

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXII.—No. 45

Sunday, November 8, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	457
The Iconoclasm of Professor Toynbee—T. F. Palmer...	458
Religious Education—"Julian"	459
Privilege—A. R. W.	461
Acid Drops	462
To Correspondents	463
Sugar Plums	463
Duty Encounters Conscience—Gordon Hogg	464
Richard Jeffries and "The Story of My Heart"— "Quondam"	465
Obsequious Obscurantists—J. Humphrey	466
The Attacks on Science—Professor H. L. Hawkins	467
Correspondence	467
Sunday Lecture Notices, Etc.	467

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

This Christian Country

WE were unable last week to do more than comment on Mr. Sorensen's question in the House of Commons concerning the obviously lying slogan that the war was being fought to defend Christianity. As politics go, it was a bold thing for an M.P. to do, and we compliment Mr. Sorensen on his courage. If the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs had given a reasonably fair reply, the matter might have been dropped. But his impertinent brushing it on one side brought Lord Winterton to intercede a few days later, and this led to a debate which covers fourteen columns of Hansard. What was said is not likely to prevent the lie being told again—religious lies of all lies are the hardest to kill. They are not so much killed as enshrined, or suffer a transformation and are in memory cherished for the great good they once did. We think the whole matter is important enough and significant enough to warrant further notice.

It will be remembered that this particular lie—that our war aim was to defend Christianity—was originated by the ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, it was used by Chamberlain, who did so much to put Hitler in his strongest position, it was placed in the mouth of the King, it functioned in the Press and was trumpeted in all the Churches. The lie was, of course, obvious from the start. It is true that we have a State Church, and also that one condition of a man or woman mounting the throne is that he or she must profess belief in Christianity as set forth in Church of England teaching. That much was settled some two centuries and a half ago. But as a matter of fact it is doubtful whether much more than half the people in this country are considered believers in Christianity, and the yarn of fighting to maintain the Christian religion became ridiculous when we were looking for help from Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, Freethinkers and others outside Britain, and damned ridiculous when we count nearly two hundred million Russians and four

hundred and fifty millions of Chinese as our Allies in this war to "save Christianity." But the size of a lie has never troubled the Christian Churches. The only question is "Will it pay?" Evidently Dr. Temple and other Christian leaders think that in this war it will still pay—at least for home consumption.

Blundering Piety

The particular cases to which Mr. Sorensen and Lord Winterton took exception were the public utterances of Lord Halifax and Sir Samuel Hoare. Of the two, that of Lord Halifax was the more objectionable because it was the most elaborate. It was not merely out of place, but it was a distortion of historic truth of a kind to which even a Christian Evidence lecturer might take exception. He detailed at length a number of things we owed to Christianity, and which by inference made the whole of the modern world debtors to the Christian Church. Of course, it is better for Lord Halifax to be out of Britain than in it, but he is our representative in the United States, and that does make a difference. As a private individual no one would bother about him. Mr. Law might have been less offensive in his action and brushed Halifax's indiscretion on one side as a mere "matter of speaking," but, as will be seen, he felt it his duty, or to his interest, to repeat the lie, and so became a partner in the offensiveness to all non-Christians who are helping in the war. Lord Winterton pointed out, what everyone should know, that in the British Empire we have a minority of Christians compared with other religions. Lord Winterton went on to say that when he was in the East—during the last war, presumably—even the Red Cross service replaced the Cross by the Crescent. "The Moslems," he explained, "could not imagine how a God who sent his Son to earth in the guise of a man should suffer him to be crucified." Neither can any decent-minded people anywhere who apply common feeling to this bloodthirsty business. Lord Winterton added that we should not defeat Hitlerism "by talking of Christian civilisation; it must be a much more broad-based appeal."

Mr. Sorensen made an excellent speech, one that must have made the perky Mr. Law sorry he did not answer the simple question that was originally put with greater wisdom, if not with greater truth. He offered Mr. Law the whole population of America as Christian—a very generous allowance, since there is no reason for believing that the Americans are less intelligent than the people of this country—the population of Britain and other places in as large a proportion as possible, certainly much too large to be in accord with the facts, and then found that we were left with 1,000 millions who were non-Christians, but who were fighting on the side of the Allies or were quite sympathetic with them. The result was that the non-Christians were as at least 1,000,000,000 as against a total of less than 400,000,000. And this staggering attack was

completed with a reminder that "this easy identification" of Christianity with high motives and good behaviour was not justified by facts. Mr. Sorensen was very modest in both his claims and his details.

The only champion that spoke on the side of Mr. Law was a Mr. Driberg, about whom I know nothing, and after his suggesting that Lord Winterton's reasoning would leave us with the task of conducting a "war of material aims from which the core had been removed," and which was promptly characterised by Lord Winterton as a sheer "travesty" of his speech, Lord Winterton was very kind.

Save us from Our Friends!

A wiser man than Mr. Law would have adopted at least a mask of frankness and apologised for a hasty reply that did not properly express what he intended, but he began with what was a mixture of untruthfulness and foolishness. He denied that when Lord Halifax said the United Nations were fighting for what were Christian objectives he did not mean that these were exclusively our objectives. That is not true. Lord Halifax's speech came "over the air" as part of a Sunday broadcast, and those who listened will remember that he went over a number of points which included hospitals and democracy, and he said in plain words that these were created by Christianity—as plain a lie as any man could utter. Mr. Law also pleaded that when statesmen are speaking of deep "spiritual" issues "they can only speak in terms of their religion," for which he was sharply reminded by Lord Winterton that when ambassadors speak on such matters as Lord Halifax handled they are speaking for millions of our fellow-subjects in all parts of the world—Jews, Hindus, Moslems and men of no religion.*

That is a thing we have urged very many times, and it expresses nothing more than elementary honesty and justice. Yet this lie of the world war being for the protection of Christianity has been repeated by our preachers, by statesmen, from the Prime Ministers downward, from the King to the street-corner preacher, in our newspapers and in popular addresses. We agree with Lord Winterton's rebuke to Mr. Law. It is a dangerous practice, and we add, a completely dishonest one. Mr. Law pleaded that the line taken by Halifax and Hoare was "a natural thing." Well, it is a natural line for Christians—even allowing for a dissentient minority, but it would be anything but natural to men who were careful to speak the truth when the truth was so plainly before them. Mr. Law admitted that Christians are in a minority in the British Commonwealth. No one questions that, but this is another reason for a public abandonment of the lie that was put into circulation directly the war started, and which is in circulation to-day.

All lovers of fair play, whether religious or non-religious, owe Mr. Sorensen their thanks for raising this question in the House of Commons. While we are talking so much about honesty, freedom, loyalty to truth, etc., etc., it will be well to remember the readiness with which this story was put into circulation and the way in which it was welcomed by all interested parties.

* We see that when Chamberlain resigned the Premiership he wished Lord Halifax to be his successor. Churchill saved us from that disaster, but America might well wonder why he was sent there.

I think I have done the right thing in placing on record this example of lusty lying in the interests of religion. For it stands as a sample from bulk, and gives a good example of what Christian leaders mean when they talk about truth. After all, the lie involved in calling this world conflict a war for the preservation of Christianity is not a greater falsehood than calling Britain a Christian country. A lie cannot be sanctified by geography. Of course, this may be a war that will secure freedom for Christians to practice their religion, so far as it is consistent with public sanity and security. (Even in this country there are forms of Christian belief which if one practices may land him in serious trouble.) But this is no more a Christian country than the war is a Christian war. It is true that we have an established Church or Churches which are partly sustained from public funds. It is also true that the King is compelled to be a Christian of a particular brand. But there is a very substantial body of people who will not have Christianity at any price. A man or woman may enter Parliament without being a Christian. A non-Christian may hold any office in the State—save one—provided he can overcome the Christian intolerance that will oppose his election or his appointment. But as we have all kinds of religions represented in the fighting forces, and as we have all sorts of religions in the civil services, so we have all sorts of religious opinions, and as anti-religious opinion is well represented in the civil community, it is time we dropped the "Christian country" falsehood.

We repeat, a lie is a lie, whether it affects millions of people or a few hundred thousand. Yet daily we have the lie that this war is for the protection of Christianity coming to us through our radio system, with never the permission to meet it with a flat denial. We have it so declared by highly-placed and extravagantly-paid Archbishops and Bishops and large numbers of clergymen. The lie meets us when we rise in the morning and we open our daily papers. It is with us in many forms in our daily walk. Why not end this lie along with the other? Why not let the public hear the truth that we have all sorts of religions in this land, with a growing number who will not have religion at any price?

Halifax and Hoare represent a considerable section of our people. Perhaps we shall always have that type with us. But at least we might try and end this lie as soon as possible. We need not subsidise it in the name of truth and patriotism.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE ICONOCLASM OF PROFESSOR TOYNBEE

SIX volumes of Arnold J. Toynbee's provocative "Study of History" (Oxford University Press) have already appeared. This vast and aggressive undertaking of the Professor of International History at London University almost instinctively recalls the subtle character in "Othello" who was nothing if not critical. Dr. Toynbee disparages the so-called specialists in historical research for their inability to recognise the verity that history is universal in character. "There is a strong tendency," he declares, "to depreciate works of historical literature which are created by single minds. . . . For example, Mr. H. G. Wells' "The Outline of History" was received with unmistakable hostility by a number of historical specialists. They criticised severely the errors they discovered at the points where the writer in his long journey through Time and Space, happened to traverse

then tiny allotments. They seemed not to realise that, in reviewing the entire life of Mankind as a single imaginative experience, Mr. Wells was achieving something which they themselves would hardly have dared to attempt—something, perhaps, of which they never conceived the possibility," and, as Dr. Toynbee himself has now taken the totality of human struggle, achievement and frustration for his province, he is already charged with inaccuracies as well as transcendentalistic tendencies.

That Toynbee's methods are unorthodox the most cursory examination of his remarkable production will make clear. In his judgment, the parts performed by racial, environmental and diffusionist factors in the rise, development or decay of human culture, have all been very greatly exaggerated. The genesis of the various civilisations which have arisen in the world in ancient and modern times may, he urges, be mainly ascribed to man's capacity and willingness to face and overcome the inclement conditions in which his lot was cast, while man's failure or inability to cope with and improve upon primitive conditions is plainly manifested in the intellectual and social conditions displayed in savage and barbarian communities.

Racial arrogance and its sinister offspring Nationalism, Toynbee ascribes with considerable ingenuity to the Protestant form of Christian faith. Lest his attitude towards this aftermath of the Reformation should be attributed to sectarian bias, he appends an initialed footnote in which he avers that "it may be pertinent for him to mention that he was brought up as a Protestant and that he has not become a Catholic." Our historian suggests that as Protestantism arose just prior to the great overseas settlement of European colonists in the New World and, as the conflict between the Western European States terminated in the triumph of England in the 18th century, Protestant domination in overseas territories was firmly established. The whole of Northern America was subjected to the sway of English-speaking Protestants when the Seven Years' War had been fought and won. In addition to this incursion into the North American Continent, the English established their rule in India, where the racial pride of the white conquerors became more apparent than polite to the Indian people.

It is urged that these events have proved highly inimical. For, unfortunately, Protestant psychology was deeply entrenched in the teachings of the Jewish Bible which, in relation to subjected communities, "are very clear and very savage." "The Bible of European origin and race," proceeds Toynbee, "who has settled among peoples of non-European race overseas has inevitably identified himself with Israel, obeying the will of Jehovah and doing the Lord's work by taking possession of the Promised Land, while he has identified the non-Europeans who have crossed his path with the Canaanites, whom the Lord has delivered into the hand of his Chosen People to be destroyed or subjugated."

Toynbee charges the Protestant colonists with the extermination of the Red Indians, some of whom still survive, nevertheless, while the Catholic Spaniards are said to have been satisfied with the liquidation of the Caribbean Islanders, while the Incas and Aztecs were graciously permitted to persist when they became converted to Catholicism and accepted the Spanish rule. In consequence of this, racial admixture supervened. Still, this apologetic picture of Spanish mildness is scarcely countenanced in the writings of the great historian, Prescott.

Pertinently enough, Toynbee notes that when the first translation of the Bible into a Teutonic tongue was made by Ulfilas in the fourth century of our era, "he wisely omitted the Books of Samuel and Kings, on the ground that war and bloodshed were too much in the minds of the Goths as it was, without their proclivity in this direction being consecrated and confirmed by the authority of the sacred book of their new religion."

Modern slavery, again, attained it is said its worst forms in the United States and in its earlier stages the Catholic Spaniards

and Portuguese drove a lucrative trade by purchasing this negro merchandise. Paradoxically enough, we are reminded that the British occupation of Hindustan led to very few conversions to Christ, while the Indian population was too numerous for elimination, so the English did precisely what the Spaniards had been compelled to do in Mexico and Peru, and rule over British India as a dependency of the Crown. Still, no humanist can condone the ruthless decimation of the native races of America by their pious supplanters, or palliate the lofty condescension and aloofness so frequently displayed by the Anglo-Indians to their native fellow-subjects in the past.

Not that racial prejudice is entirely modern, for one seems to remember the racial exclusiveness which animated many of the ancient Greeks. Nor were all Romans indifferent to the pleasing opinion of their own inborn racial superiority.

Toynbee concedes that "the fanaticism and ferocity of the race-feeling which the Old Testament once instilled into Protestant souls have been considerably abated as Protestantism itself has evolved through Rationalism towards Agnosticism. First the traffic in negro slaves, and finally the very institution of negro slavery in the New World, have been abolished by the English-speaking people themselves under the promptings of their own consciences and at the price of their own blood and treasure; and the attitude of the Englishman in India is no longer the attitude of unmitigated aloofness and superiority that it used to be." Even now, however, a completely co-operative spirit is not yet universal in Anglo-Indian circles, while under the colour-bar both in America and South Africa the dark-complexioned peoples suffer serious disabilities.

The Blond Beast—Nietzsche's superman—is traced by Toynbee to the French aristocrat, Count Gobineau, who first discovered Nordic Man. This superb human type has now become exclusively Teutonic, despite the obvious fact that the Alpine variety of the Indo-European race constitutes at least half of the German-speaking communities. Nordic and other imaginary racial claims for pre-eminence, Toynbee scornfully dismisses as the irrational products of emotion and religion, without any scientific justification whatever.

Gobineau's fable, however, has been industriously developed by patriotic German philologists, who have transformed the Indo-European race of the earlier ethnologists into an Indo-Germanic super-stock. But the rancorous English renegade, H. S. Chamberlain, outdistanced even the ultra-national Teutons in his adulation of "Nordic Man." In giving full play to his undisciplined imagination, this fervid apostle's zeal, as Toynbee sees it, "ranged through the great civilisations and the great men and women of history seeking whom it might devour, and it did not rest until it had swept them all into the Blond Beast's maw. Not content with finding a Nordic ancestry for Charlemagne and for 'fair-haired Menelaus,' he found it for Dante and Jesus Christ. The fine flower of Nordicism, for Houston Stewart Chamberlain, was the Imperial Germany which was on the eve of coming to grief in the General War of 1914-18." And all this in his fantastic "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century."

T. F. PALMER.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SINCE the three Archbishops first propounded their scheme for the introduction of dogmatic religious teaching into the State-aided schools, there have been further developments. The Trades Union Congress has refused flatly to be beguiled by the archiepiscopal swansong. In spite of the Catholic vote, it rejected the scheme by an overwhelming majority. The Tory Party have adopted their usual tactics. They produced a report which made God into an honorary member of the Conservative caucus, presumably "for the duration," and they worked out their ideas in this light. The public schools were to remain, in order to

provide national leadership. Dogmatic religious teaching was to be given in the State-aided schools. There was to be effective provision for the training up of the youth of the country as young robots, the playthings of a small and privileged leadership. The report was naturally criticised; the party which issued it proceeded to disown it with speed. It was presumably just another Tory balloon, sent up to see what criticism it would attract. Randolph Churchill's plea for a central party was the first exhibition of this type. But the fact that the Head Master of St. Paul's School, London, had much to do with the document is, to say the least, disquietening.

It is clear that education is to be the main issue of the immediate post-war social reconstruction. It is right that it should be so; an educated populace is the only foundation for democracy. The rule of the uneducated would spell the intolerable dictatorship of a mob. The whole education system needs overhauling; it has evolved in terms of the needs of the industrial employer. The child is taken from school at 14 and planted in the factory or office. He is so much cannon-fodder for industry. He has learned little or nothing; the expense of his school years has been largely wasted. The school-leaving age must be raised; 18 appears to be the most satisfactory moment psychologically. The way to universities and places of higher education must be open to all; the number of scholarships needs to be increased and entrance to these institutions should be upon ability alone. The background needs to be attacked concerning two abuses. The power of the purse must be overthrown; it must not be possible for anybody to buy their way into educational establishments to which their ability could not carry them. Parents must not expect that they are entitled to abbreviate the child's schooling in order to benefit from its earnings. This attitude is common among the lower middle and working classes. It is paralysing to sound educational reform and must be removed by the elimination of economic want, a further extension of the policy for social and political reconstruction and revolution. It is interesting that all parties agree in recognising the vast importance of educational reform as the main question of post-war negotiation.

In view of this fact, the machinations of "the Black International" become important. The Archbishops have determined among themselves to secure control of the schools. They desire to see education used as a process for the instilling of orthodox Christian dogma. They are strangely silent about their own educational past. It is refreshing to read once again the record of the Church of England in education. The whole story has been localised in abundant detail and with a wealth of illustration by S. E. Maltby in "Manchester and the Movement for National Education—1800-1870" (Manchester University Press). The Church was only willing to support popular education so long as it could control it. When it failed to do so it was, in the person of Canon Stowell, of Manchester, one of the biggest obstructionists. Where it has secured the control of education, it has shown scant regard for the fruits to be produced so long as orthodox religion can be pumped in! The description by Edward Gibbon of an Oxford wholly Anglican is famous; during the 18th century the higher education was left mainly to the Nonconformist academies. The university reformers of the last century, such as Professor Goldwin Smith, realised that abuses could not be overcome until clerical control was smashed up. London University, founded in 1829, was the outstanding reply of educationalists to the clericalised education of the day. The parsons fought against the removal of university tests for so long as they could and merely sulked when their power was gone. The record of the Church of England in the schools is equally bad. The Church schools are, in many cases, in bad condition with the poorest of educational equipment or even of sanitary accommodation! Many of the teachers are uncertificated and have received no adequate training for their proper tasks. The Council school, set up under the Act of 1870, is far ahead of its

ecclesiastical equivalent, both in equipment and in the class of scholars which it produces. Yet, the Archbishops have the impertinence to seek to capture the State schools when they are not able to run their own with proper skill.

The movement for religious education is a part of this general programme. It is an attempt to inculcate a religious orthodoxy into the child-mind, binding up education with a theocentric view of the Universe and a belief that Jesus of Nazareth was both God and man at the same time. It involves tests for teachers, a "doctoring" of the facts, and all that is included in an attack upon liberty of thought and conscience. It is the preserve of political reactionaries, naturally anxious to use education for their own ends. If the text, "By their fruits ye shall know them," has any truth, the Tory Party should be discredited through and through as a selfish body utterly incompetent to rule the country yet striving at all costs to maintain power by means of economic control. Their report upon education was exactly the document which might have been expected. They never show any high moral principles in actual fact; outcries against reprisals upon defenceless prisoners-of-war, movements for reform or for bettering the lot of one's fellows, do not usually come from these quarters! Their sole aim is to enable a few, who have seized the control of economic policy, to continue their gangsterdom at the expense of the many. It is natural that they should seek to use God to support their purposes. It is a mere appeal to popular sentiment and prejudice, but it is cleverly done; the great social force of religion is to be harnessed and turned to political ends. The more general movement for the introduction of dogmatic religion into the State-aided schools plays direct into their hands.

There is the need for a firm and open opposition. At the moment there is a tendency for too many opponents to press the attitude of their own particular group. The result is that the replies to the archiepiscopal policy are apt to become diffuse and fragmentary. Yet there are a number who stand in deliberate opposition; they need to be brought together upon a short-term policy of reply and of action. Some of the older Nonconformists have not lost the whole of the spirit of Dr. Clifford and the "Nonconformist Conscience." The Trades Union Congress see the political and social dangers of the ecclesiastical scheme. Unitarians and rationalists object violently upon grounds of an unbelief in the religious ideas which it is proposed to impart to the child. There is here a common ground for immediate opposition; it should be harmonised and should form the basis of a consistent public voicing of complaint. The Bench of Bishops have left no stone unturned and have utilised Parliament; a coherent and unified opposition must adopt the same methods if overwhelming reaction is to be checked and prevented. The Secular Education League has the matter in hand; it is to be hoped that their efforts to provide a common platform for the creation of "a popular front" to voice a short-term opposition will prove successful.

The whole movement proves one fact very clearly; there is a great need for a widespread and coherent rationalistic education. In this country there has always been a refusal to secularise education entirely; semi-rationalism has gone on side by side with lingering relics of superstition. Theological unbelief has never been pugnacious enough; it has always been too ready to treat tenderly the feelings of the believer. The compliment is not often reciprocated; orthodox Christians are usually the most cowardly, lying, bullying and bitter opponents that can be found. The case of Bishop Colenso is interesting as an example of the manner in which men of God treated one of the Lord's anointed because he made the mistake of acting as an honest man, a rare thing in his caste and profession. The results of an attitude of timidity have been that the Churches have stolen a march all along the line. They have kept up their stage scenery of days of prayer and other rites associated with mental savages; they have appealed to the lowest instincts in the population. Now

they have dug themselves in and desire to recapture ground lost to them in more reasonable ages than the present time! The situation calls for an immediate and short-term opposition, but it likewise calls for an unparalleled effort to spread, in simple terms, a knowledge of the objective facts through every means that may be at hand. The education controversy will not prove a bad thing if it inspires theological unbelievers to a more relentless war against superstition and a determination that an alliance of "the Black International" with political reactionaries shall not dominate the social scene.

"JULIAN."

PRIVILEGE

I.

ABBESS of Saint Ursula, also Mother Superior of the attached Convent, was angry. Not a wild, noisy rage, which her subordinates did not much fear, because that wore itself out in a short time with spasmodic cuffing and beating of novices and other unresistant victims, chiefly in prodigious scoldings and nagging, to which recipients stood meekly submissive, eyes downcast and hands folded. Out of the Mother Superior's sight and hearing everyone was amused.

This present anger of Mother Cecile was different. It was of the smouldering, inward type, lasting for days. Throughout that time her long, pale face was hard-set, her thin lips tight locked over clenched teeth, a frown permanently on her forehead with a V groove between her glittering, intent, grey eyes. She spoke a little in a low voice, but harsh and distinct, setting her underlings running to obey her commands, some of them trembling.

Such brooding passion further expressed itself in actions. She whipped two novices till the weals stood on their bare skins. For trifling offences she imposed severe penances on nuns, placed the whole community on bread and water for a day, and on their knees for a night in the cold chapel.

Servants of the nunnery were rebuked sharply, faults being found in everyone from scullion to cook. Workers on the convent farm were soundly rated for idleness and incompetence.

Yet there seemed no good reason for the Abbess's intense displeasure with everyone and everything. Saint Ursula's was one of the biggest, most flourishing conventual establishments in England. Its buildings were large, beautiful and well appointed. Income for all purposes was ample, wealth accruing from endowments, donations, jewels and money brought and deposited by the nuns themselves on adhesion to the Order, and from the ownership of wide estates surrounding the Abbey of Saint Ursula.

Farms, orchards, pastures, woodlands, river fisheries all endured Mother Cecile's dominance, contributing to her importance and wealth and that of the institution she ruled so vigorously and sternly.

Yet she was not satisfied. Her discontent, a vast sense of frustration, more than irritated her, it enraged her beyond bearing.

II.

The weekly visit of Father Basil, Confessor of Saint Ursula's, proceeded on its normal course during the morning. The grave and elderly monk was, as usual, entertained to midday dinner. After he had pronounced a blessing, Mother Cecile dismissed nuns, novitiates and servers, leaving her alone with the visiting priest.

Immediately the oak door closed behind the last pair of nuns their Mother Superior said: "Father Basil, I wish to speak plainly to you."

The man bowed his head, and the woman proceeded: "About my Privilege, to which I am entitled."

She rose slowly and went to the window, containing that rarity, clear glass, and looked across the miles of rolling champaign.

It was not the pleasant scenery which interested the lady. Her frown deepened as she looked at the silhouette against the sky of a castle—not a big one—on a low hill.

Turning abruptly, she exclaimed: "The Baron has long held the Privilege, and he's a mere lordling, in fief to an Earl. Yet he can have what is denied me, one of the greatest Abbesses of England."

She swung round to gaze through another window. Her face darkened and her voice was impassioned as she declared: "Worse! The Lord of the Manor, whose estate is smaller than the Abbatial one, has Privilege withheld from me. Shameful!"

Indignantly she seized pens, inkhorn and parchment from a side table and placed them before the priest, insisting: "Write, Father Basil, setting out my claim to the Privilege. I will expound my case in full. Put it as it should be put, firm and clear, with authority."

"But the Sheriff——" began Father Basil in tones of dubiety.

The Abbess made an impatient gesture, crying, "Sheriff! Who is he? Mere tool of the King, pretending to power he cannot exercise."

Drawing a deep breath she asked proudly: "Who is a Sheriff to stand against the Church and its rights? Or, indeed, the King himself?"

Seating herself determinedly, she said: "To the Lord Bishop first. If he is weak or fearful then we petition our Lord the Archbishop direct. Failing all else I will appeal to our Father in God at Rome. Privilege I must and will have."

Long and carefully the priest wrote at the lady's dictation. Finished, the document had the detail and cogent reasoning of a lawyer's brief, coloured by the Abbess's potent personality, heightened to forcibleness by her strong conviction of the justness of her case.

After further correspondence and delay, a large imposing scroll was delivered by special courier to the Lady Cecile, Abbess of Saint Ursula's.

Having read it she was all smiles and geniality, for it freely granted her request, conferring upon her full powers of Magistracy. Immediately she called the Convent carpenter and instructed him to do his work well and swiftly.

III.

Because the Privilege the Abbess sought so earnestly and strenuously was the right to erect a gallows at her own gates, whereon of her judgment and condemnation she might hang malefactors; that is, any local or vagrant unfortunate who displeased her.

A. R. W.

GODS

For now we know not of them; but one saith
The gods are gracious, praising God; and one,
When hast thou seen? or hast thou felt his breath
Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?

None hath beheld him, none
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,
Swift without feet and flying without wings,
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
Insatiable, not known of night or day,
The lord of love and loathing and of strife,
Who gives a star and takes a sun away;
Who shapes the soul and makes her a barren wife
To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame,
And binds the great sea with a little sand;
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;
Who, seeing the light and shadow from the same,
Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod—
The supreme evil, God.

—A. C. SWINBURNE.

ACID DROPS

THE Glasgow "Citizen" recently provided a first-class instance of the influence of religion in schools. The trouble arose between the boys of a Protestant and a Roman Catholic school. They used the same feeding centre. A quarrel broke out, and "a running street fight between hundreds of boys" resulted. Stones and bottles formed the ammunition in this street war, and twenty boys were brought before the Juvenile Court for judgment. The summonses were heard by Bailie Millar, who said that such conduct must be put down. But these boys had plenty of religion; what influence had that on their conduct? The only influence was to make each group the natural enemies of the other group. We refer the matter to our own Archbishop of Canterbury for explanation.

It is astonishing what Christian preachers will discover in Jesus Christ. He has been everything by turns, and the tale of characteristics is not yet exhausted. For example, writing in the "Christian World," the Rev. Erskine discovers that he was not merely a "spiritual genius"; he was also "the world's greatest thinker." Now that is something new, and we should be pleased to have from Mr. Erskine some evidence in favour of his statement. So far as the New Testament is concerned, there was not a single vulgar superstition that the New Testament Jesus did not endorse. He believed in a flat earth haunted by multitudes of demons. His notions of the nature of disease, particularly when it took the form of insanity or epilepsy, were that it was due to demons. In such matters he was living on a lower level than that reached by the thinkers of Rome and Greece. His real affiliations are to be found to-day only in the uncivilised peoples of undeveloped parts of the world; and it was thanks to such teachings that the Christian Church stood for many centuries as the stubborn opponent of scientific teaching. Jesus Christ as the world's greatest thinker is as near the purely ridiculous as one can get. And we should be interested in learning in what directions this supreme power of thought was exhibited.

The Rome Radio reports than an "authentic portrait of Jesus Christ has been discovered." We like that word "authentic." It indicates that the portrait was taken from life, and that the identity of the one who took the portrait is known. All we need now is to get the names and addresses of those dead men who were brought to life and who walked about the streets of Jerusalem. If the demand is strong enough the required evidence will be forthcoming. A good start could be made by showing the holes in which they were buried. When we are dealing with a man who never had a father—known or unknown, real or reputed—anything is possible.

Our Minister of Education (and chairman of the Conservative Party) has again been giving the Churches a helping hand, although the hand has worn an educational glove. He points out that the Churches find it very difficult to bring their schools up to the level of the Council schools, which is only another way of admitting that Church schools are inferior to Council schools. This is a fact with which every educationalist is familiar, although the clergy deny it strenuously in public. The real cure for this is for the Government to take these schools over, or to insist on their being as good as the State schools. After all, it is the State as a whole that has to pay the price for inefficient education, and in any case these schools are heavily subsidised by the State. It is little short of a scandal that a Minister of Education should connive at the return to power of a priesthood whose schools are only as effective as they are because of the pressure put upon them by the State.

As is usual when something is retrogressive, the B.B.C. was used as an instrument of religious propaganda, though never yet has it permitted the question of Secular Education to be placed before the public by this agency. Why does it not ask Lord Snell, who is attached to the Government, to put the case for Secular Education before the public, and so for once in a while

give both sides a hearing? It is a shameless absurdity to lay claims to being a democracy when, in a country containing millions of non-Christians, a particular form of religious instruction is given, and all others excluded.

Of course, the Archbishop of Canterbury was pleased with the attendance of the people at the late National Day of Prayer. But the truth slipped out when, a few days ago, he admitted that there had been no increase of the people in church at the ordinary services. So now he advises that the clergy must go to the people. That is only right, and it follows the usual commercial rule that trade is made by travellers. All the busiest wholesale firms in the country follow this plan. The only difference in the two cases is that a firm may establish a reputation for its goods and hold the public to ransom if the article they sell is satisfactory. The public has tried the goods supplied by the Church and the demand gets less and less.

For several weeks a discussion on "Secularism" has been running in the "Durham Advertiser." Secularism has been mainly championed by one who signs himself "Josephus." Now we see the discussion has been abruptly closed, and the cause of this abrupt ending is not far to seek. For the issue for October 16 has an editorial announcing that "Josephus" shall speak no more, from which we may gather that he has done his work well—too well for the editor and his readers. The editor says that he has closed it only after "anxious consideration." Why "anxious"? The explanation seems to lie in the fact that the correspondence was closed "in response to the clamour of our readers." No further explanation is needed. Like an obedient editor, obeying the yelps of a number of people who will protest against Hitler suppressing freedom of speech, the editor obeys the clamour of his readers. Durham County must be proud of so obedient an editor.

But the discussion is stopped—so far as the defender of Secularism is concerned. The editor says he favours freedom of expression "within certain limits, of course," and the limit is reached when his readers protest against their religion being criticised. And, doubtless to show his readers that he is as fond of freedom—within limits, of course—as are his readers, he takes the opportunity of showing that his religion is all right by having a run in "on his own," and to which no reply will be permitted. Why should it be? The editor wanted a criticism that would "assuage the feelings of all our readers, he wanted implicit faith in Christianity." In other words, he wanted praise of Christianity only. He gets this from the Vicar of St. Nicholas, Durham, who writes a letter to the effect that he believes "Josephus" to be "an insincere man," and he will not waste more time on him or the paper if letters from "Josephus" continue. And the editor sums up a half-column of very stale, and very cheap, but not very effective remarks, with the determination that only when "Josephus" has found "something as beautiful and as enduring as the Christianity he condemns" will he again be permitted to enter the columns of the "Durham Advertiser," and with that assurance the Vicar may continue his subscription.

It would not have been worth while noting this case were it not for the fact that this kind of boycott is very common throughout the country. Editors are pawns in the hands of parsons and advertisers and the most bigoted of their subscribers. The duty of the editor is not to provide an open platform for the discussion of ideas, it is a rostrum on which one side only is heard. God and his angels are on one side, and that side includes editors—in public. What it is in private may be quite another matter. If he is genuine he has God on his side, but how can he expect God to withstand the criticisms of "Josephus" and his kind if their mouths are not forcibly closed? For this editor, when he shuts a certain kind of criticism out of his paper, is announcing to the world that had he the power he would shut it out of all papers. We congratulate Durham on having in its population such an editor and such a Vicar. We should be the last to question the genuineness of their Christianity.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. F. BUDGE.—Will use it soon.

E. WILLIAMS.—We are not worrying over anything, but it is damnably annoying just when we could do good work for the cause by printing a much larger number of "The Freethinker" to find ourselves up against a severe paper shortage.

N. R.—We note your suggestion. It is one that we have had in mind for some time. We are sure that a weekly note on those Freethinkers who did so much to establish Freethought will prove of interest. But it will not take the shape of a calendar, but something more pliable.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS

AS announced, the new edition (the ninth) of the "Bible Handbook" will be on sale on November 10. We cannot think of a time when the "Handbook" has done more good work than it will do just now. In spite of the utilities of the "Brains Trust," there is no book which is assumed to be a great national asset that is so widely misunderstood, and no book so widely advertised and so little read. In the "Handbook" that part of the Bible that is avoided by preachers is to the front. It will lead more people to read the Bible, but we do not expect the clergy to thank us for reprinting it—the ungrateful beggars. The new edition is excellently produced. Price 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

We have said many hard but not unjust things concerning the B.B.C. We have exposed its panderings to the most ignorant forms of religious preaching, the misuse of the microphone by the better educated religious leaders, the absence of any opinion that would tend to let the scientific truth concerning religion go before the public, its faked discussions, and the insult to civilised thought morning after morning by the 7.55 terror. For many years "The Freethinker" has stood alone in its persistent exposure of this completely anti-democratic institution. We withdraw nothing of what we have said. But the B.B.C. took a great step in the right direction when it invited Professor Julian Huxley to deliver a thirty-minute address on Darwinism. For the moment it shook off the evil influence of the Reithian reign. Let us hope it is only the beginning of a movement to treat the British public as something above a mass of intellectual nit-wits.

Professor Huxley's address was admirable. It was simple in its design, complete in its outline, outspoken in its direct opposition to orthodox religion, the whole excellently delivered, with a simplicity that even some of the members of the Brains Trust could not misunderstand. The issue was evolution or blank ignorance. It was worth a score of Brains Trust exhibitions of how not to do it. We trust it will lead to some improvement in that quarter.

Again let us hope that as a sequel to this address of Huxley's some competent and honest-speaking anthropologist be invited

to give the public a few lectures on what is really known of the origin of religious beliefs, or, better still, a *real* discussion between two responsible individuals—with the manuscript undoctored by the B.B.C., the religious or any other committee. Let the public have the truth, not a tale which certain people wish to be told. No man can speak with complete honesty if what he has to say will go before a censorship committee. If there is nothing actually censored it is because he has censored himself before he hands in his script.

There is little doubt among anthropologists to-day as to the origin of the gods. Just as the biologist works back from man to the lower animals, and forward from the lower animals to man, so scientists work back from the attenuated God of to-day to the multitude of lusty deities in primitive society. The scientist knows how these gods came into existence and the causes that led to their decay in power and their shrinking in numbers. The suggested course of lectures should run, say, from Tylor (1871), who founded the modern science of anthropology, to Sir James Frazer. The result of this period has done for the origin and evolution of gods exactly what Darwinism did for biology. Our knowledge of the origin of God is to-day as certain and as impossible of disproof as is the animal origin of man.

One other point. Professor Huxley pointed out how timidly many scientific men approached Darwinism, and also that many held back from publicly admitting the truth when they saw it. Religion then, as now, took its toll in the shape of public dishonesty. We have in the scientific and literary world large numbers of men and women who know better than they admit concerning the evolution of religion. Literally there are thousands in this country who have not yet developed enough courage to let their opinions be known. We think it was Alfred Russell Wallace who said that the great geologist, Lyell, refused to make public his belief in biologic evolution (he had taught it so far as geology was concerned), but friends got the truth from him at the dinner table. So to-day there are thousands of men in all walks of life who know the truth, but are afraid to speak because of the price they may be called upon to pay. Some excuse must be found to prevent people believing they are not opposed to the belief in God; they merely think there is not evidence enough to prove his existence. It is pitiful, but 'tis true. Religion cannot convince the educated mind, but it can turn men and women into hypocrites.

Broadcasting might be one of the greatest instruments of education and democratic development, but it may easily be one of the deadliest of implements for fooling a people and obstructing the growth of a really free people.

Another recent notable talk arranged by the B.B.C. was one on venereal disease. That must have brought a shiver down the backs of that common type of Christian whose mind is so pure that it is never at rest unless it is in touch with something that it believes to be more than usually filthy. Two shocks in a brief period seem too good to be true.

The most difficult thing in the world is to get a certain type of Christian to act with moderate honesty. It is now the legal right of every man entering the armed forces to have his attitude towards religion to be registered as belonging to any denomination he pleases, registered as being without religion, or insist on any description whatever. Moreover, if he happens to change his opinions from religious to a non-religious kind, the first one must be cancelled and the new one registered. This has been done in many cases, although here and there some officer, either through religious bigotry or because he is acting in ignorance, places obstacles in the way. The N.S.S. has had to deal with many such cases and has usually managed to get the difficulty straightened out—with very much regret, we expect, to the untruthful gang of chaplains that feature in the B.B.C. shows.

Now here is another case. After several men had had their identification discs changed to "Atheist," a notice was exhibited in the camp preventing any further denominational changes

without a discussion with the padre (and apparently his endorsement) and a letter of explanation to the "Administration." We are told there is some very bitter feeling in the camp from both Freethinkers and professing Christians.

Now on this subject, paragraph 1265, section 12, of the "King's Regulations" is quite clear. Here it is:—

When a soldier has it in mind to change his religion, he will, before he receives his instruction in the new religion, make an application in writing to his C.O., who will at once communicate this notification to both the chaplains concerned. A period of one month must intervene before the change of religion may become operative.

Hitherto this has been quite sufficient to cover the change to Atheism, and it was so held in the House of Commons by the responsible Minister. The holding of a discussion with a padre implies that he is the one who will decide. And that is simply monstrous. The average padre, from what we know of him, is about as capable of judging Atheism as the "man in the street" is of evaluating Einstein's theory of relativity. We advise all Freethinkers in the Army to stand firm for their legal rights. If they persist and it comes before the proper officers we are sure they will get their way.

The following reaches us, written to another reader, by an Army officer "out East":—

"I receive 'The Freethinker' four times every month and I pass it round when I have read it. Whilst I have been here I have converted a Jew and a Moslem, besides several Christians. I only want a Hindoo and a Sikh and I shall have been through the whole lot. I'll bet that even Chapman Cohen hasn't got a record like that."

We congratulate our friend on his "bag," but there are quite a lot of others who are ready to be brought over. Our trouble is that the paper shortage—which gets more severe—prevents our printing more copies each week. But we are steadily climbing.

The following is sent us by an old reader of "The Freethinker" who has forgotten its origin. But it is good enough to be remembered, anyway:—

"Beautiful is the setting of the great sun, when the last song of the bird fades into the lap of silence; when the islands of the clouds are bathed in light, and the first star springs up over the grave of day."

And there are boobies who, in a world that can give rise to that feeling, assure us that it is as nothing if there be not the absurd pantomimic life that Christianity holds out to us!

The debate between Mr. J. T. Brighton and Mr. Stephen W. Goodwin aroused much interest at Cheadle, North Staffordshire, and the Guild Hall was packed with an audience whose interest was maintained to the end. The time allocated for questions was taken up almost entirely with questions to Mr. Brighton, and the local N.S.S. Branch feel confident that their stock has appreciated considerably as a result of the encounter. From reports received there is an agreement that Mr. Brighton's handling of his case was excellent.

We have had a number of letters of late inquiring whether there is any likelihood of our edition of Paine's "Age of Reason" being republished. We are afraid that there is no immediate prospect for its reprinting as a propagandist pamphlet. To do its work as we wish it to be done it must be sold at a price that in itself is tempting. But that means a very heavy loss, and that we cannot face at present. Two very large editions were sold, the first at 4d., the second at 6d. It might go well at 9d., or even 1s., but the cheaper the better. To sell a book of 250 pages, well printed, at either of these figures would be an achievement. But that would mean a heavy loss. We could face it—with the backing of that millionaire for whom we have long been looking.

DUTY ENCOUNTERS CONSCIENCE

(C.S. = Christian Soldier v. C.P. = Christian Pacifist)

Every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own.—"KING HENRY V."

C.S.: No, you are wrong. We are fighting to defend the right to be free.

C.P. (sarcastically): Free of what?

C.S.: Fighting to defend the right of free speech, freedom of the Press and religion; freedom from tyranny and oppression; to ensure the freedom of future generations so that they may live in peace, harmony and concord—individually as well as nationally.

C.P.: Umph. It certainly sounds attractive. It is "a commendation devoutly to be wished," but—

C.S.: Well, but what?

C.P.: But why is it necessary—in the 20th century—to have to fight for such obvious privileges? In other words, what is wrong with civilisation when nations resort to barbarous methods to settle differences—which even then are temporary settlements only?

C.S.: It is because people are wicked. God in his infinite goodness and mercy has inflicted this catastrophe as a punishment and a warning to us to mend our ways.

C.P.: I do not see that point at all. There are very many people who are suffering and dying, because of the war, who are not wicked at all. On the other hand, it is possible that there are many people in non-belligerent countries who are very wicked but are not suffering at all.

C.S.: That cannot be helped. "God makes the rain to fall on the just as well as the unjust." If the quotation is wrong it will serve just the same. Besides, the Bible is full of stories where the innocent suffer with the guilty. As—ahem!—Shakespeare said: "To do a great right do a little wrong."

C.P. (ironically): To do a *little* wrong! One of the Commandments is "Thou shalt not kill." How then do you reconcile this precept with your practice?

C.S.: The wisdom of God passes all understanding. Anyway, your interpretation of this Commandment is too literal. It is obvious that the Commandment had no reference to a just war, for is it not written "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"? I seem to remember a quotation which ran "I am a God of war."

C.P.: Possibly, but it is also written "They who live by the sword shall perish by the sword." And Jesus said "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

C.S.: Yes I know. But you must remember that Jesus said "Lo, I come to bring not peace but the sword." It is useless for you to quote texts in support of Pacifism. Circumstances alter cases.

C.P. (sorrowfully): I see there are circumstances in which distinct happenings are possible. However, I am convinced that it is a sin to shed blood. The crime is all the more heinous because it is not your quarrel; that is to say, you personally did not commence the hostilities in which you are now involved.

C.S. (sharply): No, of course I didn't, but that does not prevent me taking part in a quarrel on the side which is defending the right. You *must* see that our cause is just.

C.P.: No. I see only Christians in Germany, Italy, Poland and other countries who are fighting for what they believe to be right also.

C.S.: Ridiculous! We are fighting an evil and foul tyranny. How can that be right—those countries, I mean?

C.P.: That is what you are told, but is it true? How can we Christians believe that we are fighting an evil and foul tyranny which is said to exist in countries which are almost wholly Christian?

C.S. (sceptically): They may profess and call themselves Christians, but they are not worshipping the true God. Their God is Mammon. They must be judged by their actions and not by what they say they are. The Prime Minister said that we are "fighting for a cause for which a trumpet has sounded on high." Isn't that enough for you?

C.P.: No. These arguments are used by the enemy also. He believes the same as you do. That is why I stand aloof from the conflict. War between Christian countries is a living lie. The contending parties are not true to their faith, otherwise they would not fight!

C.S.: But we are fighting a crusade.

C.P.: Maybe, but in this matter I must be guided by my conscience. Violence begets violence. It is wicked to shed blood, for it is written "He who sheds blood shall his own blood be shed." This man whom you kill—and with whom you have no quarrel—is he not one of God's creatures like you and I?

C.S. (venomously): He may have been created in God's own image, but his heart is black—as black as the devil's!

C.P. (mournfully): It is as I feared. Man must undergo a change of heart else wars will never become obsolete.

C.S.: You imply that I must undergo a change of heart, then?

C.P.: You see, it is a matter of conscience. For instance, your conscience does not see any wrong in killing. Let me put it this way. If it is wrong to kill a man in times of peace, what has happened in a man's heart, meanwhile, that makes him kill, not one but perhaps dozens of men in war time, and that perhaps without any qualms of conscience? I venture to suggest that his heart, i.e. his mental reactions to killing, are no different in peace time than in war time. Otherwise he would have that revulsion of feeling to war and its horrors that would prevent him from killing anybody at any time! Therefore, he must undergo a change of heart and understand that God is telling him through his conscience that it is wrong to kill.

C.S. (impatiently): You mean that God has told you that it is wrong to kill, but that he has not told me? Or, in other words, he has effected a change of heart in you?

C.P.: No. It is—er—natural for me to think so. But do not think that I blame you.

C.S. (angrily): Blame me! Good heavens! I hope I know my duty, and that is to my King and country. Both are in dire peril and it is my duty to help them. I am not sure whether conscience enters into the matter at all. What is conscience?

C.P.: It is a sense of right and wrong, and as far as I am concerned my conscience tells me it is wrong to kill.

C.S.: Wait a moment. As we are both Christians, then it appears that one of us is wrong.

C.P.: Yes, if we are both Christians.

C.S. (threateningly): Meaning that I am not a Christian?

C.P.: I would not suggest such a thing. It is not for me to sit in judgment on a fellow Christian. I act as my conscience dictates.

C.S.: That is plain enough for me. (Strikes him.) That's how my conscience bids me act.

MORAL.—Scratch a Christian and you'll find a devil. *Stroke the devil* and you'll find—a devil of a Christian.

GORDON HOGG.

RICHARD JEFFRIES AND "THE STORY OF MY HEART"

(Continued from page 456)

IN human affairs there is the same lesson. Goodness often suffers, and vice as frequently enjoys.

"How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence?"

It is the most utter falsehood, and a crime against the human race. Even in my brief time I have been contemporary with events of the most horrible character; as when the mothers in the Balkans cast their own children from the train to perish in the snow; as when the "Princess Alice" foundered and 600 human beings were smothered in foul water. . . . Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful, that I can hardly write of it. . . . The whole, and the worst, the worst pessimist can say is far beyond the least particle of the truth. It is the duty of all rational beings to acknowledge the truth. There is not the least trace of directing intelligence in human affairs."

This is a hopeless creed, a doctrine of despair, says the religionist. Not so, replies Jeffries; it is the only teaching that supplies us with hope and courage. If man were really in conflict with Deity there would be no possibility of effecting an improvement. Acknowledging that no such power or direction exists, things become plastic to the human will. What has been thoughtlessly credited to a non-existent intelligence should be exercised by the human race. "We must do for ourselves what superstition has hitherto supposed an intelligence to do for us." Much of the pain and suffering in the world may be prevented when we no longer stop our ears with "the wax of superstition and the wax of criminal selfishness."

There is scarcely an evil which Richard Jeffries, rejecting all religious doctrines and beliefs, does not believe to be endurable, so great is his belief in human intelligence properly directed. All diseases, he says, pathetically, are preventible, or they can be weakened so as to do no harm. All human beings are capable of physical happiness, and we should all strive to secure it. We do not die of old age, but of disease or weakness handed down from our ancestors.

"Our bodies are full of unsuspected flaws, handed down, it may be, for thousands of years; and it is of these we die, and not of natural decay. . . . We die through our ancestors; we are murdered by our ancestors. Their dead hands stretch forth from the tomb and drag us down to their mouldering bones. We, in our turn, are now at this moment preparing death for our unborn posterity."

Disease, famine, suffering, are all to be conquered by human intelligence adequately organised. The earth produces an abundance of good things; why then, he asks, do people die of starvation? And the answer is: Because of our absolute lack of organisation; even of the very idea that such a thing is possible. "That 12,000 written years should have elapsed, and the human race, able to reason and to think, and easily capable of combination in immense armies for its own destruction—should still live from hand to mouth like cattle or sheep. . . . In 12,000 written years the world has not built itself a house, nor filled a granary, nor organised itself for its own comfort. It is so marvellous I cannot express the wonder with which it fills me."

Just as he will have nothing to do with the superstitions of religion, so he sets on one side the social superstition of work being man's highest condition. "It is the lie of a morality founded on money only," and incapable of appreciating a higher life. Our object should be leisure, so that we or our ancestors "may enjoy their days, and the earth, and the beauty of this beautiful earth: that they may rest by the sea and dream; that they may dance and sing; and eat and drink." The one occupation really worthy of man is that of the thinker—the thinker who works with a view to his thought acting as a medium for the release of the race from physical and spiritual slaveries; and "every idea gained is a hundred years of slavery remitted." The one thing we are certain of is the Now. Let us live for it, and work for it becoming more real and more precious than it now is.

"The tomb cries aloud to us. . . . Look at this and erase your illusions. . . . reflect on this and strew human life

with flowers; save every hour for the sunshine; let your labour be so ordered that in future times the loved ones may dwell longer with those who love them; open your minds, exalt your souls; widen the sympathies of your hearts, face the things that are now as you will face the reality of death; make joy real now to those you love, and help forward the joys of those yet to be born. . . . Lift up your mind and see now in this bitterness of parting, in this absence of certainty, the fact that there is no directing intelligence. . . . Remember that old age is possible, and even more than old age; and beyond these earthly things—what? None know. But let us, turning away from the illusion of a directing intelligence, look earnestly for something higher than prayer, and lift our souls to be with the more than immortal now."

One is again tempted to go on quoting from a work so rich in suggestiveness as "The Story of My Heart," but if one quoted twice the amount there would be the same reluctance in parting, and a word on another and less pleasant subject must be said. On his deathbed, it was reported, that Richard Jeffries was brought back to the faith that he had so explicitly and so passionately rejected. Long continued suffering of mind and body will do much to weaken a man's intellectual strength, but one may be pardoned believing that not even the suffering he went through would have brought a mind of his character back to the Christian faith, once having so decisively rejected it. The original story of his deathbed conversion appeared in the "Girls' Own Paper," a vehicle of communication which is itself somewhat suggestive of the mental character of the writer. It is only fair to say that the article contains a portion of a letter from his wife endorsing the story of his conversion. But the following brief record will throw some light upon the tale.

Jeffries, as has been seen, was always weakly. In December, 1881, five and a half years before his death, he fell ill. The rest of his life is a story of poverty, disease and long-drawn-out suffering, pitiful to read. Four times in one year he underwent surgical operations. His disease was ultimately found to be ulceration of the small intestine, although there were other complications. In parentheses one may remark that it was during this period that his best works, "The Pageant of Summer" and "The Story of My Heart," were written. In 1884, the year following the publication of the "Story," Jeffries made the acquaintance of a lady and gentleman at Eltham. These seemed to have worked hard for his conversion, and after his removal to Crowborough Hill in 1885 he was the recipient of numerous letters dealing with the same topic. In addition to this, his wife seems to have worked for the same end, the tone of her letter being clearly that of a missionary rejoicing at a capture.

Now it is quite conceivable that Jeffries, weakened as he was by over five years of torture, unable at the last to take food, and yielding to the importunities of wife and friends, may have given a passive acquiescence to their religious expressions. That he died "listening to the good old book" is also conceivable—if he died listening to anything (seeing that he was always fond of reading the Bible and Shakespeare) but it is *not* conceivable that a man of Jeffries' strong opinions and earnest character would ever have so far retrograded as to repeat the childish twaddle reported in the "Girls' Own Paper," such as, when the New Testament was read, "These are the words of Jesus. . . . They are true and all philosophy is hollow. . . . I have given myself to God and Christ, pray for me." Had Jeffries said anything, even as a believer, it would surely have been something better than this.

But even though the story were wholly true, it is obviously a pathological case, and not an instance of reasoned conviction. While Jeffries was in his best health he was frankly and passionately pagan. While he retained his clearness of vision he was to all practical purposes an Atheist. What he may have become under the pressure of disease and the ill-advised importunings of friends concerns one, after all, but little. His own confession

of faith is contained in "The Story of My Heart," and as he withdrew nothing he had there written, as he as late as 1885 affirmed that the volume still expressed his most earnest convictions, one may be excused taking that as against any deathbed story that may be reported.

"QUONDAM."

OBSEQUIOUS OBSCURANTISTS

FOLLOWING a two years' "controversy" over Sunday films, three of the eight cinemas in Carlisle are now open on Sunday evenings and showing to packed houses. The popularity of this form of entertainment is shown by the fact that queues of would-be patrons have to be turned away each week, unable to gain admission—"House Full" being the vogue. Assuming that licences had been granted to all the city's cinemas for Sunday openings, there would still be crowds clamouring for admission.

Success was only attained, after repeated applications by the public had been turned down, not because the obscurantists had taken a remorse of conscience, but because the military authorities came to the aid of the public and issued a "strong request" for Sunday films for the troops. Having lodged the "request" in such "polite terms," the City Council were left with no alternative but to accede. It was on the casting vote of the Mayor that the public were to be admitted. Also, an application to refuse admission to children under 16 years of age was defeated, thus giving the Sabbatarians a double set-back.

Adopting similar tactics in Scotland, the military authorities made "representations" to that august body, the Scottish branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, whose members have continually refused to even consider Sunday openings. On this occasion, however, they "agreed" to co-operate; and now, believe it or not, we are to have Sunday cinemas IN SCOTLAND! It is "expected" that the magistrates throughout the country will in no way refuse to grant licences under similar circumstances to cities and towns desirous of Sunday amusements. To anyone familiar with the hypocrisy associated with the Scottish Sabbath Day, it will be at once realised what a blow this means to the evil influence of ecclesiasticism, especially that of the strict Presbyterian type, which has been responsible for the subjection, and the division, of the Scottish people. It is a blow from which hurried recovery will be difficult. One of the last remaining bulwarks to social progress has been stormed. A physical, mental and moral victory over the powerful forces of religious racketeering has been accomplished! A social revolution has been achieved!

It may be observed that on this occasion the Churches did not act with the same amount of hostility towards Sunday films as formerly. A tribute must be paid to their powers of discernment. Smelling out that reform in this direction was inevitable, they were wily enough not to offer very much active opposition, especially agin' th' Government, so they just left it to others to do their dirty work. It is a well-known fact that there are many demagogues ever ready and willing to comply with the slightest wish of the Church, and it is to these individuals that the Churches mostly rely to offer antagonism when needs be.

This form of antagonism is usually based on sociological grounds, of the *semper idem* variety, something like this: "Sunday films and other forms of entertainment are undesirable." "There is no public demand for Sunday shows." "The opening of cinemas, etc., on Sundays would involve a certain amount of labour, thus denying the worker his day of rest. . . . Blah, blah, blah." The one sure way of finding whether there is a public demand for something is to put it to the test; make it possible for the public to decide for themselves, rather than allow their "betters" to make the decisions.

Speaking against Sunday entertainments recently, Sir Patrick J. Dollan, ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow, the first Roman Catholic to occupy the civic chair and be "kirked" (a Protestant

ceremony), and a conscientious objector in the last war, declared: "We are needing more economy and industry for the winning of the war rather than a deluge of excessive and commercialised entertainment. The cinema owners and staffs have been kind to the Service and war charities and should not be expected to work a seven-day week any more than other people." Such charitable-ness, if sincere, would be worthy of commendation, but "Paddy" has been seen on many occasions seated on a bus, and in a tramcar, and in other ways using the public services, which involves Sunday work for the drivers and conductors. Does he object to his cook, or does he do his own cooking on a Sunday? Is it not the case that the Catholic's Sunday finishes at noon? and if so, why should he be opposed to Sunday evening entertainment? Very few Sabbatarians have been known to practice what they preach. Would any Sabbatarian watch his house being ransacked by burglars and refuse to call the assistance of the police because it was a Sunday, or, if a burst pipe was flooding the house, would he wait until Monday morning before notifying the plumbers; or if the house caught fire, would he refuse to allow the firemen to extinguish the flames because he was against Sunday work? It would be difficult to avoid work of some kind on Sundays—any clergyman will agree with that. The truth is, the Sabbatarians are not against SUNDAY EMPLOYMENT; they are against SUNDAY ENJOYMENT -- Creation, not recreation.

Both from a moral as well as from a medical standpoint Sunday indoor entertainment is desirable, especially for the Service men and women, the majority of whom are strangers in our midst. Officials of the Glasgow Public Health Department are greatly alarmed over the increase in infectious disease. Sir Alexander McGregor told the Press recently "that in the autumn of 1940, a year after the outbreak of war, there was a marked increase in the incidence of venereal disease, and that the augmented facilities for treatment then created were now proving inadequate, particularly for the treatment of young women. Particular concern is being felt about the increase in the number of young women infected. The majority of them are under 20 years of age, and some are mere girls."

Is it not better for the health of the nation that our young men and women should enjoy the pleasure of Sunday films and other forms of entertainment, rather than that they should be forced to wander about the streets in the black-out, because a few Sabbatarian nit-wits would prefer that they should run the risk of becoming the prey of harpies who ply the streets by night, which is their harvest time?

J. HUMPHREY.

THE ATTACKS ON SCIENCE

PROFESSOR H. L. HAWKINS, President of the Geological Society of London, said at this year's Anniversary Meeting of the Society:—

"There have been many attacks on Science as the villain responsible for our present troubles. Many of these attacks have emanated from bewildered folk who know little of any branch of Science or of the scientific method; such can be dismissed as commonplace expressions of ignorance and its satellite prejudice. But others have been launched, and kept afloat, by persons who have gained some reputation as thinkers and critics, chiefly on account of their facile use of words. It is, perhaps, scarcely extravagant to suggest that these vendors of verbiage should be logical. Let them consider the nature of their stock-in-trade."

"Surely they realise that words can be used to bring down glory from heaven or to conjure up filth from hell. Knowledge, which gives power, is as impartial as language which expresses ideas. But power is also impartial: its application for good or evil depends on the ideas that prompt its use. Words, therefore,

the agents of the mind, are more directly responsible for action than knowledge. It would be absurd to deplore the existence of words because they can cause harm when foully used—but it is equally foolish to decry the advance of knowledge because it can be misapplied. The trouble is not in our knowledge, but in ourselves.

"Let those who profess to lead our minds towards improved ideals look to their own failure to make progress before lamenting the success achieved by seekers after knowledge. Perhaps if these blind leaders of the blind could rid themselves of the myopia of orthodoxy and the cancer of ritual, they too might make advances that would transmute scientific knowledge from a potential curse to an unequivocal blessing. Meanwhile, knowledge cannot wait on wisdom; we must live and learn and hope, however despairingly, that the truth may one day make us free from the Bedlam or folly."—Quarterly Journal, Geological Society; September 30, 1942; page 48.

CORRESPONDENCE

STR.—Will Mr. Archibald Robertson ("The Freethinker"—October 25) please answer the following questions:—

1. Did the Labour Party in Parliament support the declaration of war on Germany?
2. Who elected the Labour Members of Parliament?
3. Have those who elected the Labour Members expressed disapproval of their action?
4. How else can the will of the people be expressed except through its elected representatives?—R. B. KERR.

What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour, is derived from the purely human, not the religious, part of our education.—J. S. MILL.

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 G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "Some Makers of Modern England: (2) Cromwell and the English Revolution."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

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

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Glasgow), Sunday, 3-0: Mr. E. LAWASI, "Religion and Science."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate); Sunday, 3-0: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY, "The Power and Secrets of the Jesuits."

Nelson (Fire Station, N.F.S. Discussion Group), Sunday, 7-30: Mr. J. CLAYTON, "Why Religion Decays."

The Bible Handbook

For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians

Edited by G. W. FOOTE AND W. P. BALL

This is the Ninth Edition of a book the utility of which is demonstrated by constant demand. It gives an aspect of the Bible Christian preachers carefully keep in the background. In the Handbook the Bible is left to speak for itself.

The passages cited are arranged under headings—

**BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS, BIBLE ATROCITIES
BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES AND
OBSCENITIES, BIBLE ABSURDITIES, UNFUL-
FILLED PROPHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES.**

Full references are given for every citation

*Tastefully bound in Cloth. There is no
war-time increase in price*

Price 2/6 Postage Twopence Halfpenny.

Ready November 10th

Postal Orders discharged in order of receipt.

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 People

By **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

What is the Use of Prayer?

Deity and Design.

Did Jesus Christ Exist.

Agnosticism or . . . ?

Atheism.

Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live.

Freethought and the Child.

Christianity and Slavery.

The Devil.

What is Freethought?

Price 2d. each. Postage 1d.

Other Pamphlets in this series to be published shortly

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.

THE PIONEER PRESS

2 & 3, Furnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.4