

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXII.—No. 47

Sunday, November 22, 1942

Price Threepence

CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	477
Cambridge and Its Colleges—T. F. Palmer ...	478
Some Notes on the Apocrypha—H. Cutner ...	480
Christian Country—F. J. Corina...	481
Acid Drops ...	482
To Correspondents ...	483
Sugar Plums ...	483
Godism Against Humanism—Athoso Zenoo ...	484
The Genius of Thomas Hardy—"Mimnermus" ...	485
"Atheist Boy"—Ian Yule ...	486
Correspondence ...	487
Sunday Lecture Notices, Etc. ...	487

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Evolution and Purpose

WE hope to be able to deal at greater length, later, with Dr. Julian Huxley's book, "Evolution, the Modern Synthesis." All we need say at the moment is that it is an excellent piece of work. It is also a timely one. It is 83 years since Darwin issued his "Origin of Species," and the fierce storm it aroused has now passed into history. Evolution is an accepted fact, and the process runs from star mist to planet and on through the whole of known nature. But the factors of evolution, the part played by each in the shaping of the whole, remain subjects of discussion. It is the existing situation and the place of Darwin in that situation with which Professor Huxley is concerned. It would be absurd to say that he has decisively settled all the questions with which he deals, but he has, so far as a hasty glance through the book warrants us in saying it, decisively shown that Darwinian evolution still holds a commanding position in the biological world.

My purpose in writing about this book before giving it the full appreciation it deserves is to pay a little attention to some remarks on the work which appeared in that semi-theological weekly "The Times Literary Supplement," which never misses an opportunity of puffing anything in favour of Christianity. In fact, a very good rule to adopt with "The Times Literary Supplement" is whenever one finds a book on an advanced anti or non-religious subject stated, buy it. The odds are that it is a good book.

The review in question appeared in the Supplement for October 17. It is, of course, unsigned, which is the general rule, but it does give a chance for a man to write a review of a book in a way that he would almost be ashamed of if he placed his name to it. Dr. Huxley not merely fails to find a "divine purpose" in evolution, but he says that nothing of the kind can be conceived. Of course, most scientists agree with Huxley, but few have the courage to say so. Either they remain silent, and so escape direct social attack, or they put on the protective cloak of a semi-religious agnosticism, after a foolish pretence of weighing

the pros and cons. They wipe out of their minds for the moment the fact that Tylor wrote in 1871, and that ever since our leading anthropologists have been illustrating the way in which gods are born—and die. The time they spend explaining—to the religious world, for the non-religious just wink the other eye—that they do not deny the existence of this or that god, they merely lack evidence of his existence, is anything but complimentary to either their intelligence or to their courage. The question of the origin of the gods is settled, and their beginning indicates their end.

Nature and Purpose

Dr. Huxley will have nothing to do with "purpose" in nature. He not only rules it out, he *explains* it out. He clears out subsidiary fallacies at the same time. Readers of these notes will remember how often I have pointed out that there is no such thing as progress in non-human nature, there are no such things as "higher" or "lower" forms of life. All that nature presents us with is differences and adaptations. To say that an animal is adapted to its environment is only saying that its reactions are of such a nature that it is able to live, and when it is dead, the relation between the body and its environment continues—in another form. Freethinkers will be quite familiar with these statements in my "Materialism Restated" and "God and the Universe," to say nothing of articles written over 40 years ago. There are differences in the forms of reaction between living things and their environment, but there is no difference in the organism-plus-the-environment situation.

But it was this misunderstanding of the significance of environment on which religious leaders up till yesterday based their belief in God as creator. A right understanding altogether kills "purpose" in nature, and on this Dr. Huxley says:—

"The purpose manifested in evolution, whether in adaptation, specialisation, or biological progress, is only an apparent progress. It is just as much a product of blind forces as is the falling of a stone to earth or the ebb and flow of the tides. It is we who have read purpose into evolution, as earlier men projected will and emotion into inorganic phenomena like storm or earthquake. If we wish to work towards a purpose for the future of man we must formulate that purpose ourselves. Purposes in life are made, they are not found."

That is clear, definite, uncompromising and scientific in its presentation. It should do something to spur other scientists to speak out as plainly. Nothing reflects the timidity of many of our scientists more than their obvious hesitation to say what they must believe with regard to the conclusions to be drawn from our existing knowledge of the nature of science and the origin of religious ideas.

But it is too much for the reviewer of "The Times Literary Supplement." He romps in with this instalment of stale clotted bosh:—

"It may be that Dr. Huxley has not given full weight to the argument that God uses natural selection as the implement of His purpose; or, to put it negatively, the fact of natural selection as the instrument of His purpose may still leave the existence of God and purpose an open question."

Could anyone conceive a finer example of pious stupidity? Natural selection may be considered as God's method of getting what He wants. Of course, a breeder has to make natural selection of achieving his ends. He must take nature as he finds it and make the best of it. But God, on the religious theory, created nature. He created the qualities of nature and dictated the course of evolution. Religiously, all that happens is part of God's plan. Consider the absurdity of it all. There might be a God or there might not be. It is said we do not know, and if we believe He exists, we do not know what He does, why He does it, or if He does anything at all. It is admitted that from what we know of the nature of the forces at work, these are adequate enough to account for all that happens. But if we agree that this is God's method of working, then we can believe that the development of life comes within the scope of God's plan.

But the old-fashioned Christian God—now placed in theological cold storage—did at least have His moments of greatness. He said "Let there be," and there was. He made a man out of dust and a woman out of a bone, and all the rest of the animal world out of anything that came handy. That was *some* God. He was getting somewhere and doing something. But "The Times Supplement" God, who wanted to make man and spends millions of years experimenting with all sorts of animals leading up to man, and after all that, man lets God down at the first opportunity, is enough to make even Cardinal Hinsley laugh—when he is quite alone.

For let us remember one fact about natural selection that is too often ignored. Nature does *not* select the "best" for survival. The function of natural selection is to slaughter the relatively weak (in relation to the environment). It weeds out certain forms much as a gardener weeds out a plant which is threatening one he wishes to cultivate. So far as we count "God" working through natural selection, we must count Him as doing what he can to kill, with the "higher" or "better" type surviving because it is stronger than its would-be killer. If the reviewer thinks this is a satisfactory idea of God he is welcome to it.

But the most he can say is that "evolution may still leave the existence of God and purpose an open question. What looks to us blind chance may appear very differently *sub specie aeternitatis*." A Latin quotation looks impressive to most folk, but an absurdity remains an absurdity whether in one language or another, and a man can be silly in his native tongue just as easily and as efficiently as in a foreign one, but there is surely enough absurdity in English in the passage we have cited to satisfy anyone. To say that "blind chance" is not a factor in life is downright nonsense, unless it stands for not knowing enough to account for a given something. And the Latin phrase stands for nothing more than a special operation

of a universal law, and universal laws must be manifest in particular instances, but if design in nature cannot be seen in instances, how does it come to exist in nature as a whole? A Roman Catholic formula may be impressive to a congregation of believers, but whether it is a sensible statement or not can be settled in one's native tongue. Always beware of the man who is lavish of foreign phrases.

But let us look at this question of "purpose." How do we, or how can we, logically assume "purpose" either in nature at large or in individual instances? Certainly you cannot argue design from the existence of cause and effect, because that is universal and admits of no exception. If, for example, a man dies from drinking a cup of tea which contains poison, the consequences of drinking will be precisely the same whether the poison got there by accident or was placed there by a servant. In a court of law the question of intention is essential in proving guilt. If the consequences of one's actions leads to death, and the evidence is that it was the result of accident, the charge of murder will not hold, although some punishment may be inflicted if neglect or carelessness can be shown. We need not multiply instances. The plain fact is that design or purpose cannot be inferred by a causal relation—that will exist whatever happens. To prove purpose one must relate the intention to the act—the thought to the fact.

But you cannot *prove* purpose, you cannot even infer purpose in nature unless you establish the intention of the alleged God. If one starts with a God, you may do as you please with him afterwards. But you cannot make him responsible for what occurs unless you have some means of knowing what he *intended* to do. He may have meant something entirely different from what is. Cause and effect can never prove the existence of a God, because there is exactly the same degree of cause and effect with everything that happens. Of course, there are many who will see something miraculous in the fact that 2 and 2 equal 4, but one does not expect this to be the case with our leading literary journal.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CAMBRIDGE AND ITS COLLEGES

It is now conceded that societies, like the individual organisms that compose them, are not made but grow. This axiom applies not merely to England's two far-famed medieval universities—Oxford and Cambridge—but also distinguishes all the other centres of old-time study with which Dean Rashdall, in his standard volumes on Medieval Universities, so industriously surveyed.

The genesis of the now world-renowned University on the Cam seems somewhat fortuitous. Certainly its site was not selected for its picturesque beauties or its medieval advantages. For, as Mr. John Steegmann justly observes in his splendidly illustrated "Cambridge" (Batsford, 1940, 10s. 6d.): "On the edge of the fens, an immense tract of bog, morass and marshy lakes, it was subject to repeated and disastrous flooding; and it might well be thought that if a university were to grow up in the Eastern Midlands it would have chosen Northampton, Peterborough, Stamford or even Huntingdon."

As its ancient Roman remains testify, Camboritum was once an important military station through which two Roman roads proceeded, while it had formerly been part of the British Queen Boadicea's dominions. In Saxon times the town was called Grantbrige, and this name is recorded in Domesday Book as

denoting some 400 dwelling places. Its castle was erected by the Normans, under whose rule its population increased. With the founding of Barnwell Priory and the adjacent monastic settlements of Crowland, Ely, Ramsey and Thorney, Cambridge waxed both in size and opulence. In any case, King John imposed burdensome taxation on the burgesses, although, as an act of grace, he later granted them the right to found a Merchant's Guild and to hold a fair. This, we gather, is "the traditional origin of the famous Midsummer Fair, now commemorated only by Midsummer Common." Still, the merciless exactions of the King and his Court, both in money and kind, must have proved a heavy burden on the community.

During the 12th century Cambridge became a resort for students, who were domiciled in hostels and lodging-houses under the supervision of a Principal, until their instruction was imparted by a teacher who could gather sufficient paying-pupils around him. Others were dependent on the services of the mendicant friars, who must have proved indifferent pedagogues, since their chief aim was apparently "recruiting or proselytising for their particular Order, and not unnaturally they had considerable success among the inexperienced, impoverished and studious youths, mostly of about 14, who were the earliest undergraduates."

Not until 1284 was Peterhouse, the first recorded college established, although St. John's Hostel dates back to 1135. What happened in the interval remains obscure, but in the opening years of the 12th century both Oxford and Cambridge were recruited by students who had forsaken Paris, at that time the centre of European learning. Then in 1209 a group of pacific students who were disgusted and dismayed by the constantly recurring town-and-gown riots in Oxford migrated to Cambridge to settle in serener surroundings. In this quest, however, they were keenly disappointed for, as our author observes, "the town-and-gown rows in Cambridge were carried on with a ferocity and a frequency enough to dismay even the toughest *emigré* from Paris. Indeed, the Montagne Latine and the colleges of St. Thomas du Louvre and Robert de Sorbonne must have seemed havens of peace and quiet to the distracted students of the parishes of St. Bene't or St. Edward round about 1230. The worst rows, however, occurred during the 14th century when the colleges were being founded and the University was well established in wealth and privilege."

Meanwhile, nine religious houses arose, and by 1278 Cambridge had grown into a fairly-sized community for that diminutive day and, according to an Inquisition of Edward III., the town contained 17 churches at that date. It became a very precarious sanctuary for opulent Jews who, in company with Gentiles, had been shamefully treated by baron barons, who made captive the richest Israelites and held them for ransom while they and their retainers devoured to their hearts content the provisions of the Priory. King Henry III. then intervened, but not from humanitarian motives, for he was anxious to preserve his own royal rights to plunder and oppress his Jews. Capital punishment or torture was therefore to be inflicted on the persecutors of the Cambridge Jews.

Apparently, the infant University existed before any separate colleges were founded. Still, the University and the individual colleges are so closely connected that they are practically inseparable. As Steegmann states: "The corporate bodies called colleges are, and always have been, quite distinct from the corporate body called the University; they are self-governing and more or less independent of University control, but since practically all members of the University are members of some college, it is quite impossible to imagine one existing now without the other."

Our author remarks that the town-and-gown tumults continued at least to the 18th century. Yet, in his "Tom Brown at

Oxford," Hughes describes an Oxford row that presumably occurred much later. Steegmann, however, surmises that these disturbances were largely due to the burgess's resentment at the increasing dispensation from taxation, as well as other preferences accorded the clerks. Perhaps a haughty demeanour of "scholars" towards their less literate fellow-townsmen, as well as popular prejudice against any form of culture, may have contributed to these unseemly displays.

Some of the less rowdy students unsuccessfully strove to establish more reposeful quarters elsewhere, when they were sternly ordered to return to Cambridge. Steegmann intimates: "That the riots were more or less endemic, but they occasionally became epidemics of sufficient gravity to have been specially recorded, as in . . . the most memorable row of all, in 1381, led by the Mayor and burgesses, who broke open and sacked most of the hostels and destroyed all the Bulls, Charters and Muniments in the University chest. All the Statutes and Ordinances were publicly burnt in the market-place amid shouts of 'Away with the skill of the clerks!' This particular riot goes a long way towards explaining the obscurity of University history."

The next foundation to Peterhouse was Michaelhouse in 1324, and this college may in some respects be regarded as the earliest, but it has long since vanished owing to its incorporation in Trinity College, the great foundation of Henry VIII. Among the earlier colleges are Pembroke; Gonville, later refounded as Gonville and Caius, now the medical centre of Cambridge; and Trinity Hall, which is quite distinct from Trinity College. Trinity Hall and Corpus Christi owe their inception to the heavy clerical deathroll resulting from the ravages of the Black Death. The latest foundation of the 14th century was Clare Hall, while King's, the next in succession, was not founded until 1441.

Until well within the 15th century the majority of students seem to have lived and studied in poverty-stricken surroundings quite unlike those of to-day. The author of the work under review, whose researches into Cambridge history have been extensive, concludes that the students were then "characterised by extreme poverty, generally having to beg on the highways for their living; extreme youth, being generally about 14 or 15; and extreme lack of ambition, their sole aim being as a rule to acquire just enough Latin to qualify as schoolmasters."

Like other famous foundations so predominantly restricted in our age to the sons of prosperous and influential parents, the various Cambridge colleges were originally instituted to provide the impecunious students with a modicum of learning. The quarters in which they were domiciled appear to have been unpleasantly primitive and "the average boy was probably always on the border of starvation." Moreover, avers Steegmann: "The arid medieval pedantry that he absorbed kept him also, doubtless, on the edge of spiritual starvation."

Five chapters of Steegmann's fine monograph cover the centuries extending from Medieval times through the Renaissance, Reformation, 17th Century and Georgian periods, down to the Cambridge of the present day. A survey of the modern University, including both appreciation and criticism of its architecture and other adornments, with a forecast of the future of this celebrated seat of learning and enlightenment, concludes the volume.

The Fitzwilliam Museum possesses an international reputation, and the achievements of Cambridge scientists are universally acknowledged. Newton and other eminent physicists in an earlier day, and Kingdon Clifford, Rutherford, J. J. Thomson, Clifford Allbutt, Sir James Frazer and many others in ours, have all added lustre to the *alma mater* on the Cam. Nor must the great Cavendish Laboratory remain unmentioned as a citadel of scientific research.

It seems somewhat anomalous, however, that Steegmann, so enlightened in so many directions, finds nothing but cause for disparagement in the modern female colleges of Girton and Newnham. For he treats these excellent institutions as a deeply deplorable intrusion into a semi-sacred centre of study and research which should be carefully preserved for the sole benefit of the lords of creation. Were a woman of Constance Naden's calibre still with us, her views on this thorny subject would prove interesting reading.

T. F. PALMER.

SOME NOTES ON THE APOCRYPHA

II.

ONE of the best of the books in the Apocrypha is Ecclesiasticus, so called in the Vulgate, and meaning perhaps "used in the Church"; but in the Greek it is called the Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach, or the Book of Sirach, who, it is contended, wrote it in Hebrew. It was translated into Greek by his grandson, who bore the same name; but nothing whatever is known of either, and in any case, the family relationship is variously described in different MSS. It has been a difficult task to assign a date to the work, but it was probably written somewhere between 190 and 130 B.C. Its contents are exceedingly varied—striking sayings, proverbs, sage counsels and the like, the last chapters being mostly "in praise of famous men." It is intensely monotheistic, but it was intended also to be the moral "guide, philosopher and friend of the average Jew." Dr. Scrivener considered that Ecclesiasticus and the First Book of the Maccabees "are among the noblest of uninspired compositions; if indeed, their authors, so full of faith and holy fear, can be regarded as entirely uninspired."

This brings us to the Books of the Maccabees, the first of which seems to be our chief authority "for one of the most stirring periods in Jewish history." As is the case of most of the other books of the Bible, the author is quite unknown, and so is the date of its composition, though authorities put that as somewhere between 100 and 80 B.C. Though religious in tone, and though its author may have been a Palestinian Jew, the word God or Lord does not occur in it. The book owes a good deal of its value to "its freedom from legendary accretions." Perhaps this is one cause of its omission from the Hebrew canon.

The Second Book of the Maccabees is very different from the First, which was, as far as then possible, a genuine attempt at true history. It is written more for the purpose of inculcating religion, and therefore one need not be surprised to find many mythical and "legendary accretions." It was written perhaps 50 years later than the other, but its author is quite unknown.

But though this concludes the list of Apocryphal books found in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, it by no means closes the list of extra or wider Apocrypha. As this list is not well known, it might as well be given here as illustrative of the way in which "sacred" literature has grown.

There are first two more Books of the Maccabees—Third and Fourth. Why the Third Book should be named Maccabees is not at all clear, as "there is absolutely no reference to the Maccabees or the Maccabean age in it at all." It is just an historical romance, the scene laid in Jerusalem and Alexandria in the reign of Ptolemy (222-204 B.C.), and written either in the first century before or the first century after the Christian era. As for the Fourth Book, "its chief interest is in philosophy and religion; the historical elements (if such they can be called) are entirely secondary and subordinate. . . the book is really a sermon or homily." Eusebius and Jerome thought that it was written by Josephus, but there is no justification whatever for this. The author was probably a Hellenist Jew, and the book was written about A.D. 1—but the date is quite uncertain. It is claimed that Paul was immensely influenced by it.

Then there are 18 Psalms attributed to Solomon written in imitation of the "genuine" Psalms, but nobody knows who

wrote them, or where, or when. They seem to represent the special theological beliefs of the Pharisees, and were probably composed about 40 B.C.

The Book of Enoch is next on the list and is perhaps one of the most important uncanonical works ever discovered. It really consists of a number of documents strung together, written over a period of 200 years just before the beginning of our era. It belongs to the same class of writing as the canonical Apocalypse and, says Professor Andrews, "the importance of this Enoch literature can scarcely be over-estimated. There is hardly a book in the New Testament which does not show some traces of its influence, and the Epistle of Barnabas quotes it as Scripture." He adds:—

"There can be little doubt that New Testament theology owes a very considerable debt to the Book of Enoch. This is particularly apparent when we compare its Messianic conceptions with the New Testament interpretation of Christ. (a) In the Book of Enoch the term "Christ" is applied for the first time in Jewish literature to the coming Messianic king. (b) The title "the Son of Man" makes its first appearance in Enoch, and passes from Enoch into the New Testament. (c) Two other titles which are used in Enoch of the Messiah, viz., "the Righteous One" and the "Elect One," are used of Christ in the New Testament (cf. Acts iii. 14, vii. 52). (d) One of the main functions of the Messiah in Enoch was that of judgment, and this conception is almost verbally reproduced in John v. 22. (e) The Messiah is depicted as "pre-existing" and as "sitting on the throne of His glory"—two ideas which are also familiar to readers of the New Testament."

It is not surprising in view of these facts that the Book of Enoch was considered quite "inspired" for some centuries; but it eventually was excluded from the canon—though exactly why is not clear. Recently—about 1892—a Slavonic version of the Book of the Secrets of Enoch was discovered. It was written originally in Greek by an orthodox Hellenistic Jew about A.D. 1-50. It is all about the ascension of Enoch and his voyage through the seven heavens. Like the other Book of Enoch, it has profoundly influenced Christian theology. The idea of the Millennium, for example, "is first found in this book" and Paul's ideas of the heavens and Satan prove that he knew the book very well.

Another Apocalypse recently discovered is that of Baruch which, like Enoch, appears to be a compilation of several books written about A.D. 50-100. It contains among other things a description of the fall of Jerusalem; but its principal interest is, says Professor Andrews, that "it affords a clear illustration of Jewish thought in the last half of the first century of the Christian era, and shows us the sort of literature which the apostle Paul would probably have produced if he had not become a Christian. The measure of the difference between the Apocalypse of Baruch and the Epistles of Paul is the measure of the influence of the Christian religion." In fact, there are some remarkable conceptions in this Baruch which have always been thought to be part of Pauline theology and unique with Paul.

Still another late find is the Assumption of Moses, a sort of prophecy put into the mouth of Moses as to what is going to happen to the Jewish race, written about A.D. 1-30. Once again "it throws light on many passages in the New Testament"—such as several phrases in Jude, the speech of Stephen in Acts vii and the kind of language used by Jesus in his attack on the ruling classes in Palestine.

The Book of Jubilees is still another Apocalypse written about 135-96 B.C. It is known as "the little Genesis" and is "a revised version of the earlier history of Israel from the creation of the world down to the institution of the Passover." It was probably written to bolster up the then Jewish code which was being influenced by Hellenism. It is particularly interesting because

his writer had not the slightest compunction in altering Jewish "history" to suit his purpose; and he seems to have been a firm believer in both angels and demons.

Finally there are the two works, the Ascension of Isaiah and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. The former contains "a large admixture of Christian elements," and was written (it is claimed) about A.D. 1-50; it deals with the "martyrdom" of Isaiah, and it certainly contains an interpolated section. Both the Trinity and the Virgin Birth are clearly shown and there are many other references to what later became Christian theology.

The Testaments have achieved wide fame and have been greatly discussed. The book was at first thought to be the work of a Christian; but there are Christian elements in it which are obviously interpolations, as well as late Jewish ones. It is difficult to assign a date to its composition, but it may have originally appeared about 109 B.C. Its importance lies in the fact that no other Jewish document has had a greater influence on the New Testament. As Professor Andrews says: "From the point of view of New Testament exegesis, therefore, the document is of incalculable value."

From this very short glance at the Apocrypha and kindred works it can be seen that though some orthodox writers are in the habit of dismissing them often with something like contempt, they have obviously had very great influence on the Christian "sacred" books; and that the theology of the New Testament can scarcely be understood without reference to them. In other words, while Christians may contend that the Gospel writers and Paul were "inspired" by the Holy Ghost to write as and what they did, the plain fact is that they were, on the admission of Christian scholars themselves, almost as much inspired by certain Apocalyptic books, which are, on their own showing, *not* inspired. No wonder that in such an ultra-orthodox work like Dr. Angus's "Bible Hand Book," published by the Religious Tract Society, one will find very little mention of them or the Apocrypha generally.

H. CUTNER.

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY!

WHEN Christian apologists, faced with some of the more shocking facts of the history of the Christian Church, attempt to whitewash the present-day Church by claiming that such things do not happen to-day, all they are saying, in effect, is that the restraint imposed upon them by the secular law prevents such things being done in the same degree that formerly prevailed.

It is only in degree, however, that things have altered; for the same spirit prevails, and "the greater glory" still comes before other considerations. Modern examples of Christian "humanism" often bear out the fact that the Christian Church has little regard for human feeling and human suffering in matters which affect her own great and divine interests.

Here is the story of Bobby and his mother. As you read, please remember that this is still a Christian country in the sense that the Church influences social policy and moral conceptions to a large degree.

Bobby's mother, whom I know well, suffers from encephalitis lethargica, or sleepy sickness, in an advanced stage. She happens to be a Roman Catholic in a purely formal sense, being a convert by marriage, and probably not having been inside a church for many years. She has a son (Bobby), who was sent to a remand school some 20 miles away from his home town, he having committed some terrible "crimes" to which I shall refer.

At this distance his mother was just able to visit him when an Atheist lent her the money for the fare, for she lives in dire poverty and her husband is in an institution, unable to support her. Her desire to see the lad was understandable, for his devotion to his half-helpless mother while he was at home had been pitifully courageous. Arm in arm, walking slowly, the

mother depending upon the boy for support and guidance, this tragic pair were a well-known spectacle in a busy city shopping thoroughfare.

Now the woman walks alone, slower and more perilously, for sometimes her complaint causes her to walk backward instead of forward, with saliva dripping from her mouth, head nodding and limbs trembling—a menace to traffic and to herself.

One of Bobby's crimes was that he had been a regular truant from school. With a mother like that, to play truant was a noble thing to do, for Bobby did not run away to play, but to care for his mother; and when he stole the wood from the empty house in a slum (another of his crimes), it was not to sell it for a profit, but to keep his mother warm. But we cannot tolerate criminals in a Christian society, can we? So Bobby was sent to a remand school, and his mother went to see him when she could.

Then it happened! Christian justice had to be done, but Catholic justice wanted more.

God's Gestapo—the Roman Catholic authorities—discovered that a boy from an R.C. parish, one of their credit items in compiling membership statistics, was likely to be entered on the wrong side of the ledger unless they got him first. So he was rescued for Rome, and—without the mother being so much as asked—he was transferred to a Roman Catholic approved school about 80 miles away. So does the Roman Catholic "atmosphere" outweigh the atmosphere of family contact—for the mother is completely unfit to travel that distance to see her son, even with the financial aid of an Atheist. What an atmosphere! What a Church!

True, the mother was given a voucher, permitting her to travel at a slightly cheaper rate than the usual fare—so generous is the Church. But a scooter would have been as useful to Bobby's mother.

That Bobby is now a true son of Rome is little comfort to this unfaithful daughter of Rome, for she cannot fathom the inscrutable and infinite wisdom that turns such misery and deprivation into the miraculous Will of God, the Heavenly Father. Nor can I. What mortal father could tear apart, then separate further still, the contact points of mother love, and of a boyish fidelity that hurls an avalanche of scorn and contempt upon those who cannot, or will not, understand it?

But in the name of the Holy Father, it was done. When I see again that Christian, Catholic effigy, the Virgin and her Child, I shall think of Bobby and his mother.

Yet, there is a funny side, even to this sad tale. Poor Bobby wrote a letter to his mother, telling of his journey to the new school. It was as though the spirit of Voltaire had taken charge of Bobby's pen in vitriolic, sardonic mood, when he wrote:—

"And when we got to the school I was surprised. I said to my escort that I had never seen such a big approved school in my life."

How now, Rome? With your genuine original Christian doctrines; with your claims and pretensions to a faith that makes men moral. Bobby innocently says that you have the biggest approved school he has ever seen. We are told that lack of religion causes juvenile delinquency; but if you deserve any sincere tribute it is that there is no lack of religion in your system, with its thoroughgoing methods and its embracing scope in its relations with the flock. Bobby probably did not know that "the biggest approved school he has ever seen" is controlled by a Church that can lay claim only to 7 per cent. of the population, on its own figures. Lack of religion indeed!

And by the way, if anybody wants the full details of the above story, with names, dates and places, they can have them on condition that they have an honest doubt about the accuracy of the story of Bobby in a Christian country.

F. J. CORINA.

ACID DROPS

WE mentioned last week that the Manchester City Council had asked the Home Secretary to forbid children under 16 to attend cinemas on Sunday. They say, with unusual honesty and plainness, it is because it injures Sunday schools, which exist for the purpose of turning out members for Church or Chapel. Probably the reasoning runs that as the Board of Education has most probably done a secret deal with the clergy with regard to day schools, local Councils ought to do another deal with local religious bodies.

But why not go the whole hog and prohibit anyone attending cinemas on Sunday who has at any time, or does still, profess to believe in Christianity? When we bear in mind the huge State gifts to the Churches in the shape of remittance of taxes, and the amount paid by the State to provide chaplains in the Armed Services—and prisons—it is illogical to permit these Christians assaulting their own creed by looking at a gangster play on the Sabbath.

Besides, the age limit is not effective enough. It is a known fact that conversions to Christianity, when they are not animated by political or similar causes, are a phenomenon of adolescence. Alcoholism, religion and what we may call congenital insanity belong to this period, which runs normally to about 26. So we suggest that the Manchester City Council, if it wishes to save the Churches by making Sunday so damnably dull that even a Sunday school will have its attractions, should confine the Sunday cinema-goers to under 26's; and the next step should be, of course, to prohibit Sunday attendants to under that age—26. But as Councillor Hall pointed out, the only effect of the proposed measure will be to turn the under 16's loose on the streets. So we suggest increasing the age to 26, and also compelling all members of the Manchester Council to attend Sunday school. It is evident that at least a few of them need schooling of some kind.

The "Universe" publishes an article in which it explains how 22,000 missionaries are trying to convert 1,300,000 people. The Church also has 22,000 priests, 7,600 teachers, etc., etc. Quite a lot. But the "Universe" forgets it also has God, and he ought to count for a lot. Yet the "leakage goes on," and the mass of people cited do not come to God. Why?

This also reminds us of a story current in the days when the Irish question was before the English public. An English visitor was being told by an Irishman of the state of Ireland and its readiness for revolt. He explained how many guns, etc., the Irish Revolutionary Party had, the many thousands of men they had ready to use them, etc., etc. "Why," said the Englishman, "you have quite an army. Why don't you rise and take possession of the country?" "Oh," came the reply, "the police won't let us." The Church, with God and all the saints behind it, are out to capture the world, but the world won't be captured. So the Church must keep plodding along, chronicling its successes and ignoring its losses.

Preparations for another drive in favour of handing over the schools to the control of the Churches appears to be on foot. We may expect this drive to become more urgent as the prospects of the end of the war grow brighter, and which must bring a General Election nearer. That may mean, as it ought to mean, a new Government—not merely new in form, but in essence; and the Churches are aware that they can only hope to gain substantial control of education under a Government such as now exists.

At present we may note there is another burst of articles in the newspapers on religion and the schools all over the country, all saying the same things, which alone bears the mark of a planned and costly campaign. Mainly we think this is done, not so much to influence the public as to impress the Government. The general public, as usual, takes but a luke-warm interest in education, and with the carelessness of the people and the carrying out of an understanding between the leaders

of the public and the leaders of the Conservative Party—to say nothing of the fear the Labour Party has of offending religious groups—we may find ourselves returning to the pre-1870 position.

The Roman Catholic leaders make it quite plain that they will have no interference with the control of their schools, which must be under the Catholic priests, manned by Catholic teachers, saturated with a Catholic atmosphere but, substantially, maintained by the public at large. The "Catholic Herald," in its issue for November 6, boasts that it has the declaration of Mr. Butler, Minister of Education, that religion is essential to a sound education. Much private conversations and exchange of documents have gone on between the heads of the Churches and the Ministry of Education, and the plan appears to have been well worked out. As the war outlook lightens it looks as though the cultural and social outlook will blacken—unless the general public show much greater interest than it has shown up to date.

Up to the present the State schools have always provided a foothold for the clergy through the provision for religious teaching not identifiable with any sect, and the "Conscience Clause" which gives the legal right to withdraw the children from religious instruction. As the majority of parents appear to be careless whether children have religious teaching or not, and as for various reasons they do not bother to interfere with school plans, whatever they are, the sects have gained heavily from these conditions. But suppose it were arranged that religious instruction should be given only to parents who asked for it. What then? If there is a real demand for religious education the Churches should agree to the proposal. But we are quite certain they would not agree with it because the result would show that there is only a minority demand for religion. If it is there people put up with it. If it is not there they would not bother about it. It is not the public that clamour for more churches, it is the clergy that ask for them. In modern society cant and dishonesty runs through the whole of religion from High Church to the B.B.C.

"Russia," says the "Church Times" in its issue for November 6, "will have a vital part to play in the reconstruction of human civilisation." Excellent, but Russia has already played some part in the direction of civilisation, and as we have said more than once, the great lesson it has taught the world—or at least that portion of the world that can distinguish essential things from unessential ones, is that the change of Russian civilisation that has taken place in a single generation should have dealt the death-blow to that particularly idiotic "You can't alter human nature" when the whole secret of civilisation is the plasticity of the direction in which human society may move. To those who can read history aright, all development in human nature, whether good or bad, is an exhibition of the manner in which human nature may alter in its varied expressions.

We are not certain that the "Church Times" means what we mean—it probably means only that Soviet Russia is not quite such a festering mass of evil as it was pictured when it made its great stand against the villainies of Church and State in Czarist Russia. And it must not be forgotten that it was not the recognition of the good done by the revolution that brought about our alliance, but the discovery that Russia would be an invaluable ally in our war with Germany. It was Russia, the fighting machine, that brought the Churches to heel and stifled the lies that they had told, and were telling, about "godless Russia." And what we are still fighting for is for our leading clerics and our leading newspapers and politicians to stand up honestly and say: "We were wrong in what we said about the Russian revolution; we are sorry." Praise after defamation by the same party is good, but when it is not accompanied by an honest declaration of wrong or mistaken action, then it is not so good. The Archbishop of Canterbury might set a lead in this matter.

The Churches are in such a dilemma over Russia that they excite our pity. They dare not admit they are largely responsible for the ill-feeling towards Russia, and they are fearful of the after-war consequences of praise.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- F. HOEV.—Thanks. It will be very useful for reference as occasions present themselves. We are deeply indebted to those who keep us in touch with things.
- F. GREENING.—Thanks for copying and sending on the lines, but they are not quite up to standard, although the sentiment is good enough.
- C. H. DREWRY.—We agree with what you say about the need of watching the youth organisations. They are overloaded with clergymen, and that has a tendency to keep useful people out. There are numbers of very worthy people who take part in them, and many are squeezed out by the quantity of religious cant that is put in. The type of man and woman to which we refer do not usually express and persist in a protest; they simply drop out, which throws the control more thoroughly into the wrong hands.
- A. S. JOHNSTONE.—Much obliged. Some of "Philosopher's" replies are quite good. Much better than the B.B.C. Brains Trust, where such questions are barred lest listeners should make certain "dangerous" deductions.
- J. M. C. sends us the following quotation, which certainly has point. It is headed "Church":—
- We've filed her teeth
And clipped her claws,
Why cringe beneath
Her drooling jaws?
- We suppose the answer is—Want of courage.
- G. H.—Thanks. Shall appear as soon as possible.
- A. S. KNOX.—We doubt the authenticity, but will publish when space permits.
- D. STARN (Clapham Common).—We have not yet had time to do more than just glance at Sir James Jean's new work. But the bearings of new scientific theories on Materialism will be found discussed in our "Materialism Restated," a new edition of which—the third—is now in the printer's hands. We may write on Jeans' book later, but we have our hands very full.
- A. HATTIE and "TAB CAN."—Obliged for cuttings. They are useful.
- W. G. PRIEST.—Obliged for excerpt. Will be used.
- W. MOSLEY.—We share your appreciation of Mr. Corina's article on "Abortion and the Law." A great many of our problems would be much easier of solution if they were cleared of the religious taint.
- E. J. SIMONS.—We are preparing something on the question of Christian persecution which we hope to have ready for the press soon, but the demands on our time grow greater instead of lesser.
- REV. W. J. DENHAM.—Crowded out. Next week.

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

WE are sending out the copies of the "Bible Handbook" as rapidly as possible. But we are being harassed by difficulties in binding. Copies are being doled out as though they were prizes. But within a few days we hope to fulfil all orders. The demand for this reprint is much greater than we anticipated.

There was no ceremony on November 11 round the monument in Whitehall. It would have been a mockery of the dead and an insult to the living had it been persisted in. The idea on which it was originally based, and which led to its erection was a worthy one. It was to commemorate the memory of those who had fallen in battle from 1914 to 1918. But from the outset it was prostituted to the glorification of war. The army that fought the wars of 1914-18 was essentially an army of civilians, as it is in this war. It was composed of men from the mine, the shop, the workshop, the desk, of men of letters, of all the classes that make up a modern community. With the briefest of training they were thrown into the battle, and they did their duty fearlessly and well. It was in its essence a civilian army. And no army ever fought better.

In sheer decency the Cenotaph should therefore have been devoted to the memory of the dead. (We leave out the word "sacrifice," for there are doubts whether a man does "sacrifice" himself when he realises the better aspects of his nature, and its religious associations are rich in indications of superstitions and religious brutality.) In every one of these demonstrations the Army, the Navy and other branches of the Services and the clergy were fully represented; the higher aspects of life—literature, art, industry, music, civic developments—none of these things was represented. Brute force and cunning occupied the field. There was, of course, the crowd, but they were there to be taught admiration for that which should have been kept in the background.

Many times we protested against this betrayal of the men who fell in fighting a war they were told was to end all war. We were almost alone in so protesting. Since the days of old Rome the people have enjoyed a pageant, and under cover of a "show" the Armed Forces gave an exhibition which taught the lesson that no country was safe unless it was well armed and viewed every other country as a potential enemy. The Cenotaph should be rededicated, and periodically we might then have a ceremonial service glorifying peace and civilisation. But from that the rattle of arms and the tramp of soldiers should be excluded. The priesthoods should be absent and all the arts and industries and the triumphs of science that belong to civilisation should be represented. Manhood and womanhood may not be as great as we would wish, but they contain the elements of the greatest we can conceive. To use the memory of the dead to create a taste for that which threatens all civilisation is treason to humanity. Let us learn from the Chinese philosophers of old, that "the soldier is at best a necessary evil." And we are sure that many great soldiers would agree on that.

It was quite pleasing again to hear the church bells—from the outside. Inside they are never attractive. All the churches were, of course, busy praising God and thanking him for the splendid advance of our troops—which made the whole proceedings idiotic. To praise the men who planned the advance, and those who carried out the plan, is natural and proper. The pity of it is that so many had to pay for the success with their lives, or in large numbers had to pay a heavier price by being seriously crippled for life. But what in the name of all that is idiotic have we to thank God for? If every plane had been made by Atheists, and every man who flew them, with every soldier an Atheist, the result would have been what it is. If God can only help to victory when we are able to earn victory without him, he deserves to be known as the Great Opportunist. Or, alternatively, as lawyers would say, a "Jack of Both Sides," always backing those who are strong enough to do without him.

GODISM AGAINST HUMANISM: SPIRITUAL FAITH OR SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING

"Multiplication is vexation, Division's twice as bad;
The God in Three, a Puzzle be: Its Fractions drive
'em mad!"

THIS rendering of the old school jingle, not much as poetry, certainly suits—ideologically—the present, the fourth, period of the World Struggle that began in 1914. When I last appeared I had the satisfaction of solving a "Problem"—that was no problem at all. It had been a part of Professor Eddington's apologetic sophistry in his efforts to defend Godism, i.e. Religion or Faith in Spiritual and Supernatural Powers. Limits of space and time—for I wanted to catch the tide of our readers' interest in the "Problem" at its flood—made my answer brief. Much more might have been written, because Eddington's statement about the Multiplication Table involves the whole fight of Philosophic "Materialism" against Philosophic "Idealism." Being by nature and development careful in the use of words, I have never liked the terms "Materialism" and "Idealism." They can be, have been, and are, used in the most twisting, sophistical manner by the Professional Apologists for Christian Godism—most of whom are utterly unscrupulous, intellectually, in their attempts to save the Faith on which they live well, in the material sense of the word. To-day, they are haunted by the fear that they may have to cry—as the Canonical Gospels say their "Lord and Saviour" cried—Why hast thou forsaken us? The better statement of this now all-important controversy, as I see it, is: **"Is Human Life, individual and social, the outcome of Spiritual and Supernatural Forces, or of Human and Natural Forces?"** However, when Chapman Cohen has answered the question so fully and clearly, particularly in "Determinism or Free Will?" and "Materialism Re-stated," it were needless, and inadvisable, for me at present to enter upon the wider and deeper issues involved.

Still, in spite of all this, the specific affair of the Multiplication Table can be most useful in helping towards an *Understanding*—not merely a knowledge—of this most important Problem of the Present. My old, simple and favourite basis for Philosophic "Materialism" was: "Without sufficient material food no human can have any ideas—not even any idea of food." On the other hand, through a long process of Individual and Social evolution, Humans have become "Ideologic" animals. That is, mental faculties have developed in the Human Individual—existence; and customs, morals, laws, etc., in the Human Social-existence. Humans, more and more, secure—or try to secure—the necessities of life by what may be called "Ideologic Effort" (not "necessities" of life, as so many journeyman journalists and politicians—big and little—seem to fancy). In short, the more complex the form of Human Social-existence becomes, the more the Human Individual effort becomes *Mental*, rather than *merely physical*.

As a result of becoming "Ideologic Animals" Humans have been—and are—able to refuse food and die for an Idea, as countless thousands have done—provided only that Belief in their Idea has become, or has been made, sufficiently strong. **They have faced as fearful odds, and died as bravely, for Belief in an Idea that was False as for one provably True.** Also, they have endured suffering and painful death, merely because "kill or be killed" or "exploit or be exploited" was the only alternative apparent to them. The Paradox of the Price paid by Humans for Brains! (Yes, Ali, it's been well worth the price; and, if you don't believe me, ask our old mutual friend Farul.)

The Scientific Atheist Philosophy, of which Chapman Cohen has been—and is—the chief exponent, by its "Scientific Conception of History," enables us to understand both the material basis in Food and the mental product in Ideas. It also enables us to trace and to *understand* the Process, back through the ages, to the Primitive Times of Humankind. Faith in Spiritual

Powers, Religion, Godism, provides no understanding at all of the Forces and Processes that "determine" or "condition" Human Existence; just as it never could do about Sun, Moon, Planets and Stars. The *Understanding* came only as Godless Astronomy developed and the Mephitic Mental Fog of Mystic Incomprehensible Christian Godism was dispersed from the "Heavenly Bodies" and from the relations of "Time" and "Space."

So it is, to-day, with our Social Problems in Peace, in War and in Peace to come. Christian Godism has not only failed to supply any *understanding* in Education, in Morals, in Philosophy, Sociology, Economics, Politics, etc.; but, by its mischievous influence through all Classes and Parties, it has confused and fogged the minds of the People to such an extent that they found themselves in the present dangers, difficulties and disasters with no knowledge whatever of what was happening—and even less understanding! Not only that, but by their obstinate, bigoted and unscrupulous attempts to regain their Dominion and Power over the minds and lives of the "Common People," the leaders of Christian Godism have complicated the World-wide Economic-Military War by superimposing a World Civil War of Ideologies that are irreconcilably antagonistic. That not only increases immensely the difficulties of the Economic-Military War and delays the day of defeat for German Hitlerism: it is endangering the Idea of the New World—the "New Civilisation"—which is the ONLY means by which the People of the Allied Nations can be united and aroused for the struggle. The people of Britain, to say nothing of the people of China, Africa, India, Burma, Malaya, etc., can NEVER be united or "inspired" by the Idea that the tyranny of Christian Godism shall be imposed, or reimposed, upon their minds and lives.

A form of Human Social-Existence, which has "had a run" of something over 300 years, is now coming to an end in world-wide misery, suffering, terror and death. Those who have done well out of it are doing all they can to conserve the sectarian and sectional advantages they have enjoyed in the "Old World." Above and beyond all others, the leaders of Christian Godism are fighting as desperately as is "Hitler" to save themselves and to enforce the Tyranny of Christian Godism upon the "New World." The new Arch. Cant., in his "Christianity and Social Order," makes a statement of aims practically identical with the Totalitarian Christian Godism of Dr. Schuschnigg, but under the Dominion of Cant. instead of the Vatican. A host of others are equally dangerous anti-Democrats. One "young" Labour M.P. not only declares himself a Totalitarian Christian, but urged his audience at a youth meeting always to be prepared to assert their T.C. That is not only a flat denial of all Democratic Principles, but it is calculated to break up all unity in the nation, party, workshop, etc., for the life or death struggle against German Hitlerism; and I know what more than 80 per cent. of my fellow-workers say about that kind of thing.

Apart, however, from these bigoted, intolerant, anti-Democrats with whom one cannot argue, but only expose and oppose publicly, there are others of a different type who still hang on to a sort of a kind of vague Christian Godism. They lament the lack of political fervour in the Labour and Opposition-Liberal Parties, and vainly imagine that some kind of Christian Godism can reinspire either or both of these parties. **They forget that it is precisely that Godism, rendering Unity impossible, that has made those parties lose their enthusiasm.** Sir Richard Acland and, probably, Professor Eddington are types of this mental confusion. They fancy there is something Incomprehensible about the Human Mind: something which can emerge from, or be caused by, nothing but spiritual forces. They don't realise that spiritual beliefs provide no explanation, because, nothing being scientifically provable, no agreement is possible. Besides, the Scientific Method in History *does* explain the Origin, Development and Decline of Spiritual Beliefs. What is much more important is that they don't understand, just as the bigots who

sing "British Christians über Alles" don't understand, that to-day it is not a matter of rehabilitating Christianity, Hinduism or any sort of Godism. To-day, at last, all over the world, all forms of Godism, of Spiritual Beliefs, of Religion, are fading before the advance of Scientific Understanding. Your long, long day is nearly over, my Reverend Gentlemen of Spiritual Beliefs! It applies to the Old and the New, when we say that a Scientific Atheist Philosophy at last ends the Age of Cant.

This introduction is two times too long, but it seems to be a good lesson for the day, so let it stay. 'Twill serve as an appetiser, and we can now settle to the table.

Is there, in the Multiplication Table, as Professor Eddington claims, anything Incomprehensible—any need to postulate Spiritual Forces—to revert to the mysticism of Plotinus with Dean Inge—to Pythagoras for the meaning of numbers—or to Professor Joad's Plato-cum-Christ "Idealism" of "Time" as an "Existence" apart from our experience of events in succession?

Or does a Scientific Atheist Philosophy—Philosophic Materialism, if you like—enable us to understand the whole business of counting, without requiring any Spirits to help? Spirits, anyhow, are apt to have a confusing effect in Mathematics!

ATHOSO ZENOO.

(To be concluded)

THE GENIUS OF THOMAS HARDY

To bear all naked truths, and to envisage circumstances, all calm: That is the top of sovereignty.—KEATS.

I claim no place in the world of letters: I am, and will be alone.—LANDOR.

I pray thee, then, write me as one that loves his fellow men.—LEIGH HUNT.

THOMAS HARDY carried high the banner of Freethought. In many ways he was a writer far in advance of his time, and his works in prose and verse are more modern than any of his rivals. Unlike the sentimentalists he faced life squarely, and if some of his books make serious reading, it is just because life is not beer and skittles.

Many critics called him pessimist, but he was too full of pity and sympathy for such a hasty generalisation. Not one of his rustics, of his working-class folk, but has a special originality, a native pleasantry and a cast of drollery. Few writers have strewed over their works such abundant irony. In one of the greatest of his novels, "The Return of the Native," the chapter in which he introduces the characters bear the heading, "Humanity appears on the scene hand in hand with trouble." In his masterpiece, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," the dramatic effect of the tragedy is heightened by the grim comment, "justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess.

A master of the lash, Hardy is as fertile as Heine, as detached as Gibbon, as acidulated as Renan. Although a "highbrow," there was no lack of comedy in his novels. "The Hand of Ethelberta," that most whimsical story, is full of humour. "The Laodicean" is inspired with the highest comedy. "Far From the Madding Crowd," written in the lightest mood, is saturated with the comic spirit. From the opening description of Farmer Oak's smile to the ringing down of the curtain, it is a joy to anyone with taste and perception enough to discriminate between a Molièresque humour and a riotous Charlie Chaplin farce.

Hardy was no less successful as a short story writer. Indeed, his mastery was unchallengeable. If "Wessex Tales" and "Life's Little Ironies" had been written by a continental artist, they would have been proclaimed to the skies. They are as perfect as anything by Daudet and Maupassant, and reveal far more delicate and faultless work than any of the Russian or Scandinavian writers' works.

What shapes arise as you recall Hardy's finest work? Where in all contemporary literature is there nobler work than the poignant scene in the bridal night in "Tess," or that other showing the dying Jude and the choristers, or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of the "Woodlanders," as wonderful a piece of art as Turner's painting of the "Fighting Temeraire"? In these it struck the consummate tragic note, as in old Aeschylus and our own Shakespeare. For they are life sublimed by passing through an imagination of uncommon force.

Opinions differ as to which is the greatest of Hardy's novels, but he himself preferred "Jude the Obscure," and once observed, "When I am dead the only one of my novels that will be read is 'Jude the Obscure.'" In making this statement the great novelist did less than justice to "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," a truly magnificent piece of work that might have been inspired by one of the greatest of the Greek dramatists.

It is a further proof of Hardy's many-sided genius that he achieved success in poetry no less than in prose. He began his literary career with verse in the far off "sixties" of the last century, and in the evening of his days he turned again to the muses, and wrote with all the zeal and enthusiasm of a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who had enriched his country's literature with masterpieces for two whole generations. His poetic masterpiece, "The Dynasts," alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. As for his lyrics, they possess a poignancy, a rhythm and a personal style that is extremely individual; and, be it noted, his poetry has the same intellectual outlook as his prose. Humanity is limned against a remorseless background:—

Meanwhile the winds and rains,
And earth's old glooms and pains,
Are still the same, and death and glad life
neighbours nigh.

The attentive reader cannot help but note the essential Secularism in Hardy's novels and poems. Even in the earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scenes and sounds, there is a frank and free Paganism.

As the author advances in reputation and grows in intellectual power, the note deepens, until in "Tess," it grows into a cry of defiance and, finally, in "Jude the Obscure," a great sob of pain.

This pagan attitude was habitual to the man. There seems a dramatic fitness in the fact that the last things to be read to him, at his own request, were a few stanzas from Fitzgerald's version of the "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam, the most splendid poet who swept his lyre under the Mohammedan crescent. The quatrains included the lines:—

One moment in annihilation's waste,
One moment at the well of life to taste,
The stars are setting and the caravan
Stars for the dawn of nothing—Oh, make haste.

Much of Hardy's work was "caviare to the general," and "Tess" and "Jude the Obscure" were both banned by the circulating libraries, a fate they shared with Meredith's "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," one of the most beautiful love stories in the language. On its first appearance in serial form, "Tess" had whole chapters mutilated by the blue pencil of the censor. Even so, readers whose regular literary food was composed of "best selling" rubbish were startled. At dinner one evening a lady asked Hardy why he hanged poor "Tess" when the whole mob of characters in this book deserved that fate? Many professional critics made similar laughing stocks of themselves when criticising masterpieces "over their heads." Hardy retaliated by gently chiding these journalists, "who had turned Christian for half an hour" in order to abuse him the better.

Although it was not "roses all the way," it is pleasant to recall that Hardy did win real appreciation in his lifetime,

and that he did not endure the common fate of pioneers—of starving to death and having ugly statues erected to their memory afterwards. On both his 70th and 80th birthdays Hardy received memorials signed by most of the literary artists of the day. It was well and happily done for, as his brother writers reminded him in the birthday address, he had always written in the high style, and he had crowned a great pose with a noble poetry.

"MIMNERMUS."

(Reprinted.)

"ATHEIST BOY"

MANY things happened after that day away back in 1940, but every September since, when the 15th appears on the calendar, I sit down and ruminate on a story not known by everyone. Of course, everybody remembers that Sunday in September, 1940, when the Royal Air Force accounted for 185 machines of the Luftwaffe and the sigh of relief that went up when we heard over the radio that our losses were 25 planes with 14 pilots saved.

My story concerns two R.A.F. pilots: one who was saved and one who died.

Since the outbreak of war Squadron-Leader Gilbert Lennox Travert had had as fine a bunch of boys as anyone could wish for. Their record was as good as the best and better than most. Three or four of his young pilots—Galton, Swift, Tugdale—were aces; bold, fearless in battle, they had come through numerous encounters unscathed. Being together so much the pilots got to know each others' ways and outlooks on life, and many were the talks and discussions during those memorable days, but though most of the debates were held in a spirit of "ragging" and good fun, it was soon apparent that when Travert and Swift crossed swords the atmosphere seemed to change. One evening religion came into the discussion, and when Travert had spoken at length on the value of Christian belief in regard to morals, Swift had quietly replied that in his estimation there was no connection at all between morals and religion.

"What religion *do* you believe in, Swift?" asked Travert.

"I don't believe in any religion, sir; I'm an Atheist."

The room was suddenly silent.

"How long have you been an Atheist?"

"Since ever I was able to think things out for myself."

"I think I'll call you 'Pagan' Swift after this," said the Squadron-Leader with a slight sneer in his voice.

"All right, sir," retorted Swift, "and from now on I'll call you 'Christian' Travert."

Laughter from different parts of the room relieved the tension, though an ugly flush had risen in the Squadron-Leader's usually pale face. A man of steady nerve and temper, audacious, loyally followed by his boys, who would have flown through the gates of hell behind him, Travert felt afterwards that Swift, the quietest member of his crowd, had really had the better of the little clash of words and he resented it. He could not explain why that was, unless, Travert confessed to himself, he had up to then been too sure of his own statements, and Swift's remarks had given him a mental jolt; so, during the days that followed, he went out of his way to make Swift's hand swing up to salute him quite an unnecessary number of times. "Must keep up the discipline," he murmured to himself, though deep in his heart he knew that was not the reason, but if "Pagan" Swift noticed anything he showed no animosity; in fact, the amused look in his steady grey eyes sometimes made Travert feel a little uncomfortable.

September came. September with sunny days and nights of stars. September with Hitler and Goering deciding to do to London what they had done to Warsaw and Rotterdam. The attack mounted day by day. Hundreds of raiders were tackled over Kent and the Thames, and Goering increased his Armada

until 250 German aircraft in the morning and 250 in the afternoon of Sunday, the 15th, marked the climax of this phase of the battle over Britain. Travert and his squadron were ever in the thick of it, and in the morning had fought many running fights with bombers and fighters, and their total of victories was high.

In the afternoon they were in the air again, and were returning towards their base when out of the glorious September sun came a group of nine ME.110 fighters accompanied by ME.109's. In the melees that followed, "Christian" Travert, after disposing of two ME.109's, was himself badly shot up by an ME.110 who came up on his tail, and another three Germans came tearing in head-on to finish him. Wounded in both arms, Travert was unable to return the fire, when "Pagan" Swift, who had been scrapping up above his leader, flashed down with guns blazing between Travert and the enemy. "Pagan's" plane took the full weight of fire meant for Travert, but not before he had knocked down two German fighters with smoke pouring from them, making the other heel sharply away while the two "Spitfires," out of control, collided and fell earthwards in one twisted mass. Travert was thrown out of his cockpit as the wreckage turned over, and despite his wounds was able to release his parachute. Swift's wounds were mortal. Machine-gun bullets had entered his side and others had pierced his hands and feet. As the planes' distorted remnants plunged into a belt of tall trees standing on the crest of a grassy knoll, "Pagan" was flung down amongst the foliage, his half-open parachute catching the branches; the straps tangling round his arms pulled them up and outwards, while his body, stripped of clothes, came to rest feet downwards three yards from the ground.

Travert had fallen unconscious after he had landed, but recovered after a while and looked around him. Where was "Pagan"? A column of smoke rising from the trees attracted his attention, so coming erect with a great effort he swung forward.

Then he saw "Pagan" hanging against the trees.

In the glow of the September afternoon the pitiful dead body seemed to shine against the background of dark leaves; the chin down on the chest cast the countenance into shadow. Travert fell on to his knees while the blood still dripped from his arms.

"'Pagan,' laddie," he whispered up to the dark face.

Then a revelation burst over Travert's brain. His eyes stared at the outstretched arms with the red-stained hands; the feet, with congealed blood on them, as though nails instead of bullets had penetrated the skin; the wound in the side as if a sword had pierced it instead of lead from a German gun; the green hill and the great sacrifice. . . . Calvary!

But, Travert argued with himself, Christ being the son of God knew there was a sure and glorious resurrection for Himself after His death, but Swift, the Atheist, has laid down his life for me and all the freedom-loving peoples of the world with, in his pagan philosophy, no greater reward than the depth and darkness of the grave.

The injured airman's thoughts were interrupted by the gentle pressure on his shoulder of the Air Force chaplain's hand.

"The ambulance is coming. I was returning to the 'drome in my car when I saw you come down. Are you badly hurt, old man?"

"I'm all right, padre, but get Swift down, for God's sake!"

"They'll get him down soon, but I think he is dead."

The chaplain, tending Travert's wounds as best he could, glanced compassionately at the body above his head.

"The poor lad's crucified there like Christ upon the Cross!" he exclaimed.

"Do you see it that way too, padre? What age was Christ when He died?"

The chaplain was silent for a moment. "Christ was only 33 when He died for us on Calvary," he said.

"Thirty-three!" cried Travert. "That Atheist boy up there was only *nineteen* when he died for us to-day!"

And as the ambulance came to a halt behind them, Squadron-Leader "Christian" Travert staggered to his feet and, with heels together and tear-dimmed eyes fixed on the face of his dead comrade, slowly and with difficulty brought up a quivering, bloodstained hand—to the salute.

IAN YULE.

CORRESPONDENCE

A CORRECTION.

Sir.—When you are commenting at length and critically on a debate in Parliament, you should be careful to get your quotations and references right.

Apparently you did read the Official Report of the debate to which you refer in your issue of November 8; your hostile and offensive allusion to myself is, therefore, the more astonishing.

I did not speak "on the side of Mr. Law." I did not make the statement which you put into my mouth. I supported Lord Winterton and Mr. Sorensen.

I must ask you to correct your misquotation publicly.—Yours,
THOMAS DRIBERG.

[We desire to express our deep regret that we should, quite innocently, have blundered in attaching Mr. Driberg's name to a very foolish statement. Mr. Driberg is correct in saying that he spoke in support of Lord Winterton's protest against calling this war one for the preservation of Christianity.

Referring again to Hausard, we can see how the blunder was made. The objectionable and foolish expression really belonged to Captain De Chair, member for a Norfolk constituency. It immediately preceded Mr. Driberg's speech and, as both were short, it is easy to see how the mistake was made. Mr. Driberg's sentiments are well expressed in the following from his speech:

"We are surely fighting for the system of beliefs and the way of life defined by President Roosevelt as the Four Freedoms. One of these four freedoms is liberty of conscience, which, of course, includes both freedom of any religious body or denomination to practise its own religion, and also freedom for those who do not believe in any religion, to maintain their own anti-religious or non-religious attitude." Mr. Driberg, under a well-known pen name, has also written well for freedom of opinion in the Army.—(CHAPMAN COHEN.)

RELIGION AND THE ARMY.

Sir.—Some of your readers may be interested in my experiences during 15 months in the R.A.F. On first entering the R.A.F. I was asked my religion, and answered "None." This seemed to be regarded as a subtle form of sabotage. Obviously, I was one of those people who, from sheer perversity, enjoy being awkward. So I was put down as C. of E. I then said I'd refuse to sign anything and demanded to see the manager. After some mutual recriminations, the N.C.O. who was dealing with me went off to see an officer. After a little while he returned in slightly less bellicose humour and offered to enter me as an Agnostic. I raised no objections to this and, accordingly, was so entered.

Within a fortnight I found myself on a list of men appointed to attend a compulsory church parade. I turned up as ordered, got as far as the door of the church, stood aside and informed the N.C.O. in charge that I had conscientious objection to "entering this b—y joss-house," whereupon he told me to "get to hell out of it," which I did. The same thing occurred four weeks later.

On being moved to the Metropolis for a while, I found myself again down for a voodoo palaver. This time I made use of my right to interview my commanding officer, explained to him my circumstances, and he, being a gentleman in the proper sense of the term, at once said that I need not attend the parade. Nor was I put down for any more parades at this station.

Later I was transferred to a camp notorious as the home of what the forces call "bullsh." Here, I was again named for a dollop of juju worship. I went to my squadron office, told the N.C.O. in charge that I was empty of Jesus, and asked to be excused the parade. The N.C.O., obviously a constipated individual, told me I'd attend and like it, so I told him that the

entire "Empah" hadn't enough strength to drag me into the church. He then remarked that if I refused to enter the church he certainly couldn't make me do so, but would see to it that I got some dirty and unpleasant fatigues. I said, flatly, that I'd refuse to do them, mutiny or whatever it might be called. He retorted that in such a case he'd put me on a charge of refusing to obey an order. In that case, I told him, I'd demand a court-martial, and also permission to write to my Member of Parliament giving the facts of the case as evidence of victimisation for my views. Rather bitterly, he said he'd see my commanding officer about the matter. I don't know what happened after that, but the day before the parade was due, I was told I need not attend. Later, when nominated for yet another church parade, I again applied to be excused and was released without argument.

Reaching my present station, where I've been functioning for five months, I found myself among reasonable people for the first time, and have not once been nominated for church parade. My belief is that non-believers in the fighting forces will get no more intolerance than they're willing to endure, and will get as many of their rights as they've the guts to obtain.—Yours,
AN AIRMAN.

WAR AND THE PEOPLE.

Sir.—Certainly the Labour Party supported the declaration of war on Germany. Certainly the Labour Party, in common with all other parties except Fascists and the I.L.P. (strange bed-fellows!), will continue to support the war on Germany till Hitlerism and Fascism are smashed to smithereens.

What on earth has that to do with the question? Mr. Kerr cannot be so innocent as to think that the war was made on September 3, 1939. Hitler had invaded Poland two days before. Hitler had entered Prague six months before. Hitler had been handed Czechoslovakia on a plate by Chamberlain and Daladier a year before. Hitler and Mussolini had attacked the Spanish Republic, with the connivance of the British Government and the active support of our reactionaries, three years before. That was when the war began.

In this filthy policy of "appeasement" the British people, thank goodness, had no part. In 1935 they had elected a Parliament pledged to an exactly opposite policy. That Baldwin, Hoare, Chamberlain and Halifax betrayed those who returned them to power, built up Hitler and Mussolini, and reaped the result in the shape of war, underlines Mr. Rosetti's case and mine. The rest of Mr. Kerr's questions "do not arise."—Yours, etc.,
ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Sunday, 3-0 p.m., Mr. G. Wood and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, S. K. RATCLIFFE—"America and Ourselves."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Accrington (Kings Hall Cinema): Sunday, 6-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON—"This Civilisation."

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

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): Sunday, 3-0, Mr. BERNARD MILLETT—"Civil Liberty in War Time."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): 3-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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.

Postal Orders discharged in order of receipt.

New Pamphlet *By* C. G. L. DU CANN

There are no Christians

Price 4d.

Postage 1d.

Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

What is the Use of Prayer?

Deity and Design.

Did Jesus Christ Exist.

Agnosticism or . . . ?

Atheism.

Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live.

Freethought and the Child.

Christianity and Slavery.

The Devil.

What is Freethought?

Price 2d. each. Postage 1d.

Other Pamphlets in this series to be published shortly

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST, by Gerald Massey. With Preface by Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; 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 Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

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

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 6d.

THE PIONEER PRESS

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