

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXII.—No. 34

Sunday, August 23, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	345
Changing Vistas—"Julian" ...	347
A Kettle of Fish—F. J. Corina ...	348
Acid Drops ...	349
To Correspondents ...	351
Sugar Plums ...	351
The World and "Democracy"—Austen Verney ...	352
"The Posthumous Autobiography"—A. G. Knox ...	353
Spilling the Beans—R. H. Rosetti ...	354
Religion and Life—H. L. Mencken ...	354
Correspondence ...	355
Sunday Lecture Notices ...	355

VIEWES AND OPINIONS

Church Parade

CHURCH parade is the occasion of one of the greatest lies in the British Army, the Navy and the Air Force. It is also the institution that is most disliked in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The officers know this to be true, the men know it to be true, the chaplains—those petted Munchausens of the B.B.C.—know it to be true. If church attendance in the Forces was voluntary, only a small minority would avail themselves of the opportunity. This also the officers and the men and the chaplains know. But the officers and the chaplains would probably inform the world that going to church is not compulsory; anyone who objects to taking part in a religious service may be excused. Legally that is true. Actually it is not true, for pressure is brought to bear upon the men, and there is a veiled compulsion in operation. It begins at the recruiting table. Legally every man joining the Forces has the right, in reply to the question "Religion," to have set down his own answer. He has the legal right to have it set forth that he belongs to this or that religious body, or none at all. But often enough the pressure starts just at this point. If the recruit answers C. of E., Baptist, Roman Catholic, or one of the numerous Christian sects, there is no bother. No matter if the recruit hasn't any opinion on the matter. Sometimes he replies, as a friend of ours did, to the question, "What religion?" "What are you short of?" That at least showed a willingness to help "the war effort." If the recruit doesn't know where he is or what he is, he is lumped down as Church of England. There must be many, many thousands in the Services who didn't know where they were or what they were until the recruiting officer placed another one on the pile orthodox.

Others, the more conscientious and, one would imagine, those who would be of greatest value to the Services, meet trouble at this point. A recruit may inform the officer that he has no religion at all and wishes to be entered as Freethinker, Atheist, or by some other name. His trouble often begins there. He is told that he must have some

religion. Sometimes his request as put down is flatly refused. At the N.S.S. office we have plenty of complaints, and a great deal of the Secretary's time is taken up in writing to the heads of the Forces to secure the legal rights of the recruit. Sometimes it is enough for the recruit to ask to see a superior officer. In that case he may get his rights recognised.

But he has in most cases to pay a price for his daring to be without a religion. While the rest of his comrades are being marched to church with all the eagerness displayed by a child who is ordered to swallow a dose of medicine before going to bed, the man without a religion, and who did not care to prostitute himself, is selected for some disagreeable duty. It is not punishment—certainly not! It is just a reminder that a soldier's duty is to obey and act, even where religion is concerned. Where religion is at issue all the thinking will be done for him by his officers or by that travelling expert in the untruthful, the regimental parson.

A Plea for Freedom

There are the plain facts. No one disputes them, no one can dispute them. In a war for the freedom of the world religion rears its ugly head and declares that there shall be one walk of life where full-bodied men must be treated as though they are infants. Yet there are thousands who do protest, and there are many more thousands who would set themselves down in the Forces as "Godless" if the inconveniences of petty punishments followed the attempt to be intellectually honest. While we are talking so much about freedom, might it not be a suitable moment for the Government to decree that in the Armed Forces, for those who wish for religious services, there shall be suitable provision made. But there shall be no inquisition made as to what are a man's religious views, and no fatigue duties imposed if he does not claim membership of one of the Churches? Why should civilians be treated by law and custom as intelligent and responsible persons and our soldiers, sailors and airmen—where religion is concerned—treated as incapables?

We have said, more than once, since this war began, that the number of those who have written themselves down as without religion have been greater than in other wars. To that we may add that the number of officers who plainly proclaim themselves as Freethinkers has also increased very much. A third feature to be noted is that, so far as one may judge the proportion of men who are without religion, and who have most doubts concerning the truth of religion, is greatest with the Air Force. And that, we may remind the reader, is the arm that demands greater individuality, self-dependence and mental clarity. The standard of mental efficiency must, in our judgment, be of a higher order than in any other branch of the Services.

So we were pleased to see in the "Daily Telegraph" for August 8 the following:—

"Sir,—Both Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt stated in the Atlantic Charter that one of the things for which we are fighting is freedom of religion and thought. Yet by the command of a commanding officer, all officers and men on a station are required to attend a place of worship, and frequently week-end passes are cancelled.

"To many earnest Christians, as well as those who profess little interest, this tradition is extremely distasteful. Certainly compulsory church parades are causing an undercurrent of bad feeling in the Army and R.A.F.

"The 'official' ruling is that if a Service man objects on conscientious grounds he must attend the parade, but he may stay outside the church until after the service. Needless to say, few avail themselves of this concession, as it is more comfortable to sit down.—

Yours, etc.,
Beckenham.

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT,
R.A.F.V.R."

This officer puts it very mildly, and if he were in the position of a private, finding himself punished with a particularly unpleasant job, he would, we expect, express himself in rather stronger language. As it is, and as "Flight-Lieutenant" says, this compulsory attendance at religious services—for it is playing with words not to call compulsory a job that a man must do under threat of punishment or unnecessary inconvenience if he refuses—is causing discontent in the Services. We know it is there, and very many of those who complain to the National Secular Society refuse their names because they do not wish to be "marked." Nor can this class be met with the remark that men should be ready to put up with inconveniences where their convictions are concerned. That is a good enough counsel, but the fact is that most men are not desperately enamoured of truth. Their affection is apt to be very weak indeed, in a large number of cases, when they have to pay for freedom of thought. It is only one here and there who has the courage to say, "Here am I, I can do none other." If we would develop a mentally stronger generation than we have we must make truthfulness and independence as easy as possible. Children who find honesty at home are likely to look for it abroad. It is a poor philosophy to expect that the next generation will grow up intellectually independent if suitable examples are not set by the present one.

A Bishop Speaks

"Flight-Lieutenant's" letter was followed by others from the Bishop of Chelmsford, the inevitable "Onlooker," and by "Leading Aircraftwoman." "Onlooker" dismisses "Flight-Lieutenant" by informing him that Christians have no right to object. "The worship of God is a divine command, not an Army order." But the objection is that we have to deal with an Army order, and everyone knows that "God's command" to the Army would have little more effect than the command of some peddling padre. God must be backed by an officer. "Leading Aircraftwoman" agrees "whole-heartedly" with the lieutenant, so, we are sure, would 50 per cent. of the Army, for religious or non-religious reasons. For the plain truth is that in the Forces church parade is the most unpopular routine in the Army.

If the choice lay between spending Sunday as one pleases or being marched off like a naughty child to Sunday school, what would be the result?

The Bishop of Chelmsford's letter deserves to be printed in full. He says:—

"Sir,—'Flight-Lieutenant' raises an important point in his letter on church parades. At least 80 per cent. of the general population display no interest in religion, and since the fighting Forces are a cross-section of the whole community, it is probable that the same deplorable situation prevails in the Services.

"The value of compulsion in religion may be doubtful, though it may justly be argued that most good habits are learnt by compulsion. The small boy does not brush his teeth by instinct: he is compelled to do so, and in due course acquires the good habit.

"But the widespread non-religious habits (they are hardly irreligious in a positive degree) of the population give ground for grave anxiety. We loudly declare that the war is being fought to preserve Christian values and the Christian way of life, and yet the vast majority of our people will not cross their thresholds to support Christian institutions in their immediate neighbourhood.

"It is this strange inconsistency between our words and our habits which makes us so incomprehensible to foreigners, who so constantly declare that we are hypocrites. Perhaps they are right!"

It will be noted that the Bishop believes that 80 per cent. of the people are not interested in religion, and that the proportion holds good for the Forces. Fancy an army that has been almost deafened with the cry that they are fighting to preserve the freedom of the world being marched to church as though they were children being ordered to Sunday school! We believe it to be a wrong so to drive children; to drive men to church is a direct insult to their manhood. Why is the situation in the Forces "deplorable"? The Bishop is speaking professionally; and that reminds us of a motto that Mark Twain took for a chapter heading: "Let us be thankful for fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed." His comparison of a boy forced to clean his teeth is wide of the mark. Cleanliness is an admitted, a demonstrable need. Religion is not, save with savages, among whom something like a Bishop's robe took its origin. What we should like the Bishop of Chelmsford to answer is, whether he agrees that a very small number in the Armed Forces should force their opinions on the vast majority, and at the public expense? Does he believe that a soldier, a sailor or an airman cannot efficiently perform his duties in the absence of religion? If he will answer yes or no to these questions we shall know where we are and, more importantly, we shall also know where he is.

Who is to blame for the war being called a war to preserve the Christian way of life? The war is no more to guard the Christian way of life than it is to give a man the right to put a shilling on a horse when Derby Day comes round. It should be a war to permit everyone to do as he pleases, so long as it does not deprive others of a like freedom of action. It was the Churches that set the falsehood going that we were fighting to preserve Christianity.

I can assure the Bishop that when foreigners look at the Churches and their behaviour, when they find, in the name

of freedom, religion is forced on the Forces, with the vast majority against any such practice, they do not say we are "incomprehensible"; they say we are, in such matters, just humbugs.

Suppose the array of chaplains we have in the Army—including the Government-paid travelling padre, who cannot get rid of the underlying notion that he is talking to idiots or an audience of freshly-fledged curates—suppose this array of chaplains was disbanded, would our Army be the worse for it? If the Russian Army became suddenly very religious, as the Italians and the Hungarians are, would the Russians make better soldiers than they are now? If not, why not? Is there something in British human nature that makes us inferior to the Russians? I do not believe it. I believe we are as good as Russians any day, once we allow for differences of outlook. Of course, the Russians have a multitude of religious folk in their ranks, but they also appear to have a much larger proportion of men and women who are able to trace their devotion to home and country to its real source. I do not believe that whereas the Russian Army can get along with its job without a paid army of chaplains, that our own men cannot find the same impulse and courage to fight for the humanity they know. Must they be bothered by gods of whom they know nothing, and in which 80 per cent. are not interested? Perhaps one day we may have courage without cant, and develop a sense of right and wrong worthy of civilised men and women.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CHANGING VISTAS

THE background which determines progressive thought is changing rapidly. The older freethinking was conditioned by the circumstances of its day. It was essentially a liberal creed, stressing individual effort and material progress. Man must be free to work out his own destiny; even his hours of permitted labour must not be limited. This viewpoint has broken down very largely; it overlooks the social implications involved in any ordered attitude to life. Man exists in relation to his fellows; it is of no little importance that the same standards of judgment which are applied to the individual should likewise be applied to the social order and its varied implications. The failure of the older liberal creed is to be seen in the extent to which it permitted the exploitation and crushing out of the rights of the individual man through vested interest and the gradual evolution of private monopoly control. Social life has passed through three stages in a rapid evolution. The mercantile era gave place to a highly industrialised society and, in its turn, industry has now been displaced by monopoly capitalism. Even if the older stress upon individual striving had its virtues within the mercantile setting, its weapons are too rusty to fight against the latest developments.

The place of the traditional Churches within this development is usually found to be upon the reactionary side. Their morality was pitched upon a keynote which did nothing to condemn the evolution of capitalist exploitation. For example, it was said of Rockefeller that, in spite of the numerous scandals, suicides and ruin associated with the Standard Oil Trust, he personally had never outraged the moral dictates that he learned in his Baptist Sunday school. A morality so circumscribed that it could not condemn the ruination of many of his fellow men in the name of big business is not worthy of the name, however God-given it may claim to be. Even at the present time the orthodox Churches have done little or nothing to guide war mentality into fit channels when reason may prevail. There has been no ecclesiastical

condemnation of the Vansittart nonsense, even though it is perhaps one of the most dangerous theories circulating at the moment. When reckoning comes to be made, Vansittart would substitute anti-Germanism for a reconstruction which would do away with the social and economic causes of war; in other words, he would serve his class as a faithful servant and enter into the joy of his lord! Dr. Temple has done much to urge social reconstruction, yet one hears nothing of his tackling Vansittartism as a practical issue arising out of the matter. Nor again do Church dignitaries usually appear as opponents of the particular home-produced brand of Fascism which fetters the freedom of the Press by retaining the ban on the "Daily Worker." The Churches are playing their time-honoured role of reaction, but it is now usually set in economic and social rather than narrowing theological terms. They are so busy administering comfort that they have no time to attend to vital realities! The result is that they form a dangerous opposition to true progress.

The issues for freethinking have changed very much of recent years. Economic and political development has cast a lurid light upon the class structure of society. The exploitation of the many by the few has provided a dominant indication of the way in which economics are developing. The class war has explained a great deal of contemporary history. A stress upon the individual is insufficient to meet the changing temper. The analysis of Karl Marx affords a far more certain guide; the clash between those living upon unearned income and the wage-earning classes is the prevailing fact determining the present course of social progress. A freethought which stands apart from these things is missing its true vocation. It is falling into the error of the Churches and seeking to set up some haven of refuge into which people may rush when they desire to escape from the crudities of reality. In spite of a small handful of leftward-looking clerics, the bulk of the orthodox Churches are playing their usual part of soldiers in the army of reaction. Nor must the clergy be blamed for this state of affairs. The ministry of any Church is recruited from its laity, and the faithful laity, embodying into one the service of God and mammon, are among the more reactionary and spiteful groups within the community.

It was asserted by Michael Bakunin that, if God existed, it would be necessary to abolish him in the interests of man! Whatever may be thought of this particular remark, Bakunin was clearly correct in seeing the religious controversy as a particular stage in the wider sociological battle. The ideal of any progressive sociology is to give people freedom to live their own lives; Marx ended his prophecies with the coming of a classless society. There are three main factors opposing freedom at the present time: religious organisation, political pressure and Mrs. Grundy. The three are bound together into a corporate whole. There has been, and still is, a notorious alliance between religious organisation and political pressure. The one uses the other as occasion arises. A study of the English period of the Commonwealth underlines the point, so too does the history of the Methodist revival. Religion is utilised to draw off attention to "pie in the sky"; political pressure gets busy in order to increase economic exploitation upon earth! Mrs. Grundy is the ready ally of the two forces; she is called in to create a smoke-screen of moral purpose in order to stabilise the type of Baptist ethics which doubtless gladdened the heart of Mr. Rockefeller! The gymnastics of the Bishop of London's Morality Council are a good illustration. So busy are they watching the streets to count the number of prostitutes, spying around Hyde Park, and otherwise prying into their neighbours' affairs, that they have no energy left to investigate hunger and fear, the two root-causes of the immorality of the modern world! Thus is attention mis-directed; religion and politics join hand in hand to maintain a state of oppression directed against the rights of man and the ultimate freedom of the individual.

The time has come when the Freethought Movement must look upon its activities from the broadest angle. Generally speaking,

the older battles have been won. The infallible Bible has been cast down; the idolatries and the puerilities of the orthodox Christian cultus play little part in contemporary superstition. People practice birth-control whatever the Bishops may say; the pomposity of the average churchwarden is merely a subject for amusement. Certainly there is a conspiracy of silence in the Churches concerning these things, but it extends to a small minority of the population. Yet there is a vast battle opening out if a real freedom of thought is to be secured. It is the struggle for a true mental liberty based upon social justice, and it calls for the reorganisation of society in order that man may be liberated from the bonds of economic exploitation. The orthodox Churches naturally oppose this movement; it would spell the end of their sway. A society ordered in terms of freedom would have no place for Bishops, archdeacons, moderators or other enemies of individual liberty and choice. An oppressive religious organisation receives the support of the reactionary elements within the State, for the same causes would overthrow their power. Mrs. Grundy is fiercely clamorous, yet an irated yet free population would soon put her out of business. It is the special province of Freethought to see the issue as one and to turn its searchlight upon the whole mass of corrupt organisation which the centuries of orthodox domination have misnamed human society!

It is sometimes forgotten that the greatest battles of religious freethought has a distinctively class basis. The point is well brought out by T. A. Jackson in his excellent book, "Trials of British Freedom." The attacks upon Carlile, Hetherington, Southwell, Bradlaugh, Holyoake, were not only occasioned by the shocks which they gave to orthodox piety. They were stirred up by class interests and economic factors. The attempt to bring down Bradlaugh, which resulted in Foote being imprisoned for blasphemy, was worked out by Tory political opponents who probably cared nothing about the metaphysics of Atheism. They were interested, however, in the fact that Bradlaugh was a Radical and a Republican! It is significant that, when he was found to be an opponent of Hyndman and the rising Socialist Party, the very people who had been busy defending God against Bradlaugh now rushed to his side against an even more perilous foe. A glance at the recent history of the Churches will soon show the extent to which they have been used as instruments of economic exploitation. Missionaries have been the forerunners of the trader rather than of the Prince of Peace; preachers have been busy crying down every economic and social uprising from that of the Chartists to the General Strike of 1926. The penalisation of the Communists in 1925 was a dastardly onslaught upon liberty, but we do not read of any protest by Dr. Temple. Even to-day, in spite of Malvern Conferences and the like, the usual run of Churchmen are still rampant supporters of the reactionary side. The Church dignitaries reply with a cautious policy; they make their revolutionary pronouncements in so wide a vocabulary that it pleases almost everybody and means nothing. Even then, the truly pious, represented by "Truth" and the "Morning Advertiser," are shocked and offended. It is not without interest that the latter journal is the organ of the licensed victuallers. It would be a sad day if the Church of England were to become a progressive political force in fact and thus shatter its age-old union with the Tory brewers! It might then learn to take an intelligent interest in temperance reform and the causes of drunkenness.

In short, the vista has changed. There is not a theological controversy existing in isolation from that of politics; the whole of the issues are intertwined, a point well emphasised by G. D. H. Cole and other radical historians. The time has come about when freethinking must again be synonymous with plain speaking, and the economic basis of society examined, in the interests of human freedom, from the standpoint of a close scientific analysis.

"JULIAN."

A KETTLE OF FISH

WHEN I was a little boy at school, and a teacher found me out in a schoolboy "whopper," he offered me a piece of advice that left a profound impression on my mind. Even as a little boy I had an ear for a logical statement. Had the teacher told me that I should not go to heaven, or that Jesus would be cross with me, or that Peter would put a black mark against my name on the Heavenly Scroll, I would have smiled cynically and remarked (to myself, of course), "You tell another. You can do it better than I can."

But the teacher was a sensible man. He pointed out that the trouble about telling whoppers was that, after the first, it needed a second to cover up the first, then a third to cover up the second, and so on. "And," he added, "when you get to the fourth you have made for yourself a pretty kettle of fish." The older I get, the more I appreciate the value of that advice.

For instance, look at the kettle of fish that our religious and educational "leaders" have cooked for themselves. They have told so many lies that they have woven a web of fabrication that snares and enmeshes them every time they open their mouths, or attempt to make a move. Some of them, indeed, as we shall see in a moment, are so entangled in their skeins of lies, told for the greater glory of God, that they are quarrelling among themselves because of the inevitable self-contradictions that they set up. Would that these Christian leaders could have had so wise a teacher as I had. But then, it is not Christian practice to teach children by appealing to their reason; a lie is not something (to a Christian "moralist") that causes inconvenience to others and to oneself. It is a wicked, sinful act that displeases Jesus and makes God angry. A child's lie, to a thorough-going Christian, is not the natural refuge of an undeveloped mind, seeking an easy way out of an awkward situation. It is a mark of the original sin that stains the record of humankind from Adam onwards.

Consequently, the habit of lying is suppressed in Christian training by the fear of God rather than by an appeal to a sense of fair play, reason or justice. But the fear of God is not an operative factor when it comes to lying for the glory of God. Surely God would not be angry about a teeny-weeny lie told for his glorification. In fact, he would probably be pleased. And the same line of argument might be applied to the damned big whoppers that are told for his glorification. All the big bosses of the world are inclined to favour the liar who lies on their behalf—Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt and the Mikado—so surely the Boss of the Whole Universe will be in the same pattern, if not the actual Boss pattern.

But I am digressing too far. So let us return to the kettle of fish. For three years now we have been having it dinned into our ears that more religious teaching was needed in our schools to combat the decline in Christian belief in this country. The people who have cried out for this extra measure of religious dope in the schools have been the clergy, and from the present and the former Archbishops of Canterbury to the merest parish curate we have seen the cry taken up, interspersed with such phrases as "modern paganism," "degenerate youth," "irreligious age," "unChristian nation," "pagan secularism," and so on. The cry of the clerics was echoed by others with various pretensions at being philosophers, politicians, social reformers, moralists and educationists. And so the case was established. The youth of Britain was becoming unChristian and irreligious; more religion must be taught in the schools.

But I question whether these people really believed that religion had slumped to so low a level. They fondly imagined, I think, that things were not too bad, but they were bad enough to justify some attention to the younger generation in the schools. So a few howling lies on the above lines, and pressure in the right quarters, would help to make up the leeway.

But something astounding happened! It suddenly transpired that the lie they thought they were telling (for the greater glory of God) was not a lie at all, but, as a simple fact and without the derogatory elements, was the Naked Truth. Britain's youth was, if not irreligious, at least very definitely non-religious. Alderman Hyman, the chairman of the West Riding Education Committee, recently declared that this was the case, and quoted figures to prove it. Now the West Riding Education Committee is a very important body, dealing with a thickly-populated area of the country. A statement from that body carries weight and influence as a rule, and the clergy were horrified when Alderman Hyman proved that they (the clergy) had, in fact, been telling the truth for the past few years.

Recoiling from the truth in a manner that only professional Christians and politicians understand, the parsons at once began to deny the very statements that they had themselves been making for so long. They went out of their way to attempt to prove that young people were interested in church-going, and where hard fact could not be lied away by direct contradiction, they invented an interesting series of excuses to explain it away.

Alderman Hyman's "cat among the pigeons" was a statement in the Press that

"of the 48,000 boys and girls between the ages of 16 and 18 who registered under the youth scheme, less than 3 per cent. were in any way associated with a church."

The Rev. R. Whincup, who is a canon of the Bradford Diocese, which includes a large part of the West Riding, took up the Anglican cudgel by declaring, in an interview, that Alderman Hyman's disclosure was likely to make people unduly pessimistic, and he asserted that "there is more religious feeling in this country and more religious knowledge among young people than is generally realised." Why people should be pessimistic about something they obviously don't care a rap about I fail to see, but the canon ought to know. Yet, while denying that our children are irreligious, the canon, almost in the same breath, told a reporter that he blamed lack of interest on the part of parents for the falling off, and he suggested sound evangelistic work as the remedy. I wonder why the canon does not adopt his own remedy, and show up on the Bradford car park on Sunday nights to save his flock from the wicked Atheists who speak there!

My suspicion that the clergy did not know that their "lie" was the truth was borne out by the Rev. C. Whitworth, the president of the Federal Free Church Council. He admitted that "we have not been contacting the young people, nor adults, as we ought to have done, but we did not realise how low the figure was."

In a weak effort to explain away an unpleasant fact he added, "The opening of sweet shops on Sunday is another factor which may well have kept children away from Sunday school."

Try another, Mr. Whitworth. My boy tells me that sweet shops have not only been closed on Sundays, but half of the ordinary days of the week, since the war began.

Other ministers added their quota to the recanting squeals of the Churches as they sought the columns of the Press to deny the story they have themselves so often told. But the true spirit of Christian brotherliness was demonstrated when Monsignor Provost Russell, an eminent Yorkshire Roman Catholic, administered a smack in the eye to his fellow Christian clergymen. Even in a state of dire distress, when their position demands that they should help each other, these Christians have to demonstrate their denominational detestation of each other. Monsignor Russell rubbed it in.

"Youth clubs and guilds in the Roman Catholic community," he said, "are flourishing, and the attendance at worship is very good, but for a long time other denominations have had a big problem to face."

That was a dirty smack, Mgr. Russell. But it proves one thing to a keen observer. The good old original Church is the biggest

liar of them all. Religion is decaying as an idea, not merely in a denominational sense, and it affects every one of you. Though the degree of decay may vary in the different branches, the rot is striking through the whole tree. The very decay elsewhere has a contaminating effect that even Holy Mother Church cannot escape. Her remorseless, vicious grip is surely loosening—but she'll lie like hell, they'll all lie like hell, to the very end.

F. J. CORINA.

ACID DROPS

SAYS Miss Dorothy Sayers ("Inquirer," July 4): "If Jesus was not God, then he was either a liar or lunatic of a very dangerous and objectionable type." That is the lady's way of frightening timid Christians who may have some doubts on the subject into acceptance of the unadulterated theological theory of the nature of the New Testament character. But Miss Sayers should be aware that the belief of being either an incarnation of a deity or a special messenger from a God is one of the commonest of delusions. We may put the liar on one side, but the number of people whose unhinged or ill-balanced intellect leads them to believe they are agents of God are very numerous indeed. Any Alienist would be able to give cases to Miss Sayers. Any good medical work will supply Miss Sayers with cases. It will really not do to frighten timid Christians who are beginning to exercise doubts about their religion by saying you have to decide whether Jesus was a liar, a lunatic—or God. And in any study of Jesus—assuming his actual existence—one cannot leave the question of his mental state untouched. The question of his being a liar may be set on one side altogether by a candid and unprejudiced student.

But suppose the "ethic" of Jesus to be quite good-judged from the ethical point of view. Then it must remain good independently of the teacher being God or of his ever having lived. Suppose, for instance, we give Jesus full marks for "Love one another" or a similar teaching. If that is good counsel, does it cease to be good even though the alleged author of it was just a mere man? Surely honesty remains honesty, kindness remains kindness, truthfulness remains truthfulness, whether the teacher be a God or a man. Truth is quite independent of an author, once the value of truth is recognised. We really would like Miss Sayers to say whether the common virtues of life commend themselves because of their influence on the corporate life of man in this world, or do they depend for their value upon the belief in a God and a future life? These are quite plain questions. We wonder whether Miss Sayers will have the courage to face them? We feel sure that to face so plain and so simple a question would be more fruitful than to try and frighten timid believers from examining their own creed with courage and intelligence.

If Miss Sayers does not feel capable of answering such simple questions, we would welcome some of those valiant gentlemen who are so bold when broadcasting—in the full knowledge that the B.B.C. will see to it that no troublesome questions shall be asked. The "Freethinker" does not conduct a discussion in that way.

Kew Parish Church announces that at the evening services ladies are not compelled to wear a head covering. St. Paul said very emphatically that women are not to attend church with their heads uncovered. But business, theologically, is very dull just now, and women are more and more careless about going to Church. Even more attractive is the announcement—broadcast by the vicar—that those who "come in late and leave early" may have "the privilege of sitting in the 'Royal' Gallery." If sitting in the same place as the Royal Family has sat will not tempt this democratic population of ours into church attendance nothing will.

Another of our national absurdities is in view. Early in September we are to have another day of national prayer to ask God to help us win the war. It is also announced that this day of prayer is by the request of the King. Surely the performance is stupid enough without adding a lie to it. The King has about as much to do with a day of prayer as we have, or as he has in directing the course of the war. It is the priesthood that wish

to keep this exhibition of "national" stupidity, backed up by politicians who are alive to the fact that we have to deal with a lot of British primitives. The King does as he is "advised."

A question was asked by one of the religious weeklies: "Is the Church a going concern?" We should say it is. Never in its history has it been going at a greater rate than it is at present. It is not going as rapidly as we could wish, but it is going. We take pride in the fact that we have done something, little though it may be, to hasten its departure.

Yet, what else could people expect? The Christian Church has been in existence for many centuries. During that time it has had, in Christian countries, things very much its own way. It has been supported by governments, laws made for its protection against critical attack, by its control of the child it has bred Christians such as an animal breeder develops a type that is out of the normal, and by its political control the Church has held the position of men at its mercy. Yet in spite of all, there was never a period when Christians were less certain as to what their faith really involved, or when it stood lower in the general estimation of educated and intelligent people. Few religions have had so much in their favour. And yet Christianity is dying—from the top downwards.

Catholic leaders are never quite at home unless they are suppressing something. The latest move is a demand (the Glasgow edition of the "Catholic Herald" for August 7) for the suppression of a number of publications that are sent here from the U.S.A. which, it is alleged, wounds the feelings of Roman Catholics. Special exception is taken to "Witness" publications which appear to make an attack on Roman Catholic doctrine. Seamen have been interviewed and, it seems obvious, that they have been encouraged to refuse to carry this "offensive" literature. The "Herald"—which has always been emphatic that there must be no close friendship with Atheistic Russia when this war is over—asks whether "Catholic seamen of the Royal and United States Navies and the merchant navies should be asked to convey to this country prurient rubbish offering deadly insult to everything that Catholics hold sacred." If any body other than Catholics took this method of suggesting that seamen refuse to do their work, as seamen, the authorities would most probably interfere.

As an explanation of the declining hold of Christianity on the people, one of our daily papers declares that Christianity has lost much contagious and infective character. But that is only in the line of development. Nearly all infectious and contagious complaints are weaker than they were. It is the task of science to make them so. And history provides us with many, very many, illustrations of the truth that all infective and contagious complaints may be weakened or destroyed by scientific efforts. Religion offers no exception to the general rule.

It is claimed that twenty million copies of the Bible were sold in the ten years following the close of the last war that was to end wars. We are just a trifle dubious about that word "sold." We imagine it may mean only printed, and when we look at the number of copies that are given away, that are sent abroad to carry out missionary labours, the number that are bought to be given as birthday presents, etc., to say nothing of the thousands of preachers who are agents for the boosting of the Bible, the number is not really so impressive as it sounds. And we must not forget that, on the admission of Christian preachers, Christianity in this country is weaker than it has ever been.

The Anglo-Russian Friendship Committee held a meeting at Ruislip the other day. A parson was in the chair, and another parson was the principal speaker. All well and good, but we are still waiting for those clergymen—and their name is legion—who did so much to slander Russia for the first 25 years of the existence of the Soviet, to apologise for their attitude. This also applies to laymen, on and off the Press. A man may make a mistake, whether he be a parson or a layman, but is contemptible beyond verbal characterisation to join in the praise of Russia without offering the slightest apology for the past conduct of these anti-Russians. In this matter the Roman Catholics appear to be the most straightforward. There the

attitude is: co-operation with Russia while she can help us; when that is finished we return to the previous attitude. The war might never have occurred had Russia been left to work out its destiny without the tremendous campaign of lying and misrepresentation that went on in this and other countries.

Very largely our newspapers have been boiled down to one—issued under different titles. The censorship hands out the news on what is interesting people most, and we get what our officials decide it is good for us to know. It is in some senses a pity that the newspapers are not forbidden to publish any war news or news about the war, and that we are not confined to a Government sheet. This would leave the newspapers free to deal with aspects of life other than the progress of the war, and we should then know which was official news and which was "news" in the pre-war sense of the word. As it is, "want of space" is the reason given why general news is so small in quantity, and not over-good in quality. Yet, if what we have suggested became practice, it might provide the occasion for giving us a morning paper which would not force upon us the feeling of emptiness and uselessness that must now be experienced by many readers.

We note that Sir James Marchant, Director of Salvage, has made an appeal in the Glasgow Cathedral for salvage. There seems something appropriate here in both the speaker and the place. Most Christian publicists are to-day collecting religious salvage in the hope of turning it into usable and saleable material. In fact, we might call the majority of popularisers of Christianity as experts in salvage. The connection of a Cathedral with the collection of salvage is something that would have tickled Gilbert, of Savoy fame.

The "Church Times" laments that "the art of preaching in England . . . has sunk low since the great men of fifty, or even thirty years ago." We agree with the criticism, but the "rot" set in much earlier than thirty, or even fifty, years ago. For well over a century and a-half the intellectual quality of the clergy has been deteriorating, and the deterioration of the men is an indication—almost an index—of the intellectual decay of the Christian religion. As we have often said, the Church has either to employ men who are honest enough to preach real Christianity—freed from ethical cant—in which case it loses "face" with the educated public, or it must have preachers who by every possible trick try to make Christianity mean what it never has and never can mean. By no means can they combine preachers who are intellectually honest, true to their religion, and of first-rate intelligence.

Signor Farinacci, in a speech recently, declared that "all Christians must be the irreconcilable enemies of the Jews, and that in waging this supreme struggle we are sure of obeying the injunctions of the Church and we are sure of doing our duty as Christians." Signor Farinacci knows, of course, that the Church from time to time tries to show it is not anti-Semitic by issuing "declarations" that the Jewish people must be protected against "unjust" persecutions; but he knows that the Holy Catholic Church has always been anti-Semitic in spirit and often in fact.

The Catholic Church is as preoccupied with religious education as ever in this country—that is, of course, preoccupied in explaining at every opportunity that the State must pay for the whole of the instruction.

The Vatican journal, the "Osservatore Romano," insists that women must not go stockingless to church, as women must "dress with modesty and Christian decency." God, through the inspired mouth of Paul, insisted, also that women must wear hats in church—possibly because not to do so was neither decent nor modest. On the other hand, men must take off their hats in church—also, no doubt, for fear of offending God in some mysterious way. But it is only Christian men who have to doff their hats. Jews, also in strict accordance with God's wishes, must wear their hats when praying to him—it is an awful crime to enter a synagogue hatless. Mahommedans have to take their shoes off before entering a mosque—otherwise, we don't know how angry Allah would be. Perhaps there's a special God now for nudists. If there is not, there ought to be.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. WEST.—We have not seen Mr. Maurice Collins' "Dark Door," but your description of it that if a sermon is to please, the nearer its profundity approaches absolute unintelligibility the greater the satisfaction of its auditors is a statement of fact so far as the majority of sermon-tasters are concerned.

R. B. COCKBURN, J. BRIMELOW and L. A. WARMAN.—Thanks for addresses; paper being sent for four weeks.

J. PEPPER.—Many thanks for obtaining yet another new reader. For distributing "The Freethinker": J. McCorrisken, jun., 10s.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—Gnr. A. Edwards, 7s.

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

NOT entirely our fault was the printing of a very ugly "bloomer" in the third paragraph of last week's "Sugar Plums." We were made to say that in the West Riding of Yorkshire less than 3 per cent. of boys and girls in the 16 to 18 age group were "unconnected" with the Churches. It should, of course, have read "connected." We are sorry for the blunder, and if any of our readers say that we must be a rotten proof-reader we agree with them. Proof-reading is a tiresome job, and probably we say harder things about our mistakes in that direction than do any of our readers. All we can say in mitigation is that we are not working under ideal conditions, and must let it go at that.

The North Staffordshire Branch N.S.S. has arranged for Mr. J. T. Brighton to speak in the Hanley Market Square on Saturday and Sunday evenings, 22nd and 23rd inst., at 7 o'clock. Mr. Brighton is a capable speaker, is doing excellent work for the movement, and local saints are asked to make his visit well known, also to give their personal support to both meetings. The branch secretary has done well in making the arrangement.

Our editions of the "Age of Reason" and the "Bible Handbook" have been out of print. We hope to be able to make arrangements for the reprinting of both these useful propagandist books. Other publications are in hand and will be announced shortly.

Sir Walter Langdon-Brown, Professor of Physics, Cambridge, contributed to the "Evening News" an interesting article on "Scientists Who Have Changed the Thought of the World." Sir Walter names six—Copernicus, Bruno, Galileo, Vessalius, Darwin and Freud. Darwin confessed that he was an Agnostic, which is an Atheist who prefers another name. Bruno at most may be credited—or discredited—with a very vague deism. Newton, the scientist who left God out of his science, had leanings—as had Faraday—towards a most ignorant form of

Christian belief. Copernicus never repudiated his Christianity, and there was no call that he should do so, but we will put him on the theistic side of the hedge. Galileo may, or may not, be placed on the religious side. We will give the godites the benefit of the doubt. Freud was clearly an Atheist. The belief in God was to him man's great illusion.

Of the six men who have changed the thought of the world three out of the six were non-theistic, and the other three took their scientific inspiration from the pagan world. The proportion of men who have also had a great influence in changing the thought of the world grows greater as the generations advance. There still remains a goodly number of men well known in scientific circles who continue to mumble about "God," by which they mean anything from a mathematical symbol to a vague "something," an intelligible description of which they are quite unable to give.

"Science in Soviet Russia" (Watts and Co., 1s. 3d.) adds one more to the spate of books written in praise of the quality and achievements of the Soviet. One is inclined to reflect as to the different world that might have existed by now if there had been enough men of courage twenty years ago to have minimised the torrent of misrepresentation against Revolutionary Russia. Not only might Russia have been able to do more than it has done, but it might have powerfully influenced our own world for the better, and—who knows—might have prevented this world war. Let us hope that those new friends and admirers of the Soviet will retain that admiration when the testing times arrive when an attempt is made, and it will be made too, to recreate ill-feeling between ourselves and a people that have done so much for itself and, incidentally, for the world.

Anyway, the seven British scientists who supply brief sketches of the scientific development of Russia have given us much that is important, and all of it is interesting. What does stand out is the fact that the Government of Russia has behaved loyally to science, and the servants of science have been treated with a generosity that placed no obstacles in the way of their work. In this direction, at least, they compare well with any period of our own history similar in length. There is far more than fifteen pennyworth of inspiring information in "Science in Soviet Russia."

In the March number of the Australian "Freethought," edited by J. S. Langley, there is an excellent article on that famous fighting Freethinker, Charles Southwell, who kept the flag flying in England so splendidly during the thirties and forties of the last century. He was sentenced for blasphemy just over a hundred years ago for his article on "The Jew Book" in his journal "The Oracle of Reason," openly advocating Atheism, and almost from the first took an independent stand in his methods of propaganda. Though at first working with Holyoake, he found later it was impossible to do so, and in 1855 he rather suddenly decided to go to Australia. It was not long before he made his mark there, his brilliant oratory attracting huge audiences. In fact, the Melbourne "Age" described him as "the most effective political orator that has yet presented himself before the people of Melbourne."

Southwell is said to have recanted his Freethought—a conversion which caused great pains to his friends in England and elsewhere. The writer of the article in "Freethought," Mr. H. H. Pearce, vigorously contests this, and rightly points out that Southwell's own writings after his supposed conversion, particularly in his journal the "Auckland Examiner," prove its utter impossibility. Mr. Pearce is thoroughly investigating the whole question, but there is little doubt that he is right. Southwell, he insists, "remained to the end a dauntless champion of Freethought even though somewhat unorthodox in his tactics. . . . He would bow his head to no man . . . he fought a heroic fight . . . and died a lonely forgotten death in 1860 in New Zealand." It is said that on his death-bed he confessed that he had never forsaken his Atheistic opinions. We are glad to be reminded of one of the bravest soldiers in the cause of Freethought.

THE WORLD AND "DEMOCRACY"

(Continued from page 330)

WHILE the expansion of its office was going forward, the lines of Parliamentary procedure were being slowly drawn and in the main were settled during the 17th century. "Before the end of the 17th century Parliamentary procedure began to follow the lines which it retained until after the Reform Act of 1832. The first edition of Sir Erskine May's book on Parliamentary procedure was published in 1844; and the Parliamentary procedure of 1844, says Sir R. Palgrave in his preface to the tenth edition was essentially the procedure on which the House of Commons conducted its business during the Long Parliament."*

After becoming established as a regular factor of the Constitution, the decisive act of its history is the attainment of sovereign authority in the national polity. Under the Tudors it reached to higher importance, but largely as a "managed" body, by strong arbitrary rulers. Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, says in a book published in 1589: "The most high and absolute power of the realm of England consisteth in the Parliament." When weaker rulers subsequently challenged this power it was to end in its becoming a reality.

The passage thereto was arduous, broken and bloody. Through the turmoils of the Civil War in the 17th century the interregnum of the Protectorate, the restoration of "King, Lords and Commons" as the basic formula of the Constitution, to the final quarrel with and expulsion of the Stuarts. The advent of William of Orange led to a tentative effort at Parliamentary and party government. The Bill of Rights defined anew its prerogative and the liberty of the subject. The Act of Settlement confirmed its supremacy over the Throne, if retaining hereditary succession. The 18th century is taken up with experiments in Government responsible to Parliament with a Prime Minister and Cabinet. There is a curious period when the Commons is a Corporation largely controlled by a "governing class" of land-owners. There follows the reactions of the French revolutionary epoch, demand for a reform of the Commons and extension of the franchise which results in the partial concessions of the Act of 1832. Successive widening of the franchise during last century brought us to practical manhood suffrage, later extended to women, a secret ballot, the suppression of corrupt practices at elections. A form of executive grew up under which the Administration was responsible for initiating all major legislation, and the direction of finance; at once controlling Parliament and controlled in return by public opinion. Without a formal jurisdiction, resting on universal suffrage, aided by an efficient Civil Service, unlimited in scope save by its own good sense, the final Legal Court of Appeal, it presents to-day the most potent, direct, popular Government and system in the world†.

The other leading and related phase of democracy is connected with the U.S.A. The original 13 colonies which seceded from Britain and formed a Federal Union in 1787 came originally from various foundations, and in scattering themselves along the Atlantic seaboard showed their primal individualism. Some

* Sir Courtenay Ilbert.

† The Parliament Act of 1911 defined anew the relations of the two Houses, whilst confirming the Commons' supremacy. . . . The first representation was one of communities and classes rather than of persons; and the personal franchise grew up casually on a feudal tenure; and a customary basis in the towns. The figures for the electorate vary before the Reform Bill of 1832. Some give about a quarter of a million, brought up to half a million or more by the Bill. By subsequent Acts and extensions we are now presented with an electorate of 30 millions in a population of 46 millions, with a small preponderance of women voters.

were not of Anglo-Saxon genesis, most had little in common. Many were refugees from the storms and stress of political and religious strife and oppression in Europe and England during the 17th century. Others carried with them their sectarian and exclusive spirit as they built up their communities amid the hard and dangerous conditions of the New World and its indigenous barbarians.

The Constitutions of these States had grown out of Charters granted to them by the Crown when they were English Colonies.

In each of them there was a Governor and a Legislature usually elected on a property franchise; and the Governor, the head of the Executive, was independent of and not responsible to the Legislature. In none of them obtained a system of Cabinet Government or Parliamentary rule such as exists at the present day in the United Kingdom and in the self-governing Dominions. The cause of this difference is chiefly due to the associations of the old American Colonies, of the States which succeeded them, and the Federal Union into which they were incorporated at the time. The British Cabinet was in its initial stage, while the Constitutions of the Dominions were modelled on that of the United Kingdom during the 19th century.

The separation of the Executive from the Legislature was thus a common feature at their union. Another was that in nearly all the Legislature consisted of two Houses. The need for two Chambers has since become an axiom of political theory which has acquired a wide credence. The English precedent may have influenced its adoption in the States. There was also an 18th century doctrine among abstract thinkers, like Montesquieu, that the executive, judicial and legislative functions of the State ought to be separate from and independent of each other. The American course, too, was affected by general considerations and practical issues. There lingered even here that traditional mistrust of the "populace" previously noted, and the need, therefore, of guarding against the risk of concentrating power in a single man or set of men. They had further to reconcile the claims and jealousies of the States and their view of State Rights with the exigencies of a Federal Union. So in the nature of the problem set, and method of approach, the American experiment differed fundamentally from Britain. In their adopted Constitution a House of Representatives deputised for the nation on the basis of population. At the outset the franchise varied, but became unified on a general suffrage during last century. A Senate stood for the States with equal representation in Congress alike for small and large. The President and Administration remained apart from Congress. Various amendments thereto have since been made, including women suffrage.

The Congress rules of procedure were largely borrowed from that of the English Parliament. "Thomas Jefferson, when Vice-President of the United States, and therefore President of the Senate, compiled for the use of the Senate a manual of procedure based on the practice, rulings and precedents of the English Parliament; and Jefferson's manual is still authoritative for the procedure of both Houses of Congress." . . . A similar influence has extended to other Parliaments abroad as they became established during the 19th century.

Our next consideration is the bearing of these institutions on the wider concerns of Intellectual Liberty.

AUSTEN VERNY.

(To be continued)

The Christian religion with the blood of Christ out of it isn't worth the paper it is written on. I believe in the blood. Ours is a bloody religion. The blood stands for the poured out life. It is a bloody gospel and a bloody world. That book is bloody. Take the blood out of the atoning sacrifice and you have nothing left. Call it a slaughter-house religion then, if you want to. Without the blood, the Bible would be a meaningless jumble and hopeless jargon of words.—BILLY SUNDAY, "American Evangelist."

"THE POSTHUMOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY"

CHAPTER 1

It was in the year 1890 that I became a living entity. My mother and father reared me in modesty and Victorian superstition.

I do not blame them; it was inevitable that it should be so, as the system at the time was in full swing and they were both victims of the propaganda of the Press and pulpit which was a feature of that age.

I still remember my mother's superstitious exhortations, that "a half loaf is better than none" and that "honesty is the best policy," etc.

In my early youth I was daily impressed by my mother that "God Is Good," and the texts on the wall were "Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me" and "The Meek Shall Inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

My youthful mind could not reconcile the one with the other.

CHAPTER 2

In time I reached that age when I had to be sent to school. At first I did not like school: there were too many "Dont's" and too much "hymn-singing."

The "don'ts" I paid no attention to, and the "hymn-singing" I invariably skipped by remaining silent; the teacher was continually at me for not "singing-up" and uttered subtle threats of the consequences of the "bad-fire" if I did not pay attention. The only effect this had upon me was to give me a feeling of nausea and utter disgust.

Apparently my mother must have been informed, for she was continually hectoring me about complaints that "I was a bad boy at school," but my youthful mind repelled all entreaties; I could not reconcile Ethics with my sordid tenement environment, and I involuntarily revolted.

At this time I observed that school teachers were very keen on belly-crawling before nonentities.

I vividly remember an occasion when an education "authority" was expected to visit the school; the pupils were crammed beforehand on how to be "nice" and "well-behaved," and the lessons were switched over to learning the words of a new hymn and to memorising the dates of royal incidents, especially "battles." The schoolroom was cleaned and polished up for the occasion and a large photograph was festooned with flags above the teacher's desk and a large cardboard notice was attached with the words: "God Save Our Gracious King and Queen."

We were kept grinding away at the words of the new hymn and the National Anthem for days on end; and at home mother kept the propaganda going as hotly as she could.

The day previous to the great event we were informed to tell mothers that we must be dressed in our Sunday-bests for the next day, and every little liar averred that they could sing the "new hymn" lustily.

CHAPTER 3

After this school event I began to read literature and I happened to pick up a copy of that great American scholar and thinker, Robert Green-Ingersoll, and in an account of his early childhood I quote from his own account:—

"In the olden days they thought some days were too good for a child to enjoy himself. When I was a boy Sunday was considered too holy to be happy in. Sunday used to commence when the sun went down on Saturday night. We commenced at that time for the purpose of getting good ready, and when the sun fell below the horizon on Saturday evening there was a darkness fell upon the house ten thousand times deeper than night. Nobody said a pleasant word; nobody laughed; nobody smiled; the child who looked the sickest was regarded as the most pious. That night you could not

crack even hickory nuts. If you were caught chewing gum it was only another evidence of the depravity of the human heart. It was an exceedingly solemn night. Dyspepsia was in the very air you breathed. Everybody looked sad and mournful."

I remember reading this graphic pen picture and appreciated Ingersoll's great service to humanity and Freethought.

CHAPTER 4

About a year after this my mother died; my father decided to keep on the little house and work away in the shipyard where he had spent his lifetime. I became the domestic to my father, and I can remember him coming home tired out to find that I had the table "set" for supper, which he would take and immediately tumble into bed to get rest to enable him to get away early again the following morning to his wage slavery.

I managed to keep at this until the working age, when my father got me a job in the small office at the shipyard, where I was kept working until the first outbreak of insanity in August, 1914. My office chum immediately "joined up" and was killed in action within six months.

The popular query at the time was, "Oh, did you hear so-and-so was killed in France?"

I got "fed up" and "joined up," and after a matter of six months I was invalidated home, gassed.

I was eventually discharged without a pension and returned to my little home, finding my father unemployed and in abject poverty; he had managed to keep the little home together, and I nestled in to share his poverty, and well I remember that "a grateful country will never forget you" as I applied to the Ministry of Labour for my pittance.

I was subjected to the nefarious Means Test and managed to exist with pawning anything of value now left and scrounging round the streets for firewood and coal dropped from delivery lorries.

I did not drink and I did not smoke, but poverty kept persistently present.

CHAPTER 5

Eventually my father died and the second outbreak of insanity found me still unemployed and in poverty. I decided to get out of it, and joined the Mercantile Marine—not through any patriotic motive, but through sheer desperation to escape from the conditions.

CHAPTER 6

The ship left for New York and the voyage across was calm and uneventful; I thought New York a striking contrast to the black-out I had left in Glasgow, and after a lightning discharge the tanker was loaded with 30,000 gallons of petrol and glided down past the Statue of Liberty and was soon ploughing into the belly of the deep. On the first day at open sea I was standing on the starboard side of the wheelhouse when I observed the surface of the sea break and the surge of an object racing towards the middle of the ship—CRASH!!

A. S. KNOX.

DEATH TO PRIESTCRAFT

War with the army of enslavement! Down with the seducers of childhood—the spiritual profligates who debauch the youthful mind! Banish them, with their spooks, from the school, the college, the court of justice, the hall of legislation! Let us train generations of sound minds in sound bodies, full of rich blood, and nervous energy, and frank inquiry, and dauntless courage, and starry hope; with faces that never pale at truth, hearts that hold no terms with falsehood, knees that never bend before power or mystery, heads that always keep a manly poise, and eyes that boldly challenge all things from height to depth.—G. W. FOOTE. "Flowers of Freethought."

SPILLING THE BEANS

THE "News-Chronicle" embodies all the traditions of respectable British journalism, especially where religion is concerned. No infringement of the rigidly established newspaper etiquette towards religion is allowed in its columns. In simple language, that means God can rely upon the "News-Chronicle" being definitely on his side and a voluntary extra on his publicity staff.

The occasional appearance of a mild and humble dissatisfaction with some aspect of religion from a reader is merely a necessary peg upon which a claim for freedom of expression can be hung. Nobody would suspect the "News-Chronicle" of wilfully admitting to its columns matter really dangerous to the cause of religion; therefore the publicity recently given, in big front-page type, to the results of a Gallup poll on religion by the British Institute of Public Opinion must be considered as a bad slip-up.

We have an Established Church in this country. Its work is spiritual, within the framework of Thirty-Nine Articles of religious faith. There are a number of rival houses in the holy business, all under the direct patronage of the same God. They all claim that their spiritual work is the purifying element in our social life, and that the quality of secular existence rises or falls with the spiritual health. The columns of the Press, the B.B.C., Councils and Councillors, M.P.s and Lords have been a voluntary supporting chorus, always rehearsing. Schoolchildren are dosed with it; soldiers, sailors and airmen are made to swallow it in weekly doses, although, like the schoolchildren, they may be withdrawn from religion provided that, on joining up, they asked for secular training by declaring themselves without religion. Yet, in spite of the drenching with religion, when the question was asked by the Gallup poll: "Should the Churches interest themselves more on questions of social reform?" only 20 per cent. replied "No." Only one person in five wanted the Churches to concentrate upon their spiritual work. Sixty per cent. of those contacted for the poll voted for more interest in social reform from a fundamentally spiritual institution. To mix something different with what you have is dilution, and look at it how you like, it seems quite obvious that 60 per cent. of those contacted wished to see a dilution of the spiritual by the secular—more interest in man and human affairs. The remaining 20 per cent. would not commit themselves either way.

To a further question: "What do you think about the part the Churches are playing in the life of this country?" 15 per cent. thought the Churches were playing their part well. That might mean anything from a peace, war, spiritual or secular outlook, and so is of little value. More definite was the reply of 30 per cent., who said the Churches were playing no real part; 20 per cent. wanted the Churches to be more active, giving better lead in social matters, and 5 per cent. only wanted the Churches to concentrate on spiritual problems alone. The "News-Chronicle" surely did not realise it was informing the British public that, of the people contacted for a poll on religion and the Churches, only 5 per cent., or one person in 25, wished to see the Churches concentrate on spiritual problems alone. True, the poll represents a very small part of the population, but only a short while ago Bishop J. McNulty informed a meeting of the Nottingham Section of the Catholic Women's League that not 10 per cent. of the people have any connection with organised religion.

It may be argued in some quarters that the poll figures endorse the clerical claim that the lack of religion and the present war are related. But the people do not make wars. The affairs of nations, including foreign relations, are handled by governments. Hitler dictates German policy and claims to be selected by God for his present work, and God has not protested. The

Bible is full of similar selections for similar jobs, all equally true, but testifying to the religious belief of the claimants. Then there was the noble work of that great Christian gentleman, Franco, in Spain. We have had the advantage of a long line of Christian governments, our Churches have given full support to the last three wars in which we have been engaged, and in that the clergy gave the lead to their congregations. So, dismissing the clerical claim of kinship between the present war and irreligion as a Christian truth, or self-apparent lie, the figures given by the Gallup poll, whilst in no way surprising to intelligent observers, is noticeable chiefly because one of the bodyguards of religion gave it such a prominent write-up in its columns.

R. H. ROSETTI.

RELIGION AND LIFE

THE most curious social convention of the great age in which we live is the one to the effect that religious opinions should be respected. Its evil effects must be plain enough to everyone. All it accomplishes is (a) to throw a veil of sanctity about ideas that violate every intellectual decency, and (b) to make every theologian a sort of chartered libertine. No doubt it is mainly to blame for the appalling slowness with which really sound notions make their way in the world. The minute a new one is launched, in whatever field, some imbecile of a theologian is certain to fall upon it, seeking to put it down. The most effective way to defend it, of course, would be to fall upon the theologian, for the only really workable defence, in polemics as in war, is a vigorous offensive. But the convention that I have mentioned frowns upon that device as indecent, and so theologians continue their assault upon sense without much resistance, and the enlightenment is unpleasantly delayed.

There is, in fact, nothing about religious opinions that entitles them to any more respect than other opinions get. On the contrary, they tend to be noticeably silly. If you doubt it, then ask any pious fellow of your acquaintance to put what he believes into the form of an affidavit, and see how it reads: "I, John Doe, being duly sworn, do say that I believe that, at death, I shall turn into a vertebrate without substance, having neither weight, extent or mass, but with all the intellectual powers and bodily sensations of an ordinary mammal . . . and that, for the high crime and misdemeanour of having kissed my sister-in-law behind the door, with evil intent, I shall be boiled in molten sulphur for one billion calendar years." Or: "I, Mary Roe, having the fear of hell before me, do solemnly affirm and declare that I believe it was right, just, lawful and decent for the Lord God Jehovah, seeing certain little children at Bethel laugh at Elisha's bald head, to send a she-bear from the wood and to instruct, incite, induce and command it to tear forty-two of them to pieces." Or: "I, the Right Rev. ———, Bishop of ———, D.D., L.L.D., do honestly, faithfully and on my honour as a man and a priest, declare that I believe that Jonah swallowed the whale," or vice versa, as the case may be.

No, there is nothing notably dignified about religious ideas. They run rather to a peculiarly puerile and tedious kind of nonsense. At their best, they are borrowed from metaphysicians, which is to say, from men who devote their lives to proving that twice two is not always or necessarily four. At their worst, they smell of spiritualism and fortune-telling. Nor is there any visible virtue in the men who merchant them professionally. Few theologians know anything that is worth knowing, even about theology, and not many of them are honest. One may forgive a Socialist or a Single Taxer on the ground that there is something the matter with his ductless glands, and that a winter in the South of France would relieve him. But the average theologian is a hearty, red-faced, well-fed fellow with no

discernible excuse in pathology. He disseminates his blather, not innocently, like a philosopher, but maliciously, like a politician. In a well-organised world he would be on the stone-pile, along with the lawyer. But in the world as it exists we are asked to listen to him, not only politely, but even reverently, and with our mouths open!

H. L. MENCKEN.

(From "The American Mercury.")

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EDUCATION QUESTION

Sir,—May I thank you for your very sensible view of the education controversy expressed in "The Freethinker" of August 9. I should like to take this opportunity of calling the attention of your readers to the work of the Secular Education League, which is seeking to combat the ecclesiastical onslaught upon the schools.

Education should be factual and objective in so far as it is State-aided. If parents desire to teach religious dogma, they should teach it in their own time and at their own expense. The Churches have no right to seek to give education under a democratic Government a partisan and propaganda twist.

Much of the present attempt to capture education has an undoubted economic and political origin. The alliance between ecclesiasticism and the more reactionary elements in the State is notorious. A valuable work at the present time would be a renewed insistence for the disestablishment of the Church of England and for the more objective teaching of history. At the moment, we hear rather too much of Lord Elton in the schools and too little of Laski or Brailsford! If the ecclesiastics have their way, they will end by setting up a State cultus, inculcated through the State-aided schools, which can be turned to the most undesirable political ends whilst all teachers will be subjected to tests concerning their orthodoxy. I would appeal to readers to support the Secular Education League in fighting against this highly undesirable scheme.—Yours, etc.,

F. H. AMPLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

(Hon. Sec., Secular Education League).

HOW IT RUNS

Sir,—The following item might interest and amuse you.

In two adjacent streets here (Blackpool) are a chapel and a church. Each displays some text or saying upon a large notice board. Now one displayed prominently:—

"Your worst enemy is drink."

Upon going round the corner we find on the other board a perfect gem:—

"Make your worst enemy your best friend!"

I would add that I had no trouble anywhere at all about having my religious denomination stated as "Atheist." It was accepted without question.—Yours, etc.,

DOUGLAS HOGG.

ELIZABETH AND HERESY

Sir,—It seems a shame to catch out so scholarly a contributor as Mr. T. F. Palmer; but when he says that there were no executions for heresy for the first 25 years of Elizabeth's reign the facts are against him.

On July 22, 1575, in the seventeenth year of Elizabeth, "two Dutchmen anabaptists were burned in Smithfield, who died in great horror with roling and erieng." (Holinshed.) According to Strype, the chief cause of their execution was that they would not own the Privy Council as Christian magistrates—holding, as Anabaptists, that no Christian might bear the sword of authority. On May 20, 1579, Matthew Hamont, after his ears had been cut off, was burned in the Castle ditch at Norwich for denying the divinity, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the existence of the Holy Ghost and the necessity of the sacraments. The Church of England, like the Church of Rome, was watered with the blood of heretics.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

FAITH, HOPE AND CHASTITY

(Roman Catholic Bishop Henschke, of Wagga, N.S.W., has solemnly warned all Catholics against taking part in beach parade competitions; he expressed his regret that Wagga had linked itself with a proposed parade which originated in Sydney. "Womanhood is too sacred, our girls too refined and decent, to join such competitions to be photographed and gloated over by lascivious eyes," says the Bishop.)

No pure and holy Roman maid would take part in a beach parade, They're too refined and decent—

At least that's what the Bishop says in extolling their Wagga ways;

The Bishop's views are recent.

If Sydney folk had understood the sacredness of womanhood

They would be driven daft

In thinking of the dreadful sin of gazing at the female skin

When it was photographed.

No Roman mother could take pride in seeing daughter show her hide

Simply to win a prize,

Nor could a Roman father, dotting, watch unmoved the shocking gloating

Of lascivious eyes.

No, no, it must be much more fun to go round dressed up like a nun in twenty yards of slirting

Than skip, half-naked, on the sand, where every time you wave your hand

You'll be accused of flirting.

At least, that's how it strikes the Bish., who seems a rather strange old fish

With a most prudish mind,

Which finds his God's creation crude, and, in the altogether, rude, Indecent, unrefined.

We sorrow for the Bishop's fate; of course the man is celibate And therefore hardly human,

It cannot penetrate his mind, the proper study of mankind,

Is woman.

Oh, Bishop, listen for the nonce,

"Honi soit qui mal y pense!"

G. INGHAM.

—From the "New Zealand Rationalist."

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.

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

COUNTRY

Outdoor

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, a Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-30, Mr. COPELAND (Glasgow), a Lecture.

Higham, Friday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

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

North Staffordshire Branch (Hanley Market Square), Saturday and Sunday evenings at 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON and Mr. J. H. CHARLES.

Quaker Bridge, Sunday, 2-45, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

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

CHRISTIANITY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

THE
HISTORICAL JESUS
 and the
MYTHICAL CHRIST

By **GERALD MASSEY**

With Preface by **CHAPMAN COHEN**
 Price 6d. Postage 1d.

Pamphlets for the PeopleBy **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***New Pamphlet** *By* **C. G. L. DU CANN****There are no Christians**

Price 4d.

Postage 1d.

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.

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.

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**