

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXII.—No. 43

Sunday, October 25, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	437
The Greek Penetration of the Persian East—T. F. Palmer	439
The Living and the Dead—C. S. ...	440
The British Booster of Christianity—E. Watson	441
Acid Drops ...	441
To Correspondents ...	443
Sugar Plums ...	443
Richard Jeffries and "The Story of My Heart"— "Quondam"	444
Fishing—R. H. Rosetti ...	445
"Democracy or Superstition?"—A. S. Knox...	445
War Books—G. H. Taylor...	446
Sunday Lecture Notices, Etc.	447

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

God, Morals and Mr. Lewis

WE dealt last week with the handling of miracles by Mr. C. S. Lewis. This gentleman claims to have been an Atheist till he had reached the mature age of 14. We have only his word for it, for there is not the slightest trace of it in what he says nowadays. It was perhaps hard on Mr. Lewis to introduce him to Freethinkers in the guise of a sermon, for the pulpit has a deadening effect on most. The only man I ever met who could be as futile outside the pulpit as he was inside was Winnington Ingram, ex-Bishop of London. Nothing seems capable of modifying his infinite foolishness. So this week I ask my readers to forget Mr. Lewis the preacher and to consider him as a philosopher. It is true he is a B.B.C. philosopher, and that, to use a learned term is *Sui Generis*, which is Latin for something that stands by itself. So we will consider Mr. Lewis as representing a philosopher of morals and his thesis that there is no justification for a "moral sense" without assuming there is a God in the background. Now, this kind of plea—it is adopted by Archbishop Temple—is a comparatively new one with Christian preachers. It is true that early Christianity had something to say about morals, but not much, and what it did say was not new in either theory or practice. With all that had been said by Greek and Roman and Egyptian writers it would have been absurd for Christians to claim originality in ethics. Certain it is that the pagan world was not struck by either the behaviour or the teaching of Christians where morality was concerned. Greek and Roman writers had regarded morals as a product of social life, and it never dawned upon these uninspired writers that to behave decently one had to believe in a God. I am afraid that Marcus Aurelius and Socrates would have looked upon the ethical philosophy of Mr. Lewis and Dr. Temple with something approaching contempt.

Moreover, the historic teaching of the Christian Churches runs dead against the position of Mr. Lewis. For this was that no matter how *bad* you were, faith in Jesus would save

you, but no matter how *good* you are, you could not be saved without faith in Jesus. That is the only meaning of the story of the thieves on the cross. It was in my own time the general theory of Christian preachers, it is still the belief of multitudes of Christians, it is the war-cry of the Salvation Army, and indeed has never been formally denounced by any of the great Christian churches.

But of late years Christian preachers have scented danger. The "wicked Atheist" was no longer profitable propaganda—there were too many Atheists. The Atheist was well represented in all sections of society. The "wicked Atheist" stunt was played out. The fires of hell were losing their heat, in spite of the stoking done by the Catholic Church. Some new plan had to be adopted.

A way out was, or is being, found. If Molière's character could speak prose for the major part of his life, why may man not be religious without being conscious of it? After all, people may eat poison without being aware of it, they may unconsciously assume a God without knowing it? So it is suggested that an Atheist, without knowing it, assumes a God, since he could not be reliably decent if he did not. This position qualifies Mr. Lewis for the B.B.C. platform, where he will receive the same measure of protection against criticism and the same praise for sheer "blather" that is given to a pulpit.

The series of broadcasts by Mr. Lewis covers 62 pages, with an average of about three fallacies to the page, and is priced at 2s. 6d. Perhaps we ought to qualify this statement that there are three fallacies to each page by explaining that the same fallacy is repeated time after time. Many of these were used in the Deist controversy of the 18th century when Christian leaders were attacking the arguments now used by Mr. Lewis. I think, in view of the repetitions, I need only summarise his position—or perhaps I ought to say the position prepared by such men as Dr. Temple. There is, to begin with, a glorious confusion of "law" as used by science, which is merely descriptive of what occurs, "law" as decreed by governing bodies, which involves obedience without a necessary regard to their ethical quality, and moral "law," which builds upon actions classified as "good." Mr. Lewis changes from one to the other as it suits the need of the moment. He is impressed by the fact that man will use such terms as "It is not fair," and, above all, that they do recognise the categories of "Right" and "Wrong." (Mr. Lewis has a great faith in the power of capital letters.) Above all, he is convinced that when a man says he doesn't believe in a real "Right and Wrong," if he then appeals to a "standard" of ethics he is contradicting himself. It never occurs to Mr. Lewis that the recognition of a "standard" in ethics contains nothing more occult than is involved in a standard weight or a standard measurement. What Mr. Lewis, with his worship for words, says cannot exist without a belief in a God does actually exist in the animal world, for in gregarious groups an animal gets into serious

trouble if he breaks the "law" of the herd. Very timidly I suggest to Mr. Lewis that he should stop writing and talking on ethics until he has studied a little what has been done in late years in the study of animal evolution as a prelude to human behaviour. But one ought to inform him that if he does so he will no longer be welcome to the B.B.C. pulpit. Still, the literature on both animal and human morality is very large and worth consulting.

Of course, Mr. Lewis may retort that granting the natural growth of a standard—minus capital letters—yet man would not or could not live up to it without belief in a God. But I do not think he would say this because he says of the moral law that it is something that "God has put into our Minds" (Broadcast Talks, p. 30) much as one might pour water into a jar, one assumes. The figure is striking, even staggering. But if God did shoot this moral standard into us it is a pity that he was not a better marksman, or that when putting it into our minds He didn't make it stronger than it is with some folk. And a moralising influence is more needed with Godites than it is with Atheists. If Mr. Lewis doubts this, I advise him to look up prison statistics.

Mr. Lewis is emphatic. "Morality in man," he says, "is hopeless if the universe is not governed by absolute goodness." I confess to being without the shadow of an idea as to what is meant by "absolute goodness," but if he means a God who controls things, then I must remind Mr. Lewis that there is a world war on. And when we think on this there seems no reason for complaining of the actions of our political Ministers and the blunders of our Generals. They might well retort: "Look at God. We're doing as well as He does, and we don't take so long thinking about it."

A Simple Lesson

It is useless following Mr. Lewis further in his talk on morals. It might have been written by a smart curate towards the end of the 18th century, and even then he would have had to deal with Archdeacon Paley. Its endless repetition of the same idea becomes tiresome, for saying the same things over and over again is not convincing, it is just boring. In the whole of his long-drawn-out kindergarten essay on morals Mr. Lewis has but one mention of evolution. In this he notices Bernard Shaw's foolish excursion into the operations of a "life-force," and mentions Emergent Evolution, but again without understanding it, since if the principle of emergence is admitted it knocks the bottom out of his belief in the necessity for God. And there is, of course, not the slightest evidence of an acquaintance with, or a recognition of, the scientific researches of the past 50 years concerning the evolution of morals. Perhaps if Mr. Lewis had continued an Atheist until he was, say, 18, instead of getting saved at 14, he might have given us something better than a parsonic talk to a kindergarten class.

So, greatly daring, I will reverse the situation by placing Mr. Lewis in the elementary class on life and mount the rostrum of the teacher. The address would run on something like the following lines:—

Children, to-day we are going to consider the nature of morality. You will all be familiar with such words as right and wrong. You also know that actions are either good or bad, right or wrong. You know it is wrong to tell a lie, it is wrong to steal, wrong to be mean in actions

towards your companions, wrong to be brutal to either your fellows or even to animals. And each of these "wrongs," with many others—there is a very lengthy list—have their accompanying "right." It is right to be truthful, right to be kind, right to be just, to be honest, etc.*

Many of you may wonder why we should be honest or truthful? Why should we not only observe certain rules of conduct, but feel—most of us—very small if we break these rules? Why have we this standard of right and wrong, this feeling of obligation towards others?

Once upon a time people explained our knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong as due to the action of Gods who came on earth for the purpose of educating man. They taught man exactly as I am trying to instruct you, and when the instruction had been given, these Gods went back whence they came. Then, as man got to understand things better, he gave up the idea of being visited by teacher Gods, and, so to speak, boiled them all down to one God, who did not come down to earth, but implanted "a sense of right and wrong" in our minds. Now we will try another answer to the question, which is simple, and it can be verified.

First of all, you all know that you are members of a group. And with all group life, beginning with the animal world and on to humans, there must be mutual action and reaction in such a manner that each serves the other more or less efficiently. If a group is to exist—no matter their quality—there must be a certain degree of mutual trustworthiness and loyalty; in a word, there must be a general sense of the duty of action in certain directions. It does not matter what the character or aim is, if men are to live together they must work together. And they must trust each other up to a point. If these conditions are not fulfilled, then the group falls to pieces. And it does not, as I have said, matter so far as this principle of co-operation is concerned whether it is a gang of thieves or of honest men and women.

It must also be pointed out, as a very wise man, Socrates, who lived about 2,500 years ago said, if an action or a thing be good, then it must be good for something. It cannot be good for nothing, or if it is good for nothing, for neither use nor ornament—which is also a kind of use—then it is of no consequence at all. Things or actions are good or bad for what they do. There is no other meaning for the word "good" or "bad." Good and bad are the consequences of either actions or thoughts, there is no other significance in the words.

But, my dear young students, please keep your mind on the fact that man is a social animal, and this means that from the moment that he is able to take notice he is under tuition. Even a cat will train its kitten to hunt, and the way a kitten plays with a moving object has reference to the way in which members of the cat tribe earn their daily food.

But the members of the human tribe have a much better training to give every newcomer. From infancy the child finds itself—ordered by inadequate parents or guided by good ones—in the midst of a society where what is considered the right road is so laid down, so hammered out, that the newcomer cannot leave it altogether, and generally has no desire to do so. This process of social education has been going on ever since man became a distinct species, and even before that time. There is an evolution of ideas and feelings just as there is an evolution

of structures. Leave either phase out and you will never understand the meaning of "right" and "wrong." You will only acquire a many-sided misunderstanding of a very simple fact.

Right and wrong, the whole framework and contents of what we call morality gives us no insoluble puzzle that can only be set aside by believing in a God. That is to seek what another very great man—Spinoza—called the asylum of the ignorant. What is called a "moral sense" (quite a misleading term since to most it implies a kind of independent *thing* that has been miraculously planted in us) is not something that man is born with, it is a state of mind and feeling that is created and more or less stereotyped by the social group into which he is born.

Above all, my dear pupils, avoid thinking in capital letters. They nearly always mislead, and they very often result in a dangerous delusion.

I do not, of course, offer this simple explanation to Mr. Lewis. That might be considered impertinent. I merely explain how one who was an Atheist before he was 14 and has remained one during what is now getting to be a lengthy life, looks at morals without capital letters.

Next week I will take Mr. Lewis in his final phase as a champion of God. I cannot promise any radical improvement, but being an Atheist I must be fair. I cannot saddle God with responsibility for Mr. Lewis.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE GREEK PENETRATION OF THE PERSIAN EAST

IN his highly suggestive and informative two-volume history, "Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity" (Cambridge University Press), Mr. F. Legge presents a fascinating picture of the generalship and far-seeing statesmanship of Alexander the Great. This completely contravenes the view of an earlier Hellenist to the effect that the campaigns of the Macedonian conqueror were comparatively unimportant, for Legge considers these exploits as in the greatest degree beneficent to civilisation and progress.

At Alexander's advent, Persia was the predominant world power. Its territory extended uninterruptedly from the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean. Apart from the tiny Greek City States, the trading Republic of Carthage and the Italian towns then emerging, the Great King of Persia and his satraps dominated the then known world.

This vast Empire, however, lacked cohesion, as its score or more provinces each possessed a considerable share of self-government. Every province was ruled by a satrap who was permitted to maintain military as well as naval forces under his direct control. Still, these subordinate rulers were selected by the Great King himself, and were liable to dismissal for proved malfeasance. Also, a Royal Commissioner was appointed to inspect the public accounts, to give heed to complaints and certify that everything was in order.

In general, the subject races of this immense domain were mildly governed, and the ancient Persians were by no means the crude barbarians their Greek caricaturists have painted. It seems fair to conclude with Legge that: "Those authors are justified who say that the government of the Persian Empire was to the humbler classes of Asiatics a great improvement upon any that had preceded it, and that the rule of the Great King never awoke the fierce resentment in its subjects aroused by the tyranny of the Semitic Assyrians, or of the Chaldeans who were, in great part, of Mongoloid blood." Had it proved permanent, Persian ascendancy would perhaps have rendered fruitful services to civilisation. But the fates decreed Iran's downfall, and its

huge conglomeration was destined to undergo rapid disintegration when attacked by the well-trained, small, but efficient Greek army.

This invading force, under the command of a leader who was little more than a boy, shattered the unwieldy Persian Empire with startling celerity. When we recall the primitive means of locomotion of ancient times, it appears almost incredible that Alexander contrived "to transport a force of about 100,000, comprising infantry, cavalry and artillery, over the 3,000 miles which separate Macedonia from Karachi, at the same time preserving such perfect communication with his base that he never seems to have remained for long without letters from Europe, while the stream of recruits that reached him from the same source must have been continuous and unchecked. Such a feat which, with all the aid which steam and electricity can give us, would still tax to the utmost the powers of our greatest modern generals, becomes almost miraculous when we think that the greater part of his line of communications must have lain through recently subjugated lands, and that his own advance led him into countless unmapped regions known only to him by the half-fabulous tales of his enemies."

Still, what our author considers the most amazing fact of all is that Alexander not only intermixed the populations of the cities through which he passed with infiltrations of his own soldiers, but that these blendings infused a Greek culture that has persisted to the present day. Alexandria, Candahar, Cabul, Merv and other leading centres that he established in the East still bear witness to the great Macedonian's prescience. Verily, when one recalls his triumphs in the field, the heartfelt wish arises that such another military genius would emerge in the present world conflict to carry the Allied cause to a brilliantly victorious conclusion.

Speculation concerning man's history, had Alexander experienced the allotted span of life, is as fascinating as futile. Despite the enterprising spirit and ability of his generals, the early death of Alexander brought the expansion of Grecian influence to an end. Yet, as Legge suggests, had the conqueror lived it seems almost certain that Carthage and the Italian City communities would have been as completely subjugated as the many Oriental countries that the Greeks invaded.

The partition of the former Persian State among Alexander's generals soon succeeded their leader's death, and five Greek kings were reigning where one had ruled before. Greek mercenaries were in constant demand in all the newly-founded States. Greek merchants penetrated everywhere in the East, while the spoils of the opulent and now overthrown Persian Empire enabled privileged Greeks to revel in luxury. A probably unprecedented activity became the order of the day. As Legge intimates: "Asia awoke suddenly from her sleep, and acquired a veneer of foreign manners in hardly longer time than it has taken Japan in our own days to adopt European armaments, trading and dress." Centuries later, Greek plays were popular among the Parthians, and even the statues of Buddha in the remote East betrayed pronounced influences of Greek artistry. Moreover, these stirring changes profoundly affected the development of sacred cults and played an important part in the subsequent rise and later triumph of Christianity.

Apparently, for the first time in man's history, the more advanced peoples were enabled to communicate in a common speech. Greek—not that of Euripides or Homer, but a language eminently serviceable for daily intercourse, as also an excellent medium for the transmission of religious concepts—was available. Thus, provided with a means of communication everywhere understood, the conquered peoples eagerly made their masters acquainted with the details of their native faiths. The Jewish Scriptures and the Sacred Books of the Chaldeans and Egyptians were translated into Greek as well as those of other cults. This seems to have led to the genesis of the study of comparative religion. Legge notes that: "Writers like Diodorus Siculus and

Plutarch are still our chief guides for the religions of the earliest populated parts of the ancient world; but how could these compilers have handed down to us the traditions they have preserved save for writers like Berossus, Manetho and Philo of Byblus, who themselves wrote in Greek? Plutarch tells us that when he spent a year in Rome during the reign of Trajan, he did not find it necessary to learn Latin, his native tongue being apparently understood by everybody. One may wonder how much of the sayings and doings of the Founder of Christianity would have come down to us had they not been first recorded in the *lingua franca* of the whole East."

Supercilious Christians with their supposedly superior beliefs are apt to scornfully survey every form of polytheistic faith, even when three deities compose their own sacred Trinity. Yet, departmental deities were universal in antiquity. The Israelites of old, erroneously regarded as monotheistic, acknowledged the existence of other gods than theirs and went whoring after them on many occasions. Thus, as Legge points out, "the Syrians thought that Yahveh of Israel was a mountain god who could not help his people when fighting in the plains, and the Philistines believed that the ark in which he lived would bring prosperity or disaster to the place in which he happened to be for the time being." So polytheistic were ancient cults that the few philosophers who cherished the idea of one overruling Power usually confined their opinions to themselves.

The brief if remarkably successful rulership of Alexander proved a powerful buttress for the monarchical system of government. All his successors in his distributed dominions reigned as kings. The Roman Republic in its turn became an Empire and for 2,000 years the monarchical principle reigned supreme throughout the civilised world. Alexander, however, was not contented with earthly honours and, probably for the purpose of making his various subjects more obedient, and to inspire veneration for his benevolent despotism, he was anxious for elevation to divine majesty. Sacred rulers had long reigned in Egypt and, so long as the civil and ecclesiastical worked in harmony, all usually went well with the privileged classes.

It is thought that the deification of the living sovereign introduced a novel practice to the European communities. Nevertheless, the Greeks soon recovered from their first surprise and accorded Alexander divine attributes. Athens and other City States, Sparta among them, bowed to his divine decrees, and the ruler thereby strengthened both his temporal and spiritual authority. But, as Dr. Hogarth intimates, Alexander never instituted any personal cult, and he can scarcely have regarded his divinity very solemnly as he permitted its expediency to be openly discussed in his presence at a convivial gathering.

Alexander's successors, however, used this political device much more systematically. "Ptolemy and Arsinoe, without any pretence of divine paternity, were proclaimed 'Saviour Gods' to their Greek as well as for their Egyptian subjects, quite apart from any identification of themselves with Horus or any other native deity." Presumably, the more enlightened Greeks smiled in secret. Still, a semi-divinity, at least on ceremonial occasions, even now hedges the few kings and queens who survive among us.

T. F. PALMER.

"No child under the age of fifteen should receive instruction in subjects which may possibly be the vehicle of serious error, such as philosophy, religion, or any other branch of knowledge where it is necessary to take large views, because wrong notions imbibed early can seldom be rooted out; and of all the intellectual faculties, judgment is the last to arrive at maturity. . . . The faculty of judgment, which cannot come into play without mature experience, should be left to itself; and care should be taken not to anticipate its action by inculcating prejudice, which will paralyse it for ever."—A. SCHOPENHAUER. (From the essay "On Education," translated by T. B. Saunders. 1891.)

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

(The following is taken from the New York "Truthseeker." In view of the present talk by Dr. Temple and others of the ethical value of Christianity, the following may be taken as a sample from bulk. No other active influence does so much to outrage intellectual and ethical decency as the Christian religion when it has unchecked expression. The following restrained account of this outrage is written by her son. We need only add that similar occurrences are not unknown in this country.)

ON learning by telephone of the death of my mother I left New York for Oklahoma to attend the funeral services. My brothers met me in Oklahoma City, whence we travelled by auto to Shawnee and Tecumseh. Being asked what arrangements had been made for the funeral, they advised that a Methodist preacher would conduct the services.

On our arriving at the home, Judge Sherman (aged 85) confirmed the report that a clergyman would speak at the funeral service. On my asking if I might be permitted to say a few words, he replied: "Yes, that was your mother's wish."

The service was held at the home, August 5. The Rev. Osman conducted the usual religious funeral service, with Bible reading, prayers and the orthodox assertions about the soul, God and immortality. He spoke for about 25 minutes. After a song by a young woman, I took nearly half an hour to state the truth appropriate to the occasion. The hearers were informed that Laura Sherman had long since ceased to believe in the Bible, the Church, God and Immortality.

The discussion—for such it was rather than a "service"—was in effect a debate between a clergyman and an Atheist on the primary dogmas of the Christian religion, with the preacher quoting from the Bible and the funeral ritual, and the unbeliever quoting from "Atheist Poetry," especially Swinburne's lines in praise of mortality and the thoughts of Omar and Lucretius; and appealing to Common Sense (at a funeral!) and Reason.

As the Rev. Osman had spoken of the need of the sustaining power of faith in God, without which, so he held, life is meaningless and purposeless, I refuted his contentions. When I referred to the much publicised story that "there are no Atheists in foxholes," the Rev. Osman nodded his head, indicating that he had heard it and, doubtless, accepted it as true. The arguments given in "The Liver Tract" were repeated for the benefit of the audience. The notion that kindness, honesty and other virtues require belief in future rewards and punishment was denounced as immoral. Laura Sherman, it was said, was honest and kind, not for expected consequences after death, but for present pleasure. It pleased her so to act.

The rebuttal of this debate was held an hour later at the graveside, near the town of Maud, about 20 miles distant, before a small audience consisting mostly of old time friends living in that community.

It had been agreed or understood, at least by me, that at the grave there would be no service other than some remarks by a lawyer friend of my mother and Judge Sherman. But after his remarks, which were saturated with piety, the Rev. Osman delivered what was obviously intended to be the concluding part of the service. When he had finished speaking, the coffin would have begun to descend had no one interrupted.

At funerals the undertaker is a sort of chairman. Arising at once and walking over to him, I asked the undertaker to be permitted to speak. He assented. If he had not, I would have spoken anyway. I was determined that this common outrage over the defenceless body of an Atheist should not be perpetrated with the implied consent of my silence.

My statements were few and short, and to the point. I said that my purpose in speaking was to remove possible false impressions; that Laura Sherman, my mother, whose body lies in the

coffin, was not a Christian but was an Atheist; that she had given full moral support and as liberal financial support as her means permitted for the propagation of Atheism by the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and by the "Truthseeker"; and that she had rejected the Bible as Revelation and did not believe in God, Soul and Immortality.

Some in the audience, including relatives, were shocked. The experience may help to wake them up. One person said: "It would have been better if he had stayed in New York." Closer relatives, themselves "indifferentists," took the position (which is not hard to understand): "It may be all right for you to talk that way in New York, but not here. We live here—you don't."

Such a funeral service is obviously unseemly. Whose behaviour that of those who give false impressions or who tell the truth about the dead, is unseemly, I leave to the judgment of every reasonable and honest person.

C. S.

THE BRITISH BOOSTER OF CHRISTIANITY

DIRECTLY after his return from England, Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, in a broadcast to the people of the U.S.A. and relayed in Britain, reiterated the familiar lie that we are fighting this war for "the Christian way of living." This is a vague statement, but it is fair to assume that he means "living according to Christ's teaching." If that is so, I take it that Lord Halifax is prepared to be judged by his reaction to this: "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor"; "If a man smite thee on one cheek turn to him the other"; "Forgive to seventy times seven."

The answer, of course, would be Shaw's famous comment: "Not b—likely!"

Also we have it on the authority of a notorious religious professional, W. R. Inge, that "the principles of the Sermon on the Mount would mean sudden death to civilised society" (*The Times*, August 2, 1937); so, according to Lord Halifax, we are anxious to commit suicide.

At the present time the colour question is a matter of great controversy in both America and Britain. The rulers of both countries make great play of Christian principles, the chief of which is "Do unto others as you would be done by."

See how it works.

There are a lot of coloured men from the U.S.A. in this country who have come to fight for freedom. They are the descendants of the only people in America who did not go there voluntarily. (Incidentally, British Christians made fortunes out of the slave trade.) Now, they are the only ones denied equal rights of citizenship.

These coloured soldiers are segregated from the white troops by their own officers and are not allowed in the same places of entertainment. Only this week a Bishop advised British girls not to become acquainted with any coloured soldiers or to go walks with them. What brotherly love!

In case it should be thought that the colour bar is chiefly confined to the States, here is a copy of a letter from the "Toronto Globe and Mail" (Canadian):—

"NO BEER FOR COLORED MAN

"To the Editor of the 'Globe and Mail.'

"A recent judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada demands more than passing notice. A colored citizen was refused service of an order of beer in the York Tavern, Montreal. He sued, and was awarded 25 dollars nominal damages in the City Court. On appeal the Quebec Court reversed this decision, one Judge dissenting. Plaintiff then appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled in favour of the tavern keeper (again one Judge dissenting, setting forth his reasons in an able and

convincing argument). But neither wisdom nor justice prevailed. Justice, credited with being blind to distinctions of wealth, color or creed, was in this case certainly not color blind.

"Carried to its logical conclusion this judgment authorises any public purveyor in Canada to refuse food, drink, lodging or any other service to any non-Caucasian. Thus are three-fourths of the citizens of the British Empire insulted by the highest tribunal in Canada—Defender of Democracy! Champion of Christian Principles! Boaster of its British Justice! Exponent of Exemplary Government!

"This decision means more than mere denial of the legal right of a humble citizen to quench his thirst in a tavern licensed by a Government of which he is a part.

"With this decision as a precedent colored citizens may legally be denied even the meanest of privileges in a land in whose defence they have shed their blood in the past, and for which some of them are at this moment wearing the King's uniform.

"If the Constitution of Canada can be construed to legalise discrimination against one small group of its citizens it is obvious that no racial minority in Canada is secure in the enjoyment of supposedly guaranteed rights and privileges. (Why, then, do we war against Hitler?) The fact that refusal to service on the grounds of color is the exception rather than the rule in Canada, and the belief up till now that such refusal meant breaking a law which could be invoked at will, gave hope that Canada was gradually progressing toward the ideal of democracy. "Surely the attention of our Government should be directed to this decision of its appointees, which sets back the hand of progress, which I am satisfied, is deplored by a vast majority of Canadians of all classes and which breeds contempt for the Supreme Court of Canada.

North Buxton, Ontario.

CANADIAN."

A more damning indictment of Lord Halifax and all he stands for I can't imagine.

E. WATSON.

ACID DROPS

THE B.B.C., which never sticks at anything where the supposed interests of religion are concerned, during the Brains Trust performance the other evening, produced a question alleged to have been sent in. The question was what books were most read in this country, and the comic man of the circus, Commander Campbell, was equal to the occasion. The most read book he said was, after the Bible—Ye Gods!—"The Pilgrim's Progress."

If reading a book means reading all of it, then the Bible is quite obviously the least read book in the country. Try it on people, and by observation, and note the result. As for the other—"The Pilgrim's Progress"—one of the most selfish books we know of—we converted ourself into an inquiry agency. We took the opportunity of quite casually asking people with whom we made contact—not friends—and among these comparative or total strangers, in three days we had asked the question of no less than forty-eight people. The score ran thus—they were all adults: only seven had read it, but sixteen remembered the book because it was read to them when they were children or their teachers had told them about it. It would be interesting if some of our readers would take up the canvass. Of course, the question must be introduced casually. We also tried another method, how many homes had a copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress." We were able to ask this question of twenty-three only. We struck two who had the book in the house. It belonged either to their mother or the "old man"—father. For humbug the B.B.C. need fear no competitors.

There is one characteristic form of Christian publicity to which the different Christian bodies—all of them—have been true. That is disliking each other. The earliest pictures we get of Christians is that of quarrelsome, troublesome sects. They have always maintained that reputation. When they combined it was to

make trouble for others or to steal unfair advantages over others. The present campaign of the Churches to collar the schools is an example of that, and dangerous, because it is backed up by the Conservative Party, and both are manoeuvring for security after the war. It is a dangerous situation, particularly as so many people have been bought up by well-paid jobs, and their silence—at least—has been bought. We shall win the war, we may very easily lose the peace.

So we are pleased to find the "Church Times" disagreeing with the World's Evangelical Alliance because of what it calls "tit-bits of antedeluvian Protestant prejudice. The "C.T." seems to prefer High Church and Roman Catholic prejudice. The Protestant gang says that "the Papal system is subversive of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel of Christ." That is not more enlightening than the "Church Times" when it brings its charge against the Alliance, because there never has been agreement as to (a) what Jesus did teach, and (b) when they agreed upon what Jesus said, the next difficulty was just what did he mean by it. The Gospel of Christ, the truth of the Bible, Man's eternal salvation, the worship of the true God, and Christian truth—all these and others have been used, and Christians are quarrelling as desperately as ever concerning their meaning.

General Franco—the unavowed ally of Italy and Germany—says that "Spain had a glorious Empire until Liberals and Freemasons destroyed the structure of the country." Franco is a little out in his dates. Spain—or the larger part of it—was great and glorious for about 500 years, but it was when it was under the control of the civilised Mohammedans. Then they were conquered by the comparatively uncivilised Christians, and the art and science and philosophy which flourished under Mohammedan rule flickered and almost died out with Christian dominance, and Spain became a synonym for retrogression, religious brutality and the hatred of new ideas.

And to-day Spain, having been conquered by the help of Italy and Germany, with Britain looking on undisturbed, save by the body of men who, in spite of threats from our own Government, led by that dead, but unburied, man, Stanley Baldwin, fought on the side of the better Spain—is a land where tyranny and starvation and brutal punishments have now re-established themselves. What we are paying cannot be calculated until this war is at an end.

We are pleased to see some of the Roman Catholic leaders repudiating the outburst of anti-Semitism that is in full force where Hitlerism rules, although we note that anti-Semitism runs its course in Italy, a country in which the Pope has influence. But it will not do to forget that but for the Christian Church—which includes the Roman Catholic Church—anti-Semitism would have been dead in Europe. Whatever other causes may be cited for this, it was the Christian Churches that kept anti-Semitism alive, and if this most stupid of all forms of group hatred has been utilised by non-Christians, or anti-Christians, it will not do to forget the part played by the Christian Churches in this most filthy of the many forms persecutions assume. The public has a disastrously short memory, or it would recall the Dreyfus case, which was backed throughout by Roman Catholic influences.

Twelve women chaplains, it is announced, have been appointed to look after the spiritual welfare of the girls who are attached to the forces. We wonder what the male chaplains will say to this innovation, and will the women be paid at the same rates as the male chaplains? And will they amuse the world by the same yarns that everyone in the Services know to be liberally dashed with what, on the secular level, to be largely just simple, everyday lies? If ever the B.B.C. rises to the level of letting the truth be told about the padres, we will give them a list of men who are in the Services and which may show the public how they stand in the eyes of most men in the Forces. The bad ones are, of course, disliked, the good ones are taken mostly as a joke.

"The Londoner," in the "Standard" for 14th October says he hears complaints of the way in which "religion, politics and Russia are barred" by the B.B.C. We know what "Londoner" means, and appreciate even the timidity with which it is announced. But the grounds of the complaint—and if given opportunities we would provide thousands of reasoned complaints within a given time—is not quite as stated. For religion and Russia and politics are not barred. We have too much religion, quite enough politics and a deal of Russian war news.

The real complaint is that all that is given of religion and politics is quite one-sided, and the interesting side of Russian life that is given veils the boycotting of Russia with regard to its general view of life, citizenship, and problems that we shall have to solve when the war is over unless we lose any real benefit which might compensate for the frightful loss of life that has gone on. As to the historic sketches given by the chaplains, they are often nothing but farcical lies, told on the level of an infant class. With religion, the other side is never heard. There has never been permitted a drastic criticism of religious beliefs ever since the B.B.C. gave its first broadcast. And therefore the B.B.C. religious broadcasts are more than nonsensical or unjust—the policy converts them into a living lie.

Many years ago we protested against this policy of the B.B.C., and invited prominent men to make known their dislike to this policy. A mere handful responded, and they ceased to appear before the microphone. But that is not enough. What is needed is a public declaration from these men that they are opposed to this semi-Fascist policy. Will they rise to it? Or are the fees and the publicity too much for them to resist, and so they become silent associates to what is an outrage in a country which is proclaiming itself as fighting a war for human freedom?

"Philosopher," who writes regularly in "The People," comments in the issue for October 11 on the attitude of the "National Education Association" with regard to the lack of religious instruction in schools. The N.E.A. suggests large numbers grow up ignorant of religion. Readers will remember that this was the double-barrelled lie with which the Churches began their crusade. "Philosopher" remarks on this that "little more was heard of this allegation when it was shown that delinquency was more prevalent among children from denominational schools than among children attending Council schools."

What we have to remember is that this lie was fathered by the heads of the Church and repeated in a large number of newspapers. There never was any basis for it in fact, but it was good enough to give our Conservative Board of Education and the Churches a good start. As Ingersoll said, a lie gets round a country while truth is putting its boots on, and nothing was ever conceived with so much care as this religious lie. That is what the Archbishops and others counted on. They must have known, or could have known, that from the points of view of education and character the Council schools, other things equal, can beat the denominational schools hands down.

By the way, the full title of the National Society is "for instruction in the religion of the Church of England." To keep that in front of the public would give the game away.

Archbishop Amigo (R.C.) gave a Southwark gathering a valuable piece of information. He said that some people were of opinion that we were going to win this war by getting into uniform. "That seems to be the belief of Churchill and Roosevelt and Stalin." But they are mistaken, for Amigo tells the world that it was wrong. "A great deal may be done by prayer, and unless we pray we are going to be beaten. Therefore I want you to pray very earnestly." O, artful Amigo. If we won the war it would be because we have prayed well. If we lose, then it is because we haven't prayed properly. Yet Russia appears to have done well without prayer, and we feel sure that nothing would delight the Catholic Church more than the crumbling of Russia.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. C. CLAYTON DOVE writes: In my "Thoughts on the Myth Theory" there is a passage which reads: "The Mythicists draw attention to the fact that out of the 27 books comprising the New Testament, the Four Gospels and I. Timothy . . . are the only ones to mention the connection of Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate." Here the word "Acts" should be inserted between "Gospels and I. Timothy."

G. L. COLBROOK.—Pleased to welcome you as a member of the N.S.S. We are afraid there are many parts in this country that, religiously at least, earn the title of "Darkest England."

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.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

WE do not care to imitate the policy of the Roman Catholic and other religious papers in advertising the fact that certain people who happen to come before the public in a creditable manner are Catholics, or Methodists, or belong to some other religious sect. But it is very curious that with the praise that has been given to Edouard Heriot, the French political leader, not one of them has mentioned that he was a confirmed Atheist and one who took an active part in Freethought propaganda. Heriot was a prominent member of the International Freethought organisation. He was actually President of Honour in the International Freethought Congress that took place in London a few years ago. It was this Conference which was so violently slandered by Cardinal Hinsley and other well-known Christians, who did what they could to induce the Government to prohibit the Congress, and which Sir Samuel Hoare, then a member of the Government, regretted to his "Dear Ramsay"—now in custody under the Defence of the Realm regulations—that he had no power to forbid the gathering. Heriot would have attended that Congress had it not been that the situation demanded his presence in Paris. Had Heriot and others who were present at that Congress had their way we should have been saved from Munich, the betrayal of Czechoslovakia and probably the world war.

Again we ran out with our issue of "The Freethinker." Unfortunately we are not able to overprint, and there are no returns. But we do our best to satisfy all demands. Still, it is a healthy, if annoying, state of affairs. The demand for books and pamphlets is also brisk. No wonder the Churches are concluding that if they do not hang together they are likely to hang separately.

The President of the governing body of the Church of Wales has his eye to business. It has been decided to form a Youth Association, and the President was in no doubt as to how it was to be run. Any youth may be admitted, but when it came to control the warning was given that the governing committee must be properly formed. The control of this body must be in the hands of members of the committee alone. Because—we quote from the "Western Mail" for October 3:—

"If you allow any committee to consist partly of nominees chosen by others you lose control of the committee." That is unusually honest for a clerical leader, but it does help us to understand what leading churchmen have in mind when they talk about democracy.

To-day (October 25) Mr. J. V. Shortt lectures for the Blackburn N.S.S., in the Public Halls, Northgate, on "God Help Us—By an Atheist." The meeting commences at 6-15 p.m. There are sufficient Freethinkers in Blackburn to guarantee success, and if each will bring an orthodox friend an overflow meeting should result.

The Glasgow Branch N.S.S. had an encouraging week-end. The comfortable Cosmo Cinema was filled with an appreciative audience, and it was evident that Mr. Rosetti's lecture had been closely followed. There was a continuous flow of questions which had to end when the contract time for the hall was reached. On the Saturday evening a happy party gathered at 25, Hillfoot Street, where a liberal tea-table received the attention it invited, after which speeches and a general entertainment rounded off a very enjoyable evening. Much hard and careful work had been put in by the local officials, to whom much of the credit for the good meeting in the Cosmo Cinema is due.

A debate has been arranged by the North Staffordshire Branch N.S.S. between Mr. Stephen W. Goodwin and Mr. J. T. Brighton, which will take place in the Guild Hall, Cheadle, North Staffordshire, to-day (October 25), at 7-45 p.m. The subject of debate is not to hand in time for insertion here, but we feel confident that the Freethought point of view will be well presented and defended. Debates are generally attractive items to the thinking part of the public and we have no doubt this one will follow the rule.

In answer to a question in the House of Commons, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the Atlantic Charter fell within the basic principles of Christianity. That will cheer up China and Russia, to say nothing of millions of individuals in other Allied countries. Some of these basic principles are to turn one cheek when the other is smitten, to render obedience to the powers that be, to take no thought for the morrow, etc., etc. We imagine that Hitler and Goering will regret that these basic principles were not in operation in 1940. At any rate, our airmen, soldiers and sailors have certainly carried them out—in their own way.

We hear a great deal nowadays from the clergy of all denominations concerning the importance of Christianity to the make-up of a good citizen. We beg to put a counter-question to any or all of those who stress that. This is: Is there anything that a citizen can do as a Christian that is useful or good that he cannot do just as well as a non-Christian? We have asked a similar question to this for years, but have never yet received an answer. We wonder whether we shall be more fortunate now. Either Archbishop Temple or the Dean of St. Paul's might have a try. But we do not think they will. The open platform is not to the taste of either.

The "Church Times" notes that "Religious Brains Trust" meetings among the Forces are being attended to with interest by men and women. We are not surprised, but our reports are that they were mainly religious on the B.B.C. pattern—that is, that questions that tend to discount the value of religion are discouraged and often set aside. We suggest to Freethinking members of the Forces that they should protest actively and continuously against this practice, and to insist on their criticism being heard. It might even lead to the B.B.C. conducting its religious discussions with some regard for intellectual honesty.

We have several new publications on the way which will be on sale as soon as possible. One now ready is Ingersoll's "What is Religion?" This is the last public lecture given by Ingersoll, and shows him at his best—smooth, witty and deadly in its accuracy. When there are so many whose faith in Christianity has been shaken or destroyed we can think of no better pamphlet for circulation. The price is twopenny, by post one penny extra. There should be a good market for this among the Forces. It would be rather interesting to note the reaction if men in the Army, Navy and Air Force made it a point to present a copy to their chaplain. The poor fellows should not be kept quite in the dark as to what is going on.

RICHARD JEFFRIES AND "THE STORY OF MY HEART"

AMONG the autobiographies in the English language, that of Richard Jeffries occupies a unique position. There is none other that is quite like it in style, and there are few others, if any, that so grip a reader, and from the perusal of which one gains so much, and yet so keenly feels the need for more. Of autobiographical details, in the usual sense of the expression, there are none. A reader who goes there for details of Jeffries' ancestry, parentage, birth or education will come away without having gained information on any of these points. He will feel that he has been in touch with a mind of no ordinary calibre, but for purely biographical details he will have to seek elsewhere. In truth the book is more of a confession than an autobiography; the confession of a strong man's yearnings, impulses and desires both satisfied and unsatisfied. Excluding the usual associations of the word, it is the history of a soul, and, as such, as informing a history as our literature contains.

Yet while not coming within the limits of an ordinary biography, on higher grounds "The Story of My Heart" is the truest of all life histories. It is in sober truth the story of a life, a record of that which constitutes the noblest and the only imperishable part of it. Man, after all, lives best and longest in what he thinks. His work, be it in sculpture, or painting, or invention, or literature, is only valuable and enduring so far as it enshrines thought; and, in supplying us with a record of his life's thinking, Richard Jeffries has left the world one of those records that may be read ages hence with as great a freshness as now, and at a time when other kinds of biographies will be dead and forgotten.

Because "The Story of My Heart" is out of the usual run of biographies, because it contains little or nothing that tells us of the authors' ancestry or education, for this it is necessary to know something of the writer in order properly to appreciate it. To begin with, the heredity of Richard Jeffries is plainly responsible for the overmastering love of country life that is one of the most characteristic features of his work. Born in 1848 of a long line of Wiltshire yeomen, and with a sensitiveness of nature that in his case had unhappily a pathologic foundation, the life of a city was almost wholly distasteful to him. True, it is not every countryman, who manifests the conscious joy in field life manifested by Jeffries, and there are very few indeed who possess his powers of close and minute observation, but it is only a man who has been bred in the country who can feel its life as he felt it. The delight of the city man in green fields, rivers, woods and hills is of an altogether different kind from the feeling of the one who has sprung from the soil, and has learned to study it as sustainer, teacher and friend.

In the case of Richard Jeffries this hereditary attachment to the soil was rendered the stronger by his love of solitude and self-communion, which again rested somewhat upon a foundation of physical weakness. He was tall and thin, and at the age of 17 it was feared that he would go into a decline. An American writer, whose unpublished work on Jeffries is quoted by Mr. H. S. Salt, remarks that Jeffries' "portrait indicates the scrofulous diathesis with its singularly impressionable temperament, its rapturous enjoyment of a delight, and its intense susceptibility to a pang. In such a one the physical life is largely pathological; it is not to be estimated by the ordinary standard of the robust man." The truth of this description is well borne out by his writings.

Physical weakness with Jeffries seemed only to accentuate his desire for physical perfection and his love for physical beauty. Few have written a more impassioned protest against that religious and philosophical asceticism which sees in the neglect of bodily perfection and "worldly" delights the sign

of a lofty intellect and pure character. It is not a mere sensualist, but a man almost overwhelmed with the actual and potential beauty of nature who writes in the "Story":—

"I believe with all my heart in the body and in the flesh, and believe that it should be increased and made more beautiful by every means. I believe—I do more than think—I believe it to be a sacred duty, incumbent upon everyone, man and women, to add to and encourage their physical life by exercise, and in every manner. A sacred duty each towards himself, and each towards the whole of the human race. . . . I believe all manner of asceticism to be the vilest blasphemy—blasphemy towards the whole of the human race. I believe in the flesh and the body, which is worthy of worship—to see a perfect human body unveiled causes a sense of worship. The ascetics are the only persons who are impure. Increase of physical beauty is attended by increase of soul beauty. The soul is the higher even by gazing on beauty. Let me be fleshly perfect."

All things combined to drive Jeffries back upon himself for companionship, and the compensating feature for others is the acquired habit of close, persistent observation, which, while it never gave him what could be properly called the scientific faculty, enabled him to describe country life with a vividness few have equalled. It was enough for him "to lie on the sward in the shadow of green boughs; to listen to the songs of summer; to drink in the sunlight, the air, the flowers, the sky, the beauty of all." He would spend hours in trees for the purpose of keeping a better watch upon animals, or approach a sheet of water with the proverbial stealthiness of a Red Indian in order to determine how far fishes could detect the approach of man from the vibration of the earth beneath his feet. The mere feel of the firm earth beneath him gave rise to an exaltation not altogether unlike the emotions described by religious mystics. Air, light and colour were the things he constantly craved for, and his writings bristle with praise of these things. As when he is describing, in "Wood Magic," the wind talking to Bevis:—

"Bevis, my love, if you want to know all about the sun, and the stars, and everything, make haste and come to me, and I will tell you, dear. In the morning, dear, get up as quick as you can, and drink me as I come down from the hill. . . . Do not listen, dear, for one moment to the stuff and rubbish they tell you down there in the houses where they will not let me come. If they say the earth is not beautiful, tell them they do not speak the truth. But it is not their fault, for they have never seen it; and, as they have never drank me, their eyes are closed and their ears shut up tight. But every evening, dear, before you get into bed, do you go to your window, and lift the curtain and look up at the sky, and I shall be somewhere about, or else I shall be quiet, in order that there may be no clouds, so that you may see the stars. In the morning, as I said before, rush out and drink me up."

Or in this passage, where he is describing his impressions of light after visiting the reading-room of the British Museum:—

"It is the nature of light to beat and throb; it has a pulse and undulation like the swing of the sea. Under the trees in the woodlands it vibrates and lives; on the hills there is a resonance. It beats against every leaf, and throws back, and beats again; it is animated with the motion of the grass blades; you can feel it ceaselessly streaming in your face. It is renewed and fresh every moment, and never twice do you see the same ray. Stayed and checked by the dome and book-built walls, the beams lose their elasticity, and the ripple ceases in the motionless pool. The eyes, responding, forget to turn quickly, and only partially see. Deeper thought and inspiration quit the heart, for

they can only exist where the light vibrates and communicates its tone to the soul. If any imagine they shall find thought in many books, certainly they will be disappointed. Thought dwells by the stream and sea, by the hill and in the woodland, in the sunlight and free wind, where the wild dove haunts. Walls and roof shut it off as they shut off the undulations of light."

And the practical import of these two passages is further emphasised in his advice concerning the education of children:—

"All of you with little children . . . take them into the country among green grass and yellow wheat, among trees, by hills and streams, if you wish their highest education—that of the heart and soul—to be accomplished. Therein they shall find a secret—a knowledge not to be written, not to be found in books. They shall know the sun and the wind, the running water, and the breast of the broad earth. Under the green spray, among the hazel boughs where the nightingale sings, they shall find a secret, a feeling, a sense that fills the heart with an emotion never to be forgotten. They will forget the books—they will never forget the grassy fields. If you wish your children to think deep things, to know the holiest emotions, take them to the woods and hills, and give them the freedom of the meadows."

One is tempted to linger longer with the nature-writings of Jeffries—above all, with his essay on "The Pageant of Summer," of which Sir Walter Besant says he knows "nothing in the English language finer," but which almost defies quotation because of its sustained beauty, as well as to deal with his career as reporter, novelist and the final discovery of himself as one of England's greatest prose poets of nature. Space, as well as the scope of this essay, forbids, and we must get on to what is, in many senses, his most remarkable work, "The Story of My Heart."

"QUONDAM."

(To be continued)

FISHING

I WAS never a keen fisherman—maybe because I was never a successful one. In my juvenile days, with boots and stockings removed, my brother and I, like Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, did cast our net—handkerchief—into the River Roding and dredged many miraculous draughts of fishes—tiddlers. The dignity of my later teens demanded an angling outfit, and from that time my catches never reached more than an occasional indolent starfish, until two years ago when my hook, baited by an experienced old salt, tempted a number of Devonshire mackerel with the result that the consumption of mackerel in the village increased by that number. It was then I began to pick up some of the technique of baiting, and the idea of the right bait for the right fish set me thinking in a certain direction. There were other fish besides those found in water—human fish in large numbers floating about on the dry land waiting to be caught, providing the right bait was used.

At one stage of pre-natal life the human embryo has gill clefts and a single-chamber heart like fishes, and if those features are modified at a later stage before birth, the fish-like habit of taking the proper bait is carried right through life by a large number of people. Thus, successful angling may be had from numerous dry land ponds well stocked with human fish. Very profitable sport can be found in the fortune-telling pond, providing the right bait is used. A gipsy get-up, a coloured skin or a crystal globe is usually selected by the old hands. An angler of small physique will obtain good catches from the racing tipster fishing grounds if his hook is baited with a jockey's outfit. A hefty 6ft. angler will succeed better with a smart suit, well-groomed hair and a careless twiddling of £1 notes. Fishing in the cure-all ailments pond needs careful baiting. A shabby suit, Cockney accent and a declaration that "the medical perfeshun" fear his

concoction, and that he could "hempey the 'orsepittles in a week," would never secure a bite. In that pond a prosperous appearance is essential, although it may be only skin deep—as it most likely is—and it must be supported by a running patter in which such words as oxygen, carbon, sodium chloride and alkali are well patronised.

By far the best fishing ground of all is that of religion, and fortunate indeed are those who acquire fishing rights there. Every theological college should display a figure of Jesus coupled with the inscription, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 19). For in the pond of religion human fish are trained to be hooked. With Jesus and immortality as ground bait, and the holy line baited with a reversed collar, flat hat and Oxford accent, very profitable catches are assured; and, oh boy! what sport: flat fish, white fish, jellyfish and squirts swarming around the bait, pushing and jostling each other to take the bite, stirring up the muddy bottom, and feeling so very superior over the blatant little sceptic fish, swimming calmly in clean water, fending for themselves, and giving the warning that the clerical bait on the ecclesiastic hook is the first step to the frying pan.

The young, inexperienced angler in the curate stage feels his mission is to win the little sceptic fishes' attention, but all the old hands sense danger and agree that extermination of the sceptic fish is the only safeguard for their sport, which will continue to thrive so long as the mud can be kept circulating in their patch. There is, however, the haunting fear that the faithful fish may get wise, their number diminish, the decreased fin activity permit the mud to settle, and all except the most stupid fish see through the game. Still, there is Westminster, and the holy anglers have their eyes on hon. Members, and hon. Members, even those who can see through the game, are too honourable to refuse their help for the perpetuation of the religious pond and of the fishing rights of the clerical anglers.

R. H. ROSETTI.

"DEMOCRACY OR SUPERSTITION?"

THE genesis of education may be traced back to the Babylonians and Egyptians.

Among them knowledge was always regarded as the exclusive monopoly of the priestly and ruling classes, for its strict conservatism was recognised as an individual factor in the retention of social and religious prestige.

While men are ignorant they rarely question the actions of their rulers, and are usually content to bow down before the existing authority automatically, and allow their credulity to be exploited and imposed upon.

This practice of constituting knowledge the exclusive prerogative of the "initiated"—for if we may judge by the records that have come down to us, the mysteries of the ancients were but faintly disguised lessons in the natural and moral sciences—continued until the days of the Greeks.

Even then it was not totally abandoned, for the religious mysteries of Eleusis still played an important part in the national life and were as exclusive as the earlier mysteries of Isis.

In general, however, the Greeks were only too eager to disseminate knowledge, and all who cared to could listen to the teachings of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and other great sages of antiquity. Had it not been for the decline of the Greek civilisation in the second century B.C., there can be no telling how far progress and science could have advanced.

Even as it was the Greeks formulated systems of social and moral philosophy which have guided the speculations of succeeding generations; created masterpieces of architecture and sculpture which remain the supreme artistic accomplishment of the Universe; and in the realm of exact science foreshadowed the theories of evolution and the atomic constitution of matter.

These, together with a mighty literature and a spirit of inquiry are our heritage from the Greeks.

They were the first peoples among whom education was extended to the masses, in their desire for the acquisition and spread of knowledge, and are more akin to the modern world than any other peoples of the classical or Middle Ages.

Throughout the Dark Ages the torch of knowledge was kept burning in two centres—Constantinople and Seville.

While the rest of Europe was plunged in darkness and fettered by the demands of the Roman Church the records of civilisation were retained in these two cities.

In Constantinople the works of Aristotle, Socrates and Plato existed in Greek manuscript; in Seville, Granada and other Moorish cities in Spain, they were preserved in Arabic.

The classical spirit and the desire for individual emancipation began to assert themselves during the 14th and early 15th centuries. Centres of learning sprang up in Florence and Ferrara and soon the tide of the Renaissance had engulfed the whole of Northern Italy and was sweeping its way across Central and Western Europe.

When the flood tide of the Renaissance burst upon our own country it found that Universities had already been established, but that they gave little or no encouragement to classical or original thought. England had never been as completely subject to the papal authority as Spain or Italy, and to this we must attribute the great educational advancement which followed the invention of movable-type printing by Gutenberg about 1450.

The invention of printing was frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authority, as it foreshadowed the cheapness of the vehicle that was to spread knowledge and shatter the fetters which kept the mind in bondage; the bigoted authority feared the intellectual development more so than the spread of smallpox or bubonic plague!

The determined attempt to suppress the progress of the printing-press by ecclesiasticism is too well known to require any added emphasis from me.

By sheer irony of circumstance, a German invention (printing) would appear to be the greatest force for Democracy extant! It is only from the intellectual progress of the people that we can hope for the emancipation of the masses, and the destruction of superstition is the first essential to that ideal.

In Scotland every progressive innovation, whether it be the opening of cinemas on Sundays, or golf on Sundays, or anything in the nature of uplifting the gloom of piety, has been opposed by rigid Presbyterianism or superstitious Romanism; but genius cannot be suppressed even when opposed by those who pray, prattle, protest and preach about "sacredness," "sanctity," "sacrifice," "sacraments," "humility," "humbleness," "hell," "heaven" and—Humbug!

This clique of belly-crawling nonentities must be ruthlessly pushed to the one side, as they constitute the "enemy within the gate" to intellectual progress—and "Democracy"!

To quote a recent poem by the Scots poet, Joe Corrie —

"SALVAGE"

"I asked myself . . . where's the wisdom gone
That the gods of our race have given?
Enough pure gold from the well of Truth,
To make this earth into heaven.
Have they been too wise or too obscure
When they have had their say;
Or have our minds been fashioned
From the poorest or basest of clay?
From the poorest or basest of clay, by God!
For what did I see this morn?
But the works of Plato and Bernard Shaw,
Battered and battered and torn,
Lying mixed up in a salvage pile
Of nauseating smell,

To make a case for a cartridge
That would blow some poor devil to—HELL!"

This poem is likely to be dismissed by the average "Christian" as "inspired by the devil," but then if they raise the status of the devil to that of God, and grant him letters patent for inspiration, it simply condemns their whole creedism as the diabolical imposition of superstition, and the cowardice of sheer mediocrity!

A. S. KNOX.

WAR BOOKS

"Guide to the New World." (H. G. Wells; 1941, Gollancz.)

This is published as "a handbook of constructive world revolution," Wells favouring a World United States freed from the conditions making for national antagonisms and establishing a "fundamental world law of freedom and security."

"Ending Hitler and Company ends nothing. The conditions that evoked Hitlerism will fester on to produce new types of gangster adventure. The fundamental thing is the Revolution and not the war." The immediate job in hand, he says, is to win the war against Hitlerism, and to this end we should befriend the German people and pave the way for their revolt against Nazism. More particularly we should aim at reducing the "air terror," and have, finally, a world-wide federal control of the air.

His comments on Sir Samuel Hoare are one of the best things in the book. "Manifestly this man has never had an idea in his head except reaction; he is as helpful in the business of reconstructing the world as a stampeding pony." "It is appalling that this blinkered, pleasant, gossipy, gullible creature, after being Air Minister, Secretary for India, Foreign Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Home Secretary and Lord Privy Seal, should have been installed at last in Madrid," "spending your money and mine in some wily and dishonourable wangling with the traitor Franco," drawing £5,800 for "expenses" as well as a salary. "And what sort of post-war scoundrelism we are committed to as the price of Franco's propitiation, only the Foreign Office knows. These seeds will germinate later."

In the role of prophet Wells is less effective, speaking of "Hitler's ebbing and dispersed military resources," and looking (January, 1941) to the near prospect of the British Fleet "cleaning up the Mediterranean, and Italy may have shaken off the waning virility of Mussolini and be out of the war" before any spring offensive. He thought "the German air offensive is petering out and incapable of a recovery," the same applying, with reservations, to U-boats.

One can hardly excuse him from the charge of wishful thinking. "In 1914 the Hohenzollern army was the best in the world. Behind that screaming little defective in Berlin there is nothing of the sort." "Even the jumble of ill-equipped levies which the Allies sent to Norway instead of an army, in the hands of any more competent leadership than the absurd Ironside's, could have held that country. No real German army ever appeared there. Hitler won Norway with a few hundred second-rate aeroplanes and a few score Quislings. It was funk, unpreparedness and hesitation on our side that lost Trondhjem." In France it was the same with the incompetent French generals, "radio voices around and behind them, messenger boys on motor-cycles who told them to surrender. No real army pursued them. Whole towns surrendered to half a dozen German cyclists." The so-called German military strength is a phantom, and he doubts even its ability to "march through the Balkans" or North Africa. "And its raw, Jerry-built discipline is wilting under a creeping realisation that the Blitzkrieg is spent and the war is coming home to roost."

Perhaps "H. G." had better stick to long-range prophecy, where he cannot be refuted by events!

"An Atlas History of the Second Great War." (Horra bin; 1940-42 in successive volumes, unfinished; Nelson and Sons.) To those who keep a private diary of the war these books will be most helpful for comparison and correction; and in this respect I have already benefited from the first five volumes. Each volume is small, well printed and produced, a little reading matter on the right and the relevant map on the left. There is no propaganda, no opinion, only impersonal fact. It is, therefore, not history in the usual sense, being devoid of "atmosphere"; it is a straight chronology; and the author, a mathematician, excels in producing charts, statistics and his own maps. Perhaps it is not quite fair to say it is confined to a recital of events. Before any campaign is detailed there are introductory notes and maps explaining military or naval "significance" and purposes. These volumes will appear at intervals and their sale should be assured. I have read war literature to the extent of 100 productions or so, and to me they are unique. The serial form of the narrative means that one campaign (e.g. the Eastern Front) cannot always be carried out without sacrificing chronology, but the author has struck a happy compromise in the manner of the best historians, between a devotion to cross-section history, and to tracing out one chain of events.

"Ireland-Atlantic Gateway." (Phelan; 1941, Bodley Head.)

Let the old Anglo-Irish hatchet be buried is the message, for we are faced now with this grim fact: East of Calais—Death; west of Calais—Hope. There is no real "neutrality," says this enlightened Irishman; it is a misnomer. And he instances the case of Denmark (whose behaviour, may I point out to the pacifists, in passing, was exactly that of non-resistance, resulting in subjection and transport of Danes to Germany for what amounts to slave-labour; slave-labour which can only be ended by the victory of those who are resisting—the British and their Allies. Consequently the non-resisters have now to look to the resisters to free them from their bonds).

Of his fellow-Irish, Phelan asks: "Whom are you neutral against?" "If the British lose the war there will be no Ireland."

"Tipperary survives because Portsmouth is there. America will survive because Buncrana and Cobh are there. Britain will survive because America is there. We are all in the bloody basket together. The only real objections come from those who get no profit out of that particular basket."

"All Gaul is Divided." (Letters from Occupied France, 1941; Gollancz.)

We are told the division is between the "realists" who think they might as well knuckle under to the Nazis, and the "sentimentalists," all Anglophile, and typified by the woman who said she hadn't seen a German because she kept her eyes down when they were near, and she never wanted to see one. We get the idea that the sentimentalists are impractical. It would seem, moreover, that the Nazis temper their brutality in order not to arouse too much awkward antipathy, but they have made it clear that should they ever be forced to withdraw, they will pillage and violate to their utmost as they retire. On several occasions we are told the Germans are all right *quand même* (by themselves). The German soldier off duty who can find the time to stoop down and titillate a puppy (one incident from the letters) certainly can't be 100 per cent. beast.

The French peasant loves his pig, now marked off for food by Nazi order. Extract from a remark by a peasant: "I have been down to inscribe Lucius and it worries me. I promised my son and his wife a piece of him. I promised my daughter and her husband a piece of him. That makes three families already in that pig. If the whole German army gets in, too, where are we?"

G. H. TAYLOR.

WANTED

"Elements of Social Science," by a Doctor of Medicine. Box N.20, c/o "The Freethinker," 2-3, Farnival Street, London, E.C.4.

CORRESPONDENCE

PROGRESS AND THE PEOPLE

SIR,—I am staggered to learn from Mr. Kerr that I am an "apostle of popular thought." In the course of thirty years' advocacy, the popularity of my opinions has somehow escaped my notice. For the rest, I am unable to discern any connection between Mr. Kerr's present arguments and the original subject of discussion, viz., the relative responsibility of governments and peoples for wars. He has shifted his ground, and now drags in the "King Charles's head" of eugenics and family allowances. As I have never attacked birth control (I am in favour of it, but do not regard it as a panacea) and have never taken sides on family allowances, I feel no obligation to discuss them now.

Nothing in Mr. Kerr's letter affects the truth of the proposition asserted by Mr. Rosetti and myself, namely, that wars are made by governments, not by peoples; nor of the further proposition asserted by me, namely, that if we wish to convert people to a doctrine, the profession of contempt for the people is a bad way to begin.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

THE COMMUNIT

SIR,—Mr. John Darker's review of "The Road to Total War" is a strange article to appear in "The Freethinker." It makes me wonder once again whether even "Freethinkers" are really free thinkers always.

Mr. John Darker wants to mass-feed us in Communits of 100 to 500 persons to save labour, fuel and power! Why stop at feeding? Why not include mass-bathing to save towels, soap and hot water? I am sure the proposal would have the warm approval of Mr. Montagu Norman's financial hierarchy (who would probably be exempt from the scheme). It is absolutely pitiful to find "The Freethinker" helping to establish a British Servile State.—Yours, etc.,

DAN GRIFFITHS.

[We are not responsible for the opinions expressed by contributors—only with their having a point of view worthy of publicity.—Ed., "THE FREETHINKER."]

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 Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park), Sunday, 3-0; Mr. G. WOOD and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1), 11-0; Professor SUSAN L. STEBBING, M.A., D.Lit.—"Unfree Thinking."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Public Lecture Halls, Northgate, Blackburn), Sunday, October 25, 6-45; Mr. J. V. SHORTT—"God Help Us—by an Atheist." Literature on sale.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. Meetings every Sunday at Laycock's Café, Kirkgate, 7-0.

Burnley Branch N.S.S. (47, Nairne Street), Sunday, 2-15; Mr. J. CLAYTON—A Lecture.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Glasgow), Sunday, 3-0; Mr. ARTHUR COPLAND—"A Survey of Secularism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate), Sunday, 3-0; Mr. JOSEPH McCABE—"America and Japan."

North Staffordshire Branch N.S.S. (The Guild Hall, Cheadle, N. Staffs), Sunday, 7-45—Debate between Mr. STEPHEN W. GOODWIN and Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

JUST ISSUED

WHAT IS RELIGION? by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll.
Price 2d.; postage 1d.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOD AND EVOLUTION, by Chapman Cohen.
Price 6d.; postage 1d.

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY,
A Survey of Positions, by Chapman Cohen.
Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION (a re-issue of four
lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester),
by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH, by Chapman
Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

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

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

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

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 Free-
thinking. 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**