

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Playing for Safety

THERE was no need for the Rev. L. B. Ashby to have done it; but he chose to do it, and that is all that can be said in his defence. Mr. Ashby is the Saturday sermoniser for the "Daily Telegraph"—although why the "Telegraph" should insult its readers in this way we cannot say. To say that intelligent people long for and approve these sermonettes would be to offer an insult in the form of an explanation. Lacking absolute proof, we simply decline to believe that even sensible Christians enjoy these exercises in futility that go the rounds of our Press. The most likely explanation is that the better-intellectually-type of believers imagine they help to keep the less intelligent ones in order. At any rate, we will let the matter go at that.

Mr. Ashby says that for misquotations nothing suffers so much as the Church of England Catechism. He gives as an illustration of this the way in which the Church Catechism, "to do my duty in that *state* of life unto which it *shall* please God to call me," becomes *completely travestied* as "that *station* of life unto which it *has pleased* God to call me." He adds that "this nonsense is found in the Karl Marx theory that 'religion is the opiate of the people,' and is designed to make the poor accept their lot with resignation." Now, I have always wondered why Christians should object to the statement of Marx—unless it was on the ground that he was letting the cat out of the bag. For one of the claims of Christian preachers has been, from the very beginnings of the Christian Church, that Christianity did this. Christian preachers have never ceased to claim that their religion enabled man to be calm under oppression, happy under ill-treatment, to face death with equanimity, and to put up with wrong for Christ's sake. I do not, of course, claim that this has been universally the case in fact, but it certainly has been the theory. Marx's statement involved neither sarcasm nor satire. It was objected to by Christians because Marx, as an Atheist, was able

to show that the Christian Church had served as a narcotic for the wrongs which the Church had protected with the cloak of sanctity. The seeds of this were sown in the New Testament with its teaching of non-resistance, with the command to obey the powers that be, and that servants—"slaves" is the right interpretation here—should be obedient to their masters whether their masters were good or bad. And right in front of me while I write is a leaflet, pushed into my letter-box, informing me of the comfort the belief in Jesus and in a future life brings to those who have lost a son or a husband or a friend in the war. And, after all, there is nothing objectionable in an opiate as such. It entirely depends upon the purpose for which it is used. Mainly, the Church has used it for a purpose that has been bad.

I just note in passing that Mr Ashby thoughtfully omits a sentence just above the one he cites. That runs, "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters." In attempting to prove Christianity to be a democratic religion, that sentence would not count on the religious side. And there is no mistaking the meaning of "betters." We have many specimens of them left. Hence our dangers and disadvantages.

### A Peculiar Plea

Now let us look at what Mr. Ashby calls "a complete travesty," a misquotation that holds "pride of place," and which appears with "extraordinary persistence." The "travesty" consists in the use of "state" instead of "station" and "shall please" instead of "has pleased." For my own part, after looking at these two quotations, I can see no substantial difference between them. "Shall" and "has" are the same thing used in different tenses. But the distinction between God having done a thing or that he will do a thing makes no material difference in the implication or the sense of the two quotations. The difference lies not between these two presentations of the same teaching—a difference that is purely verbal—but in the change of times. We are in the midst of the largest war in history: a war which, so far as wars can differ, is distinctive in kind. And Christianity was never less in fashion than it is at the moment. The Churches have as much right to call this a war for Christianity as an arms manufacturer in Britain has the right to call this a war for maintaining the right of an armament firm to continue making arms for the British Government. But, war or peace, Christianity must be "boosted."

I am puzzled to see what Mr. Ashby had in his mind when he sets forth this peculiar defence of Christianity. I think it must be because Christianity has lost so much ground since the opening of the war that he is attempting to set forth the plea that the Christian religion has nothing to say against war when it is a "righteous" war. And he is up against the "common" man's reflection that if there be a God and if the world is his creation, and

if things develop in accordance with some imagined divine plan, then this war is somehow or the other part of that plan. But, having set out on this adventure, Mr. Ashby seems to have gone quite off the line in challenging what is really one of the plainest facts in history, namely, that the historic Christian Churches—and we have no real concern with others—have always exerted their chief power and influence in the direction of behaving passively and obediently in the existing social situation.

So long as the Christian religion was represented, in the main, by the Roman Church, obedience to "worldly authority" was limited by the extent to which the secular State fell in with the Papacy. If the relations were congenial, the Church ordered the people to obey—for the "powers that be" were "ordained by God." But when the State attempted to cut short the immense revenues of the Church, to take away any of its land, to levy taxes on the Church, or in other ways to trench on Church privileges, then trouble began. There are very, very few occasions on which the Church interfered with the State when Church rights were fully respected. So long as this was the case the Church stuck to its doctrine—for the layman—of obedience to the powers that be. ▽

### Liberty and the Church

When we reach Protestantism the position changes somewhat. The Roman Church had fought and intrigued to gain control over the secular State, as it still does to the limit of its opportunities. The Protestant Church from the outset was linked with the State, and the State religion became the Christian religion. As with the Roman Church, in the days of its contentment, disobedience to the State was one of the offences against which the Protestant (State) Church in this country thundered. James I. considered that rebellion was of the nature of blasphemy. Charles I. also believed that the voice of the King was the voice of God. The whole teaching of the Established Church for nearly two centuries ran on the lines that the duty of the subject was obedience. An echo of this is still to be found in our blasphemy laws, although recent amendments of the common law of blasphemy have reduced an offence to God as something on the level of a charge of being drunk and disorderly.

Towards the end of the 18th century there was preached in full strength the teaching—to the poor—that it was the duty of man to be content in the state, or station, in which God had, or has, placed him. Blasphemy and rebellion were still running in harness. There was little difference here between the Nonconformists and the members of the Church of England, although it is common for Nonconformists to dwell upon the fact that many of the men who won so much for the working class in the first 40 years of the last century were members of Nonconformist bodies. For "were" one should usually read "had been," for most of them had been ejected from the Methodists and from other Nonconformist bodies for taking part in "rebellious" movements. Many resolutions were passed by Nonconformist bodies denouncing those of its members who took part in the semi-revolutionary movements of the day. And when we remember that these revolutionists were demanding such things as better wages—then ranging about 12s. to 15s. per week—the creation of schools for all, and extension of the franchise and the like, we gain a good conception of the times.

For the Church to which Mr. Ashby belongs, and which, by being a clergyman, he represents, it will be enough to cite the ideal of Hannah More and Wilberforce. Hannah More is known for her work in the field of education, but the limitation of her view is shown by her *cheerful* letter to a village the inhabitants of which had made themselves unpleasant to their "betters." She says:—

"In suffering by the scarcity you have but shared in the common lot, with the pleasure of knowing the advantage you have had over many villages in your having suffered no scarcity of religious instruction."

In a letter referring to the scarcity of food Wilberforce writes:—

"Let me remind you that probably that very scarcity has been permitted by an all-wise Providence to unite all ranks of people together; to show the poor how immediately they are dependent upon the rich. . . . It has also enabled you to see more clearly the advantages you derive from the government and constitution of this country. . . . What would have been the state of the poor in this long, distressing scarcity had it not been for your superiors."

Both Hannah More and Wilberforce may be taken as representative of the better type of Christians of that day; but they had their obvious limitations. And those limitations were mainly due to their religion; or if it be argued that their religion served to disguise certain unpleasant aspects of their characters, we change the wording of the indictment without effecting any alteration of its character.

And that lesson is perhaps as useful as any that one may master. Half the dishonesties—moral, mental and physical—that happen have their source in the inability of civilised man to look the world fairly in the face. Paradoxical though it may sound, it takes a man with courage to do an evil action, or make an untruthful statement, with a full consciousness of what is being done. Civilised man must need find a justification for his bad actions. His good ones need no apology. The truth of what has been said comes out strongly with a religion such as Christianity. Commencing with being built on not merely a non-moral basis, but on one that is a mixture of moral and immoral tendencies, the longer it exists the more its real foundations weaken, the more are its advocates driven to find a social and ethical warranty for their religion. That is why lying and cruelty and opposition to new ideas has played such a large part in Christian history; but always with a moral and social cant that has now assumed a special character and claims a particular status of its own. It is a phase of the long war between truth and falsehood, between old beliefs and new knowledge, between the deeply embedded rudiments of primitive human nature and the demands of a more civilised life.

Perhaps this is the best excuse one may find for the Rev. Mr. Ashby's curious excursion into Christian apologetics.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

No man was more eager than Cromwell to protect learning and learned men. He sought out scholars for public employments. . . . His house was remarkable for its refined amusements. . . . the love of music was with him almost a passion as it was with Milton.—KNIGHT'S "ENGLAND."

## IMPROVING GOD'S CREATION

THE Book of Genesis, which the really modern-minded clergyman now teaches as symbolistic fiction, relates that the Almighty looked upon his six days creation and saw that it was good. Unfortunately, all creative artists are egoists and are too much in love with their productions when they are not engaged in hating and destroying them. They all need a critic on the hearth; and England's God is no exception to this rule. If the God of Genesis had been married, like Jupiter, his wife would have sniffed at Creation and pointed out its faults.

For my part, I am prepared to improve God's creation and even to improve God himself, remaking him in the image of a decent man of the type found in the bar of any English public-house. There is no doubt, as Voltaire pointed out in "Candide" with some emphasis, that this world is not the best of all possible worlds. It is indeed what the British workman declared it to be: "a bloody world!" Everything in it preys on its fellow creature's blood, and countless victims (before they are swallowed) will doubtless agree with me, even if my readers do not, that the principle of "Live and let live" is better than God's law of "Eat each other and be eaten."

Worms say the world would not be so bad to live in it if were not for the birds. Birds complain of cats, and so do mice—without reason. Sheep and oxen tell me that Man would be better out of the way. On the other hand, man complains bitterly of his fellow-man (the accident of being born in a different country in wartime is a crime deserving death amongst mankind!), and man complains equally bitterly of many and unknown disease germs. These last little creatures may have souls to be saved for all I know, and there are countless myriads of them the microscope tells me. Really they might eat something else besides human flesh and blood, not to speak of one another. Disgusting, I call it! And when any of those bacteriological organisms attack your health and life, my dear reader, you will doubtless agree with me.

This horrid parasitism of one form of animal life upon another I would end by my Divine will. All animals, from lowliest insect to mightiest man, should feed on nothing but air, and drink rain and dew only. They should all love each other and live in pleasure and peace, pursuing not each other but pursuing simple happiness. Death and birth, too, should be as pleasant as generation and mild as infant sleep. Why not?

The heart of man would be changed. Instead of skin-aversion between white and negroid, yellow and brown, I would encourage skin-attraction. Instead of man's strange hatred for, or still more startling indifference towards, his fellow-man, he should be implanted with a genial affection for all his fellows at sight. Cannibalism of the physical variety and that mental cannibalism called war, would be impossible even as nightmares. Sex-war should go: commerce between the sexes might be much improved by a few radical reforms. Nor would I shrink from improvement in the facial and physical aspects of men, women and animals, and I would be more generous in supplying them with "spare parts" that the present Deity, whose provision in that regard errs, to my mind, on the side of parsimony, not to say downright meanness. Why should I lose a leg and not grow another instanter?

Scientists tell me, and my own observation confirms it, that the vegetable creation upon this travelling earth is as unhappy as the animal creation. It is bad enough, in my opinion, to be created a cauliflower or even an onion (whose very body-odour is productive of tears) without being an unhappy cauliflower or a suffering onion. The struggle for survival amongst vegetation is a fearsome thing for vegetation; so too, no doubt, is a plant's death from thirst or sun-scorching. I find it difficult to believe that leeks like being boiled—and a decent Deity like myself would say "Farewell to All That."

With death and birth as pleasures—instead of pains; death no longer "a hideous storm of terror," with disease and evil emotions no longer existent, the world would no longer be a vale of tears. All of us—men, animals and vegetables—could really enjoy life, enjoy ourselves and enjoy each other in the non-devouring sense. There would be no riches, no property, no quarrels, in a world where all one needed was air and water; where the weather was so kind and element as to do away with the need for clothes and shelter. I suppose that not even the most saintly of Christian clergymen will contend that the weather sent by the present Deity, at any rate to England, is exactly everything that it might be. Even the Unholy and Uncatholic Church of Rome must admit that I could do better than the present Celestial Government—sometimes at least—if I had the gift of Omnipotence. At any rate, I would try hard, as children say ("Vote for Me and a Better World"—as Churchill and Roosevelt express it.)

Stimulated by these few remarks of mine, no doubt you, gentle reader, are reflecting that you, too, could remould God's Creation "nearer to the heart's desire" even better than I. For my part, I do not doubt that you could do better than I, just as I could do better than the present Misgovernor of the Universe. This being so, if we two pigmies could do so much, just reflect what a really great man, a Colossus (not a mere ordinary mortal like you and me, but an "Indispensable" like the Right Honourable Winston Spencer Leonard Churchill, M.P., C.H., etc., etc., our wonderful Premier) could do if he were God. "We all have the utmost confidence in him, and on that point the nation is united as never before—" but in spite of that, on careful second thoughts, perhaps the present Deity had better remain if our great War Leader is the only alternative. I have just remembered that poor old Chamberlain told us that "judgment" was not amongst Winston's "brilliant qualities." Even the yes-men of the Press and the Tadpoles and Tapers of politics, to whom the Premier of the moment is a temporary god, might not really care for Winston as a permanency and omnipotent.

One final word. As democratic Englishmen, you may be inclined to think that the present Dictator of the Universe should be supplanted by a Parliament or Committee, in which men, animals, plant-life, and even minerals, should have adequate "representation." This is certainly an idea, and a fashionable idea at the moment. It is in harmony with current political nonsense and is certain to be popular with the mob. Nothing is worse than a Dictator, however, except a Democracy, and judging by the muddles and messes of our present so-called "democracies," the universe would quickly return to Chaos and Old Night while the chattering was taking place. For my part, I think the present anarchy might be better than that. Think of the British Parliament and Civil Service administering the Universe—and shudder! The very notion is enough to make any Freethinker vote for the present God.

Still, if only the Old Gentleman would entrust his job and his power to me for six days! I would rest on the seventh day willingly. When I had done my six days, not only I, but everyone else, would see that my work was not only good but much better. If six days is too long for a jealous God to give me, I beg to say that I could do a lot of cleaning-up of this universe on a Saturday afternoon in my spare time.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

The Arabs pushed to superstition their respect of hospitality. Their most inveterate enemy found refuge, security and even protection as soon as he succeeded in touching the cord of their tents or the skirts of their wives.—LAMARTINE.

Cato used to say that they who beat their wives or children laid their sacrilegious hands on the most sacred things in the world; and that he preferred the character of a good husband to that of a great senator.—PLUTARCH'S "CATO."

## THIS FREEDOM

IT is not perhaps fully consonant with individual justice to hold a Lord Chancellor responsible for a Home Secretary's actions, or expect a Home Secretary to live up to a Lord Chancellor's words. But political justice is a thing apart—and not altogether unreasonable when it assumes to each member of an Administration adherence to principles officially enunciated by any of its members on the Administration's behalf, and a collective share of the responsibility for the official actions of any of its members who continue in office under the full approval of the Administration's favour.

Thus with memory's ear cocked at the echoes of the strange attitudes and actions taken by some of our democracy's present administrators in connection with that democracy's fundamental principles of free thought, free speech and equality before the law—one may well be less stirred than amused at reading in one's semi-officially controlled free Press that the Lord Chancellor (first member of the Government to comment in public on Hitler's recent speech) declared in a broadcast talk that

"to President Roosevelt's "four freedoms"—of speech, from want, from insecurity, from fear—must be added a fifth: the freedom of every citizen to appeal to the law and courts."

As in the case of another "vital democratic freedom" much publicised by the Government's spokesmen, the right of peoples to govern themselves and live their own lives without outside interference, when sought in practice by India—this must, in the circumstances, be taken to be a politico-legal counsel of perfection rather than a statement of practice. For this very thing which now assumes oracular utterance from the lips of the Lord Chancellor is one of those basic principles of English justice which have for so long been taken for granted—and which, under our present Administration, are being more and more taken and less and less granted.

In administrations as in individuals (for administrations, after all, are only the collective wisdom or folly of wise or foolish individuals) there is a window-dressing tendency to praise in theory what one, knowingly or unknowingly, denies in practice; and perhaps it is from some uneasy stirring of the Administration's collective guilty conscience that we receive this little homily. Like many others, its reading, if not so tragic, would be amusing just at this time when Executive Action becomes more and more a law unto itself, and when the political Executive (despite the appeals of democracy's few remaining democrats in Parliament) tends more and more to act by executive authority rather than in any way that would allow appeal against its will to be made to the Courts.

Need such things be even under the attractive compulsion of "war's necessity"? Those of us who in the past have been particular to the extreme about liberty (knowing how treacherously slippery is the slope of "justified" or "temporary" denial of liberty) are told now on all hands, and by many who should know much better, that at the present time we are speaking out of turn, because the "necessities of war" demand such "temporary constraints" upon some of our liberties, in order that we may the better defend all our liberties and the bases of freedom itself against unscrupulous dictatorships. The argument is popular, frequent, easy, plausible—and ridiculous.

Let us consider another quotation:—

"We have recently watched with dismay the silent encroachments upon our freedom; the gradual extension of the dictatorship of the Parliamentary Executive; the power of Parliament growing less and less, and the power of the Minister and his Department getting more and more; the growing inclination of the Prime Minister to present the House of Commons with a *fait accompli* rather than allow it to share beforehand in discussing matters that vitally affect the country. In these days when democratic statesmen are

becoming almost as touchy about criticism as the dictators themselves, the freedom of the Press becomes more and more precarious; all sorts of pressure is exerted in unofficial ways; actions have been taken against the Press under the Official Secrets Act and upheld in the Courts by the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Hewart, which in 1920 Lord Hewart, as Attorney-General, solemnly assured the House of Commons could not and would not be taken. In 1935, too, the possibility of legislation to control the Press was actually being canvassed by this democracy's Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald), its Lord Chief Justice (again Lord Hewart) and other prominent people. It may come yet, especially as our great friends, the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists, would like us to do it. It may come yet, especially as the ordinary people in the street suggest the same thing and do not see the folly of their attitude. Wherever we turn we see this slowly growing apathy towards hard-won liberties, and the corresponding growth of an attitude favouring control, legislation, coercion. . . ."

I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the picture of the time when those things were said (since they were stated in a public lecture by myself!). And the time they were said was away back in "peaceful" 1938. Yes, 1938—that fact in itself should give us furiously to think.

May it not be that "war's necessity" is but the accidental occasion (or excuse) rather than the governing cause of so many of to-day's restraints upon our freedom? Is it not rather strange that the things we find in being to-day are the logical development of those dangers then prophesied and already threatening? Curious that "war's necessity" appears simply to have expedited the coming of forms of dictatorship and authoritarianism that were already incipient in the conditions and mood of this country several years ago, when there was no question of war's necessity!

Abuses of freedom by newspapers, I have long maintained, should be dealt with by dealing with the newspapers, not by dealing with freedom; and there should be some certainty that they *are* abuses of freedom and not simply uses of freedom that are officially unwelcome. I have long held, too, that people should be educated to read newspapers intelligently; and taught that, just as the voice of the people is not necessarily the voice of God, as once believed, so also the voice of Lord Rothermere or Lord Beaverbrook had no necessary connection with the Almighty. That remains more or less true, and if I may, I would humbly add that neither is even "war's necessity" the Divine Will, nor, as far as we can tell, does the voice of God Almighty speak from within the precincts of the Home Office.

There is another angle to present Gilbertianism which should give us furiously to think. Was it just a little ironical twist of Providence that—following the curious history of the persistence in the repression of the "Daily Worker," and the many strange stories told of the operations of "Regulation 18B"—the final action in the now notorious warning to the "Daily Mirror" should have been taken not on some more direct and obvious principle in connection with the war effort, but on the social implications of a rise in the price of a private-profit-making commodity—and taken by an official who in his political horoscope is cast with a party sworn to the abolition of all private profit-making through exploitation (of course, in the capitalistically circumspect economics of the British Labour Party)?

Was it just an ironical twist? Or was it just one of those coincidences that the Prime Minister quoted from 1938 as favouring Press control (then mainly at the behest of diplomats for whose death and destruction this country *now* favours Press control) was a Labour statesman turned "saviour of his country" in the halo of capitalists' and bankers' flattery? Just a coincidence that the work he and his pseudo-Labour associates began in those days of peace should now, in the so-called necessities

of war, be completed and cemented by another "saviour" from Labour's haloed host, by Labour "dictator of County Hall" turned "dictator of Fleet Street and Scotland Yard"?

Providence, 'tis said, has a great sense of humour. So it appears. However, while accepting with becoming gratitude such whimsical gifts of inscrutable Providence, let us also ponder these things awhile!

RONALD STANDEFAST.

### MID-SPRING NIGHT'S DREAM

THAT so many of us must spend long weary hours by day and by night watching over or guarding scenes of the most serene peace, is surely one of the strange anomalies of war. It is probably true that few more essentially peaceful settings for contemplation and reflection could be found than the average fire-watchers incongruously comfortable post in the small hours of the morning, or the maddeningly secure and harmless gate which must be guarded against an ever present danger which never materialises.

It would be unexpected if during the half conscious contemplation of silent houses, and intermittent clock watching which characterises these spells of passive defence, there were not many who made them a not unwelcome opportunity for philosophical dreaming. One wonders almost how many of the great intermittent flashes of philosophical and political genius which characterises human progress will later be traced to the apt turning of one such hour? I would like a £5 note for every penny if weary mind which last night alone turned for the hundredth time to the problem of the ultimate causes of war. Not unnaturally, in common with so many others, this problem has helped for me to shorten and alleviate many such hours, and if there can be a conclusion in a matter so vastly complex and yet so insistent, it would not be unexpected if it should be borne in upon one at such a time when, deprived of the impact of endless arguments and the emotionalism of general conversation, it is possible to think clearly and with a minimum of prejudice.

Is not the ultimate cause of war both infinitely complex and at the same time absurdly simple? And are we not blinded to its elemental wood almost entirely by the riot and profusion of emotional, racial and rhetorical trees? And having plainly seen the cause, do not the same two factors of necessity rule the cure?

As I see it, the ultimate cause of all wars is nothing more nor less than the tortuous course of human domination over a globe which nature has endowed at random with wealth and poverty with the same planless inequality which rendered the continents so strangely shapeless and haphazard as they rose from the oceans which once covered them all. Our animal ancestors were the first to notice this. And after 5,000 years of civilisation we are no nearer a rational answer as to how, in an unequal world of land and sea, we are ever to reach a system whereby all the modern facilities for transport and exchange can solve for all time the problem of the "haves" and the "have nots" which underlies it all.

No one who has watched the progress of the World Campaigns during the last two years can ever again be lead away by the notion that its ultimate causes lie at the door of any one Dictator, any one ideology, or the attributes of any one small group—these and so many other things which are hurled at the unsuspecting public in all belligerent countries are but the trappings and the subtle camouflage whereby interested parties seek to lull suspicion, enhance patriotism, and generally to colour the issue in the interests of the rulers of the issue and the day. If one thinks of all wars as based on the simple issue of "have" and "have not" and are able, as many of us claim, to recognise all intermediate factors and phenomena as something interposed and unreal, one has, I think, reached the rock bottom of the age old problem, and could in theory at least suggest its solution. And yet at the same time, the very nature of the problem seems to

me to preclude any hope of a final solution even in theory, before countless hundreds of years have brought about a levelling of human conditions and opportunities which would bring the Chinese Coolie to the same plane of culture and scale of living as, for instance, the American labourer (at least) with his modern flat, radiogram and private car. In the interim there will and must be what in effect are "subject races" else one must ask the European proletarian to sink to a level of life only just above that of the Indian "untouchable" or the African nigger—which could not be contemplated, yet would be the inevitable consequence of a too sudden attempt to bring about the final ideal equalitarianism which must some day reign if the race is to survive.

What then would be my world plan for immediate conditions precluding anything but minor wars of little consequence in the misguided world as we now have it? A simple rearrangement of Empires largely on the existing plan—yes—even complete with "subject" races and foreign "possessions," but pledges from the outset so to rule and to educate that the ultimate World State freed from all political and religious intolerance must emerge. I say "simple," but it would have to be understood from the outset that vast private interests would be subject to confiscation and rearrangement involving what on the face of it would seem gross injustice and its opposite, gross favouritism, in the ruthless redivision of the world's widely varied riches. And is this surprising, when the plan would aim at the sudden reorganisation on rational principles of a situation grown all awry through years of ignorance, laissez faire and unreason? In setting up what I visualise as the Four New Empires, it would be necessary, I think, to so divide the capitals and administrative centres as to leave them in the Northern Hemisphere, with foreign and tropical possessions allocated without fear or favour purely on a basis of one quarter each of the mineral and natural riches involved, with due consideration to communications and respective economic working. Racial characteristics would be considered, but not allowed to dominate the all-important economic factor, and a Federation of the Four Empires with machinery for collective security would bind the joint World Union until such time as men felt able to bring them under one head after years of steady progress in which, in the absence of economic jealousy and/or overcrowding, there seemed little object in the nominal separation. And the time to do this would be the hour of victory, when the victorious nations would be in a position to impose it without further bloodshed, having in the meantime reconciled themselves to the sacrifices involved in the dissolution of the present system of tenure.

Two things would be necessary for such a plan. One, the complete disestablishment of all and every religious body holding political power, and the other the realisation that such a stroke would in itself be economically immoral, and have to be recognised as a necessary immoral world revolution carried out ruthlessly to right deep-rooted economic wrongs which would yield to nothing less. It would seem to me that any less drastic settlement of world affairs after this war, though it might establish even a long peace, would end again in further conflict. A situation brought about by economic causes cannot be treated by moral suasion, since morality itself is largely an economic problem which could be re-established with as little disturbance as possible on the basis of its new foundation under the guidance of enlightened men.

At any rate, that's how it seemed to me in the early hours of the other morning under a full moon as I stood my guard against a row of silent houses keeping company with the odd wandering dog, and early cyclist pedalling dreamily to some Spartan task in the great armoury of war. None but a Free-thinker could even toy with such a scheme.

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

## ACID DROPS

FATHER HEENAN (R.C.) assures the world that the Church has "nothing but love for the great Russian people while deploring any system of philosophy which would rob them of their God." We like that expression, a very common one, by the way, "rob them of their God." How does one accomplish this? You may rob a man of his coat or his dog, or of any movable article. You may rob a man of his legal rights, etc. But how does one rob a man of his God? One does not talk in politics of robbing a man of his Conservative, Liberal or Labour views. We do not speak of robbing a man of his opinion concerning certain musicians or painters, or the pleasure of a sunset, or the fascinating fury of a great storm. In such matters we rightly speak of a change of opinion or of taste. And as there is a change of opinion, or of taste, the process is an educative one. A man finds placed before him certain arguments he had not heard of, or the strength of which he had never recognised. His taste may be elevated or depraved. But "robbery" is always, when the word is used with decency, a matter of taking something from a man by force or stealth, which is another form of force. As a certain comedian would say, "We don't get it."

What really happens, what occurs in the displacement of an idea or opinion is one gets a ready-made formula put before him and he accepts it—as a consequence of immaturity, or lack of knowledge, or poor reasoning, or by not recognising certain facts that would have made the acceptance of the formula. From childhood he hears such expressions as "There must be a God," "You must believe in a God," "You will be punished if you do not believe in God," etc., etc. Then it is recognised that a belief in God or not, is fundamentally a matter of opinion. There is no "must" in it—that is, there is no legitimate "must." There is only a "must" which owes its power to fear of punishment, here or hereafter, or to sheer imitation of others, to loss of position or hope of gain. There is a "must" only for the coward or the fool. For a man there is a process of reasoning about "God" which may be sound or unsound. That is all.

What is plain here is that we have the old religious, and particularly the old Christian, game of calling names. Robbery implies violence, threats, the rule of brute force, the non-recognition of the rights of other men and women. No one can rob a man of his God. God is not portable, he is merely invisible. We do not talk of robbing a man of his ghost when he discovers that the ghost was an illusion. Quite correctly we say the man has ceased to believe in the ghost because he has discovered it to be an illusion. Once upon a time it was adequate to describe "God" as an illusion. In the light of a great deal of contemporary belief it would be excusable to define "God" as a vehicle for blackguardism.

A great deal has been written of late concerning the "New Order" which is to be created in the new Poland that will be established after the defeat of Germany. But if it is to be Poland for free men and women, which is not quite the same as a free country, there will have to be a much more liberal regime than existed before the villainous annexation by Germany. The re-establishment of Polish landlords, with the reinstatement of a substantially Fascist form of government, with the majority of the people landless, will not make for world peace. If Poland will enter the circle of genuine democracies, or will honestly aim at creating one, well and good. The reinstatement of the power and privileges of the Roman Church in Poland is also a factor that has to be borne in mind.

The Isle of Man appears to be a delightful place just now for a holiday. Everything seems quite happy there, and there are few risks of bombing raids. The "Sunday Dispatch" supports us in the conclusion named by its chronicling the fact that the

Japanese interned there "celebrated the fall of Singapore with an all-night champagne party," and we know already that our British fifth columnists have no complaints to make concerning their treatment as guests of the British Government.

The retrogressive element among our political rulers was never more clearly shown than in the campaign it has joined with—if it did not originate—for handing the elementary schools over to the control of the churches. The other phase of this retrogressive influence is to be found in the difficulty still experienced in large numbers of cases for men—we ought now to add women—to secure one of the first elements of freedom where religion is concerned. Of course, legally, every individual in the Forces is entitled to a certain degree of freedom, but our letter-box bears good evidence that this right is often denied, or its exercise gained at the cost of something that is not unlike punishment. The engagement by the War Office of a travelling paid padre, whose platitudinal stupidities are heard weekly on the air, is another indication of the same trend. And there are others.

But, so far as we know, the only man who has gone the length—perhaps it is intended as a feeler—of advocating compulsory attendance at Church for civilians, is the Rev. Cresswell Webb, who decorates the pages of the "Daily Mirror" for May 12 with an article to that effect. Mr. Webb glances admiringly at what the Nazis are able to do in the way of compelling the German people to attend Nazi meetings, and argues that if Christendom is to hold its own against Nazi efficiency we must see to it that Church attendance becomes obligatory. Why not? If we are justified in forcing religion on the schools, if we make it semi-compulsory in the Armed Forces, if our Ministry of Education may intrigue with the Churches to give them control of elementary education, why not go the whole hog and compel the civil population to attend Church? It is the only method by which Christianity can be saved. "Freedom of thought must be respected!" Certainly. That is agreed. But we learn that the real freedom is that which finds expression in the worship of God. The Archbishop of Canterbury says so. And if people do not recognise this of their own volition, they must be compelled to observe it. Long live freedom—provided it is of the proper official kind.

The Rev. Cresswell Webb\* also asks in the "Daily Mirror," "Is a church like a theatre?" We agree with him that it is not. With a theatre people pay to go in, in a church they pay to get out. A theatre has to pay rates and taxes. In a church every member of the public is forced to pay a proportion of what churches should pay. In a theatre the actors use a language that one can listen to with ease and profit. In a church the performers usually adopt a form of speech that should, and often does, rouse a smile. In a theatre the actors honestly confess they are assuming a part, describing how men and women are likely to react in a given and common situation. In a church an impossible person in a ridiculous manner is mainly concerned with an artificial human nature that is to be fitted for action in an impossible world, for beings who will cease to be human if they can manage to live in it. Decidedly, a church is not like a theatre.

In these days of "de-bunking" it is not surprising that such an unpleasant personage as Pope Alexander VI. should form one of the whitewashed saints. The "Universe" is crowing over the fact that a "freethinking" Cuban lawyer has at last "done justice" to the most infamous of the Borgias in a work which, we are told, "makes all the curdling romance of Borgia poisoning go down with a crash, the stories of debauchery fade away into mere vapours of ill-supported scandal." All the same, it appears that "in the matter of his mistresses and children" the author, Orestes Ferrara, "does not entirely sweep these indictments away"—which means, in effect, that it is quite possible that a celibate Pope of Rome had at least some mistresses and some children. After all, both Caesar and Lucretia Borgia can't be swept away very easily—nor indeed their crimes, done under the very nose of Alexander VI., and in many cases with his connivance.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. HATTIE.—Thanks for cuttings. They are always useful, even when they are not immediately used.

For distributing "The Freethinker," W. A. Urquhart, 15s.

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## SUGAR PLUMS

WITH this issue "The Freethinker" appears in a new form but without alteration in quality or quantity. We had hoped to get through the war without any further alteration in the appearance of the paper, but the paper shortage gets more serious, and continuity of publication is the first consideration. The present form enables us to print more copies, and the saving of paper where possible is urgent. The most annoying part of the situation is that the demand for "The Freethinker" has increased, and we have had to refuse orders. Also to restrict the number of free copies sent out.

This change marks the only alteration in the make-up of "The Freethinker" that has occurred since its first appearance more than sixty years ago, and if readers like the present form it will continue—with, of course, a larger number of pages—after the paper shortage has disappeared. It may also be noted that the quantity of reading matter in this issue is substantially what it has been in other numbers. Finally, we have to thank very sincerely the loyal generosity with which readers have supported "The Freethinker" during the most trying period of its history. Those at this end have all worked to do what could be done, but the continued inspiration and encouragement came, as it had to come, from without. So we make our changed but fundamentally continued appearance, confident as ever in the value and need of "The Freethinker" to "the best of causes."

The conditions in which "The Freethinker" is now printed compel us to hold over the report of the Annual Conference until next week. When the paper was got ready on the premises, we could to some extent command time; now time commands us. Actually this copy of "The Freethinker," with the exception of the space taken by these notes, was in the hands of the printers before the Conference met. Even "The Freethinker" has to bow to circumstances in these times.

All we need say now is that the Conference was a marked success. It was held in the Waldorf Hotel, as was also the lunch; and considering the war conditions, the meal was a good one and well served. We heard nothing but praise concerning that part of the programme. There was a larger attendance than last year, and far more members came from the provinces—Durham, Manchester, Bath, Hull, Wigan, North Staffordshire and Bolton, and London and nearby districts being well represented. Apart from the more formal business, elections of officials, the discussions on the subjects set forth reached a very satisfactory level. The speakers showed they had a good grasp

of the principles involved, and in the discussions it was good for an "old hand" to note how well the essential issues were grasped and dealt with. That promises well for our future.

Another pleasing feature was the extent to which the younger generation was represented. There were, of course, many of the "old guard," and we were delighted to see them; close to the presidential chair was Mr. How, who had stood by the side of the president when he gave his first lectures in Victoria Park over 50 years ago. That stalwart, Mr. Saphin, was also present, and while the physical marks of time were traceable, as with so many of us, there was no faltering or weakening on the mental side. We hope to see them with us on future occasions and to continue just as long as life is agreeable enough not to become a burden or a bore. To most of us, young and old, the Conference will have acted as a stimulus. We hope that conditions next year will provide an opportunity for a visit to the provinces.

We said our say concerning Miss Dorothy Sayers as a defender of Christianity, rather to that lady's annoyance, but we like to see even our opponents treated fairly. The Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, for example, has raised a solemn, if not a serious, objection to the religious play which Miss Sayers wrote for the B.B.C. The objection raised by the Committee is that "the part of our Lord was played by an actor and non-scriptural and colloquial language was put into his mouth." That we consider a quite unjustifiable complaint against Miss Sayers.

If "Our Lord" ever lived, and if he preached to the people—perhaps we ought to say "if he spake unto the people"—he will have used current colloquial language. Surely the Committee does not believe that a man talking in the Jerusalem of nearly two thousand years ago spoke in the language of the English Bible of the 16th and 17th centuries, or with the professional drone of the modern parson? Miss Sayers was quite justified in making her Jesus speak as an ordinary man of to-day would speak. It is surprising that the really sensible part of Miss Sayer's play should have given offence to Christians.

But is it surprising? Everyone knows how important it is with folk tales and magic performances that a specific language, a specific tone, and a specific manner should be used. Speak in a quite ordinary way and the magic of the whole thing disappears. This is as true of the Christian legend as it is of the invocation of witches or the fee-fi-fum of the fairy tale. Miss Sayers probably did not quite realise this, but then she is not a professional theologian. She is a mere amateur, and professionals are always suspicious of amateurs. They are apt to do much harm in their eagerness to help the cause they have espoused.

Consider the difference between describing the important experience of Joseph concerning the coming birth of Jesus. Instead of "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream," read "Joseph dreamed an angel appeared unto him in a dream." There is all the difference here between fact and fancy. So being an outsider we are able to see why it is that the amateur thought she was doing Christianity a service, while the professional knew she was knocking the stuffing out of it.

Mr. Arnold Lunn, like most converts full of enthusiasm for his new love, told a Roman Catholic Press Conference in London that the only chance England has of influencing American opinion is through the Roman Catholic Press. We know, and often dwell upon the fact, that Roman Catholic manipulated opinion in the U.S.A. is strong. Apart from purely foreign influence, it has offered the greatest opposition to what we may call a "spiritual" alliance with Russia. But we do not think that its influence is nearly what Mr. Lunn would make it.

The reason for Mr. Lunn's statement, made to an English audience, is plain. He knows that Rome will never cease plotting against Russia while that country maintains its present attitude towards Christianity and religion. It would continue to plot, even though the relation between State and religion was ideal from the point of view of social justice. Mr. Lunn knows well that any

move, public or private, open or concealed, to maintain a close association with "Atheist Russia" will meet with support from powerful influences in this country, who are compelled, for the time, to be silent. The claim that we are risking our relations with the U.S.A. unless we get on good terms with the American Catholic Press is just one of the moves that has Catholic intrigue stamped all over it. Roman Catholicism has but one real and permanent aim—the maintenance of the Roman Church.

The Bishop of Grimsby is quite upset because the see of Lincoln is still vacant, and has asked all the faithful to make his appointment "a matter of earnest prayer" so that "a worthy successor to our long line of real fathers in God may be sent to us." We can reassure the Bishop of Grimsby. Prayer or no prayer, whoever is appointed the Bishop of Lincoln will be, if not the very finest that city has ever had, quite equal to the finest. He will have almost all the virtues and wonderful qualities of an Archbishop of Canterbury, and that is saying something. Whoever heard of a Bishop not being "a worthy successor"?

A proposal for a wartime nursery in Blackburn brought an offer of additional premises from the Very Rev. Dean Moylen, a prominent Roman Catholic priest in Blackburn. But on hearing that a non-Catholic matron was to be appointed, the Very Rev. Dean Moylen withdrew his offer, entered a caveat against construction work proceeding, and proposed advising Catholic women that, on grounds of conscience, they could not use the nursery. Fortunately for Blackburn, there are no "very reverends" on the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, and in consequence, proper attention for expectant mothers was considered more important than the sectarian beliefs of the matron. The committee has met the challenge of the spiteful "Very Rev.," and if the Ministry of Health supports them, the premises offered and then withdrawn will be requisitioned and the proposed nursery proceeded with. The Very Rev. Dean Moylen provides a living lesson of what Christianity can make of a man.

### BROWN'S CHRISTMAS PHILOSOPHY

That Corporal Brown was lecturing  
Over his canteen beer,  
And pointing out that Christmas time  
Is best time of the year.  
"Now, I'm no deep religious guy,"  
He said with eyes a-gleaming,  
"But I would not miss that Christmas feast,  
So full of pep and meaning."  
"Of course, there's lots of fairy tales—  
King Wenceslas and such—  
But whether we believe them all  
Don't matter very much.  
That yarn of angel multitudes  
Is a preposterous thing,  
But boy, that Christmas feeling  
Suro makes me want to sing.  
That whiskered guy called Santa Claus  
With reindeer and sleigh,  
A-climbing down the chimney pots—  
It makes me laugh, I say.  
That tale of shepherds and the star  
I simply don't believe,  
But gosh I like my beer and pie  
And five days Christmas leave.  
I cannot understand it all,  
And have no Christian graces;  
But I drink the Christmas spirit in,  
And really go to places.  
So though I am no Christian man,  
It fills my heart with glee;  
For Christmas brings my one big chance  
To go upon the spree."

ERIC A. DOWSON.

### DENIS DIDEROT

RARELY has the world seen a more fecund mind than Diderot's. Voltaire called him *Pantophile*, for everything came within the sphere of his mental activity. The 20 volumes of his collected writings contain the germ-ideas of nearly all the best thought of our age, and his anticipations of Darwinism are nothing less than extraordinary. He had not Voltaire's lightning wit and supreme grace of style, nor Rousseau's passionate and subtle eloquence; but he was superior to either of them in depth and solidity, and he was surprisingly ahead of his time, not simply in his treatment of religion, but also in his view of social and political problems. His historical monument is the great "Encyclopædia." For 20 years he laboured on this colossal enterprise, assisted by the best heads in France, but harassed and thwarted by the Government and the clergy. The work is out of date now, but it inaugurated an era; in Mr. Morley's words, "it rallied all that was then best in France round the standard of light and social hope." Diderot tasted imprisonment in 1749, and many times afterwards his liberty was menaced. Nothing, however, could intimidate or divert him from his task; and he never quailed when the ferocious beast of persecution, having tasted the blood of meaner victims, turned an evil and ravenous eye on him.

Carlyle's brilliant essay on Diderot is ludicrously unjust. The Scotch puritan was quite unable to judge the French Atheist. A greater than Carlyle wrote: "Diderot is Diderot, a peculiar individuality; whoever holds him or his doings cheaply is a Philistine, and the name of them is legion." Goethe's dictum outweighs that of his disciple.

Diderot's character, no less than his genius, was misunderstood by Carlyle. His Materialism and Atheism were intolerable to a Calvinist steeped in Pantheism; and his freedom of life, which might be pardoned or excused in a Scotch poet, was disgusting in a French philosopher. Let not the reader be biased by Carlyle's splenetic utterances on Diderot, but turn to more sympathetic and impartial judges.

Born at Langres in 1713, Diderot died at Paris in 1784. His life was long, active and fruitful. His personal appearance is described by Mr. Morley:—

"His admirers declared his head to be the ideal head of an Aristotle or a Plato. His brow was wide, lofty, open, gently rounded. The arch of the eyebrow was full of delicacy; the nose of masculine beauty; the habitual expression of the eyes kindly and sympathetic; but as he grew heated in talk they sparkled like fire; the curves of the mouth bespoke an interesting mixture of finesse, grace and geniality. His bearing was nonchalant enough, but there was naturally in the carriage of the head, especially when he talked with action, much dignity, energy and nobleness."

His conversational powers were great and showed the fertility of his genius. "When I recall Diderot," wrote Meister, "the immense variety of his ideas, the amazing multiplicity of his knowledge, the rapid flight, the warmth, the impetuous tumult of his imagination, all the charm and all the disorder of his conversation, I venture to liken his character to nature herself, exactly as he used to conceive her—rich, fertile, abounding in germs of every sort, gentle and fierce, simple and majestic, worthy and sublime, but without any dominating principle, without a master and without a God."

Diderot was recklessly prodigal of his ideas, flinging them without hesitation or reticence among his friends. He was equally generous in other respects, and friendship was of the essence of his life. "He," wrote Marmontel in his Memoirs, "he who was one of the most enlightened men of the century, was also one of the most amiable; and in everything that touched moral goodness, when he spoke of it freely, I cannot



express the charm of his eloquence. His whole soul was in his eyes and on his lips; never did a countenance better depict the goodness of the heart."

Chiquered as Diderot's life had been, his closing years were full of peace and comfort. Superstition was mortally wounded, the Church was terrified, and it was clear that the change the philosophers had worked for was at hand. As Mr. Morley says, "the press literally teemed with pamphlets, treatises, poems, histories, all shouting from the house-tops open destruction to beliefs which, 50 years before, were actively protected against so much as a whisper in the closet." Every form of literary art was seized and turned into an instrument in the remorseless attack on *L'Infâme*. Diderot rejoiced at all this, as largely the fruit of his own labours. He was held in general esteem by the party of progress throughout Europe. Catherine the Great's generosity secured him a steady income, which he never derived from his literary labours. His townsmen of Langres placed his bust among the worthies in the town hall. More than 100 years later a national statue of Diderot was unveiled at his native place, and the balance of subscriptions was devoted to publishing a popular selection of his works. Truly did this great Atheist say, looking forward to the atoning future, "Posterity is for the philosopher what the other world is for the devout."

In the spring of 1784, Diderot was attacked by what he felt was his last illness. Dropsy set in, and in a few months the end came. A fortnight before his death he was removed from the upper floor in the Rue Taranne, which he had occupied for 30 years, to palatial rooms provided for him by the Czarina in the Rue de Richelieu. Growing weaker every day, he was still alert in mind.

"He did all he could to cheer the people around him, and amused himself and them by arranging his pictures and his books. In the evening, to the last, he found strength to converse on science and philosophy to the friends who were eager as ever for the last gleanings of his prolific intellect. In the last conversation that his daughter heard him carry on, his last words were the pregnant aphorism that 'the first step towards philosophy is incredulity.'

"On the evening of July 30, 1784, he sat down to table, and at the end of the meal took an apricot. His wife, with kind solicitude, remonstrated. 'Mais quel diable de mal venez tu que cela me fasse?' (How the deuce can that hurt me?) he said, and ate the apricot. Then he rested his elbow on the table, trifling with some sweetmeats. His wife asked him a question; on receiving no answer, she looked up and saw that he was dead. He had died as the Greek poets say that men died in the golden age—'they passed away as if mastered by sleep.'"

Grimm gives a slightly different account of Diderot's death, omitting the apricot, and stating that his words to his wife were, "It is long since I have eaten with so much relish." With respect to the funeral, Grimm says that the curé of St. Roch, in whose parish he died, had scrupled at first about burying him, on account of his sceptical reputation and the doctrines expounded in his writings; but the priest's scruples were overcome, partly by a present of "fifteen or eighteen thousand livres."

According to Mr. Morley, an effort was made to convert Diderot, or at least to wring from him something like a retraction:—

"The priest of St. Sulpice, the centre of the philosophic quarter, came to visit him three or four times a week, hoping to achieve at least the semblance of a conversion. Diderot did not encourage conversation on theology, but when pressed he did not refuse it. One day when they found, as two men of sense will always find, that they had ample common ground in matter of morality and good works, the priest ventured to hint that an exposition of such excellent maxims, accompanied by a slight retraction of Diderot's previous

works, would have a good effect on the world. 'I daresay it would, monsieur le curé, but confess that I should be acting an impudent lie.' And no word of retraction was ever made."

If judging men by the company they keep is a safe rule, we need have no doubt as to the sentiments which Diderot entertained to the end. Grimm tells us that on the morning of the very day he died "he conversed for a long time, and with the greatest freedom, with his friend the Baron D'Holbach," the famous author of the "System of Nature," compared with whom, says Mr. Morley, "the most eager Nesciant or Denier to be found in the ranks of the assailants of theology in our own day is timorous and moderate." These men were the two most earnest Atheists of their generation. Both were genial, benevolent and conspicuously generous. D'Holbach was learned, eloquent and trenchant; and Diderot, in Comte's opinion, was the greatest genius of the 18th century. G. W. FOOTE.

(Reprinted)

## THE DEPARTMENT STORE OF PIETY A Sleepy Satire

IT was Silvia's fault. She was the naughtiest girl at the convent school in which she was "educated," but since she has scrambled out of her teens, and been mentally liberated, she has become paganesque—poking fun at even the most sacred things.

The time was after dinner. I was resting on my window divan, I was tired, and then—well—

I took up the "Daily Religion" and saw a full-page advertisement of the

### "REOPENING AFTER EXTENSIVE RENOVATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT STORE OF PIETY"

in which the Holy Directorate invite the great B.P., but particularly Mrs. Demos, her sisters, her cousins and her aunts to inspect "Their immense stocks of the newest and most fashionable lines in Churchianity."

So Silvia and I wended our way to the Ecclesiastic Mart on Zion Hill, where the Salvation band was brassily booming, "Oh! to be washed in the blood of the Lamb." "What a sanguinary sticky bath," said Silvia. "Now, Silvia, do behave, and remember where you are," I replied as I doffed my chapeau.

A grandly attired corpulent beadle opened the massive Gothic doors and we entered.

Behind the counters were the parsons, in bibs and vestments, continually washing their hands in "invisible soap and water," bowing and scraping to the customers whilst chanting in diatonic droning.

### THE HOLY SHOPWALKER DOES HIS STUFF

The Shopwalker was gorgeously arrayed in robes of silk and gold and wore a mitre with gusseted ribbons.

"This way, madame!"

"THE SALVATION COUNTER? First floor; no lift—crawl up the stairs on your knees."

"COMMON PRAYERS? The second counter on the right; we have a special line of Oxford Group that is exclusive and dressy."

"MIRACLES? Top floor, please; the stocks are low these days, but there are still a few Dunkirks available."

"RELICS? Yes, you will find a large assortment of these antiques down in the basement at give-away prices, for they are not so fashionable as they were; we have an absurdly cheap line in Italians."

"BARGAIN COUNTER on the left; a new heavenly halo that sells like 'hot dogs'—Angel Wings of every colour and texture—The Paradise Rainbow is the latest craze; it has a patent electric motor concealed in the feathers that keeps the wings flying and at the same time rests the wearer."

"WANT SOMETHING CHEAP, do you? We still have a few second-hand moults at 1s. 11½d."

#### SATANELLA, THE CONVERTED MANNEQUIN

We crawled up to the first floor in time to hear a special announcement on the loudspeakers—preceded by a fanfare of sackbuts:—

"FASHION DISPLAY by the converted Mannequins in the Salon at 2-30. A gorgeous spectacle with seductive singing, holy water free, blessed wafer 3d., 12 for 2s. 6d.; a devilish fine display.

"At 3 p.m. precisely, Satanella, the fascinating mannequin, 'the darling of the devils,' will exhibit the scarlet sins she wore in Purgatory, from which she was snatched, like a burning brand by the prayers of the Holy Church.

"Satanella will tell you the true story of her life, how she sinned and, as a warning to others, she will describe all the seductive arts of allurements she practised on the male sex, by which no man could resist her; how even the pillars of the Church 'fell for her'—just as the 'Sons of God' in the Holy Bible fell for the daughters of man, who were fair, but oh! so wickedly alluring.

"Satanella will tell you how, when her strength was spent, she repented, and will wear the lovely costume of 'sackcloth and ashes' she personally designed that was the 'Rage of Heaven' until it was censored by Gabriel because the Angel Choristers' Union started to agitate for a forty-hour week—with the right to spend a Saturday half-holiday in Hell.

#### THE PATENT RAINBOW WINGS

"Finally, to the strains of the specially imported Band of Angelic Harpists (kindly lent for the occasion by St. Peter), the lovely Satanella will fly three times around the Salon in the new fashionable Rainbow Wings (with the patent electric motor), which cost only 19s. 11d. a pair.

#### NO MEN ADMITTED—ONLY PARSONS

"Ladies! Don't miss this display of enchantment in the Salon at 3 p.m. precisely—the greatest spectacle of sin and beauty ever exhibited, and absolutely the last appearance of the lovely Satanella—before she returns to Paradise.

"NO MEN ADMITTED—ONLY PARSONS. Admission 1s., which includes a glass of nectar flavoured Babylon Water, a perfect panacea for a seraphim complexion bloom, as used to-day in Paradise by Nimon de Lenclos."

What a disappointment! "No men admitted, only parsons." I did want to see the lovely Satanella fly in her patent Rainbow Wings, but Silvia slipped in and promised to tell me all about it—so, sadly, I left the pious warehouse, and went to see Sadie at the "Spotted Dog."

THEN I WOKE UP. It must have been the lobster—but no, by my side on the window seat was that journal of "blood and fire" that had dropped from my sleepy hands—"THE WAR CRY."

HENRY J. HAYWARD.

#### THE CHURCH AND ARMY MORALITY

"'UTTERLY damnable,' exclaimed the Archdeacon of Beaconsfield (the Ven. T. Dilworth Harrison), speaking recently at Derby Diocesan Conference, when he stated that Army Medical Officers were explaining to recruits in great detail the use of contraceptives and where they could be obtained."

The above example of blinkered church vision appears in a Northern newspaper. Apart from the questionable right of the Church to condemn birth control at a time when the world's clergy is busy sanctifying human self-destruction, the announcement raises several interesting points in the average freethinking mind.

Foremost among these must be the fact that in advocating the use of contraceptives the medical officer's prime consideration is the prevention of venereal disease. Throughout the services there is only one type of contraceptive advised for the troops, and this is the type that prevents actual contact of the parts

concerned, thus reducing to a minimum the risk of venereal infection. The benefits and blessings of so sensible an arrangement need hardly be explained even to an Archdeacon.

The Service medical officer is concerned wholly with the health of the man. He is possessed of both knowledge and common sense. He appreciates human nature and realises that the healthy male animal forced to pass twenty-four hours a day in strong male company must find his natural outlet, or succumb to some less normal form of gratification. I do not know whether the average medical officer looks upon sexual intercourse as a divine miracle or a natural phenomenon, but at least he appreciates that the results are often serious. He does not blind himself as does the venerable gentleman of, Beaconsfield, who, while entitled to his view that human life is God-given, should by implication be prepared to concede that venereal disease must also spring from the Great Giver.

The same newspaper item quotes from a report issued by a Committee of the Free Church of Scotland. The report states: "Promiscuity is being condoned and even encouraged among the armed forces by the gratuitous provision of facilities by which it is designed that the more direct consequences of vicious relations may be escaped."

This remark is even more worthy of criticism than the Derby Diocesan rantings, for it deliberately deprecates the treatment of venereal disease. The gratuitous facilities referred to are known in the Forces as E.T. (Early Treatment) Rooms. Here a man might clean himself privately after chance intercourse and make use of free ointment as a precaution against possible infection. Undoubtedly this medical foresight has been instrumental in preventing a great deal of serious suffering for the Tommy, who, after combating the enemy when on duty and the "exigencies of the service" when off duty feels a little too weak to wrestle with the devil in his spare time.

The writer does not know much about the clergy; he knows less of their little get-togethers, but he has been in the Forces and he has experienced the Service-man's private problems. He found that the padres could be very helpful people in a social sort of way (they usually had the tact or lack of self-conviction to save their trade for compulsory church parades). His physical requirements, however, were in the capable hands of an experienced medical officer, who could at least answer questions on his subject.

From the recent utterances of the self-styled Powers of Good it would seem that the continuance of this arrangement will save the Service man—and posterity—much trouble.

H. I. S.

#### NAZIS AND GERMANS

ONE of the points which is bound to arise in any discussion about the general planning of the post-war world is just what we propose to do with regard to the German people (as distinct from the Nazis) when this war is over. There are two possible schools of thought in this matter, one being that usually associated with the name of Lord Vansittart, whose idea it appears to be that the Germans have always been incurable aggressors, and that only by ruthless suppression can we hope to make them co-operate in any kind of peaceful world. That this theory ignores much that it is at this date unnecessary to stress; we need only mention the name of Napoleon (probably the greatest aggressor in comparatively recent history) to show that the Germans have by no means been exclusively responsible for aggressive action.

The other school of thought, taking up the position that, once the Nazi Party has been dislodged from power by Allied action, or German revolution, or most probably by a combination of the two, the German people will have to be educated into a more sensible attitude—that, in short, a better version of the Weimar Republic can be brought into being—has not had such popular acclaim as the Vansittart school. But Mr. Victor Gollancz' "Shall Our Children Live or Die?" (Gollancz; 2s. 6d.) presents such an excellent statement of the case that I feel I must grasp the opportunity of recommending it to all Freethinkers who wish to play their part in the development of the post-war world. The book exposes many of the flaws and fallacies of what Mr.

Gollancz calls "Vansittartism," and makes out a calm and reasoned statement for the political fomenting of a German revolution, combined with a great military push by Britain, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. It is, of course, a highly controversial statement, but it deserves the widest possible circulation among thoughtful people. After all, when this war is over, people of all countries will have to contrive to live together in a world which will be embittered and shattered by the upheavals of the war period. To continue those wartime embitterments into the post-war era will, as Mr. Gollancz points out, cause the seeds of another and even more terrible war to be sown among the younger generation. The young people of Germany will, of course, have to be led away from the nonsense of Nazi racialism; but we shall only confirm them in the theories of the Nazis if we class them as an outlaw race, to be kept firmly in their place and held down for ever more.

Mr. Gollancz deserves the thanks of all who try to think things out to fundamental issues; only if such books as his are widely read can we hope for a better world in future. S. H.

## MISSISSIPPI

### Them Dang Movies

GLOOMY Sunday is a 120-year-old tradition in Mississippi. An 1822 blue law still forbids Mississippians to attend bearbaiting, cockfights, bullfights and any other routine amusements of a Sabbath. Sunday movies are taboo—to the intensified boredom of some 110,000 soldiers training in the State. They wander aimlessly up and down the dead, empty streets of Mississippi towns, boning for something to do, and usually finding it only in honky-tonks and back-street bordellos.

Last week the Mississippi Senate, for the third time this session, fearlessly faced the issue. The opposition thundered that a Bill permitting Sunday movies would "open the gates of hell." Roared Senator Joe Daws, of De Kalb (pop. 866): "The Pearl Harbour tragedy came about because sailors were not at their posts. They were attending Sunday movies!"

This was too much for Senator Earl Richardson, of Philadelphia (pop. 3,711). Senator Richardson stopped his whittling, brushed the shavings off his lap and his desk. He snorted: "Do you know what time Pearl Harbour was attacked? It was about 7-15 in the morning. That's a mighty funny time for soldiers or anybody else to be in the movies."

Up rose Senator Olen C. Hull, of Lawrence (pop. 400), a lay evangelist. He warned his colleagues that passage of the Bill would mean "religious suicide for Mississippi"; that "the downfall of every nation so far has been due to two things—first, desecration of the Holy Sabbath, and second, loss of the virtue of its womanhood." Members spat rich brown streams of tobacco juice at the shiny brass spittoons. Senator Hull warmed up. He had been summoned, he said, "to come at once" to the home of a friend 80 miles away. He "raced" there in his automobile to discover that his friend's daughter—"a beautiful young woman"—had confessed to losing her virtue. "And where do you think it happened? Where do you think it happened? It took place in a picture show!"

This was too much for white-haired Senator Dave Crawley, of Kosciusko (pop. 4,291). "I don't dispute the story," said he, "but I do observe a picture show is a hell of a place to lose it." After the fireworks, the Bill passed—29 to 10—went to the House, which has twice killed a similar Bill. The measure was strictly class legislation. Even if the House should pass the Bill, cockfights, bullfights and bearbaiting will still be illegal in Mississippi on Sundays.

From "Time," March 16 (delayed in transit).

## CORRESPONDENCE

### TYRANNY OF WORDS

Str.—Readers of Mr. Lissenden's interesting article on "The Tyranny of Words" may like to know that Stuart Chase, the American writer on economics, published an illuminating book under that title a few years ago. Drawing on the pioneer work of Korzybski, Ogden and others, Chase gives a disturbing demonstration of the shakiness of the verbal framework that holds together our abstract concepts. He also describes an entertaining game in which you re-write homilies or expositions or speeches with "blab" substituted for every word or phrase that you can't precisely define in its context. It's astonishing how many theories and beliefs collapse before your eyes in the process. But don't use a typewriter if you're tackling political speeches or religious pontifications—the wear on the *b* is terrible.—Yours, N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

Volumes might be written of the impiety of the pious.—HERBERT SPENCER.

### WANTED

Professor of French, 21 years' Continental experience, would give lessons in French at moderate terms to sons of Freethinkers.—Prof. X., c/o "Freethinker" Office.

## 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), Thursday, 7-0, Mr. E. C. SAPHIX; Sunday, 3-0, various speakers.

#### Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), 11-0, Dr. R. H. THOULESS—"Straight Thinking in War Time."

### COUNTRY

#### Indoor

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

#### Outdoor

Blyth (The Fountain), Monday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON. Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Edinburgh N.S.S. Branch (The Mound), Sunday, 7-30, Debate, "This is a God Ordered World"; Pro, Rev. EDWARD TOWILL and Mr. JOHN GRAY, M.A. (Newington and St. Leonards Parish Church of Scotland); Con, Mrs. M. I. WHITEFIELD (Glasgow) and Mr. F. SMITHES; Chairman, Mr. REILLY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Stevenson Square), 3 and 7 p.m., Mr. W. A. ATKINSON will speak.

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

Burnley (Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Lamb-in-Rosendale, Thursday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Wheatley Lane, Friday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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