

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWES AND OPINIONS

### Secularism and Religion

I HAVE been looking through a batch of cuttings, ranging over several months, preparatory to a "clean-up." And, not for the first time I have been struck with the difficulty exponents of religion have in fairly stating the case against them. This cannot be due to want of understanding, for very many of those names that lie before me are the names of men who may lay claim to a fair measure of intelligence, even if they cannot truthfully be called men of genius. The policy of misrepresentation, or misstatement, may have paid when unbelievers were scarce and heretical ideas were only whispered. But to-day the risk of exposure is great. It is a far better plan to put an opponent's case as strongly as possible and then show its weakness. That method may be described as the art of killing with kindness. In a lengthy controversial life I have found very few servants of the Lord who could survive this treatment properly administered.

For example: one of the things that caught my attention was the report of an address given by the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Matthews. It is from the issue of the "Church Times" for October 22. He says:—

"Secularists maintain that religion should be kept out of politics; that religion is a man's private affair, and that the Church should be prevented from setting up a community within a community."

The first part of this is correct; the second is a foolish misstatement. It is because religion in the modern State must be a private affair (not that its operations affect the individual only), that the Secularist says the only just and sensible way is to permit each citizen to select whatever religion he or she chooses. There are so many gods that if a man or woman thinks he must have a god he ought to be able to find what he desires in the motley crowd of gods around him, and if even among this crowd he cannot find a god that suits him, then he should have the liberty to make one "after his own heart." If he does not care to launch a new god on an already crowded and falling market, then he should be at liberty to say: "Well, I don't believe exactly in a God, but I do think there may exist a kind-of-a-sort-of-something that is a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-manager-of-the-universe.

That is what the Secularist means by saying that religion is a man's own private affair. And it is the

plan we adopt in many situations. It leaves a man individually free while still recognising his organic connection with the human group. A man may eat or drink whatever he pleases within his own house, but he may not take poison with the intention of committing suicide. At that point his existence as a member of a group comes into existence. He may also do as he pleases within his own house, but he may not act so as to endanger the life of his wife or children. He may not get drunk on the public highway, at least to the extent of becoming a source of annoyance or danger to his fellow citizens. I may also remind Dr. Matthews that if a Christian parent has a sick child and refuses to call in a doctor—thus carrying out the teaching of the New Testament—if the child dies the parent or guardian may find himself compelled to answer a charge of manslaughter.

I hope I have made the Secularist position clear. If Dr. Matthews had shown the rather un-Christian ambition to understand what his opponents really believed, ten minutes walk from St. Paul's would have brought him to the office of the "Freethinker" and the necessary enlightenment would have been his. But that might have spoiled his sermon, and no one may correct him while he is in the pulpit; I do not think he is the type of man who dares much on the open forum. The Dean has a genius for silence—in some directions.

The second comment of Dr. Matthews—that Secularism forbids the creation of a community within a community, is simply not true. Secularism says exactly the reverse. A religious community should have the same right to exist that a secular community or society has. But having given the religious body the same civil rights that are enjoyed by other communities, the State should have no further concern with it than it has with other bodies. It is at this point the anti-social quality of Christianity exhibits itself. It denies that a non-Christian society should exist on the same terms as Christian societies. That is one reason why all over the world and throughout the ages, sooner or later, the State has had to exert control over Christian activities. Christianity began as a non-social organisation; it proceeded by claiming the right to rule the State. As a paid official of the State Church Dean Matthews should be acquainted with these phases of Church history.

### Religion and Life

Another item among my scraps is one I agree with although I differ from the writer as to his conclusions. This comes from the "Church Times" of October 22, 1941:—

"Religious education is not prominently, or even importantly a matter of knowledge. Efforts have been made for so many years to impart religious knowledge, and no increase in the dose is to do much towards making people religious. Religious knowledge is not the monopoly of religious people. In fact, religious people sometimes discover to their discomfort that the opponents of religion are better informed than they are."

My first difference is mainly one of terms. No one can impart *religious* knowledge, for no such thing exists. There is only a knowledge about religion, and that is a very different thing. There is, indeed, no such thing as religious education. There is only *instruction* in religion. And the distinction is important. Of course a measure of education accompanies religion, but to the good teacher education is more important than instruction. In religion instruction holds the field, and education is suspect. Religion is concerned with establishing set beliefs, the importance of forms, the value of ceremonies. What is called a religious education is much on the level of the education a parrot receives when it is taught to mimic human speech.

I find this endorsed, unconsciously, by the writer I am quoting. He says:—

“Religious education for the next thirty years should assume as its special task the bringing up the parents of the future in the knowledge and worship of God.”

I think “the knowledge of God” may be taken as sarcasm, for that knowledge is exactly nothing. What is called a knowledge of God is nothing better or higher than mere moods that are of service to the churches. What the churches call a knowledge of God has just about as much right to be called by that name as a man has to apply for a medical diploma because he has a pain in the stomach. But I do agree that the dependance of the new generation for a knowledge of God will entirely depend upon the parents or teachers if the parents have no hand in the business. The next generation must get its knowledge of God before it is old enough to weigh evidence or criticise statements. It must be educated into religion in the way that a mother cat teaches its kittens to get ready for a knowledge of mice. If one could revive a cat and its kittens of the time of Elizabeth, we should find it behaving just as cats and kittens behave to-day. The training of a kitten and a Christian—so far as a priest may have his way—is much on the same level.

The principle involved here is the one expressed when we learn that A. belongs to a Roman Catholic family, B. to a Protestant family, C. to a Jewish family, and so on. When we know the family forebears, we know the product—unless someone or something has dragged the child out of the orbit of their influence. But note that this applies almost entirely to religion. If we are told that a man is an Italian, a Russian, a Frenchman or an Englishman, that will tell us nothing of his religion, it will give us little insight into what is his particular bent in art or science or literature.

I think that if I were editor of the “Church Times” I should be just a little shy of informing the world that the only sure way of getting Christians is to breed them.

### Unbelievers and Religion

If it is possible, I more than agree with the writer's statement that knowledge of religion is not a monopoly of believers. I would go further and say that the staunch believer has no *knowledge* of the origin or of the nature of religion at all. And of all the men who profess belief in religion, the honest clergyman knows least. This class is well informed in what they are supposed to believe, in the customs and ceremonies that go with religion, but what else are they informed about? Vaguely they are aware that there are a number of men in all parts of the world who

make collections of religious beliefs, as other men do of birds, or worms, or as the pathologist collects the vagaries of the human mind. These men know that all the beliefs that go to make up any of the established ideas of the religious world, the virgin births, the sacrificed God, the heavens and hells, commence in the fear and ignorance of man. But what does the average believing Christian know about these things? Try him and note the result.

This knowledge concerning religion may with the unbeliever be imperfect, but at least he has the substance of the truth. This knowledge may be acquired casually, he may not know all the pros and cons concerning the alleged historicity of Jesus Christ; he may not know intimately the long tale of Christian miracles, and he may argue his case very badly, but at least he has not been *bred* to perform certain antics or the utterance of certain associated sounds, at least he has entered the world of understanding and left that of mere echoes. He has taken charge of his own mental salvation and for a Christian to do that is a sheer impossibility. The Christian advertises to the world the information that he is an unfortunate, foolish and helpless specimen of humanity—without God. He may be, to some extent, right in his self-analysis, but why should he boast of these things?

I should be very pleased indeed if, in the future, one could count on meeting believers in religion who really kept themselves abreast with what modern science has to say about their beliefs. At present the fabled hunt of the Greek philosopher for an honest man is child's play compared with finding a Christian who will meet a Freethinker with modern explanations of religion as the basis of the discussion. After many, many years of hunting I have failed to find one. The certain thing is that the genuine believer in religion—historical religion, mark you, not the diluted mixture of half understood science, or of wishy-washy ethical aspirations, and spurious philosophy—can only retain his belief by shutting his eyes to the research and discoveries of the past hundred years.

About ten years ago I was invited to address a meeting of young men and women in one of the lecture rooms of Mansfield College, Oxford. The meeting was interesting and I may sum up much of what I have been saying by repeating what I then said.

Most believers in religion do not wish to know what can be said against their beliefs, but only what can be said for them. If they do happen to desire information about Atheism they go to a parson, or to someone who is a parson in outlook, and in either case they are acting as one who applies to a brewer for information as to what may be said on behalf of total abstinence. As a consequence of seeking illumination in this way, the knowledge of the ordinary layman about religion is of little value. He does not understand religion because he does not know what can be said against it. In a world where all things are related, to know only one term of a relation is not to know anything.

This state of affairs gives the Atheist a quite unfair advantage; for while the Atheist knows a great deal about religion, and has in the majority of cases been himself a believer, the Theist knows little of what can be said against Atheism. This is not fair fighting; and as my sympathies are usually with the bottom dog, I desire to do something that will place matters on a better footing. The believer is fighting with one hand behind him; he is reduced to butting with a portion of his anatomy that should be placed to better uses.

He is very heavily handicapped, and I have seen so many left mangled on the field because they would try to fight machine-guns with bows and arrows, that my endeavour is to see that the Theist is better equipped, at least to the extent of knowing the kind of case he has to combat.

It is in the same spirit that I have done my best for Dean Matthews and the editor of the "Church Times." Yet I do not expect that Dean Matthews will feel thankful for my helping him to understand the teachings of Secularism, nor do I expect the editor of the "Church Times" to say "Thank you" for the support I have given him in his opinion that "unbelievers" are likely to be better informed about religion than the believer, and that if Christianity is to be preserved, what is most needed is that parents shall bring up their children as believers, and, by inference, keep them quite free from *understanding* religion in either the theological or the anthropological sense. If either feel thankful I am certain that the thanks will not be publicly expressed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### ARSON AND ITS SANGUINARY SEQUEL IN THE REICH

JOHN GUNTHER, the well-known publicist, presented the reading public with a sparkling volume entitled "Inside Europe," almost on the eve of the War. This work (Hamish Hamilton, 1939) proved popular and twenty impressions were printed in little over a year. A comprehensive survey of European affairs, it tends to revive Carlyle's great man theory, a doctrine so mercilessly castigated by Herbert Spencer in his brilliant "Study of Sociology." Assuredly, no one disputes the potent influence of outstanding personalities in moulding the activities of mankind. Still, the most gifted men are themselves the product of heredity and environment and, had the social and economic circumstances which determined their birth and upbringing been different, their activities might have taken quite other forms.

That remarkable personalities such as Lenin, Marx and Bismarck, among others, have proved powerful in shaping thought and action is obvious. Also, it is arguable that Spencer himself was a very striking example of a scientific philosopher who deeply impressed intellectual Europe and America, as well as the cultured classes of India, China and Japan. Nevertheless, Spencer's evolutionary message was itself the product of the studies, reflections and discoveries of preceding generations. Concepts of purely natural causation and physical development were widely entertained by the more thoughtful. Thus, the teachings and researches of Lyell, Darwin, Haeckel, Huxley and their many eminent contemporaries made possible the triumph of the evolutionary principle in their own lifetime, and thus made it a practically indispensable part of the intellectual life of civilised mankind.

Yet Gunther is only too well warranted in claiming that: "This is the age of great dictatorial leaders; millions depend for life or death on the will of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin. Never have politics been so vital and dynamic as to-day, and pervasively obtrusive in non-political affairs. . . . What fictional drama can compare with the dramatic reality of Mussolini's career? What books in the realm of art have had the sale and influence of Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'? Who is a greater engineer than Stalin?"

Gunther's description of Hitler and his German victims in the blood-bath of June 30, 1934, heralded by the Nazi burning of the Reichstag in 1933 is distinctly vivid. It seemed almost providential that on the eve of the elections that confirmed Hitler's

seizure of the Chancellorship that the Berlin Parliament was destroyed by fire. This act of incendiarism, and it was evidently nothing else, proved fatal to the remnants of the Weimar Republic. It also pronounced the extinction of all that was progressive in Germany, and assured the Nazi triumph at the polls, with the establishment of State despotism.

Uncertain concerning the result of the impending elections, the Hitlerites first made an abortive attack on the Communist headquarters and then arrested the 100 Communist deputies to the Chamber. A plot to cause an insurrection of a Communist character was conveniently discovered and exposed. Naturally, the public was bewildered and "Hitler was able to manoeuvre himself to power, immutably, unshakably."

The opening proceedings of the trial of the men accused of arson were a complete travesty of justice. Suspiciously enough, the alleged offenders were said to have entered and escaped from the burning building by means of a tunnel leading to the residence of the then Speaker of the Reichstag, the saintly Goering himself. Gunther was present and reported the trials both in Leipzig and Berlin. Owing to the pressure of outside opinion, the Court was later compelled to assume at least a semblance of judicial impartiality. Gunther concluded that at the outset of the inquiry the Court presumed the guilt of the defendants, and that the trial would be brief. Consequently, the prosecution's case was not nearly so skilfully fabricated as it might have been. A Balkan revolutionary, Dimitrov, was one of the accused. But the opening stages of the trial were so mismanaged by the authorities that glaring instances of official falsification, contradiction and inconsistency unnerved the normally tough Teutonic expert witnesses for the prosecution.

Dimitrov soon threw the prosecution on to the defensive. So apt were his observations that Goering reddened with shame in open Court. Gunther reports that: "When a witness could not be found, he (Dimitrov) asked, 'Have you looked for him in a concentration camp?' When the judge rebuked him for making communist propaganda, Dimitrov pointed to Goering—on the witness stand—and said with a subtle combination of impudence and perfect courtesy: 'But, he's making National Socialist propaganda.' No one who saw him will ever forget Dimitrov pointing to Lubbe [a half-demented fanatic arrested in the burning Reichstag] and exclaiming in his picturesque Balkan German: 'This miserable Faust! Who is his Mephistopheles?' Nor the climax to his final speech when, imperturbable as ever, with the executioner's axe or Goering's private vengeance facing him, he demanded of the court 'compensation for his wasted time.'"

In the light of the evidence elicited at the trial the Court had no alternative save the acquittal of the accused revolutionaries. Lubbe appears to have caused very minor fires and was convicted and decapitated, and the extent to which this feeble-minded creature was a tool of the Nazis died with him. Karl Ernst, a leading Nazi, subsequently asserted that he and two confederates set fire to the Reichstag, but these alleged incendiaries all perished in the carnage of June, 1934, and silence on the subject set in.

The purge followed the fire. Dissension had become acute between the S.A., Hitler's Brown Shirts, then commanded by Hitler's bosom friend, Roehm, and the Reichswehr, the regular army. The Führer was constrained to choose one force or the other and he decided in favour of the Reichswehr. This resolve necessitated the disbandment of the competing body,

with the sequel of the sanguinary purge of June, 30, which so shocked the conscience of the outside world.

Hitler's subordinates were distracted by internal animosities. Strivings for priority and personal antagonism were rife. Hitler himself seems to have commanded general adherence as the acknowledged leader, but the antagonism of the minor officials towards their adversaries grew daily more deadly. Venomous hatreds within a party in which discipline was deemed imperative, and in which terror was acclaimed as a moral instrument for success, appears to have rendered the impending slaughter inevitable.

According to Hitler, the murders—for such they were—numbered 77. But, Gunther estimates that the total of those that perished reached 250 if not 300. Generals Schleicher, Kahr and Bredow, Papen's private secretaries, and Willi Schmidt were all despatched. Roehm, Heines and others were slain and von Papen himself very narrowly escaped death. Brüning, a former Chancellor, was marked for slaughter and just saved his life by flight.

Schleicher's murder was deeply resented by many leading officers in the Reichswehr and they demanded an explanation. The Nazis hesitated. But the documents concerning the matter, then in Himmler's hands, for some unknown reason passed into the possession of the Reichswehr. Himmler endeavoured to regain them but failed. Gunther intimates that: "A group of 400 Reichswehr officers met in a semi-public ceremony, with the old Field-Marshal, von Mackensen, in the chair, and drank a toast to Schleicher's memory, inscribing his name with that of Bredow in the regimental honour-roll. This frightened the Nazis. A hush-hush meeting was called by Goering . . . at which it is believed, Goering confessed that Schleicher's death, like that of Willi Schmidt, was a mistake."

Hitler, however, had lessened the discontent in the Reichswehr by his destruction of the rival Brown Shirts. Certainly, several of the murdered men were very sinister in character, and their elimination was no moral loss. But the purge shattered the illusion of Nazi solidarity, with an undeviating loyalty among party members, or even to Hitler. Also, apart from the horrible nature of the purge it proved fatal to any expression of democratic sentiment that had survived in Germany.

There were several hairbreadth escapes from the holocaust. English citizens present in Germany assisted the escape of children whose parents had perished in the purge. It is surmised that the blood-bath may have hastened Hindenburg's decease. The aged President passed away in the succeeding August, yet he sent a message of congratulation to Hitler and Goering when he received tidings of the tragedy.

When Hindenburg died, to the best informed publicists in Germany the moment appeared very critical. What attitude would the Army adopt? Who would succeed to the Presidency or Chancellorship? These questions were on every lip. But Hitler had already made his peace with the Reichswehr and, on the very day of Hindenburg's death, Blomberg had imposed a solemn oath of life-long fidelity to Hitler on every Reichswehr garrison, and all those officers who had absented themselves from the oath-taking were compelled to solemnly subscribe on their return to duty. As for the other problem, Hitler sagaciously solved that by combining the functions of President and Chancellor. With Hindenburg's end the risk of the Führer's dismissal by a President was removed. Adolf was now supreme. As Gunther pertinently remarks: "He could only dismiss himself. Only God could remove him now. And God, he claimed, was on his side."

T. F. PALMER.

## THE TESTIMONY OF TACITUS CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

### INTRODUCTION

CAIUS CORNELIUS TACITUS was a Roman historian of great celebrity, whose birth occurred about A.D. 60 at a spot now unknown. As regards rank and education he enjoyed some advantages. In the course of his career he practised successfully at the Bar, became a praetor in A.D. 88, and got a substitutionary consulate in A.D. 97. The date and place of his death are not recorded, but his departure is believed to have been posterior to that of the Emperor Trajan, which occurred in A.D. 117. Tacitus held Republican principles. His writings are those of a man with a deep mind and an elevated character. Our inquiry concerns the famous passage which in the 15th book of his "Annals" refers to Christ and the early Christians. Chapters 38 to 45 of that book describe a great fire at Rome and certain events subsequent to, yet connected with it. These chapters occupy only five pages of the edition here used.\* The writer says that the fire started on July 19 in the consular year of C. Lecanius and M. Licinius, and that the other things occurred during the same statutory period. This, according to Liebenham,† equates with the year 64 of our era; and also with the tenth year of Nero's reign, which began October 13, A.D. 54. At the beginning of chapter 38, Tacitus says that whether the fire was due to chance or to crime on the part of Nero is uncertain. In chapters 39 and 43, he mentions some help, and promises of help, given by Nero to the suffering survivors of the disaster. Then, at the beginning of chapter 44, he records some religious ceremonies executed to propitiate the gods, but adds that in spite of all which was being done to allay it, a suspicion that the fire had been ordered still persisted. Thereupon follows the passage containing the aforesaid testimony. To facilitate analysis the best plan is to divide this piece into sections, giving in every case the original text with a proposed translation. On the last point, however, it is well to observe that immoderate love of brevity often led Tacitus to write obscurely. This has caused most of his translators to make their versions literary rather than literal; but the importance of the present matter determines me to leave purity of idiom out of account and to render the text as closely as possible, in order that readers unskilled in Latin may be enabled to follow the construction of the whole passage.‡

### PART FIRST

1. Original and translation of the five sections composing the passage. Also such annotations upon these parts as appear to be required.

### SECTION FIRST

Ergo abolendo rumori  
Nero subdidit reos et quae-  
sitissimis poenis adfecit  
quos per flagitia invisos,  
vulgus Christianos adpella-  
bat.

Therefore, for abolishing  
the rumour Nero counter-  
feited as the criminals, and  
with the most exquisite  
penalties afflicted, those,  
whom hated on account of  
shameful offences, the com-  
monalty was naming the  
Christians.

The word *flagitia*, here rendered "shameful offences," means in general "scandalous acts," and, in particular, "sexual misconduct," such as adultery, rape, sodomy and so forth. Tacitus himself (Germania XII.) distinguishes between *flagitia* and *scelera*, taking the former in the above sense and the latter to signify any sort of crime. It is remarkable that the early Christians were often charged with *flagitia*. Pliny the younger, an eminent man and a close friend of Tacitus, mentions *flagitia* as cohering to the Christian name, and does this in an epistle to the Emperor Trajan. Cardinal Bellarmine declares that the nocturnal vigils of the Church were abandoned because, among other reasons, "*flagitia* were not rarely committed." (*De*

\* C. Cornelii Taceti Quoad Extant Ex Fide Optimorum Librorum Accurate Recensuit C. H. Weise, xxx. Lipsiae, xxx. 1882.

† Fasti Consulares Imperii Romani, xx. Willi Liebenham xx. Bonn. xx. 1910.

‡ As regards the translation, the words italicised are not in the text but implied by it.

*Jejunis*). It is noteworthy that, although Tacitus regards the charge of arson as false, he accepts the charge of *flagitia* as true.

There is a difficulty about the relation of the accused to their alleged name. It is common enough for associations of malefactors to acquire opprobrious designations, "the garroters," "the moonlighters" and "the gangsters," being familiar examples. In the early days of Tacitus, and even before his time, Palestine was infested with revolutionary ruffians named *sicarii*, or "daggersmen," from their favourite weapon. In the above cases the characteristic misdeeds of the various parties got them their respective names, whereas the name *Christianos* applied to the persons now in question does not describe their conduct, but their religious persuasion, which in the next section is affirmed to have originated from a man named Christ. Critics who contend that the present chapter has been tampered with by an interpolator would be likely to suggest that *Christianos* was substituted for some name which described the behaviour attributed to the persons concerned, this being done with the object of introducing the testimony to Christ's existence given immediately after the substitution. But, as will be seen in due course, certain later allusions occurring in the passage contradict that hypothesis.

#### SECTION SECOND

Actor nominis eius  
Christus, Tiberio imperi-  
tante, per procuratorem  
Pontium Pilatum supplicio  
adfectus erat. Repressaque  
in praesens exitiabilis super-  
stitio rursus erumpebat, non  
modum per Judæam, origi-  
nem eius mali, sed per  
urbem etiam quo cuncta  
undique atroxia aut pud-  
enda confluent celebran-  
turque.

The author of this name, Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, by the procurator Pontius Pilate, with punishment had been affected. Repressed also at the time, the destructive superstition was again breaking forth, not only through Judæa, origin of that evil, but through the city Rome whither from every side all things atrocious and to be ashamed of flow together and are honoured.

The strangest feature of this section is that although the writer manifests an utter detestation of Christianity, he does not vilify the Christians by asserting their founder to have suffered crucifixion, which the Greeks and Romans regarded as the most appalling mark of infamy possible for a criminal. The Pauline Epistles testify that the early Christians met with opposition due to the ignominious nature of the death attributed to their master. The apostle mentions "the stumbling block of the cross"; and declares, "We preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, unto Gentiles foolishness"; but with triumph he exclaims, "Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 23; Gal. v. 11, vi. 19). (R.V.)

The omission of Tacitus to say that Christ was crucified is all the more remarkable because, subsequently in the passage, he says that on the present occasion some of the Christians were "affixed to crosses." It is also noticeable that, when designating Christ's punishment, Tacitus does not use the phrase *capitalis poena*, which was current at his day,§ but employs the older term *supplicium*, which, although it often means capital punishment, does not mean this exclusively, as is evident from the works of Cicero and other authors.

In concluding this section I would point out that, when specifying the originator of the Christians, Tacitus does not mention his name "Jesus," but only his title "Christ"; and that he makes no reference to any claim of divinity made by this person himself, or made for him by his followers. The word "Christ" means "Messiah." Hence it is very probable that Tacitus believed Pilate to have punished Jesus for making Messianic pretensions which, because the principal one was kingship, were incompatible with the authority of the Romans over Palestine. The strenuous efforts of the Four Evangelists to exonerate Jesus from the suspicion of revolutionary designs is a fact no less striking than suggestive.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

## EQUALITY

"Variety is the spice of life."—COWPER.

"Quot hourines, tot sententiæ."—TERENCE.

VAUVENARGUES, the French moralist of the 18th century, asserted that "It is a false statement that equality is a natural law. Nature has made nothing equal. Its supreme law is subordination and dependence." Poor Vauvenargues! Throughout his life he suffered ill health and poverty. The fact that he was a Marquis availed him little, and ill luck dogged his footsteps until he died of lung trouble at the early age of 32. As George Eliot remarked in her novel, "Amos Barton," "courageous thoughts will not pay your baker's bill, and fortitude is nowhere considered legal tender for beef." Vauvenargues had much cause to consider the problem of equality.

But what do we mean when we talk of equality? The possibility of having our property, power or position tampered with in a vague, undefined manner, causes considerable apprehension, and we react accordingly as realisation seems near or remote.

Edward Bellamy, in his novel, "Looking Backward," describes with utmost confidence and ability the complete happiness of all the citizens in his State who live contentedly on equality of "income." Coupons took the place of money.

It is thought that in matters concerning the law we have equality for all classes of the community. But doubt is expressed by many people who are convinced that there is "one law for the rich and one for the poor." In other words, the poor man is almost certain to get his deserts, whereas the rich man may escape the maximum penalty because of his ability to obtain expert and specialised knowledge and assistance on intricate points of law irrespective of cost.

That knowledge is a power to be reckoned with is becoming increasingly evident, and most people are agreed that equality in education is of great importance. Equality of rights and equality of privileges in the affairs of citizenship are among the bulwarks of Democracy.

Religious folk are exalted by the statement that we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord! These words cause an attitude of mind in the oppressed, the meek and the lowly which facilitates the work and increases the power of ecclesiastical and secular authority. Equal in the eyes of the Lord! "Agreed," says Authority, adding in an undertone, "but not in our eyes!" Not for the meek the adventure of the pioneer and agitator. The latter calls for that bold, courageous and aggressive spirit which has blazed so many trails for the cause of progress.

As children, many readers may recall how painstakingly our parents taught us to share equally—whatever came our way—with our brothers and sisters, and on no account to harbour selfish thoughts. There is a story of a little boy who thought that this virtue should not be restricted to the home circle. Or maybe he had neither brothers nor sisters. One evening, whilst having his supper of bread and milk, he saw a poor, half-starved child peering through the window and eyeing longingly the steaming and wholesome meal. The vagrant was invited indoors and enjoyed an equal share. The parents of this little hero did not approve of this idea of share and share alike, which must have caused confusion in the mind of the boy because of the check to his generous impulse.

In the semi-communal life of the Army, sharing equally amongst the rank and file is strictly observed, and woe betide anyone who attempts to appropriate more than his share. In wartime the State controls the price and distribution of much foodstuff and sees that everyone gets an equal share (more or less). In peacetime this problem does not cause so much concern.

The lack of any semblance of equality in the distribution of wealth has caused much discontent and suffering in many countries. The struggle is again reflected in the conditions which prevail throughout the world to-day—with this difference: In peacetime the struggle was between individuals; now the fight is between nations—between the "haves and the have nots."

Vauvenargues said that "nature has made nothing equal." Very well. We shall not quarrel about that. What concerns us is the fact of not having "equality of opportunity." Given that, no one could grumble because he did not have the other fellow's chance! S. GORDON HOGG

§ See Suetonius, "Caesar," 48, and "Domitian," 4.

## ACID DROPS

OF all the clotted bosh we have ever read we must take the following from the closing words of a special article from Mr. Stanley B. James in the "Catholic Herald" of November 28. He is speaking of what he calls "The Entrance of God in His Own Person into History," and tells the world that, "That He entered into a particular race and nation and was loyal to its native traditions both defines and sanctifies patriotism. In becoming man Christ identified Himself with a special class. His choice of a mother who, though of royal descent, lived the life of a craftsman's wife, has a direct bearing on questions relating to work and the worker."

Consider. God might have got born into two races, or three races, or more races at the same time, and think of what a mix up that would have been! He identified himself with man, when he might have been half man and half elephant. He chose a woman for his mother when he might have done the trick completely and come without a mother as well as without a father. And he chose a craftsman's wife for his mother when most of us have to put up with any mother we can get. The more one examines modern religion, the more one is convinced that it "passes understanding."

We take it that some of the members of the Tunbridge Wells Town Council are in a bad way since they advocate opening meetings with prayer. It is true that the House of Commons has a chaplain who prays that God will endow members with wisdom and justice. But the need there is patent, and we have not heard that Tunbridge Wells Council is in as desperate a state.

The Rev. C. Hollis, preaching in the Kidderminster Grammar School on November 22, said that 70 per cent. of the men who fill up forms declaring themselves members of the Church of England did not know how to find their places in the prayer-book of the Church of England and were therefore using a "borrowed religion." That suggestion is a curious one. An English-born man or woman is, we believe, legally a member of the Church of England, although he may not be a baptised member. The two things are distinct and separate. An English-born subject has certain legal rights, and one of them is that of claiming the services of the Church. We know that certain clergymen will often refuse certain privileges to a man or woman because they are not baptised members, and some clergymen will refuse to remarry divorced persons. But we believe the parson is acting illegally. To paraphrase Mr. Hollis, that clergyman is borrowing his living and then refusing to carry out his duties.

There is another aspect to this charge of recruits to the borrowing a religion. It is, in the majority of cases, not true. That is, of course, not a cardinal offence where Christianity is concerned. But every soldier knows, every sailor knows, every airman knows, and every clergyman knows that a Church of England membership is thrust upon men and, we suppose, women on joining any of the Forces. When it comes to filling up the required form, and the recruit either does not know his legal rights or does not care what kind of a religious label is pasted, the statement that he belongs to the Church of England is not made voluntarily but suggested to him by the recruiting officer who not only suggests "C. of E.," but tells him roundly that he must have some religion. If the Church of England had placed to its credit only those who insisted on being written C. of E., there is not 25 per cent. of the men in the Forces who could be claimed members of the Established Church. We should have greater respect for any clergyman who insisted that no man should be written down a Christian at his unhelped request and if no sort of inconvenience appeared likely to follow a declaration of being opposed to all religions. If Mr. Hollis wishes to see honesty in the Army where religion is concerned, he should advocate perfect freedom of profession of religious belief. At present a recruit has a legal freedom that is abused in practice.

According to an item in the London "Evening News," prisoners at Cook County Gaol, Chicago, receive compulsory instruction in religion. We thought torture had been abolished in all civilised countries.

From the "Evening Standard" of November 26 we learn that the Archdeacon of Canberra (Australia) has just been acquitted on a charge of assault brought against him by another Christian resident of Canberra. The Archdeacon says that the duty of the Church is to make men manly, so we may assume that he was trying to further Christianise the man who brought the charge of assault against him.

We have not a very high opinion about the B.B.C. "Brains Trust," but we protest against its being accused of inciting people to serious thinking. This is what a Roman Catholic paper accuses it of, and as we have listened carefully several times, we have heard nothing that would lead to "dangerous thinking." What we have heard is a number of questions such as might be asked in any school with students of about twelve or thirteen, and answered very carefully so that too much thinking shall not be encouraged. The paper that lies before us charges the Brains Trust with having given vent to "pagan ideas" about marriage. That must have been an accidental slip into common sense. We feel sure that if the editor will protest to the B.B.C., such reckless attempts to make listeners think will promptly be stopped.

The other day the Russian radio reported that when a German prisoner was told that he would find Russia like home, he became very disheartened.

Rosenberg, the German "racial" expert with a Jewish name, has framed a plan for displacing the Bible in Germany. "Mein Kampf" is to take the place of the Bible in German Churches. The State Church is to be anti-Atheistic and one in which all German men and women, youths and girls "acknowledge God and his eternal works." The matter is interesting because, first it disproves the religious talk of Hitler and his gang being all Atheists—they are, as a matter of fact, mainly religious. Next it shows that in the attempt to enslave Germans perpetually the gang can find no better implement than religion, and thirdly, in establishing a National Church where only one form of religious belief is permitted, Hitler and his gang are pilfering the ideal of the Roman Church, and indeed, of every established Church in Christendom. The brutalities of Hitlerism should not blind intelligent people to these pregnant facts.

"Mein Kampf" is to be placed on every altar, and worshippers will acknowledge it as "the greatest of all documents," as it also "embodies the purest and truest ethics for the present and the future life." What a lack of originality there is about all this. The Christian Church said this many centuries ago of the Bible, and the Churches here are still proclaiming the same "religious truth." And minus the intensity of the bestial brutality displayed by Nazism. The German gang are now showing plainly their religious origin. A greater display of beastliness than the Church displayed is a matter of detail.

According to "Spanish News," published in London, some weeks ago Germany sent to its ally, General Franco, some films depicting the march of the German troops into Moscow. The picture had the Kremlin for a background. By accident some of these pictures gained publicity. We expect to hear of a similar effort showing the march of the German troops into London. One might as well go the whole hog and have done with it.

Somewhere in Scotland—the sender of the cutting forgot to send the town of publication—there is a newspaper called "Press and Journal." In the issue for November 17 it contains an up-to-date edition of the famous "Mons Angels" of the last war. In a public address at Edinburgh, a Lieut. Everett, R.N., had a "guardian angel," a real one. He said that "if you had the eye of faith you could see when the steam jet indicator was guiding the ship into the wind, or planes taking off; you could see an archangel standing with wings outstretched." No one questions the veracity of a sailor—while the war is on. But what a pity it is that the angel took a day off just when his, or her, or its presence was most needed. What we need is not only more angels, but angels that stick to their job for the duration.

## "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,  
Telephone No. : Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS

- J. BARRETT.—Obliged for cutting. The Archdeacon of Canberra is not the first Christian who has considered force in action better than words. We cannot say we are in unqualified agreement. That does not lessen the absurdity of a Christian preacher saying it.
- W. S. B. LAWES.—Thanks for letter. Papers are being sent.
- T. OWEN.—You did well to press your point, but the dishonesty of the B.B.C. in staging these substantially "faked" discussions on religion should be obvious to anyone on the public side of an asylum. Presumably they help to cheer up the weak-minded.
- H. VINEY.—We had better devote a special article to the matter so soon as opportunity offers.
- J. SNAITH.—Pleased to read what you say concerning the clergy and the schools. We regret to say that in this matter Freethinkers have been rather lax, and political parties are in fear always of offending the Churches. They can be very dangerous opponents—to a politician who has to beware of the prejudice of voters.
- A. R. MILLS.—Thanks; will come in useful.
- NORMAN FOWLER.—Glad to hear what you are doing. It is certain to bear good fruit. The Freethought movement has always benefited from this hand-to-hand propaganda. Shall be pleased to meet you either in Birmingham or in London.
- C. H. DARBY.—Call when convenient, but let us know beforehand, if possible. Shall appear as soon as possible.
- JOHN H. SEXTON.—Many thanks for your kind appreciation. E. P. Meredith's "Prophet of Nazareth" is unfortunately out of print—it was written as far back as 1864—but copies can be had occasionally from second-hand booksellers for about 5s. Meredith's chapters on the ethics of Jesus are a very careful analysis but quite damning in their accumulative effect. It is a pity that they are not better known.
- WAR DAMAGE FUND.—Mrs. MacDonald, 10s.; H. Bury, 10s.

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*Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

### SUGAR PLUMS

TWO additions to the "Thinker's Forum" (Watts and Co.; 6d. each) are interesting reading, but from quite opposite points of view. The first is by Dr. Needham, the well-known biochemist, "The Nazi Attack on International Science." It is an essay we can strongly commend to readers. If we had to criticise anything it would be the title. For the Nazi attack is not on *international science*—there is no such thing. Nazism is an attack on science and common sense, and science is one the world over. But the foolish German talk about Aryanism "blood," racial purity, etc., is well exposed in that clear manner which is characteristic of Dr. Needham's work.

We commend this pamphlet not merely because it exposes the stupidity of the theory of German "race" and German "blood," but because the same kind of ideas have considerable currency in this country. We have the same talk (in essence) of racial qualities, aristocratic or royal blood,

etc., etc., and it has the same subversive consequences, in kind, that it has produced in Germany. Ignorance of the social implications of science is all around us and is as ripe in educated as in uneducated circles. We have yet to make common the truth that all human superiority over the animal group is due to the *social* environment, and that variations are the basic fact on which the social factor works. Other things equal, the idiot and the genius are as prolific among all classes of the community. We hope that readers of Dr. Needham's pamphlet will not forget this wide application of his essay. If they do they will read it with the lesser profit.

The second pamphlet is by Lord Ponsonby and consists of a section of a larger book and must be read in the light of that fact. The title is "Do We Want a Future Life?" and it is an interesting criticism of what one may call the classical arguments for and against a future life. But by itself it is largely thrashing a dead horse. We do not mean by this that what Lord Ponsonby says is not pertinent to the religious defences of the belief in immortality, but that by leaving out of sight the damning evidence of modern anthropology the unwary reader is left with the feeling that "there is a deal to be said on both sides," and while the professional advocates can keep the discussion on that level, they can produce the impression that they have made out an arguable case.

But if scientific anthropology has anything to say on this head it is that the belief in immortality not merely lacks evidence, but that all that has been written on behalf of the belief in a future life is set on one side as a great historical illusion that began in the ignorance of primitive humanity and has been perpetuated as so many other illusions have been kept in being. If that is not the implication of all that has been established by anthropology since the days of Tylor, then we have lost its essential significance. It is time that Freethinkers dropped the "There is a great deal in what you say, but I cannot agree with you" attitude. Current science does not say that we lack evidence of a future life; it knows it is an illusion. The world of the savage is dead; his theories cannot longer be tolerated, even when clothed in modern language.

We have had many suggestions that the series of notes under "Views and Opinions" of recent date should be reprinted in pamphlet form. At first we were inclined to do so, but have decided that the notes are too "sketchy" for that purpose. Mr. Cohen seldom writes to any plan, and intended writing just a couple of articles; but the thing grew and grew by its own volition, and the bigger it grew the more there remained to be said. So we must treat the suggestion as just a compliment to the writer.

The West London Branch N.S.S., through the kindness of Miss Woolstone, will hold a meeting to-day (December 14) at 57, Warrington Crescent, near Warwick Avenue tube station. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "What we pay for the religion we get," and there is a general invitation to attend, with opportunities for questions and discussion. Proceedings begin at 3 p.m., and of course, members are expected to see that the room is well filled.

Quite by accident a paragraph was omitted from last week's issue that the writer of the article signed Wallace Nelson is the Wallace Nelson who was so well known to British Freethinkers many years ago. Mr. Nelson had a fine reputation among Freethought speakers, but has been on the other side of the globe for many years. There must still be some in this country who can recall his work, and they will be pleased to know that time has dealt kindly with him. He is well and as firm in his Freethought as ever. We hope to hear from him again, and should also like to hear from British Freethinkers who remember him and his work.

The activity of the clergy in trying to make capital out of the war is having good reactions—for us. It is leading many to consider religion and Freethought who never bothered much about either. It has also helped us to many new readers.

## SHOULD WE READ FICTION?

A LITTLE controversy which took place in these columns a year or so ago interested me greatly, and I was sorry that war conditions and other reasons made it peter out. The question was, whether we Freethinkers should or should not read "thrillers"—and, I take it, fiction generally?

Let me admit at the outset that I am an inveterate fiction reader, and that some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent in the company of novelists, great and little. Not for a moment would I give up reading fiction, and I do not regret in the least that a good deal of what I have read has been at the best second or even third-rate. And this includes thrillers, crime and detective stories, ranging from "Monk" Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe to "Nick Carters" and "Sexton Blakes."

The principal objection urged against those of us who revel in impossible adventures is, that it is a waste of time. Frankly, I am tired of this ridiculous argument as well as the one which solemnly claims that thrillers are "dope." I always feel inclined to say with our American friends—so what? It appears to me that we all of us do a thousand things in our spare time which are dope, and a good thing too. The very serious musician will gravely tell me that I am wasting my time listening to Leslie Stuart rather than to Bach—some of them even back away in horror that such a fool as I am in these matters even exists; but I glory in my likes and dislikes in music, and these precious musical nonentities just make me laugh. Why should I not prefer the melodies which move me to those which bore me? It shows that I am no musician of course—so what? I yield to no one in my love for Beethoven, but I like Chopin and Schubert and Offenbach and Jerome Kern and Cole Porter, and therefore I do not understand music! Well, I am content to leave it at that.

So in art, I never tire of Michelangelo or Rembrandt, but I love our own Hogarth and Charles Keene and Phil May—and I loathe a lot of the pretentious modernistic stuff which the same kind of critics as the Bach lunatics try to stuff down our throats as great art. I *feel* it is not—but again I prefer to let other people satisfy their own tastes, for I intend to satisfy mine.

For me, the worlds into which our great novelists have introduced us seem to be a necessary part of our education. These worlds exist perhaps only in their own imagination, but how wonderful they often are! I am sorry if there is any Freethinker who can enter the Pickwickian theatre and emerge an unconvinced and soured spectator of the most humorous scenes ever put on any stage. I can hardly understand how anyone can read Gogol's "Dead Souls" or Dostoevski's "Crime and Punishment" without at once enthusiastically acclaiming the Russian genius for this powerful kind of writing. And can there be any young man these days who calls himself well read, and yet has never read "Pendennis"? No young man can afford to miss this book or "Great Expectations."

But perhaps it is not the masterpieces of fiction which are meant when we are told we are wasting our time in reading "dope." Just thrillers and crime "rubbish."

Well, in the first place there has always been great interest in crime stories—whether we consider the Romans who read Suetonius' "History of the Twelve Caesars" or those of us who have read the "Newgate Calendar." In England the ready response of the public to Lytton's "Paul Clifford" and Ainsworth's "Rookwood" and "Jack Sheppard," roused the ire of Thackeray; but he could only reply with "Catherine"

and "Barry Lyndon," both of which are also crime stories. Thackeray strongly objected to depicting criminals in a favourable light; but after all, if Ainsworth does make a young ruffian like Sheppard more of a saint than he was, we of this generation at least should feel a little more than pity for his quite unmerited death at so young an age. The "crimes" of Jack Sheppard now would be dealt with so leniently that in all probability he would have passed only a few weeks in prison; whereas under the insane and savage laws of two hundred years ago he was hanged for what was almost nothing at all, in the way of real crime. But be that as it may, "Jack Sheppard" is still a fascinating crime story, and I certainly do not feel reading it was dope.

But what about "detective" stories? Here again the answer seems to me to be quite simple. If anybody tells me that the three short stories by Edgar Allan Poe which were, perhaps, the first to indicate what could be done in the way of crime detection from a scientific point of view are dope, I am afraid I cannot reason with him. Poe was one of the great "creators" of literature. His short stories reveal an astonishing flare for invention of the highest order. As Conan Doyle puts it in his extremely interesting "Through the Magic Door," Poe's "brain was a seed pod full of seeds which flew carelessly around," and his famous detective Dupin is the father—and still perhaps the greatest of them all—of the famous detectives from Lecoq to Peter Wimsey, whose power of solving unsolvable mysteries has given pleasure to millions.

How many detective stories I have read I could not count. There was a host published in America in the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century which came my way; there were any number from France like those of Gaboriau; while here in England we had the great Sherlock Holmes and numbers of imitators. I can hardly believe that the best of Edgar Wallace's crime stories can be put down without difficulty before the crime is solved; or that the humour with which Miss Sayers can surround her mysteries will never cause a chuckle of contentment. All these are "dope," are they? Good; I hope my eyesight will be spared a long while yet to revel in this kind of dope.

The late Prof. G. Saintsbury once wrote two large volumes on the "History of the French Novel." It is an extraordinarily fascinating work for he seems to have read almost all the fiction emanating from a country which specialised in it. Life, alas, is too short for me ever to catch up with the Professor, though I also have read not a little of France's great story-tellers. I expect that even reading Saintsbury would be considered dope, but I should like to see more Freethinkers interested in the lighter side of life if they are not so already. I admit we ought to read Darwin and Frazer and Tylor and Herbert Spencer and even Kant. But frankly, I think Jules Verne's "Clipper of the Clouds" interested me far more than any "categorical imperatives." And certainly "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" appeared to my dopey mind far more entrancing than Darwin's "Formation of Vegetable Mould."

I have wasted time, of course, in playing chess and draughts and darts. I have thrilled at a boxing match, and in those happy days before the last war, shouted myself hoarse when Gilbert Jessop was in form and I was lucky enough to see him. What a waste of time when I could have been improving my mind!

There are Freethinkers and Freethinkers. I like to think that I belong to those who feel that in this most imperfect world it's our business to enjoy ourselves when we can and how we can; and never to forget Ingersoll's famous "The time to be happy is now, the



place to be happy is here, and the way to be happy is by making others happy." The man who gave me some thrillers to read in a shelter last winter made me happy; and the writers who provided the dope helped me to pass some happy hours under the most terrible conditions. All power to the ingenious and brainy inventors of crime, thriller, and detective fiction.

H. CUTNER.

## ART IN RUSSIA

### Henry J. Hayward Entertains a "Queen"

"A QUEEN on your phone, sir!"

I hastily picked up the receiver.

It was lovely Anna Pavlova, the Queen of Terpsichore!—the crowned Empress of the Poetry of Motion—whose devoted subject I was, for all the allurements of the theatre—the ballet at its perfection with its gorgeous orchestral environment was, and is, in my opinion, the supreme entertainment.

It was the last day of Anna Pavlova's New Zealand tour; the American boat was a day late, so Anna phoned that to-morrow she had a free evening—"what should she do?"

"Let me be your escort," I said. So at 6 p.m. by the clock I picked her up.

Away from the searchlight of the stage—Anna Pavlova possessed that simplicity of life and nature—which I have found in most great artists.

First I persuaded Anna to be photographed with me, so we hied to a studio which I had arranged—and a souvenir of that evening hangs on my office wall.

No! Anna did not want to dine at an hotel! "Let's go to an ordinary tea room." So we went and ate a simple repast and afterwards to a movie.

Anna Pavlova was a Russian, and during this too short evening she enlightened me on the position of Art generally in the Soviet Republic.

She had travelled in every part of the world and possessed an observant mind, but she maintained that of all the countries, Russia was at heart the most artistic—and since the revolution the passion for art to a great extent had replaced the emotion that was expended on religion in the days of the Czars.

Sweet Anna Pavlova! The gods loved her! She died too young. She was not only the greatest artist of her time—in the dance—but she possessed the supreme gift of theatre presentation by gathering around her a coterie of other brilliant dancers, and of welding the whole by the choice of exquisite music into a rapturous entertainment; and if there be another world, in which we could be reincarnated, what a welcome Anna Pavlova would receive from those great devotees of terpsichore who have "passed over."

But returning to Anna Pavlova's statement that "Russia was the most artistic of all the nations," this is reinforced by Professor Dillon, of Oxford University, who was sent as special correspondent of the London "Daily Telegraph" "to investigate the progress of Art—and particularly Theatrical Art in the Soviet Republic."

Professor Dillon was well qualified, for he speaks Russian, and in his youth was an attaché of the British Embassy at the Imperial Court at St. Petersburg. In his review in the "Daily Telegraph," which is a conservative journal, he writes:—

"Never in the history of mankind has there been so great an enthusiasm for anything as the enthusiasm for Art in Russia to-day" (1938). "Everyone is furiously studying some form of Art—the only comparable enthusiasm is that which France had for liberty in 1789.

"In Moscow there are over 1,500 repertory societies, and last year 471 performances of Shakespeare's plays were given—Shakespeare is the second most popular dramatist in Soviet Russia to-day.

"I went to a performance of Wagner's opera "Lohengrin" by a Moscow repertory society; there were 80 in the chorus, 70 in the orchestra, and the whole of these, together with the principals, all came from one single factory.

"It was given in a humble theatre at prices of admission equal in English money to a few pence. Unfortunately I was a little late, the prologue had commenced and the doors of the auditorium were closed—so I had to wait 35 minutes until the doors were reopened after the prologue. It was an excellent rendering of Wagner's great opera."

Think of it! Four hundred and seventy-one performances of Shakespeare's plays in Moscow in one year! Why, in 1938, in the whole of New Zealand, there was not one public performance of a Shakespearean play—and please recollect Shakespeare is a British dramatist, not Russian!

What endless mischief has been done to the peace and progress of the world by the ceaseless moaning of pharisaical people, who have refused to see anything but evil in Soviet Russia because, forsooth! their Government is a secular one—as even our New Zealand, in its education, purports to be.

"Can any good come out of Nazareth?" But despite the continuous chorus of libel that has welled up from these dour critics, Russia, in half a generation, has progressed from a semi-savage 13th century civilisation, where ignorance and superstition manacled her in the days of the Czars. Yes, Russia has progressed to her place as one of the great industrial countries of the world, in some ways leading America and the British Empire, and more than their equal in the passion for Art her people possess.

The time has arrived when these carping critics must tear the blinkers from their eyes and stand in salute to the great Russian people for their heroic struggle for liberty against Hitlerism and Fascism, or go and hide their faces in shame!

HENRY J. HAYWARD.

## ESOTERIC PRIESTCRAFT FOR YOUNG PRIESTS

(Continued from page 555)

WE have before pointed out that Jesus, by himself, is not sufficient on which to run a religion. This can be illustrated by the English Nonconformists. They are (spiritually) descended from Cromwell's Ironsides. Those virile men made a working compromise between Jehovah, the Man of War, and the Lord Jesus, the Man of Peace. The former was for their public acts, the latter for their private lives. They overwhelmed their antagonists as servants of the Lord of Hosts and kept Jesus for the amenities of domestic and social life. And the compromise only made them unpopular and gave them a reputation for hypocrisy. Their descendants had to put Jehovah in the background and made a cult of the effeminate Jesus. After being in obscurity for more than a century they had an increase in numbers and importance when the industrial revolution brought many of them great wealth. In the 1880's they were strong in numbers and influence. But criticism of the Bible sapped its authority as an inspired book. They had, at least tacitly, to give up the Old Testament as inspired. Tacitly they admitted Jehovah, the Man of War, to be an immoral and savage tribal god. But they made a desperate attempt to keep the New Testament as inspired and Jesus as morally perfect. The ministers especially concentrated on a cult of Jesusism. The atmosphere of their chapels became too goody-goody. They began to find that the lads in their 'teens were drifting away. They began to find that male converts to their effeminate religion were practically unobtainable. The ministers, as unpractical as their boasted exemplar, stupidly went on preaching Jesus in the insane belief that the Son of God would not let them down. The rot continued and got worse until nowadays Nonconformity is a spent force. As we have before remarked, you need never worry about a sect that practises pure Jesusism. It will never grow very big and will not last more than one or two generations. The atmosphere of effeminacy it engenders will stifle it. It will never get a large following of men.

Do not make a mistake here and think that it is maudlin sentiment that drives away men. It is more the general effeminacy of Jesus that repels them. Men refuse to wallow in maudlin sentiment. They cannot stand half as much of it as women can. But they do like an occasional dose. In fact, maudlin sentiment is one of the most valuable

ingredients in our dope mixture. But it must be dealt out judiciously to the men. (Give as much as you like to the women; the dear little softies like to weep a lot.)

The application of all this to our present subject is that we substituted a woman for a man as the main object of our pathos business. Men's sex pride does not allow them to make a hero of a man who suffers with resignation all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. They can get maudlin much easier about the woes of a woman. Sob stuff in regard to a woman is all right. In regard to a man there is a large element of incongruity. But this is not the only advantage of the Blessed Virgin cult.

Our whole "tale" is based on a temperamental Sultan God, whose nature is such that he can be most safely approached (for mercies and favours) by intermediaries. In straight Christianity the only intermediary is Jesus. The Virgin is an *extra* intermediary and would be valuable for this alone. But as a female she has very special value. Who so likely to wheedle favours from Sultan as his most favoured of women? or from Son, than his mother, his nearest female relative? And for women's special petitions a woman is superior to any man as a passer-forward of same.

A point about an intermediary is that he or she should be sympathetic and willing. We can make the B.V.M. sweet and compassionate to the nth degree without incongruity. We can tell that Jesus is also all sweetness and compassion, but our clients *feel* it most in regard to Mary. It is more plausible and convincing in regard to a woman. This is plainly shown by the fact that they will pray to Mary to persuade her son to get his father to answer their prayers. They never do the reverse. Also when our pious ones have visions, they see the Blessed Virgin far oftener than any of the Trinity. In fact, with many of our clients their religion is almost entirely goddess worship. She is by far the most popular of our heavenly hierarchy.

In short, the introduction of the Mary cult has justified itself many times over. In your daily work keep it going.

But be careful. In practice we have got the Christian Trinity into a Catholic Foursome, but we have refrained from saying so in public, and neither must you. In practice most of our clients worship the Foursome—in fact, they practice the cult of Mary far more than any of the Trinity. But we have never made an official dogma putting Mary on an equality with the Trinity, and we have never called her a Goddess. There are still too many critics about. They we claim to be monotheistic, saying that the Three are One. Also we have a centuries long habit of calling other people pagans. If we were to call Mary a goddess we should definitely give the show away. You may encourage our mugs and mutts to worship Our Lady, the Queen or Empress of Heaven, Star of the Sea, Our Lady of This and That and a lot of other high-sounding names; you can let them—nay, encourage them—to work themselves into such hysterical extravagance as to consider her of greater importance even than S.G.; we don't mind this in the least. The sillier they get the better we like them, for they are then the easier to exploit. But as long as we have not certified such importance of Mary by a dogma you can say that such extravagances do not compromise the Holy Church. Critics may, and no doubt will, jeer at the B.V. cult. They will ask how can she be a virgin when she had at least seven children? They may ask what is her exact position in heaven; they may ask what is Joseph's private opinion about her, whose wife is she, how can she be Queen of Heaven until her position has been regularised according to the true moralities of our precious marriage system—and a lot of other similar queries. You must dodge these queries as best you can. Say you will not argue with critics who are either flippant or blasphemous. Of course, it is we who are blasphemous, but attack is the best defence, and by calling the critics blasphemous you obliquely assert that you could not be blasphemous—not if you tried. As long as critics are at large you will have to dodge them as best you can. It is an annoying situation and we must work for the day when we can attend to critics by means of an efficient Atrocity Department. We shall never be quite safe until we reach this happy situation.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

## THE MARCH OF TIME

"TIME Marches On!" That saying, now so familiar to cinema-goers, will have to be equally appreciated by those whose chief concern is in the world of ideas. A "Humanist" parson, Mr. D. R. Davies, some two or three years ago, wrote an arrestingly interesting book under the title "On to Orthodoxy," and the path towards something approximating to theological orthodoxy seems to be trodden by a fairly considerable number of our intellectuals. Miss Rosalind Murray, for example, daughter of Dr. Gilbert Murray, wrote just before the war a book entitled "One Good Pagan's Failure," justifying, on grounds largely intellectual, her adherence to the Roman Catholic faith.

Such eminent figures as Mr. T. S. Eliot, as I have explained in previous articles here, have changed their theological attitude in recent years. It is all very disconcerting for a Freethinker of the older school, who regards the progress of mankind as being necessarily from religion on to Freethought, from emotion to pure reason.

In recent articles here (articles which I am sure do not appeal to the Editor, but to which, with characteristic kindness and broad-mindedness, he has extended the hospitality of his columns) I have tried to demonstrate that there is a curious lack of something in our propaganda and even in our general philosophical outlook. This move of the intellectuals towards something of the nature of theological orthodoxy is yet another phenomenon exemplifying what I hold to be a lack in our understanding of the fundamental realities of human nature.

There is, that is to say, a steady trickle of thoughtful people back to the religious fold. It may merely be that the manifold trials and tribulations of war have led many to search for something stable to which they can pin their trust. I am not at the moment disposed to argue as to the reasons for the change. What I am now concerned with is what the effect is likely to be.

Where the "intellectuals" go to-day the masses will go to-morrow: If a sufficient proportion of the more thoughtful people drift back to orthodoxy, with the consequence that the intellectual level of the orthodox rises, the trickle to the Churches may become a flood. The tendencies of the past 50 or 100 years may thus be slowed down or even reversed. The mentality of the clergy may become more respectable for thoughtful folk.

All these things are at present in the province of "may." Whether they ever reach the province of reality depends very largely on our efforts. If Freethought succeeds in adapting itself to meet the changing needs of modern times, it may resume its triumphant onward march. If, on the other hand, it persists in old-fashioned ways, ignoring the signs of the times, the imaginative picture which I have painted may be turned into reality.

"Time Marches On!"

S. H.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE CITY PARISHES

SIR,—Your reputation for fair play in debate prompts me calling your attention to the following facts:—

City parishes, by numerous "Orders in Council," pay large sums annually for the upkeep of other parishes. My own parish, after complying with such "Orders," produces an annual benefice income of £320, less a fixed sum for dilapidations and pensions of £40. This nett amount is subject to the usual income tax payments. A number of the incumbents have been reduced to poverty owing to enemy action and have had to rely on diocesan help.

Your remarks relating to the increased value of land in the possession of the parishes makes no mention of the huge sums taken from the parishes under an "Order in Council" dated February 23, 1891, when a fixed annual sum was made for the upkeep of the ancient churches. These sums to-day are in some cases inadequate.

I give a few of the amounts thus taken and used for the good of the workers of London:—

For the purchase of Clissold Park, £7,500; extension of Hampstead Heath, £50,000; Vauxhall Park, £12,500; North Woolwich Gardens, £10,000; Brockwell Park,

£25,000; East Ham, £3,000; extension of Peckham Rye, £12,000; Free Library (Bishopsgate Foundation), £40,000; Free Library (Cripplegate Foundation), £40,000; Regent Street Polytechnic, £4,000; The People's Palace, Mile End, £6,750; City Polytechnic, Northampton Institute, Birkbeck Institute, City of London College, Consols £6,100; a further sum not exceeding £45,000; Victoria and Morley, £6,500.

Capital funds for the annual upkeep of Bishopsgate Institute, £2,000; Regent's Street Polytechnic, £3,500; People's Palace, £3,500; City Polytechnic, Birkbeck, City of London College, £5,350; Victoria Hall and Morley, £1,000; Borough Road, £2,500; Battersea Polytechnic, £2,500; South-Western Polytechnic, £1,500; Working Men's Colleges, Great Ormond Street, Bloomsbury, £400; Bow and Bromley Institute, £150.

These sums are never mentioned or discussed, but so-called huge incomes of the clergy are attacked, with no sort of mention of the other side.—Yours, etc.,

F. H. E. HARFITT,  
Rector, St. Mary-at-Hill, Eastcheap.

[We have inserted Mr. Harfitt's letter, but we do not see that it materially affects what we have said. We did not give a detailed and complete account of income and expenditure. We were interested in drawing attention to the position and financial power of the Established Church.—EDITOR.]

#### MAN'S FUTURE

SIR,—All these systems have had their day: feudal, military, ecclesiastical and capitalist. We now seem to be emerging into a period of free socialist co-operation when man will cease to war with himself, but rather devote all his energies to conquer Nature, who is our only real opponent. If man does not overcome Nature, she will overcome him. Homo Sapiens will disappear and leave the world to others. Butterflies, insects and lizards were here long before us. These and other species will reign supreme. Recorded history will be blotted out and man's puny efforts to overcome his environment will be only a passing dream. In another two or three hundred million years perhaps Nature will throw up another species with more intelligence and, when they come to investigate, will discover that at such and such a period there existed a peculiar mammal known as man. They exterminated one another in terrible wars. Some skulls and thigh bones will be uncovered and a few ruins remain—all the rest, desolation overgrown with verdure. The earth, accompanied by its satellite moon, will still whirl round the sun, but otherwise the Universe will not be affected in the very slightest. Nature will only have erased a rather troublesome creature from its books. Time is meaningless and infinite.

"Time like an ever-rolling stream  
Bears all its sons away,  
They fly forgotten like a dream  
Breaks at the opening day."

JUDEX.

#### THE JEWISH QUESTION

SIR,—Mr. Corina, in his otherwise sympathetic article on the Jewish question, appears to be unaware of the fact that Jewish charity, besides being generous, does not discriminate between Jew and non-Jew. He might find it worth while to examine the lists of donations to hospitals and other charities.

Current history has a long record of public-spirited gifts in every sphere from Jewry. These gifts are often made unobtrusively and sometimes anonymously. A distinguishing feature of Jewish charity is that help is given without interference with the independence of the recipient. In this connection I would like to give a single instance from many in my own experience.

A young acquaintance—a non-Jewish girl—was visiting in hospital her husband, a young Jewish greengrocer, who had injured his back while carrying heavy loads. A lady representing the Jewish Board of Guardians happening to meet the young wife by the bedside, asked how she was managing to keep herself and her little daughter. She explained her difficulties and was asked to call at the Jewish Board of Guardians, which she did the next day.

She was given £5, told to use it carefully and to come back again when it was spent. She was deeply moved by the kindness, but much more by the trust shown in her. Nobody asked her any questions other than to find out what help she needed, and assistance was continued until her husband recovered.—Yours, etc., R. LEWIS (A Freethinker).

#### THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

SIR.—With the departure of Professor Huxley to America, the theologians of the B.B.C. Brains Trust have it all their own way, and their causerie becomes much like another Sunday sermon.

A few weeks ago Professor Joad used, when defining "knowledge," the phrase, "The religious meaning of the Universe." Can the little we know of the Universe be said to have any religious meaning—or, indeed, any meaning at all?

Professor Joad did not define what this meaning is; we do not know, and the assertion that it is something in the mind of God is to shift it *Ignotum per ignotius*—from the unknown to the incomprehensible.—Yours, etc.,

EDGAR SYERS.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

#### Report of Executive Meeting Held November 30, 1941

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Bryant, Ebury, Bailey, Horowitz, Griffiths and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to the Parent Society.

Correspondence from Blackburn, Liverpool, Chester-le-Street, Glasgow and London was dealt with and instructions issued. Details for a further protest to the Board of Education on the Churches' attempt to get religious control in the schools was agreed upon. Possibilities of indoor lectures in London and the provinces were discussed, suggestions made, instructions given and other channels for activity were examined.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for January 18, 1942, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON

##### Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12-0, Mr. L. EBURY.

##### Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "The Roman Tradition in the West."

West London Branch N.S.S. (57, Warrington Crescent, near Warwick Avenue Tube Station): 3-0, Mr. R. H. ROSETTI, "What We Pay for the Religion We Get."

#### COUNTRY

##### Indoor

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (P.P.U. Rooms, 112, Morley Street): 7-0, a Lecture.

Blackburn N.S.S. Branch (Lees Hall, Blackburn): Saturday, December 13, 3-0, Mr. JACK CLAYTON, "Science and Religion."

Glasgow Branch N.S.S. (25, Hillfoot Street, off Duke Street): 3-0, Committee Meeting.

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate): 3-0, Mr. KRISHMA MEXON (Secretary, India League), "India To-day."

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President - - CHAPMAN COHEN  
 General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI  
 2 & 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.

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