

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

Vol. LXII.—No. 30

Sunday, July 26, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTESTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	301
Looking Back: Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson—August 3, 1932—"Julian" ...	303
Christian Tolerance and Freedom—N. A. Urquart ...	304
The World and "Democracy"—Austen Verney ...	305
Acid Drops ...	306
To Correspondents ...	307
Sugar Plums ...	307
A Problem: <i>Why the Clotted Bosh?</i> —Athoso Zenoo... ..	308
Religion in the U.S.S.R.—S. H. ...	309
Thomas Paine, 1809... ..	309
Living Drama—Geo. B. Lissenden ...	310

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 295)

Fallacy Hunting

PERHAPS I ought not to use the word "hunting" where fallacies are concerned. They are so numerous that the difficulty is to dodge them, not to find them. Many of these fallacies are not of great importance: little more than popular sayings that do no harm—if one leaves out of sight the fact that the critical habit, as do other habits, shrinks with lack of exercise. On the other hand, criticism may develop into a nuisance where many things, like friends, may be taken for granted; and there is really no need to analyse every sentence spoken—for over-accuracy of speech tends to make conversation a nuisance. It is, however, different when anyone uses spurious phrases as though they were genuine things. To pass them is akin to giving a man a bad half-crown knowing that he will try to pass it on as a genuine coin.

Consider, for example, the saying: "The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." This, by the way, is not from the Bible, as many people imagine. It is from Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," but is known mainly through that prince of literary pirates Laurence Sterne. I think that sentence, however, has done much to build up God's character. Yet nothing is clearer than that the Lord tempers the wind neither to the shorn lamb nor the newly born one. Many thousands of lambs die annually, and, as man does what he can to preserve them, the responsibility for not lending a hand must rest with the other party. Of course, theologically, this should not be. But when one looks at "God's world" it hardly presents him as a protector of the weak. W. H. Mallock, a theist, put the matter with fairness when he said that, if we must take God as nature presents him, the picture we get is that of either "a criminal lunatic deliberately killing or maiming" or "some blackguardly larrikin kicking his heels in the clouds; not, perhaps, bent on mischief, but indifferent to the fact that he is causing it." The god who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb comes out poorly from an impartial examination.

The Piety of Emptiness

Parallel with this protection of the shorn lamb is another hard-worked testimony to God's character: "God loveth a cheerful giver"—this time from the New Testament. If that be true, he cannot be very particular as to the quality of his loves. Swindlers are often among the most generous givers. "Come light, go light" is a very common practice among thieves. Shady characters are not wanting in generosity to a lesser degree than those who lead a normally honest life. It will be remembered that Hooley, the financier, presented a set of solid silver ornaments to St. Paul's Cathedral. The plate was returned, some time after it was given, in response to a public outcry. Certain it is that if all the "wrong 'uns" had been niggardly the Churches would have lost heavily. So we had better—to be in accordance with facts—say "God loves a giver" whether he is cheerful or otherwise. We lean to the opinion that if we substitute "tax collector" for "God" we shall be nearer an available fact.

There is another popular saying, also from the New Testament: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." That used to be in great vogue when "Christian Socialism" first appeared on the scene. The value of this was three-fold. First, it is used by those whom it suits to prove the sympathy of Jesus with the poor. Secondly, it pleases those with enough intelligence to dislike the supernaturalism of the New Testament and who wish to pose Jesus Christ as a social reformer. Third, as it really means nothing at all it can be made to mean whatever one likes.

For there never has been a labour dispute in which both sides could not agree that the labourer was worthy of his hire. The dispute never turned upon whether the labourer was worthy of his hire or not; the dispute centred upon what was the worth of the labourer. The labourer thought his value should be set at one level, the employer at another. The labourer argued that in view of his needs, and the amount of labour he was asked to do, the money paid him was inadequate. The employer argued that, bearing in mind the money invested in his business, the price of raw material and the overhead expenses, it was impossible for him to pay more. The essential question was, and is: In view of the cost of living and the right of each to have a sufficiency wherewith to live decently in return for honest labour, also bearing in mind the fact that the resources of society come to the present generation as a heritage for all—is the proportion of that heritage which the "labourer" receives equitable? To that question, "The labourer is worthy of his hire" gives no answer. It is just a grandiloquent way of saying nothing at all. A handy formula for either class, but an empty one for both.

Even Shakespeare!

From the New Testament, with its partial, unhealthy and distorted view of life, we may turn by way of a change to one who looked at life through the eyes of a master of human passions, and who shed the light of his genius on every aspect of life with which he dealt. Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Polonius these words:—

“This above all; to thine own self be true
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

I suppose this has been cited as often as anything of Shakespeare's, and always, so far as we know, with unqualified admiration. But is it really impeccable? Is it really a truism? Is it even exact? Is it beyond question that if a man is true to his own self that he cannot then be false to anyone? Of course, if we are dealing with an upright man—one of impeccable character and unerring judgment—we may safely say that such a man, in being true to himself, will, *ipso facto*, be true to others. But is it more than what one may call a conditional truism?

Suppose the man with whom we are dealing is not a good man, what then? Suppose he is selfish, dishonest, even of a markedly criminal character? Can we then say that so long as he is true to himself he cannot be false to any man? Remember that the ground of the conclusion is that a man, true to himself, cannot be harmful to any other person. But a man must be true to his own nature. Even that seems to be less wise than it seems. For whatever a man is or does he cannot, so long as his action is due to his own uncoerced volition, act any other way than along lines of agreement with his character. The action of a scoundrel is as true to the character behind the act as is the conduct of a good and wisely benevolent person. A liar is as true to himself when he lies as is one who is habitually truthful. Hitler and Goering are as true to their characters as other folk are true to their characters. Action will always be true to character, so long as it is not forced behaviour, because it cannot be anything else. The best of training does not make a man false to his character; it aims at so altering the existing character as to give a greater power, a greater impetus to dormant better qualities. The pressure of social life runs in the same direction. So does every form of social pressure.

It seems, then, that the wisdom of Polonius does not tell us very much. It is not so much a revelation as a truism. We modify character by creating new desires at the cost of other and older tendencies. Polonius helps us in this task not much more than the average politician helps by screaming to us to save the country—by which he means to follow him.

But another point strikes us. Polonius was a politician; and it may be that Shakespeare, who knew politicians—“men who outwit God”—may have had in mind something different from what most seem to have thought. He was “holding the mirror to nature.”

A Dean in a Fog

My typewriter has been running away with me as usual, for I really intended to deal with other things; but I have not enough space left me to handle the subjects I had in mind, so I must leave them for another occasion. I will content myself this week with one or two examples of what we may call, politely, mixed reasoning. The present Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Matthews, has, with certain people, gained the reputation of being something

of a philosopher. One of his books, published about six years ago, bears the title “The Purpose of God.” I know nothing of God or his purpose save as a term covering a survival from primitive mankind. What I am interested in is the Dean's understanding of the world in which he and I find ourselves. He says, with approval, that Hume, who retained a rather nebulous deism, agreed that the world “is an order, not a chaos.” That interests me because I am wondering what the Dean has in mind—if anything—when he speaks two conceptions of the world: one that of “order,” the other “chaos.”

I think “chaos” may be ruled out of science altogether. It has no scientific value whatever. After a house has been bombed, and both the building and its contents have been scattered, or remains in one huge tangled heap, we might speak of the contents of the house as being in a state of chaos. But no level-headed man would deny that the position of every object was as expressive of known or knowable natural laws, as though the place of each piece of shattered furniture had been planned by some builder. The principle of cause and effect is as manifest in the building after it was bombed as it was before the bomb fell.

But while I can conceive, dimly, a natural “order” that is different to the one we know, I cannot picture “chaos” at all, save in the sense that the same set of conditions may manifest one thing to-day and another to-morrow. If Dr. Matthews could prove that this did occur, or does occur, then we should be compelled to look for some other force outside the known factors as an explanation of the erratic behaviour of “natural forces”; and even then we should not have chaos, only one “order” superseding another. Meanwhile, I call Dr. Matthews' attention to the fact that any grouping of natural forces must result in an “order” of some kind; and so long as the grouping of natural forces are consistent in their consequents, “God”—certainly as an active force—is ruled out as unnecessary.

In proving the world to be “orderly” as a means of proving the existence of God, the Dean has committed suicide in order to save himself from slaughter.

Here are two other specimens of the Dean's reasoning that may help to illustrate his mental quality. “The conception of evolution,” he writes, “within nature precludes us from holding that such nature evolves,” and “though there is undoubtedly evolution within the universe there can be no evolution of the universe.” What in the name of common sense can anyone make of this? Are there really two things where science and common sense thought there was only one? Is the universe separate from its parts? Surely the “universe” is not separate from individual things; it is individual things taken as a whole. Separate things are not forms of existence held together by something called the “universe,” so that when the parts evolve and, apart from them, there is a “universe” that may or may not evolve at the same time. Twenty shillings and one pound sterling are not two things, but one thing; there is not a pound and twenty shillings. Actually, the “universe” does not evolve because there is no such distinct entity. “Universe” is a shorthand summary of what is.

I can assure Dr. Matthews that there is no such thing as the United States of America once we demolish the separate States. This ought not to be if the Dean's reasoning is sound.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

LOOKING BACK: GOLDSWORTHY LOWES DICKINSON—AUGUST 3, 1932

THE name of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson is already fading into the past. At best, he is recalled as an authority on literature, as a close friend of Roger Fry and patron of the Arts, as the writer of skilled dialogues concerning philosophical problems. Yet during the last war, he was one of the outstanding figures with Bertrand Russell and C. P. Trevelyn of the Union of Democratic Control. He was never a pacifist in the absolute moral sense, but his high-minded agnosticism was revolted by the outbreak of irrationalism which the war produced. Men who had studied German history and found much of which to approve in 1812, 1864, 1870, now discovered with the certainty recently made familiar once again by Lord Vansittart that all German achievement since Frederick the Great was the work of a culture and that no other course would serve than the "knock-out blow" or the hanging of the Kaiser. Sheaves of atrocity stories were poured out from the Press; as time went by the war aims became lost in a general cry of hate. Lowes Dickinson was revolted; he was a disciple of reason as he had learned it from Plato and Goethe. He was stirred to protest when Bertrand Russell was removed from his fellowship at Cambridge. Years after, they were both removed by the Tories from a China Committee! The retiring don became a public character, urging sanity and reasonableness in a world which was largely engaged in refusing to listen.

The more serious work of Lowes Dickinson during the war years commenced in 1915 with "The European Anarchy." It was a close study of the causes of the war, obviously owing much to the work of Seymour Coeks on the secret treaties and the undemocratic diplomacy which had brought about the conflict. Dickinson was never beguiled by the myth that there was only one guilty nation; at times his clear-headed reasonableness upset his more advanced friends, such as Vernon Lee or Lord Ponsonby. As E. M. Forster remarks in his biography, the war caused a rent in the soul of Lowes Dickinson. He was appalled by the results of world insanity; the deaths and maiming of his younger friends became a burden to him. He did not make a truce with himself until 1926, when he published "The International Anarchy," probably one of the clearest and most exhaustive studies of the background to the European War ever written.

Dickinson's attitude to religion was that of the aesthete and man of letters. He wrote two small books of great worth in which he impugned historical orthodoxy as representing final truth; he was content to rest in a philosophy of values and to set aside any of the credal claims made for Jesus. His feelings were intensified by the widespread contradiction of theory and practice which marked the Western world; in "Letters of John Chinaman" he reflects upon the opposing claims of the peace-loving Jesus and the ambitions of European imperialism. His conclusion that orthodox ecclesiasticism was a social stereotype possessing relationship to the original Palestine Gospel was later reinforced by the attitude of the large Churches during the European War. One by one, they committed themselves to a gospel of blood-lust and hate which nauseated Lowes Dickinson and led him to feel that the true religion of the times was to be sought in active work for international co-operation. Twenty-five years have since gone by and the majority of ecclesiastics have still to learn their lesson. The plaintive appeal against hate uttered recently by Dr. Temple is not resounded in the pulpits; the average congregation sees no contradiction between the Man of Nazareth and Lord Vansittart. The attitude of Dickinson is justified; the Churches ever fail to transcend the verdict of popular majority opinion.

The reactions of war had left Dickinson anxious to see the foundations laid for an enduring peace. He was certain that this meant nothing less than a constructive internationalism ready to

turn away from the root-causes of conflict. "Think other thoughts," he wrote, "love other loves, Youth of England and of the world." His book, "War, Its Nature, Cause and Cure," was an exposition of the theme. Unlike some who had realised the insanity and the illiberality of war, he stressed the economic aspect and urged a world-readjustment which would render total warfare an obsolete barbarity. The book concludes with a plea for self-government and racial autonomy under the general direction of a League of Nations. Dickinson did not live to see the end of his dreams; he died on August 3, 1932, before Hitler had risen to power. Much has happened in the solitary decade which has since gone by. The world which Lowes Dickinson was seeking to shape now seems a thousand years away!

The brave little band of Englishmen who stood for sanity during the four years of war are deserving of recall. Dickinson was essentially a political realist among them; his critical powers were exercised in the dissection of the unworthy myth which was moulding and summing up the popular thought and aspirations of the times. There are fundamental differences between the present warfare and the last; it is more clearly now a conflict of ideologies. Yet, there are vital connections still with what went before. Fascism represents the ultimate outcome of those roots of war against which Dickinson strove. The last peace was not made by the men who had done the fighting; after the election of 1919, the House of Commons was packed with hard-faced men who stayed at home and did well out of the war. England's honour had been saved by Horatio Bottomley; the Peace Treaty was drawn up in terms to be expected from those who compiled it. The pledges of the Armistice were broken; a brutal peace entered like iron into the soul of the defeated people. Economic readjustment did not take place; Socialism was a subject which scared the victorious politicians. Bolshevik horrors were substituted in the credulous mind for those perpetrated by Germany; the victors settled down to a war of their own in which they might exploit capital and crush democracy. Having got rid of the Weimar Republic and the League of Nations, their field was clear. They gradually produced a situation in which another world war became inevitable. The old individualistic liberal-capitalism had broken up; it was challenged by Fascism, and the so-called democratic political leaders were unwilling to give the only effective answer, one founded upon the analysis of Marx.

When allowance is made for the far-reaching changes of context, Lowes Dickinson has a living message ten years after his death. His appeal was for a Socialist Internationalism based upon economic readjustment and for an historical sense capable of regarding history from an international standpoint. It was for his internationalism that he was attacked by the "Morning Post," which demanded a "national" anti-German school of history as a means of winning the war! Each of these ideals was to be sacrificed in the years which commenced with the Peace Treaty of 1919. Popular appeal was not made to reason and tolerance, but to an emotional reaction founded upon a partial view of the facts. Dickinson had envisaged a league of peoples working for the common good; he was faced with a league of rulers each working for what he could get out of it for himself. The Hoare-Laval Pact of 1935 was the sequel to the expected from such a source. In the midst of the present war, some sinister parallels to the last upheaval and its psychology of emotion have emerged again. Vansittartism bears ominous resemblances to the mentality of 1916; it foreshadows a peace which would reproduce the fallacy of the last Treaty. Anti-Germanism and racial animosity is a potent smoke-screen directing attention away from the fundamental economic causes of war and the means of their removal. National unity and election truces are slogans which can be dangerous disguises, allowing a loss of balance and an emotional irrationality. The Anglo-Soviet Pact is only a starting-point towards a necessary social revolution; there is too great a tendency, even within the Labour Party, to take things for granted. The protests of the 1922 Committee

against Left Wing tendencies in the B.B.C. news do not suggest that the more extreme Tory groups have yet learned anything from the Russian Alliance save a fanatical desire to check social and economic progress in a sectional interest. The rationalism of Dickinson rebuked them now as it did then; clear-headed analysis affords the only answer.

It is now ten years ago since King's College, Cambridge, lost one of its oldest fellows, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson. He was a brave man who sacrificed comfort and friendships for causes which he saw to be just and reasonable. His spirit is reminiscent of John Cornford, David Guest and others who gave their lives in the Spanish War. There is something for present-day disciples of reason to learn from his memory. It is found in his demand for close attention to fact and in his constant attempts to prevent all reason from becoming submerged into wild propaganda. Few can be content with certain elements in the present war; it has driven some to fight for freedom and others to struggle for big profits. War aims have yet to be defined, but some have shown their war motives with a clarity which deserves to be rebuked in the stinging language of "Letters of John Chinaman." Perhaps the greatest tribute which could be paid to Dickinson's memory would be that of a new stress upon internationalism, a fresh demand for a real league of peoples, and a constant endeavour for economic revolution as the first stage to a world socialism. Lowes Dickinson stood too close to Plato to become an ardent disciple of Marx. But it may well prove to be that his ideals will find their clearest exposition in a semi-Marxist analysis of human society.

"JULIAN."

CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE AND FREEDOM

THE grey matter that constitutes the average "Christian" brain is in serious need of the oil of logical thinking to make it function as sweetly as, in my opinion, a human brain should. The longer I live, and the more people I meet, the more do I (an ex-Sunday school teacher) think that the "Christian" ideas about everything could not be worsened if one deliberately tried. Take the "Christian" ideas of tolerance and freedom.

My dictionary says that the word "tolerance" means "the allowance of that which is not approved of: the practical recognition by a State and its concession to its citizens of the rights of conscience, especially in the matter of religion."

The "Christians" I know must never have studied a dictionary, because I have yet to meet a "tolerant" Christian; that is, if he took his "Christianity" seriously. The Christian idea is well summed up in the words of a recently popular song, "You can't do that there 'ere."

A recent correspondence between myself and a schoolteacher friend of mine in Aberdeen has made me acutely aware of the need for a clear-cut Atheism to forward the true progress of mankind.

In this correspondence my friend stressed that if I made any use of his writings to me, I was not under any circumstances to use his name, in case it would prejudice his position as a teacher. This meeting was held between representatives of the Educational Institute of Scotland and representatives of the Presbytery (at the Presbytery's request, note) with a "view to improving religious instruction in schools . . . they (the Presbytery) viewed with alarm and concern the waves of secularism and materialism which were sweeping the world, etc., etc." The Presbytery had set out as a basis for negotiation several points for "consideration": (1) That a minister was to be appointed to each school to be known as "The Minister" of that particular school. I will not bore my readers with further details, for sufficient has been given for my purpose.

At this meeting of the E.I.S. a vote was taken on the matter of whether there was to be "more religion" or not, and those for were 56, those against, 57. However, the rebels slipped up in framing their amendment, and the "Godly" ones promptly

and tolerantly took advantage of the situation to vote the "Godless" ones down as being out of order. If the "Godly" ones can manage it, the children of Aberdeen are to have religion by a majority of minus 1.

My friend says, in his letters to me, "most applicants for a teaching post must adopt a hypocritical attitude." . . . "I suspect why X (a friend of his) did not get the job (teaching in a primary school) was because, when asked at an interview 'if it were necessary to cut down the time for teaching in a primary school, what subjects or subject would you cut down or remove?' he answered without hesitation, 'the Bible period.' . . . 'If he did not get the job solely on that account he certainly lost a lot of votes.'"

Good examples of "Christian" tolerance! My friend is frightened for his job . . . a slip-up in wording an amendment and the end of the wedge is slipped in . . . a quite possibly good teacher is lost to the nation because of religious prejudice . . . and the ministers do their best to "get in by the back door."

To the logical thinking person it is pathetic to see the mental gyrations of the "Christian" apologist when he tries to explain away the various complexities of his creed. He's all for tolerance, but just mention the word "Atheist" and note his reactions. Out comes the old weapon of "faith." What a weapon! I have often pinned down a "Christian," point by point, on his own admissions, to admitting the utter impossibility of his religion, only to get pointed out at the end of it all: "Ah! but you won't change my faith . . . I have faith," as if that were the absolutely logical answer to all my argument. I have retorted, "If I were to go to a lunatic asylum and there meet a man who was convinced he was Napoleon, no logical argument of mine would convince him to the contrary, would it?" The answer is always, "I suppose not." "Well," I have replied, "you remind me of a lunatic like that . . . you have a 'faith' just like that . . . all the facts are against you and you absolutely refuse to be convinced."

I have a number of Salvation Army relations who always come to see me full of hope and "faith" that I will yet see the "light" and save my soul. At first when they heard of my views they were horrified, but bit by bit they are getting accustomed to the ideas. They would always ask me to go to church on a Sunday morning, and my retort always was: "Certainly, if you will come with me to the pictures on Monday." But going to the pictures was "different" somehow or other. I have sat with grim amusement, watching them pray over their food, before going to bed, and at other times, and I know how tolerant they were when I wanted to listen to dance music on the radio or if I asked them to read an Atheistic pamphlet. Yet what is the difference? I should have the same right to have my tastes in music and the same right to propagate my ideas as they, but they are so "tolerant" that they would attempt to burn my literature before my face to show their contempt and horror for it, say their prayers all the more fervently, and sing their hymns all the more lustily, as if to convince me by sheer noise.

Are their ideas to be respected because they are many and we Atheists few? "Oh no," they will say, "we know we are right: we are certain we are right." And then round and round the mulberry bush we go and I get told the old, old story of the Atheist who lay a-dying and sent for the minister because he had changed on his deathbed. "Yes," I retort, "maybe . . . a drowning man will clutch at a straw, I believe . . . and what a thing of straw is your God."

What would you say, you "meek and tolerant Christians," if we, the Atheists of this country, were to go in behind the scenes as the ministers in Aberdeen did and try to get Atheistic teaching into the schools? I don't even need to guess your reply. Does an Atheist ever get the chance to express his views over the radio? Does an Atheist ever get a column in the daily Press?

Yet all you "tolerant" Christians keep on claiming that this is a "free country," a Christian country, where everyone can express his views.

I'll believe all you say about freedom when my schoolteacher friend can fearlessly say, if questioned about his religious views, "I am an Atheist," or when I hear an Atheist speaking on the radio, or see, not a leading article, but even a secondary article on Atheism, by an Atheist, in any of our popular daily papers. Until then I beg leave to smile a big smile when I hear the word "freedom" in the mouth of a "Christian."

N. A. URQUART.

THE WORLD AND "DEMOCRACY"

(Continued from page 288)

FROM the dawn of what is known as recorded history in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area, the considerable attainment therein of material civilisation is associated with a general directive supernatural notion. Each community has its regulative cult, its familiar spirit or deity; law and authority are from above; custom and usage once established are sacrosanct. Thus the singular people, the Hebrews, having established themselves in Palestine, are under the special providence of Jehovah; all their codes and statutes are enacted in his name. This spirit of routine observance and sacerdotal aspect of the "State", has continued through the centuries the main basis of consociation amid the shifting fortunes of kingdoms and empires. It is represented in Europe by that formidable medieval institution, the Ecclesia Romana, surviving through altered conditions to our day; exhibiting peculiar relations and portents.

Amid this obscurantist atmosphere there emerges another form of life and action connected with the various States and city-republics of antique Hellas. There enters on the scene the prototype of the citizen, taking a part in public affairs and discussion through the popular assembly—the ecclesia. So begins real politics; and studies in political doctrine based upon (or limited by) these experiences appear in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. A political terminology corresponding thereto emerges; democracy, aristocracy, tyranny, oligarchy as shown in contemporary action. Not that we breathe simply the air of rationality. There in the background is a state cult to be respected; the Olympians still hold high revel on their mountain eyrie. "The gods whom Aristophanes scoffed at on the stage sometimes slew their scoffers. . . ." But we meet with ratiocination; human relations became a subject for examination; and from the outset among such terms "democracy" is one of ill repute with the philosophisers.

The citizens taking part in affairs were limited; as widespread slavery was the lot of the labouring order; as similarly in the Roman world. Yet Plato considers this basis unsatisfactory, and in his famous treatise the ideal Republic is controlled by selected trained "guardians" to whom is committed the welfare of the State. Aristotle, approaching the theme from another angle mistrusts Greek democracy, and favours a mixed government with a popular, monarchial and aristocratic element duly mingled. . . . However, the Greek genius failed to uphold its independence against a ruder, stronger power in the north; which opened the way to a Greek Empire extended under Alexander the Great.

More pronounced factors of a civic regime are found in the performance of the Respublica Romanorum of its greater days during some four centuries prior to our era. Its constitution is tentative, but it included a state-council, the Senate, to which its leaders in war or peace were accountable, and presents remarkable historic personalities. Its fabric was unsound in other respects and it went down amid civil strife, disturbance

and the stresses of its very expansion of power. Meanwhile, it had made the Mediterranean a European sea by destroying the Oriental dominion of Carthage. It was succeeded by an autocratic Empire which consolidated Roman authority with a measure of success until it, too, fell upon evil times. Yet during the centuries following that witnessed vicissitudes of Roman institutions, this republican tradition remained an inspiring memory among ardent spirits of a later period: "whether presented in the romantic rhetoric of Livy, or the mild and humane beauty of the parallel lives of Plutarch, or in the abounding eloquence of Cicero, or in Lucan's passionate verse, or in the bitter aristocratic irony of Tacitus." . . . And affected protagonists of freedom under new circumstance.

Though Roman administration broke up in the West, elements survived amid the surge of barbaric inroads to become centres of civilising agencies in another order.*

Then there enters on the scene the potent force of the Church Catholic with its comprehensive claims. Remarks Renan: "Throughout all the Middle Ages the Church is no other than the old Rome, regaining its authority over the barbarians who have conquered it—imposing upon them its decretals, as it formerly imposed its laws—governing them by its cardinals as it once governed them by its imperial legates and proconsuls." . . . Theocratic monarchy, the divine Church sanctifying the divinely selected ruler, is the chief feature marking the rise of separate kingdoms and nations out of the composite tribes of Christendom. Not that the relations between the spiritual and temporal powers in their respective spheres were invariably amiable! But that is another story. . . . Then came the Reformation Schism, and other adventitious factors which wrought for change and innovation in thought and action.

Still the old civic concept revived among the independent States and free cities of Italy, Germany, the Low Countries. Under more favourable and settled conditions material civilisation had progressed in the fine and industrial arts and in agriculture from the 13th century on. A vigorous municipal life with possibilities of increased wealth and amenities was developed under nominal republican auspices and the rule of leading burghers. These States met with varying fortunes and measure of success. Some earned a reputation for faction and instability from contemporary students, who regarded a popular form of government most difficult of attainment from the demands it made on abilities and qualities not invariably forthcoming. A friendly observer with Holland in view says: "The masses are credulous, envious, fierce, turbulent, seditious, inconstant." . . . After a chequered career the Florentine Republic declined; where the ultimate cause of failure was attributed by such critics to defects in the Florentine temperament. "No good man could rise to eminence without becoming the mark of envy and persecution. No reputation was ever stable. The air was full of mocking wit and fierce jealousy and the quick incessant flash of party spite."

Venice maintained her reputation and position at the head of the Adriatic for centuries as a well-ordered present, maritime commonwealth directed by an able, resolute oligarchy. She repulsed enemies on land and sea, established colonies, held a large share of Mediterranean trade, embellished her city with noble architecture. Then the tides of commerce, through geographical change, receded to beat on other shores.

For the genesis and institution of the modern democratic principle we must turn to the deed of an island people off North-Western Europe.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

(To be continued)

* The Eastern or Byzantine Empire ran a separate course to the 15th century, but bequeathed the codification of Roman Law under Justinian in the 6th century.

ACID DROPS

A CHAPLAIN in the Army writes in one of the religious journals that it is enough to make his blood boil constantly to read that so many of our "misguided bishops and clerics" tell the world that the Church has failed. We admit that it is not usual to let the cat out of the bag, but it requires very careful watchfulness not to tell the truth sometimes. If we may paraphrase a well-known saying of Abraham Lincoln—"Some men may tell a lie all the time, but you cannot expect all the members of a given profession to tell the lie all the time."

Another attractive news-item was the desire of one writer to the Press for the Gospel to be preached by people who understand the "modern pagan," and that these pagan-killers will meet the M.P. on his own ground, and that he must, in addition, have the intelligence to "expound the Christian faith in comprehensible terms." Now that is asking for something. Consider: if the appointed person *understands* the modern pagan he is likely to agree with him, and another soul is lost. If he is able to expound real Christianity, then his audience is not likely to agree with him. In the first case the Church loses the preacher, in the other it loses the audience. The Church would do better to go along the old lines—not to bother about what the opponent believes, and not to let a congregation know what real Christianity is.

At St. Albans there has for some time been held a series of Church meetings to explain the Bible to members of the Church, to Nonconformists, and also to "unbelievers." There is no mention of any impression having been made on "unbelievers." That was to be expected. Churchmen remain as they were, quite satisfied with themselves. But the discovery has been made that there are "some divergencies between the Church and the Nonconformist view of the Scriptures." So the matter ends with all of them being as they were.

But we don't think that either the Churchmen or the Nonconformists should be blamed for not agreeing as to what the Bible means. For Christians have always disputed on this issue. And we do not blame them for it. We think the fault lies with the alleged author. It is the word of God, and contains in it, so runs the prayer book, everything that is necessary to man's salvation. But when anyone writes a book he should be able to at least make his meaning clear. If he cannot, then he should not venture on authorship. So far as we know this is the only book that God wrote, so it might be pleaded on his behalf that he was unused to writing. Maybe. But we can hardly call God's only recorded effort in book production a gigantic success. His followers are still rowing with each other as to what he really meant.

A little less blameworthy is Canon Rogers, of Birmingham, who complains that the people do not know what the Church stands for. Less blameworthy for complaining, but with not so much justification. For the real trouble here is not that people do not know for what the Church stands for, but that they are awakening to the fact the Church stands for obsolete ideas, for a misunderstanding of the plainest facts of life, for privilege, and for the perpetuation of many things that have had their day. We should like to see Canon Rogers face the plain question—Is there anything done by the Church of any value that cannot be done without the Church or the religion of the Church? To answer that would indeed be getting down to real issues.

It is very interesting to find the "Universe" making an attack on astrology as a superstition. Of course, the "Universe" is right. But what of the Church and holy water and holy beads, of the worship of relics and so forth? We can only suppose that the "Universe" attacks astrology because it is not one of the superstitions of the Church. But where there are already so many superstitions, surely one more or less cannot make much difference.

It has been observed before that truth has a strange habit of cropping up where it is least expected. Here is another example:

"Of all irritating clap-trap, episcopal clap-trap is most exasperating because it is so pretentious."

Now that comes from Canon Bezzant, of Liverpool Cathedral, and he ought to know the quality of Bishops and their kind. It was also said from the Cathedral pulpit, and that is the seat of truth—sacred truth.

That "blessed" word "Instinct." Another addition to our bag was gleaned from a recent copy of the "Star." There has been, it seems, a rush of bicycle stealing, and a magistrate pointed out that the police cannot be on the look-out if their time is taken in attending Court summonses. It was suggested that the police might be empowered to inflict small fines on people who left their bicycles unattended, but was turned down because it would be "right against our British instinct." Considering the way in which we are now governed by arbitrarily-issued orders running from the time we get up until we return to bed, it looks as though our "British instinct" is rather elastic.

Quite obediently the members of the Roman Catholic Teachers' Federation urge the Government to provide Roman Catholic schools out of public funds. They had to do so, or their priests would be down on them and they might lose their jobs. Where the interests of the Roman Church is concerned, teachers and laymen have no opinion at all. There is only one voice and that is the voice of the priest. The sooner everyone gets that into their heads the better. It is the one truth that matters where the Roman Church is concerned.

Of course, so far as the raid on public funds is concerned, and the prostitution of the State in the interests of the sects, what holds true of Roman Catholics holds true of Protestants. But the latter does not, because it dare not, claim the same control over the minds of people that the older Church does. The spirit may be willing, but the opportunities for control are lacking. So the Protestants have to be content with threatening the Government with the power of the religious vote, and frightening Members of Parliament, who know better than their acts imply, into silence. All this illustrates two things. First there will be no improvement in political honesty until religious influences are broken, and second, there can be no peace in the educational world until the State restricts itself to secular education.

Malta, we are told, has an intensely religious (Catholic) population. That may be true, but we note that it has had destroyed by the Germans 75 churches, 22 schools, 18 convents, and eight hospitals. Now suppose Malta had been like Russia, for example. Would the result have been different? Or will the friends of Malta say that the Maltese were so inferior to the Russians that whereas the latter could stand without God and his angels, the Maltese could not? We do not believe it. We believe that the Maltese are just as good as the Russians. It is only their religion that is wrong.

We note that the 442nd church in Rome has just been opened. In addition, there are in that city 212 chapels and 77 oratories—so there can be no doubt whatever that Rome is thoroughly Christian. Now would some earnest Roman Catholic—say Mr. Hilaire Belloc—tell us exactly what this Christianity has done for Italy? It is backing up its Fascist partner Germany to the utmost and, according to Mr. Bracken, the Minister of Information, there never has been in history such a record of foul cruelty as that perpetrated by the Germans—and, where possible, the Italians—on the helpless, captive countries of Poland, Greece and Czechoslovakia. Has the opening of this new church in Rome, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Sienna, been of the slightest use to the poor tortured peoples of these countries? If not, what is the exact value of Christianity when faced by a clear-cut issue, and not just the pious mouthing of our Bishops and priests here in England, safe from the Gestapo horror?

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. W. COLEMAN.—Have read the booklet with great interest. It has been sent on as requested.

R. WILLIAMS.—Certainly; so soon as circumstances permit, "Almost an Autobiography" will be reprinted. The paper shortage is responsible for it not being already done.

For Distributing "The Freethinker": C. M. Hollingham, 20s.; R. E. Cronin, 10s.

S. G. LEECH.—We are not surprised at your appreciation of the excerpt dealing with China. We may follow it with others as opportunity offers. We are writing the author.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—Gunner Edwards, £1; E. Horrocks, £5.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

WE are anxious to reprint the much appreciated "Bible Handbook." It has already run through a number of editions, but the demand continues. Unfortunately, we have no copy of the last edition, 1937, the few remaining ones having been destroyed in the "blitz." We require two copies. Perhaps some of our readers may help in the matter. Copies will be replaced so soon as the new edition is issued.

The newly-established Radio Freedom League, the object of which is to convert the B.B.C. to give a really honest programme by permitting the "other side of the case" to be stated, is making good headway. A public demonstration has been arranged for Hyde Park on Sunday, August 2. There will be several speakers and Mr. Chapman Cohen has promised to be present and to say "a few words." The meeting will commence at 2 o'clock.

For the first time in the history of France the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille was without official recognition in France. But it was recognised in both this country and elsewhere with all the official trappings, and in France by a very large number of the French people in spite of German surveillance. That was of good omen so far as the French people were concerned, and of significance to the rest of the world. It should put a definite end to the parrot, self-interested cry that went up here with the collapse of France: "The French have let us down." There was far too much of the "Us" in that cry.

For, after all, it was not the French people who let down either "us" or themselves. It was the collection of scheming financiers, self-interested politicians, a Roman Catholic gang, and others, united in keeping friendly association with Atheist-Communist Russia that let France down. And we ought to remember how nearly we came to letting ourselves down with an almost identical combination in this country. For ourself we never doubted for a moment that the people of France would

come back, and that they are coming back. The French are fighting back in the only way that is possible, and in circumstances that deserves all the praise and help we can give.

A century and a half ago France gave a lead to the rest of Europe with its "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." It not only lifted France, but it acted as a spur to the people of this country in a way that only those who are closely read in the real history of the country. There are too many of our people who still take their ideas of the revolution from novels; 1789 and the Russian Revolution will stand out as the two great and significant events of the past two centuries, and that not so much for what these two revolutions actually achieved, as for the lesson that the greatest and the most drastic of tyrannies and the most subtle of control have at last to reckon with the People. France must and will live again—or the story ends in European slavery.

The Bradford Branch of the N.S.S. is holding a series of successful meetings out of doors on Sunday evenings. The meetings are held on the Broadway car park, alongside the religious meetings which are held there at the same time. This apt choice of time and position, while not interfering with the meetings of the opposition, results in the Freethought case being presented where it is evidently much needed. There have been good results up to date. The only snag in the proceedings is that the various clergymen, who speak in bunches of two or three each Sunday night, do not return the compliment that the Secularists pay them of listening to what the opposition has to say and asking intelligent questions.

The other day the papers contained an account of a man who escaped from prison and who went direct to see his wife in hospital and her newly-born baby. He will, no doubt, be eventually captured and punished for daring to break prison. But we would not care to be the policeman who arrests him. The man was in prison for theft but, on the bald facts, he has the making in him of something better than a prison badge. It was the postal authorities he robbed and that is, perhaps, more serious than robbing a private person. At least, it may be so considered. But the visit to his wife and baby that surely stands for something. Here is a chance for the Archbishop of Canterbury to do something, and show something.

Some of our clerical guides are determined to see that nothing is left undone that may add to the strength of the fighting forces. Thus the Rev. R. D. Dauntton-Frear, officiating Chaplain to the Forces, has discovered that the King's Regulations, which orders that "every recruit shall be issued with a New Testament or other religious book of denomination" has not been obeyed. Mr. Dauntton-Frear complains of this through the columns of the "Church Times," stating that "since conscription began these have not been issued at all in many cases." We would remind the Chaplain to the Forces that there is a war on paper is very scarce, and we are urged by the Government not to waste paper. The Chaplain does not say that soldiers have been complaining that they have not received copies of the Bible. It is the Chaplain who complains—naturally.

Now we are democratic people, and this is a war for the preservation of the democracy. So that our men in the Army are treated fairly we suggest that it be left to them to select a book without any orders as to what that book shall be. Or, alternatively, if the issue of the Bible is carried out, they should have a copy of the Bible Handbook, issued by the Pioneer Press, so that each man might have a digest of the Bible to help him in the reading.

We understand that Hurstpierpoint College, in order to prove that we are really fighting for a democracy has established a scholarship to any child whose father is serving in any of the Allied Forces. But so that democracy may be kept safe, the condition of entering the school is that the proposed pupil shall come from a family equal to that of a British public school family. We must keep the breed pure.

A PROBLEM: WHY THE CLOTTED BOSH?

WE are at a very critical point in our life-or-death struggle against the terrible threat of German Hitlerism. The utmost possible unity in essentials, especially in effort, is necessary: yet all—or nearly all—the influences that, from 1931 to 1939, were responsible for mental confusion, ignorance, false hopes, etc., still operate. Sectarian beliefs and sectional economic interests, intimately interlocked, still result in antagonism rather than in unity. Each of those sects or sections—of many various types—individually or collectively tries to achieve its purpose by working under the surface of our Sea of Troubles—as do the U-boats. Thus, to meet and defeat them is more difficult than on the open sea.

Personally, from 1931 to 1939, I did what I could, with others, on a composite political "platform," to arouse the Great Doped Majority to the dangers of drifting into Fascism and war, via German Hitlerism. We failed: "Hence the Pyramids"! Although temperamentally—for I have an emotional streak in me—my feeling was, "Well, I warned you," reason and my scientific Atheist philosophy came to the rescue and I realised that, willy-nilly, we were all in the soup together. Together we had to save ourselves—or sink. I took on the job I considered I best could do and, apart from lack of time, I was little inclined to enter into discussions which might—or might not—have helped.

Even with some Frees there seems to me to be somewhat of failure to reach that clarity of scientific analysis and understanding which ought to be possible to Frees. They seem to shrink from following scientific reasoning to its full conclusions and from facing *all* the issues fearlessly. Our friend, Sturge-Whiting (June 28, 1942), on the "Radio Padre," is a case in point. Apparently he fails to see that much of the most mischievous mental dope is administered—as always—by some of the best intentioned people, but that "the doctrinary implications," the "time-worn shibboleths" and "implied absurdities" are still there. The "Radio Padre" may console the believer in spiritual and supernatural powers: he is likely to do only harm, by his failure, to the great majority of the younger generation who have no such beliefs. "Can Freethinker or Atheist do it?" Well, well, well! Ain't it done—in the U.S.S. Republics?

That apart, by posing his problem (July 5, 1942) he has forced my hand to write sooner than I'd've been able to do. The "problem," as stated, is no "problem" at all. Were any "smart alec" of an amateur apologist for Godism (religion) amongst my workmates to put forward such a case, I'd probably begin in one of the "foreign languages." I learnt, when young, by calling it "—clotted bosh!" To me, the only real "problem" to be answered is, "Why does Eddington, consciously or unconsciously, write such bosh?" And, to me, the answer is clear: he is trying to defend something that logically cannot be defended by straight scientific reasoning. That's the downward path to Fascist tendencies. However, space allows me not to deal with that—at present. Probably the most effective way is to transpose Sturge-Whiting's quoted passage into comprehensible sentences, as simply as is possible with such a subject. "You know my method, Ali, so here goes."

"Suppose we concede the claim made that 'Natural Law' is merely a name for the way in which the forces and processes operate, in proven sequence, to constitute what we call 'mind.' Then this concession enables us to understand how a long sequence 'transcends' each part of the sequence. If, for example, we admit that every 'thought' in the 'mind' is the outcome of a sequence of cerebral forces and processes, then we can, similarly, understand the way in which 'thoughts' succeed each other in the 'mind.' Quite simple, Ali—what?

"Now, the 'thought'—not a suitable word—in a boy's 'mind' that $7 \times 9 = 63$ is the result, in the first place, of a long sequence in his individual cerebral forces and processes. A long sequence of external forces and processes has also operated—in Scotland,

I am told, the leather strap is still one of the 'forces.' That is, the 'thought'— $7 \times 9 = 63$ —is the outcome of a cerebral sequence in the human individual-existence, in conjunction with a tutorial sequence in the human social-existence. When the 'thought' becomes $7 \times 9 = 65$, the error is quite clearly as much the result from the *whole* process as when it is 63. Some part of the forces and processes—perhaps the strap—has failed to produce the expected result. If the boy habitually reversed the figures—36 for 63 or 27 for 72, any qualified psychologist or oculist would at once know the condition—not spiritual—from which this resulted.

"Some say that the 'brain' which produces '3 incomprehensibles \times 1 incomprehensible = 1 incomprehensible' is better than the 'brain' which says '3 \times 1 = 3'; but such is not the 'brain' that enabled the leaders of the U.S.S. Republics to design or begin the building of the New World—the 'New Civilisation'—some years ago, and which told them how to prepare to defend it. 'Verb. sat. sap.!' "

"Dismiss the idea that Godism (religion or belief in spiritual and supernatural forces) can ever solve any of the problems of our human social-existence—either in peace or in war. It cannot even tackle the multiplication table!" Q.E.D.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R.

ONE of the most striking things about the way in which Soviet Russia has been treated by this country in the past has been the subtle combination of political and religious reactionaries to create prejudices. When religious freedom has been almost complete in that country many people in Britain and America have tended to suggest that only by a definite opposition to everything for which the Soviet stood could Christians hope to be logical in defence of their faith.

Now, under the stress and strain of war conditions, this is being modified. Not merely the "advanced" clergymen, like the Dean of Canterbury, now say that they admire the great achievements of the U.S.S.R. The clergy in general are able to become communistically minded if they so desire. There is, indeed, almost a feeling that the good clergyman is only good if he admires Russia and things Russian.

All this is not altogether the fault of the clergy. They have in the past been used by politically reactionary folk to oppose the development of the Soviet State, and it is only recently, when the value of Russia in this war has become increasingly obvious, that the politically "right" people have realised that their opposition must be curbed. A recent pamphlet by a clergyman, "Religion in the U.S.S.R.," by the Rev. Stanley Evans (Russia To-day Society; 3d.), puts the issue fairly and squarely when it points out that the Soviet State is not necessarily opposed to religion—it has merely prevented religious bodies from carrying out all these non-religious activities (bazaars, Sunday schools, social missions and the like) which have so long been the prerogative of the Churches in Britain. Actually, the premises of the Church in Russia are still exempt from rates, and certain other advantages have been allowed to remain.

There is one point, however, which still remains to be clarified. In the past we were told that the churches in Russia had all been turned into anti-God museums. Now we learn that the war is bringing back the days of crowded congregations. It would be interesting to know which of the two descriptions is the more accurate.

S. H.

COURT AND CHURCH

Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves
Hung tyranny; beneath, sat deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves.

—SHELLEY: "Ode to Liberty."

THOMAS PAINE, 1809

In June, 1809, died Thomas Paine, whom Moncure D. Conway, in his monumental Biography, so truly describes as "the greatest Commoner of Mankind, Founder of the Republic of the World, and emancipator of the human mind and heart." The "Argus" article which follows is an account of Paine's imprisonment, with an appreciation of his writings and character, by Sampson Perry, his fellow-prisoner. Perry, as was the case with Paine, had fled to France to escape imprisonment. He had been but some short time there when he was arrested under Robespierre's decree as being an Englishman.

The "Argus" is extremely rare and was represented at the Paine Exhibition of 1894 by nothing more than the title page. It is therefore left to "The Freethinker" to rescue from oblivion this account of which both Dr. Conway and Miss Best, the two modern biographers of Paine, were unaware.

A. G. BARKER.

SAMPSON PERRY'S "ARGUS"

Register of Occurrences, Miscellany, etc., for 1796, of Thomas Paine and his Imprisonment in the Luxembourg

THIS studier of men, this reformer of Governments, was invited by the celebrity of his writing to sit in the National Convention of France. It was impossible that experience and talents like his should not be found eminently serviceable to that nation in the establishing a constitution upon the rights of man. He was immediately nominated one of the committee for drawing up the outlines of a constitutional form of government, to be laid before the legislature.

In this occupation he was the better able to demonstrate his fitness for the task, as two of his colleagues could speak English, for though Mr. Paine can read French, he is not capable of expressing his thoughts upon any science in that language.

This inflexible Republican may seem to have been lost for some time past; that, however, is not the case, and he has never been so great as since he has been less held up to the view of the world. The philosophic eye has at no time lost sight of him since he turned out the champion of his oppressed fellow-creatures; but as if the regular governments had declared the mention of his name a criminal irregularity, a dastardly silence has been observed by political writers for these three years past, with respect to him, or his pursuits. The situation into which France was plunged by the number and power of its enemies, after England had joined the coalition, prevented the calm voice of the philanthropic politician from being heard. In the revolutionary storm when everyone in the republican bark was tempest tossed, it is no wonder that Paine himself could keep no reckoning. The horizon of France but little resembled that of America; all the elements were in confusion. He saw that a chaos would come again before order could be established: that chaos, that horrific gloom, perhaps, contributed more than any cause to keep the malignant enemies of the Revolution at a distance; for, however much her vaunting foes might boast of marching to Paris, it is almost a certainty that they would have been sorry had any enchantment suddenly transported them there. Mr. Paine was attached to Brissot; and it was not unnatural that he should have been, considering the long acquaintance and intimate connection which had subsisted between them in America. Brissot cherished the ambitious wish of being the centre of the nation's applause, as La Fayette had done before. They had both seen, admired and envied Washington in America; they both hoped to be the Washington of France. A true republic has too many eminent men in it to allow anyone to be pre-eminent. The French knew well that such a republic as the United States of America could not long stand in the very heart of Europe. Federalisation would have ended in participation. With the sincerest respect, therefore,

for the talents, for the splendid talents of Mr. Paine, it may be allowed that the answer made by the President of the Convention to the deputation of Americans, who so honourably interceded for his liberty, deserved respect. "Thomas Paine (said he) deserves the solicitude you so laudably show, as Americans, in his behalf. He has nobly contributed to the liberties of the quarter of the world, but he has not so happily seized the genius of our revolution." This is no impeachment of the understanding of Mr. P.'s truly comprehensive mind. The variety of circumstances which concurred to increase the danger, and magnify the difficulties of the French in changing their Government, would justify the assertion that a Solon, a Lycurgus, a Numa, would all have been useless in the French Revolution. None but the French could effect a French Revolution, and nothing but a detestable coalition of 21 nations against France could have driven her into those excesses which are so affectingly deplored by their guilty authors. Whatever might be Mr. Paine's claims to the esteem and hospitality of the country in which he was a friendly, an invited sojourner, the letter of the decree against foreigners reached him, for he was born in a country at war with France. It is true, America claimed him as one of her citizens, and would no doubt have resented a violence offered to him (after the death of a man his virtues are properly appreciated); but this consideration weighed but little with Robespierre, who dictated that law, or at least directed its application to Paine and Cloots.

That same tyrant has more than once been heard to say: "America has not clearly pronounced her opinion concerning the French Revolution"; and it was owing to more considerate men than he that America and Switzerland were to be counted among the friends to France. When Paine was arrested it was pleasing to see so much respect paid to insulted greatness by the administrators who had to perform the disagreeable task. (O, Frenchmen! How little you are known! How much you are misrepresented!) They accompanied him to the house of Joel Barlow, and others of his friends, and allowed him to take four hours in arranging his private affairs. He was conveyed to the Luxembourg prison, out of which so many distinguished characters were slaughtered, not at the desire of an offended nation, but at the dictum of a revengeful tyrant. In this prison Mr. Paine was seized with a malignant and nervous fever, which endured five weeks. At the crisis of this disorder the mandate for carrying 150 prisoners to the revolutionary tribunal was put in force. Paine was delirious while the carts were loading with these victims; and he believes he owes his life to that very fever which appeared so near to take it away, for it seems his name was afterwards found in the proscription list.

Mr. Paine speaks gratefully of the kindness shown him by his fellow-prisoners of the same chamber, during his severe malady, and especially after the skilful and voluntary assistance lent him by General O'Hara's surgeon, confined in the Luxembourg. He relates an anecdote of himself which may not be unworthy of repeating: An arret of the Committee of Public Welfare had given directions to the administrators of the police to enter all the prisons with additional guards and dispossess every prisoner of his knives, forks and every other sharp instrument; as also to take the money from them. This happened a short time before Mr. Paine's illness, and as this ceremony was represented to him as an atrocious plunder in the dregs of the municipality, he determined to avert its effect as far as it concerned himself. He had an English banknote of some value and some guineas and gold coin in his pockets, and as he conceived the visitors would rifle them as well as his trunks (though they did not do so by anyone) he took off the lock from the door and hid the whole of what he had about him in its inside. He recovered his health, he found his money, but missed about 300 of his associate prisoners, who had been sent in crowds to the murderous tribunal while he had been insensible of their or his own danger. Mr. Paine was released from prison very

soon after the fall of Robespierre and was requested to resume his seat in the Convention. He accepted of the invitation to prove that he bore no resentment to France, or to the Assembly, because a tyrant had by art and hypocrisy assumed a despotic sway over the country, to his and to others' oppression. His opinions in public and in private, since that period, have been valued and respected; they have not been given in vain. He has been the means of drawing closer the ties between America and France, and the Committees have at all times been eager to receive his ideas concerning the peace which must sooner or later take place under the revolutionary labours of that indefatigable country. Mr. Paine, as a tried friend to the liberty of mankind, may reasonably be supposed to take a hearty interest in an event which is to be made conducive to the obtainment and durability of that blessing.

LIVING DRAMA

TO have reached the age of at least 50 and to be alive to-day means that one has lived through one of the most vital periods—if not *the* most vital period—of the world's history, with the certainty of witnessing many more happenings of far-reaching importance. Suppose that you and I, sir, sit down together and think upon these things? And you, madam: may I be allowed to suggest that you, too, join in these reflections. Agreed? Very well.

To begin with, then, permit me to remind you that when our parents were young people—assuming that they lived (as mine did) their allotted span of “three score years and ten”—the social conditions of this country were vastly different from what they are to-day. For example: it is only a matter of 200 years ago when a flourishing business was done in this country in the importation and re-exportation of slaves, and when “noblemen” (?) in the House of Lords opposed the Bill to abolish slavery by arguing that “slavery had flourished in the early ages when men communed with God, and to attack its legality was an insidious and heretical attack on the principles of religion.” Less than 100 years ago women and children of tender years, from five years of age and upwards, were treated like cattle and cruelly forced to work from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. six days a week—women stripped to the waist and nearly nude, and the men completely nude—at a starvation wage in the coal mines, and, a little later, in conditions equally bad, in the cotton mills of England. A very large proportion of the workpeople—90 per cent. of whom were illiterate—lived in undrained cellars without windows (because windows were taxed), and as there was little or no sanitation the domestic utensils, such as they were, were emptied into the streets. Naturally the morals of the people were low, and about one in ten of the children born in those days was illegitimate, and the majority of these bairns became a charge upon the parish, which soon got rid of them by sale or hire to the mill owners. Bastardy was, in fact, universal. And such food as the workpeople got—which consisted mainly of bread (made from flour largely adulterated by a mixture of plaster of paris and ground bones) and water (tea costing them 8s. per pound, being unknown to, or rather, not within the reach of, the workers)—and this was not only quite insufficient to sustain them, but of course caused malformation, disease and premature death. Recreations such as we know were unknown to them and, as Joseph McCabe points out in his “Century of Stupendous Progress,” “They worked from five or six on Monday morning until eight or nine, many until midnight, on Saturday. This threw upon the Sunday such personal work as the Sabbatarian law allowed them to perform; and, in any case, the same Sabbatarian law strictly forbade all recreation on Sunday except what we must, repulsive as it may sound, call the four favourite recreations of the time—sex, drunkenness, fighting and gambling.”

I do not know whether you read those little excerpts from their own pages of 100 years ago which some of our papers—“The Times,” “Manchester Guardian,” “Reynolds” and the “Observer”—reproduce fairly often? I do, and I find them very entertaining. Here are one or two which I happen to have by me.

This is one from the “Observer” dated August 7, 1836:—

“On Wednesday morning, one of those disgraceful scenes, the sale of a wife took place at the New Islington Cattle Market. A young man, seeing her tied up for sale, bid 5s. for her. He was outbid by several persons, but subsequently became the purchaser of the “lot” for 26s. and conveyed her home in a coach to his lodgings. The other man walked home whistling merrily, declaring that he had got rid of a troublesome, noisy woman, and it was the happiest day of his life.”

And writing to “The Times” on October 8, 1839, Canon A. F. Northcote said:—

“When I was rector of Dodbrooke, Devon, in 1882, I knew an old lady there who told me that, as a young woman, she had been led into Tavistock Market with a rope round her neck by her husband and sold to another man for 2s. 6d., the recognised way in those days of settling matrimonial matters of that kind.”

From “The Times,” dated February 16, 1842, we get this:—

“With rare exceptions among the refined, a majority of even decent English men and women content themselves with washing their hands and faces twice a day in cold water, and their feet once a week in warm.”

In the London “Evening Standard,” dated March 6, 1836, mention was made of the golden wedding on that day of a Mr. and Mrs. Burfoot. Mr. Burfoot, who was 77 at the time, recalled working as a “climbing” boy for his father, who was a chimney sweep. “If you would not go up the chimney in those days,” Mr. Burfoot said, “they put a sack over your head and drove you up, and you had to sweep the soot out as you came down.” And here is a cutting from “The Times” of July 7, 1840, dealing with the same subject:—

“Lord Normanby (in the House of Lords) moved the second reading of the Chimney-sweepers Bill. Almost all parties were united in its favour, and the revolting cruelties which were practised upon the climbing boys at present called imperatively upon the House to put down so atrocious a system. . . .”

The “Manchester Guardian,” dated January 13, 1841, reported that:—

“The minister and warden of Rampside have given directions that a number of spitting-boxes be provided to be located in suitable and sundry places in their beautiful new chapel, for the better accommodation of the confirmed masticators of the Virginian weed.”

On February 12, 1842, it was reported in “The Times” that a man was “summarily convicted before two magistrates for that he, on the — of June, being the Lord's day, called Sunday, in the township of —, did neglect to attend a church or at some other place of religious worship on the said day, he not having any reasonable excuse to be absent. . . .” The man in question was fined 1s. and 14s. costs, and as he had “no means of paying,” he was kept in prison for ten weeks, when someone interceded on his behalf.

According to another cutting which I have here, only 78 years ago—on October 16, 1864, “Reynolds” reported that:—

“At Condover (Shropshire) Petty Sessions, the Rev. H. Burton and Mr. H. de Warter sentenced two agricultural labourers to seven days' imprisonment for ‘refusing to obey the lawful commands of their employer’—i.e. to go to church.”

"This disgraceful sentence, however, was surpassed in cruelty by the punishment inflicted by General Hitchins, Mayor of Tenterden, Kent, on a poor boy, William Webb, who shook six walnuts from a tree and put them in his pocket. For this offence Webb was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour at Maidstone Gaol."

The "Manchester Guardian," dated February 13, 1841, reported that:—

"Last week a poor woman went to the Rochdale Parish Church to order a grave for a little child, but upon inquiry, it turned out that the child had not been christened by a clergyman of the establishment, but had received its name from a preacher in a conventicle. The sexton, on learning this, told the poor woman that the child might be put in the earth, but the vicar would not allow it Christian burial."

While the "Manchester Guardian," on July 4, 1840, made special mention of the fact that "London and York are now placed within ten hours' distance of each other."

Whereas to-day, may I remind you, poverty and illiteracy and many of the abuses to which reference has been made, and which were the order of the day, so to speak, when our parents were young people, have been abolished—or nearly so, at any rate—and the income per head of the population is to-day several times what it was a century ago. The radio keeps us posted by the hour as to what is happening in every part of the globe, and every day the newsreel presents the world to the world in pictorial form. The housing of the people has improved enormously; we have excellent social services and we can now—if we wish to do so and can afford it—travel by air, in luxury liners and with meals served on the way, at a speed of from 300 to 400 miles per hour.

We are, to be sure, just now witnessing another act in the great human drama—a drama in which the whole human family are appearing as actors in one way or the other—and what will be the outcome of this war no one can tell exactly. But this much appears to be certain: when peace returns there is bound to be a reorganisation of group life—for the peoples of the world are hardly likely to be content to return to their former social conditions with all that that implies—and there must—surely?—be a more sane and sensible view of things and a more rational way of living.

Speaking for myself, I loathe and detest trouble and strife—and bloodshed in particular—as much as anyone, and I would naturally far rather that they were things of the ancient past. But seeing that they are, unfortunately, still part and parcel of human affairs, and we all have to accept them for the time being as inevitable, I for one am glad to be living during this vital period of the world's history and evolution; indeed, to be a very humble member of the cast fills me with pride. It is to me, in many ways, a thrilling experience, and from the back of the stage, as it were, I am watching intently the leading actors as they continue to play their part in this living drama.

And I sincerely hope that you, madam, and you too, sir, have not found life without interest and profit.

Anyway: cheerioh and good luck to you both!

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

ORIGIN OF THE GOD-IDEA

What is that power? Some moonstruck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill heaven and darken earth, and in such mood
The form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown.

—SHELLEY: "Laon and Cythna."

CORRESPONDENCE

MORALITY WITHOUT SUPERSTITION

SIR,— What's biting
Sturge-Whiting?

He knows that world-famous Freethinkers like Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells are banned by the B.B.C. because they might give the broadcasts he advocates.

It is said that in a discussion about heaven a Christian asked Shaw: "Then you think there should be no reward hereafter for leading a good life?" "Is not the leading of a good life sufficient reward?" retorted Shaw.

Is such a robust ethic too heroic for listeners Mr. Sturge-Whiting has in mind?—Yours, etc.,
JOHN McILWAIN.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held July 16, 1942

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

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Ebury, Horowitz, Griffiths, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Woolstone and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Chester-le-Street Branch, and to the Parent Society.

Lecture reports and future arrangements concerning Durham, Lancashire, Leicester, Gateshead, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London were dealt with. The receipt of a legacy of £200 from the estate of the late Orris Kaye was acknowledged. A gift of volumes, "Celebrations," by Dr. F. H. Hayward, from the author was accepted with pleasure.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, August 27, and the proceedings closed. R. H. ROSETTI.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

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

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

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), 11-0, Professor C. B. FAWCETT, D.Sc.: "The Geographical Spread of Civilisation."

COUNTRY

Outdoor

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

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

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

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

Craghead (Road End), Sunday, 10-45, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Edinburgh N.S.S. Branch (The Mount), Sunday, 7-30, Mr. J. GORDON (Glasgow), a Lecture.

Higham, Friday, 7-45, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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

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

North Shields (Harbour View), Thursday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

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

New PamphletBy
C. G. L. DU CANN**There are no Christians**

Price 4d.

Postage 1d.

Pamphlets for the People

BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

What is the Use of Prayer?

Deity and Design.

Did Jesus Christ Exist.

Agnosticism or . . . ?

Atheism.

Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live.

Freethought and the Child.

Christianity and Slavery.

The Devil.

What is Freethought?

Price 2d. each. Postage 1d.

Other Pamphlets in this series to be published shortly

THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST, by C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 1½d.

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, by W. A. Campbell. Price, post free, 1s. 8d.

THE RUINS OF EMPIRES, by C. F. Volney. Price, post free, 2s. 2d.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? Price 2d.; postage 1d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

THE CASE FOR SECULAR EDUCATION (1928). Sixty-four pages. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL. A sketch and evaluation of the two greatest Freethinkers of their time. By Chapman Cohen. Portraits. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

INFIDEL DEATHBEDS. The last moments of famous Freethinkers. By G. W. Foote and A. D. McLaren. Price 2s.; postage 3d.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 1d.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

REVENUES OF RELIGION, by Alan Handsacre. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS, by G. W. Foote. Price 2s.; postage 2½d.

SPAIN AND THE CHURCH, by Chapman Cohen. Price 1d.; postage 1d.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH, by Colonel Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? by Colonel Ingersoll. Price 1d.; postage 1d.

HENRY HETHERINGTON, by A. G. Barker. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

PETER ANNET, by Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

BIBLE ROMANCES, by G. W. Foote. One of the finest Freethinking writers at his best. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING, by Chapman Cohen. First, second, third and fourth series. Price 2s. 6d. each; postage 2½d. The four volumes, 10s. post free.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

THEISM OR ATHEISM, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

Two Pamphlets that—***Catholics Hate and Protestants do not Like***

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

THE PIONEER PRESS**2 & 3, Furnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.4**