

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

Vol. LXII.—No. 18

Sunday, May 3, 1942

Price Threepence

## CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	181
Freedom and the Future—"Julian" ...	183
Acid Drops ...	184
To Correspondents ...	185
Sugar Plums ...	185
Life's Adventure—Geo. B. Lissenden ...	186
In My Looking-Glass—"A Plain Man" ...	186
"—A Saint Would Be"—J. R. Sturge-Whiting ...	187
The Creed of the Flowers—Eric A. Dowson ...	188
Correspondence ...	188
Sunday Lecture Notices ...	188

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Kidnapping

NO apology is needed for again dealing with the campaign of the Churches—now backed up by the Government—for the capture of the schools. It is one of the most vital issues before the country. If we win the war only to hand over the control of the schools to the clergy we shall have paid a heavy price for victory. For over 40 years the Churches have been gaining little by little the ground that was lost by the 1870 Education Act—and some very substantial gains have been made. Once upon a time the present claims of the Established Church would have driven Nonconformists into a state of active opposition. To-day it has become plain to Nonconformists that if they do not hang together with the Church on this issue there is a strong likelihood of their hanging separately. Times have changed for the better so far as a general understanding of the real nature of religion is concerned; and that means a change for the worst so far as the Churches are interested. There is more, far more, expressed disbelief in religion—in spite of the miserable performances of days of national prayer and the circulation of the now generally discarded deliberate lie that this war was being fought for the preservation of Christianity—than there was when the war began.

The significance of the development of the Russian people has played its part in the rapid weakening of religion that has taken place. It has forced the hands of our politicians, from the Prime Minister downwards; although only a very small proportion of the clergy has recognised the tremendous development of Russia—whether for better or worse is immaterial to the point—and the significance of the ability to change the whole aspect of a people's outlook in a single generation. This has not been lost on the "common" folk. But politicians are weak kittle-cattle where principles are concerned. It is, indeed, not the place of the politician to enforce principles so much as to count advantages—often for themselves. At the last annual meeting of the I.L.P., for example, we noted that a resolution in favour of a policy of Secular Education in the schools had been rejected on the ground that the Government would not take heed of such a resolution. Of course the Government—particularly this Government—would

not. But reformers should be made of better stuff than the I.L.P. resolution indicated. Their business should be not to study what the Government would wish to do, but to decide by what means it can be forced to do the right thing. Reforms are made outside Parliament. Parliament only registers them—after a struggle.

### A Wicked Programme

Despairing of capturing the adult population, the two archbishops—Canterbury and York—with the promised assistance of leading Non-conformists, and, as is now made clear, back-stair arrangements with the Board of Education (at present under strong Tory control), a desperate, if bold, step was taken to launch a campaign for the re-Christianising of the State schools. The newspapers were flooded with articles that obviously came from a single source; sermons were preached—all true to pattern—with wording of so identical a character as also to point to a common origin. And it is quite clear that the Churches would not have risked so bold a campaign if they had not had the promise of help from the Board of Education. Instead of religious instruction in State schools being voluntary on the part of local education authorities it was to be compulsory. Whereas under existing regulations efficiency in religious teaching is quite optional, and plays no part in qualifying as a teacher, religious knowledge is to be an optional subject—that is, it will be counted as part of the applicant's qualifications. And inspectors, who at present are not concerned with religious education, would report on the quality and quantity of the religious instruction given.

No one could doubt for a moment that the voluntary selection of religion as a qualifying subject would become, in practice, compulsory. With the clergy on top, a teacher without a religious certificate would stand small chance of appointment and no chance at all for promotion. Those who know how careful large numbers of teachers are not to let their heretical opinions become known to their superiors will realise this.

If this plot was to succeed it was plain to observers that the clergy and their supporters, in and out of the Government, must move quickly. A substantial measure of success must be achieved before the end of the war. Once the war ends, as we all hope it will end, in a smashing victory for the Allies, sweeping reforms have been promised; and unless the country goes victory drunk it will be in no humour to hand the control of the schools to a priesthood which, as such, has no interest whatever in education, but aims at capturing the child in order to reap profit from the adult. The best educationalists, and the truest of democrats, have in mind not sectional schools, with their "public" institutions barred to all but a handful of the population, but schools to which ability is the only entry. And if that education is to be complete and at its highest it must make for something more worth while than conformity with inherited superstitions and priestly supremacy.

What we have at present is Mr. Butler, for the time being President of the Board of Education,

paying the expenses of teachers who are relieved from their duties as teachers to attend courses on religious instruction, leaving local authorities to engage other teachers during their absence, to help "a form of Christian teaching universally agreed upon." That is a downright abuse of his office and of public funds. It is both impudent and absurd. It is not the business of the Board of Education to advocate a control of religious teaching. And what is a form of Christian teaching that can be universally agreed upon? Will Catholics agree to any State-controlled education? Everyone knows they will not. With their usual cunning, the Roman Church may, in the present situation, be ready to help the Protestants to get what they wish in order to reap greater State help for their own schools. But what of the rest of the population? They are not bothered about. It looks as though it were time Mr. Butler were out of office. Of course, we might get a worse Minister of Education than Mr. Butler, but the public might well take the chance.

Mr. Butler is very zealous for the Churches. He has asked the Churches for "guidance." He is quite willing to become the servant of the Churches, although his office and his salary comes from the public. But it is not about their opinions he is bothering. It may be that the Churches are not sure how much they may ask for; Mr. Butler helps them by suggesting the following. The plan, when it comes into operation, should, thinks the Minister of Education, embrace the following:—

1. Teach the fact that God is alive and active.
2. Teach that God has a purpose for man.
3. Teach that Jesus Christ was God himself while on earth.
4. That every individual is unique, being a child of God.
5. Teach that wisdom is not a substitute for belief.

That is a pretty good plateful to start with—and it is provided by a member of a Government that is fighting for the preservation of democracy! Consider what is to be put before children as truths beyond dispute. If Mr. Butler were in the company of a number of educated men and women, he might be foolish enough to state them as his own beliefs; but even a Minister of the Government would not have the impudence to set them out as statements beyond doubt. Some of the finest men and women we have in this country, from the "highest" to the "lowest" class, do not believe these things. Yet Mr. Butler is ready to take public money for himself, to give public money to others, and to hold out an implied threat to the best of teachers in his efforts to get this bundle of ecclesiastical rubbish made the basis of a national system of education.

The one thing I can agree with Mr. Butler on is that "wisdom is not a substitute for belief." I was almost saying that every fool knows it isn't. Every wise man knows it is not. But Mr. Butler is living evidence that belief may be a substitute for wisdom—at least to a Minister of Education. What is Mr. Butler doing but stating his beliefs—which he doubtless formed before he was old enough to know how much he had been misled. People are disputing whether there is a God or not; some of Mr. Butler's official colleagues have grave doubts on the matter. Outside his order there are multitudes who view such a corruscation of verbal absurdities as Mr. Butler provides with contempt. Mr. Butler says, "I don't care. I want to help the Churches. I admit I dare not advocate this kind of teaching being forced upon adults. But give it to the children; they can't hit back."

I wonder whether Mr. Butler has read the presidential address of Mr. William Griffiths delivered at the N.U.T. Conference? I present this excerpt as showing a far greater fitness to talk about schools than Mr. Butler's rambling stupidities concocted for the guidance of the Churches. It is taken from the "Schoolmaster" for April 10:—

"I have observed that a new emphasis has been placed on the need and value of religious instruction in schools. In some quarters there have been accusations that teachers have adopted a perfunctory and even insincere attitude towards religious teaching. I deny this entirely. Those, however, who are pressing for increased religious teaching, and for a firmer grip of the Churches on the schools, should remember that there are other social and educational influences which mould the characters of children—the standard of life they enjoy in their homes, the housing conditions in which they find themselves, the recreational agencies which surround them. We invite the leaders of religious bodies to be reformers in the social and educational conditions which surround the lives of our youth. We invite them to deal with life as a whole. There can be no abiding settlement of the religious question apart from the whole scheme of a wider educational programme. Mind, body and soul are one and the religious view of human personality should take them into account. We welcome the aid of all men of goodwill in providing the means for the living of the fuller life. The National Union of teachers will gladly co-operate in efforts which have as their purpose the full development of all factors that make for intellectual alertness and spiritual stature. No one knows better than the teacher that man does not live by bread alone.

"I have read with interest the two-day debate in the House of Lords, where lords temporal and spiritual seemed to join their voices in criticism of the character teaching in the State school. The debate was unreal. It showed a lack of knowledge and understanding as to the character and purpose of the teaching given in the State schools. Before their lordships criticise I would advise them to become acquainted with what is actually happening in the schools. It is impossible on the one hand to praise the endurance and valour of our men in the Forces and at the same time to decry the character of the products of our State schools. Neither by first-hand knowledge, training nor experience were most of their lordships fitted to pass judgment on the people's schools. We are tired of the people who lay the blame for the delinquencies of youth and the sins of the nation on the schools of our country. We assert that the schools are forces for good—in conditions which make character training none too easy.

"Give us the children in the keeping of the schools until the age of maturity, let us nurture them during the difficult period of adolescence, and there will be little to complain of in the soundness of character of the pupils we will present to the nation."

I think it is time the teachers told the world that they will not sell the children to the Churches and will not become tools for any plot that may be attempted by either Government or Archbishops.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The organisation of no two human beings is ever precisely the same at birth; nor can art subsequently form any two individuals, from infancy to maturity, to be the same.—  
ROBERT OWEN.

## FREEDOM AND THE FUTURE

THE Freethought Movement has passed into a new phase of existence. A change of circumstance and of environment must cause far-reaching reflections concerning its future work. The older activities of those adopting a progressive view of life were centred very largely in a dethroning of the dogmas of orthodox religion. It was a very necessary piece of work at the time. They had obtained a stranglehold upon the mind of man; if progress was to come about, their supremacy must be shattered. But this labour is now largely finished. The days of Matthew Arnold and Charles Voysey are over. Within the Churches there is a significant drift away from the old moorings. The doctrines of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, of eternal punishment for the wicked, of a substitutionary atonement made for the sins of man by a pouring out of the blood of Jesus, have been tacitly forgotten. Varied panaceas take their place in popular preaching. The more secularising Christians talk of the "Kingdom of God" and seek a semi-religious, semi-political solution to world problems. The pietistic still look for a next-worldly religion which may enable them to escape from the unpleasant realities of existence. Both, however, have dropped the old crude dogmas; they take refuge in generalisation rather than in definition. Among the population at large, there is little or no interest in theological doctrine; indifference reigns with regard to the whole subject. In view of the fact that the old dogmas made the most far-reaching and compelling assertions concerning life in this world and the next, an indifferent attitude spells some degree of scepticism with regard to the truth of the dogmatic claims.

The issues of debate have largely changed within the sphere of cultural activity. Interest is now roused by the conflicts of social orders rather than by religious questionings. The war has brought about a general collapse of the older forms of society. The private ownership of capital is widely suspect; an economic *laissez faire* is open to question. The orthodoxy accepted by the political economy upon which the older social order was founded is now debated on every side. Human thought in the West is in process of a second Renaissance and Reformation. As in the 16th century, the end of an age has come about through a general questioning both of the values formerly accepted and of the conventions which have dictated the shaping of social life. The last upheaval was based upon a rediscovery of classical literature; the present conflict of opinion is founded upon the victory of the scientific method. A preconceived authority is no longer accepted as a presupposition within any branch of knowledge; its place has been taken by methods of comparison and experiment. Orthodox religion in its past forms belonged clearly to the older social order. In its Anglican shape it was the ally of the landed classes; "the Conservative Party at prayer." Nonconformity was a theological expression of political liberalism; the preserve of the merchant class. Both sociological creeds lack relevance to the civilisations which are emerging within the world of to-day. Conservatism has been gobbled up by a capitalistic industrialism, the last stage of which lies in some form of Fascism. It is not without interest that Hitler gained his initial power in Germany as the nominee of the big industrialists. Liberalism, in its older and doctrinaire forms, has ceased to count as a factor in the making of a new civilisation. Its liberty was too often that of an individualism which included power to exploit. The neglect of economic and class interests inhibited the usefulness of the liberal message as a potent factor within society. Whatever may be said for the brave radicalism of such a work as John Stuart Mill's essay, "On Liberty," one of the great little books of the world, the rabid antagonism to every form of State action, such as was revealed by Herbert Spencer, renders the Liberal ultra-individualist a somewhat dubious figure in a society which has rediscovered the existence and purpose of community.

The struggle for freedom of thought has now entered upon a sociological phase, as was prophesied by Edward Carpenter or H. M. Hyndman. Ecclesiastical interference with intellectual liberty still takes place, but it is spasmodic and

local; its ultimate success is always dubious, and it is usually checked by public outcry. The exchange of dogmatic definition for loose generalisation is a sign of internal weakness within the non-Catholic Churches; they are a retreating army, yielding up more and more ground to the advance of scientific knowledge. Present-day enemies to liberty are found in exponents of the corporate state or of vested interest; intellectual freedom is now restricted or stamped out when it is dangerous to the political and economic sway of the ruling powers. In the course of the present war, at least two sets of interests are in sharp antagonism, even though many other strands can also be found within the tangled skein. A belief in such liberty as is implied by democratic government, by a classless society, by economic equality of opportunity, stands in opposition to a denial of freedom in order to further a totalitarian stranglehold possessed by the State over both mind and body. The important question is that of the form and nature of the social order which may emerge from the struggle. A complication of the issue is caused by the fact that, in most wars, a worthy outlook is apt to become tainted by the things against which it fights. It is only too easy to seek a military victory for freedom in the abstract by using such methods as the actual restriction of Press freedom at home! The present conflict could provide several examples of a denial of the rights of free-thinking by responsible bodies or by Ministers of the Crown. Not the least noteworthy have been the efforts of the B.B.C., which dismissed artists and musicians for signing the manifesto of the People's Convention. The same body distinguished itself by ceasing to employ a distinguished conductor of music, Sir Hugh Robertson, on account of his pacifist views. The old virus of intolerance lives on, but now it finds expression through social and political, rather than through theological and religious channels.

The question which the Freethinker has now to face is that society should be so ordered that intellectual freedom is still possible in every sphere. Likewise, in accordance with his philosophy that progress is a more desirable factor than stagnation, he must seek to bring about a society in which the existence of a progressive attitude in thought and act is recognised and tolerated. The present task of Freethought is to recover a view of life which is co-ordinated; its work is not completed by the demolition of an obsolete theology. This outlook was, in fact, characteristic of the older Freethinkers. Thomas Paine was a politician whose anti-theological work came about naturally as a part of his scheme for the liberation of mankind. The same remark might be made of Henry Hetherington or of Richard Carlile. The Chartist, William Benbow, attacked the Church bitterly in his book, "The Crimes of the Clergy," published in 1823. But his object was not only the conquest of superstition; he had in view also the overthrow of a political corruption maintained by an ecclesiastical establishment. The specialised work of Charles Bradlaugh was only in part anti-theological. He was a prominent radical political thinker who did much for the spread of republican ideas. Freethought has always possessed a legacy of those who regard their freedom as an attitude by which they should seek the well-being of mankind through a thoroughgoing sociological and political reconstruction in the name of the rights of individual liberty. In this undertaking, the theological question is only one of several issues at stake.

The point was well put at the Conference of The World Union of Freethinkers in 1938 by G. D. H. Cole; his recollections of Carlile and Owen, Bradlaugh and Holyoake led him to recall that they preached their Freethought and their Rationalism as part of a wider creed, so that in those days nobody could have any doubt that the Freethought Movement, the Rationalist Movement and the Radical Movement—the Movement making for the radical reconstruction of society—were parts of the same movement.

"JULIAN."

(To be concluded)

We have unmistakable proof that throughout all past time there has been a ceaseless devouring of the weak by the strong.—HERBERT SPENCER.

## ACID DROPS

IT is a pity that although circumstances have compelled Christian preachers to refrain from circulating the old lies concerning Soviet Russia, that a resort is made to claiming that the change in opinion in this is due to an alteration in Russia itself. Here, for example, is Professor Macmurray, who is some sort of a Christian and who is fond of dragging in God as a kind of tail for his favourite philosophic kite, saying that there has been a very definite change in the attitude of the Russian Government towards the Churches. That is not the case. During the time when priests were being imprisoned and often executed, the situation was different from what it is to-day. Large numbers of the priests were working with the "Whites" and were in open or concealed opposition to the revolution. That class has been "liquidated," and the possibility of plotting of that kind is not now very likely. It seems very difficult to harness exact statements to religious conviction.

At a meeting at which Professor Macmurray spoke, Lord Horder came nearer the facts when he said, "If we could by-pass Ministers, high officials and even societies, and bring our two peoples into direct contact, this would be a solution to our difficulties." Good, but why not include the need for by-passing the clergy and the Churches? They are more dangerous than Ministers and officials. These latter come and go, and so soon as they are out of the public eye they are forgotten. But the Churches are always here, and exercise a greater influence than any official. But it needs more courage to attack the Churches, and probably Lord Horder did not care to run the risk of naming them.

Canon Brown, of Dewsbury ("Yorkshire Post," April 10), objects very strongly to entertainments on Sundays, unless they are held for soldiers only and not for civilians. His interest in the whole matter is purely commercial. This is the way he puts it:—

"I do not object to concerts for soldiers, many of whom have attended service on Sunday morning, but only a very small proportion of the civilians who attended concerts had been to public worship the same day."

Perhaps the Churches could be "squared" by the concert people paying to them, say, 10 per cent. of the takings. The Canon's interest is purely professional. A church performance simply is not in it with Sunday entertainments—and the Canon knows it. So do his brother parsons.

Father Coughlin is the leading Roman Catholic broadcaster in the United States. It is also said that he receives a great deal of solid cash to continue his work. He has been, and we believe still is, a strong opponent to America entering the war. As a Roman Catholic he has great influence over a large section of Catholics, and the chief point of his opposition seems to centre on his profound dislike to "Atheist Russia" and the fear that the Roman Catholics will pay dearly for the war when the peace comes if the influence of Russia continues. At any rate, the Government of the U.S.A. has stopped the circulation of Father Coughlin's paper, "Social Justice," through the post. The ground is that he, the priest, is obstructing the war effort.

Father Coughlin, after all, is only voicing loudly and plainly what Roman Catholics everywhere—inspired by their leaders—are thinking and saying. Thus, in the British "Catholic Times" for April 10, 1942, the editor—discussing a possible quick end to the war, in which a general revolt of the European peoples will play a great part—says that if this happens, Communism, by which is meant Russian Communism, will be left in a strong position, which will mean "endless trouble and disorder for at least a decade. . . . Unless a better way is found, it is that (the domination of Russia) or chaos." That is plain enough, and when the war ends we shall be fortunate if we do not find helping the Catholic Church those who wish to preserve their own privileges.

The Catholic Church has, of course, no essential enmity to Communism, or to any other political or economic system, so long as it leaves the Roman Church cock-o'-the-walk. It must be a system that is friendly to the teaching and position of the Church. The name by which it is known will not then matter very much. Once more we say, keep your eye on the established Churches when the time for peace and a settlement arrives. Hitlerism may yet find its greatest friend in the Roman Church.

One of the proofs of the actual existence of Jesus Christ is that one can still see that rock grave in which he was laid; and how could he have laid in that grave if he had never existed? Another piece of evidence is that there is in existence the shroud in which the body was swathed, and no one could swathe a body that wasn't there. Moreover, the shroud has worked miracles, which is another piece of evidence that Jesus actually lived. But the shroud of Jesus was not the only one that has worked miracles. When the city of Paris was in danger of being destroyed, the shroud of St. Landry, Bishop of Paris (d. 650 A.D.), was carried on a pole to where the fire was burning most fiercely, and at once the fire died out. This may be taken as further disproof of those who say that Jesus never existed; and it is as good as any other evidence we have come across.

But now a new discovery has been made. It was always assumed that when Jesus was nailed on the cross the nails were driven through the palm of the hand. It has now been discovered, from the marks on the shroud, that the nails were driven through the wrist; and the Church insists on the exact truth. Truth is mighty and will (sometimes) prevail. If it did not, what a number of priests and politicians would lose caste. The trouble is that in the visions of some of the saints the holes in the palms of the hands were seen.

More light from the pulpit. The vicar of St. Gabriel's, Cicklewood asks whether God is on our side. Apparently the vicar has his doubts, for he points out that on Good Friday, the most sacred day in the Christian year, the Government ordered men to remain at work on that day. Naturally the vicar is angry with the Government for counting a day's work as of more value than a day's prayer. He feels it isn't playing the game with the clergy, and perhaps not with God. When so many of our political ministers are mouthing about God, it does seem strange for them turning on their religious pals in this way and demonstrating that they place more reliance on a day's work than they do on God's help.

But the vicar has another grouse, and this time a real one. It appears that Sir Robert Kindersley actually sent the vicar a printed sermon for him to preach on Good Friday. The vicar describes it as "a cheap 'blurb' based on a forced exegesis of Holy Scripture." It was impudence as well as insult. We sympathise with the vicar's protest. But when one is getting one's living as a vicar he must be prepared for many things.

There is nothing new in this practice of feeding those who will take the meal with ready-made sermons and articles for the Press. More than once we have protested against the campaign for handing the schools over to the clergy and the plot which the Board of Education appeared to have shared in. The "leaders" in the paper were identical in tone, and sometimes in blocks of the reading matter. They, too, probably came from the Government. It is a pity that some Member of Parliament does not risk not having a "job" offered him, and insist upon information as to how far this method of poisoning the public mind has gone. With a Minister who suppresses a paper without giving a reason, or without a fair trial of the man accused, and sending out sermons which suit the Government, we seem to be treading a road that will leave us with our tongues tied and the general intellect even a little lower than it is at present.

“THE FREETHINKER”

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No. : Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

The General Secretary of the N.S.S. acknowledges a cheque for £1 to the Benevolent Fund of the Society from Mrs. Stella Spink in loving memory of her father, Carl Grundy, who died on April 29, 1941.

For distributing “The Freethinker”: J. McManus, £1.

A. HANSON and J. NEIL.—Next week.

J. McMANUS.—Thanks for correspondence, which we are returning. The quality of God’s defenders in Liverpool seems to be getting poorer.

C. L. MORTON.—Pleased you enjoyed the evening, but it is high time that we had here as much liberty with the wireless as the citizens have in Canada and the United States. In Germany, people are not allowed to listen to foreign broadcasts. We can listen to the British broadcast, but it is carefully sorted out for us, and what is provided in the name of religion is an insult to intelligent men and women.

S. GRAY.—Thanks for titles. We will set about getting the books.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.*

*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.*

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

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

THE Conway Hall was crowded at the first public meeting held by the newly-formed Radio Freedom League, and there was no mistaking the feeling that prevailed concerning the need for the policy of the B.B.C. being overhauled. The new organisation has with very little publicity made good headway; it has received promises of support from many parts of the country and from many well-known men and women. There is no doubt as to the growing conviction that a monopoly of broadcasting by a single body in close co-operation with the Government of the day offers a very real threat to the development of a democracy. It is, in fact, in direct antagonism to freedom of discussion and to independent thought. Outside pure Fascism, broadcasting at present is a very grave threat to genuine progress. The first general meeting of the new association is to be held shortly, when it is hoped a clear statement of the lines of attack will be given. At present broadcasting is a great instrument of mis-information. What was very marked at last Sunday’s meeting was the disgust at the time devoted to one-sided statements concerning religion. There is no monopoly of broadcasting in the United States. Is there any adequate reason why we should not have the same freedom here?

In the Labour Hall, Caunce Street, Blackpool, on Saturday, May 2, Mr. J. Clayton will debate with Mr. Dickinson, a Blackpool Spiritualist, on “Does Spiritualism Prove Survival After Death?” at 7-30 p.m. There are many Freethinkers in Blackpool and the debate should provide an interesting evening. We understand admission will be free.

To-day (May 3) Mr. J. T. Brighton will lecture in the Failsworth Secular Hall, Pole Lane. In the afternoon his subject will be “Good-bye God,” and in the evening “Miracles of Medicine?” Mr. Brighton is always pleasing in matter, manner and personality, and that should induce Freethinkers within range not only to attend both sessions themselves, but bring an orthodox friend with them.

When Dr. E. J. Dillon visited Russia in 1929 he went as one familiar with that country under the Czars. He was a man who spoke with authority—familiar with the Russian people and at home with their language. He went, moreover, as one without sympathy with the new regime. He had already painted a vivid picture of Russia as it was when he lived there, holding a dignified position in the country. That picture was painted in his book, “Russian Characteristics,” issued in 1892, and anything more villainous as regards the character of the Government and the degraded condition of the people it would be difficult to find. Ignorance was widespread. Only about 20 per cent. of the people could read, and the current superstition was as low as it could be.

In 1929 he again visited Russia, and his picture of what he found is in his “Russia Revisited.” One thing that astonished him was the astonishing quantity of books that were being printed, and by a Government that was then (1929) fighting the active hostility, open or secret, of many countries, including our own. When Dr. Dillon arrived in Leningrad he was “startled by the number of bookshops”—they were “the dominant tone in entire streets.” The books were printed in all languages spoken in Russia, and from the number “one might imagine that Leningrad and Moscow exist mainly for the purpose of radiating universal knowledge over the planet.” Moscow, he says, outstrips Leningrad. Moscow, in fact, “looks as though it might be the book purveyor of the universe.” The whole of Dr. Dillon’s fourth chapter must be read to realise the tremendous advance made in a few years in Russia and in the face of enormous obstacles. It is a pity that some of our British booksellers have not resolved to issue a cheap edition of “Russia Revisited.” It would, of course, not now be up to date, but it would give a lesson such as no other book could give.

We were really sent back to Dr. Dillon’s book by the following statement taken from “The Times” Literary Supplement for April 18. This journal points out that the most popular works in Russia are those dealing with political and social-economic matters:—

“With what amazement English novelists will read of the circulations of their Russian confreres! Some statistics are given by the National Book Council. The works of Sholokhov had reached by 1939 a circulation in his own country alone of 7,627,500, of which 4,327,000 was attained by “And Quiet Flows the Don.” Other authors of fiction who have passed the million mark are A. N. Tolstoy (“Peter I.” and “Bread”), Novikov-Priboy (“Tsushima”), and N. A. Ostrovsky (“How Steel was Tempered”—published in this country as “The Making of a Hero”). Soviet book production in general is on the same scale, as the following table shows:—

Year	No. of Book Titles	No. of Copies
1913	26,200	86,700,000
1938	40,000	692,700,000
1939	43,800	701,000,000

Pushkin, Chekhov, Turgenev, Gorki, Dostoevski and Tolstoy sell in millions, but from 1917 to 1938 there were issued 1,500,000 volumes of Balzac and 2,000,000 of Dickens. In 1938 alone, 30,000,000 copies of books on agriculture appeared.”

One may safely say that never in the world’s history has so great a cultural change for the better been achieved in so few years. Current events have also shown that this has not prevented other numerous changes in other directions, including that of warlike preparations.

## LIFE'S ADVENTURE

IT is only the man who has known what it means to have to go, as a ragged-assed and ravenously-hungry young urchin, to a public soup kitchen for a meal and then, when he has grown into manhood been able, at will, to sit down to a seven-course dinner with the usual wines and cigars, coffee and liqueurs, who will be able to get the hang of this—or to speak more personally: unless the reader himself knows what it is to be born in very humble surroundings and, in later life, to dine in the banqueting hall, so to speak, he will not be able to understand, completely at any rate, the full significance of what follows. Because—and of course there is nothing original or profound in this observation—because life in its various phases has to be lived in order to be fully and properly understood.

There is no disgrace in being born at the so-called bottom of the social scale, nor is there anything objectionable in it—unless and until you begin to feel the objection rather acutely, unless or until you begin to chafe at the collar and a sore appears—and then there is, and you begin to take notice. . . . Yes, you begin to look around and to reflect, as best you can, upon this and that and the other. Time and again you have it drummed into you as a youngster that "God's in Heaven and all's right with the world," and a lot more to the same effect until you know the whole story off by heart. But when you begin to take stock of things and make comparisons you are not so sure of this. Somehow or other the facts of life as you know it, and have to live it, do not fit in with the current philosophy. . . . You ask questions and you are told, with unnecessary emphasis you think, that it is very wicked—most sinful, in fact!—for one such as you "to question the established order of things," and you are left wondering precisely what that means, the language being altogether new to you. You express dissatisfaction in your humble, halting way, with your position in life; you say that you think you are having a pretty rough time of it, while others are evidently having a jolly good time; and all you get in reply is that you should be truly thankful for and with the station in life to which it has pleased God to call you! You get no end of that sort of thing, with a variety of embellishments, first from one and then the other, but you cannot make top nor tail of it. To you it don't make sense.

You tell yourself, when you are on the bottom rung of the social ladder, that the people "high up" in the world know nothing of the things with which you are fairly familiar—lying and deceit, for example—because these people, to whom you look up rather enviously, knowing better, do better; having the great advantage of being born in better surroundings, and better educated, they do not—would not—stoop so low as to lie to or deceive their fellow men. Not as a class! Here and there, you gather from what is said, one of these "high-ups" falls from grace. But as a class they are honest and sincere and have the good of humanity at heart. So you tell yourself.

And being convinced of this you feel all the more determined to rise higher in the world—to get as far as you possibly can, in fact—so that you can be of more and better use in the world than if you remain where you are. You do not put it that way, because you haven't the ability to express yourself so clearly and unmistakably, but that is how you feel about it. You have a vague and indefinable feeling that you are capable of something much better than what you are doing, and you set about it—hesitatingly to begin with, but you gain confidence in yourself as you go on and you become more courageous.

You strive with all your might and main to increase your knowledge and usefulness, and you meet with some success in your struggle to improve your position in life. Nothing wonderful at first, naturally, but step by step you get there; and the sum total of your endeavours is creditable, to say the least of it. So you think.

And when you "arrive," wherever it may be, how different things are from what you expected them to be. When young, you told yourself that "up there" there were none of the things which you occasionally see "down here." "Down here" there is humbug and cheating, some drunkenness and not a little immorality, whereas "up there," you reflect, they are—surely?—bred above such

things. Here you expected to find everything just as you in your ignorance had pictured it, instead of which. . . .

But by now, having gradually got your bearings in the general scheme of things, and perhaps a little wisdom, maybe a little charity too, you sit back and laugh—heartily!—at your own childish innocence. Of course you did not know, when you were "down under," as you used to think of the position in those early days—how could you know—how anyone in any other walk of life lived their lives and why they thought and spoke and acted as they did. You were inclined then to measure other folk, every one in fact, by your own yardstick, such as it was. That, of course, is where you went wrong—as you frankly realize now.

And that, incidentally, is the error that we all have to guard against—the error of measuring everyone by our own footrule, our own standard of conduct and ethics. We are apt, most of us, to appraise or condemn our fellow men in the light of our own limited knowledge and experience when, maybe, we are not really in a position to judge. Which is not to say that we must never appraise or blame, but we must always be reasonably sure, or try to be sure, that we are in a position to measure the vice or virtue in the other man—a position that, by the very nature of things, we can seldom attain because we have not lived his life, and therefore cannot tell what has given rise to whatever it is that we may feel inclined to sit in judgment upon.

A good many of us are disposed at times, like the boy at the bottom of the social scale, to envy someone else in another walk of life—little knowing what that "someone" has to contend with and, perhaps, how gladly he would change places with us if he could. We are apt to find, too, after we have striven long and laboriously after something that we told ourselves was indispensable to our happiness, and got it in the end, that it is worse than worthless after all!

Yes, generally speaking, life is an interesting and very often an amusing experience and full of surprises, if only we can bring ourselves to see it in that way. It matters not who our parents are, or where we may see the light of day; we can legitimately strive for betterment and get a lot of fun in so doing. There are, as we all know, exceptions to that generalization—poor devils who, because of their birth and upbringing, never get, never can get, anywhere worth while. But the majority of us can, if we are so willed, make a life a thrilling adventure.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

## IN MY LOOKING-GLASS

IT has often been said to me that Freethinkers are not compelled to financially support any religion in which they do not believe, but to that I have always answered that this is untrue. In England, at the present time, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Confucians and Freethinkers are forced indirectly, if not openly, to contribute towards the upkeep of premises devoted to religion, the majority of which are Christian. In order to benefit their own pockets, the Christians are bound to allow the others to participate in the spoils.

So much for the riddle. Now, let us come down to bedrock, and find out just where and how we do support religion in general and Christianity in particular.

A few years ago there was published by the Registrar-General a list of all buildings owned by the Church of England in which marriages were permitted to be solemnised. The number of such buildings was 16,275, but, mark you, this did not include any of the chapels of ease which are scattered throughout the country. It did not even include the great and mighty Cathedral of St. Paul, in the City of London, scheduled not long since as a dangerous structure. All honour to Wren as a builder, but even the secular authorities do not seem to realise that, even after repair, it is still a dangerous building in the city of human morality and progress. St. Paul's is not registered for marriages, and so doesn't count in our calculations!

The so-called "Chapel List" is more explicit, for it includes every building registered for religious worship which does not come under the direct domination of the

"—A SAINT WOULD BE"

State. Christ Church, in the Westminster Bridge Road, the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, the Mosque at Woking are all included, and from this we may get some (and that word is used in a very limited sense) data for our argument. The number of buildings on the "Chapel List" is 30,257, and not one of the buildings on either list pays any local rates or anything towards State taxation!

These two items are interdependent. The Assessor of Taxes utilises the rate-book as his guide, and if you can hoodwink the one, you stand a good chance of dodging the other. Here we have the root of the evil in that no place set aside for religious worship is assessable for rates and taxes; and further, there is no limit to what may be described as a place of religious worship. Connect the house of the resident minister with the church itself merely by means of a covered walk, and that house at once becomes part of the church and consequently pays no more towards rates and taxes than the church itself. Some of the parsons get a bit upset about this when they find that the particular parish to which they have been assigned is not favoured in this way, and then we have the spectacle of the poor padre standing in the dock like a common felon and being sued by the local authority for its just due.

Church and chapel halls are likewise exempted for just so long as they are not rented from their owners, but that condition is flouted quite calmly and easily. If a church or chapel hall is hired the hirer is informed, "We are not permitted to charge a rental, but the usual gift to our fund is so much." There you have it in all its barefaced hypocrisy. Quite simple, isn't it?

According to those minimum figures which I quoted above, we have a total of 46,532 churches, chapels, mosques, etc., throughout the country. Of course, the actual figure is well above this, but even as it stands it becomes sufficiently alarming when quoted in terms of pounds, shillings and pence.

Now, I do not think that anyone will accuse me of erring on the side of severity if I take an average figure of £50 as representing the annual rateable value of all religious buildings in England and Wales. Again, a fair figure for local rates throughout the country would be 13s. in the £. This gives us a total of £1,512,290 a year lost to local bodies by the exemption of these buildings. With Income Tax, Schedule "A" at 4s. in the £,\* we find the State losing £465,320, or a grand total of about £2,000,000 a year, a deficit which has to be met by the remainder of the populace, 75 per cent. of whom do not go into one of the places more than three times in a lifetime.

If any Member of Parliament were to ask for the expenditure of £2,000,000 a year on, say, additional education, he would be hailed as a disciple of "Squandermania" and told that the Exchequer could not possibly afford such a preposterous amount. If he went further and suggested the rating and taxation of religious buildings in order to raise the money for his requirements, he would be overwhelmed by a storm of execration and abuse. However, I make a free gift of the suggestion to the member with sufficient moral courage to voice it in the national assembly. What a nice little gift for the Miners' Distress Fund!

Out of the 30,257 buildings on the "Chapel List," only 860 of them were registered for worship prior to the year 1852. If all the lot were rated and taxed, the number used for worship would soon be the same as it was in the year mentioned, and the remainder would be freed and utilised for sane and useful purposes—schools, libraries and the like.

You who have been re-assessed for the benefit of distressed industry, you whose hospital has had its figure value doubled under the provisions which follow the De-rating Act—just remember that you are bearing the burden. The "Little Bethel" over the road that keeps you from having a quiet sleep on Sunday afternoon, owing to the caterwauling inside, is getting off scot-free. Justice is truly blind.

"A PLAIN MAN."

(Reprinted)

\* In 1929. The figures would now be more than doubled.

IT is a well-known weakness in human nature that the older one grows the less one feels inclined to swim against the stream. I am thinking of the remarkable reorientation of philosophies which has become noticeable in the writing and utterances of two widely different authors—Ethel Mannin and C. E. M. Joad. The former can be estimated by the simple process only of a comparison of book titles covering a period of approximately a generation in time which divides her well-known *Confessions and Impressions* from a recent work with strong Christian leanings. Whilst the remarkable recent utterances of Dr. Joad must have been noted with surprise by many Freethinkers, who have listened of late to his performances on the Brains Trust, many of which seem to imply the virtual repudiation of some of his finest and sturdiest earlier books and articles. He notes, for instance, with obvious sympathy that there is a growing tendency with the younger generation to re-examine the *traditional* doctrines in seeking a religious outlook which will satisfy the yearnings and "spiritual" needs of the New Age; and since the only traditional doctrine applicable to the young of this country must be that of the Christians, it would seem impossible to reconcile this belief and hope with almost everything contained for instance in his "Is Christianity True?" or indeed with most of the sentiments which colour all his earlier books. What is it which brings about this change?

Reviewing the problem in the light of my own rational and emotional reactions, it seems to fall under two main heads. Either it is due primarily to purely subjective causes wherein the driving force of unorthodoxy, though unsuspected even by its exponents, tends to become weaker with the natural decline of those instincts which in youth gave rise to it in the first place; or, as I am more inclined to believe, it is due to a form of intellectual laziness analogous to the onset of the slipped ease which, sooner or later, gradually removes each of us from the allotment and the playing field in the fullness of time.

But there are other things. With the passing of youth, it becomes less and less tasteful to find oneself at variance with the cherished beliefs and gentle faith of those around us, or to bear the genuine pain which they so often feel on our behalf. The Christian religion has gathered around it so much that is in itself lovely—has been the setting against which so many grand characters have displayed the natural goodness within them, that it seems to become more and more difficult, after the first exultation of rugged intellectual independence has died down, to insist even to oneself on the logical separation which alone enables one to accept and enjoy the beauty in its own right.

From this emotional dilemma there seems to be two escapes. One, the least courageous, to withdraw into a fortress of private philosophical solitude from which one makes no further efforts in the direction of the aggressive campaign—tolerating, and by default acquiescing in such orthodoxy as pleases those around one to practice and express; and the other to embrace an attitude of complete sympathy with those still unable to face the Unknown without the aid of a comfortable mythology to which, after all they are more than entitled if by one iota it can add anything to the consolations of living in these times.

I have already admitted somewhere that had it not been for the support of a powerful and virile body of thought and literature associated with great names, my own Free-thought would have remained a private "skeleton" hidden furtively in the domestic cupboard, from which even now it can but emerge with increasing caution, lest in the eyes of shocked beholders there appears the glint of pain. "Better a millstone—than that I should offend one of these."

Readers of Harry Price's "Thirty Years of Physical Research" may remember a remark he made (I think in the preface), which runs something like this: "Let it be understood that it is not my wish that anything I have written or said may for one moment shake the faith of anyone who has a sincere belief in the after-life," whereupon he embarks on a detailed account of how during his long years of research under conditions which have enabled him to examine every possible psychic claim, he finds himself compelled to reject *in toto* the spiritualistic hypothesis.

He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.—  
JOHN RUSKIN.

It will be noted that the first alternative cause suggested for the change which takes place in the outlook of thinkers in and past middle age is in itself evidence of the materialistic basis of thought generally, since it clearly implies a direct relation between the evolving instincts of a changing organism and the metaphysic it reflects. "I can *now* look at sex through the wrong end of the telescope," says Joad somewhere—and being through the wrong end, we may note, it has assumed very much smaller dimensions and importance—in which mood, perchance, he may find it considerably easier to rejoice in what he recently described as a tendency by youth to re-examine traditional doctrines—doctrines, *inter alia*, which, had he cared to acknowledge them 30 years ago, would or should have provided moral sanctions serving the same purpose.

Thus it would seem that what we seem to observe in the changing pronouncements of ageing philosophers may yet prove one of the strongest grounds for agreement with Havelock Ellis, to whom all philosophies, all metaphysical systems simply reflect the constitution and personality of those who hold them—another powerful justification for Freethought and objective thinking as the only tenable attitude with which life and the Universe can safely be faced by an enlightened man.

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

### THE CREED OF THE FLOWERS

Now Private Smith he had a hunch,  
That past Death's darkened bower  
Each soldier laddie slain in war  
Would turn into a flower.

The only future life we'll know  
Is not with angel wings,  
But life like buttercups and grass  
And cabbages and things.

\*Twill take a whole platoon of men  
To make a noble tree,  
But every little one of us  
Some tiny bloom will be.

We all agreed that he was right,  
But thought it quite a shame  
That privates, sergeants, brigadiers,  
Should all end up the same.

But Gough had got the thing worked out,  
And lectured us for hours,  
Proving that men of higher rank  
Turned into pretty flowers.

Anything from a sergeant down  
Who comes from common seed,  
Will bloom as yellow dandelion,  
Low thistle and stink-weed.

A colonel will turn out to be  
A nice forget-me-not,  
While each dead general will adorn  
A choice geranium plot.

Defaulters, leadswingers and cooks,  
As every soldier knows,  
Will all lie buried in a row,  
Where poison ivy grows.

Fat men will lie in pumpkin beds  
When their long pick is over;  
Shrimps like that little Dowson boy  
Will make a tiny clover.

But when we see a cactus plant  
Beneath a sultry sky,  
We'll know that in their prickly sleep  
Some sergeant-majors lie.

ERIC A. DOWSON.

Faith consists in believing things because they are impossible. Faith is nothing more than submissive or deferential incredulity.—VOLTAIRE.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### THE NAUGHTY BOY

STR.—A well-known man had a five-year-old son whom he greatly loved and spoilt. Whenever thwarted, the child used to swear. Once, as he was swearing, he stopped short and cried out, "Help, father, help! The black men have come for me!" Thereupon he died. Thus the man was duly punished for his excessive love towards his child and for not having brought him up to fear God.

This story might be of service to the clergy in their "collar the kids" campaign; and it is the sort of tale that would become very common if that campaign succeeded. Abelard cites it in his *Sic et Non* (Marburg, 1851), and says that it was told by St. Gregory the Great (*Dialog.* IV. c. 18) under the title *de puero blasphemio*.—Yours, etc.

C. C. DOVE.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

#### Report of Executive Meeting Held April 19, 1942

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

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Rosetti (A. C.), Bryant, Seibert, Ebury, Horowitz, Griffiths, Miss Woolstone and the Secretary.

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

Lecture reports and suggestions were dealt with from Glasgow, Manchester, Blackburn, Durham, Derby and London area.

Correspondence on religion in the Armed Forces was noted, discussed and remitted to the Conference. The Annual Balance Sheet was adopted. The Annual Conference will be held in London at the Waldorf Hotel, and the Secretary instructed to proceed with all necessary arrangements. Methods for further advertising the movement were under discussion and adjourned for further information. Until further notice the Executive will meet on Thursday, the next meeting being on Thursday, June 4.

The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON

##### Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields: 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London N.S.S. Branch (Hyde Park): 3-0, Mr. E. C. SAPHIN and supporting speakers.

##### Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, Prof. G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "Latin America and the War."

#### COUNTRY

##### Indoor

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

Blackpool (Labour Hall, Counce Street): A debate, Saturday, May 2, 7-30 p.m., "Does Spiritualism Prove Survival After Death?" Affirm., Mr. H. DICKINSON; Neg., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

##### Outdoor

Blyth (The Fountain), Monday: 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Burnley N.S.S. Branch (Market): 7-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday: 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Colne (Vivary Bridge): Thursday, 7-45, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston-on-Thames N.S.S. Branch (Castle Street), Sunday: 7-0, Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Newcastle (Bigg Market), Sunday: 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.