

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Mixed Grill

I HAVE headed this week's notes "A Mixed Grill" because there are so many things on which I wish to comment and so little space in which to do it. I do not envy anyone who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and find everything barren. For the man who can find nothing interesting in whatever situation he finds himself must have very little under his hat, or his hair, than mere tissue. If the land is barren there is as much to study why it is barren as there is to find out the cause of it being "roses, roses all the way." A fool is not less of a study than a philosopher; he is merely another study in human quality. People talk of the problem of life without always considering that it is only a part of the problem of death. Understand one and you will understand the other. Voltaire remarked that the performance of a certain saint who walked with his head under his arm after he had been decapitated did not consist in the forty paces he is said to have walked but in the first one. A man reads that a new book has been issued by the celebrated Professor X on "Human Wisdom" and feels that he must read it. If it had been a work on "Human Stupidity" he would not have felt the desire to get it. But here again are not two problems, but one. Understand the fool and you will not wonder quite so much when you meet the philosopher. But as our appreciation of life grows greater we see many facets that did not exist to our forefathers. So it runs; simplicity is rooted in complexity and complexity is understood by its reduction to simplicity. So much by way of an apology for what may appear to some readers disjointed, and yet with some hope that these notes will not be, in fact, quite as disjointed as they may on first glance appear.

Our Judges

We have often commented on the quality—to say nothing of the irrelevancy—of the comments passed on the cases, that come before our magistrates. These comments are often gratuitous, often display ignorance,

and in all these instances are quite out of place. Some time ago I had something to say concerning a London magistrate who solemnly declared that he could not understand why anyone wished to take from people a religion in which they found comfort. I can raise no objection to this magistrate saying, as many others say, "I do not understand" this or that. The phrase exactly expresses their state of mind. They do not understand. But when a man does not understand the proper attitude is to be silent or humbly to ask for instruction. But a magistrate who publicly says he does not understand the motive of the person before him is not likely to have his judgment tinctured with mercy or overladen with intelligence.

The other day there was a case before one of the London Courts of a Welsh girl charged with misbehaviour in the public streets. Whereupon the magistrate proceeded to moralise on the character and quality of Welsh girls. I do not know the exact figures concerning the number of Welsh girls who come before the police courts, but from what I do know there are no grounds for any such expression of condemnation. It was gratuitous and it was untrue. But it is war time and certain other considerations come in, so the Home Secretary, apparently, induced the magistrate to withdraw what he said and apologise to the Welsh people at large. But I hope the Welsh people will not feel too virtuous as a consequence. They will, I expect, continue to provide their share of offenders—what they lack in one direction they will make up in another—and also to contribute their share of payment in the shape of fines.

But the Welsh case is only an example of a general evil and an exhibition of what one may call localised Vansittartism. A Jew is brought before the Court for some offence and the magistrate winds up with a concentrated indictment of Jews in general. The convicted Gentiles, many convicted Christians, pass without comment. A foreigner is indicted and he gets a sermon on the villainy of a man coming into this country and, by inference, staining its hitherto spotless character. It never appears to strike this righteous judge that there are some Englishmen who rob and swindle abroad and that very, very occasionally such things happen here. Still less do these judges reflect that our police courts and criminal courts were not created for the express or principal purpose of sentencing foreigners, but for the express purpose of dealing with British offenders.

One other case. A few weeks ago a boy appeared as witness in a Provincial police court. Before he took the oath the magistrate—"O wise and upright judge!"—inquired whether the boy understood the meaning of an oath. The boy replied he did. It meant that if he told a lie he would go to hell. The magistrate was satisfied the boy was a competent witness. I take it that this magistrate was brought up in a monastery, lived most of

his time in a room in the said building, and left his home on such occasions only when his presence was required in the Court. Otherwise, I cannot think how he escaped knowing that there is a large number of people in this country, engaged in business, in politics, on the Press, in the pulpits—in fact, in every walk of life—all of whom are pious folk, but who are as stout, lusty liars as the world has ever known. But the boy said he believed in hell, and to the simple-minded magistrate that was enough. I do not know how the Home Secretary would deal with this case. He might find him a post in the Ministry of Information. But by this time his experience may have informed him that there is just as great a likelihood of the witness who takes the oath telling a lie as there is of the man who merely affirms, breaks a saucer or swears by Allah before giving evidence. All magistrates and judges know this as well as we do.

Education and Hocus-Pocus

On June 16 the House of Commons went into Committee to consider the question of education. It had been expected by some that the statement which was to be made by Mr. Butler, President of the Board of Education, would contain something of importance. But Mr. Butler is notorious for never saying very much, however lengthy may be his speech, and the House of Commons, as at present constituted, lacks sufficient of the type of character that will force Ministers to make their purposes plain. With so many Members holding posts under the Government, so many looking for posts, and with the constant policy of moving incompetents from one job to another—as though God must have sent them into the world for some purpose and it is the duty of the heads of the Government to persevere until that purpose is discovered—hearing all these things in mind, one must not expect too much.

Some of the Members, I am sure, expected to hear an outline of what were the intentions of the Government so far as the working of the plot between the three archbishops—Canterbury, York and Wales—and the Board of Education had developed. The Churches had been promised not merely financial support but an alteration of the present Education Act in its bearing on religion. These alterations meant, to put it mildly, giving the Churches substantial control of the schools by making it certain that the qualifications of a teacher with regard to Christian teaching should dominate everything else. And many of the Labour Party showed their short-sightedness by indicating that they were ready to help the Board of Education and the Churches in furthering this religious plan.

But whatever expectations were nourished they were left unsatisfied. I think this was mainly due to the fact that things have not been working very smoothly. After two and a-half years the public has been getting used to government by decree—something that must happen to some degree during war time—but this unconcealed bartering between the heads of the Church and the Board of Education was rather too much. Decent regard for the rights of the people—particularly when we have had so much talk about democracy—would, while making preparations for the after-war period, have left the reshaping of our educational system till the war was at an end. But

we have a Conservative Government in power—although in form a Coalition one—and the Churches and their friends cannot afford to wait. If the Churches are not reinstated before the next Government is elected their chances of becoming so under the reign of a new Government is very slim.

But the plot has fallen on troublesome days. The Roman Church declares that it will never consent to having its children sent to schools that are not saturated with Roman Catholicism. The Catholics know that is the only way of retaining a grip on its congregations. It will be content if Mr. Butler will guarantee the funds and they call the tune.

The Church of England, which controls about 9,000 schools, declares through the Archbishop of Canterbury that it has no intention of giving up its schools. Its leaders will also be content if the Board of Education gives the Church full financial support and substantial control of the State schools.

In other directions the months have not been too favourable to this Government and Church plot. My readers will remember that the campaign was opened with a letter in "The Times," and a leading article, which disclosed the terrible ignorance of the young evacuees when they arrived at their temporary homes. Some had never heard of Jesus Christ; others did not know the meaning of Christmas, etc., etc.—and these children had all been in schools where religious lessons were given in terms of the Education Act. Many people asked for the name of the clergyman and who made the discovery, and there were also appeals for where the children might be found; but the bashfulness of the parson forbade publicity.

Many thousands of pounds must have been spent on the newspaper campaign that followed. Then some of the better type of teachers began to take alarm and many of their associations passed resolutions against giving so much to the Churches and against religious tests. Some radical reformers also began to give voice. And it was good to find Mr. Ammon, in the course of debate, warning Mr. Butler against establishing "denominational and sectarian strife and making the children's bodies and souls the instrument over which wrangling may take place."

So we learned little from the debate except that the Board of Education will do all it dare do to restore clerical control over the nation's schools. The situation was well summed up by "Cameronian" of "Reynolds News." "The Government's plans for education are 'phoney.' Our real masters are still the religious prophets, the public school profit-makers. They have instructed their Butler to postpone till to-morrow what might cause trouble to-day." So we must keep an eye on to-morrow.

Our Democracy

There appears to be some trouble with the Home Guard, but among the officer section. Officers in the Regular Army do not, as is known, mix freely with their men. When travelling, their railway passes take them first class at third-class rates. In the case of the Home Guard, third-class passes only are allowed for officers. If they wish to travel first class they must pay the difference between the two fares. But the Home Guard officers say that to travel third class with the men is injurious to discipline. That puts the authorities on the horns of a dilemma. If mixing with the men is injurious to discipline

with the Regular Army, there seems small grounds for denying the same result if privates and officers of the Home Guard travel together. It looks like both or neither.

We have had little experience with soldiers—none at all save such as a civilian has with them. But we have had an experience of mixing with men out of uniform, and we have never found that mixing with groups of men ever prevented a man of real ability being respected by those with whom he came into contact. If I have had to complain it has been of the readiness to bow before ability by the "common people." In the workshop the man who has a deeper understanding of anything affecting the daily task is soon recognised; if he fails, his errors are soon detected. In any gathering of men, in any capacity whatever, we have found this to be true. The man who cannot command the respect of others save with the compulsive aid of a uniform, or by holding aloof from others, does not deserve the position he has reached.

Perhaps the worst defence of this separatist plan is the plea that the men themselves prefer it. If that be true it implies an ingrained inferiority feeling that makes any claim of democracy a ghastly sham. That the feeling of inferiority exists to some extent I do not doubt; but its existence reflects little credit on either our labelled "superiors" or our unlabelled inferiors. It is something that must be driven out if we are ever fully to justify our claim to be a civilised democracy.

I think this may well form a closing item to this week's notes—with the hopes that the officers in the Home Guard will stifle their own snobbishness and set the "regular" officers a healthy example.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A BABY OF NO IMPORTANCE (With Observations on God the Father)

ON June 19, 1942, the London evening papers reported in a brief paragraph—without comment—that a baby had been found dying amongst the air-raid ruins of Bath. Nobody knew who, or whose, she was. Nobody claimed her. Nobody wept for her. Apparently nobody missed her.

They buried her in a nameless coffin.

The news was late. The usual excuse for preventing the English people from knowing what is happening is that it would never do to tell the enemy—what he generally already knows! It might upset the feelings of a German, or some other, air hero if the news were not broken gently that his bomb had killed a baby. He may have a baby of his own.

On the same day the noble Viscount Cecil, presiding at the League of Nations Union meeting at Conway Hall in London, said he attached great importance to the punishment of war criminals. It would be a disaster, he said, if men who perpetrated such horrible crimes went unpunished. By "horrible crimes" he did not mean the murder of this infant, for that is what any hero, in any aeroplane—even a British hero—might have the misfortune to do. One cannot doubt that there are babies in Bremen as well as Bath, children in Cologne as well as Canterbury. Nor by war criminals did he mean all of them; he did not mean the Old Gang of English politicians who misruled this country and neither ensured peace nor prepared for war. He meant only the German ones. But I feel quite sure that of those German war criminals Lord Cecil does not want to punish the war hero or "ace" responsible for that babe. He, like the soldier of King Herod, just couldn't help killing that Holy

Innocent. Orders are orders. Soldiers obey orders. It is Governments that give them. They alone are guilty.

We seem to have heard this Cecilian story of the importance of punishing war criminals before. The same old tale! "Hang the Kaiser!" Who dares to speak of 1918? Do we dream? Did we soldiers of the 1914-1918 war, like the Bourbons, learn nothing and remember nothing in that "war-to-end-war"? The Cecils have always been men of God, from the scoundrelly Lord Burleigh of Elizabeth's day; and this particular Cecil is impliedly throwing over the Christ-doctrine of forgiveness of trespasses as such Pharisees generally do. Still talking the same old tale! "Punish the war criminals." Another League to make war inevitable in the name of stopping it. Has Viscount Cecil no responsibility with his half-a-League that perpetuated enmity in Europe? Have Earl Baldwin and his Cabinet Ministers no responsibility? At the end of the war suppose this country says, "Let Germany punish her own war criminals while we punish ours." It sounds a fair proposition. But it is the old evil nonsense. We are all war criminals, every one of us, and all the Governments of the "Great Powers" in all the countries are guilty.

The last war was, in reality—and we can all see it now—a war to be the seed of this war. War begets war. This present war will probably beget others. That is the nature of most wars. There is no such reality as "a war-to-end-war." It is the formula of knaves to gull fools.

But to my baby! My baby—deserted by God and man—in that lunatic scene of human savagery, that was once my quiet and decorous city of Bath. No headlines for the baby; huge headlines that day for Rommel and "our withdrawal" to the Egyptian frontier. My Christian England: suffer the little children! Be very sure that dying infant did suffer. But of what importance is that? Rommel is important. Churchill flying to Washington is important. Cecil is important. Mothers of England engaged in munition-making at high rates of wages: I ask you, of what importance is a dying baby? God of Love: of what importance was that puling and wailing atom of humanity? Tell me that—either or both of you.

You and I, my reader, indifferently-honest, callous creatures though we are: can we endure it? See that helpless waif; its face contorted; its body writhing; its legs kicking; its little fingers clutching; the pale, gasping mouth seeking vainly the consolatory nipple that is its right! Hear the thin, tiny wail of pain and fear that echoes in the heart louder than the roar of plane engines, the fall of great buildings, the shattering explosions that rocked the city of Bath that night! Would you have left that child in its agony and death? Even you "who do not like babies"? Would you?

No. You would not. Nor I. Nor any watching Englishman or German. Even if you were not a father or a mother.

But someone did. The God of England and Germany and Italy did. We know he was there. The Church—a dozen Churches: Roman, Anglican, Methodist and all the rest—tell us that He exists and that He is everywhere always. So HE was there.

This God is not powerless. *Au contraire* he is expressly said to be all-powerful. He could "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (such as he used for killing the first-born babes of Egypt in the time of that Egyptian Hitler, King Pharaoh, of Red Sea fame) have saved that babe. Did it not ery to whomsoever was within earshot? Alas! God the Father Almighty, true to his character as depicted in the bloodstained tales of the Old Testament, preferred its pain to its pleasure, its death to its life. He had no more heed to its death cries than he had to those of the other Innocents, the babes in the hands of King Herod's soldiery as related in the New Testament. He runs true to form, this criminal god of war. From Herod to Hitler, it is the same story.

Will Viscount Cecil arraign this war-criminal, the most powerful of all war-criminals?

Let us hear the Christian clergy on the matter of this baby slaughtered as a mere incident in the glorious struggle for Christianity and for freedom. Very sad, they say. But God is love, and whom God loveth he chasteneth, and His purposes are mysterious, beyond the small grasp of our finite minds. A strange "love" indeed which let that baby perish miserably! Even in our law courts we do not accept the mad mother's plea as valid: "I loved my baby, so I cut its throat." Does a babe require "chastening" by pain, anguish, terror and death? You would call a human father an inhuman brute if he even so much as struck with his hand so tender an infant, and exclaim indignantly if a Court fined instead of imprisoning him. Rightly, too. The "infinite love" that permitted that outrage is indeed beyond our human "finite minds."

(A Persian who followed Zoroaster would give a more sensible explanation than the Christian one. He would tell you that the Devil did it and that God struggled with the Devil and was defeated on this occasion, and that it was the fault of the men, Germans and English, who assisted the Devil by making wars instead of assisting God by making peace. That certainly fits in with the facts better than the "love" and "omnipotence" Christian theory. But why should the Devil do it? There is no fun, even for a devil, in being a devil and killing one babe when you could presumably have brought down the plane and killed the lot. One little baby-girl; an inglorious victim indeed, and nothing for a devil to boast about. "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands"—but I, poor devil, have slain this poor little mite.)

The Christian God, all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful, that upheld the plane containing the gallant fellow that bravely loosed the bomb over the baby's vicinity, will doubtless compensate the "chastened" babe. Hear the Christian clergy again! Was the babe a baptised babe, a babe within the Church? Or a baby-pariah outside the holy sheepfold? Alas! good shepherds of the sheep, I have to confess that this little lamb may have been too young for baptism, and her missing parents—killed also, perhaps—may have been Freethinkers or Indifferentists.

Not the baby's fault! I will stand surety for her that her soul is spotless, far holier than those of all the Christian clergy in England since St. Augustine, down to these blessed times of Dr. Temple, our Archbishop. Useless! Original sin damns her, if unbaptised. She is no "child of God"—unless an illegitimate one unrecognised by the Church. She is no "member of Christ." She is no "inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." Not, like me, a baptised person; and so, no heaven for her! Limbo at best. The fires of hell at worst. She has not suffered enough. Let her burn again, while the fat and puffy priests and prelates are "saved," by what? Not by their non-existent virtues, but by the Blood of Jesus in heaven just as by the blood of soldiers on earth.

What a "faith"? What a dishonour to the human heart and brain that can subscribe to this cruel religious blasphemy!

But you, my readers say: why get so hot about it? It is a sad story, but there are a hundred such. The child was the victim of circumstances. Religious delusions are mere delusions. They do not affect the child. She is at peace—let her rest. She is not your child nor mine. (She only might have been.) Come, drop the subject. It is tedious. Write something more acceptable; something "funny"; something "to make us laugh."

Alas! Though I never begot her, this is my child. Her wails are in my ears, and I shall not forget that one baby killed while memory remains; and I rage and rave for her in my heart because she is mine—and yours—and because I know that so long as men and women believe in a mystic heaven or hell for that baby, so long will they not trouble to make a human heaven upon earth, and they will be acquiescent in a hell upon earth for other babies. For the pseudo-Christianity practised by the

Churches is to the ideal Christianity of Christ what Caliban was to Ariel, and that pseudo-Christianity believes that the bombing of babies is all right; did not Dr. Temple, our Archbishop, as good as say so in days when this crazy war was a distant threat on the horizon, thereby earning a headline in the "Evening Standard"?

However, let us cultivate calm and a sense of proportion. Do not let us be extreme. Only one small ewe-lamb is lost while the Chief Shepherd (and his Cathedral) are safe. Really, I must not be as utterly unreasonable as that queer Jesus Christ, worrying about one little lamb gone, one little coin lost, when so many shepherds and sheep are unharmed and when the Church Revenues are protected by strong Acts of Parliament. Let us bury the babe and over her say what Shakespeare said of Ophelia:

"Lay her in the earth
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring."

Then let us go home and breed other babies for the bombers or to be bombers, a few years hence. Let us forget. It is madness to hear that thin wail, piercing one's heart for life.

Besides, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Churchill, Roosevelt, the Pope, the Archbishop and the rest of the world's rulers, do not hear it. Nor do you. You are right, good sir and good madam, you are right—the death of my baby is my misfortune and only yours in that I do not keep it to myself. Pardon me, good fathers and mothers; I have not the voice of Dean Swift, long gone in madness and despair, "where fierce indignation can tear the heart no more," to make you feel that agony in the city of Bath where, unlike Lamah, no Rachel remained to weep for her slaughtered child.

Did you say no military objectives were hit? Splendid, splendid—what have we to worry about?

C. G. L. DU CANN.

HUSBANDRY IN MOSLEM SPAIN

DIVERSITIES in soil, climate, altitude, humidity and other physical phenomena are extremely striking in the Iberian Peninsula. From the Pyrenees southward to the Sierra Nevada, the land is mountainous, and Spain's mean elevation exceeds that of any other European State save Switzerland alone. The Ebro and Guadalquivir are fairly navigable rivers, but most of the streams run too swiftly in rainy seasons, while in periods of drought they become too shallow for inland navigation.

The copious rainfall of Andalusia is counter-balanced by intense summer temperatures, but there is abundant rainfall in the north and west. Santiago's annual downpour of 64 inches may be contrasted with some south-eastern areas with a meagre yearly precipitation of even less than eight inches.

In the days of Imperial Rome, Spain was one of the Empire's granaries, but owing to the devastations of the barbarian invaders, agriculture seriously suffered. Its restoration to prosperity awaited the arrival of the Moorish migrants from Africa. Perhaps the Visigoths may have partly preserved the system of irrigation founded by their Roman predecessors. In his excellent essay on Spanish husbandry in the "Cambridge Economic History" (Cambridge University Press, 1941), the American savant, Mr. R. S. Smith, remarks that: "The Moors, it is generally admitted, were not the innovators in hydraulic science, but the improvement and extension of irrigation was undoubtedly one of their most valuable contributions to Spanish agriculture. By the 12th century the Moors, 'who knew how to drain irrigated with precision, and to distribute water economically,' had irrigated 24,000 cahizadas (perhaps 25,000 acres) around Saragossa, and other important projects ante-dating the Reconquest. . . . One of the greatest prizes of the victorious Christians under James the Conqueror was the magnificent irrigation system in the vega of Valencia." The Moslems also utilised "an

animal-powered bucket and chain apparatus still widely used in Spain for raising irrigation water from wells."

Whether or not the Saracens in Spain initiated all the splendid agricultural successes they achieved, it is positively certain that their harvests and vintages were far superior for some centuries to those of adjoining States. Moreover, the tolerant and progressive policy of the Freethinking Arabian rulers, until superseded by their orthodox and fanatical successors, enabled their Christian subjects to co-operate in agrarian advance.

In his "Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages," Thompson observes that "agriculture deserved the name of a science in Arabian Spain when it was only manual labour elsewhere." The poets and botanists of the period celebrated the successes of the cultivators of the fields, gardens and groves. Zacaria's "Book of Agriculture" continues the work of his Roman forerunners. This Arabian author "surveyed virtually every phase of agronomy, horticulture, irrigation, meteorology, entomology and veterinary science." Certainly, the superstitions of the time were to some extent uncritically accepted. Yet, centuries later, we learn that "its practical value was considered sufficient to justify its translation into Spanish in 1802."

Valencia, Cordoba and Granada, among others, were all famed for their orchards and vineyards. Foreign seeds were introduced from Eastern countries to diversify and enrich the Iberian flora. Several excellent fruits were cultivated in Spain in Roman days, and the Arabians added bananas, cherries, grapefruit, oranges, citrons, peaches and strawberries as well as other fruits to the list. The array of edible vegetables grown in Moslem times is very extensive, and the quality of the many plants cultivated was distinctly superior to those raised in Christendom. Our learned historian, Dr. Smith, somewhat conservatively concludes that, "on the whole, that part of the peninsula in Moorish hands until the 12th or 13th century was more abundantly supplied with economic goods than Christian Spain. Though perhaps exemplary in religious devotion, the armies of Christian monarchs were not uninspired by the thought that one result of their steady southern drive would be something to eat."

The ancient olive gardens of Spain were sadly decimated by the severe drought that occurred in the 9th century. But the industrious Moors restored the olive groves by the importation of plants from Africa. Olive oil was ever an important article of commerce, and Catalonia became its leading centre for the export trade.

Like that lover of wine, Omar the poet-philosopher, many of the Spanish Moors abandoned the total abstinence principles of the founder of their faith. Not only the grape, but figs, rice and dates were called into requisition for the preparation of inebriating liquor distinguished by its powers of exhilaration. In Christian Spain itself we are reminded, "where the humblest yokel abhorred water, the cultivation of vines was almost as common as the production of grain."

The cultivation of cotton was introduced into Spain by the Saracens from Asia, and the sugar cane was also cropped. At some uncertain date, the silkworm was imported into Andalusia and a marked increase in silk production resulted through the successful planting of several varieties of the mulberry tree in Moorish Spain. Italy and the Iberian Peninsula broke the Oriental monopoly of sericulture and initiated the extension of the silk industry to other European countries.

Irrigation, so essential to the growth of rice, was successfully utilised in Valencia. Still cereals were the staple breadstuff and wheat and barley were widely sown, as were millet, oats and rye. Spain, however, was not permanently self-supporting. For at least as early as the 15th century, we gather that "even Saragossa resorted to the practice of stopping grain ships in the river and forcing them to unload a portion of the cargo to satisfy the needs of the city." Indeed, at an earlier period, Barcelona and Valencia subsidised imported grain, while in order to

replenish granaries in seasons of scarcity, some cities obtained Crown licences to detain grain vessels on the high seas and constrain their owners to sell their supplies to Spanish subjects.

Contemporary price-fixing in England and other realms is no recent innovation. In 11th and 12th century Spain, State charters frequently empowered municipalities to ordain "just" prices for commodities on sale within their jurisdiction. Meat prices were standardised in Perpignan in 1303, while in 1332 Barcelona decreed the maximum charges for every form of fish, flesh and fowl.

Much as in England, the wool staple became of primary importance in Spain. For centuries vast flocks of sheep roamed at large in rural regions. Their merino wool gained international fame. In the open country migrant sheep wandered "hundreds of miles yearly over an extensive network of sheep highways, the migrant sheep sought summer pasturage on the northern highlands and wintered in the valleys of the south." But with the growth of urban areas in the 12th and 13th centuries, serious objections were urged against the incursions of these roving quadrupeds. Consequently, the commons and enclosed pastures were by charter reserved for the sustenance of non-migratory sheep and cattle.

Cheese was consumed, but beef appears to have been better esteemed than any form of milk food. In north-western districts especially droves of pigs devoured the acorns and other growths of the woodlands, and it is recorded that "the consumption of pork was relatively high because it removed suspicions of Judaism."

Under the Moors the traditional oxen were replaced by mules, asses and, to some extent, horses as plough and draught animals. The native horse was greatly improved by the Moors' selective breeding and, with all the handicaps of floods, droughts, ruined harvests and epidemics, Spain provided a picture of prosperity foreign to Christian climes.

T. F. PALMER.

ACID DROPS

WHAT desperate fellows we have in the pulpit nowadays. Men holding high position in the Church of England, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, several of our Bishops, some of our Canons, etc., all of them enjoying very comfortable salaries, deeply sympathise with the miners' demand for higher wages, the demand for better housing for the "common" people, and so forth. These clerics are desperate fellows—in the pulpit and in the Press, which will always print their glittering commonplaces. And yet—Well, we have yet to hear from these revolutionary Bishops and highly placed and overpaid clerics something concerning any reform that will react on the Church's income. On that they remain as dumb as a fish, and to use a common saying, as artful as a wagon load of monkeys.

For example. In the coal dispute that has been going on, not one of these daredevil clerics has mentioned the enormous income the State Church derives from mining royalties and ground rents. And the ordinary British citizen is so ignorant of the sources from which the revenues of the English Church comes that all but one here and there appear to believe that Church revenues come in the main as voluntary gifts from pious benefactors. The truth is, of course, that only a fraction of the income of the Churches comes from this source. There is no greater sham in this country than that of the State Church. We invite a little plain and unmistakable talking from Archbishop Temple. Let him lead a real revolt.

Lord Eustace Percy says: "It is essential that the child should go from school to a Christian congregation." Essential to whom? Not to the child. Not to the State. It is only necessary to the clergy and to the interests that are backed by the clergy. And Lord Eustace Percy was once Minister of Education. His qualification for the post was—he was Lord Eustace Percy. In our democratic society that is a very important consideration.

We have noticed with some interest how zealously the sectarian papers—particularly the Roman Catholic ones—chronicle the names of those belonging to their fraternity who are appointed to some political or parochial office, elected to Parliament, appointed to a superior post in the Army, or Navy, etc., etc. It is part of an elaborate system of advertising which impresses that class of people who are not over-stocked with intelligence. Of course, the figures of the religious failures, of the number who are dismissed from office, or make a hash of the job they are set to, are *not* advertised.

Now, we do not believe that religious people are any worse than other people—save so far as their creed develops certain ill-features that are a consequence of their religious convictions. We are merely commenting on a very artful advertising dodge that is precisely on all fours with the method of the advertising quack. Never was there yet put on the market a cure-all that did not bring forth some testimonials—often delivered in good faith—as to the miraculous qualities of the salve or mixture that they had purchased. So one finds there are many of the easily-gulled public who, in a semi-conscious manner, think when they read of a promotion given to A.B.C., who is a member of "Our Church," that there is something about Our Church that turns out the right stuff. The advertising of the Churches and the advertising of the seller of fake cures are much on the same level, mentally and morally. That should not cause surprise—both appeal to the same public.

In a notice of Professor Gorka's "Outline of Polish History," a writer in the "Church Times," after welcoming the book, says that "there are one or two matters about which Professor Gorka is curiously reticent; for instance, the system of government in pre-war Poland and the nature of the Jewish problem." We are quite certain that Professor Gorka could easily provide the answers to these questions, and are not surprised he is so "curiously reticent." The pre-war Government was, of course, a dictatorship aping Nazism, but perhaps not quite so ruthless, and it treated Jews from an uncompromising anti-Semitic standpoint, in some cases, quite as ruthlessly as in Germany. This anti-Semitism distinguishes many of our own Polish refugees, and is reflected in their journals allowed to be published here. But it is all carefully hidden by our national journals, as it would not do to say anything belittling our "gallant Allies." It remains to be seen whether Poland will fit into a Democratic Bloc.

The same journal also gives details of a Christian swindler recently sent to gaol "after pleading guilty to obtaining money by false pretences from 70 members of the clergy, including at least one Bishop, not to mention other kind-hearted citizens." His method was gloriously simple. He would call at a vicarage "and tender thanks for imaginary kindnesses shown to his wife and children by the priest while in some former cure"—the clergyman naturally not remembering "details of all his past good work," and thus becoming an easy prey for another "touch." We should not have called attention to this humbug but we noticed but few references in religious journals to that man of God who recently managed to rope in tens of thousands of pounds as a master of the simple art of writing begging letters full of religious cant.

There is a "Christian Brains Trust"—God help us!—in Brighton, and Fr. Bode Frost had to answer "What inducement do you give me to become a Christian?" It was a marvellous opportunity to out-Joad Joad, and Fr. Frost took every advantage of piling up the usual Christian string of phrases, in which "our Lord," "perfection," "fulfil," "divine way," "purpose," "fullness of life," "truth and grace," "salvation," "temptations" and many another jostle each other in unmeaning verbiage. We can only think of the B.B.C. 7-55 horror as a good rival for this sort of thing, but we would be greatly surprised if the querist was immediately converted. Perhaps Fr. Frost will tell us? Or was his answer a frost?

Roman Catholics, who like to talk about Christian unity whenever they have the opportunity, generally are the first to run away when the so-much-desired unity comes a little nearer. As an example, the new Bishop of York declared the other day that "without any surrender of principle, they had found that

Christians of different Churches could study, work and worship together in a way which would have been impossible a few years ago." The "Universe" immediately retorted that "for Catholics there can be no joint worship with members of other Churches, since any such action would in itself be a denial of the existence of one true faith." And this after all the nice things which Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals and Moderators have been saying for many weeks past. However, the "Universe" welcomes Dr. Garbett's appeal most sincerely, and we are left wondering what it means by sincerely.

Brighton Education Committee decided recently by passing a formal resolution that religious teaching is an essential and fundamental part of education. In addition, that the State should provide the total cost of upkeep, and that public funds must not be used to interfere with the established freedom of religious teaching. Unfortunately, in the report we have read of this resolution, there is nothing to show what the B.E.C. means by religious education. Is it the complete Roman Catholic faith or Anglo-Catholicism, or a Nonconformist creed, Mormonism, Rabbinical Judaism, Modern Judaism, Christian Science, or just "simple" Bible teaching which depends on the teacher's faith or unbelief? We don't know. And we suspect the B.E.C. doesn't know. But how thoroughly religious it all sounds!

Of all the insults that are offered our soldiers, the worst is that of the War Office appointing the "travelling padre"—at a good salary, we presume. His addresses appear to take it for granted that the vast majority of the rank and file—these padres are never sent round to the officers—are just nit-wits. The cheap commonplaces that are hawked by him are pitched at what would not be complimentary if they were delivered to Sunday school children. We have had many letters concerning the quality of the preaching chaplain, but the travelling padre surely touches bottom. His manufactured experiences, his inanities, his assumption, not merely that soldiers are uneducated, but that they are half-witted as well, is an insult to grown men. He is an evening edition of the B.B.C. 7-55 terror, and one could hardly get mentally lower than that.

The "Catholic Herald" has discovered that the Spanish Civil War aroused great moral indignation in this country. It did, but the indignation did not lie with the Roman Catholics. How could it, when the Pope gave his sanction to the massacres of Spaniards by Franco's army, Mussolini's Fascists and Hitler's Nazis?

The "Catholic Herald" is very uneasy about the Treaty that has been arranged by England and the United States with Russia. The "Herald" dare not object to the alliance between this country and Russia, but it fears what may happen when this war comes to an end. The leading article concludes with some gloomy, although undefined evils, that may arise through "a policy that turns its back upon the sources of Christian civilisation and culture in order to establish as the strongest Power in the world, the immense territories, the teeming masses and the vast undeveloped wealth of a country as alien as possible from ourselves." The Roman Church has a keen eye for its own interests, and has never been over-scrupulous in the methods it has employed to further its own interests. We shall have to fight hard to win the war, but when that is over there will be a much greater battle to fight if we are to win the peace.

According to our religious advisers, we are fighting a war that is in the interests of God and His Church. Every inhabitant of this country is urged to do his best to win the war. One great problem is to provide food for the people, and if the people are to help God, God in return should do something to help the people. Yet it is now reported that some time back a "freak storm" burst over a part of Essex, snow fell, the thermometer dropped to freezing point, and thousands of acres of crops were ruined and fruit trees stripped. Is it not time God justified his existence by doing something to help? If Germany had been devastated, good Christians here would have described it as a judgment of God. What is it when it happens in Essex? And what is the use of the belief in God, anyway?

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

B. DAY.—Thanks for copy of letter to the Bishop of Bradford. We do not imagine he will reply. At any rate, these columns are open should he feel so inclined. To say that he has no time for controversy is just nonsense. What are most of his speeches but controversy? What he means is, we expect, that he thinks it wisest not to attempt a reply. In that case we congratulate him on his wisdom.

C. L. CONWAY.—We are hoping to reprint soon both "Almost an Autobiography" and "Materialism Restated."

S. MOSLEY.—We are pleased to have such sincere appreciation from a newcomer to our ranks.

T. WALTERS.—Sorry we cannot use your manuscript. Long continued articles in a weekly paper, particularly in present circumstances, are almost impossible.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

C. THOMPSON.—How can we have social equality with an hereditary Second Chamber and hereditary titles? No one would find serious fault with titles or decorations, for those who wish to wear them, so long as there is at least a pretence of the title having been earned. But titles are robbed of their value when one owes them to the accident of birth. It really does not require first-class ability to be the son of one's father—often only because one is the son of one's mother.

W. MORTIMER.—The Editor's responsibility for opinions expressed extends to unsigned matter only. For the rest the Editor is only responsible for the suitability of the matter published. Readers must always bear in mind that this is "The Freethinker," and does not move in fear of giving offence. Very few of our readers, we are certain, would wish us to alter our plan.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Funnival 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, Funnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

THERE are, according to the Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Education, 186 public schools in this country. But the Board of Education says the Government is "not concerned with the abolition of public schools," but to "see if it is possible to associate public schools with the State system of education." This will not do. It means no more than a continuation of the class character of the public schools, with admission of enough pupils from the State schools to enable the Government to pretend that there is no bar to the "common people" sharing the glorious snobbery of our "upper classes." Not even the presence of members of the Labour Party in the Government ought to be enough to permit this swindle to be carried through.

What is needed is not the abolition of schools of the educational quality of the public schools, the essential thing is that the approach to the public schools shall be the same for all, from the offspring of a dustman to that of a Duke. The boy or girl

who enters a public or higher school should win his or her right of entry. Money simply should be ruled out. Genius is not hereditary, not even in military matters. There are as many fools born in Mayfair as in the slums, but not so many fools from the slums rise to eminence in politics. Merely to make the "public" schools accessible to a few more from the State school is, as one of the Welsh members pointed out in the course of the debate, to make children of the working-class snobs. From elementary school to university the road should be open to all, and on the same conditions for all. Money and position must have nothing to do with it. The first is too often acquired by methods that are far from praiseworthy, and position only means making the road easy for fools. We refrain from giving instances. The fact is too obvious to permit of question.

It is a curious coincidence that a few hours after we had written the paragraph in our last issue suggesting that the military commands of the Allies should have at their head representatives of Russia, China, the U.S.A. and Britain, Captain Dugdale was asking in the House of Commons whether the Russians could be asked to send their best available General to Cairo, and Lord Winterton asking that Russia should send someone to the House of Commons. The last request might have been "writ sarcastic," but we still think there is something in our original suggestion. We stated it quite seriously. There is quite obviously nothing wrong with the rank and file of our Army.

An ex-chairman of the Coventry Education Committee puts the matter well in a letter to "Education" of June 19. He says:—

"Children may be made to love kindness, truthfulness, fairness, and be made to understand fellow-feeling for other races without prejudicing their belief later at an age of understanding in One who is the source of all good.

To do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly are good things whether we ascribe them to a Being with infinite attributes or not.

John Morley was neutral in regard to the metaphysics of Deity, but he loved goodness and could make others love it too. I learnt more from John Morley than from Canon Liddon. But John Morley's negative attitude towards Deity is not mine. Children may learn the elements of the good life without accepting or rejecting the tremendous implications of Theism."

Excellent. But it is the more to be regretted that Mr. Lee should have mixed this up with the stultifying statement that Jesus Christ "taught from human relationships the meaning of human life and duty." For that is simply not true. Mere moral commonplaces will not take the place of effective ethical teaching, particularly when so much of human life is ignored by the New Testament character. Moreover, Jesus did what Mr. Lee blames the Archbishop of Canterbury for doing—resting everything on the belief in God. But perhaps by the time he had written the passage cited above the ex-chairman got just a little frightened and was afraid to push his statements to their logical conclusion.

Once again we are pleased to announce the increasing demand for "The Freethinker." One Glasgow friend, Mr. J. Humphrey, has made it his business to push "The Freethinker," and has very considerably increased his sales, and with these sales have gone a demand for our general literature. There has never been a better time when one could more easily and more profitably introduce "The Freethinker" to friends and acquaintances.

In a way we think we have profited by the alliance with Russia. Until that was achieved there was no limit to the lying of very earnest Christians concerning the evils of Atheism in Russia. No action was too vile to be put to the credit of Russian Atheists. And the Russian people were pictured as shivering under an intolerable tyranny. But with Russia as our Ally, and an Ally that has probably saved this island from at least an attempted invasion, and with the acknowledgment of the enormous changes for the better in Russia since its Atheistic leaders were in power, religious lying about Atheism

and the horrors of Atheistic governments have lost their point. In one direction at least the Churches have been found out, and the more thoughtful of Christians are beginning to wonder whether the Christian structure is either as strong or as valuable as it seemed to be.

A Liverpool reader sends us the following:—

"I would like to draw your attention to the infiltration of the R.C. religion into Government factories.

At the R.O.F. Fazakerly, Liverpool, commencing Sunday morning, 21st inst., at 6.30 a.m., Mass is to be held inside the factory for the convenience of those workers who belong to this religion.

To make this possible, Government petrol, vehicles and labour has been used for the erection of an altar.

This notwithstanding that there are three churches on the opposite side of the road from the factory, which might easily have been utilised by the R.C. workers in need of 'religious comforts.'"

This is only one of the many instances of the manner in which existing authorities are playing into the hands of the Churches. We suggest that those working in factories should join in making a strong protest against this forcing of religion on to those who are engaged in war-work. There should be a limit to what even the British public will stand in this matter. It is an insult to the people to assume that they need religious services to induce them to play their part as citizens.

We are asked to inform members and friends of the Birmingham Branch, N.S.S., that a ramble to Lickey Hills has been arranged for Sunday, July 5. Tram No. 71 from Navigation Street takes 45 minutes to Lickey Terminus. All to meet there at 3 p.m.

"THE RISE OF CHRISTENDOM"

II.

IN putting forward his astonishing theory that, of the three great religions, Mohammedanism came first, it must not be thought that Johnson did not produce formidable arguments. He had studied hard and his knowledge of the classical languages enabled him to go to original authorities instead of using them at second hand. He insists, for example, that "the Roman Empire, from its rise to its decline, from the time of Augustus to that of Heraclius, was entirely unconscious of any such revolution in religious affairs as was implied by the introduction of Christianity." He claims that the evidence from inscriptions "have a still and ghostly tale to tell"; while that from coins—"in important particulars the coins of the emperors flatly contradict the statements of the ecclesiastical historians." After giving many examples, Johnson concludes that "under such conditions of evidence we may applaud the prudence of Buonanni, who appeared to hold that no coins before Boniface VIII. (1291) can be trusted, and who begins his collection from Martin V. (1415). It may now be assumed that none are genuine before the latter date."

On this point the reader must decide for himself with due regard to the work of specialists. But no one can deny that huge frauds have been perpetrated on an unsuspecting public by the "discovery" of many an ancient coin. Christians have forged not only vast numbers of manuscripts—the sorry trade is still being practised—but also many "ancient" inscriptions. Readers will perhaps remember that delightful chapter in "Pickwick" in which Dickens satirised such a discovery.

Certain "guidebooks" of ancient Rome appear to have come down to us like the "Notitia Urbis," and they seem to know nothing of a vast ecclesiastical system like Christianity. "Rome is still old Roman in its externals, in its customs, in its religion. Such Oriental rites as it knows are the ancient Egyptian. It has not been touched by any form of Christianity, whether Jewish, Samaritan, Arabian or Catholic."

Johnson also claims that "all those strange notices which run through the Roman literature from Cicero concerning the 'Judei' and their great influence in Rome form part of the system of monkish interpolation. Such Jews are purely imaginary, entirely unknown to their own literary records." If a demur is raised about this, let us not forget what Cardinal Newman said in his "Grammar of Assent": "That all knowledge of the Latin classics comes to us from the medieval copies of them, and they who transcribed them had the opportunity of forging or garbling them. We are simply at their mercy. . . . The numerous religious bodies then existing over the face of Europe had leisure enough, in the course of a century, to compose not only the classics, but all the Fathers, too."

When we come to study such books as the Koran and the first chronicle of Al Tabari (which Johnson considers is the foundation of all the medieval chronicles) we are obliged to be in the hands of authorities and translators. How much we can trust them has always been doubtful. For example, Johnson maintains that "the Benedictines mistranslated the Koran in the interests of the Church," that the phrase "People of the Book" in the Koran has been deliberately rendered "Jews and Christians"—a wilful blunder—and that the name Jesus Christ has been falsely introduced in the same book by the translators. "Neither Jesus nor Christ," insists Johnson, "nor the dogma of the person of Christ as held in the Church, is to be found in any part of the Moslem Word of God."

To these two works, the Koran and the first chronicle of Al Tabari, "The Rise of Christendom" devotes more than 170 pages in an endeavour to show that the Bible has taken almost all their stories, myths and legends as the basis of its own "history." I confess that I find it hard to believe that such is the case; but this may be due to my upbringing, and the almost insuperable difficulty of getting one to see that the Old Testament was not the first on the list. We have had it so dinned in our ears that Jehovah is the true God, and all others false, and that the Bible is the first and only true work of its kind, that it is nearly impossible to get another idea even considered. For us, and those who think like us, a work like "The Rise of Christendom" gives a nasty but completely necessary jolt.

Of course, Johnson had to go fully into the question of the "Rise of Hebrew Literature" and prove that "not only the forms, but the substance of early Hebrew literature was derived from the traditions of the Arabians—in other words, that the Biblical legends are based on those in the Koran and the Chronicle of Tabari." Personally, I cannot feel that he made out his claim, but many readers may think otherwise.

And if the Old Testament is founded in this way, and the early Church literature is founded on the Old Testament, then the dates given by Johnson—about the 10th century for the Koran, the 11th century for the Old Testament, and the 12th century for the New—are, in the face of almost every other authority, more than sensational; they cut right into the history of these religions and of mankind so sharply that the whole fabric of organised beliefs is annihilated. Johnson did indeed try to overwhelm the Church with a devastating attack which, if it had succeeded, would have made the three great religions look sillier than fairy tales.

How far he succeeded must be left to his readers. For myself, I can only say that, sceptical as I am, I have been unable to go the whole distance with Edwin Johnson. But the one clear result which follows reading his book is both a reminder and a confirmation of the fact that no other system that the world has seen has ever been built on or buttressed by so much deliberate lying and forgery as Christianity.

He later tried to show how the Benedictines forged the Epistles of Paul, but in the opinion of many he did not succeed. And still later, in "The Rise of English Culture," he showed how impossible it was to trust much of what goes as English history.

Only those who have studied the authorities upon whom rest our past history are able to judge whether he succeeded.

In the first of these articles dealing with his work I said I had not been able to discover any particulars of his life. The kindness of one of our readers enables me to say a few words about one of the most scholarly Freethinkers the movement has produced.

Edwin Johnson was born in 1842 at Upton, near Andover, the second son of the Rev. A. Johnson, Congregational minister. He was very studious as a boy, and entered New College, St. John's Wood, to train for the ministry in 1859. Like Robert Taylor before him, he seems to have "won all the way," winning three scholarships and obtaining M.A., classics, at the London University. Dr.—later Sir William—Smith, of Classical Dictionaries fame, wrote of young Edwin as one of his most distinguished scholars. His first pastoral charge was at Forest Hill, where he married, and later, after a tour on the Continent, he went to Boston. In 1879 he was appointed Professor of Classical Literature by the Council of his college and came to London, embarking on an intense course of writing and study. Dr. Furnivall thought him one of the most pregnant-minded thinkers and noticed the breadth and depth of his culture." After a long illness, due to an insidious and incurable disease, he died in 1901 when only 59 years of age. Johnson is always highly spoken of as a scholar and a gentleman.

Interested readers will find a biographical account of Edwin Johnson and his writings by E. A. Petherick in "The Rise of English Culture."

H. CUTNER.

BUSHES

LET us talk about bushes, for bushes seem to have engaged the interest of mankind for generations ever since a bush was said to have been "alight with the fire of God," to the moderns who are obsessed with gooseberry bushes.

Then there was Moses, who was found strangely enough in a cradle of bulrushes. A cradle made from a bush that grows in the water. He was supposed to have been found by an Egyptian princess, but it seems to me the tale doesn't hold water. A modern girl would have thought of something better than that.

But far more interesting are mulberry bushes. "Here we go round the mulberry bush." Around and around in an idiotic dance. Follow my leader and you'll come back to where you started. Whether you follow a fool or a philosopher you'll end up in the same place. But perhaps the philosopher will lead you a more exciting dance.

These bitter if not very profound remarks are occasioned by a too deep draught of the social prophets. The rise, prosperity and decline of civilisations have been attributed to everything from mosquitoes to sunspots; and even those who pretend to form a scientific view of social history get tangled up in their causes and effects. Most writers make it what they want it to be, and cold objectivity is as rare as icebergs in hell.

To name but one, Marxism, is a bit spotted these days. Karl Marx was a very learned man, and with his deep knowledge of history and economics he wove a web that obscured the actions and reactions in the minds of simple men and women. "Das Kapital" is a colossal work, but it reminds one of a gigantic pyramid standing on its apex. The medieval monks argued on how many angels could dance on the point of a pin. Marx derives everything from one point—a point that is not true. Everything—science, art, religion, politics—progress is determined by the "social relations arising out of the means of production," which begs the question as the point to be settled is: What determines the social relations? As if the social relations never influence the means of production. Even if it were true that the social relations arise out of the means of production, what determines the means of production? Is

inventive genius spontaneous and innate, or does it serve the needs and desires of the community—in other words social relations and their offshoots, religion, politics and art which, in turn, are determined by the social relations, which are caused by the means of production? And around and around we go around the mulberry bush.

But let us stop before we get dizzy. Quite a lot of simple folk are blinded by the furious working of the machine. Things happen, and they are caught up by the furious drive of some economic or social blizzard and look to their leaders for guidance. It takes them a long time to realise that they are just as helpless as themselves. For the truth is, economic experts do not know what causes depressions and booms. Or if they do, they generally find that their conclusions clash with the supposed interests of the ruling class, and they produce some comforting theory that simply means that things are better left alone; and even those who want to change something generally attribute all our woes to one thing—like bad money, or drink or a wrong system of taxation.

If we can venture a definition, Civilisation is an attitude to life and to the world. Civilisation is a history of Man's mind and the growth of that mind. At each stage in the mind's development, life has overflowed in an outbreak of art and science and literature. At each stage life is followed at what we can call a "norm" of existence, beneath which it cannot descend. In classical times it was the tribal system of society. It destroyed itself by the acquisition of other countries and slaves. It can be truly said that Rome died of too much slavery, and produced Christianity, the greatest of slave religions. Then came the Dark Ages, and when the curtain had again risen on history, society rested on a new basis—feudalism.

This idea of civilisation as the expression of Man's psychological attainments should have a powerful interest for us at the present day. When we listen to the Jeremiahs who prophesy the breakdown of civilisation, we forget that we cannot get away from the "norm" of our existence, which is the production of goods in the mass. This rests on a scientific foundation, and it means that we must keep up the discoveries of science. We can hardly expect the goose that lays the golden eggs to be killed. Even if the goose is suffering from malnutrition it has to be kept alive.

Life is like the tide that rises and falls. After every ebb comes the flow; after every sunset the dawn; after every winter the spring renews the earth in a mantle of green. So whether we like it or not, we must keep on. Our civilisation cannot be destroyed except by a mass-suicide; and that is unthinkable. Even the Nazis must allow scientific thought and a certain freedom in that sphere or they will perish; and thought cannot be kept in watertight compartments. You cannot allow Free-thought in one particular without the danger of it percolating to others. Which is the hope of the world at the present moment. Kill scientific thought and you kill yourself. Free it from its trammels and you make the world free.

IDRIS LI. ABRAHAM.

FAITH

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

—POPE'S "Essay on Man."

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

—TENNYSON'S "In Memoriam."

YES, faith—what is it? It may be defined as trust and confidence in anyone, and belief in the statement of another. This explains faith from a worldly point of view, but it has another meaning all its own—a spiritual interpretation, as it were—so that to most people faith means faith in God. Religion has taken faith

under its wing, clothed it in supernatural attire and capped it with a halo. Attired thus, faith accompanies religion and gives the latter the necessary support and sustenance to enable it to continue the soporific influence over the credulous and unthinking. Just fancy! Here we have faith—one of the most noble qualities of human nature—wedded to man's greatest illusion, religion—a superstition which shackles his thoughts to supernatural scintillations and dims his understanding to realities. Thus, the religious, in raising their eyes to heaven in never ending supplication, leave their feet to stumble along the best way possible—which, as history has so often shown us, has been the worst way. "Faith, hope and trust in the Lord," says the priest, "and it follows that you will have faith, hope and trust in me, which, as one of God's representatives, pleases me very much"—and thereupon prattles about platitudes.

Whereas there can be no reciprocity by God to man's faith in him, there is ample evidence of man's faith in man, and of the value of mutual trust and confidence.

Faith has a complex meaning and may be divided into various elements. In addition to trust and confidence may be added sincerity and simplicity. The people who influence you and are influenced by you are those who believe in you and trust you. They will accept what you say as something real and tangible so long as you possess a sincerity of purpose which, combined with the charm of simplicity, enables them to see things as they are. This secret of personality radiates a sincerity which is irresistible. Yet, to have this faith it is necessary to be among men, among difficulties and obstacles; and the measure of your success will be governed by the extent of the faith you have in yourself and others and, as exponents of the cause of Freethought, to the extent of your faith in the movement. Some of us are good talkers and, on occasions, may be eloquent. But the man who possesses faith has an unconscious eloquence, for it becomes part of his character. Again, he may have certain accomplishments and ability, but unless his words are inspired by faith, there is no meaning. He may be ever so eloquent, as the world appraises eloquence, but if he lacks sincerity he displays merely the brazenness of words.

Whilst faith has the power of moving mountains, it can also move pimples, according to faith-healers and other quaint quacks. Sometimes a man will say that he acted in "good" faith, which is another way of saying that he had faith in what he considered a good cause—or that his judgment was faulty. On the other hand, it is said that an act may be in "bad" faith. To qualify faith in such a manner is like qualifying virtue. It would appear as though faith had lost its meaning in other ways, too. Who can doubt that the term "Yours faithfully," as used in business circles, is mere convention? Every British coin tells us that the Crown is a Defender of the Faith. Whatever meaning the abbreviation FID. DEF. had in olden days, we must conclude that nowadays there is no significance at all, as some coins boast the letters F.D. only!

And what of blind faith? In this case we apprehend that although the object which evokes this faith may be incompatible with truth, justice and reason, the faith persists in its intensity and loyalty. In such a case the faith is born of those inseparable, ignorance and prejudice.

So closely do religious people ally their faith with their creed that it is common to refer to the religion professed as the Faith. The Christian religion—among others—is known as the Faith. Abraham is Father of the Faithful, along with other patriarchs.

On our part we are content to pin our faith on man as something to be comprehended. Much amusement may be derived from breaking a lance on a god, but who can respect the hollow sham of the brazen image when once the lance of ridicule has shattered it? We may pin our faith on a man who may prove unworthy of our trust, but there is always the hope that he may reform, whilst the effect of a god on the mind is to deform.

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man."

And as a commentary on his couplet, Pope wrote of "Th' enormous faith of many made for one."

S. GORDON HOGG.

FATHER DIVINE

The entry of America into the war will perhaps have cooled down the activities of the well-known negro God, Father Divine, but an interesting account of his Lordship is given by Arthur Felig, a New York journalist photographer, in "Popular Photography." "One night a stabbing started trouble up in Harlem," he writes. "Somebody had tried to serve a paper on Father Divine and some razor play resulted. The 'Journal' gave me a special rush assignment to cover it. I grabbed a cab and arrived in front of Father Divine's chief 'heaven' at 115th Street, to find a mob of black people—quiet, sullen, terrible. Only the police on the beat were there—the reserve cops hadn't arrived. When I got out of the taxi and the crowd saw my camera, that mob massed towards me like a dark tidal wave. 'You can't take God's picture,' they shouted. 'We ain't gonna let you make no shots of our Saviour,' they cried. 'Git outta Harlem, white boy, before we slice you up.' They were armed with razors, sticks, shovels, clubs—anything that came to hand, including some sizable rocks and baseball bats. An assignment is an assignment, but so is a neck a neck. I hesitated. That mob was plenty ugly. And their anger seemed to increase each second. When the police reserves arrived I edged over to the 'Journal' reporter, who carries a gun. I knew as long as I was near him I was fairly safe. Shaking like the well-known leaf, I made two quick flashes and beat it for the station house with the mob breathing close on my neck. That sounds funny now. But there was nothing funny about it that night." This little picture gives an excellent appreciation of what religion looks like "in the raw"—but we are afraid it will not be used as a beautiful example by our Archbishops, Cardinal and Moderators for teaching the benefits of Christianity in our schools. More's the pity.

THE WALLS

One moonlit night I walked the proud sea-wall
We built of concrete, reinforced with steel.
I marvelled at its strength, remembered all
Our labours and devising, and did feel
That we who set it there had planned
A monument that for all time should stand
As witness to the power of human brain.

I halted for a while, and from my stand could mark
As I gazed out, a dim and lonesome strand
Betwixt me and the gentle swell that blended with the dark
What were those jagged shapes that jutted from the sand?
I went to them and saw the eroded stone
And buckled rods of walls once like our own—
But they could not withstand the wearing tides.

Of our naive philosophies, the Systems Man contrives
To guard him from the fear of the Absolute,
The great Unknowable, not one survives
Its resonance, when, vibrant, mute,
It quickens in our hearts a transient chord.
As the Walls of Jericho, which fell before the Lord,
They fail us in our hour of direst need.

S. N. FARMER.

AN INFAMOUS CREED

The infamous Christian dogma of the atonement is based upon the notion of suffering as something good in itself. The suffering must be there, even though it be the just that suffer. It has entered into Catholic asceticism. The scourgings and macerations of the monk were conceived of as, so to say, the filling up of the cup of the atonement by voluntarily increasing the sum of suffering in his own person with the view of being the more acceptable to the Deity. In the last resort asceticism meant of course the doctrine of the inherent evil of matter. Pain was good as tending to destroy matter. Pain was the enemy of the "natural man," and therefore the friend of the "spiritual man."

—E. BELFORT BAX.

CORRESPONDENCE

A PROBLEM

SIR.—Readers might be as interested as the writer in an answer to the following observation by Eddington in his "Science and the Unseen World":—

"Suppose we concede the most extravagant claims which might be made for Natural Law so that we allow that processes of the mind are governed by it. The effect of this concession is merely to emphasise the fact that the mind has an outlook which transcends the Natural Law by which it functions. If, for example, we admit that every thought in the mind is represented in the brain by a characteristic configuration of atoms, then if Natural Law determines the way in which the configurations of atoms succeed one another, it will simultaneously determine the way in which thoughts succeed one another in the mind. Now, the thought of seven times nine in a boy's mind is not seldom succeeded by the thought of '65.' What has gone wrong? In the intervening moments of cogitation everything has proceeded by Natural Law, which is unbreakable. Nevertheless, we insist that something has gone wrong. However closely we may associate thought with the physical machinery of the brain, the connection is dropped as irrelevant as soon as we consider the fundamental property of thought. That it may be correct or incorrect.

We say that the brain which produces 'seven times nine are 63' is better than the brain which produces 'seven times nine are 65.' But it is not as a servant of Natural Law that it is better—dismiss the idea that Natural Law will swallow up religion; it cannot even tackle the multiplication table single-handed."

There seems a flaw somewhere in this reasoning, and one can suggest several answers. Comments by readers or by the Editor would, I think, make interesting reading.—Yours, etc.,

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

JESUS CHRIST

SIR.—Your correspondent Archibald Robertson (21st June, p. 250) thinks I overstate when I write of "Jesus's wholesale damning of those who thought differently from Him." Here are four sayings, one from each Gospel:—

"He that believeth not (on the Son) is condemned already."—(John iii., 18.)

"He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."—(Luke xii., 9.)

Of Scribes and Pharisees: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"—(Matthew xxiii., 33.)

"He that believeth not shall be damned."—(Mark xvi., 16.)

The meaning of these sayings is clear, and was clear to the Christian persecutors, many of whom were sincere and honest men and not without humanitarian feelings which, however, they crushed under the inspiration of their Master. It is irrelevant to the present argument to question the authenticity of these sayings. The Jesus of the Gospels, the whole Jesus, has been and still is the official and unofficial exemplar and guide to the main body of Christians. To judge the beginning by the end is the acid test, and one which Jesus teaches us to apply—of prophets, "ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew vii., 16.)—Yours, etc.,

"CANDID."

OBITUARY

MR. ARTHUR FORBES

We regret to announce the death of Mr. Arthur Forbes, of Middlesbrough. Mr. Forbes had been connected with the Free-thought Movement since 1893. He was of a quiet, unassuming disposition, but none the less firm in his ideas, and ready at any time to do what he could for the Free-thought cause. He was one of that almost silent army to which the world owes so much, and whose influence is expressed in the growth of humanitarian ideas and ideals. The funeral ceremony took place at the West Cemetery Crematorium, Darlington, on 15th June. A Secular address was delivered by Mr. H. Deaken.

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"THERE IS NO GOD"

I found thee not by the starved widow's bed,
Nor in the sick-rooms where my dear ones died;
In cities vast I hearken'd for Thy tread,
And heard a thousand call Thee, wretched-eyed,
Worn out and bitter. But the heavens denied
Their melancholy Maker. From the dead
Assurance came nor answer! Then I fled
Into these wastes, and raised my hands, and cried
"The seasons pass—the sky is as a pall"—
Then wasted hands on withering hearts we press—
There is no God, in vain we plead and call,
In vain with weary eyes we search and guess—
Like children in an empty house sit all,
Castaway Children, lorn and fatherless.

—ROBERT BUCHANAN.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

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

West London N.S.S. Branch (Hyde Park), Thursday, 7-0, Mr. E. C. SAPHIN; Sunday, 3-0, various speakers.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), 11-0, Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.: "A Policy for Post-War Education" (2).

COUNTRY

Outdoor

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. Outing to Lickey Hills. Meet at Lickey Tram Terminus at 3 p.m. Members and friends invited.

Blackburn (Market Place), Sunday, 6-30, Mr. J. V. SHORTT, a Lecture.

Bradford N.S.S. Branch. Members and friends meet on Broadway Car Park on Sunday evenings at 7-30.

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

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

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

Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-30, Mr. J. GORDON (Glasgow): "Fascism and Christian Principles."

Hapton, Thursday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Huncoat, Wednesday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

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.

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