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Views and Opinions

A New Year Outlook

IN prevailing circumstances it sounds like an effort at sarcasm to wish our readers a Happy New Year. While I write this the guns are booming, and it is within the bounds of possibility that before I finish these notes I and they, with books and papers, may be mixed in the heaped up debris of a bombed house. And unless something in the nature of a miracle happens, 1941 cannot be a very happy year, even though it may give greater cause for satisfaction than 1940 has given. So I had better content myself with expressing the hope that 1941 will see us nearer an enduring peace than the last war left us. For the last great war (please note that we have contracted the habit of calling a war great when we mean only that it is large) never came within reasonable distance of peace. And with the signing of the treaty it became as certain as anything in the world of international politics could be that the victors had merely arranged an indefinitely timed armistice. The fight was stopped, just as the fight in the boxing-ring stops when the gong sounds, to be resumed when the combatants have had time for a "breather." War at best is a barbarous way of settling international differences, however faithfully the "rules of war" are observed. And when neither of the parties in a war can trust the other "rules of war" sounds sarcastic. Anyway, as the strength of a chain is that of its weakest link, no one may say the observance of any agreed rules of war depends upon the one who has the least inclination to keep them. I doubt if any General at war ever really expects his opposite number to obey agreed rules in the letter and in the spirit.

* * *

War and the Churches

It was to be expected that the Churches, like Mussolini, should exploit the present war to as great an extent as possible. There are psychological and what one may call political factors at work here. Whether a war is justifiable, as I believe this one to be, given the existing situation, or questionable, as so many of our wars have been, there are certain consequences that are inevitable. From the point of view of a humanizing of life, war always involves a step backward in the scale of civilization. Social freedom is restricted, freedom of speech and publication is lessened, hatred becomes a "holy" passion, force is stripped of disguise. We never get back to the state in which religion originated, but we strengthen the feelings upon which religion thrives. The uncertainty that accompanies war, the renewed prestige of mere authority, with numerous other ugly tendencies that decline

during times of peace, regain strength during a war period, and the churches are not slow to avail themselves of such favourable circumstances. The hardened militarists have preached that men grow "soft" during a prolonged peace, and the clergy translate this into religious terms when they say that men forget God when things are going well, but recall him when they are overcome by misfortune.

In the last world-war the clergy did what they could to profit by the occasion. In the case of the present war their efforts have not been quite so successful. The palpable lie that the war was being fought for the purpose of preserving Christianity seems to have worn itself out. Survivals of the primitive such as Lord Halifax and the Archbishop, of Canterbury with numerous others in "lower" stations worked this lie until the stupidity of pretending that the many millions of people at home and abroad who were strongly against Christianity, and the many other millions who believed in religions that were opposed to it were fighting to preserve the Christian Church aroused feelings of opposition or disgust. The rush in the early months of the war for a day of national prayer, each one followed by a disaster to our arms, ceased, although another may now be attempted when something definite and striking occurs on the fields of battle. The one move that remains is the endeavour to get more religion into the schools. Unless those interested are wide awake there is a likelihood of our finding the clergy more strongly entrenched at the end of the war than they were when it began. After all, death-beds and the cradle are the two extremes of life on which the Christian Church has counted with the greatest success. The warriors of the Church always advanced with the greatest feeling of security when they were tackling enemies under nine and over ninety.

* * *

After the War?

What is to happen after the war? It would be idle to expect that when it is over we shall enter a period of perfect peace, and that all will work with zeal for a new earth, if not for a new heaven. But we must expect the age-long clash of interests of an hereditary aristocracy, as opposed to a commercial or agricultural one, the conflict of an official class versus a general populace, the fight between financial and social interests, the many-sided conflict between what is established and what a section of the people desire which one might describe as the fight between what is and what might be will continue. The latter *must* continue if society is to advance. And we must, above all not encourage the delusion that because this war has caused a ready response to the calls of a common citizenship to meet what is unmistakably a common danger, there will be created a complete "change of heart" that will burst into full flower when the war is over. Historic processes do not move in that precise and easily calculable manner. And so long as the Christian Churches remain established as a social and political power we must count with the insidious operations of one of the most dreadful dangers of civilized life, and one that will do as it has always done, that is, the rationalization of the interests of sections of the community that will protect its doctrines and confirm its status. This last is a truth with which most of our "advanced thinkers" are well

acquainted, but it is a consideration that will receive constant and "faithful" handling only in such a journal as this one.

On this level I count it as something to the good that this war has brought forth a recognition that we are all in it, the civilian as well as the soldier, the man in the workshop as well as the man in the field of direct conflict. The days when we could enter into a war, send soldiers to the battle-front, cheer them when they departed and when they returned, and then forget them, are gone, never to return. This time we have not merely been told "officially" that we are all in the war, but many of us have had personal and unpleasant confirmation of the fact. Indeed, if Hitler could kill or cripple the civilian population, without slaughtering a single soldier he could make quite certain of victory. In this, as I pointed out in some recent notes, there is really nothing new. An army must live on civilians. It must derive its strength, its morale, its courage and sense of duty from social life. Any conqueror who can demoralize the civil population may consider his victory complete. Not merely materially but "spiritually" the battle-field is dependent upon the tone of civil life for whatever virtues are manifested thereon. "Totalitarian war" only registers a consciousness of an already existing fact. It is, indeed, one of the clauses in the indictment of war that it is always parasitic in its nature. The qualities it displays, endurance, courage, sense of duty, placing the life of the whole before one's own life, all these and other qualities are developed in social life. They find expression in war, and even then deteriorate without the refreshing influence of social life.

* *

Is Isolation Possible?

This war will indeed have been fought in vain if it does not end with a strong and expressed conviction of the almost criminal character of a world dominated by war. And in this matter there is only one way out. I have pointed out more than once, and long before either this war or the war of 1914, that the choice before the world is not that of isolation or collective action, but whether we chose collective action for peace or collective action for war. There is no such thing to-day as isolation between nations that are in contact with each other. The sole issue is whether we choose collective action for war or collective action for peace. For what a nation does with regard to neighbouring nations is determined by what that neighbouring nation is doing. Germany armed because it felt it could not get its way save by force. And we arm in order to keep pace with Germany. With the United States—a veritable world by itself—there was an understanding that our naval forces should bear a certain proportion to theirs. A nation's tariffs is determined by how nations act with whom it is trading. And so on through all the links that connect one nation with others. If this simple truth had been seen by our statesmen and newspaper writers, instead of carrying into the twentieth century a principle that could only exist so long as two peoples were geographically and intellectually isolated, we should by now have had a real League of Nations instead of one that was hurried out of efficient existence by men with their own petty axes to grind. We have paid dearly for the sneers of such Governments as we have had this last few years, and the unenlightened ravings of such newspaper magnates as Lord Beaverbrook, with their thinly disguised opposition to the League of Nations. They would not have concerted action for peace, so we have concerted action for war, and before war was officially declared we had concerted action in preparing for war. The independence of nations, as some of our would-be teachers have held it, does not exist. One may say it has never existed in a complete form. To-day our obvious task is to place law above force, to secure concerted action for a world peace in place of concerted action for world-war.

* * *

The Way Out

But if we are to work for real peace in the world nations must give as well as take. To-day we are, with not too much wisdom from those who want what they call "isolation," boasting that we are "mistress of the seas," and all of us in this country at least, are pleased that it should be so. But it is also said that the nation that rules the seas rules the world. I am not challenging this state-

ment, and I agree with those that say it is fortunate for those in these islands that "Britannia rules the waves." All I am asking is that we shall be sufficiently level-headed to make our choice of which policy we prefer—that of world peace, or a world in arms waiting for an opportunity to go to war. Nations have hitherto chosen the latter. But having chosen the latter they have protested that what they really wanted was the former. And having made choice of the latter they have not had the courage logically to apply their chosen policy. When Germany was arming there was no move in the League of Nations to say to Germany, "You shall not build up an army. If you have a grievance bring them before the international court and it will deal with you in terms of law." That might have set a precedent which would have been awkward for some of the more powerful members of the League. (Note, we have used the word "Powerful" although the question of a judge being powerful when sitting with other judges is in itself offensive). The League preferred a collective action that made war inevitable.

But if we would take we must give. If we would have a peaceful world we must have one in which war is completely and finally outlawed. Questions of our not being able to leave our national honour to be decided by others are nonsensical. We are within a few generations in this country, and much more recently in other countries, when precisely this argument was used concerning what was called personal honour—under cover of which many kinds of what are now prohibited scoundrelisms were active. The individual was the guardian of his own honour in many particulars. But as men became more civilized it was recognized that the personal defence of individual honour inevitably protected the bully and the scoundrel, and the authority for deciding questions of personal injury, including personal honour, became courts-at-law, where the judges were independent and the law more or less clearly defined.

With the inevitable break up of the present German regime there would be made possible the existence of a federated States of Europe. And there is no ground for doubt that to this may be added the American States—North and South. Or, as we have before said, the combination of a restored and revived France, the British Empire and the Americas each submitting their own differences to an international court, and standing by the verdict of an appointed court, would form a combination that no other single power, and no probable combination of other nations could afford to ignore. The combination of the United States and the British Empire already exists for the purpose of conducting the present war. Is there any reason why this combination should ever be broken up?

So if we cannot say "A Happy New Year to all our readers," we may express the hope that we shall not be registering more of our readers who have suffered death or disaster from this world-conflict.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Her Path to Atheism

Hail to the steadfast soul
Which, unflinching and keen,
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist, and illusion, and fear!

Matthew Arnold

MATTHEW ARNOLD's magnificent tribute to Harriet Martineau (1802-76) was richly deserved. Her life is the record of a useful existence devoted to the service of her fellows. So far back as 1832 Lucy Aiken wrote to Dr. Channing: "You must know that a great, new light has risen among Englishwomen." Lord Brougham, a still better authority, remarked to a friend about the same time: "There is at Norwich a deaf girl who is doing more good than any man in the country."

In that quiet backwater of life Harriet Martineau was born. She has given us a picture of life in the town; of its priestly exclusiveness and intellectual stagnation, only slightly modified by the social gatherings of a few cultured families, and by the infusion of

French people, the result of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Martineaus themselves were among the "aliens" whom that intolerant measure drove to our hospitable shores. At Norwich they had flourished for about a century, part of the family devoting itself to silk-weaving, while others were in the medical profession. Harriet's father died young, leaving a family of eight children, of whom Harriet and her brother James, the distinguished preacher and theologian, are both famous.

Harriet was barely of age when she published the first of her many books. This was *Devotional Exercises for Young Persons*, a modest and pious publication of the Unitarian School in which she had been brought up. In itself it is a work of little consequence, but it was the harbinger of more splendid works destined to raise her to the pinnacle of fame and influence.

Her mind ripened rapidly, and she embarked on a wide choice of subjects. Novels, travel, folk-lore, history, biography, and sociology, flowed from her busy pen. Her fertile and versatile mind even attempted a series of stories illustrating the working of the principles of Political Economy, which had been laid down in abstract manner by Adam Smith, Bentham and Romilly. These stories had a European circulation, being translated into several Continental languages. She found time for travel, visiting the United States, and meeting with a most cordial reception. On her return to this country, she associated herself with Charles Knight, the famous pioneer publisher, and contributed a number of useful books to the very popular series which earned for him a well-earned and enduring reputation.

With the object of lightening her literary labours by variety, she next employed her pen on a series of tales for children, of which *The Settlers at Home* and *Faets on the Fiord* are still read. At the same time she produced two novels of a very marked and distinguished character, entitled *Deerbook* and *The Hour and the Man*, the latter dealing with the unhappy Toussant L'Ouverture and the Haytian Rebellion. This latter was a best-seller, and still remains, perhaps, her most popular work.

About this time her health failed, and Lord Melbourne pressed upon her acceptance a Government pension, but she was too high-minded and conscientious to accept it. In declining the pension, she pointed out that she could not share in the proceeds of a system of taxation which she had often criticized adversely. Her illness lasted several years, but she, characteristically, turned her misfortune to account by writing *Life in a Sick Room*, a work which alike proves her courage and serenity under the iron hand of affliction. Soon after her restoration to health, she varied the monotony of a laborious life by a visit to the Orient, and wrote her impressions in *Eastern Life*, a work which is still worth reading, for in it she declared her Freethought opinions.

During all these years her mind had been irresistibly growing, and the result of her mature thought was embodied in *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, written conjointly with Henry George Atkinson, who was afterwards a frequent contributor to the *National Reformer*, and other Freethought periodicals. This volume revealed to all the world that Harriet Martineau was an Atheist. This frank avowal cost her trouble, not the least being the antagonism of her own brother, the well known Unitarian writer. Nor was this her most notable contribution to Freethought literature, for three years later she introduced to the English-speaking world a translation of August Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, a work destined to have an enormous effect on contemporary religious thought, and which has actually directed modern Christianity away from supernaturalism towards Humanism. While thus employed, she yet found time to write her *History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace*, which is characterized by its extreme clarity and fine impartiality, and is, perhaps, the finest historical work written by a woman in the English language.

From this time it was mainly as a leader-writer in the *Daily News*, and as a contributor to *Once a Week* that her literary ability manifested itself. In those days the *Daily News* was run on Radical lines and had small resemblance to the sentimental evangelism of its later days. Her life was now drawing towards its end. To the very

last, in spite of bad health, she took the greatest interest in every movement for the bettering of humanity. She lived through a long, happy, useful life, and sank, calmly, full of years, into the grave, regretted and esteemed by all.

Because Harriet Martineau taught the vital truths of Liberty and Fraternity, of good deeds to others, of kindly tolerance, she is worthy of remembrance. The regard of Freethinkers is rightly hers. Who knows, when the final result is weighed, who will have done the most good in the world, the artist who makes masterpieces, or the woman who does her best to alleviate the "weariness, the fever, and the fret" of life? If Freethinkers, true to their illustrious dead, keep her memory green, holding her, as she indeed was, the embodiment of true womanhood, then better than in effigy or epitaph will her life be written and her tomb be built in the hearts of her fellow-soldiers in the Army of Human Liberation.

Hail to the spirit which dared
Trust its own thoughts, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from Time.

MIMNERMUS

New Testament Problems

II.

No one could, in most cases, possibly suspect from the various sermons one hears broadcasted, or from the talks on the Bible, or from the whining tones of a pet B.B.C. religionist, that there were such things as New Testament problems. Everything happened just as the Word of God—which being the Word of God must be divinely inspired and therefore infallible—declared they happened. To realize the immense difficulties apologists and commentators have had to face, one must read their books, and it goes without saying that these are never or very rarely referred to in wireless broadcasts or in pulpits.

Yet most of the problems have never been solved. As Dean Alford, in his famous Greek Testament, had sadly to admit on such a question as the Resurrection, "We must be content to walk by faith, and not by sight." And he might just as easily have always advised the same way of getting out of the insuperable difficulties which the four gospels have posed for all who have examined the accounts with understanding.

Take, for example, such a problem as to where exactly Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection. One would have thought that on such a point the four inspired writers—and remember that we are always told that they *were* inspired—would be in complete agreement. Actually Matthew and Luke grossly contradict each other, and there never has been any reconciliation. Matthew makes it absolutely clear that Jesus appeared to them in Galilee—chapter xxviii. 7, and onwards. Luke, on the contrary, says they saw him first in Jerusalem—chapter xiv. 13-35. Of course, as far as Freethinkers are concerned this ridiculous discrepancy does not matter two hoots, for we do not believe either narrative. But for Christians it is a very serious matter; they have to believe in the Resurrection and the Word of God, and here is a proof that this Word has gone wrong somehow. Only faith can come to their rescue, but there are so many outside the fold who prefer reason, logic and facts. Is there any wonder that scepticism grows apace?

If one inquires further—how many disciples were there when Jesus first appeared to them, we get three answers. Matthew and Luke here are in agreement, they say eleven. John makes it ten as Thomas was absent (xx. 19-24). Paul, however, says there were twelve (I Cor.

xv. 5). This is very sad; and once again constitutes one of those little problems dealing with a very solemn subject to which theologians have produced no answer.

It is also very interesting to find that the divine authorities are unable to agree as to the effect Jesus had on his disciples when he came to them fresh, so to speak, from his residence in the grave—that is, as far as his dead body is concerned, for we are informed he paid a visit to hell during the same time, if I remember aright. Luke says that the disciples “were terrified and affrighted.” That is quite clear. On the other hand, John says that the disciples were “glad.” You pays your price and takes your choice. But the contradiction remains.

Then look at the famous Ascension, when Jesus was wafted straight up to Heaven, or went there through his own volition, or was helped by a miracle. Is it not strange that the two apostles who saw it, that is, who were there when it happened, say *nothing* about it, while the two who were *not* there tell you all that is known about it? Matthew and John were on the spot and they do not report it. Luke, who was never an actual apostle but a convert Gentile, tells us that Jesus “was carried up into Heaven.” Mark, who is supposed to have written his Gospel from what he heard Peter tell him, and who, like Luke, was not on the spot, informs us that Jesus “was received up into Heaven”—whatever that means. In any case this verse is not considered quite authentic by a large number of theologians, and is so classed by the Revised Version, so it can be ruled out. A few words in Luke who never saw it, and hey presto!—the Ascension is a fact. But will some believer inform us exactly why Matthew and John, who saw the aerial incident, never reported it?

There is the same curious discrepancy in the accounts of the Transfiguration. It is reported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke—and *they never saw it*. It was seen by John, and he has not a word about it. As Thomas Scott says in his *English Life of Jesus* (a work which deserves to be better known than it is these days), “By some singular fatality the writer of the fourth gospel seems incapable of describing any one incident in the life of Jesus as the Synoptics have described it”—a problem which theologians have had to face, and which they have now given up as unanswerable. In any case the Transfiguration is a very good copy even to small details of the same incident in the Life of Moses as described in Exodus, chapter xxiv.

Then again, take one of the most famous incidents in the life of Jesus to which reference is always being made—though it is true that the story raises more than a mere laugh with some people—the loaves and fishes yarn. Matthew, Mark, and Luke make it quite clear that it was the disciples who furnished the loaves and fishes for the multitude in the desert. John is just as emphatic that it was a lad—“There is a lad here which has five barley loaves and two small fishes” (vi. 9). Nobody knows who is right, as all the writers are equally divinely inspired. No wonder the Roman Catholic Church allows the Bible as a whole to be read only by permission, the “vulgar” not being quite able to understand the Holy Work without the explanation which only properly trained priests can give.

By the way, there are quite a number of interesting side lights on the same incident never, if possible, dwelt upon by our leading religious lights in the pulpit or on the radio. For example, after feeding the multitude, what did Jesus do? According to Matthew and Mark, he sent the people away; according to John, it was he, Jesus, who went away. Matthew and Mark declare that after the multitudes went away he “went up into a mountain to pray.” John says that the people wanted to make him “a king,” so he went alone “into a mountain.” And the discerning reader will note that there is nothing in Matthew and Mark about the king business, and nothing in John about the praying. What magnificent play all this would make for one of the B.B.C.’s answering set questions games. You could have six theologians on either side, and the marks would go to the side which could best reconcile the unreconcilable incidents in the life of Jesus as reported by the Synoptics on one hand and John on the other. It would be great fun.

And there are still many many more serious problems for the pious to solve unless they rely entirely on Faith.

H. CUTNER

Sacrifice

GENT: How is your new cook suiting you, vicar?

Vicar: Oh, she is (theologically speaking) perfect. She presents us daily with either a burnt offering or a bloody sacrifice!

The vicar did not say which he fancied. God prepared the bloody sacrifice. For Cain’s offering (Gen. iv. 3)—the first fruits of the earth—He had no respect. While for that of Abel (Gen. iv. 4)—the fattest firstlings of the flock—he had respect.

The sacrifice of human, or animal, life constituted a bloody sacrifice. Unbloody sacrifice consisted of libations, incense, fruit, and cakes.

Human sacrifice seems to have been known throughout the world: “on the altars of Moab, and of Phœnicia, and of the distant Canaanite settlements in Carthage and in Spain, nay even, at times, within the confines of the Chosen People itself, in the wild vow of Jephthah, in the *sacrifice* of Saul’s sons of Gibeah, in the dark *sacrifices* of Hinnom, under the very walls of Jerusalem—this almost irrepressible tendency of the burning zeal of a primitive race found its terrible expression.” (Stanley, *Jewish Church* i. 40). It was known to the Greeks and the Romans. It is frequently mentioned in the Bible: Gen. xxii. 1-10; Judges xi. 29-40; 2 Kings iii. 27; xvii. 31; xxi. 6; xxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6; Jer. vii. 31, 32; xix. 5, 6; Ezek. xvi. 21; xx. 31; Micah. vii. 7., etc.

Tylor was of opinion that *sacrifice* formed an important part of all early forms of religion. He traces three definite stages in the development of the rite: (1) The Gift Theory. (2) The Homage Theory. (3) The Abnegation Theory. (*Primitive Culture*, Chap. xviii.).

And says Smith:—

The custom of sacrificing human life to the gods arose undoubtedly from the belief, which under different forms has manifested itself at all times and in all nations, that the nobler the *sacrifice* and the dearer to its possessor, the more pleasing it would be to the gods. (*Dictionary of Antiquities*, p. 999).

The idea of human sacrifice originated in the “distracted globe” of a fanatic priest. As education gained a footing, human victims were replaced by oxen, sheep, etc. Further enlightenment popularized the unbloody rite—libations, incense, fruit and cake made in the form of animals, as substitutes for real animals. Sacrifices were limited to clean beasts and birds. Priests killed and dressed animals for the altar. Portions of sacrifices reserved for their subsistence they helped themselves—even from the sacrifice of the poorest people—the tenth part of an ephah of meal—the priest took a handful, threw it on the fire, and reserved the rest for himself. Sacrifices were ordered for morning and evening, weekly sacrifices for the Sabbath, sacrifices at New Moons, Annual sacrifices, stated sacrifices for the people at large, sacrifices were arranged for private families, and so on. Priests in their own interests exploited sacrifice until they rid it of whatever good it may have contained, and made of it a mere ceremony. (Ps. xl. 6; and Hosea vi. 6.) Samuel (Sam. xv. 22); Solomon (Prov. xxi. 3); and Isaiah (Isa. i. 11-17) questioned the utility of sacrifice, and denounced it. They rang its death knell, but it still lives. In this twentieth century, say, three thousand years after its decease was heralded, some interesting survivals of it may yet be noted.

The following five selected illustrations are taken from Tyler’s *Primitive Culture*, Vol. II., 406-409, 1st. ed. 1891):—

(1) One of its most remarkable survivals may be seen in Bulgaria, where sacrifice of live victims is to this day one of the accepted rites of the land. They sacrifice a lamb on St. George’s Day, telling, to account for the custom, a legend which confines the episodes of the offering of Isaac and the miracle of the Three Children. On the feast of the Panagia (Virgin Mary) sacrifices of lambs, kids, honey, wine, etc., are offered in order that the children of the house may enjoy good health throughout the year.

(2) Within the borders of Russia, many and various sacrifices are still offered: such is the horse with head smeared with honey and mane decked with ribbons, cast into the river with two millstones to its neck to appease the water spirit, the Vodyany, at his spiteful flood-time in early spring.

(3) At Andrioux in Dauphiny, at the solstice, the villagers went out on the bridge when the sun rose, and offered him an omelet.

(4) The custom of burning alive the finest calf, to save a murrain-struck herd, had its last examples in Cornwall in the present century.

(5) It is a remnant of old sacrificial rite, when the Swedes still bake at Yule-tide a cake in the shape of a boar, representing the boar sacrificed of old to Freyr, and Oxford to this day commemorates the same ancestral ceremony, when the boar's head is carried into the Christmas feast at Queen's College, with its appointed carol "Caput apri defero, Reddens laudes Domino."

GEORGE WALLACE

The Christian God and Joseph Bramah

ON December 9, we ought to have remembered Joseph Bramah, one of the greatest lock inventors this world has ever known, who died in 1814. Let us see some of the things that the "God" of Christianity did for this great man. One, when Bramah was a boy, God let him have so severe an accident whilst taking part in some sports, that he was forced to change his employment. Two, "God" helped this lame young genius to walk from Stainborough in Yorkshire to London. Three, if I remember rightly, God caused Bramah's mother to be thrown out of a horse and trap coming down a hill so that she was killed. Four, God gave Bramah a chill whilst he was engaged in the useful occupation of constructing water works at Norwich, which caused him to return to London and killed him. God never did anything so useful as constructing water works anywhere in his life. Five, God saw that when Bramah was buried in Paddington Churchyard, he had no memorial.

A Christian might say that all that has nothing to do with God, but the answer is that if God exists and if he is responsible for everything that happens, it has everything to do with him. Of course an educated person who does not believe in God, does not blame him for any of these deplorable conditions, and nor do some Christians, who are thereby not even consistent in their prime and primitive absurdities.

Yet a visit to Silkstone Parish Church will result in the discovery of a fine tablet on which is carved, amongst other things:—

By rare genius and eminent perseverance he advanced himself as an engineer and machinist of the greatest public utility.

So far, so good. A record of his scientific achievement, and not a word about "Gawd." But:—

He was not the less remarkable for his Benevolent disposition and Steadfast Faith in the Founder of our Holy Religion.

It seems to be granted that his "Benevolent disposition" did not depend upon his "Steadfast Faith," etc., which is something. But I should like to tell the mug, presumably now in Heaven, who wrote the last part of this, that, supposing that Bramah really believed all the Christian "clotted bosh," it was only because it had been rammed into his head as an infant, and before he was old enough to understand what it was he was being taught. Bramah would have invented his lock just the same if he had been an Atheist. And how did the writer know for sure that Bramah really believed all the Gospel piffle about Jesus, anyway? Even if Bramah had been a "believer," I think that he would have been sufficiently intelligent to see what a lot of rubbish he had

been taught as a child, if only he could have had a few select conversations with an educated Freethinker. And if God had done me the honour to consult me before his disgusting dealings with Joseph Bramah, I think I could have given him a few hints on how he might not have made himself so positively obnoxious to a person with umpteen times more brains than himself. So let us remember Joseph Bramah who was hailed as one of the saviours of the well-to-do for inventing an unpickable lock, thus showing how successful Christianity had been after nearly 1800 years in promoting honesty in the poor and charity in the rich.

DONALD DALE

Acid Drops

One of our readers calls attention to an item in the *Times Literary Supplement*, rebuking those who speak of Hitlerism as being a religious movement. What else is it? Hitler was born and remains a Roman Catholic. To argue that he is not because he will not obey the Pope in all things is more than an error, it is deliberately assumed stupidity. Large numbers have quarrelled with the Pope and the Roman Church without ceasing to be religious. Hitler was bred a Roman Catholic and remains one. To say that he is a liar, that he is brutal, or half-insane is quite beside the point. Men by the million have lied and been brutal and ignorant without that in the least tarnishing their right to be called a Christian. And Hitler has explained how God has designed the German people to lead the world, how "Providence" selected him for his job, etc. etc. And what is the mental attitude of the Germans who really follow Hitler but a genuinely religious one. And after all Hitler's treatment of conquered people is not very much worse than that which God, according to the Bible, measured out to those who opposed his chosen people.

Mr. James Agate writes very pleasantly on many things, but when he gets "off his beat" he is apt to come dangerously near making a fool of himself. Thus, Mr. A. P. Herbert recently said he could not distinguish between faith and "wishful thinking." But as Mr. Herbert considered it rather bad to do very much wishful thinking—at all events one must not shape one's action by wishful thinking, Mr. Agate thought this a reproach to "faith." Hence he set out to correct Mr. Herbert, we fancy with the desire to avoid any slur being cast on "faith," which religionists tell us means so much to them.

So Mr. Agate sets out to instruct Mr. Herbert as to the difference between the two things. He gives two examples, both of the same order and each quite misleading. It is faith, he says, that the article he is writing will be paid for. It is wishful thinking to spend it before it is received. But there is really no difference between the two on the basis of the example given. To write in the belief that one will be paid for it, is based upon the knowledge that such things are paid for, and that they who receive it will honour their obligation. To spend the amount before it is actually due is done by the majority of people, who have that amount at their disposal, and complete trust in the honesty of the other fellow. It is action based on experience. But the "faith" that Mr. Herbert had in mind was, we think, that associated with religion. And that is a different thing altogether. It is "wishful thinking." That shapes future events in the light of our fancy and not of our experience. As a defender of religion Mr. Agate must try again.

Who is ultimately responsible for the official message from the Board of Admiralty as one of the Fleet Orders, which appears in the *Daily Telegraph* for December 24:—

In the conviction that the present war is a struggle between good and evil, and that in the practice of the Christian religion may be found to-day the same support experienced by our forefathers in establishing in the Royal Navy those ideals of service and sacrifice we have inherited.

Their Lordships, while appreciating that under

conditions of war the instructions regarding Sunday work can seldom be realized, wish to emphasize the need for observing the instructions for the holding of Divine service and prayers.

It is bad enough to have in the navy as in the army, the same difficulties placed in the way of a Freethinker abstaining from attending religious service, but it is much worse to find an official document calmly assuming that in some undefined way a proper discharge of duty and effectiveness in action is derived from a belief in Christianity. As we are engaged, avowedly, in a war for the "freedom of the human spirit" might it not be as well to make a beginning of sufficient freedom to entitle any man from ordinary seaman to admiral to either attend or stay away from a religious service? One would like an answer to the plain question whether there is any vital difference between Hitler ordering men to attend his public demonstration and cheer to order, and the British Admiralty ordering men to attend a Church service and praying to order? If there is, we fail to see it. A sailor's duty has not necessarily any connexion with his religious belief. But Christians in high places appear to have made up their minds that the Churches shall profit by the war, if it is at all possible. Again, will someone in the House of Commons have the courage to raise this question, or does anxiety for one's "political career" prevent all considerations of this kind.

Everything will go well on the fighting front. We have this on the authority of W. E. Gladstone, once Prime Minister of Britain, via a Spiritualist medium of Bath, via the *Sunday Chronicle* of December 15, 1940. Here is the message that will cheer us up and make the Hitler-Mussolini combination tremble. "Good evening my friends. Once more I return to earth. I have just, this last day, been with your Prime Minister in the House of Commons. My friends you are going to victory sooner than you believe. Good night." Those who are acquainted with Gladstone will notice that his style has altered. In the flesh, W.E.G. would have taken at least half a column of a newspaper. And in the end the reader would have been a little doubtful as to the meaning of one who was described by a member of the House as "exuberated with his own verbosity."

On a closer examination, however, we are inclined to think that this might, after all, be the ghost of the great politician. First, he says he has just come from the House of Commons, and where else should he go than the place with which he was so familiar? Secondly, victory is to come sooner than we believe. "Sooner" has the proper Gladstonian ring. The people he was addressing may have expected peace about 1970, or 1941, or '42. One cannot tell, and if peace comes within the next half century the Medium would be able to say, "I told you so." Thirdly, if the war stops with a compromise that leaves Hitler in power, it may always be said that to stop many years of slaughter may in itself be considered a victory over the passions of mankind. Finally, the ghost did not say with which side victory would rest. It did not say a British victory or a German victory. And which ever side won the spirit of W.E.G. would be able to say, "I told you victory would come. So we are inclined to think that this is a direct message from the spirit world. It has all the hall-marks of a spiritual message. It leaves each one to interpret it as he may. If the ghost had given an exact date for the end of the war he would have been disowned by the spiritual trades union for running unnecessary risks.

We never feel quite so disgusted as when we see grown up men in the pulpit blather about "Love." It usually masks humbug, although it often exists as a substitute for action. But the Pope who has not dared to deal "faithfully" with either Mussolini or Hitler, has just broadcast to the world that his desire is to spread "universal love." The world is not needing "love," which history shows is compatible with the most brutal of actions. One expects that there are large numbers of people who will say they love Hitler. What the world really needs is justice—a sane and healthy conception of justice with a reasonable plan for its application and security. "Love" could then look after itself—and the pulpits of Christendom would empty rapidly.

The Rev. W. Campbell, of Peebles, is much perturbed because of the small proportion of children attending Sunday Schools. Other clergymen belonging to the same area also joined in the same lament, and a resolution was carried at a meeting of the Presbytery that the subject should "be raised with the authorities." Perhaps these representatives of God Almighty are of opinion that compulsory attendance at Sunday Schools should be enforced by law. Compulsory attendance at Church lingered longer in Scotland than it did in England, and we expect that many of the clergy in both areas long for the good old days.

Professor Finnegan, of Magee College, Londonderry, joins with Mr. Campbell in his lament. He says that all Christians must join in creating a "Christian atmosphere" throughout the Schools. This means that all education must be saturated with religious teaching, and that the parson must always be above the teacher. And who is to settle what is a Christian atmosphere? In Northern Ireland it would be the peculiarly narrow and vicious atmosphere that characterizes a narrow form of Presbyterianism. In South Ireland, it would place the Roman Catholic priest in power. In England, we should have a wild scramble among the sects; and with all of them the schools would be converted into a training ground for customers for the clergy. The real remedy for all this is to keep religion out of the schools. If that were once done, we should see how little the clergy as a body care for education in itself.

Here is another gem from the clerical mine. The Bishop of Bradford, addressing the Diocesan Conference at Bradford, says that reform in the Church is necessary, and advocates, (1) Deseccularization—which, we take it, means there must be less common sense in the Church than there is at present. (2) a concentrated effort of reading and thinking, which means a selected reading that prevents understanding, and a parrot-like repetition of beliefs that should shame a Hottentot, (3) Thought to its service of public worship, which means becoming regular customers at the parson's stores, and (4) learning to pray better, which means heavier collections and a less nimble intelligence. One may be quite certain that in any reform advocated by the clergy the change will always leave them stronger than they are at present.

According to the *Official Year Book of the Church of England* there has been a decline in the number of candidates for confirmation, of deacons ordained, of Sunday School scholars, and "of money offerings of every kind." We suspect that the latter is lamented as much as anything. But we are rather surprised. War being a step backward in civilized life, one would expect religious organizations to show at least sporadic symptoms of greater vitality. In the last war there was, we believe such a revival, although it did not last for long, nor was it very great. This time there does not appear to have been even a flicker. And when we think of how hard the clergy have worked the barefaced lie that this war is for the preservation of Christianity, it is rather pitiful to find the churches emptier than ever. Well, well, we all know the Abraham Lincoln maxim about fooling the people; the situation above described may be taken as an endorsement of its truth.

According to the Bishop of Liverpool, there are not enough people reading the Bible "regularly and with intelligence." We put aside the "regularly" since if a stupid man, he reads the Bible all day and every day, he will not add to his intellectual power, nor will he read it more intelligently because he reads it frequently. Everyone knows what a bore a man is, and how foolish he is when his mouth is filled with Bible texts, and his brain with—? On the other hand, the first editor of this journal read the Bible intelligently—and wrote the *Bible Handbook*, one of the deadliest blows ever delivered against the Bible for "the man in the street." That has been a regular "seller" ever since it was published. Sir James Frazer also read the Bible thoroughly and intelligently, and he wrote three bulky volumes demonstrating that the Bible told the same story that is told by savages all over the world. We wonder what the Bishop of Liverpool thinks of these two examples? We feel certain only of one thing. This is that he will not have the courage honestly to make his thoughts public.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- A. W. DAVIES.—Thanks for address. Copies being sent.
 F. TERRY.—Thanks for good wishes. We are taking every reasonable care, but there are things that simply must be done.
 H. MURPHY and "TAB CAN."—Much obliged for cuttings. For Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—"In Memory of J. D. Stevens," E. A. Macdonald, 21s.; Ben Jenkins (South Africa), 42s.
 E. HENDERSON.—The General Secretary will write you.
 E. NEWBURY.—Of course trying to spread Freethought is up-hill work. But would it be worth spending one's time and energy on if it were not?
 H. SILVESTER.—We quite appreciate your position. You have known us years enough to be able to judge, and your high opinion of what has been done is very gratifying. Hope to see you soon.
 W. WALLACE.—Thanks for sketch. May we reprint? It will interest many of our readers.
 T. DIXON.—Very pleased to hear from you. We expect you are taking things as cheerfully as ever. Call when you are again in London.
 B.M.—Thanks for copy of *The Boamen*.
 M. MATHER.—Thanks for good wishes which we heartily reciprocate.
 S.H.—Received. Many thanks.

Owing to the new attack on the *Freethinker* Office we are obliged to hold over a number of letters, answers to correspondents, etc., until next week.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

We are rather late in noticing the *Rationalist Annual* for 1941. That is not of great consequence in itself, for the regular subscribers will have procured their copy, and for others it will be fresh and interesting reading in January, 1941, as it would have been in November, 1940. The articles are on more than the usually high level, with most of them containing just that amount of disputable matter that keeps a reader critically alive, while demanding attention in virtue of the importance and interest of the subjects dealt with. Of these mention may be made of the too brief article by Gilbert Murray on "Why Despair of Reason," and the very debatable one by Sir Arthur Keith, and a very interesting informative article by J. B. S. Haldane on "The Laws of Nature." One wishes that this particular article had been longer. He suggests, and we agree with him, that while we shall all continue to talk of "Laws" of Nature, it would be better to think of "Uniformities," but the substitution of "Uniformities" for Laws will not easily be achieved. We can only add here that the price of the *Annual* has not been raised. It is still One Shilling.

We are prohibited from reproducing either as a whole or in part, Mr. Winston Churchill's article on "The Public School Tradition," in the *Sunday Dispatch*, for December 22, so all we can say here is to express the opinion that it is the greatest exposure, and the most damning criticism of our Public Schools that we have yet read. And the most damning feature of the article is that it is written in the form of praise for these institutions. We shall be surprised if in the future it is not cited by those who attack these schools.

SPECIAL

FOR the second time in three months I am writing this directly after a visit from German planes. The floors are damp, but the spirits of all concerned are untouched. There has been further damage done to books and pamphlets by water, but we are going on as usual—so far as is possible. We are among the victims of the great bombing raid on the night of Sunday, December 29, and although not so badly hit as many, the injury was sufficient, and the annoyance more so.

The thing that has given us most anxiety is the printing of this issue of the *Freethinker*. This has been overcome, although some of the articles have had to be set outdoors. It is probable that subscribers will receive their copies a little later than usual, but they will get them, and that is the important thing—to us, and we hope to them.

One other thing—this with regard to our "War Damage Fund." I do not go to the office every day, and a registered packet, containing a number of letters was sent from the office to my private address. The packet was posted on December 27. Up to the date of writing, the packet has not been delivered. It will probably turn up in the course of a day or two. Meanwhile I shall be obliged if those who posted letters on December 23, 24, 25 and 26, will advise me as to their contents. Cheques can be easily traced or cancelled, as can postal orders—provided the counterfoils have been retained.

In the circumstances we have decided to defer the list of donations until our next issue. Meanwhile I wish to again thank those who have already subscribed. We are passing through a very hard time, the worst that this paper has ever experienced. It is the consciousness of the loyalty and readiness to help of so many of our readers that enables us to face the disasters of war—with confidence. We are writing this in a damp room, with drops of water still falling. But the watery globules are not tears. We are still able to face the present with a smile and the future with confidence.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Courage of Dean Inge

SOME little time ago I wrote a satirical verse upon Dean Inge in the *New Statesman and Nation*, which verse, perhaps, did its subject less than justice. For his latest book, *The Fall of the Idols*, shows the Dean, as compared with most of his clerical brethren, as a giant amongst pigmies. He attempts to think for himself as well as for other people. If he is not entirely successful in either attempt that is rather the fault of his profession and upbringing than the natural man's.

His fallen idols are those of the nineteenth century: Progress, Democracy, Pacifism, Humanism, and Religion. Yes—even Religion, which says something for his courage. But these are not really fallen idols: they still stand, I suggest, although some of them are chipped and damaged and off their pedestals. On all these idols, a scholarly, well-read, powerful, if narrow and prejudiced, mind works like a buzz-saw in Dean Inge's book. Inevitably he gets sometimes a flash of originality—that most valuable thing in literature. At his worst, the Dean never fails in readability: at his best he achieves an enviable felicity of expression.

Perhaps he is at his most characteristic as a Pacifist. Like most modern Englishmen in war-time, he is a half-Pacifist; a disbeliever in War, but a supporter of the War-at-the-moment. On pacifism, he notes the

vacillating attitude of the Christian Churches from the first century to the present day. Jesus Christ really came to bring "peace on earth, goodwill towards men," and the Dean quotes those many Gospel texts that most English clergymen conveniently and patriotically suppress in war-time. Correctly he removes the misunderstanding of "I came not to bring peace but a sword" into the realm of effect from the realm of intent. (But he ignores the incident of Christ's violence in the Temple). He courageously notes "formal contradictions in Christ's words." Christ (he says in effect) was good enough for Galilean peasants but for us, an organized society, we "cannot abstain from the use of coercion." As we suppress criminals inside the nation, so we must defend ourselves against an invading enemy. In the case of Finns v. Russians and Poles v. Germans, armed resistance (to the Dean) was not contrary to the law of Christ. "The law of love forbids war absolutely. But a purely predatory State . . . has put itself outside the comity of civilized humanity." Is there such a thing as "a purely predatory State," I wonder?

You perceive that Dean Inge has the courage of his Government's convictions. But he has not the courage of Jesus Christ's convictions. For equally a purely predatory man has put himself outside the comity. Yet Christ says: Love, forgive, resist not, pray for, him. Perhaps Christ was wrong and his Dean right. But Dean Inge should have the courage of his own convictions and say so. "Blessed are the war-makers for they shall be called the children of God."

The Church taught Christ's pacifism until Constantine's day, when, accepted by the State, it began to back the State at all costs, and support Wars. Nevertheless, the consciences of some Christians (such as the Quakers in England, the Doukhobers in Russia, and the Mennonites in the Low Countries) have rejected all war absolutely. But Dean Inge rejects this Christ-view as "extreme." He proceeds to discuss various wars, even British wars, as justifiable or otherwise. He does not pronounce, however, as to whether the Boer War or the 1914-18 War was right, as we British claimed at the time. But he notes caustically that:—

We should like to see Continental nations beat their swords into ploughshares, but when it is suggested that Britannia should beat her trident into a toasting-fork that is a rather different thing.

He gives, clearly and accurately, the foreign view of Britain as "astute and unscrupulous, picking up colonies by means of naval supremacy and forming coalitions against any dominant Continental power," and making as a pretext for war "some hitherto unsuspected affection for some small nation" such as Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia or Poland. But we English think ourselves peace-lovers who only fight for righteous indignation at the treatment of a weak nation by a strong. No doubt our Government and newspapers talk like that, but does any commonsense Englishman really think it? Dean Inge will not opine which view of us is true "because his own country is concerned." This is running away with a vengeance.

But later the Dean sticks to his Christian guns. "That war is the greatest evil in human life and that no good can ever come of it are in my opinion certain." Nothing can be clearer or more courageous than this sentence so far as it goes. But what of *this* War? The ex-Dean of St. Paul's on that subject is as discreetly silent as the Pope of Rome.

Flying so far (he says) is a curse to humanity. Gas is a Satanic horror refused in the Crimean War and repudiated in 1925, but still on the cards. *The Great Illusion* of Norman Angell was based on his illusions, and false. The people of England in the Dean's own social class, with everything to lose and nothing to gain by war, are yet hot for it. Socialists deserting their creed are new, as usual, war-mongers. The failure of the last War in all its three objects—(1) to destroy German militarism, (2) to end War, (3) to make the world safe for democracy—deters no war-believers. The old catchwords are mouthed again with little difference. There is nothing worse than winning a war—except losing it—

yet England and Germany alike scream for "Victory" like insane creatures.

What is the cause of war-mentality? Acquisitiveness, the boredom of peace, war-glorification, press-stunts, the ancestral ape within, the romantic patriotism called nationalism—and finally and perhaps above all, fear: nations believing, as Germany and England each believe to-day, that their "national life is in peril unless it can take the national life of one or more foes or at least helplessly cripple that foe." Here I think the Dean accurately puts his finger on the real trouble. But he will not have it that armament firms cause wars at all, even partly. I can only say that if he read the Life of the late-lamented Sir Basil Zaharoff, he would change his views upon that. Armament-profits are certainly one cause of wars.

Now what is the Dean's remedy against War? Such ideas as an international air force are "not practicable." Refusals to serve in the Forces might cause many martyrdoms, and might also help the great cause of peace, but the treatment of China, a really pacific nation, by other nations is "not encouraging." The organization of Peace Societies is "worth while." But really all we can do as private citizens (says the Dean quoting Burke) is "so to be patriots as not to forget that we are gentlemen."

I can only exclaim on reading the Dean's final word on this most important subject: "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" as Shakespeare says. Surely Dean Inge's half-courage is typical of his cloth, his Church and his generation. Mother's little gentlemen by reminding themselves that they *are* little gentlemen will not bark and bite like patriots any more. For the sake of gentility, poor nations will not covet the colonies and markets of rich nations; the tiger and the ape will die in us all; armament-firms will prefer genteel bankruptcy to vulgar profits; the world will "stay put"; and all the nations out-vie each other in "Play the game you cads." Can even the Dean seriously accept his own inane remedy?

Even the unbelieving readers of the *Freethinker* may well prefer the words of Jesus Christ and Tolstoy to those of Edmund Burke and the Dean. "Resist not him that is evil," or "Love your enemies, bless them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," may be too much for some of us, but these words are not, like the Dean's words, too little for any of us. In *King Lear* we are told that "The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman." But I never heard that Christ was; and judging him by his reported words and conduct I should say he was none. However, the Chief Priests always are and doubtless, were. That is to say, against anything so beastly as crucifixion in general, but ready to crucify the particular Christ of their day for patriotic reasons of State.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Philosopher—A Misnomer

"Philosopher sir?" asked the green-coated stranger.
"An observer of human nature, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.
Pickwick Papers

I HAVE been reading a book by Professor C. E. M. Joad, entitled *Return to Philosophy*. Its scope and purpose, as expressed in the sub-title, are "A defence of reason, an affirmation of values, and a plea for philosophy." All this has a somewhat formidable sound; but notwithstanding that it "thunders in the index" thus, the book is evidently written with an eye to the general reader rather than the erudite philosopher.

Indeed, had it been otherwise, I for one would have had nothing to say about it. What I have read of the philosopher has been just enough to enable me to appreciate Mr. Pickwick's good sense in so promptly rejecting, by substitution, the imputation of that character.

An observer of human nature has, at least, a chance of observing something, because it is there to be seen; whereas the philosopher is ever looking for something which he can never find, and which, so far as he

knows to the contrary, is not there to be found. According to the new version of the old gibe, he is like a blind man searching in a dark closet for a black top-hat that isn't there. The author is quite aware of this peculiarity of philosophy, and the fact that he is so makes his book the more interesting inasmuch as he is ever trying to dodge it; and the skill and ingenuity he thereby displays provide good reading.

It is not possible within the limits of an article to do more than touch on a few of the matters discussed by Professor Joad. This is a pity because, in marshalling the way for his own nonsense, he utters many wise and witty things on the nonsense of others. In the chapter happily entitled "Bunkumism," he deals with certain phases of what he calls, "the derogatory attitude towards reason," and "the consequent general lowering of standards of thought and criticism," which are prevalent today. With caustic humour he describes certain manifestations of this decadence ranging from the metaphysical fancies of financiers, newspaper proprietors, theatrical producers and other commercial magnates turned philosophers, to the anti-rationalism of D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley. He has also a word in season for the vast congeries of mental rubbish which has been accumulating for years under the name of Psycho-analysis; concerning which he says: "This doctrine has proved a god-send to fools. Those who are weak in the head have not hesitated to substitute the stirrings of the bowels for the processes of reason." He might have included the stirrings of other parts of our physical conformation. In the same chapter he does a good job of work for Rationalism par excellence. Taking Christian Science as it is set forth in the text-book of the cult, *Science and Health*, he subjects it to a dose of dialectics that should go far to make its absurdities obvious to the most besotted of its adherents.

In discussing the qualifications of the philosopher Prof. Joad admits that it is extremely difficult to say what they should be. "The difficulty with regard to philosophical truth," he says, "is the difficulty, when you have discovered it, of being sure that you have." It seems to me that the qualifications necessary to discover that which you cannot be sure of when you have discovered it must indeed be extremely difficult to define. With the object, doubtless, of palliating in some way the uncertainty that besets philosophical speculation, he tells us that "it is more important to know where a philosophy is right than to know where it is wrong," and, "that whether right or wrong, all the great philosophers managed in the course of developing their thought to say a number of highly important things about human life and the way it should be lived." This plea does not appear to me to help the case of philosophy much. In pursuing other subjects of inquiry we cannot know where we are right without at the same time knowing where we are wrong; our knowledge of the one presupposing or including our knowledge of the other, so that there can be no question of their relative "importance." But the trouble with philosophy is that you cannot, on Prof. Joad's own showing, be sure where you are right, and in consequence, that your knowledge is of any importance. The fact that philosophers have managed to say a number of highly important things about something that *isn't* philosophy can scarcely be used as an argument in its favour. It is rather too casual and circuitous a method of saying important things.

However, despite the difficulty of the job, Prof. Joad manages to fill half a dozen pages in describing the qualifications of the philosopher. These comprise a knowledge of past metaphysical speculation, logic, mathematics, science, art, literature—in sum, the intellectual equipment of a modern Admirable Crichton. In view of his statement that "The corpus of philosophical knowledge which may be regarded as established beyond cavil is very small" one cannot but wonder why it should be necessary to know so much in order to discover so little.

I now come to the question with which modern philosophers amuse sensible people and bemuse themselves, and which Prof. Joad handles under the title of "An Affirmation of Values." He is particularly desirous of showing (for a reason hereafter to be noticed) that certain qualities, as Truth, Beauty and Goodness have a value in themselves apart from that which we place on

them—in philosophic phrase—that they have an objective existence independent of any idea of them which we may form. It would be useless for me to attempt to follow Prof. Joad's arguments in support of his "Affirmation." They consist in great part of logical traps, and syllogisms which prove his assumptions and nothing else, and of instances and illustrations artfully chosen for the facility with which they enable him to juggle with words.

In explaining the nature of absolute values, he tells us: "That they are desired for their own sakes and would remain valuable even if nobody desired them." That a thing can be valuable for its own sake without relation to a valuer, or valuable when it is desired—that is, wished for on account of its value—by nobody may be true enough of absolute values because it is certainly absolute nonsense.

It appears that some of Prof. Joad's students "assume and aggressively assert first, that only material things exist and are real; secondly, that beauty and truth are only ideas in the mind of man; and thirdly, that the mind of man is probably only a camouflaged version of his brain." In order to show them the shallowness and folly of such notions he asks them: "Whether, if the number three is only an idea in the human mind, twice three would cease to make six, if nobody knew it made six," and "why, if beauty is *merely* a quality which the mind projects, it projects it into some things, pictures for example, and not into other things such as pieces of string"; and so on.

Questions which are merely quirks are best met by others of the same kind. Can the fact that twice three make six exist otherwise than as an idea in the mind? If Prof. Joad asserts that it can, the question follows: In what other way? A thing to exist must exist somewhere and by some means. The question in this case is where and how. Also, if beauty exists apart from the mind that conceives it, how comes it that that which is beautiful to one is not beautiful to another? If beauty were an absolute quality existing independently of our ideas it would perforce appear the same to all, and everyone would be visiting "fair Melrose by the pale moonlight," or burning to bomb some one of Epstein's creations. The same applies to the other so-called absolute values. Of what value is truth that is not true of something, or goodness that is good for nothing?

The ultimate measure and criterion of value is the mind of the valuer. Prof. Joad asks "whether push-pin is as good as poetry." The answer is No, it is better to the man that prefers push-pin to poetry. And his preference has the same validity as that of any minion of the Muses. In the infinite diversity of human tastes and desires, who may presume to decide that one is better than another simply on the ground of his own inclination to it? Is not the fact that he prefers it proof of its relativity?

But why all this eager advocacy of absolute values? One would have thought that the chief value of truth, beauty and goodness lay in our actual possession of them here and now, and not in their abstract existence in some hypothetical region beyond our senses. But "nature hath framed strange fellows in her time"; and philosophy seems to be a sort of mental rendezvous for them. The fact is, many of this type, when they cease to believe in the existence of the world that is laid down and described in all authoritative Christian charts as Heaven, are by no means satisfied that there ought not, in default, to be some other. The reason of their dissatisfaction is not, as it might appear, the value they set upon truth, beauty and goodness, but the value they set upon themselves. Like Squeers in *Nicholas Nickleby*, "who appeared to be in a perpetual state of astonishment at finding himself so respectable," they are lost in wonder at the cut and quality of their own intellectual rig-out. Is it possible that a being possessed of so much knowledge and culture, to whom a Platonic dialogue, a verse from Browning, a Bach fugue or "the line of a Sussex Dawn" is a familiar subject of contemplative delight—is it thinkable that such a paragon, "looking before and after like a god," should be finally snuffed out like a candle? Perish the thought! For the preservation and persistence of so choice a spirit there *must* be some celestial contrivance. And, as it happens, there is one, ready to hand, and excellently adapted to satisfy the egoistical yearnings of all immort-

ally-minded philosophers. I refer, of course, to Mysticism. Many passages in Prof. Joad's book leave us in no doubt that he finds in the claims of the mystics just the kind of evidence needed to help in establishing the credibility of this much desiderated "World of Values." There is nothing surprising in this. That the ravings of brain-sick visionaries should be enlisted in support of such a theory is only an instance of that ingenuity in adapting one absurdity to another which has signalized philosophers in all ages.

It has been said that "no man is the wiser for his learning"; and the truth of the saying is in no case better exemplified than in that of the philosopher. When the subject of our study is essentially futile, our erudition and our folly are merely synonymous, and we become only more foolish as we became more learned. Mankind has never been the better or wiser for all the speculations and meditations of philosophers and mystics from Plato and Plotinus to ex-Dean Inge and Prof. Joad. Such assumptions of superior knowledge are often only a manifestation of the deep-seated egoism which characterizes certain minds that would fain believe that they are in some way marked out to know more and deserve more than their fellows.

A. YATES

Two "Infidels"

TENNYSON called Omar Khayyam a "large infidel," and spoke of Fitzgerald's translation as "done divinely well." Swinburne has said of Fitzgerald that "His daring genius gave Omar Khayyam a place for ever among the greatest English poets."

Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet and astronomer, who excelled in two opposite directions, was born in the latter half of the eleventh century, and died within the first quarter of the twelfth century. He was a very wise man. He saw through the masks and shows of things. He understood what the prizes of ambition, and the blessings of wealth, really are. He smiled at titles and office. He preferred a life of obscurity—and usefulness. "The greatest boon you can confer on me," he said to a friendly Vizier, "is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread the advantages of science, and pray for your long life and prosperity." And the friendly Vizier granted him a yearly pension from the treasury of Naishapur. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he went to Merv, and was one of the eight learned men chosen by that potentate to reform the calendar; which was done in a way that won the praise of Gibbon, who declares that the Jalali era thus arranged was "a computation of time which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style." Omar was also the author of some astronomical tables, and a treatise of his on Algebra was translated into French in the nineteenth century.

"Khayyam" signifies a Tentmaker. Omar's original trade was therefore the same as St. Paul's. But what a difference between the two men! St. Paul would have been shocked at Omar's levity and profanity, and Omar would have laughed at St. Paul's fanaticism and solemnity.

Omar had the double brain of a man of science and a poet. He was master of all the learning of his time; and he also rejoiced in the sunshine and gazed with bent brows on the solemn mystery of the star-lit night—he loved music, and flowers, and the beauty of woman, and all other loveliness—and while he could regale himself with simple bread and cheese, he would wash it down with draughts of the wine which the Prophet forbade, for the generous liquor gave him a finer exhilaration than he (or others) had ever gained from the disputes of all the religions of the world over the secrets of the Unknowable. With the orthodox he was therefore something of an outcast. But he lived his own life and was glad, and he thought of death without fear. "My tomb," he said, "shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it." And so indeed it happened. For he was

buried just outside a garden, the trees of which spread their boughs over the wall and dropped their flowers upon his tomb.

Omar's rich brain distilled hundreds of quatrains full of poetry, reflection, and scepticism. He sang a good deal of wine, but that was doubtless to some extent symbolic of the joy of life which religion challenged. The Persian poet, like the Scotch poet, probably sang far more than he drank of the forbidden stuff. Those who fancy Burns was nearly always drunk, forget his large output of verse, in addition to his daily work as farmer or exciseman; and also that he was dead at thirty-seven. Omar lived much longer, and he kept his head for his scientific labours. There is such a thing as taking a poet's utterances as if he spoke on affidavit. Even pious Martin Luther burst out with:—

Who loves not wine, woman, and song,
He is a fool his whole life long.

But we must not infer that he spent his time in singing, drinking, and fornicating.

The scepticism of Omar was something more than negative. It was passionate and aggressive. He did not float luxuriously between this world and the next, as Fitzgerald says, on the wings of a poetical expression. He was too honest for that. "Having failed," as Fitzgerald says again, "of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but This, he set about making the most of it; preferring rather to soothe his Soul through the Senses into Acquiescence with Things as he saw them, than to perplex it with a vain disquietude after what they *might* be." Nothing could be finer than the way, for instance, in which Omar turns upon the God who demands man's absolute worship and obedience, and claims the right to punish him for the faults which result from the action of his Creator:—

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid,
Pure gold for what he lent us dross allay'd—
Sue for a debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Eumesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

O Thou, who Man of baser earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

That last line is one of those superb audacities that bring light to the eyes and send the blood coursing swiftly through his veins. Only a Master could have written it. And it appears to be as much Fitzgerald's as Omar's.

Magnificent, also, is the quatrain in which the Persian poet, more than seven hundred years before Darwin, expressed the unalterable course of nature and the futility of prayer:—

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it.

Things are what they are, and will be what they will be. Man may strut and boast, and talk of miracles, and believe, or affect to believe, that some power in nature or behind it will do his behests or fulfil his desires, but in the end he has to bow to the inevitable. Wiser are those who "let determined things to destiny hold unbewailed their way." And yet—and yet—the human heart cries out against the cruelties of the world, and pictures something saner and sweeter. Omar himself exclaims:—

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

But this is only a dream, and Omar knew it perfectly well. Here on earth, not elsewhere, we must find our paradise, or at least our consolations; and the greatest of

these is love—as the other Tentmaker said in a different connexion :—

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the own,
Where name of slave and Sultan is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmud on his golden Throne!

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Food and shelter and love—these, after all, are the great primary things of life. They take a thousand forms, but at bottom they are all of one substance. And nobody ever knew this better than Omar.

The quatrains of Omar Khayyam, anticipating every phase of modern scepticism, were naturally never popular in his own country. They were translated into French in the first half of last century. Not long afterwards they were taken in hand by Edward Fitzgerald, who was a true poet, without initiative. His genius and Omar's may be said to have fused together. The hundreds of quatrains took final and perfect shape in English as a hundred and one; the more diffuse Omar was tightened up into the glorious terseness of Fitzgerald; and the result is a poem, only four hundred and four lines in length, but pure gold from first to last—a splendid and imperishable thing.

I have myself known Omar-Fitzgerald, or Fitzgerald-Omar, ever since 1877, when a scarce copy of the *Rubāiyāt* was lent by Bertram Dobell the bookseller to James Thomson the poet, who copied the whole volume out in a notebook, which he in turn lent me so that I might copy it out too. I have my copy by me still. I would not change it for the most sumptuous book in the world.

I have called Omar and Fitzgerald two "infidels." It is abundantly clear to me that the Englishman was as sceptical as the Persian. I see it in the loving working workmanship of the so-called translation, as I see it in dozens of Fitzgerald's letters, which have taken their place already among the classics of English literature. And it is only a hundred years this thirty-first of March since Edward Fitzgerald was born.

(Reprinted) G. W. FOOTE

Correspondence

"NAZI" EDUCATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—G. H. Taylor's article on "Nazi 'Education'" ("Freem." 17-11-'40)—as is usual with him—was informative and useful; but I venture to make a comment, although somewhat late.

On reading the article, superficial readers—if any such there be—might fail to realise how this "Education," and other features of Hitlerism, are the direct product resulting from *all* the previous conditions. (In accordance with No. 1 of the three principles of Scientific Atheist Philosophy.)

For years before 1914 Germany was a "Totalitarian" State in fact; although the word was not in use. This State Totalitarianism was based upon, or justified by, Hegelian Idealism; and a few years have passed since first I declared that Hegel has done as much harm to human progress as has the name of Jesus Christ. German "civilisation" (Kultur) was to dominate the world: World Dominion or Downfall. Schools, Colleges, Universities, Churches, etc., all had their allotted part in working for that aim. Although the strain on them was very heavy, the bulk of Germans accepted, and believed in, the ultimate triumph of their "Kultur." As far as I know—prior to 1914—Treitschke, Bernhardt and Clausewitz, all taught the ruthless use of force against an enemy—civilian as well as military. These, among others, were characteristics of Germany before 1914; and many generations were thus moulded. Add to this the conditions and events of 1919-1931 and 1931-1939, and it is not difficult to understand how "Hitlerism" emerged from the sequence of happenings.

One difference is that—prior to 1918—Christianism, both Lutheran and Vatican, had a recognised and important place in this Kultur of Force. Possibly, when he attacked Christianism, Hitler made a big mistake—with future "grave" results for himself! When leading British Christians admired Mussolini and Franco; Hitler might have done better for himself by making the Pair a Trinity.

I write this, fully aware of the life-or-death struggle in which we are involved; but I feel sure that we can best contribute to victory in the war, and to a peace settlement favourable to human progress and happiness, by *understanding all the forces* that have operated, and are operating, in Europe and the world.

I cannot close without saying that I have lived and worked, in different parts of the world, with Germans, as with others; and—in spite of their "Kultur"—I found them, in the main, to be much the same as other humans and to vary, just as other humans do. Those who look at world happenings in the light of a Scientific Philosophy, can understand how we—as a people—have been a contributory factor in the sequence of events. Those who are wise, 'tis said, learn from experience: let us see to it that we do. *La Verité oblige.*—I am, etc.,

ATHOSO ZENOO.

Obituary

JACOB AND RITA MEERLOO.

WE deeply regret to announce the death of Jacob and Rita Meerloo, which took place through enemy action on December the 8th. Jacob Meerloo was too unwell to proceed to his shelter during an air raid, and his wife Rita stayed with him in the house, which received a direct hit from a bomb and both were killed. They were sincere Freethinkers with a wide circle of friends. Jacob Meerloo occasionally exercised his pen in literature, his "Hyde Park Forum" being perhaps the best known of his efforts. The remains were interred in the Camberwell New Cemetery on December 17th, when, before relatives and friends, a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S. We offer sincerest sympathy to the surviving daughter Leah who, besides losing both parents, went through what must have been an experience of terror with a girl friend, both of whom were rescued by mere chance after being imprisoned in a wrecked shelter for 36 hours.

R. H. R.

JAMES DANIEL STEVENS.

THE death has occurred at the age of 70 of another member of the pioneer group of Johannesburg freethinkers. Mr. Stevens was the energetic and capable secretary of the old South African Rationalist Association, which numbered amongst its executive such well-known "saints" as Messrs. Torrente, Beer, Horwitz, Jenkins, Frank Latham and Strauss, most of whom have now, alas, joined the great majority.

While it lasted our Rationalist Association excited lively discussions and broke new ground in a hitherto untouched area for free-thought. Its meetings in the now demolished Tivoli Theatre were crowded and animated, and the speakers fearless and earnest in the presentation of their, at the time, decidedly risky views. Quiet, unobtrusive and industrious, Mr. Stevens willingly carried the burden of organisation upon his shoulders and, during interludes, delighted audiences with pianoforte renderings of classical music. He was very well read and deeply interested in astronomy, which bent he was fortunately able to cultivate to the full during the years since his retirement from Municipal service. When the S.A. Rationalist Association lapsed, he acted for some time as Hon. Secretary of the London R.P.A.

A secular service was conducted by the undersigned in the presence of relatives and friends, at the Braamfontein Crematorium on the 13th November.

E. A. McDONALD.

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