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CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	377
The Era of Modern Enlightenment—T. F. Palmer ...	379
Reason or Emotion?—H. Cutner ...	380
The Modern Muse—S. H. ...	381
Acid Drops ...	381
Sugar Plums ...	383
To Correspondents ...	383
The World and "Democracy"—Austen Verney ...	384
Somebody Slipped—F. J. Corina...	385
Believe It or Not—R. Sturge Whiting ...	386
Correspondence ...	386
Sunday Lecture Notices ...	387

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

C. E. M. Joad and God

SOME time ago one of our newspaper paragraphists referred to Mr. C. E. M. Joad as a "philosopher." I am not sure what it was the newspaper man had in mind, but it was accepted with all seriousness by Mr. Joad, in whose make-up a sense of humour is not very conspicuous. The newspaper man might have had in mind the old Greek meaning of a philosopher—one who loves wisdom. Or he might have thought of a philosopher as a dreamy, impracticable kind of man who, if left to look after the baby and keep a good fire burning, would probably throw the baby in the fire and carefully put the coal-scuttle to bed. Or he might have meant by a philosopher one whose head is filled with muddled and uncertain ideas that are of no use to anybody. Or, finally, he may have set down a sarcasm where he intended to pay a compliment. But the unkindest cut of all was when the B.B.C. adopted Mr. Joad as its pet philosopher. There is a wise old saying, "Call no man fortunate till he is dead."

Unconsciously Mr. Joad provides a commentary on his quality as a philosopher in the shape of an autobiographic article in the "Evening Standard" for 25th August. It is written under the impression that he is recording a change of opinion, whereas he is merely exhibiting the continuity of a misunderstanding.

For example. Mr. Joad informs us that he once believed in God, but about 30 years ago he ceased to do so and reached "the sunlit uplands of Agnosticism." So, beginning with God, then suspending judgment, for a period, concerning God's character, Mr. Joad now solemnly announces that he is getting back to God. That is an event which may create greater joy in heaven than it will arouse surprise on earth. For Mr. Joad commits the vulgar error of assuming that if there is a God he must be a good God, that is he must fall into line with our standard of goodness, and, historically, that is absurd. The question of the existence of God is quite distinct from the character of God. The confusion is quite common, but that does

not destroy its folly. Gods there have been of all sorts, good, bad and indifferent, but whichever category we place them in they all bear the stamp of human workmanship. Mr. Joad evidently began his study of Theism in a mental fog and has continued his investigations in the same atmosphere. The "sunny upland" which Mr. Joad honoured with a brief stay must have been rather misty. He really should pay some little attention to what modern anthropologists have to say about the birth and development of *all* the gods.

A Philosopher in a Fog

But Mr. Joad reaches the peak of his confusion and is most amusing when he deals with what he thinks is Materialism. His remarks on this topic are so weird at this time of day that they must be cited in full.

"I have never been a Materialist. I have never, that is to say, believed that matter is the only reality. After all, the only thing that matter can do is to move about, and it seems to me unbelievable that a world consisting of moving particles of matter could account for, could in fact be, the inspiration that produced the Sonnets of Shakespeare, the beauty that is enshrined in the Quartets of Mozart and our appreciation of their beauty."

So Mr. Joad "postulated a force of Life which, expressing itself in and through matter as an electric current may run down a wire, created living organisms in pursuit of its purpose." I count that last as one of the funniest things Mr. Joad has ever said. A life force that runs through matter and electricity that "runs down a wire" as water runs through a pipe, must place Mr. Joad well ahead of Commander Campbell. We should like Julian Huxley's comments on the simile and the implications it carries concerning Mr. Joad's mentality.

As to Mr. Joad's conception of Materialism. I was almost describing this as "muddled thinking," but I feel that "thinking" may be too honourable a term. It is really the irresponsible chatter of one who has no conception of the nature of the problem before him. The one thing certain is that Mr. Joad does not understand what scientific or philosophic Materialism stands for, and to Mr. Joad's assurance that he never was a Materialist I would add the conviction that he never will be a Materialist. He has yet to master the philosophy of science and the science of philosophy, and I add the warning that mere "mugging-up" in either of these directions will not compensate for lack of understanding.

For example. What is meant by "reality"? Reality is anything that is. The reality may be of a material or a mental character. It may be verifiable by all, or it may exist only to the vision of a single person. It may be a delusion, or it may be something that is verifiable by anyone and at any time. There are different categories of "reality." I suppose that much of the misunderstanding

here is due to the dictionary policy of putting "real" as the opposite of "imaginary." That is wrong. The imaginary and the real belong to different categories, but both fall within the larger category of existence, and so come within the scope of the real.

Mr. Joad is apparently looking for life *in* matter, and that is just about as profitable and as reasonable as looking for water in oxygen or hydrogen. Life is a phenomenon that is observable in connection with matter; it is an accompaniment of known factors. But it does not follow that the two—life and matter—are identical. A product never does resemble its factors. If it did we should be unable to distinguish one from the other. After all physiology does build on structure and psychology builds on physiology; but the differences of these "levels" do not wipe out their associations. "Reality" obtains in each. Mr. Joad must broaden and deepen his understanding and appreciation of these things. The philosopher of a Sunday newspaper should cultivate a common-sense outlook.

Oh, Rare Philosopher!

I pause here to congratulate Mr. Joad on having made the profound (I use "profound" in the sense of "Brains Trust" profundity) discovery that all "matter can do is to move about." I agree that if matter can only move about, then it can only—move about. That philosophy would be clear even to Commander Campbell, who, I expect, would agree with Joad on this subject. But I do not think that when Professor Tyndall, many years ago, made his sensational statement that he could see in "matter" the "promise and potency" of all that exists conceived "matter" with no other capacity than that of "jest movin' around." Mr. Joad might reflect that even the size of a planet may have some influence on its future—the retention of an atmosphere and all that this would lead to, for example. But I must not venture into too great depths lest I interfere with Mr. Joad's better acquaintance with God. Professor Bertrand Russell says that "but few philosophers ever believed in the hard little lumps at any date later than Democritus." Professor Russell is wrong. Mr. Joad believes in them. But with all respect I would commend to Mr. Joad an acquaintance or a deeper study of three books—Russell's "Analysis of Matter," Vaihinger's "The Philosophy of 'As If,'" and Woodger's "Biological Principles"—a book which for some reason has not received the attention it deserves. I disagree with much of it, but it is an important work. And with great humility I would suggest a glance at my own book, "Materialism Restated," which embodies a position I have held for 50 years, and which has of late years made great advances in philosophic and scientific circles.

Nearer to God

I do not think I need waste time or paper over Mr. Joad's failure to find the music of Mozart and the sonnets of Shakespeare in the behaviour of atoms of matter just able to "move about." I am not psycho-analysing Mr. Joad, but only trying to explain him. I will just interlard a query. Why do men of the Joad and Campbell type always fall back upon illustrations from Shakespeare, Mozart, Beethoven, etc.? Is it necessary, or is it just swank? After all, the question of whether all that is on this planet was developed from the raw material of the planet could

be proved as effectively with "My Old Dutch," the "Ingoldsby Legends," the wildest of jazz music, or the moanings and groanings of a Bing Crosby. Of course, it sounds superior to say "When I am tired I put on a record of Wagner or Beethoven," rather than to say "I listened to some of the records of the 'Yeoman of the Guard,' and felt much better after it." For myself, I think "whatever Gods there be" that when I am tired I can find interest in Edgar Wallace, philosophy in Bret Harte and Artemus Ward, or pleasure in a record from some of the Savoy operas. Even a volume of sermons may cheer me up by showing what I might have been if I had entered the Church. But I can assure Mr. Joad that if he inquires of his scientific or philosophic friends, he will find that none of them have ever attempted to discover Shakespeare or Martin Tupper in the movement of atoms that could just move about, even if energised by electricity that comes down a wire as water pours through a tap.

With heroic generosity Mr. Joad feels he will give God another chance. He feels he must have a God to explain the evil in the universe. "Evil," he says, "is endemic in the heart of man," which is both scientific and sociological nonsense. Neither good nor bad is endemic with anyone of normal constitution; and when the constitution is not normal then "good" and "bad" are rather misleading terms. In any case, "good" and "bad" are categories created by human society. Individuals may show a tendency to one or the other; but it is important to remember that the society of one day disagrees with another age on what is good or bad. The categories remain, but their contents change. But there is no need whatever to make a mystery of the quality, or the changing form of "good" or "bad," or to drag in a God as an explanation. An action that is not good—socially good—without God cannot be good with Him. Mr. Joad creates a mystery in order to establish an absurdity.

It would be brutal to ask Mr. Joad what he means by "a benevolent and participating God." He probably does not mean anything. Perhaps he thinks it sounds well. But even of this God he says he has had no experience, but presumably he hopes to get an introduction. Mr. Joad, I think, loves fame and adores famous people. If it will comfort Mr. Joad—and we do claim to know something about Gods, otherwise we should have no legitimate claim to be called an Atheist—we can assure him that if he means to find God, he will certainly succeed sooner or later. That is as certain as it is for a newly appointed Minister of State to find all the talents in the Government that has just given him a lucrative post.

In sober fact, Mr. Joad has never been without a God, even though he may have given his God another name. But if he intends to find a God, he must make hay while the sun shines. The churches are in no condition to pick and choose, and within the Church there should be a very notorious future for Mr. Joad.

But if he is forced to confess that he has had no experience of God, he yet knows those who have been more fortunate—or otherwise. He falls back upon the "Mystics." It is true he says "The mystics talk a religion I cannot understand," but a religion that one does not understand is a first-class introduction to a God one cannot comprehend. A union of the unknowable expressed in terms of the incomprehensible should secure an appoint-

ment for life in the B.B.C. Brains Trust as its irrefutable exponent of religion.

We present our compliments to Mr. Joad. He has discovered the only religion that is safe against attack. No man can *accept* the incomprehensible, but any man may worship it by cultivating Mr. Joad's frame of mind. It is a real religion—the only religion that the devout may safely talk about, write about, preach about, and which can hope for perpetuity. Experience cannot be cited against it. Criticism cannot harm it. It makes clear the inconceivable and solidifies the impalpable. And it brings Mr. Joad nearer the unapproachable. I feel sure Mr. Joad is getting nearer to God.

A sudden thought. Was Mr. Joad merely pulling the leg of the Editor of the "Evening Standard"? Or does the Editor owe Mr. Joad a grudge, and so published this article? I am left wondering.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE ERA OF MODERN ENLIGHTENMENT

IT is now the fashion in certain semi-superior circles to depreciate the 18th century as a period of intellectual advance. Yet an epoch which was adorned in Britain by authors so illustrious as Hume, Gibbon, Fielding, Smollett, Swift and innumerable others; in Germany by Goethe, Schiller and Lessing; in France by Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Holbach, d'Alembert and Laplace, must ever remain an outstanding era in modern European culture.

In France, the century emerged with Louis XIV. still on the throne, and it terminated in the turmoil of the Revolution. As Lytton Strachey justly claims in his fascinating "Landmarks in French Literature": "It is the period which bridges the gulf between autocracy and self-government, between Roman Catholicism and toleration, between the classical spirit and the spirit of the Romantic Revival. It is thus of immense importance in the history not only of France, but of the civilised world."

While earlier French literature was rarely utilised for purposes of propaganda, that of the 18th century was decidedly didactic in character. It certainly produced several masterpieces of pure literature, yet its outstanding literary pronouncements were primarily directed towards the emancipation of man's mind from social tyranny and religious superstition.

Even in the reign of Louis XIV., La Bruyère and Fénelon were painfully conscious of the evils that emanated from the altar and the throne, while still earlier, Fontenelle, under the pretence of holding up to derision the pious credulity of Paganism, was really undermining the miraculous claims of Catholicism. Then, in the late 17th century, Gibbon's "malicious Bayle" compiled his monumental Dictionary in which a daringly sceptical spirit was persistently displayed, while its rich stores of information furnished some of the most deadly weapons to the polemical writers of succeeding decades.

In 1721, Montesquieu with his Persian Letters smoothed the path for the subsequent triumphs of Diderot and Voltaire. In their epistles to their fellow-countrymen in Persia, Eastern visitors to Paris describe the leading features of French life. By these ingenious means, Montesquieu mercilessly exposed the extravagance and incapacity of the authorities. "The corruption of the Court," observes Strachey, "the privileges of the nobles, the maladministration of the finances, the stupidities and barbarisms of the old autocratic régime—these are the topics to which he is perpetually drawing his reader's attention." Nor are the clergy spared. Indeed, the whole system of government is surveyed in a practical, secular spirit, while religious fanaticism is wickedness incarnate.

To gain the ear of the public, the new writers interspersed spicy anecdotes with the serious and solid matter of their publications. Heavy volumes would have remained almost unread, and the constant endeavour of the apostles of enlightenment was the direction of attention to their innovating ideas.

Montesquieu's masterpiece, the later "Esprit des Lois," long exercised a salutary influence, for it is a veritable landmark in the expression of progressive thought. François Arouet, afterwards world-famous as Voltaire, also arose in the literary firmament. This extraordinary genius began his career as a dramatic poet whose plays carried by storm the Parisian audiences in the theatres. For half a century Voltaire's dramas were applauded as matchless masterpieces and their author was exalted as the rival, if not the superior, of his mighty predecessor, Racine himself. It appears puzzling that a playwright whose theatrical works make no appeal to-day should have so long captivated the naturally critical Parisian public.

That Voltaire was himself assured of the greatness of his plays is perhaps doubtful. In any case, he tried his prentice hand in many directions before he at last revealed his real potency. Trouble arose between Voltaire and an insolent aristocrat, and the former was driven to seek asylum in a foreign land. This three years' exile in England proved the turning point in the philosopher's brilliant career. At that time England was almost unknown to Frenchmen, save by repute, and Voltaire's visit was most industriously spent in the study of a State and people that apparently enjoyed all the advantages that France was denied. The activities of scientists, and the sceptical views expounded by Deistic authors; the prosperity of the general community; the restraints imposed by Parliament on the Crown and clergy and the existence of several dissenting sects; all these evidences of relative liberty and enlightenment seemed in glaring contrast with the tyranny ruthlessly exercised by Church and State in his native land.

When Voltaire was permitted to return to France he prepared the publication of his "Letters on the English." In this brilliant production, as Strachey concisely says "English life is described in its actuality, detailed, vivid and various; we are shown Quakers and Members of Parliament, merchants and philosophers; we come in for the burial of Sir Isaac Newton; we go to a performance of "Julius Cæsar"; inoculation is explained to us; we are given elaborate discussions of English literature and English science, of the speculations of Bolingbroke and the theories of Locke." But the hidebound bureaucrats of Paris soon detected an insidious indictment of their own methods of administration and ordered its immediate suppression. The sale of the book was prohibited in France and a copy of the pestilent print was publicly incinerated by the common hangman.

Nevertheless, the innovating views of Voltaire, Montesquieu and their associates slowly pervaded the public mind, although several influential writers still clung to the orthodox tradition. A pronounced change, however, became observable between 1750-60. Then a phalanx of penmen appeared who boldly satirised and condemned the evils of the old régime. From that time to the assembling of the States General, when action was initiated, a powerful advocacy of retrenchment and reform was provided by the printing press, and this propaganda ever increased in intensity as the years rolled by.

It has been pertinately said that the watchwords of the reformers were Reason and Humanity. The civil and ecclesiastical misgovernment from which France suffered was made clearly evident to all. In fact, the plight of our Gallic neighbours was in many respects even worse than that of much-tried Russia before the 1917 Revolution. The humane Turgot lent invaluable aid in the French struggle, and Rousseau's appeal proved potent. But the latter's gospel was too fantastic for this realistic world, and his suggested return to Nature was utterly unattainable. Not that Rousseau's fancy picture of primitive humanity,

uncorrupted by an artificial civilisation, was original. Earlier enthusiasts had imagined an ideal past as Dryden's lines bear witness:—

I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

Amidst all his many illustrious contemporaries Voltaire shone with the most brilliant light. His noble vindication of Calas and his blasting exposure of other crimes committed by the French authorities in the cause of Catholicism electrified not only France but the civilised world. To terminate such atrocities, Voltaire was unsparing in his sacrifice of wealth, time and energy in his devastating attacks on the great lying Church which appeared to him responsible for all that was revolting in human life.

Like the rest of the world, the sage of Ferney had his blemishes just as the sun has spots. But his indomitable passion for the destruction of the persecuting spirit is beyond all human praise. There is sound criticism of the great emancipator in Macaulay's youthful lines:—

That flashing eye blasted the conqueror's spear,
The monarch's sceptre, and the Jesuit's beads;
And every wrinkle of that haggard sneer
Hath been the grave of dynasties and creeds.

In very wantonness of childish mirth
He puffed Bastilles, and thrones, and shrines away,
Insulted Heaven, and liberated earth.
Was it for good or evil? Who shall say?

T. F. PALMER.

REASON OR EMOTION?

IN one of those fruitful controversies for which this journal is famous, the question of the future of Freethought was some time ago broached and the problem raised as to why we were not attracting many more thousands or hundreds of thousands of people than we were, our failure to do so being due to the fact that either our methods were wrong, or that we were more or less out-dated. Let me say at once that most, if not all, the arguments deduced to prove this did not in the least impress me; for not with the best wish in the world do I want to see our movement copy either the ideas or the sentiments of the so-called social side of Christianity.

People who come into the Freethought Movement are not bribed to do so. There are simply no material awards. The soldier in the "best of all causes" works for little or no pay; there are no prizes and no medals. There is nothing but the conviction that we are on the side of truth, and that our war against superstition and credulity and intolerance has already gained victories beyond our wildest imaginings.

Freedom of thought, freedom of the Press, freedom to worship or not as we think fit—these are now commonplaces with regard to what we are fighting for in this war. Even some of our religious leaders have had to admit that it is not, after all, Christianity we are fighting for, but a number of secular ideals which are common to humanity. These ideals are by some tacked on to Christ and Christianity, but this is just religious impudence. If a "brave new world" is to follow the peace it must be the world we know down here, and not something in the skies; and however the question and the problem is put, that world is the ideal of Secularism, and not of Christianity.

I am therefore quite unimpressed when told that the Freethought Movement is not attracting millions of enthusiastic young people who have given up Christianity, but find that we have no "soul" or that we are too "materialistic." The fact that we have no soul is always stressed, the implication being that Freethinkers rarely smile, that they are almost always bathed in a sea of misery, that they cannot see the beauty of

poetry, music or art, and that our only salvation is to hark back, not perhaps to the credulity of "orthodox" or "Church" Christianity, but to the "sublime" teachings of Jesus himself, so sadly misunderstood and misinterpreted by the majority of mankind.

Let me give a typical and concrete instance of this kind of—to me, at least—fatuous position.

I have been reading Miss Ethel Mannin's "Christianity—or Chaos?" and I must frankly confess to being puzzled that such a book would come from the writer of so many good books. There could be no mistaking the inherent unbelief in these, and indeed, right at the beginning of the book under review, she declares that "intellectually, so far as any personal Deity is concerned, I call myself an Agnostic, even an Atheist, a Rationalist." Yet the whole of "Christianity—or Chaos?" is a plea for "God, the Supreme Good"—whatever that means—the recognition of Jesus Christ and his teaching, the abolition of "materialism," though I have found it quite impossible to understand clearly what she means by materialism or the proof that she is right, and the establishment of the "Kingdom of God."

No doubt Miss Mannin would add to what she says in her book about "materialism" that it stands for everything that is ugly, that is false, that it is responsible for all our present evils, that no one professing it can love mankind or have any hope for their future, or that a materialist must of very necessity stand for everything bad against which Miss Mannin herself has protested in so many books. Or to put it in another way, if you oppose Miss Mannin's own Gospel for the Good of Mankind, you are a very horrid "materialist." Personally, I have always rather liked the word and have, wherever necessary, proclaimed myself as one; but then my own view of Materialism is radically different from that of Miss Mannin.

My real objection to the kind of argument put forward by our distinguished authoress is that though "intellectually" an Atheist, she plays entirely into the enemy's hands. The whole of her book is an impassioned plea for religion—not necessarily religion as understood by the man in the street, nor even that of the current conception of Christianity—but her own brand of "real" or "true" Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ, in fact, complete with Redeemer, Saviour, Teacher—all with capital letters to make the words look more "sacred"—and that the only way in which the world can be saved is to go back "to the ennobling ideals of Jesus the Christ"; though Miss Mannin adds also to those of "Gautama the Buddha." But here she goes into no details about this teaching supposed to be so superior to "materialism."

Now this going back to Jesus is the theme of most of our religious leaders, and it is worthy to note that they do not stress particularly going back to the childish conceptions of Deity, Heaven, Devils and Angels, for which Jesus is so famous, but to his "moral teachings" of which the Sermon on the Mount is given as a specimen, though with such hushed breath as if even it is almost too sacred to be referred to. For Miss Mannin, it is the utmost height to which we can climb. After reading her book and the Sermon on the Mount again to refresh my memory, I can only say that I am more than ever convinced that whatever is true in it is not new, and whatever is new, is not true; and that I should be sorry to base my own conduct on a good many of its preposterous propositions.

When you are once bitten by this "back to Jesus" craze, it is almost impossible to argue with you. Everything that Jesus said is supremely right and almost everything anybody else says may be right, but if it is in opposition to Jesus, it is entirely wrong. Let me give an example from Miss Mannin's book.

Naturally she has to deal with sex in relation to society, and on this point she violently opposes Paul's views—Paul, of course, being quite wrong, while Jesus is always right. She says: "But it was not Christ, the tolerant ascetic, with his 'salvation

in the spirit,' who damned the flesh, but Paul. It is Paulianity, not Christianity, which is anti-life because it is anti-sex. Paulianity is rooted in fear, fear of the flesh, fear of eternal damnation; it robs Christianity of its sweetness by impugning to it a spirit entirely alien from that of its Founder." I am not concerned with defending Paul or even with the "sweetness" of Christianity. But if the reader will turn to Matthew xix. 10-12 he will find that the advice of Jesus, if followed by mankind, to arrive at Miss Mannin's "Kingdom of Heaven," would not only do away with sex and marriage, but with the whole of the human race. Whatever Paul may have thought of the necessity of marriage in most cases, he said nothing quite so terrible as this advice of Jesus who "never damned the flesh." Miss Mannin, however much she dislikes hearing something with which she vehemently disagrees, should be told that her "materialism" and "materialist" are creatures of imagination. They are dummies set up to be flogged.

Materialism with most of us—apart from philosophy—is another name for Secularism, and what we have fought for and striven for and advocated has been always the ideal of happiness in this world—a happiness which, in the ultimate, must be found by each man for himself. There may be, or are, certain fundamental principles in collective groups of people, but here again these principles must be individually sought for and applied. Apart from them, no man must be coerced or made to believe that nothing but this or that only is the "Way and the Life"; and indeed, it may be that, in spite of all "moral uplifts" or the teachings of "the Christ," or of "the Buddha," or even of Secularism, we may never, like Edgar Allen Poe's Gallant Knight "gaily bedight," reach El Dorado.

H. CUTNER.

THE MODERN MUSE

I.

CRITICS of modern poetry are often inclined to stress the obscurantist attitude taken by some much-publicised poets, suggesting that all modern writers of verse are tending to lose the clarity and freedom of expression which have been representative of the best poetry of the past.

In the present article I am turning to a writer who has frankly scorned tradition, flicking his fingers in the faces of the great ones of the ages. Mr. W. H. Auden has been recognised by a large number of the younger generation as representing in a rather curious way their hopes and their ambitions. He has laughed at the values of Christian Capitalism, which may be regarded as the typical staid virtues of the passing age, and he has respected that new civilisation which young people generally see as an urgent necessity. As an outcome of the present war a new civilisation will have to be built, but no one as yet can discern its lineaments. Auden, more than anyone else among the younger generation of poets, has faced up to this issue and tried to hail the coming of a new world. (As has recently been suggested, it is one of the weaknesses of Mr. Auden's position that he has spent the months since September, 1939, in America.)

Readers who want to know what this leader of the young "moderns" is really trying to do will find an interesting selection of his work in "Some Poems" (Faber; 2s. 6d.). It is an exceptionally interesting half-crown's worth, for it contains verses selected from various books of the author, from 1930 (when he was 23 years of age) to 1939.

And what precisely is his aim? Well, that at present remains a little vague. It is a tendency towards a genuinely democratic way of life, towards a sharing of the real things of life with other men and women in real comradeship, and of an overthrow of the dogmatic obscurantisms which have too long exercised a dictatorship over the minds of those who would be free. In other words, it is not so very different from what we know as the ideals of Freethought.

His technique? Well, here is a single stanza, torn from its context, which gives perhaps a faint flavour of what you will find in most of his best verse:—

When the green field comes off like a lid
Revealing what was much better hid;
Unpleasant;
And look, behind you without a sound
The woods have come up and are standing round
In deadly crescent.

That is part of a fascinating dialogue which comes from the play "The Dog Beneath the Skin," some extracts from which are included in the selected book mentioned above.

Mr. Auden, of course, like most innovators, has on occasion gone to ridiculous extremes. He has, like all young men, on occasion written very badly. But at his best, and when he is writing with that bitter flow of feeling which most of us are bound to feel at times when we regard the crazy muddle of a world which we have perforce to face, he is interesting to every reader who possesses any kind of taste for the novelty in literature. Some readers may object that what he writes is not poetry, in the sense that Shelley or Keats or Matthew Arnold is poetry. This may be so; the work of Mr. Auden may as yet be better described as recitative free verse. Yet it does express a mood which is (or has been) common among the men of his generation, and for that reason it will, I think, occupy an interesting place in the poetry of our time, even in the future, when the literary history of these stormy days comes to be written.

S. H.

ACID DROPS

THE day of "national" prayer opened with a thumping lie. The "Daily Telegraph" led the way by saying (issue for September 3) that "for 15 minutes this morning the nation will be united with its Allies in worship." That, we repeat, is simply a lie. Our Allies include China and Russia. Did they join in the worship of the Christian God? Is it true even of this country? Were the British people united in prayer? Millions never troubled about it. They knew that it was a mere show, a palpable folly, the registration of a colossal lie. The one thing we are not united on is religion; the thing we never have been and never will be united on is religion. But lying in connection with religion is so far standardised that no non-religious person is surprised at its manifestation, and no religious person has the courage to tell religious leaders to restrict their statements within the limits of possible truth.

And why do those who are responsible for this ridiculous performance insist in placing the responsibility for it on the King's shoulders? The King cannot order it, and no one who does not believe in churchgoing is likely to go. It is just one more exhibition of humbuggery to drag the King into this absurdity.

If there is any truth in orthodox Christianity we can understand praying to the devil. The Christian holds that he is the origin of evil, and we should do our best to get him on our side. Or why not pray for his conversion? One could really respect the intelligence of the "hard-shell" Christian if he did either of these things. But to grovel before God! Where is the sense in doing this? To ask God, in his goodness, to protect the aged, the young, the sick from bombing, and when that protection is not given, to compliment God on his power and his goodness, must surely be one of the bitterest satires ever devised, or an exhibition of meanness of character that almost defies characterisation. Man can rise to his highest when he defies circumstances, but he surely sinks to his lowest when, seeing the slaughter of myriads of men, women and children and the destruction of the better phases of human effort, he goes on his knees and, in the act of reminding God that he could prevent all this if he would, praises him for his power, his goodness and his mercy. Why blame Hitler and worship a God of this kind?

Meredith said that woman was the last being man would civilise. He was wrong. The last thing man will civilise will be his gods; and they are civilised only when they disappear.

It is announced that an order for 15 minutes' "stop work" was made in factories during the "Day of Prayer." Assuming there are 20,000,000 men and women engaged in war work, this means that there was a loss of work of at least 4,000,000 hours, and this during a war when we are urged to put every possible ounce of energy into our war effort. When men have ceased work to secure what they regarded as a greater measure of justice with regard to pay or conditions of labour, they have been roundly denounced as traitors to the country. What is it when 4,000,000 hours are lost in the foolishly fantastic stupidity of a "Day of Prayer"?

If anyone had promised a £1,000 prize to whoever strung together the greatest amount of nonsense in the fewest words concerning the Day of National Prayer, Cardinal Hinsley would have romped home an easy winner. The Cardinal suggested there should be prayers for a just and lasting peace, the triumph of the right, the consolation of the sorrowing, the health of the sick and wounded, the release of captives, the release of the famine-stricken, the ending of persecution.

Now we call this a superlative display of humbug; and as no honest and sensible human being would be deceived by such a number of hypocritical sentences, we assume that the Cardinal was just trying to humbug God. For there is not one of these things that the Germans, the Japs, the Italians could not and would not endorse. They all want peace, the triumph of the right, comfort for the sorrowing, recovery of the wounded, release of captives, the end of famine; and as to persecution, did anyone ever hear of a government that avowed itself to be persecuting anyone?

Suppose these prayers reach heaven. Cannot one imagine God inquiring of Gabriel, or one of his other attendants, how he was to deal with these prayers, and deciding that the petitions must be set on one side on account of their vague and misleading character? Cardinal Hinsley is what Dickens would have called a very artful cove, but his artfulness is rather too obvious. Whichever side wins the war, Hinsley would be able to claim that the prayers of Roman Catholics had been answered. We might have known what the Cardinal meant if he had asked God to help us give the Germans a thrashing. But that would not fall into line with the aims and policy of the Papacy. The last thing the Vatican desires is to see the war end with Europe, America and other countries on terms of real friendship with Russia; and it is certain that nothing would please the Papacy better than to act as some sort of adviser to the conquering belligerents. A stalemate would suit Rome better than anything, for when the Papacy talks of a desirable victory it means a victory that will place Roman Catholics in power. Rome boasts that it is the same to-day, yesterday and to-morrow. That is something all non-Catholics should bear in mind.

In "The Freethinker" for August 23 we called attention to a remarkable utterance by Miss Dorothy Sayers. It was that "If Jesus was not God, then he was either a liar or lunatic of a very dangerous and objectionable type." Being an Atheist and assuming for the moment that Jesus had actually existed, we took a more charitable and a more humane alternative, and suggested that delusion might explain all that was necessary for the claim of Jesus, if he made it, to be God. We also said that the moral value of the teachings of the New Testament character could be considered quite apart from the question of his being a God, and added that "Love one another," if considered good, would remain good whether Jesus said it or not. We also said:—

"Surely honesty remains honesty, kindness remains kindness, truthfulness remains truthfulness, whether the teacher be a god or a man?"

We added that this was a plain question, and invited Miss Sayers, who has of late played a very active part as a Christian evangelist, to give us a plain answer to a simple question.

Very promptly Miss Sayers responded and sent a reply dated August 26. Owing to the date at which we go to press we were unable to publish the reply until now. But here it is:—

"The question, as you say, is simple; so is the answer. "All human virtues depend for their validity upon the existence and nature of reality—that is, of God. This, of course, independently of our belief. Although, in fact, it is belief that ultimately determines conduct.

"You may decide how far a thing is valuable if it is not valid."

We must first congratulate Miss Sayers on having the courage to say in plain, direct language what men like the present Archbishop of Canterbury is constantly saying, but not so plainly, because they would not have the courage to face the consequences of their statement; and we must conclude from Miss Sayers' statement that the love of a mother for her child, the loyalty of a friend to a friend, the affection and sense of duty that exists between husband and wife, the compunction that—shall we say—some of us feel to tell the truth, and to respect the rights and property of others have no validity in themselves. People would never have learned to value any of these things if God did not exist. More, even granting that these qualities would never have been valued had not God, in the first place, revealed them to mankind, we should never have retained a sense of their value once the belief in God had been discarded. We feel indebted to Miss Sayers for her plain speech, but whether Christian husbands, wives and men and women who do not come within the category of marriage, will agree with her, or feel pleased at being labelled as incapable of honesty and kindness without God, is another question.

Miss Sayers seems to depend upon the words "valid" and "valuable." But a belief is valid when it is soundly based and can be argumentatively justified; and a thing is valuable in view of some end for which it is intended. Thus, a plea is valuable when it is likely to convince. A tool is valuable when it is likely to do a certain work. We have a sneaking suspicion that honesty and truthfulness can justify themselves without a God, and that a tool will do its work, no matter what is the intention of those who wield it. Still, we thank Miss Sayers for so effectively advertising the poor quality of Christian morals. We are glad to say that we know a great many Christians who are really of a much better type than Miss Sayers appears to believe that Christians in general are. The curious thing is that when a Christian is teaching morals he invariably falls back upon arguments that are quite independent of belief in any god whatsoever.

Dr. A. C. Gardiner, writing in the "Baptist Times," says an "encouraging feature in the present situation is the likelihood of new and younger (Church) leaders forthcoming when the war is over." We doubt that very much. All our information and experience goes in the opposite direction. Our actual experience is, of course, very small compared with the vast number of soldiers, sailors and airmen. But from letters, talks with soldiers who call at our offices, as well as information that trickles through the Press, for one who moves in the direction of the Church there are a score that move towards Freethought. Of course, as is to be expected, only a small proportion of those who give up Christianity become active propagandists. But some do, and the reports we get are most encouraging.

We appear to have quite a number of at least casual readers. One of these writes us a lengthy letter explaining that we must take the Bible "symbolically." There may be something in this. The ass, it will be remembered, is often mentioned in the Bible. When the Angel of the Lord wished to halt the Prophet of the Lord, it was the ass that first saw the angel; and the first triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was on the back of an ass—and from asses, from then until to-day, the Churches have derived immense support. We think there should be an image of an ass in every church. It would make the atmosphere congenial to the worshippers and create a greater feeling of security in the minds of the preachers. We got many helpful suggestions from our religious readers. We hope they will send more.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

WE take this opportunity of thanking those who have sent us greetings on our 74th birthday anniversary. So long as our health continues good we have no objection to these anniversaries. There is any amount of work to be done and our greatest pleasure is to do it. Added to that, the present is an occasion when those who will, may strike telling blows against superstition. In this country the Churches never stood lower in the general estimation of the people than they do to-day. The desperate efforts that are being made to preserve the status of the Churches is alone evidence of this. Freethinkers should make the best of their opportunities.

We are pleased to announce that arrangements have been made for a reprinting of the "Bible Handbook." It will be issued as soon as possible. The "Handbook" has always been a steady seller—this will be the ninth edition—and quite evidently meets the needs of large numbers of people. In spite of increased costs of printing, paper and all sorts of labour, it will be published at the price of previous editions—2s. 6d. We are hurrying the printers up with the job.

The "Handbook" is not an examination of the source of the Bible stories, the question of dates, or anything of that kind. It lets the Bible speak for itself by giving the exact words with chapter and verse for everything that is printed. Naturally, Christian preachers have never liked this book. In that respect they behave like a man charged with forging banknotes—he may think a lot of his workmanship, but he has a strong objection to it being exposed for what it is.

But there is one condition on which we would withdraw this book from circulation. That is, that the clergy would admit that the Bible was written in the way all books have been written—with all the marks of the crudeness of the times that gave it birth. We await offers from the clergy.

The "Church Times" remarks that the National Day of Prayer was a "sombre reminder" that the civilised world has been at war for three years. It was also a reminder of how little the Christian God has done to help us win the war, and how much we have gained from our alliance with Russia and China—neither of which bother very much about "God's help."

The Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. will close a very successful open-air season to-day (September 13), when Mr. J. Gordon, of Glasgow, will be the speaker. Not only have audiences been

good, but of greater significance is the increased application for our literature. Successful branch work can usually be traced to keen officials, and in the case of Edinburgh the branch secretary, Mr. F. Smithies, has served the cause loyally and well during the whole of the season. The branch has also been working to secure new readers for "The Freethinker," and with very satisfactory results. There is a new reader round every corner for the oldest Freethought journal in Europe.

From the "Glasgow Evening Citizen":—

A soldier's oath is the basis of an army's discipline. Volunteer or conscript has to stand, and be judged, by its terms. So the form of the oath, varies with the political constitution of the soldier's country. Compare the following:—

"I pledge allegiance to the American Flag, to love and obey the Constitution of the U.S. and, if I must, to lay down my life for the American Flag."

Here is the Soviet Oath:—

"I, a citizen, of the U.S.S.R., entering the ranks of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, do take the oath and solemnly swear to be an honourable, brave, disciplined and watchful fighter, to keep strictly all military and State secrets, to fulfil obediently all military regulations and the orders of my commanders, commissars and chiefs.

"I swear to apply myself conscientiously to acquiring knowledge of military affairs, to guard unsleepingly the military and national possessions, to remain devoted to my last breath to my people, to my Soviet Fatherland and to the Workers' and Peasants' Government.

"I shall ever be ready at the command of the Workers' and Peasants' Government to go forward for the defence of my Fatherland—the U.S.S.R., and as a fighter of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, I swear to defend her with courage, with skill, with dignity and with honour, sparing neither my blood nor my life to achieve victory over the enemy.

"If of malice I betray this my solemn oath, then let me be visited with the strict punishment of Soviet law, general hatred and the contempt of all working people."

And here is the British oath:—

"I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me."

The comparison of these oaths makes a nice study in political evolution. Many readers may feel that the simplicity of the American oath comes nearest to perfection.

Looking over some letters that should either have been answered or destroyed long since, we noted one from a Christian (but, as he explains, not a churchman) asking us why we complain of "Christian intolerance" as though it was peculiar to Christians. The question ought to have been answered earlier, but we have only two hands and, more to the point, our space is very limited. But we will essay an answer now, although it must be brief. First, we are not aware of ever having said that intolerance was peculiar to Christians. We have met with many intolerant persons who were strongly anti-Christian, and we actually knew one personally, some years ago, whose intolerance was so marked where Christianity was concerned that some of his friends were ready to swear that he would not tell the time

by a church clock. Intolerance should be a rare vice instead of it being, as it is, the commonest and the most objectionable of offences.

But we have always held two things. First, that it is in connection with religion that intolerance takes on its widest and bitterest expression. Second, that every established religion more or less regards intolerance as a virtue, when it should be ranked as a vice. It has been a ruling principle in the Christian Church, and in some form or another it rules in the Christian Churches to-day. It is not uncommon to find Christians who will asperse a Freethinker's character, ruin him—if possible—in business, shut him out of public office, and lie concerning him with the unapproachable vigour of a travelling evangelist. He will do all this and persuade himself that he is discharging a public duty.

Note also that with all other vices a man runs a chance of seeing, as in a mirror, his own miserable character and damnable behaviour. But where religion is in question his worst passions, his meanest motives, when dealing with unbelievers, assume the appearance of social virtues. His better nature is choked by his training; his meanness is hidden under plausible motives—he is sustaining morality or upholding his Church or creed; and that gives us the great crime that the Christian Church has committed against the race. It has glorified and moralised one of the vilest offences that society knows.

We think, when we have a little more leisure, we will write at least a pamphlet on what we regard as Christianity's crowning crime.

THE WORLD AND "DEMOCRACY"

(Concluded from page 373)

IF Democracy is a late achievement in the institutional deed of mankind, it corresponds to something in the rational soul of man himself as the one worth while system under which to carry on individual and corporate life. It gives effect to the twin principle of self-ownership and self-direction which distinguishes personal independence from the age-old servile tradition of the race. It implies responsible citizenship—individual participation of all adult members of the State in the shaping of their common destiny. It means the expansion of life from within the body politic and requires related agencies as a mode of formulating and directing a Public Will and Public Opinion. This may function through the Parish and Borough Council to Parliament; the Press, debating club or a talk between Tom, Dick and Harry in a pub over a pot of beer!

To compass this task therefore makes equal demands on the character of the citizen for the proper discharge of its duties and obligations. Capacity for personal initiative with that of co-operation for the public good, to which all sectional interests must, in the long run, be subordinate; which, in return, sustains what, in fairness, covers such interest. Tolerance, probity and honour in private and public finance; impartial dispensation of justice and independence of the Judiciary; adaptability of different parties in Parliament to form and support a stable Administration, which would presumably rest on a majority for the time being as circumstance determines. Reasonable compromise is the lubricating oil of the governing mechanism involved.

Neither can citizens escape general accountability for the quality of the people set to direct these institutions, and the policies they may adopt. If corruption and nepotism creep in, with a corresponding weakening of the State fibre, those who put them there must share the blame. "Inequitable government can support itself only by the aid of a nation correspondingly inequitable in its sentiments and acts. Injustice cannot reign if the community does not furnish a due supply of unjust agents." *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

* Herbert Spencer.

To what extent mankind at large is capable of meeting these demands is a question posed by their very *raison d'être*: that Democracy is a possession to be enjoyed simply under inalienable conditions. The failure of free institutions among peoples recently endowed therewith may be due in part to inexperience in a difficult *métier*. That has to be allowed for. It is another matter when they collapse through exceptional strain in a nation which for years has conducted its affairs on this basis. When well-founded they embody means of resilience to emergency. The case of Italy after the last war, or France during the present turmoil, point to grave ethological defects and fissionary influences at work, disclosed in the stress of adverse circumstance.† Where they have proved successful indicates presence of essential attributes, whatever the causal sequence. How to educe their further expansion is a crucial question.

Implicit in political democracy is the idea of equality of opportunity as a way to all-round well-being. But this is not to be identified, as such, with some particular doctrine, prescription, economic dogma, as the one mode of attaining that end. Nor is it to be linked with any specious ordering of "society." Such summations must be realised by a consensus reached through normal channels of discussion, experiment and agitation. It is thus the negation of every phase and theory of revolutionary violence, "direct action," as a short line of approach to Utopia.

If, in treating of popular government, we have carefully to distinguish between the framework and the content, still more does this apply in its relation to unitarian systems and their special claims. This usually assumes their superior efficiency and organisation to the loose methods of a popular code, and exhibits the role of a dominant party driving a people of disciplined robots along the path they intend them to take. Be they black, brown, yellow or red; be their intents wicked or charitable; be their residual upshot beneficent or the reverse—to associate "democracy" therewith, in any guise, from personal sympathy with the doctrine involved is to "contaminate" its ideal as the sure foundation of all else.

Yet for those who, accepting and meeting its tests, find here the *via media* to betterment, it continues to shine as the lode-star of ascendant Life:—

Nor kind nor coinage buys

Aught above its rate;

Fear, craft and avarice

Cannot rear a State.

Out of dust to build

What is more than dust—

Walls Amphion piled

Phœbus stablish must.

When the Muses nine

With the Virtues meet,

Find to their design

An Atlantic seat,

By green orchard boughs

Fended from the heat,

Where the Statesman ploughs

Furrow for the wheat—

When the Church is social worth,

When the State-house is the hearth,

Then the perfect State is come,

The republican at home.‡

† The position in each case is peculiar. France appears to have headed for disaster before the war, which the crisis precipitated. Through internal dissension, sectional contra public interest, class and doctrinal antagonisms, thereby failing to fulfil the cardinal law of national survival: The State shall not be disintegrated. . . The causes are another concern.

‡ Emerson.

The World War, engaging the whole energies of peoples in a mortal battle for supremacy between hostile polities, strikes different persons in its reactions in diverse modes. To some, the sole satisfaction to be gained from participation in this welter of blood and destruction is, that when peace comes, it must allow for a new world order to appear wherein such things will be impossible of return.

Others, however, find it vain now to speculate on or prescribe for the state of affairs existing when "Cease firing!" shall sound. For them there is one supreme end to fight for at the moment—the preservation of their customary life, their intimate sanctities, country, home and beauty. . . . And that when the day may dawn, even over a stricken world, the symbol of government of the people, by the people, for the people, will float inviolate above its historic sanctuaries—held by Triumphant Valour against the worsted legions of the damned!

AUSTEN VERNEY.

SOMEBODY SLIPPED!

An Important Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Hinsley

MY Lord Archbishop; Your Eminence Cardinal,—I feel it my duty to draw your distinguished attention to the fact that somebody slipped when the great Christian Churches of this country allowed the recent startling revelations to be made concerning young people and religion. The revelations I refer to are those concerned with the interviewing of young people by Registration Panels in various parts of the country.

An outstanding feature of these interviews is the way in which they keep demonstrating the almost complete lack of association with religious organisations and Churches on the part of our adolescents.

For instance, in the densely populated West Riding of Yorkshire only 3 per cent. of the young people interviewed (48,000 of them) claimed association with a Church or religious movement, while in the more rural and thinly populated area of Westmorland only one in seven, or about 14 per cent., claimed any such connection. These two examples alone, effectively covering both industrial and agricultural areas of England, show that the "malady" of non-religiousness has spread from the urban to the rural areas, so that even the parochialism of our country villages has lost its power to compel religious observance among the young people.

Your Anglican Grace is no doubt seriously perturbed, like so many others, by the publication of these figures, but possibly your Roman Catholic Eminence is less perturbed, or pretends to be less perturbed, because it is part of the Roman Catholic policy never to admit losses. But the ostrich can bury its head in the sand with more success than Your Eminence can honestly deny that losses are taking place—for the most significant thing about the figures that have been published is that they explode the myth (believed in even by some Freethinkers) that the Roman Church, at any rate, is more than holding its own.

On the basis of these figures, Your Eminence, the Roman Church can have the full percentage of the young people who claim religious connections, and it is even then going down the river with the rest of the Christian Churches.

As an intelligent man, Your Eminence will see what I mean if you check these figures with your own numerical claims.

Now, reverend gentlemen, the situation is dangerous. No, not from a social standpoint, as you might plead, nor from a moral standpoint. The social and moral well-being of the youngsters is probably more assured in these days of knowledge and enlightenment than in any previous generation. The situation is only dangerous from your standpoint. A shepherd without a flock will soon be out of a job if the man who pays him finds out

the true position. I am sure you will see what I mean. So what can you do about the matter?

You know, Your Reverences, as well as I know, that you cannot hope to recapture the youth of the nation. Your decaying superstition crumbles constantly under the touch of Reason; your savage fables and fairy stories shine but dimly against the brilliance of the sparkling truths of science. Your shepherd's staff, which once wielded power and authority among the people, like a magic wand, is now but a pillar of tradition upon which you may lean a little longer because the British people, and especially their politicians, respect a tradition beyond its usefulness. Your mournful dirges no longer inspire fear in the minds of the ignorant, but a tolerant contempt; your depressing garb no more begets a cringing reverence and veneration, but rather healthy shunning of the creatures who parade it.

Your steepled buildings no longer command the diligent attendance of communing congregations; rather are they "sights" for trippers, or "subjects" for historians and archaeologists. Your Holy Book is no longer the fountain head of family life, adorning every household sideboard, brass-bound and imposing, with its genealogical tree; rather is it some cheap, black-cloth edition—"a present from Auntie Fanny"—hiding away in a dusty shelf of other unread books, or reposing with the rubbish in the attic.

And, Your Eminence, for your particular benefit—going, too, are the crucifixes, the virgin statuettes, and the rest of the Romanistic junk that once besmirched the walls of many British homes. Some remain, I admit—a tribute to the super-salesmanship of Holy Shop. But I know your sales are dropping, because I see inside the people's homes with a keener eye than even the keenest of your priests. The pretty, secular ornaments and pictures of, our sixpenny stores, with their cleaner, healthier and more artistic appeal, have struck a solar-plexus blow to your holy fetishes. All the Black Beetles in Christendom are powerless against the joint influences of commercial art, modern plastics and the new "home making" journalism for women. Slowly your grip is yielding. Once there was a fetish shop near every church, but they are putting up their shutters fast, and to find one now one has to search around.

And so we could go on, Your Reverences. 'There is a Christian hymn that sings of "change and decay all around." Fancy a hymn containing so profound a scientific truth! And the very Church itself is in the remorseless grip of that natural law. Except that the decay is considerably greater than the change. What, then, can Your Grace and Your Eminence do about it? I ask again.

Perhaps you have seen, as I have seen, that it is no longer a question of securing a "come-back" for Christianity in point of popular support. That can never be, and you know it. But you might be able to stage an effort to bluff the people. Most people will agree that Christianity is good—for the other fellow—and they don't mind bluff so long as it is on the other fellow's behalf. Most men believe they are just good enough (individually) not to need Christianity; but each man believes the other fellow needs something of the kind. So bluff is your game if you want to survive.

In face of the truth you cannot survive. Not even tradition, not even gutless politicians, can save you if the facts are allowed to be known, and to show, as they are showing now, that you are shepherds without flocks, and therefore useless. May I respectfully suggest, then, that you start bluffing now.

Get into touch with the Minister of National Service. You have plenty of influence with politicians, if not with the people. Request him to order that these infernal Youth Committees shall cease to ask whether young people are connected with religious organisations. Persuade him to instruct the committees that the really important question is "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?"

The psychological effect is better all round. The young people of 16 to 18, being asked a question like that, must nearly all answer in the affirmative, because their recent schooling taught them about Jesus Christ, and they haven't yet begun to think about it. At that age they naturally take Jesus Christ for granted, just as they take for granted Boadicea, King Arthur, Raleigh, Drake, Nelson and the rest—because they have been authoritatively told that these characters existed. Between 16 and 18 is almost a foolproof age to ask such a question with a view to getting the desired reply, especially if the question, be asked in a leading manner. "Of course, Master So-and-so, you believe in Jesus Christ?" But you understand that method better than I do, Your Reverences, so I will not labour the point.

But go to it right away, for God's sake. Think how it will strengthen and justify your positions when our newspapers can scream in the headlines that an overwhelming majority of Britain's youth believes in Jesus Christ. A Christian nation, after all! What a main home news lead that would be! And you, Your Grace, and you, Your Eminence, together with 50,000 Black Beetles of Britain, could rejoice in the Lord, for would not your apparent flock extend throughout the length and breadth of the land, and your status be enhanced by hundreds of thousands of youthful "believers"? Would it not be the New Jerusalem, in England's green and pleasant land?

It would indeed—but for the mocking of your intellectual consciences, and but for the fact that children of 16 to 18 will soon grow up, to repudiate your hollow sham.

F. J. CORINA.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

ABOUT four years ago an infant girl suffered the treble disasters of losing both its parents, inheriting congenital venereal disease and falling into the hands of a Catholic Rescue Society. Unable to find any Catholic family willing to undertake the responsibility of caring for the innocent mite, on whom the Deity had conferred the just rewards of its parents' sins, an offer was accepted from a man of the writer's acquaintance. A nominal Protestant and a great lover of children, this kind-hearted working man undertook not only to bring up the child as his own, but to make himself responsible for its treatment in hospital for the disease which from the time of birth burned in its veins, and which, thanks to medical science, is now curable when treated in its early stages. Owing to the nature of the disease, it was necessary from the outset for the child to use only its own special crockery and linen, which my friend provided. Every two or three weeks for many months it had to be taken to a London hospital for spinal injections, causing subsequent pain and sleeplessness, over which its foster-father watched and cared through many weary nights.

After many months of ceaseless care and conscientious attention to medical instruction, a final blood test showed the child to be completely cured; and it is not surprising that by this time the foster-father had become completely and warmly attached to it. That, however, counted for nothing with the benevolent executive of the Rescue Society, who, though refusing to have anything to do with it in disease, now saw the chance of losing another innocent victim for early impregnation with its doctrines, where the beneficent infusions of curative chemistry had left off.

Ruthlessly, and in spite of the most fervent appeals on the part of the foster-father, the child was taken from him and sent to a Catholic institution in the country 100 miles away, there to be forcibly "saved" from the danger of eternal damnation at the hands of Protestant guardians.

A few months ago the gallant foster-father, now doing war work, felt an irresistible desire to see his beloved protege again. Collecting some sweets and chocolates with some difficulty, he travelled at no small cost to the institution in which the child was an inmate.

He succeeded in interviewing the "Reverent" Mother through the gap in 'a partly-opened door, and that was all. On learning his mission this heartless creature literally slammed it in his face.

R. STURGE-WHITING.

INTERCESSION

Call on God, yea, call upon Him!
Seek and ask and ye shall find—
Tears and prayers all unavailing
With a God, deaf, dumb and blind!

Intercession and Thanksgiving
Through unending nights and days,
Gods are thirsty creatures living
On loud pæans of ceaseless praise!

Shell-protected, God-directed,
Nazi bomber takes his aim—
Through the steeple, on the people—
Praising God's most glorious name!

Praise, applaud Him, loudly laud Him,
'Neath his banner bravely led;
Loud thanksgiving from the living—
Silence from the "Glorious Dead"!

Praise Him! Praise Him! He can "take it,"
Have no fear upon that score!
"Use a trowel"! You can stake it—
He will "take it," then some more!

Tragic waste! Vain, vain obsession!
Supplicating wails of woe!
Stand erect and face aggression
On your feet—your knees won't do!

Banish fear and stand defiant—
Gods are stiff for scorn and scoff!
Steadfast stand and self-reliant
Tell these Gods where they get off!

—A. HANSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

ELIZABETH AND HERESY

SIR,—Mr. Archibald Robertson, in "The Freethinker" for August 23, seems to have understated Elizabeth's irrigation of her infant Church with heretic blood. His great namesake, Mr. J. M. Robertson, tells us ("History of Freethought to the French Revolution," chap. 2, p. 536) that in 1575, in addition to the two Dutch anti-Trinitarians, ten Dutch anabaptists were burned, for whom Foxe the martyrologist vainly appealed to the Queen to appoint any punishment short of death, or even that of hanging, rather than the horrible death of burning.

In 1579, Matthew Hamond, ploughwright, was burned at Norwich, and there also, in 1583, John Lewes. Both denied the divinity of Christ. In 1583 also, Elias Thacker and John Coping were hanged at Bury St. Edmunds for circulating books by one Robert Browne against the Book of Common Prayer. Truly, the fox changes his coat but not his character.—Prayers, etc.,

H. ORMEROD.

WAR AND THE PEOPLE

SIR,—In your issue of August 23 Mr. R. H. Rosetti says: "The people do not make wars. The affairs of nations, including foreign relations, are handled by Governments." I think that is a very questionable assertion. Very few wars take place because governments want them. There is always some force pushing on the government. What is that force?

Neville Chamberlain certainly did not want a war, and I doubt if any member of his Government did. For this he has been

abused ever since; and who are the people that have abused him? Practically all have been popular leaders of some kind. He was strongly supported by the leading capitalist organs, "The Times," the "Observer" and the "Daily Mail."

Ten years ago we had trouble with Japan over Manchuria. The war party of Japan was ready to fight us then, and well it might be, for the President of the United States was an isolationist, and no other country even pretended to be willing to take military action. Two things kept us out of war. There were frantic appeals from Australia and New Zealand, which knew that they, and not we, would have to bear the brunt of the war.

The people do not desire the hardships and sufferings of war, but they always imagine that they will have a walk-over. The German people believed Ribbentrop when he told them that we should never fight. Numbers of people in this country thought Hitler was only bluffing and, in any case, said they, the German people would not follow him, and the war would be over in six months.

One of the great weaknesses of our age is the respect which otherwise intellectual men have for the people. No respect could possibly be less deserved. I fear posterity will get much amusement out of the simple faith of men of our time who imagine that they have sceptical minds, and have ceased to worship idols.—Yours, etc.,

R. B. KERR.

RELIGION IN THE ARMY

Sir,—Your interesting article on the subject of church parades will bring back memories of 1914-18 to many of your readers, and there will be very few, I am sure, who will not be wholeheartedly with you in your condemnation of the system.

Fortunately, the average British sailor, soldier and airman has a keen sense of humour, and can turn even an imposition into a subject for banter and ridicule.

Like Figaro, he makes haste to laugh, for fear that he should weep!

Obviously, any attempt to affect actual compulsion in regard to a matter which has nothing whatever to do with a man's duty to his country, and to the superior officers under whom he serves, is an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the subject.

And what is, perhaps, worse, it makes for hypocrisy. I venture to think that many of your readers will agree that quite a number of padres in the last war instinctively felt that this was so. They shook off the trammels of their cloth and, on the whole, made every effort to carry out their duties in such a manner that the average Tommy would not feel that he was being treated as a nitwit or a guttersnipe.—Yours, etc.,

P. V. MOSS.

RELIGIOUS BROADCASTS

Sir,—In the B.B.C. "Listener" Research Newsletter No. 18 information was given re the listening public's attitude towards dance bands, symphony concerts, poetry broadcasts and broadcast religious services.

They were classified as follow:—

	Dance Bands	Symphony Concerts	Poetry	Religious Service
	%	%	%	%
Are very enthusiastic...	28	10	6	17
Quite like	25	13	13	24
Are indifferent	22	18	23	30
Rather dislike	14	19	24	18
Hate	11	40	34	11
	100	100	100	100

It would appear that 59 per cent. simply don't want religious broadcasts. I had an experience a while back at Keighley Victoria Hospital, where I had gone one Sunday afternoon to visit one of my workmen who was seriously ill. At about 2-50 that afternoon a religious broadcast came on. It was immediately met with calls from all over the ward of "Shut that off; we don't want it."

I asked my friend whether that was typical of the patients' attitude to religious broadcasts, and he said "Yes," and that occurred regularly.—Yours, etc.,

"ALERT."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held August 30, 1942

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

Also present, Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Seibert, Ebury, Bailey, Griffiths, Miss Woolstone and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Edinburgh, Kingston, West London and North London Branches, and the Parent Society.

Lecture arrangements at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stoke, Blackburn, and reports from Mrs. Whitefield; Messrs. Brighton, Clayton and Shortt were dealt with.

Progress in the Chapman case (India) and the Society's interest in the will of the late Walter Payne, of Taunton, were announced.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Sunday, September 27, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12-0 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, C. H. DESCH, D.Sc., F.R.S., Science and Humanism.

COUNTRY

Outdoor

Blackburn N.S.S. (Blackburn Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

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

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

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

Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-0, Mr. J. GORDON (Glasgow), a Lecture.

Enfield, Lanes. (near Library), Friday, 7-15, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

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

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

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

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