

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

Vol. LXII.—No. 28

Sunday, July 12, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor	281
Ecclesiasticism and Racketeering—"Julian"	283
War and Anatole France—S. Gordon Hogg	284
An Old Story—R. H. Rosetti	284
Acid Drops	285
Sugar Plums	287
The World and "Democracy"—Austen Verney	288
China—C. C.	288
The New Order—Geo. B. Lissenden	289
The Miracles of Jesus—Norman Morrison	290
Correspondence	290
Sunday Lecture Notices	291

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

On Fallacies

FOR a long time I have had it in mind to write a book on fallacies. Not the kind that we meet in a formal book on logic, but just a chatty sort of a book dealing with the kind of fallacies that one meets with in religion and politics and philosophy, and even in science, with full examples of the fallacies presented. If I had written that book I have no doubt that the description of the lecturer, given by one who had been listening to an address on "Drink," as being full of his subject, would have applied. For there never was a treatise on fallacies that was not pounced on as unconsciously furnishing examples of the evils pilloried. Even so, I think the book would not have been written in vain. But the weeks lengthened into months and the months into years, and my great work—no one can say it was not great—remained unwritten. Come to think of it, the great work never does appear. There never lived a great painter who painted the picture he intended doing, the poet who wrote the poem he would one day write, the man of letters who gave to the world that flawless creation he meant to write—one day. The best things are always just over the hill or just round the corner.

So I am still going to write that final work on fallacies—some day. Meanwhile, I am trying the patience of readers by amusing myself, whether I instruct others or not, with exposing the fallacies of other people.

There is a common saying that words are the medium of thought. They are more than that, they are very frequently the controllers of thought. Someone complained to George Henry Lewes that many of his quarrels with other people were about words. "Well," replied Lewes, "what else is there to quarrel about except words?" Lord Halifax and Sir Stafford Cripps call high heaven to witness that they are fighting to preserve "democracy." But the one thing certain is that the democracy that one wishes to preserve is the one the other wishes to establish. Each of them, to use a term coined, I think, by Ogden and Richards, have a different "referent" for the same

word. They make identical sounds, but they mean different things, and one may reasonably ask whether each of these types is only fooling himself, or are they fooling each other? I am told that I ought to believe in Jesus, as though the localisation of the figure "Jesus" is something that can be settled as easily as determining the material of which the Nelson monument in Trafalgar Square is made. But I find that there is a Jesus who is just a God—whatever that may be—he is also a wandering preacher of the kind that has always been very common in the East. He is a man striving to do good to others, a deluded enthusiast, a dummy figure created by a number of mystics, and so forth. And yet people will ask "Do you believe in Jesus?" as though the meaning—the reference—is as clear as daylight. Verily, we do quarrel about words, and our quarrels would be more fruitful if we were all more alive to the fact.

Some years ago I wrote a book on materialism, the chief aim of which was to show that for about 2,000 years people had been disputing about "Materialism" without coming to any decision as to the "reference" of the word. Once the historic meaning of the word had been worked out, there was at least the possibility of the dissenting parties coming to some agreement as to the question at issue, and clearly stated that opened the road to understanding. It would have settled the "meaning of meaning" and the discussion would have been a helpful one. As it was, the religionist made a god of a ghost, and the Materialist came near to making a ghost of a god. The cure for this confusion lay in considering the significance of the leading terms used.

It is an axiom that thought cannot reach an advanced stage without speech, and without speech abstract thought is simply impossible. Once the first steps in articulation are made thought and speech go hand-in-hand, each leading a further development of the other.

It is further important to bear in mind that language is the creation of a social medium which makes possible the carrying forward, cumulative, achievements from generation to generation. Sociality in this way develops from gregariousness. It is because of this that—to use a Marxian phrase—quantity finds expression in quality and quality develops an almost independent existence in a collective life.

But this process is not all gain. Language preserves thought and aids its development. It also just as surely tends to harden thought by forcing it into set grooves. This has been well expressed by Ogden and Richards in their fine work "The Meaning of Meaning."

The power of words is the most conservative force in our life. Only yesterday did students of anthropology begin to admit the existence of these ineluctable verbal coils by which so much of our thought is encompassed. From the structure of our

language we can hardly even think of escaping. Tens of thousands of years have elapsed since we shed our tails, but we are still communicating with a medium developed to meet the needs of arboreal man. And as the sounds and marks of language bear witness to its primeval origins, so the associations of these sounds and marks, and the habits of thought which have grown up with their use and with the structure imposed on them by our first parents, are found to bear witness to an equally significant continuity.

And that greatest of modern anthropologists, Sir James Frazer, bears the same testimony.

The common inherited scheme of conceptions which is all around us, and comes to us as naturally and unobjectionably as our native air, is none the less imposed upon us and limits our intellectual movements in countless ways—all the more surely and irresistibly because, being inherent in the very language we must use to express the simplest meanings, it is adopted and assimilated before we can as much as begin to think for ourselves at all.

Language is therefore a mixed blessing. But our rate of progress is determined by its use. It halts our speed even while it gives impetus to our development. Yet always language lags behind thought, even in the act of helping to develop the quantity and quality of our thinking. We are compelled to put our thought into the existing matrix, and, do what we will, something of the old and discarded thought will remain with us.

There is another very important consideration. This is the mere reaction of people to words irrespective of the value of the ideas for which they stand. At present we are all professing an intense desire for democracy. We bow to the name with the same unreasoning uniformity that the most superstitious Roman Catholic bows on entering a church—the proper kind of church. But democracy stands for at least three different things. It may mean an economic democracy in which all have the same opportunities of sharing in the economic wealth of a country. It may mean a political democracy, in which the reference is to an equality of voting and freedom of speech, or it may be a social democracy, where there is a recognised and operative equality of human beings. Yet our ears are deafened to-day with the cry of "We are democrats" from all sorts of people who rise to it with the readiness that a fish rises to bait.

Both Bentham and John Stuart Mill stressed the automatic and powerful influence of mere words. I think it was Mill who first suggested the use of "determinism" in what is known as the "free-will" controversy, instead of the then current phrase "necessity." He pointed out that when an audience is offered the choice of "freedom" or "necessity" there is a general and mainly unconscious reaction in favour of "freedom." No one *likes* coercion, although many have to submit to it. Everyone likes to be on the side of freedom. It was a contribution to clarity when the issue was stated as "Determinism or Free-will." It might be a further contribution to clarity if we stated the issue "Is human action caused or uncaused?" The absurdity of the anti-determinist position would soon be demonstrated; at any rate, those who are discussing the subject would have a better chance of understanding the subject.

When the first edition of my "Determinism or Free-Will" was issued I received a very complimentary letter from one of our leading psychologists congratulating me on having produced so clear a statement of the position of so confused a subject. I replied that all I had done was to wipe off the philosophical and scientific barnacles that had gathered round the scientific ship, and reduce the question to its essentials. I think this need of a periodical overhaul of our vocabulary was in the mind of William James when he suggested that some of our set psychological terms might with profit be put on the shelf for a few generations. One need only take such a word as "consciousness" to realise this. The word so often suggests the primitive notion of some *thing* observing and registering events. It thus keeps alive the primitive idea of a "soul" inhabiting the body and yet being no necessary part of it. Keep "consciousness" out of it and use "awareness," and while, even then, we may not shake off anthropomorphism altogether, we shall have taken a good step forward towards clarifying thought. More than a century and a half ago Jeremy Bentham wrote:—

"What we are continually talking of, merely from our having been continually talking of it, we imagine we understand; so close a union has habit connected between words and things that we mistake one for the other; when we have words in our ears we imagine we have ideas in our minds."

So if what I have said, and shall say, prevents one here and there from mistaking sounds in their ears for ideas in their minds, I shall have done some good. But I am not sanguine enough to convince crowds. Descartes opened one of his important works by saying that common sense seemed of all things the most equably distributed, since no one appears to want more of it. If what I say does not bring conviction with it, it will be something if it helps to rob the perfect terror that some people display at the very thought of philosophical thinking. I would have them realise that there need be nothing "dry" or fatiguing about philosophy. As the great Professor Grote—a Freethinker—said many years ago, "Thought is not a professional matter, not something for so-called philosophers only or for professed thinkers. The best philosopher is the man who can think most simply. Philosophy is no more than good and methodical thought."

CHAPMAN COHEN

(To be continued.)

WHEN WE ARE ALL ASLEEP

When He returns and finds the world so drear,
All sleeping, young and old, unfair and fair,
Will He stoop down and whisper in each ear,
"Awaken!" or for pity's sake forbear,
Saying, "How shall I meet their frozen stare
Of wonder, and their eyes so full of fear?
How shall I comfort them in their despair,
If they cry out too late, 'Let us sleep here'?"
Perchance He will not wake us up, but when
He sees us look so happy in our rest,
Will murmur, "Poor dead women and dead men!
Dire was their doom, and weary was their quest,—
Wherefore awake them into life again?
Let them sleep on untroubled—it is best."

—ROBERT BUCHANAN

ECCLESIASTICISM AND RACKETEERING

ONE of the most prominent features of the Spanish War, in the eyes of certain sections of the English Press, was that the Government supporters burnt the churches. The fact that the Catholic Basques were also anti-Franco was hidden; the suggestion was made that "the great Christian gentleman," welcomed by Sir Henry Lunn and others, was opposing hooliganism and sacrilege of the worst type. In an interesting work, "Homage to Catalonia," Mr. George Orwell gives an inner picture of the Spanish War. He is concerned to point out various features overlooked by the English Press. It is freely admitted by him that the mob did attack and burn the churches in Aragon. They looked upon the whole ecclesiastical background as a racket; their revolutionary politics supplied them with all the religion that they needed. When the breakdown of the old order came about, they naturally turned against the symbol of economic and political repression. Mr. Orwell draws a parallel with England and remarks that this would scarcely be the fate of the "moribund" Church of England.

The implication of his remark is that the Church of England is not a racket. Yet a moment's reflection must show it to be so quite as much as was the Church in Aragon. Begotten out of Court intrigues and a background of political chicanery during the 16th century, it has always borne on its body the marks of its origins. Closely related to the Court, it has maintained an attitude of flunkeyism whenever royalty are mentioned. The upholder of static creeds and a changeless orthodoxy, it is natural that it should be the open champion of conservatism in every direction. An extensive landowner, it is interested in the products of agriculture; the alliance of Church and brewery is an expected sequel. The Church of England, as it has functioned within the State, has stood almost exclusively for the rights of the landed gentry, it has stressed political conservatism, and it has refused support to any reform which has weakened the power of the squirearchy who maintain it. The Spanish Church could not have gone further in the direction of racketeering by an organisation upon the social situation.

The present position of the Church is of interest to all desirous of political reform. Its actual wealth has never been computed; it has been estimated at some £25,000,000, but no exact statement is forthcoming. The wealth exists in part in the form of ancient endowments, left originally for the good of the whole people; for example, a legacy which was to be devoted to healing would have been given naturally to the Church in past centuries as the upholder of medicine. It also exists in terms of land-owning; large areas of land are ecclesiastical property and the ground-rents go to the Church of England. In London, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were ground landlords of one district which contained slums and another which contained brothels. Miss Fitzgerald issued a whitewashing report, "The Church as Landlord," in which it was lamented that nothing could be done; it has taken the heavy bombing to put an end to the scandal! The varied sources of revenue which flow freely from land-owning are naturally open to the Church, as for example, mining royalties and tithe. It is not without interest that the Church of England has never been prominent in temperance reform. Whilst admitting that this form of propaganda has sometimes been carried to extreme lengths, yet social historians prove abundantly that some such reform was very necessary. It was hampered by an alliance of people and signboard, of Bishops and brewers, of parsons and publicans. The brewing interest is associated with conservative politics and with land-owning; the Church likewise is associated with conservative politics and with land-owning. It does not require very much insight in order to understand the nature of the alliance!

Within recent months, a curious sign has manifested itself. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple, sponsored the

Malvern Conference of 1941; its decisions were designed to propagate some moderate economic Socialism. There was an anxious desire, for example, to restrict excessive dividends. Without impugning Dr. Temple's personal sincerity in any way, it is extremely unlikely that he will convert the narrow and reactionary types who compose the majority of churchgoers. Even as he speaks, the Bishops of London and of Lichfield are reported in the Press as using language which shows them to be strong imperialists who look upon the war as a "crusade" and who see some sort of Divine intervention in the affairs of the British Empire. People who believe nonsense of this kind are not likely to suffer from minds too open and emancipated! The socialism of Dr. Temple is an interesting sign of the times; it shows that an able and intelligent man cannot remain content with the old economic fallacy that it is the producer and not the consumer who is to be considered. But there are no signs that he is having any effect upon the minds of the elderly gentlemen who carry round the collection-plate or upon the old women of either sex who make up the average Anglican congregation.

In short, the Church of England exists as an institution for the sanctifying of things as they are. It lacks any intrinsic culture: it fails to maintain any moral standard transcending the average opinion of the property-owning classes. A body which maintains itself in this condition cannot be other than a conservative force in politics, opposing every reform and attempting to uphold things as they are. Social history can produce case after case of vice and misery as created by competitive capitalism; it is difficult to find any instance in which the Church of England has agitated to alter the system which thus leads to hunger and crime. The theological talk of sin diverts attention from the fact that most anti-social conduct is due to psychological maladjustment or to an evil environment; it serves therefore as a safeguard against the carrying out of remedies which would demand changes in the social and economic spheres. Nor is it surprising that, abroad, few Anglicans have shown any desires or insight other than those of the usual conservative imperialist. The Church of England accepts the object of sanctifying the Empire without grumbling and without any clear implication that imperialism must purge itself from its manifold abuses. The Church Congress has spoken too frequently in the manner common to a leading article in the "Daily Telegraph" for Dr. Temple's mild socialism to cause any fears that the Church is really going "red," whether at home or abroad.

The solution is indicated by the remarks of Mr. Orwell concerning the Church in Aragon. Great denominations have their roots in certain social and economic conditions; they exist as rackets utilised for the maintaining of reactionary social orders. Their function and purpose is suggested by the economic interpretation of history; the attacking of these institutions is an attack upon the conservative politics which they maintain. Mr. Orwell is mistaken in thinking that the Church of England is merely "moribund"; it bears all the marks which led him to attribute racketeering to the Spanish Church—land-owning, the interfering of the clergy in private life and the rest. Great wealth is used every year to uphold an obsolete theological magic in which few intelligent people believe. The reason for the apparent paradox is to be found in the fact that the possessing classes are quite intelligent enough to see that the superstitions of the past may not command absolute belief, yet they create a moral stereotype within which the existing order is maintained. •A London vicar recently received a sentence of three years' penal servitude for the misappropriation of funds; he merely acted in a personal way what the Church of England as a corporation has done with its old endowments. Money left for the good of the nation has been diverted into sectarian channels and its utility restricted to the maintenance of a denomination in order to perpetuate a reactionary sociology.

Progressive persons generally should take in hand the question of the ecclesiastical racket as it exists to-day. Not only does it

mean that certain old superstitions are still maintained at vast cost and without apparent utility; it also spells the existence of a huge organism which is linked up with all that is reactionary and unreal in life, giving to it active support in order that social change should not come about. As Professor Tawney has shown in "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism," Protestant theory has been wedded to individualistic economics since the 16th century; the social histories of J. L. and B. Hammond or Dr. Maccoby's books on English radicalism contain many instances of the methods which ecclesiastics will use in order to gain their own ends! The time has been reached when it is clear that social betterment must imply the fundamental alteration of the social structure. Those desirous of progress cannot afford, therefore, to disregard the Church of England as it exists in the form of a social racket. Ecclesiastical disestablishment and disendowment become a part of progressive policy even more necessary now than in the days of Victorian radicalism.

"JULIAN."

WAR AND ANATOLE FRANCE

War ostracizes, demoralises and brutalises reason.

—JOHN MORLEY.

War is an out-of-date method of struggle.

—G. F. NICOLAI.

ANATOLE FRANCE, the celebrated French author, said in 1917, when the Great War had been in progress for three years: "If God exists he must be the most abominable of creatures, since he has permitted this war to be." This forthright statement left no illusions in the minds of his listeners regarding his sceptical views of religion. As one commentator expressed it, "he did not hesitate to express unorthodox views." He certainly dealt hypocrisy and humbug, some shrewd and heavy blows for which he was never forgiven, as will be noticed later on.

And yet it is noteworthy to remark that although he detested war with a foreign foe, he believed that civil war was less reprehensible because "at least we know what we are fighting for." In making this statement he laid himself open to attack by his enemies and he was accused of confused thinking and embitterment. He said that "to love war because it makes heroes is like loving the croup because doctors and nurses have died trying to save the life of the child."

As one familiar with the history of the world, Anatole France knew of the long periods of warfare in the past which existed as a normal occurrence in the lives of the people. Paradoxical as it might seem, war and privileges went hand in hand. (Winwood Reade's treatment of this aspect of civilisation in "The Martyrdom of Man" (Watts and Co.) is both masterly and comprehensive.)

In these days glittering prizes were to be won by those who wielded the sword. For were there not new worlds to conquer, rich lands to seize, strange people to subdue and enslave in an age of romance and glamour, chivalry and feats of arms? The aggressor and conquering nations became more and more powerful until they in their turn were conquered and subdued. Civilisation was in a state of flux and mighty empires rose and fell in an era which now seems legendary. Life was held cheaply, although lives were sold dearly. Conquest brought an infiltration of new ideas and new blood to the defeated people. Wars and progress became, in effect, wars of progress.

Anatole France believed that one day war might become a thing of the past, but many years would elapse before the era of arms would end. Throughout the period of hostilities—when it was said that 1,000 Frenchmen died every day—he repeatedly expressed his loathing of war, and when he suggested that after the fighting was over "the French people should admit the vanquished foes to their friendship," he became the object of

much abuse. Even after his death in 1924 the attacks did not cease. Irresponsible and irrepressible elements calumniated his memory in their efforts to belittle and besmirch this outstanding figure in French literature.

As an ardent humanitarian and a great lover of his country he could not reconcile his pacifism with his patriotism, and for a time he despaired of humanity. The age of suffering in which he lived was hard for him to bear, and he wondered whether man would ever cease fighting at all. He regarded the prolongation of the war as a great sin. What could he do to stop it? He must be content with being a pacifist in theory. Such were the attacks of his enemies that he volunteered for service in the forces. He was then 70 years old. His offer was declined.

Clemenceau was reported to have said that much as he admired Anatole France, he (Clemenceau) would have him arrested if he said a word too much.

No doubts can be entertained that he was attacked not only because of his pacifist views, but because of his satirical and scathing denunciation and exposure of religion and religious practices. See "Under the Rose," by Anatole France, published by John Lane, The Bodley Head, Limited.

During the concluding years of his life he became enamoured of Communist theories and speculations. It is idle to speculate how he would have reconciled his views of the last war with the present war, involving as it does Communism, to which he had subscribed.

In 1921 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. In 1922 the Pope placed the whole of his works on the Index. We can imagine how the great writer and philosopher received the latter "honour."

In condemning the writings of Anatole France, the Pope acted with customary pusillanimity.

We are certain that the lofty intellect and nobility of character of Anatole France would respond to such treatment with customary magnanimity.

S. GORDON HOGG.

AN OLD STORY

THE University Catholic Federation of Great Britain held its 21st annual general meeting in Birmingham recently, and in connection with it three conferences were held on "Science and Society." The treatment such a topic would receive from a conference of Catholics and from an assembly of Freethinkers would differ very widely. With the Freethinkers, freedom of thought, speech, publication and assembly, for science and society would be taken as fundamentals, while the Catholics would be concerned only with totalitarian government by their Church, for their Church, outside of which there would be no freedom for science or society.

That, of course, is assuming a strength and power not at present possessed by the Catholic Church, and so the conference at Birmingham had to be carried on in a faked atmosphere. That was managed by men of science and Catholic men of God sitting together under a gentlemen's agreement of deceit and pretence that their respective activities were fraternal in design and practice. Both sides played the part well. Dr. F. Sherwood Taylor, curator of the Museum of the History of Science of the University of Oxford, informed this conference of Catholics that the genius of Galileo demonstrated the practice of modern science—no applause reported; but the Rev. J. Leicester King, Jesuit, brought the scores level by declaring that the rapid progress of science had only been possible because science and its workers are embedded in a civilisation based upon Christian principles.

Now, where is this civilisation that is based upon Christian principles? Where did it come from, and where can one find it? Our law is based upon Roman law; our science and philosophy

came from Greece. As for morality, selecting from the ancient pre-Jesus world we have a collection of Egyptian funerary writings commonly known as The Book of the Dead. Speaking of those writings, Dr. Washington Sullivan said they were so lofty that if every vestige of Christianity was obliterated from the earth they would provide an admirable ethical outfit for the reorganisation of morality in Europe. Those writings were in general use in Egypt 3,000 to 4,000 years before Jesus.

What ingredients of civilisation did Christianity add to those already known to the ancient world? What did Jesus add; what was Jesus capable of adding? It is just an old Christian story, ignoring the pre-Jesus world, silent as to the havoc Christianity made in human society, lacking the knowledge or the courage to acknowledge that humanity became cleaner, healthier and happier with the decay of Christianity; that the sayings of Jesus, centuries older than Jesus, were borrowed from the pagan world; that one of Christianity's major contributions to Europe was seven to eight centuries of intellectual blackness. A repetition of stock phrases such as "The teachings of our Lord," "Christian Civilisation," "Christian principles," etc., uttered with assumed reverence, awe, and in tones of bated breath, is calculated to convince the uninformed that decency in the world began with Jesus and Christianity.

Then Dr. H. P. Newsholme, professor of hygiene in the University of Birmingham, told the conference that not only science, but almost every human activity, has become dissociated from religion, and the immediate consequence has been their exploitation by the selfish. Who are those selfishly exploiting activities because of dissociation with religion, but who would cease doing so if those activities were associated with religious hanky panky? Does exploitation and kindred practices indicate an absence of Christianity, and is Christianity an antidote for such practices? For every case where religion acts as a check to a wrong action, there are 50 where religion is the direct motive in a wrong act. To the cute person a profession of Christian faith is no guarantee of honest dealings or intentions. Experience has taught the honest man and woman to be very wary of the pious individual. Religion is one of the most common and easy disguises under which all forms of swindles have succeeded. The religious swindler snares the religious and non-religious—in fact, his co-religionists are usually the easiest victims.

To-day the Churches are active in a forced campaign of falsehood, featuring our schools as lacking religion for the sole purpose of exploiting them for selfish Church interests. Is there any other institution in the land whose members are so thoroughly exploited as are the religion-soaked, priest-ridden members of the Catholic Church, by the Catholic Church, for the Catholic Church.

The exploiters of war conditions through black markets, profiteering and swindling are denounced in all manner of unwholesome names, but nobody calls them non-Christians. How many of those sent to prison for such acts describe themselves other than Christian? How many refuse the ministrations of the prison chaplain? Is there one member of the N.S.S. among the lot?

It has always been safe and easy for the Churches to exploit the ignorance of the people, and the clergy should always be grateful that, as a general rule, the people are ignorant of truthful Church history, and of the part played by the Churches concerning science, education, social reform, persecution, ecclesiastic intrigues and—most fortunate of all, perhaps—ignorance of pulpit methods.

R. H. ROSETTI.

It is with diseases of the mind as with those of the body; we are half dead before we understand our disorders, and half recovered when we do.

ACID DROPS

LORD ELTON is one of those lay preachers who generally manages to say nothing that is of consequence, but which is delivered as though our salvation depended upon hearing it. For that reason he has a ready entrance to the press and is beloved of the B.B.C. In a recent issue of the "Daily Mail" there appeared an article by Lord Elton on "Public Schools." Lord Elton puts it that "Public Schools" are attacked because they cultivate loyalty to them on the part of the pupils. But that is nonsense, and Lord Elton must know it is nonsense. Loyalty to a school, or to any worthy association, is a good thing.

Lord Elton's remark that as a public school education costs from £100 to £300 a year, "it is absurd that a boy who is quite unable to learn anything, and would be happier working with his hands, should spend five years at school at such a cost." We agree, but it is worse that boys who lack intellectual ability should pass through these schools, and that the passing should almost guarantee an entrance to the higher branches of the civil service, political appointments, and other official duties that they are totally unfit to discharge, and have this exhibition of inability landing us in disastrous situations. Ability is not hereditary; public posts are, and they who force an entrance into this privileged circle have a very hard path before them. At present our educational system is very costly, and by "costly" we do not mean monetary expenditure, but by our waste of good material and our glorification of mediocrity.

It is difficult to believe that Lord Elton does not know better the situation that exists with regard to Public Schools. What genuine educationalists are aiming at is not the destruction of Public Schools, but the abolition of the bad features connected with them. They are asking these the better features for the benefit of the whole of the community. Broadly, that demand, as we suggested last week, takes the form that public schools shall become an integral part of the national educational system; that each inmate shall earn the right to enter, and that neither money nor social position shall make good the absence of capacity. That plan and that plan alone will secure the nation as a whole benefiting from what ability the nation as a whole possesses. It would also kill the appointment of hosts of incompetents to public offices whom we see wandering from office to office and equally useless, or dangerous, in each.

In a case at Middleton, Lancashire, concerning a Jehovah's Witness Conscientious Objector, the prosecuting solicitor said, of the defendant:—

"This man calls himself a Jehovah's Witness, and is a member of a sect which can only be described as a small band of canting, hypocritical humbugs, who have commercialised religion in the most sordid manner, and obtained an easy livelihood by playing on the gullibility of decent religious-minded people."

Without going into the pros and cons of the Witness movement, we do suggest that this solicitor's statement amounts to downright religious persecution. There is so little religion that is not canting, hypocritical and commercialised, that to single out one sect in this fashion is grossly unfair; but as the solicitor remarked, this particular sect is a "small band," and we suppose that makes a difference to a Christian.

The Jehovah's Witness made a mistake in the first place, however. He should have become a minister of one of the more respectable sects (the same Christianity under another label), and he would then have had an Act of Parliament to give him "conscience" protection for the duration, instead of a tribunal, followed by a police court and twelve months in jail. We do wish, when the solicitor made the above remarks, that the "Witness" had turned to him and, like the stage comedian, asked: "Why pick on us out of the whole gang?"

A platitudinous publicist in the propaganda producing palace of the prince of peace has perpetrated the perfect answer to a parson's prayer. Henceforth and for evermore, let every Atheist

how his head with shame and hold still his wicked tongue. For is it not written on the much read Wayside Pulpit.

Every rose is a living answer to the Atheist:—

Thanks be to God for the ingenious gentleman who invented that one. No longer need the Christian apologist squirm and wriggle to find an answer to the panzer attack of the unbeliever. He has just to point to the rose on the bush and say, "There is the answer." Just what it means no one will be quite sure, but it has all the qualities of a good political slogan—it sounds well. The beauty of the rose, when it is beautiful, is undeniable. Tack God on and the trick is finished.

Yet the materialistic minded Atheist, with his unreligious habit of looking at all sides of a question, may turn over the beautiful rose leaf and reveal a vicious grub, or greenfly, or a mass of sporadic germs eating the heart of the beauty of the rose and turning it into an unbeautiful jelly. Why does not the Wayside Pulpiteer take his courage in both hands, throw bashfulness to the winds and say: "It takes a God to produce me, and another God to explain what is the use of me after I have been made?"

A little book about Sister Josefa Menendey has recently been published and it gives splendid confirmation to a well known physiological fact. She belonged to the "Sacred Heart at Poitiers" and died there at the age of 33. She left behind her "a long series of communications from Jesus Christ" with whom she had intimate talks, their burden being "that Christ wants our love more than anything else." It is quite natural that a sex-suppressed nun should have long talks with Jesus who wants "our love," just as it is natural that so many of the books by priests and monks dealing with the same topic should find in Mary the ideal partner. The close connection between religion and sex are always elucidated by the publication of such works as this one about poor Sister Menendey.

Lt.-Col. P. W. O'Gorman, a firm believer in the "undoubted" authenticity of the Holy Shroud, is very disturbed at the claim that "our Lord" was nailed to the cross by his palms, and not by the wrists which is what the Holy Shroud proves. He admits that the New Testament says hands, but as hands include the wrists, the Shroud must be right. Moreover many of the pictures of the Crucifixion are, contends Mr. O'Gorman, not at all contemporaneous and are "fauciful" in many respects, especially where Jesus is shown wearing a long garment. In particular, no one can say how many of the "relics" of the Crucifixion are genuine, especially the nails, about which there are hopeless contradictions. No, the only real proof is in the Holy Shroud photographs which "have been proved to be the only authentic portraits of the Saviour's Passion-riven body." And to think that there are some blatant infidels who even disbelieve such wonderful proof!

The "Universe" announced with a big headline that "South Africa loses 242,000" — the average reader, of course, wondering how South Africa could possibly have lost such a number of men in the war. The losses however were not caused by the war, but "since 1910" through birth control! It is difficult to keep pace with Roman Catholic nonsense but how very funny it all is sometimes.

We have pointed out for years the unhappy mental calibre of many of our priests, vicars, curates, and other Christian functionaries; we are pleased therefore to see this confirmed in an article in the "Church Times" of a recent date, entitled "The New Priesthood." It admits for example that "a diminished and diminishing proportion of the ablest young men at the old universities is aware of a vocation to the sacred ministry." And also, "How is it that so many of the candidates for ordination belong to types which are less adapted to mixing easily with men and women of other tradition and origin?"—a cryptic way of gilding the pill. And we are even told that "we still affix absurd importance to qualifications which are entirely irrelevant" — which can mean all sorts of things but never a nice one

for the clergy. The truth is that the bishops are at their wit's end to find men worthy of the great "honour" of being a priest, and the only material is poor enough to make them gasp. As it should do.

The clergy of Grantham, of all sects, have protested against Sunday morning civil defence and invasion exercises. Their objection is purely professional. They say it keeps people away from Church and Chapel. Their motto is business first and what is the use of a victory if it ruins the Church industry. In replying to the protest the Chairman of the War Emergency Committee says "it is vitally important that all the personnel should be thoroughly trained to meet invasion." So much for the value of Church services.

The Bishop of Liverpool has got into hot water for saying that he knows a group of public houses where it is arranged that only one glass of beer be sold to girls under sixteen. As serving a girl under eighteen is illegal, the Bishop has been asked to substantiate his statement. Of course, he has not replied. The assumption that a Bishop may not be allowed to tell a lie for the greater glory of God is to deprive a clergyman of one of his oldest privileges. If such questioning were persisted in, one might soon find people asking for evidence of that whale story, or even question the announced fatherhood of the boy that was born to Mary with angels singing hymns of joy round the stable, and, in some pictorial volumes, donkeys bowing before the Sacred Manger.

A very sensible letter from a soldier appeared in a recent issue of the "Picture Post." A soldier wrote that on his identity disk there was arranged some items of information, and the centre of the disk was given the religion in which he was supposed to believe. The disk is worn in case he should be killed, or so seriously wounded as not to be able to give his name, etc. But the one thing really important is that of information concerning his blood group, should the information be necessary, is not given. The writer suggested that the religion should be abolished and the space occupied by the valuable medical information. There are only two or three objections to this. The first is that blood transfusion is a comparatively new thing and we cannot expect our military chiefs to rise to an understanding of it for, say, a couple of generations. Secondly, one great purpose of the disk is not the welfare of the soldier, but the advertising of this or that Church. Of course, the information as to religion is often a lie, but a lie more or less where the interests of religion are concerned is not of great importance.

Cardinal Hinsley says it is the duty of parents, in the interests of the children to co-operate with the teachers. We agree, but Cardinal Hinsley, as is usual with priests of all Christian denominations, says one thing and means another. He means that parents should do nothing that would disturb belief in such religion as children get in school, and both parents and teachers should combine in teaching children forms of religion which the majority of thoughtful parents know to be false, and which are not believed in by many of the teachers who are forced to give it.

Parents do, as a matter of fact, co-operate with teachers, so far as they can, on subjects about which all agree are essential to the child's welfare. Where large numbers of parents stand aloof from the teachers is where religion is concerned. Large numbers of parents who know that the religious lessons are misleading stand aloof, and remain silent from the mistaken idea that the children will suffer if they do not join in with the religious lesson which the large numbers of the teachers know to be so much waste of time, or worse. Honesty of thought and speech, the imparting of knowledge and the creation of mental attitudes which we know will be approved by the child's experience, should be the main aim of parents and teachers. That is certainly not the aim of Cardinal Hinsley and his like. A religion that cannot live unless it is forced upon children, a religion that dare not wait for the maturing of the child's mind for judgment, is a colossal swindle, however it may be dressed.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

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be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

IN Northern Ireland, where religious bigotry runs high and
strong, the same struggle for control of the schools by the
clergy goes on. We are the more pleased to note in the Belfast
News-Letter for June 10th a letter from a teacher, who says
he has taught religion as a subject for forty years, but "cannot
say that the resulting product shows any marked superiority
over those children who received little or no religious instruction
in religion." That would be the testimony of all teachers
if they dared be honest in their speech. It would also be the
testimony of the clergy if—but, there, no one expects them to
be honest where religion is concerned.

The letter noted is signed by a non-de-plume. That is a
measure of how much genuine mental liberty there exists
either in Ireland or England. First there is the difficulty in
finding editors who are not afraid to give non-religion and
anti-religion the hospitality of their columns, and then there
is the fear of men and women that if they permit their anti-
religious opinions to be known they will suffer in many ways.
But we still rave about freedom. We are even fighting a war to
maintain it. Why, in the House of Commons there must be
something like twenty-five per cent of its members who dare
not give freely and fully their opinions on religion. They are
the guardians of our liberty.

We have been looking over some of the old journals that
were being issued by Carlile, Hetherington and others of the
fighting force that gathered round Carlile. And what fighters
they were! They not merely protested against laws that acted
as a bar to the freedom and well-being of the people, but they
defied those in power in a way that our "heroes" of to-day
are afraid to emulate. One of the points in dispute was the
newspaper stamp duty, which prevented, as it was meant to
prevent, rousing the people to something better than was then
in existence. There was Hetherington's "Poor Man's Guardian,"
(1832), eight pages, and sold at a penny. The sub heading of
the paper ran thus:—

"Published in defiance of 'Law' to try the power of 'Right'
against 'Might.'"

Our dare-devils of to-day would be satisfied with a mere
protest, followed by obedience.

There was also "The Crisis" (1833), "Issued under the
patronage of Robert Owen." Likewise the "Gauntlet," pub-
lished by Carlile. The issue for July 21st, 1833, was edited by
Carlile in prison. The Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne had
offered to remit the remainder of the sentence if Carlile would
find sureties. Carlile, immediately he was informed of the
"clemency" of the Home Secretary, wrote the following letter,
which appears in the "Gauntlet." The letter was dated
from Giltspur Street, Comptor, June 16th, 1833.

"MY LORD.—The keeper of this prison, at four o'clock
of this day, has communicated to me by written note, that
he has this day received an order from your Lordship's
office, remitting his claim on me for sureties, as far as the
finding of sureties to the amount of five hundred pounds,
by two other persons, is in question. The keeper adds,
that he expects an order from the Treasury, for the re-
mission to me of his claim on me for two hundred pounds,
which I am to know so soon as he receives it.

I am to inform your Lordship that there is, in this case
for which I am confined, a writ of error still pending and
nowhere judged, which I intend to prosecute, sooner or
later, as I can find the hundreds of pounds that are neces-
sary. And if that is not a reason why I should go out of
this place immediately, I have to inform your Lordship
that I shall remain here nine years and a half longer, if
it be necessary, that I may go out unconditionally.

I am, my Lord, your Lordship's very proud and in-
dependent prisoner.

RICHARD CARLILE.

How many of our newspaper heroes of to-day are there who
would fight as Carlile and his backers fought for the freedom
of the press? We Freethinkers may well be proud of our fore-
bears.

In the "Sunday Pictorial" for June 21st, Captain Bellenger,
M.P., says:—

"In the army everyone must have a religion or none at
all. If the soldier declares himself Church of England, as
most of them do, he can be quite sure that on Sundays he
will be marshalled by other professing C. of E.'s and marched
off to some church like sheep to a shearing pen . . . Is it
not time we recognised that religion is individual and not
mass production. . . Church parade is a part of drill, like
any other parade. It usually entails an extra dose of spit
and polish and a lecture, just like lots of other Army
lectures."

Every officer in the army know this to be true, every chaplain
knows it to be true. And yet the men are treated like irrespon-
sible fools where religion is concerned. The "Padre" draws his
officer pay, and his presence helps to keep up the gross humbug
of the necessity of religion. Marching to Church is one of the
first pieces of hypocrisy that a man meets on joining the army.

The General Secretary of the National Secular Society will leave
for a short vacation on July 18, and during his absence matters
of pressing importance only will be dealt with. Details sent in
at once will receive attention before the 18th inst.

Some people are protesting against the Archbishop of
Canterbury saying that the issue before us is religion or Atheism.
It is strange that the one completely honest and unmistakable
utterance by Dr. Temple should have upset many Christians.
We admit that complete truth from a leading cleric is not
common, but there is no sufficient ground for surprise or shock.
It is a case of religion or Atheism—and Atheism is winning all
along the line.

There never has been any other live issue. A change of gods
left Theism untouched. To say that one could not decide left
the gods untouched, and even room for new gods to be
introduced.

THE WORLD AND "DEMOCRACY"

... It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God; shall have a new birth of freedom; and that Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."—ABRAHAM LINCOLN, Gettysburg, 1863.

ONE of the last published addresses of "J. M. R." dealt with what he termed "contaminated ideals." The argument was to the effect of the danger of associating under one heading or formula ideas essentially distinct in their subject content. This led to confusion of thought and ineffectual purpose. . . . This view applies to the loose way in which the term "democracy" is employed by publicists to distinguish their particular leanings. It may be used to denote a peculiar social or economic system; a theme for attack; a political polity; a specious, material and class doctrine. Loose phrasing is not uncommon in "idealist" expression where personal prepossession so largely enters. From which weakness those who dwell in public utterance can pray to be delivered.

The term democracy came through the Greek *demos* = people, and *kratos* = power. The Oxford Dictionary is distinguished for its explanation of words and terms in their most general acceptation. It defines democracy in the first instance thus: "That form of government in which the Sovereign Power resides in the people as a whole, and is exercised either directly by them (as in the small republics of antiquity) or by officers elected by them. In modern use often more vaguely denoting a social state in which all have equal rights without hereditary or arbitrary differences of rank or privilege. Personally, that class of the people which has no hereditary or special rank or privilege—the common people or commonalty."

Democracy, then, in this dual sense, is primarily connected with a form of government and polity, and the masses as affected by that polity. It is this sense which covers our main approach in the following survey. Minor implications as they relate to this issue will be touched upon as they arise; and it may illumine its development if we open up with some general reflections.

A recent summation in time—democracy is at one with what is also known as representative, responsible, popular government. But the manner and substance of representation varies in those countries of our modern world which have adopted or experimented in this metier. So with the powers and constitution of elected Parliaments which carry out the popular mandate. The franchise itself may be restricted to a property qualification, however drawn, or embrace the adult male population, or may take in by some mode or other the feminine part of mankind—the latest innovation herein.

There is also no finality or absolute rule in this connection as regards the character of the central source of authority in the State. This may assume the *modus operandi* of a "Republic"; or may consist of some kind of limited or constitutional monarchy; the retention, that is, as Head of the State of a reigning family trained for the office, with no partisan affiliations, as is usually the case with an elected President. Some of the most democratic communities in its popular meaning retain this institution, as with the Dutch in their House of Orange.* And

*The British Monarchy holds its place in the Constitution from similar expediency and historic association. Legal and administrative business is enacted in its name. With Britain's expansion into a "World-State," embracing every variety of people and stage of culture, it has a further utility. The Crown is a common link, alike between self-governing dominions and primitive communities accustomed to tribal kingship, to whom the title is native as a sanction of allegiance. In practice, the office has followed the course of changing circumstance.

here we strike a suggestive association. The sapience of the European settlement after 1815 united Belgium and Holland under one rule as the Kingdom of the Netherlands, much against the wishes and sentiment of the Belgian partner. In beliefs, ethnic origins and historic tradition it was alien to this collaboration. Despite forces of self-interest entering therein, a revolt broke out against the connection in 1830, which was successful. When it came to framing the Constitution of independent Belgium in a national congress, a keen debate followed on the lines along which this should proceed—monarchy or republic; and by 174 votes to 13 it was decided to recur to the familiar forms of monarchy rather than to affront the unknown perils of a republic. Some of the points raised are of interest to-day, beyond matters of expediency in the foreign relations of Belgium at the time entering into this concern:—

... The warning voices did not come from the East alone. There were the 'bloody and retrograde fluctuations in the republican States of Southern America,' exhibiting a violence of party-spirit, peculiar, it was thought, to politics which permit the highest prize of political ambition to be scrambled for; confirming the general belief that republican government is necessarily unstable. Such was the tenor of much of the argument. Others laboured to exhibit the truth, which had been obscured by the doctrinaires of the French Revolution, that heredity was a neutral institution equally consistent with tyranny or freedom. The form of the Executive was not in itself a matter of primary importance. Taxes could be reduced under a monarchy as they could be increased under a republic. The citizen could come and go as freely under the one dispensation as under the other. Heredity, said the democrat, will lead to despotism; but the real protection against despotism was not in an elective President but an elective legislature, a responsible Cabinet, an independent judiciary, together with guarantees for freedom of worship and speech and education. These were the really important principles which, once fixed and established in the Constitution, would carry with them every liberal consequence which the most uncompromising apostle of human freedom could desire. And such was the spirit which gave shape to the Constitutional Monarchy of Belgium."

The last sentence or two assumes, what is usually taken for granted, that freedom and democracy are at one. This is mainly true, politically, for the direction of policy under the sway of public opinion implies means for shaping that opinion through ancillary agencies; the freedom of the Press. But under this head must be included the whole range of publication and concerns involved—religious, philosophical, æsthetic, scientific—and opens up some vital questions in relation to the Intellectual Life, its character and "Culture." . . .

It was an optimist belief of last-century English Liberalism that the angels were on the side of liberty and righteousness in their progress. . . . As we trace the genesis of democracy and its associations we may descry how far the upper powers favour its emergence, and to what extent the world cherishes its vouchsafements.

AUSTEN VERNY.

(To be continued)

*H. A. L. Fisher, M.A., "The Republican Tradition in Europe"; 1911.

CHINA

IT has taken a world war to make people in this country recognise the Chinese people for what they are. To European peoples—including ourselves—they were just clever little yellow men; they made good servants, they had some skill in the arts, traders knew they were among the most honest dealers in the world, and above all—counting more to their discredit than to their credit—they were not a military people, cherishing traditions of great conquerors. A mere handful of people here recognised the

profound character of the Chinese philosophy of life. But that philosophy had little attraction for Christians anywhere. For it did not emphasise man as necessarily a "sinful" creature, incapable of helping himself, but to grovel on his knees to this or that god. In return, the Chinese regarded Europeans generally as essentially barbarians, and they have never failed to supply the Chinese with a great deal of material to be used in support of their opinion.

One of the best books I have read on China—I have to thank a subscriber to "The Freethinker" for making its acquaintance, is "My Country and My People," by Lin Yutang, published by Heinemann in 1936. It has run through several editions, the latest revised—in 1941. It is strange I should have missed it, as I have always been interested in Chinese philosophy and history.

I present readers with this sample, on "Chinese Humanism." "Chinese Humanism" has a very definite meaning. It implies, first, a just conception of the ends of human life; secondly, a complete devotion to these ends by the spirit of human reasonableness or the Doctrine of the Golden Mean, which may also be called the Religion of Common Sense:—

"The question of the meaning of life has perplexed Western philosophers, and it has never been solved—naturally, when one starts out with the teleological point of view, according to which all things, including mosquitoes and typhoid germs are created for the good of this cocksure humanity. As there is usually too much pain and misery in this life to allow a perfect answer to satisfy man's pride, teleology is therefore carried over to the next life, and this earthly life is then looked upon as a preparation for the life hereafter, in conformity with the logic of Socrates, which looked upon a ferocious wife as a natural provision for the training of the husband's character. This way of dodging the horns of the dilemma sometimes gives peace of mind for a moment, but then the eternal question, 'What is the meaning of life?' comes back. Others, like Nietzsche, take the bull by the horns and refuse to assume that life must have a meaning, and believe that progress is in a circle and human achievements are a savage dance, instead of a trip to the market. But still the question comes back eternally, like the sea-waves lapping upon the shore, 'What is the meaning of life?'

"The Chinese humanists believe they have found the true end of life and are conscious of it. For the Chinese end of life lies not in life after death, for the idea that we live in order to die, as taught by Christianity, is incomprehensible; nor in Nirvana, for that is too metaphysical, nor in the satisfaction of accomplishment, for that is too vainglorious; nor in progress for progress' sake, for that is meaningless. The true end the Chinese have decided in a singularly clear manner, lies in the enjoyment of a simple life, especially the family life, and in harmonious social relationships. . . . It is an ideal of life that is neither particularly ambitious nor metaphysical, but nevertheless immensely real. It is a brilliantly simple ideal, so simple that only the matter-of-fact Chinese mind could have conceived it, and yet one often wonders how the West could have failed to see that the meaning of life lies in the sane and healthy enjoyment of it. The difference between China and the West seems to be that the Westerners have a greater capacity for getting and making more things and a lesser ability to enjoy them, while the Chinese have a greater determination and capacity to enjoy the few things they have. This trait, our concentration on earthly happiness, is as much a result as a cause of the absence of religion. For if one cannot believe in a life hereafter as the consummation of the present life, one is forced to make the most of this life before the farce is over. The absence of religion makes this concentration possible.

"From this a humanism has developed which frankly proclaims a man-centred universe, and lays down the rule that the end of all knowledge is to serve human happiness. The humanising of knowledge is not an easy thing, for the moment man swerves he is carried away by his logic and becomes a tool of his own knowledge. Only by a sharp and steadfast holding to the true end of human life as one sees it can humanism maintain itself. Humanism occupies, for instance, a mean position between the other-worldiness of religion and the materialism of the modern world. Buddhism may have captured popular fancy in China, but against its influence the true Confucianist was always inwardly resentful, for it was, in the eyes of humanism, only an escape from life, or a negation of the truly human life."

C. C.

THE NEW ORDER

IT is customary, in these days, to talk about the "New Order" that is to be ushered in after the war is over, and there are a good many who honestly and sincerely believe—yes, and declare—that as soon as peace returns we shall most certainly adopt an entirely new way of living—vastly different from anything that we have experienced before and hitherto, with roses in the garden, ivy round the door, and all the rest of it—and, so it is argued, we shall look upon all that has happened as a horrid past, to be blotted out from our memory as we sponge a slate. But highly desirable as it is that we should return to sanity, and a peaceful and prosperous way of life, at the earliest possible moment, we must not blind ourselves to the fact that things just don't happen that way—not good and lasting things, at any rate.

Of course, revolutions do occur—revolutions in thought and feeling and ways of living: history records quite a number of these sudden and violent changes—but after the tumult and the shouting has died down there has generally been a reversion—maybe only a partial reversion, but a reversion nevertheless—to the old order of things, and a feeling of thankfulness on the part of a good many that—well, we are still alive and such being the case we had better make the best of it, imperfect though it is! Such is the force of habit and the pull—often the backward and downward pull—of the past.

And there will be not a few who will be ready and willing to adopt that let-well-alone attitude when this war is over. Of that there seems to be no doubt. The gospel of hate has already got its advocates in high places, just as it had during and after the last war; and that alone goes to show that there are some among us who cannot or will not learn the simple fact that hatred always has a boomerang effect, and when deliberately fostered causes unfold misery, if not eventual ruin. One body of people, as a people, is not capable of sustained hatred towards another people in its entirety. One or two may for a very long time hate one or two others, but a nation—never.

In various other quarters, too, there are obvious signs that those who, like the leading exponents of hatred, have not only learned nothing whatever during the last two or three decades but who are fearful of the future, and are taking such steps as will—they think—preserve their peace and prestige, if not actually feather their nests in advance and in readiness for "the day"—their day.

Now to be quite fair to all of these people—and ourselves incidentally—let us frankly admit that they are only doing what is perfectly natural to them—just as we all do! We are all creatures of circumstances, with mental and physical appetites fairly well developed—yes, and generally speaking, those appetites have got a fairly firm hold of us long before we are conscious (if ever we are conscious!) of the fact—and we go through life,

or the majority of us go through life, telling ourselves that there is nothing wrong with our make-up and thinking only, or mostly, of satisfying our personal cravings. . . . That's the rub. Very few have the courage to admit that it is only a degree or two that marks them off from the rest.

It is not for one moment suggested that notwithstanding our ingrained habits and complacency, nothing can or should be done to help the dawn of the new era, but we have first to get down to fundamentals. That is to say: we have first of all to admit our own imperfections and limitations and then decide—each and every one of us—what we really want when the war is over, and whether we are prepared to work and fight intelligently for it, whatever "it" is. Indecision and hesitation will get none of us anywhere worth while, but decision and determination will. Most of the "isms" and "asms" that we have tried so far have proved ineffective to establish peace, prosperity and happiness on earth, and the majority of the peoples of the world are weary to death with struggle and strife. It would therefore seem that the time is ripe to try some other form of human endeavour.

There is apparently no panacea for all the ills from which mankind suffers, but as competition—which is a "law" of nature, and therefore common to mankind—seems to be good for us, good in the sense that, rightly directed, it brings out and develops such virtues as there are in us we might, perhaps profitably, try competing with each other for the abolition of the shackles of superstitions and the tyranny of shams—two, but only two, of the obstacles to progress.

If this war has taught us anything it has surely taught us this: that our pre-war efforts, our collective efforts if you please, were entirely misdirected—hence the present world chaos for which, bear in mind, no one was personally to blame—and that when peace returns our task must be so to reshape society and redirect society's aims and objects that the people no longer worship false gods—the earthly sort as well as the heavenly sort—but, seeing them for what they are—and in this connection the war has been a real eye-opener—banish them, together with the superstitions and tyrannies which always accompany them, from the earth and the skies for ever.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

I SHOULD like to say at the outset that I am an admirer of the ethics of the Nazarene, and particularly of the great fight he put up against terrible odds in the interests of religious and social reforms. It is indeed remarkable that an uneducated young man without any influence should stand out against the powers that be and denounce without fear or favour, and that in scathing terms, the hypocrisy and corruption of the Jewish Church—which in his day was the all-powerful institution in Palestine. He proclaimed publicly a simple code of practical ethics, as a guide for our conduct through life, which ran counter to the dogmas of Judaism. This doctrine roused the ire of the Pharisees, with the result that he was ultimately put to death for heresy.

Now, having said all this, I am not going to proclaim that he was the greatest reformer this world has ever seen. I shall go as far as to say that he was one of the greatest. We had other reformers who were ethically and spiritually on the same plane, such as Buddha, Confucius, Socrates and Marcus Aurelius. It was only but natural that in succeeding generations the followers and admirers of Jesus would perhaps, unconsciously, weave a garland of legends round this romantic figure, somewhat similar to the exquisite Greek and Celtic myths we have about Helen of Troy, Deirdre, and the sons of Uisneach, Ossian, and other heroes of antiquity.

A miracle involves the suspension of natural laws, which is unthinkable. Of course someone might suggest what are termed

miracles are governed by natural laws which are meantime beyond our ken. In some cases that might be true, or it might not. However, I should like to mention that I do not believe in the divinity of Jesus; or perhaps I should say that he was divine in the same sense that other reformers were divine. To-day within the Church the Virgin Birth is denied, and even some doubt the Resurrection. Professor Guignebert, of the Chair of Christian Literature in the University of Paris, openly denies the Resurrection, and he is one of the leading scholars in Europe.

I am now going to put forward the strongest argument in existence against the authenticity of the miracles of Jesus.

In his day, Palestine was under Roman rule, and in every district Roman officials were stationed to watch the political activities of the Jews—to guard against sedition, etc. These officials were highly educated in their day and generation, and may I ask here: How is it that none of them ever recorded any reference whatever to the alleged miracles performed by Jesus? It is no answer to this question to state that the religious and political views of the Romans were different to those of the Jews, and therefore they would ignore the doings and activities of the Galilean. A miracle is a miracle to every shade of religious and political belief, whether Jew or Gentile. Is it, then, conceivable that such miracles publicly performed as the feeding of 5,000 men, plus women and children, on two loaves and five fishes (Matthew xiv. 15-21); the raising of the widow's son at Nain in presence of a huge multitude (Luke vii. 14); and finally, at the Crucifixion, when the sun was darkened for three hours—six to nine—and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves and came unto the Holy City and appeared unto many (Matthew xxvii. 45-52). Yet even Pilate, who played a leading part in this drama and whose palace would be shaken by the earthquake and his ears deafened by the thunderous roar of the rending of the rocks and the city at noon thrown into midnight darkness for hours, is silent on this astounding phenomenon. One would expect that Pilate, at any rate, who was Viceroy of Rome in Palestine, would at once report the whole alarming happenings to his Emperor. Otherwise one would expect he would be called to question about his failure to report this amazing incident. Still, as I have already said, he is silent. Why?

Moreover, Tacitus and Pliny, who always recorded any astronomical phenomena which occurred in the Roman Empire in or about their time, failed to record the total eclipse of the sun for three hours in Palestine.

There is no possible logical explanation of the silence of the Roman officials about the miracles of Jesus, except that they are fictitious.

Gibbon, the Roman historian, refers to this remarkable omission.

NORMAN MORRISON.

CORRESPONDENCE

"THE RISE OF CHRISTENDOM."

Sir,—A little more familiarity with recent archeology might have saved Mr. Cutner from the traps laid by Hardouin and Edwin Johnson for those whose "little learning is a dangerous thing" to themselves and others. To mention only a few discoveries, Crowfoot's excavations at Samaria, the Ras Shamra tablets, the Elephantine Papyri, the Lachish potsherd letters, and Sir William Ramsay's excavations in Asia Minor certainly prove that the Bible belongs to the ancient, not to the medieval world, and that the broad outlines of the traditional story of Hebrew and Christian origins are true. Many thousands of papyri have been found in Egypt which belong to the period of the Roman Empire, and these include Mss. of the Old and New Testaments (in whole or in part). Has Mr. Cutner heard of the Chester Beatty Collection?

The Moabite Stone, inscribed in Hebrew with a dialectical difference, disproves the absurd theory that "Jews" without a traceable past concocted the language of the Old Testament out of Arabic and "surrounding languages and dialects." (What were they?) in the early middle ages. What experts believe that Arabic is the "mother" of Hebrew and other Semitic tongues? -

I am greatly entertained by the Gilbertian picture drawn by Pere Hardouin, S.J., and made still more Gilbertian by Edwin Johnson. Basilian and Benedictine monks — we ought to add, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Nestorian — representing Churches long at daggers drawn and far apart — carry on a vast system of forgeries, which includes the New Testament, the works of the Christian Fathers, and nearly all the Greek and Roman classics! These forgeries are all substantially harmonious, instead of being mutually destructive! The "atheists" provide themselves with huge quantities of "period" ink, lettering, and parchments, and forged monuments, coins, frescoes, and inscriptions, in corroboration of their literary fictions. These men were not then catering for an ignorant mob who would swallow anything; their objective must have been a world of scholars, able to detect 6th century from 1st century ink, for whom the historic past was no tabula rasa. But the monks succeeded in wiping out every trace of their antecedents and universally imposing their fairy tale! Since all the documents before, say, the Wars of the Roses, are forgeries, what is our criterion of forgery? This hyper-criticism makes the detection of the false quite impossible.

I suggest that Mr. Cutner consults again — he must know it — Whateley's delicious satire. "Historic Doubts on the Existence of Napoleon Bonaparte." On his principles he should begin to wonder whether Napoleon was a variant of Apollo (or Apollyon), and whether his historic career is only a chapter of solar mythology. Myths are growing about the name of Lenin, and perhaps a Mr. Cutner, of the year 2300 A.D. will regard Lenin as a mental perfection of Stalin, and attribute his polemical writings to the pen of Prof. J. B. S. Haldane.

A. D. HOWELL-SMITH.

NOTE BY H. CUTNER.

Mr. Howell-Smith might have done better had he waited until my second article had appeared. Still, if he wished to acquaint the world with the extent of his own reading, then I grant him a partial triumph. Otherwise, in the face of the fact that I was outlining an interesting theory of the rise of Christianity, which would be unknown to the majority of readers, I fail to see the relevance of his criticisms. But has he himself read Father Hardouin's complete works?

CORRECTING THE "DAILY MAIL"

Sir.—Maybe you can find room to correct a statement by Ward-Price in the "Daily Mail" of July 1, referring to the Alexandrian Library. The mis-statement is that the library was destroyed by the Moslems.

Ward-Price should know better than this.

The Encyclopædia Britannica, which one would scarcely call anti-Christian, 1926, edition, says, the usual statement, that the libraries were destroyed by the Sarazens can hardly be supported.

In 389 or 391, an edict of Theodosius ordered the destruction of the Serapeum, and its books were pillaged by the Christians.

Maybe people like Ward-Price do not consult authorities.—

Yours, etc.,
W. L. ENGLISH.

LOYALTIES

Sir.—In a Club I visit occasionally—a Comrades Club of Ex-Service men—members of which are supposed to be such Patriotic Loyal subjects, and I am known to be a "Bolshie," with all it implies.

Yet on many occasions I have stood and listened to arguments about the rotten income tax system, "how they try to rob one," and so on, but how clever some are in dodging the Tax collectors, and they are the loyal ones, sometimes I am tempted to join in and point out that "I have always found the

Income Tax Authorities very fair" and "if you play the game with them they will do what is right to you," but I get laughed at, and when I say "I always pay my Tax" they reply "more fool you." Yet, I am the Bolshie—not patriotic, a danger—they are loyal—and so, here we have a group of loyal subjects, whose Government can do no wrong, until it touches their pockets and then the Government uses Gestapo methods, etc. On the other hand we have a lone Bolshie, who objects to the Government and the system, but who realises that until the present system is altered, we must pay up and play the game.—

Yours, etc.,

H. J. GIFFRINS.

Concealment regarding a question of such vital importance as the truth of Christianity is to be deplored; while an attitude of indifference on a subject that should be of surpassing interest to us all can only be characterised as amazing—unless, indeed, the real explanation be that men have ceased to believe.—PHILIP VIVIAN.

OBITUARY

ENOS HOLDUP

At the Honor Oak Crematorium, London, the remains of Enos Holdup were cremated on Saturday, 27th June. In his 69th year at the time of death, his life had been an active one in the old S.D.F., Labour Party, Co-operative Movement and among his workmates. His Freethought principles were always well to the fore, and although he was made to suffer for his opinions he could not be silenced. He was a constant reader and admirer of the "Freethinker" and its editor. A large party of relatives and friends were present at the crematorium where a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S.

R. H. R.

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. EBURY.

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South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), 11-0, C. E. M. JOAD, M.A., D.Lit., "Religion—Forty Years Retrospect."

COUNTRY

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Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-30, Mrs. M. I. WHITEFIELD (Glasgow), a Lecture.

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