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VIEWES AND OPINIONS

Dangers Ahead

IT may be taken for granted that large-scale production will continue after the war. There is no reason why it should not. The plan to reduce output in order to send up prices is the most idiotically anti-social thing one can conceive. There may be, there often is, a great and sinister difference between what one can afford to buy and what one can eat or use, and the future may pay greater attention to what men and women need than to what they can afford. A second war-time manœuvre, that of invasion of the workshop by religion, will be not merely prolonged, this bids fair to become an established feature, unless the workmen protest against it.

It will be remembered that the matter of entertainment in factories began with music-hall turns provided by organised theatrical groups at Government expense. It was soon discovered that a brief space between tasks filled by music, songs and "wisecracks," sent the men and women back to their work in better spirits. There was nothing particularly humanitarian in the purpose, it was one of the methods of helping the war. Long ago pig breeders found that pigs were not naturally filthy animals; as a matter of fact they thrive better in clean stys and pay their owners better. So the pig got better quarters and their owners better returns for their investments. Instead of "stys" write factories, and instead of "pigs" write humans and the position is clear.

But others saw the implications and the possibilities in these agreeable half-hour breaks in the day's toil. Not even vultures have a keener sense for food that lies afar than the clergy for professional opportunities. And the war-time masses of people in factories (I dislike the term "workers" because it suggests a kind of inferior class) opened up possibilities which the clergy seized. It began with short addresses here and there. Then "community singing" was introduced, to become more and more diluted

with hymns and short religious addresses. The bulk of the people employed raised no objection, because it was not the *ideas* expressed in the singing that was material so much as something with a good swing in it. For the overwhelming majority, anything that ran well, "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road," or a song of Marie Lloyd's, would have served as efficiently, and, so far as the clergy were concerned, they did not care very much what was used so long as it could be made to appear as though it was the religious quality of the singing that captured the people. We should like to see a vote taken as to whether the "communal singing" was to be entirely religious or ordinary songs with a rousing chorus.

In all this the people are being fooled as they have so often been fooled. There is no evidence that we have heard of to show that the people asked for this intrusion of the clergy, and if some plan of cajoling the people to religious services can be firmly established, it will be welcomed. The plan has developed rapidly, and it is being converted into what is to be a post-war-time policy. For example, the Bishop of Birmingham, speaking at Birmingham on June 6, said:—

" 'Never has the need for religious work in the city been greater. Church-going has fallen to a very low ebb, and we cannot hope to see a recovery until the war is over. I would ask the clergy, where they can, to take the message of the Gospel into the factories. If the people cannot come to church—and one recognises full well the hindrances that exist under present conditions—cannot the clergy and the lay agents of the diocese take the Gospel into the canteens? During the last few months there has been a markedly increased willingness on the part of those who manage our factories to welcome the religious message given at meal-times and other convenient occasions.

What is wanted is not so much dogmatic Christianity as those essentials of the Christian faith which make for the Christian way of life. . . . I would urge that, if our clergy and our lay readers, Church Army captains and women workers can get into the factories, they can there, in these difficult days, spread the Gospel of Christ.' "

That seems a pretty picture! Mass production, which robs the workman of any special pride in his work, huge factories, which serves still further to weaken the sense of individuality, and the clergy ready at hand to preach and sing them into a state of intellectual somnolence and animal-like satisfaction.

I seriously suggest that all those who do not want this intrusion of the clergy to show their disapproval before it is too late. They can at least stay away from services in factories, and in many ways show that it is only a small minority who wish to be preached at, either over their meals or in any other way. If this is done as it should

be done, the clergy will drop their claims, particularly when we have the frank confession of the Archbishop of Canterbury that his main interest is to make converts to Christianity. It might also be a good move if bodies of "workers" could be brought to the point of asking whether these preachments and hymn singings could not be done *during working hours* and not during the hours of relaxation. If the souls of the working people are to be saved, we see no reason why the employers should not bear at least part of the cost.

Clerical Kidnapping

There is one other question that before long will assume an aspect of urgency. If the plan works smoothly, it will come with the Government's new Education Bill. It will also be one of the meanest tricks ever played by what is a substantially coalition Government. Readers will remember that when this question of definite and dogmatic religion being taught in provided schools came up it was based on lies concerning the lack of religion among children who were taken from the London area to places of greater security. No evidence of this was given, and the falsity of the statement made became so obvious that it has now been dropped. The complaint now is that the religious teaching in the State schools is not dogmatic enough, and no certificate that the teachers are sound in *their* understanding of religion is required. If the Bill works out as the Churches wish—and up to a certain point they obviously had a secret promise from the Ministry of Education that there would be created, substantially, a religious test for teachers—we shall revert to the pre-1870 position. There will result a winning of the war and a losing of the peace—1918 over again.

But there is one practical step that can be taken, not only by Freethinkers, but by those who do not wish to have a Church-controlled system of national schools. At the recent Conference of the National Secular Society it was urged upon speakers on the Freethought platform that they should advise all Freethinkers to withdraw their children from religious instruction. That is the legal right of every British citizen. All that is necessary is to send or otherwise inform the headmaster or mistress that your child, or children, are to be withdrawn from religious instruction. No explanation need be given, and the teacher has no right to ask for one. It usually results in the pupil being given something else to do while the other children are getting their dose of religion. That the child will be made uncomfortable by this being done is mainly legend. Difficulties may arise in villages, but all the inquiries that have been made prove that in towns and cities no inconvenience of any kind is experienced. It would be an insult to teachers to assume otherwise. All Jewish children are withdrawn, and in the few cases where Roman Catholics allow their children to attend the State schools, they are withdrawn also. If it happens that any difficulties are experienced, a note to the General Secretary of the National Secular Society will lead to investigation and correction.

But I want to carry this appeal further than Freethinkers. I wish to urge upon all parents who believe that the teaching of religion should rest with the clergy and parents to also withdraw their children from religious instruction. It is beyond question that Christianity as taught in the schools is not, in fact, the Christianity of a very large number of the more enlightened and better educated Christians,

who do not believe in the crude religious beliefs of a century ago. There are others who quite properly believe that it is not the business of the State to teach religion when so large a proportion of the public have lost faith in religion. The policy of secular education is not one that belongs to Freethinkers only. Christian ministers of various denominations, and a large section of their followers, are advocates of the policy of secular education. If all these people act as we suggest it will be a lesson that may determine the Government in dropping this plan, which has been so carefully worked but which is clear against the modern State and a remnant of a period when obedience to religion was either legally or socially enforced. Secular education is a policy every democrat should support—at least so far as the national schools are concerned. The miseducation of children is terribly *easy*, and it looks black when those upon whom the child naturally looks for reliable guidance has to unlearn what it is taught is of first-rate importance.

There is one note on which I would like to close these paragraphs. Our Home Secretary, Mr. Morrison, speaking the other week at the Labour Party Conference, said he advocated "peace during the war, and a terrific war during the peace." I agree with the latter part of this, and with understanding, the first part also. So many times have I said that the cultural difference before us always is: Shall we war on the level of brute force, or shall we war on the higher level of the clash of ideas and ideals? In one of these forms of warfare we must always be engaged, if we believe that every advance made is but a stepping-stone to a new and higher level. A war on the level of brute force may remove an immediate danger, but when that war is won, the value of the victory depends upon whether we have cleared the way for the greater and better war of ideas and ideals. The peace that the best of the world wishes to get is that which prevents a war of brute force ever occurring again, and the extent to which it makes each group of peoples ready to play its part in the war for the conquest of nature, and of human nature to the extent of suppressing the savage in us. That war may well be "terrific" and call into play the better side of human nature. This, and not the readiness of men to die in a battle of force, is the important issue before us.

I hope there will be "a terrific war during the peace," but the enemy is not waiting for the war of force to end before he gets to work. Strategic positions are being taken up, recruits are being enlisted, and in the promised Education Bill we see the promise of key positions being taken up by the enemy. Our "war effort" will not be the less valuable because we keep an eye on what is being done by the clergy. If the Churches succeed—with the help of the Government—in capturing the schools, they will have achieved the greatest victory they have gained for more than a century.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

BIBLICAL JUGGLING

By a judicious selection of texts you can prove anything from the Bible, and disprove anything—as Catholics have often reminded Protestants. To pick out passages that to some extent are favourable to a certain view, and to ignore much stronger passages that are clearly opposed to it, may be an exercise in private judgment, and may satisfy the conscience of neo-Protestants, but it invites a contemptuous smile from Freethinkers, who believe that reason ought not to suffer such a prostitution.—G. W. FOOTE.

ROMANIST MENDACITY AND TURPITUDE

IN his two-volume study, "Romanism and Truth" (Faith Press, Buckingham Street, Strand; 1930), Dr. G. G. Coulton presented a devastating indictment of the organised mendacity of the Roman Church. He is, however, solicitous to exempt individual Catholics from his condemnation, which is chiefly directed towards the hierarchy and its unscrupulous supporters in the Press. Cardinal Gasquet, Father Thurston and the laymen, Belloc and Chesterton, fare badly in our author's exposure, while the testimony of many eminent prelates and lay Catholics (several of whom were ultimately excommunicated or retired in disgust) is cited to show that men, naturally upright, became heartily ashamed of the mendacious methods consistently employed by the Official Church for the purpose of preserving its spiritual authority and political power.

Dr. Coulton has devoted a scholarly life to the study and interpretation of ecclesiastical history, and his researches have obviously been of a very exacting character, while his Romanist critics' acquaintance with the records of their own Church appears on investigation to prove of a most superficial nature. In any case, when Coulton offers his assailants every reasonable opportunity to substantiate their charges of inaccuracy and perverse misunderstanding of the real teachings of the Church, or invites them to discuss the points at issue either on the platform or by post, and is prepared to publish the proceedings at his own expense, his antagonists usually answer evasively before definitely retiring from the fray.

As a guarantee of his personal integrity, the doctor notes that: "First in 1906, and continually ever since, I have exposed myself to a test which, I feel convinced, no Roman Catholic controversialist would face for his own part. I have promised to print, on errata-lists, all corrections of fact which may be brought to my notice; moreover, I have more than once offered to my opponents a considerable space for reply within the covers of my own publications. The only serious acceptances of this offer have been by two distinguished Jesuits; and by printing both these discussions at my own cost I have given the public full opportunity of judging between us." Yet this has not prevented some of those who ran away from jeering at Coulton as a man who merely trailed his coat for a fight and, this not infrequently, in sectarian publications in which any real discussion is burked.

Now that another Parliamentary measure for education is impending with a probable revival of the old religious animosities Dr. Coulton's revelations concerning the surreptitious activities of the Romanist hierarchy in England may be recalled. Some years since, a body denominated the Westminster Catholic Federation, presided over and specially favoured by the late Cardinal Bourne, strove in suspicious secrecy to impugn the accuracy of the history taught in the elementary schools. Certainly, it is highly desirable that misleading statements in accredited manuals should be corrected. Now, some of these alleged inaccuracies were privately printed in the Federation's three-volume Report. One might have supposed that a matter of so grave concern to all educational reformers would not have been jealously concealed from the non-Catholic community. Yet Dr. Coulton assures us that "It was only by the merest chance that I discovered the existence of these voluminous reports, letters and documents. Doubtless there is [or was] no copy in the British Museum or in any other public library. I pleaded twice with the secretary, and very earnestly, for leave to purchase a copy. On his persistent refusal I decided to utilise such information as I had chanced to glean, and wrote to the Cardinal pleading not only for some sort of publicity, but for the simple fulfilment of what had been very solemnly promised." For, proceeds the doctor, they had not only expressed their anxiety to obtain corrections, but had sanctimoniously scolded the publishers for ever allowing personal reasons of money and

convenience to stand in the way of cancelling and reprinting incorrect pages. They also adopted a high moral tone towards those in any way concerned in imparting historical truth to defenceless schoolchildren.

When later appealed to for publicity, the Federation official equivocally answered that this would prove prejudicially to the publishers whose private correspondence, without permission, had been extensively drawn upon in these Reports. "Yet," declares Coulton, "I happened to know from one of the best and most public-spirited of these publishers that he was indignant with the Federation for having printed without any sort of permission his own letters (in an edition of 2,000 copies, I believe) for circulation within the inner Roman Catholic clique, and as a lever for putting pressure upon him and his fellows." But every appeal for fair play proved vain, even when blunders far more serious than any in the L.C.C. school books were detected in the "corrections" of the Federation's expert authority. Indeed, Romanist tampering with the school books was designed to favour the Papal claims with entire disregard of historical truth. Coulton offered to discuss any two of these alleged improvements with any accredited Catholic controversialist. "Only thus, I argued," he states, "could the Federation justify their self-appointed undertaking of compelling our publishers and the L.C.C. to re-write history in the Roman interest."

As the Federation unceremoniously closed the correspondence, Coulton wrote to Cardinal Bourne himself, reminding him that the Vigilance Committee of his Federation intimated in their Report that: "We shall welcome having our attention called to the errors that may be discovered in our notes, as well as any useful references we may have missed." As Coulton had detected several glaring misstatements in the Report, he entreated the Cardinal's assistance in publicly notifying them, especially as the Federation, upon approaching the publishers and the L.C.C., had stressed the primary importance of accuracy. The sacrifice of whole editions in circulation, they said, must be disregarded, for the requirements of conscience override every pecuniary consideration. Three publishing houses flatly refused to submit to this coercion, while others were more accommodating.

When pressure was brought to bear on the County Council, its spokesman stated that, in the absence of expert knowledge on the subject, the Council referred the matter to the publishers. The Federation replied that the authorities evidently needed enlightenment, but before necessary measures were adopted "these must be sanctioned by our President, his Eminence the Cardinal, and have his wholehearted approval."

This statement appears to have decided Coulton to approach Cardinal Bourne in an epistle which is published in full in an Appendix, pp. 120-26 of Part I. of his "Romanism and Truth." In this letter Coulton condemns the studied secrecy of the Federation's proceedings. The three bulky volumes containing their Reports, Coulton writes, "which have been circulated in thousands of copies among members of your own communion, are marked *Privately Printed* and, in one case, *Confidential*. It was only by chance that my attention was drawn to them by the fact that a copy was left lying in a public place at Cambridge. When I ordered it through a bookseller, he was told it could not be supplied. I then wrote to the secretary of the Federation, pleading that, though a Protestant, I had as much interest as he in the historical accuracy of our school books, and adding: 'These questions of historical truth are, in the strictest sense, public questions, and there can be little hope of final agreement unless conflicting claims are clearly stated.'"

This request was positively refused, and Coulton was warned that if he printed the numerous extracts he had culled from the Reports, this would be as discreditable as publishing private correspondence. Your Church, Coulton rejoined, acts as a State which acts adversely in many instances to British interests and must fully bear the responsibilities this involves. "When you

claim the right to secrecy here, I must put upon you the onus of making the public understand why a matter of such obvious public concern should be looked upon as a private secret, and why a body which professes the purification of publicity as its chief aim should so assiduously shun the open air." The Federation pretended that publication would be unfair to the publishers, but Coulton retorted that the Federation's secret document printed the letters of publishers without their consent, while in at least one case permission would have been refused had it been applied for.

In the earlier stages of its search for inaccuracies in the Council histories, the inquirers were betrayed by their prepossessions into far greater misconceptions than any contained in the books they so severely condemned. Perhaps their own misgivings induced the Federation's experts to consult reliable authorities about these controverted questions. A Council school book's statement that the French Protestants were so bitterly persecuted that they rose in self-defence is stigmatised as "a caricature of the truth." Professor A. Renaudet, the specialist to whom the Federation appealed on this point, thus replied: "On the contrary, we must admire the patience of the French Protestants, who did not fall back upon force until they endured for nearly 40 years the worst acts of violence."

Another lying assertion in these precious volumes is that the Protestants first "took their name from the fact that they solemnly protested against religious toleration as an unjust and impious idea." Upon this fabrication, another expert to whom the Federation submitted their assertion responded: "In view of the remarks which follow the passage I have quoted from the criticisms [of the Federation's writer], I can only regard the opinions there expressed as reprehensibly disingenuous, if the facts were known to the writer, or as at least most unfortunate in view of the facts themselves."

All this and more damning matter appears in Coulton's appeal to Cardinal Bourne, but that much-praised prelate declined to intervene in any way in the interests of justice and truth. Yet the Federation constantly commiserated the poor, defenceless children, whose innocent minds were said to be poisoned against Holy Church by the fictions of the Council's histories. The foregoing, however, may serve as an indication of the falsifications the Church would joyfully introduce into our school books, instead of purging them of the blemishes they doubtless contain.

T. F. PALMER.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BISHOP OF ST. ALBANS

MY LORD BISHOP,

Having been rebuffed by Parliament in your efforts to stop the manufacture of contraceptives, you announce that you are about to stir up "the Church to bring pressure on Parliament" to prohibit their sale to any but married persons on the production of a medical certificate.

Why doesn't your Lordship study the facts before rushing in with an interference which would not achieve your object and might do incalculable harm? In the first place, has your lordship read Hansard for the spring of 1934, when such a Bill was discussed in detail? It is not often the House of Lords rocks with laughter, but the late Lord Banbury of Southam was coached by me with some of the facts that must result from the passage of such a Bill, and the absurdity of the situation was self-apparent.

Take one point only: the best contraceptive in the world is olive (ordinary salad) oil. Is your Lordship proposing to have a Bill passed that olive oil shall only be sold to married women on the production of a medical certificate? In these fantastic times you may succeed, but you won't be able to stop me telling

women that castor oil and margarine remain, and even your Lordship cannot prohibit the sale of margarine, nor its use as a contraceptive by married women without any doctor's certificate.

You appear not to have taken the trouble to find out that many young people are prevented from marrying by the anti-social action of public bodies and others who dismiss on marriage and therefore many marriages are secret, and an application for a medical certificate for contraceptives would encompass their complete ruin.

Perhaps you do not realise that your coercion would result in a great increase of that scourge, abortion? Do you know that myriads of women to-day ruin their health and enrich abortionists through ignorance of, or inability to obtain, contraceptives?

But perhaps your Lordship will say you are only thinking of contraceptives made of rubber. Is your Lordship unaware that the form of rubber cap considered the clinically best contraceptive has two uses? Applied in one way it protects from undesired pregnancies; used in another way it promotes conception, and helps to bring a child to a woman perhaps for many years heretofore sterile who desires a child. So if you stop the sale and manufacture of these contraceptives you will be hindering the procreation of children by women who desire them. Hundreds of wanted babies have been born as a result of the work of my birth control clinics.

But perhaps your Lordship will retreat once more and say you only mean condoms. I agree that they are undesirable, but has your Lordship not heard that they have some protective value where there is venereal disease? As, alas! the measure you propose will not stop headstrong young people from contaminated unions, is it not advisable that they should have at least that measure of protection from infection; or do you prefer the conception of a child not only illegitimate but diseased?

Why do you play into the hands of the medicos and wish to put money into medical practitioners' pockets taken out of those of the poor? How cruel as well as thoughtless you are you might realise if you looked up all the entries under "Doctor" in the book "Mother England."

The few following cases should show you the despair the poor would feel if you were to pass your "doctor's certificate" imposition:—

"When my last child was born the doctor said another would most likely prove too much for me, but when asked how to avoid it he refused to tell me, even to save my life, the things which I am sure is common knowledge amongst the rich."

"The doctors say I'll never be able to carry another child the full time—but refused to tell me what I was to do."

"After my first baby was born I went through a serious operation which left me very poorly indeed, but before two years were past I had another little one, so you can imagine the state of my health, properly worn out, and the doctor advised me not to have any more children for at least ten years, but he did not tell me how to avoid this, and being as young I could not ask him."

"I am the mother of five children and have had a lot of trouble with them; two have died. When the last baby was born the doctor said, 'Can't you finish up?' but when I asked him how I could, he just laughed."

"I was in the hospital under Dr. H— for five weeks; that was two years ago. They told me I must have no more children, and yet when I asked them how I could prevent it, they just shrugged their shoulders and smiled."

I arraign your Lordship for lack of knowledge and presumption resulting from that ignorance.

But perhaps your Lordship is like the Lord Bishop of London, who seriously told the House of Lords in 1934: "I would like to make a bonfire of them (contraceptives) and dance round it."

You arraign "the refusal to face responsibilities and self-sacrifice involved in the procreation of children" by mothers. Have you taken the trouble to look up Whitaker's Almanack and find out the fact that this country is the most over-populated, having 703 to the square mile, whereas Germany went into this war because of her over-population of only 347 to the square mile? Surely the persons to whom you should address your reproaches are the Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations, especially Canada and Australia, where our huge, over-populating surplus should go. They refuse our immigrants to fill their empty spaces.

One notes with revulsion the inherent cruelty in your effort to force women against their wills by coercive ignorance to bear children they do not feel physically fit to, or do not want to bear. It is without doubt the most blasphemous form of slave driving, for we should be made in God's image and begotten in love. The slavery of a woman who carries in her womb day by day a child not begotten in love, she did not wish to conceive, is the most insidious and horrible of all forms of slavery: and before Man and before the Throne of God I arraign your cruelty. Answer my charge!

MARIE CARMICHAEL STOPES.

DREAMLAND IN HISTORY

THE reviewing of newly-published books has certain advantages for the publisher and the reviewer. The first gets some gratuitous advertisement, the second gets paid—sometimes—more often but not invariably—gets the book to keep for his work, and can, therefore, fill a bookcase free or contribute to the now fashionable salvage schemes for waste paper, or even sell the overplus. Only the author—and who minds him very much—has the gratification of surrendering his royalty, as these reviewed books figure in the returns of his publisher under the heading of "Free and Press."

To review, therefore, a book long out of print may be regarded as pure philanthropy, other than for any lesson such book can convey. The following must be regarded as purely *con amore*, the only reward being the interest, or otherwise, of the reader.

I have taken as a subject a book called "Dreamland in History," published as far back as 1891 by the defunct firm of Isbister, of Covent Garden, and written by the Very Rev. H. D. M. Spence, D.D. (now presumably defunct also), Dean of Gloucester.

One must start with the search for the ordinary meaning of "Dreamland" as distinct from the ecclesiastical. Dr. Spence's book commences with an account of the Dukes of Normandy from Rollo to William the Conqueror, and is an account (very laudatory in the eyes of the author) of some 200 years of crime and bloodshed of the five Dukes. This may be the ecclesiastical idea of "Dreamland," although many would prefer the word "Nightmare." Dr. Spence has always, or had, the main idea, the benefit to the Church by "offerings" of the faithful, which might be confused with the "gullibility of the populace" in all countries and at all times.

From this and other books of similar character one can gather that the dignitaries of all Churches, and at all times, as Professors in the Gentle Art of Cadging, could give the average beggar a long start. The religious trade in spurious relics gave the impetus, no doubt, and what a trade, what a swindle this was, no one reading Thomas Henry Huxley's essay on "The Value of Testimony to the Miraculous" can have any doubts. Yet Dr. Spence seems to have had the utmost faith in the Precious Blood of Jesus being preserved in a bottle at Fecamp, and for a thousand years or so after the Crucifixion. He even appreciates the "offerings" which this "relic" brought to Fecamp Abbey—but that, perhaps, is more understandable.

It may be very profane, but one is reminded of the beggar woman who refused to pay 1s. per day for a child of miserable appearance on the ground that for this sum she could get a cripple. The latter would, of course, be a better investment in extorting the "offerings" of the "faithful," the "charitable" or the "gullible," which according to the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth, appear to be interchangeable terms, but then all is grist to the ecclesiastical mill.

Leaving out the Spurious Relics Department of the Clerical Cadging Corporation, it may be instructive to deal with the genuine and the historical (?) branch. In his own Cathedral of Gloucester, Dr. Spence can, in vulgar parlance, "let himself go"—and he does. Gloucester is Gloucester, and Winchester is, of course, the rival camp for the "offerings of the faithful," so on page 131 we get the following:—

"William Rufus lies in the choir of Winchester Cathedral with the old Saxon Kings, but for the murdered William no bells tolled, *no alms were given*, for the repose of the soul of the dead Rufus no prayers were offered. Men thought for him that prayers were hopeless."

If this mean anything at all to non-ecclesiastical eyes, it means that Rufus would be a bad investment, at least for Gloucester; but one still may wonder why Winchester was so unbusinesslike. Perhaps Gloucester would have done better with the bones of Rufus. Worcester gave a post-mortem lodging to King John—another beauty. Perhaps neither Winchester nor Worcester had a good advertiser at that time such as Dr. Spence.

Now turn to Gloucester and its Abbot Thoky, who with commendable courage—for that period—gave a burial to Edward II., who was, after all, no great shakes as a king or anything else. Here we must continue with the actual words of Dr. Spence on page 136, as they are priceless:—

"It was a brave, manly, pious act—this of the old Gloucester abbot. But when they did this noble bit of work, neither monks nor abbot dreamed of the extraordinary rich guerdon which their loved minster church would, in coming days, receive for the brave and beautiful act of tender chivalry."

One is tempted to remark what a noble bit of work, and what an example of "casting one's bread on the waters, etc."—or should it be "bones"?—and how it must have put the Bogus Relics Industry almost out of business. Perhaps it did. What a pity it was that there was no Abbot Thoky in circa 1535 to convert the second Tudor, Fat Harry, to the relics business (genuine also) and away from collecting wives and a few other kingly vices. Perhaps Dr. Spence could have stepped into the breach if he had been alive in 1535. What a catastrophe; and what was the Almighty doing? HERBERT CESCINSKY.

ACID DROPS

THE "Universe" reports the secretary of the Education Committee of the T.U.C. as saying: "We make no attack on religion or on religious instruction. Religious instruction, we think, should be given in schools on a non-denominational basis." That sounds like a religious truth, for it involves the assumption that the T.U.C. desires religious instruction in the schools. And we feel quite certain that if a vote could be taken the majority of trade unionists would say: "We do not think religion should be taught in the schools, but if it is taught it should be on a non-denominational basis." And that is a different proposition than the one stated. That we may set down as a "religious" truth. The qualifying word "religious" is significant, for a religious truth has no fellowship to what science and everyday honesty is content to call just plain "truth."

One day the war will end. That we announce with the utmost confidence. The exact date? That is a frivolous question. No one who is in the prophecy business ever gives an exact date, nor do those who accept religious prophecies expect them. All accepted prophecies are dateless. And *what* will occur is usually not definite. An indefinite thing, to occur in an indefinite place, at an indefinite time to indefinite people, gives us the ingredients of all the religious prophecies worth bothering about. Prophecies that do not observe these conditions die out and are conveniently forgotten. Dates, definite places and definite forecasts are anathema to all engaged in the miracle business.

The largest firm dealing in miracles and prophecies is situated in Rome. It has branches all over the world, and it has just issued another reminder that miracles *do* occur—provided one believes in them before they happen. It seems that "Our Lady"—famous for making her appearance at odd times and queer places—made herself visible in 1917, and said that "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my immaculate heart." She added that "If my requests are heard, Russia will be converted." The requests were not satisfied to the proper degree, and Russia was not converted. If the results had been satisfactory then, as "Our Lady" says, "The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me. Russia will be converted, and an era of peace will be granted to humanity." The Pope and Our Lady appear to be on excellent terms. There have been six of these apparitions, the last on October 13. The witnesses to the recent one are three children, the vision occurring in Fatima, North Africa. The three children were aged seven, nine and ten, all belonging to the same family. The testimony of such witnesses is conclusive—for Roman Catholics.

But before the Pope gives his sanction he must be convinced of the truth. So in addition to the weighty testimony of the children we have a number of "famous ecclesiastical professors"—Roman Catholic professors, one may assume—who accepted the testimony of the children. Besides, this anxiety of the Virgin to have Russia dedicated to her began in 1917, and it has continued till to-day. The next stage one may expect to see is Stalin, with bare feet, leading a procession to church and forbidding any other religion than Roman Catholicism to function. It is a touching story. Perhaps we have not heard the last of it. Let us hope the Virgin will lend a hand in the final defeat of Germany.

"Our Lady" has all the anxiety of a third-class actress to receive public notice. Here, for example, is exactly what she said on July 13, 1917: "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my immaculate heart. If people do what I have told you, many souls will be saved and will find peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease to offend God, not much time will elapse and precisely during the next Pontificate another and more terrible war will commence." There it is, "straight from the horse's mouth." No good Catholic may doubt the truth of the vision and its message. In any case, there is the evidence of three witnesses, aged seven, nine and ten. That should be conclusive. It is conclusive to good Roman Catholics. They dare not deny the truth of the vision.

The Dean of Durham, we see from a book notice in the "Church Times," has written a booklet on "God and My Neighbour." He is quoted as saying "The English are a practical people, and will be won over by a faith that works by love." We wonder whether it was by love that the English people accepted the Roman Church, and after that the Protestant form of Christianity? Or was it because of an overdose of love that Catholics and Protestants hated each other so much? It is astonishing what utter rubbish Christians will write when they have a religious subject in hand.

"Veteran Teacher" writes, in a letter published in the "Catholic Herald" for June 18, advising all "Catholic teachers" to join the National Union of Teachers. That is quite good advice—by itself. But the reason follows: "Inside they can work wonders. . . . Catholic teachers awake and set a good

example." Which really means that Roman Catholic teachers should join the N.U.T. for one avowed purpose and use their membership for another. We admit this is good Roman—indeed Christian—practice, but those who value straightforwardness and honest dealing "have a word for it."

What will happen if the promised Education Bill gives the clergy a larger measure of control over the national schools was illustrated in a case reported in the "Ely Advertiser" for June 9. At a meeting of the Education Committee the matter of a lady teacher and her treatment by certain officials was raised. A certificated teacher, applying for appointment to a vacancy, was incautious enough to let the Vicar know that she was not an Anglo-Catholic. "Within twenty-four hours she received a reply stating that she was not wanted." Now what would have happened if she had declared herself a Freethinker? She might have been tarred and feathered and run out of the town.

There are, we understand, quite a large number of civil servants located in Colwyn Bay. This is quite a nice place, but it has its drawbacks. It is a very religious place, and when we say a religious place we mean a place that is not too comfortable for non-Christians to live in. For the real Christian is never satisfied unless he is making other folk act as he acts. In justification he would say: "That is my religion," and we are not put into this world to be happy or to indulge in mundane happiness; we must all act in such a way that we shall one day get to heaven. And that has its hopeful side—for the non-Christian. For he may console himself with the reflection: "One day we shall all die, and the good Christians will go to heaven. We non-Christians will go to hell, and that is, by the rules of the Christian creeds, the place for first-rate company."

To get back to Colwyn Bay and the civil servants. It has occurred to some of them that they would like to play games on Sunday. Not bad games—at least they are not bad on six days out of seven. But the seventh day is the day on which the Lord rested. That was excusable, for he had made the whole world in six days, and may be said to have earned a rest. But the particular incident we are chronicling was concerned with civil servants, and their job is not considered of a specially wearing character. Moreover, they came, in many cases, from London, and London with its seven-day week of unchecked vice must be regarded by the spiritually-minded Welsh folk as a not very desirable residence. And they actually asked the Town Council for permission to play games in the parks on Sunday. Ye gods! But the Council thought of the demoralisation that might infect the pure-minded Welshers. And the Council rose to the occasion. They refused to permit any such desecration. The civil servants must stay at home and play cards, or swear, or indulge in other dissipations. Yet the Churches are asking the bus company to run buses on Sunday to take people to church!

A "young teacher" describing in the "Church Times" the result of religious teaching in Church schools does not appear to be very enthusiastic. He says: "The child has been in the Church school from the age of five to eleven. Has the school done all in its power in those six years to teach the child the Catholic faith and to attach him to his Church? . . . Unfortunately, in many schools the answer must be 'No.' I know of one Church school where the schoolchildren have not gone into a church for over a year." And the Churches insist that the country must pay for "religious" teaching of this kind! Of course, it is good to learn that after all the heated talk from cardinal, bishop, priest and vicar, the children so often manage to miss the poisonous rubbish which Christians call "God's own religion."

We wonder what Sir Stafford Cripps is aiming at? He is reported in "The Times" for June 22 as saying that what the country needs is "a strong leaven of men and women who would catch the same sort of violent infection of Christianity and democracy that struck some of our forbears." Sir Stafford ought to know that it was this "violent infection of Christianity" in social reform that in the end broke many reform movements and ended by perpetuating evils that should long since have disappeared.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

HANS. CARR.—The talk of Roman Catholic leaders about their love of freedom is just "eyewash." The great Cardinal Newman defined the powers and attitude concerning opinion as follows: "The Catholic Church claims, not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of history, and it demands submission to her claims. It claims to censure books, to silence authors, and to forbid discussion." That is an authoritative deliverance, and not even Hitler could have claimed much more.

C. EVANS.—There should be a published report of the proceedings of the Church Assembly, and we had better wait for it. The document should be interesting; it will, at any rate, be authoritative for those whom it represents.

S. G. HOGG.—Pleased to know that yourself and wife were interested in the Conference. We should be pleased to meet both yourself and wife if you would let us know when you are likely to be in London.

T. W. WHITE.—We neither said nor suggested that Buddhists did not take part in war. Buddhist teachers have recognised that in certain circumstances a Buddhist would feel it his duty to take part in a war. But the Buddhist did not believe in surrounding it with the quality of "Uplift," as Christian preachers do in all parts of the world. The Buddhist teaching is that no man can escape the consequences of his actions, and taking life leaves a stain on character that renders the Buddhist aim more difficult of realisation. Buddhism does not play fast and loose with morals as does the Christian religion.

E. M. L.—Shall return to the matter very soon.

Will the reader (with a Harrow postmark) who sent for a copy of the "Bible Handbook" send on address.

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

THE Birmingham Branch N.S.S. is arranging a ramble to Lickey Hill on Sunday, July 4, to which all members and friends are invited to meet at Rednal terminus (Car 70) at 3-30 p.m. Tea has been arranged at the Cofton Tea Rooms for 5 p.m. Two shillings should cover both tea and car fare. Given fine weather, and the local secretary, Mr. C. H. Smith, in charge of the party, a very enjoyable time is practically certain.

Will Bristol Freethinkers willing to co-operate in forming a local branch of the N.S.S. please attend at Kingsley Hall, Old Market Street, on Thursday, July 8, at 7 p.m. A strong and active Bristol Branch should appear on the Freethought map as a result of the meeting on Thursday.

We fancy that a great many people were puzzled as to what Mr. Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, really meant when he said in a "Back to Religion Crusade" that the better world will not come through politics or economics alone, but from the men and women "walking with the light of God in their souls." Well, we have met some of these people and have read of a much larger number. Some—a few—were decent, others were a damned nuisance to everybody except the followers who also had their soul alight. We wonder what on earth Mr. Brown might have meant. We say might have meant, because we have the conviction that he meant nothing at all. It was just froth.

But then Mr. Brown, probably discovering that what he said meant nothing, pulled himself together and explained that his "recall to religion was not to conviction about a god unseen, but to something expressed in terms of habits and in ordinary everyday life." But we are still in the dark as to what that means. He is Minister of Health, but on the face of it we should say that his own health—mental health—is subject to brainstorms.

We have already referred to the Freethinking discussion that has been carried on in the pages of the "Yorkshire Observer." The Freethinking side has been mainly contributions by "Luke Straight," but there have been a number of letters from both sides. A set debate has arisen from the discussion, and we believe another is on its way. We are quite sure that many Christians must have benefited from the discussions, if only to the extent of recognising that man ought to aim more than believing in this or that religion; he should strive to understand it.

There is also a lesson that editors and proprietors ought to learn. This is that there is a large and growing body of men and women who are really interested in, not "What do I believe?" but "What am I justified in believing?" It is probably the case that when, now and again, a discussion on religion takes place in which both sides are given a fair hearing, the number of letters sent in is very great. After all, the mass of the people do not wish to be deceived, and they who have any real love for truth are not afraid to submit their opinions to the test of open discussion. So we hope that other newspapers will follow the example of the "Yorkshire Observer."

We suppose that the Rev. W. L. H. Elliot may be taken as a fair sample of a clergyman. We have given several examples of his mentality of late, but we may be excused giving another, if only because it will help us to understand the outlook and quality of a typical parson. A mother applied to Mr. Elliot for advice. She had lost her husband and their little girl was always asking for "Daddy." How was she to deal with the child? The case is a common one and a painful one. How should it be dealt with?

Mr. Elliot replies that the mother should tell the child "quite plainly and simply what death is." "How?" "Let her know that she has a father, but that she can't see him for a while, but he is always near her, watching over her and helping her. Do make that quite clear." Now we grant that in such a case many of us would tell the child something that is not strictly true, such as saying "Daddy has gone away" or something of that kind, trusting to time to deaden the sense of loss. But is it honest, or even advisable, to tell the child that her father is watching over her and helping her? It is certainly not truthful and it is not really necessary. There are other ways with which one may meet the grief of the child without telling what is substantially a lie, and what one would do would depend upon the kind of child one has to deal with. And we feel that if Mr. Elliot were honest to himself—and honesty to one's self is of much greater importance than the vast majority of parsons appear to believe—he would try some of these other plans without saying what he knows may not be true, and what so many clergy know is a plain lie. Many parents have to face this position, but many also manage to meet it without using one's authority over a child.

THE MOON GODDESS

II.

ONE of Babylon's gods—I believe he is also in the Bible—is called Shamas. He was the son of the Moon, but he seems to have found in Ishtar, who was always identified with the Moon, a formidable rival. Later, he and Ishtar were regarded much in the same light as Osiris and Isis, who herself was not only the Moon but also the Mother of Nature; and it should be noted that Isis and her prototypes never die like their sons (or husbands). They represent the Universal Mother, or the Moon Mother, or even the Earth Mother, and appear in most religions.

Another interesting fact mentioned by Dr. Harding in "Woman's Mysteries" is that primitive man, in trying to explain "the identity of the earth and moon attributes," claimed that "the original source of both the earth and the moon was a World Egg, the Moon, which split into two parts, one remaining in the sky as moon and the other becoming earth. The first World Egg was the mother from whom all things come." We still, every Easter, unconsciously act as if that concept in some way were still true, and perhaps we always shall.

"The Moon-Goddesses are many," says Dr. Harding, "yet as soon as we begin to study their attributes and characteristics and the stories of their lives, we cannot fail to recognise that they are really all one and the same." This has a familiar ring to many of us as I shall show, but she adds, "She was known under different names in different countries and in different ages, but her life story, her attributes, her characteristics, did not vary greatly even though the name of the religion changed from place to place."

She was Ishtar of Babylon and, with her son Tammuz, was worshipped centuries before Christianity.

She was Astarte or Ashtarte with her son Baal, certainly worshipped by the Canaanites, the Hebrews and the Phœnicians.

She was Isis with her son Horus, worshipped by the Egyptians—and known very well by name even to modern Christians.

She was Cybele, worshipped in Phrygia; she was the mother of Attis; she was Anahita, the mother of Mithra; the Celtic Mother Goddess Ann or Annis; the Greek Goddesses Rhea, Ge and Demeter; the Roman Goddesses Tellus, Ceres and Maia; and, among others, Dr. Harding has to admit that "in medieval Europe, the Virgin Mary and her son carried the same significance, and in the many legends which have gathered round her name, does so even to-day. It is probably not without importance that the worship of the Virgin as Mother of God first came into prominence in the Church at about the time of the Crusades, when the ecclesiastical thought of the day was profoundly influenced by Eastern Asia and Syria, where the Mother and her Dying Son were still so deeply revered. We do not ordinarily think of the Virgin Mary as being related to the Great Mother Goddess of Syria, who was Goddess of the Moon and Mother of God, but perhaps she was her direct descendant."

In his lecture on the Virgin in the "Devil's Pulpit," delivered in 1831, you will find almost the same conclusion—though when Taylor gave it he was almost a "lone hand" and he by no means "converted" many of his followers. He saw far more clearly than they that in the story of the Virgin Mary we had merely the story of the other Goddesses in a more or less different form but essentially the same. She was "the Virgin Mary, the Grecian Venus, the Egyptian Isis, the Goddess of Corn and Harvest, Ceres," though he insisted that they all were merely personifications of the Virgin of the Zodiac; this was "a truth borne out, not by one or two, but by a thousand analogies." How far we may carry these stories to the sign of Virgo or to the Moon itself is still a problem I think not solved.

Catholics have nearly exhausted endearing terms for "our Lady," but among them are "The Moon of the Church," "Our Moon," "The Spiritual Moon," "The Perfect and Eternal

Moon," as well as "Star of the Sea" and "Ruler of the Ocean." It is also interesting to note that nearly all the Great Mothers are represented as Virgins in spite of having many lovers or sons. Sir James Frazer claims that the word Virgin in this connection "means no more than an unmarried woman," though Dr. Harding thinks that in the case of Mary or other goddesses "the quality of virginity persists in some unexplained fashion in spite of sexual experience, child-bearing and increasing age." It is obviously one of the many mysteries connected with the Holy Christian Religion.

We know that on the Continent there are many statues of the Virgin Mary which are carved out of black stone. It is probable that these represent Isis or Isis and Horus; in any case, their real significance is that they show the other phase of the moon—the dark phase. In many of the other religions the two phases of the moon are represented by two goddesses. For example, in Greece the Bright Moon was Aphrodite, while Hecate was the Dark Moon. Later we get Artemis as the crescent or waxing moon; Selene, the full moon; and Hecate, the waning moon.

Ishtar was not only the "Queen of Heaven" like Mary; she is also shown as being born of sea foam like Venus. Robert Taylor insisted that the very word Mary "is the same as the Latin word *Mare*, the sea; and in its plural form, *Maria*, signifies the Seas as the adjective Marina, of or pertaining to the Sea, read without the letter N, after the ancient manner of writing, is the same word, and was from the days of an infinitely remote antiquity one of the names of the Goddess Venus." And just as the Virgin Mary had the title Maria Stella—Mary Star—so Ishtar, who had once been a star herself, was "Queen of all Stars" as well as "Queen of Heaven."

Nearly everything said about Ishtar was also said about Isis but she was also the dark Moon—the Destroyer. In her bright phase she is the giver of life and is often represented suckling Horus—a picture of motherhood which has always appealed to man; and in the pictures of Mary and Jesus is perpetuated precisely the same idea. In fact, all one has to do is to study the stories and legends about the Moon-Goddess, and those of the Virgin Mary are clearly explained.

As an example, we have the Assumption of the Virgin which takes place on August 15, and the significance of which is fully dealt with by Taylor. "August 13 or 15," says Dr. Harding, "is still celebrated as a Festival of Candles, but—and here is a very interesting fact—the torches are no longer lighted in Rome for Diana, but for the Virgin Mary. It is the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin which is celebrated. On this day of Diana's old festival, it is Mary who is carried to the heavens above." And one could give many other examples of the way in which the Church of Rome took bodily over festivals appertaining to the Moon-Goddess and invented reasons why they now belong to "our Lady."

In the world-famous painting by Murillo of the Virgin will be found the crescent moon under her feet—a symbolism only to be explained by her connection with the old pagan moon-goddesses; and the astonishing thing is that it was known not only to the artists who painted the pictures, but to the Church which commissioned them. Yet nowadays one would find very few Catholics ready to admit it, or any other "borrowing" from the despised Paganism.

It must be obvious that if Mary's connection with her sisters is rightly deduced—that is, that they are merely fictions designed to explain certain customs, or point a moral, or even give power to a priesthood, then she is herself in exactly the same category. She is a fiction and, as Robert Taylor rightly showed, could never have lived. Who then was the mother of Jesus? For it must dawn even upon the most obtuse mind that if the Christian Deity never had a mother and his father was only a Ghost—he was exactly in the same boat as Mary.

Just a myth.

H. CUTNER.

AUSTRALIA MOURNS WALLACE NELSON

It must have been in the eighties of last century that Wallace Nelson, who died in Sydney (N.S.W.) on May 5, appeared as a freethought lecturer in England. Paragraphs in "The Freethinker" from time to time show that he is still remembered in that country. To the writer he often expressed his deep appreciation of the generous way in which friends in England subscribed to a fund which enabled him to come to Australia.

At that time Mr. Nelson was in a very low state of health. His advent here was really in the nature of a kill-or-cure experiment. How happily things turned out is shown by the fact that his end did not come till he was in his 87th year.

During his 55 years here he had become widely known throughout the length and breadth of the commonwealth. Very largely was this due to the lecturing tours that he made in the years immediately following his advent to this side of the world. Later it was his lot to figure for a while as a member of Parliament. He took the platform, too, in many public movements. A most gifted writer as well as a remarkably convincing speaker—witty and pungent, logical and forceful—he devoted himself for the past 30 or 35 years largely to newspaper work.

Editing first "The People's Newspaper" (Rockhampton, Queensland), he went to West Australia, where in turn he edited "The Worker," "The Westralian" and "The Kalgoorlie Sun." In that state he also did for a while the leaders for the "Perth Daily News." Here I should interpolate that these engagements were entirely apart from a freethought paper, "The Stockwhip," which he founded and conducted in his very early years in Brisbane (Queensland). Unfortunately, it was a somewhat short-lived venture.

He made several visits abroad. In one instance he was commissioned by the Westralian Government to do a series of emigration lectures in England and Scotland at £50 a lecture. Some years later he became lecturer-entertainer with a large Scottish party that specially chartered a boat for a trip from Sydney to their native country. While away from Australia—on the one occasion or the other—he covered the Continent, and took in America on his way back here.

Among the many people he met in England were Sir Arthur Keith, Sir Donald Ross, George Bernard Shaw and Frank Harris. His meeting with Harris was a particularly happy one. Because of Nelson's writings—prose and verse—Harris had previously gone so far, in a magazine he was then conducting, to refer to him as the most versatile genius that had ever struck Australia.

One of his contacts in America—where, by the way, he did some lecturing—that he liked to recall was Clarence Darrow, the eminent barrister, whose cross-examination of William Jennings Bryan in the Tennessee heresy hunt (the prosecution of a school-teacher for the instruction he had sought to impart in the principles of evolution) has become a matter of history.

Nelson found that Darrow, a confirmed freethinker, was a most modest, unassuming man in his personal relationships, and delighted in nothing more than in gathering parties of working men and women at his home for the discussion of subjects of every-day interest.

Nelson himself was a most kindly gentle-natured man. It was different, however, if faced by an intolerant, aggressive opponent. In that case he did not hesitate to show that, if he hadn't a rough side to his tongue, he had at least a lashing side to it. A veritable compilation could be made of his witticisms—privately and publicly perpetrated. Always were his lectures brightened up in this way. "Logic and laughter" might well have served as the sub-title of every one of them.

Still, his wit was a disadvantage to him as a politician. For example, at the time he was Labour member for Hannan's in the Westralian Parliament, he received a letter from one of the Labour leagues in his electorate demanding to know when he was

going to solve the unemployed problem. Because of his intellectual pre-eminence among the Labour members in Parliament, it was, not to the party but to Nelson alone, that Labour supporters looked for a settlement of their troubles. Promptly Nelson wrote back to the Labour League at Hannan's, suggesting a meeting at 8.30 the following Sunday night, and adding: "If you have any other little questions, such as the beginning of the universe and the origin of evil, just include them in the syllabus, because I might as well solve everything while I'm about it."

Nelson had no fear of death. For a few months he knew that the end was near. To the writer he expressed himself as quite resigned to his fate. In his wife—his second, by the way—he had a woman most devoted to his care in every possible way. By no means is it too much to say that to her tenderness and solicitude he owed many years that he would not otherwise have lived to enjoy. Besides his wife, he is survived by a son (Wallace) and a daughter (Mrs. Gilbert Thompson)—both born of the first marriage.

Through his writings and his personal influence, to say nothing of his platform appearances over many years, freethought in Australia has been immensely strengthened. Almost might it be said that he was to this country what Ingersoll was to America. In the words of a Sydney obituary notice: "He remained a mental tonic almost to the end—full of the zest of life and a radiating source of joy to others."

The funeral was of a strictly private character, the remains being cremated, with a brief secular service, the few parting words being given by one of his dearest friends, Mr. H. D. Merrick.

Not inappropriately may I conclude this very inadequate tribute to a really great man by giving these hitherto unpublished lines, pencilled in a copy of "Russian Literature—Ideals and Realities," presented by him to me six months ago during one of the regular Friday luncheons we had together for some years:—

THE HAPPY DEAD

What's life with all its sadness,
When all is sung and said,
Compared with the great silence
Of all the happy dead?

The living fear the death-stroke,
And in their terror cry;
The dead are safe forever,
For dead men never die.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

FRANK HILL.

THE NONSENSE OF GODSENSE

WERE I wealthy I would invite leading men in science, politics and literature to give a ten minutes speech blending Christianity with everyday life. I would offer a substantial fee for the speech, and treble it to any of them who emerged without saying something very silly. Silliness is so monotonously regular when religion is mixed with the serious side of life that one wonders if it is possible to be otherwise. In the dark days of the war the Prime Minister repeatedly reminded us that he had promised blood, sweat and tears. The country faced up to the promises with determination and renewed efforts, the responsibility was accepted as ours. But immediately a victory is won we are dropped out of the picture and God is brought into the scene. Then it is God's work and his victory, every credit is given to God, except the casualties; they are ours.

One can thoroughly appreciate the country's relief when the Tunisian campaign ended victoriously for us. But it was not a gift, or a favour. It was won, at a price. The material destruction can be replaced, but just on a million casualties, involving death, misery, suffering, orphans, widows and wrecked romances,

yes, such is war, human in origin, human in handling, nursed, nourished and organised under human direction and human resources. Let us keep it there. If war is noble, the credit belongs to humanity; if war is a disgrace, the shame belongs to humanity. Keep God out of it altogether. We then would at least be facing our responsibilities honestly, and avoid the indecency of giving thanks for a pretended divine favour involving divine treachery to one side of the combatants, and grievous losses and suffering to both.

The "News-Chronicle" provides another victim falling to the silly symphony of serio-religious. Mr. L. F. Easterbrook as an agricultural correspondent gives some very useful, interesting and welcome articles, but he ought to know that religion will not ripen tomatoes or keep caterpillars from cabbages. The Sermon on the Mount may be quite good in a church, but it is useless as a fertilizer. Mr. Easterbrook informs us that the Minister for Agriculture was not ashamed to acknowledge last year the Divine Power that gave us a record harvest just when we most needed it.

Why should he be ashamed? With a generally recognised licence for silliness where religion is concerned, even a Minister for Agriculture may play to the gallery without shame. We have to be thankful to that Power, says Mr. Easterbrook, for sufficient fuel and milk. But we did not have sufficient of either. Very many housewives could testify that that Divine Power badly underestimated our requirements. Milk had to be rationed and fuel restrictions were many, to say nothing of Press and radio snips for saving heat, light and power. Ministers for Food and Fuel had a worrying time sharing out what was available. Can anyone doubt, says Mr. Easterbrook, that that Power has been at work again? He immediately counters that with an uppercut by adding that we are only half-way to harvest, and disasters can still happen.

Having got his Divine Power on the ropes he lands some hefty lefts and rights. Fruit growers pray that late frosts will not rob them of promising fruit crops, Cornwall and Eastern Counties have suffered from recent gales, that salt water has been blown into coastal orchards, that here and there caterpillar and winter moths are doing an unusual amount of damage. So much to date, but more silliness is in store for Mr. Easterbrook. As an agriculturist he knows what is going on in cultivated fields, gardens and orchards at the present time. He knows that whether we have a wet, dry, hot or cold summer, it will be thriving conditions for some pests. He knows that in the soil, on the surface and in the air countless forms of insect life are developing and will get the first pick of fruit and vegetables, and his Divine Power will be helpless to prevent it.

By advising his readers on methods for destroying these pests, and the urgent necessity for destroying them he acknowledges the helplessness of his Divine Power. Every scarecrow stuck in a field is man's testimony of his greater faith in an old hat than in a Divine Power to stop birds plundering his crops. Men will toil, sweat and worry all through the summer, rooting out weeds to prevent them choking his edible growths, spraying and destroying insect pests of countless varieties, waging a continuous war against the insect enemies ceaselessly attacking his food supply.

Apart from weather worries, the harvest will depend upon man's success in beating off the attacks of rats, mice, beetles, grubs, moths, caterpillars, wireworms, slugs, aphides, flies preying on his carrots, his turnips, onions and celery, daddy longlegs, thrips, weevils, snails, birds, wasps, and so on, all taking a toll of man's food by consumption and destruction, doing damage amounting to millions of pounds every year, and at the end of it all, along will come the Agricultural Correspondent of the "News-Chronicle," Mr. L. F. Easterbrook, to tell us how thankful we ought to be that his Divine Power has allowed man to rescue some of his crops for his own consumption.

R. H. ROSETTI.

DISTURBANCE IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF DR. ARMSTRONG*

MY friend the celebrated physician, Dr. Armstrong, has a family comprising seven boys and a girl aged five years, the youngest of the lot. About a week ago, as the Doctor was sitting in his study, he heard a frightful uproar in the nursery. On going to see what was the matter he found the little girl lying on the floor with her face swollen and bleeding and her hair torn out by handfuls. The biggest and strongest of her brothers had attacked her savagely, and two others were supporting him against the rest, who had come to her assistance. All the boys were kicking and cuffing with great violence.

You know but little of Dr. Armstrong if you think that he stood by in Olympian calm to see the end of the scuffle, and no more if you suppose that he awaited the intervention of Mrs. Armstrong, or the governess, or the cook, or the housemaid, or the valet, or the gardener, or the chauffeur, or the neighbours, or the passers by! For, instead of watching the gory spectacle with indifference, or staying for someone else to stop it, he promptly brought his hands together with a deafening clap, and that instant the combat ceased.

"Ah," said the Doctor as he related the incident, "if I had possessed the power to foresee what was going to happen, I would have saved my little girl from that horrible suffering and have kept those dreadful boys from hurting her and themselves. Only think, if I had not heard them, all would have got disfigured for life; and perhaps some might even have been killed, they were so savage over it."

When the Doctor was departed, a gentleman in the company who is fond of raising cases, asked us what would be our opinion of a father who, in such an instance as the one thus described, should allow things to take their own course. We were all a little perplexed at first, for the supposition appeared so very extraordinary. Then one of us suggested that the man might be paralysed, and dumb, so that he could neither stir nor call for help. This would justify his conduct on the plea of impotency; and the same would apply if he were too feeble to overcome the children and could get no one to help him in doing it.

Here, the Lord Bishop of Babbleton, chancing to be present, said that a much better explanation might be offered. For had the father regarded the divine economy he could not but have known that it was impossible to restrain the conduct of his sons without limiting their freedom of will, a faculty absolutely necessary for them in their probationary state in order to become fit subjects of rewards or punishments. "Everyone," added his lordship, "must admit that, unless the wicked were allowed to misbehave, the good would often lose an opportunity of displaying their goodness and thus miss the recompense. As far as we know to the contrary, it might have been the intention of the man to wait until the holidays and then keep the bad boys at home, but send the others, along with their little sister, to the seaside."

"I cannot tell," replied a plain, honest countryman, "whether the boys acted from what is called 'free will,' or whether they acted from wild impulses like ferocious beasts; but whichever way the matter stood, it would have been a very unjust and cruel thing to let them get their moral education, or gratify their lawless passions, in a manner detrimental to all, especially to the innocent."

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

* The above sketch (never before published) was written during the last cosmic struggle, but the moral is equally, or even more, applicable to the present conflict.

THE BATTLE FOR IDEAS

WE do not now live in fear of the Inquisition, the stake and other forms of physical punishment devised by the "God Is Love" fraternity; but the motives, objectives and mental pattern of former persecutors still persist in their successors of to-day.

Yesterday, the Churches opposed the abolition of slavery, now they pose as champions of freedom. Unfortunately for them, Entertainment Promoters, Registry Offices and Divorce Courts have robbed them of their former glory and authority. However, the parson's parasitic existence still depends upon him hoodwinking the long-suffering people.

Besides harbouring the vilest form of intellects, religion has another function: Karl Marx called it "The Opium of the People." Our political and financial jugglers find Christianity very useful for keeping the people docile and ignorant. The death of the Beveridge Report is a recent example of what our leaders will do to the Atlantic Charter or any other promises. Everything we have has been fought for by the blood, sweat and tears of past generations; and if we want better things from the future, we shall have to fight for them. The parson inculcates an attitude of servility, the "Blessed are the Meek" doctrine is an open invitation to the vested interests to exploit the people's mental inertia.

Religious propagandists see to it that the public is constantly fed with the religious natures of the national idols. Churchill has his share of Christian sentiments, Roosevelt stresses the spiritual values, Hitler thanks Providence and Mussolini echoes the voice of the Vatican. All thoughts and actions that benefit men are labelled Christian. Newspapers are already magnifying the insignificant religious minority in Russia; soon we shall read that the prowess of the Red Army is due to their religious fervour.

Beaten in the "historical battle," the modern dog-collar man is adapting himself to the new order by infiltrating into the political and social spheres. Religion may have taught Hitler the essence of fifth-column work, for they both do the "Quisling Act" very successfully. The Christian infiltration into politics has overwhelmed all parties; the Tory and Labour Parties are saturated with the Jesus mumbo-jumbo, even the British Communist Party has not escaped it; in some branches of the C.P. religion must not be attacked, and in others the subject is taboo. The Dean of Canterbury, while paying lip-service to Communism, introduces here and there Christian interjections; he would have us believe that love and brotherhood, the Internationale and the Dnieper Dam are all expressions of Christianity.

Dean Inge wears the mantle of the Man of Science. Evolution, astronomy, physics, psychology and philosophy are all taken in the Dean's impressive stride, erudition enough to blow the dithering Rationalist off his perch. Soon we learn that evolution had a creator, there is a design in the Solar System, Man has a destiny and many other "truths" proved by the Dean's scholarship.

As for morals, the former Rector of Stiffkey paid the penalty for his infiltration into that sphere, although that sordid episode would not be out of place in the Bible.

The B.B.C. gives the lie to the much-trumpeted ethics of Christianity; this modern propaganda weapon is controlled by religious bigots, and for downright deception it takes some beating. The Boards of Governors of our high schools are usually dominated by a clergyman or two who see to it that Jesus has a continuous "run" in the curriculum. Woe betide the school-teacher who dared to explain the Atheist viewpoint, his career would soon be cut short. Town Councils have their reverends, who contrive to put the brake upon local administration. Dance-hall, dog-racing, public-house and cinema licences are always opposed by the local religious bodies.

The mischief that Christianity can do to the minds of men

puts everything else in the shade. Here is the greatest evil of all and, as usual, the parson evades responsibility. The Church owes its survival to the thousands of fears that it has put into the groping mind of man. Beset on all sides by the superstitious past, man makes his way through life bound by the ideas instilled into him by the vested interests of religion and finance. The exploiters, however, can see "the writing on the wall"; scientific knowledge and the spread of revolutionary ideas are sealing the doom of faith and dogma. It is a Freethinker's privilege and pleasure to hasten the process of death.

EDDIE HANSON

CORRESPONDENCE

THE JEWS AND JESUS

SIR,—In my former letter I quoted the exact words attributed to Trypho in Justin's "Dialogue." Mr. Cutner gives a paraphrase, and a misleading one. Trypho does not say: "We Jews know nothing whatever about your Messiah, when or where he was born." What he does say, as reference to the text will show, is: "Messiah, if such a person exists, is unknown to others and even to himself until the prophet Elijah anoints him king; then we shall know who he is"—obviously meaning the Jews' Messiah was still to come, as opposed to the Christian one alleged to have come. There is no question here of the myth or any other theory, but of the meaning of language.

About 30 years after Justin, Celsus wrote his famous book against Christianity. We know what he said, because later on Origen quoted him extensively in order to refute him. Celsus brings forward an imaginary Jew and makes him describe Jesus as the bastard son of a Roman soldier, Panthera. That is the story that eventually got into the Talmud, and shows the sort of thing Jews in the second century were saying about Jesus. I do not say it proves him historical, but it certainly does not prove him a myth.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

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