

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIII.—No. 28

Sunday, July 11, 1943

Price Threepence

## CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	273
Lords and Babies—F. J. Corina ...	274
Acid Drops ...	276
To Correspondents ...	277
Sugar Plums ...	277
Footie and Wheeler—C. McCall ...	278
What Education Isn't—P. Victor Morris ...	279
Correspondence ...	279
Sunday Lecture Notices, Etc. ...	279
Mrs. Neighbour ...	280

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Christian Liberty

NEVER before in the history of the English-speaking people has the word "liberty" been so hard-worked as during the past four years. We have gone to war against Germany in the name of Liberty; we have drawn up a solemn declaration, signed by the English-speaking United States of America, as to the liberties we intend to impose on the world when this war is brought to an end. Even the Roman Catholic Church has forgotten its history and its acting policy and demanded the liberty of the world. We all love liberty—in theory; but in practice—? Well, we will say for the moment the situation is confusing. For books that may be read by Englishmen in England may not be read in New Zealand or in India. We have Sunday laws and regulations which prevent children playing in the parks on Sunday; which will not permit the theatres to be open on Sunday; which close museums and public libraries against those of the public who would wish to visit them; and we have blasphemy laws that belong, in terms of time, to the Middle Ages and in actuality to the most intolerant of the people of to-day. And in any division that takes place in the House of Commons we have the pitiful picture of a large number of Members of Parliament who do not record their votes because they are ashamed of laws they perpetuate by their cowardice.

Australia is among the United Nations in this war. It joins with us, and the rest of the Allies, in its devotion to freedom. With the Americans and the British, the Australian says: "Give us liberty or give us death." The amazing thing is that they believe they have perfect liberty on a very large scale. Yet from a copy of "The Christchurch Star-Sun," recently to hand, we find that this question of liberty of speech which, if really existing, should guarantee the permanency of the liberties we have, and of more to come, is put to the test.

John Anderson is Professor of Philosophy in Sydney University. He was invited to speak at a New Education Fellowship, and in the course of his speech said:—

"Religious doctrines are a direct attack and assault upon a child's common sense. When religious instruction is combined with other instruction, the effect can only be one of uncertainty. The child either becomes credulous without a proper appreciation of the evidence or he becomes cynical and given to humbug. If a child is forced to swallow doctrines of a religious nature, it will undermine his understanding of things in general.

"The teaching of religion has an important political character because it promotes an extension of credulity, which is a very desirable thing from the point of view of the ruling order."

So much outspokenness is very unusual with university professors either in Australia or elsewhere. The courage here shown is the more worthy of notice. But it meant trouble for Professor Anderson, for Christian malignity stabs in the dark and has a dogged memory. It was no official concern of the Australian Minister of Public Works; but he felt shocked, and publicly promised to "use his influence to ensure that this man, holding a position in a State-subsidised university, be not allowed to affront public opinion." Presumably he represents public opinion. Poor Australia!

Professor Anderson replied, "I have before now combated the view that in making grants to the university the State purchases the opinions of university teachers." But we can assure the Professor that it is the view of many heads of universities, and even Government posts, that when a man is given an office it is at least hoped that he will not go dropping such bombs of truth as he did. The adornment of a public post often takes the form of a gag. If every university professor, and every teacher and every writer, said what they really think about current religion, one of the greatest upheavals of public opinion that ever occurred would be seen—and felt. It will be remembered by a few that even Professor Laski, about ten years ago, was called to book by chiefs at London University for giving a lecture on Russia during his vacation. Men's opinions are bought—or they are bought to silence—by all kinds of posts, honours and titles. But Professor Anderson not merely told this outside body what he believed, he said plainly, simply, and without any trace of Christian truth, "I am an Atheist."

"Bad begins, but worse remains behind." On April 9, in the State Parliament, there was solemnly debated the honesty of Professor Anderson. The subject was introduced, quite properly, by the Rev. D. P. Macdonald. He told the House that "the recognition of Almighty God is definitely laid down in the Commonwealth Constitution. Any remarks subversive of our Christian constitution demand repudiation by this House." Well, if God is

part of the constitution of Australia, and if Australians can only be good citizens so long as God keeps a sharp eye on them, then people holding public positions must be warned they must not by any means weaken the belief that God has his eye on the Australians. It is not for me to say whether or no they need watching. But if all men in high public places in Australia said exactly what they thought about God and his religion the Almighty would probably leave Australia altogether. The same goes for this country. Never a god yet who did not war against straightforward speech.

In the end, the Parliament solemnly passed the following resolution:—

"That Professor Anderson's statements are a travesty of the Christian religion and are calculated to undermine the principles of the Christian State. That this House should bring the statements under the notice of the University Senate."

The vote was unanimous. Australia's sons are dying abroad for freedom. The men at home are seeing it is the right kind of freedom. Not one of the miserable herd had the pluck or the intelligence to say a word for freedom of speech. And every vote was a vote in favour of coercion and dishonesty. We decline to believe that in the whole of Members of the Australian Parliament there was not one man who disagreed with this unanimous vote. We wonder what the University of Sydney will do—or has done—in relation to the vote of Parliament. Of course, we might have had the same exhibition as the Australian House gave us, but I do not think the vote would have been unanimous. Professor Anderson—the man seems to have a mania for truth-telling—said to an interviewer, "It is regrettable that the Labour Party should cringe before the religious vote." Regrettable—but what can he expect! Have we not seen in this country the Labour Party turn its back to the honesty of expression of the early Labour advocates and cringe to get the goodwill of the Christian vote, and salve their speeches with compliments to a religion they do not believe in? And, after all, we have the B.B.C., a semi-Government organisation, which brazenly announces that it will admit no criticisms of Christianity, and that anyone who touches on Christianity must move along the line of the "Christian tradition." And now here is the Christian tradition being honoured in the same way that it is honoured in this country. I recall that many years ago a Christian friend told me it was a pity I was not in the Church. I replied I saw no need; there were as many opportunities for lying outside the Church as there were in it. On reflection, I might have added the consideration that to lie in the interests of religion is to run fewer risks than to give vent to one's imagination in connection with ordinary matters.

Another Australian paper, "The Daily Telegraph," says the point at issue is whether a man may still speak what is in his mind even though every man in the community disagrees with him. "Professor Anderson expressed an opinion. Opinions are a subject for debate. If they are false opinions, debate will demolish them. That, anyway, is the theory of democracy, which substitutes for the rack of the Inquisition, the concentration camp and the economic terrorisation of the totalitarian State the appeal to reason. When teachers are afraid to open their mouths for fear of offending orthodoxy—and orthodoxy is defined

by the clique of politicians who happen to have a majority at the moment—we will certainly bid a last farewell to freedom of thought, speech, action and religion as well."

We agree with every word in this passage with the exception of one—"religion." All secular matters are proper subjects for debate, and where religion is not under consideration, or is not seriously affected by discussion, no objection is raised; or if it is, its intolerance is marked and denounced. But to deny the right of discussion is of the very essence of the religious attitude. Look at the terms of Professor Anderson's speech that has given offence. Substitute "child's intellectual integrity" for "common sense" and the whole of the offending remarks are, logically and morally, indisputably true. The value of education does not consist in converting a child into a gramophone, so that it will repeat without variation set formulæ, but for it to realise why one statement is true and the other false, or at least doubtful. All secular teaching must be accepted because it is either demonstrably or probably true. All religious teaching depends upon a mere acceptance of doctrines, none of which are demonstrably true and many of which are demonstrably false.

We are hearing at the moment much praise—deserved praise—of our fighting men in the air, on the sea and on the land. But there is another form of courage, as great as that shown in warfare and of much greater ultimate value in the progress of human development. That is the courage to criticise where criticism is forbidden and to speak where speech invites attack from established power and inherited religious beliefs. Professor Anderson may lose his position; he may be told that if he has the opinions he professes to hold, then his policy should be to keep them to himself. And that is wrong—damnable wrong. Truth is something made by the accumulated experience and knowledge of the race. It is our heritage: the most valuable thing we have; the more valuable because so many quake before the inconvenience its utterance may bring. To abandon it is not merely a wrong that one inflicts on one's own character, it is a crime against the best interests of humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## LORDS AND BABIES!

OUR Old Men of the State—the House of Lords—have been discussing with ponderous gravity and senility the awful "problem" of the falling birth rate.

Running true to type, with that crass wooden-headedness that is so often characteristic of the outlook of our national legislators, the Lords have been expressing the utmost concern for people who simply do not exist, because they have not even been born.

While our old age pensioners are left almost to starve, with complete disregard for their welfare beyond the doling out of a pittance with a most ungracious gesture of impatience that these people should have lived long enough to be a trouble to the nation; while anomalies and injustices are perpetrated, without protest from the Lords, in all the age strata of society down to infants, the great British House of Lords can find time intelligently (!) to give its compassionate attention to the problems of the great unborn.

Not, mark you, that they are particularly concerned with the question of how to make life happy for the unborn, if and when

they happen to become born. That is not the problem that agitates their decomposing grey matter. The problem that worries them is how to get the unborn born—just that alone. What should be done with the unborn when we have managed to get them born is quite a subsidiary consideration, for Lord de la Warr has profoundly declared that “no other economic or political problem compares with this in fundamental importance.” He meant, of course, the problem of getting the unborn born.

Lord de la Warr made this statement when, with metaphorical tears in his eyes, he pointed out to his brother lords that by 1980 our population might have dropped to a mere bagatelle of 30,000,000, of which nearly a quarter might be old age pensioners.

Of course, the question of excessive pensioners can be easily disposed of; if we don't want so many of them we need only raise the age for pensions by ten years and that will reduce the quarter to at least a tenth. Or, if we raise the pension age to 100 we can almost abolish that disturbing figure, which seems so badly to worry some of our legislators in both Houses.

But that would still leave us with the tragic part of the problem—that we should be crowding only 38,000,000 people on to our little island, in 1980, instead of the 68,000,000 or so that a rising birth rate would enable us to crowd into our limited acres. I agree with Lord de la Warr that this really is fundamental, because it is biological.

We all know that mass breeding is a natural method of ensuring the continuance of a species. Even our legislators seem to be thus far educated in biological ecology, as probably at some time or other they have all bred fancy mice or tame rabbits; and having read somewhere or other (perhaps in one of those books on evolution) that human beings are animals, just like the other creatures on the earth's surface, they have managed to put two and two together, and have reached the profound conclusion that the obvious safeguard against human extinction is mass breeding.

But the human animal is sometimes more stupid than the mule, and at the present time it just refuses to indulge in mass breeding at the behest of legislators, even lordly ones.

So Lord de la Warr, Lord Nathan, Lord Samuel and other geniuses of the Upper House thought out schemes for offering inducements, such as family allowances, higher income tax rebates for children, lower rents for big families, propaganda, and so on. The clever little fellows!

But this cute idea of free gifts for babies is not quite so original, in essence, as their lordships might have thought; the newspapers had a free gift stunt years ago as a survival scheme, but it just turned out to be a huge snowball, bringing bigger and bigger problems as the snowball itself got bigger and bigger, and the Press Lords were delighted when one sane man among them suggested they should stop it. A survival scheme that becomes a multiple suicide scheme doesn't even preserve the fittest.

One coroneted brother, however, Lord Geddes, evidently didn't think it was a question of free gifts at all, but rather a question of “inactivity on the part of the germ plasm.” How he managed to reach this amazing conclusion I really don't know, unless he has conversational access to representative sperms and ova, thus obtaining inside information straight from the horse's mouth, as it were.

Mind you, there may be just a grain of truth in this idea that the germ plasm has become tired. The efforts of these tiny organisms to force a way through even the thinnest layer of latex, or the filmiest coating of coco-butter, must be very exhausting indeed, and it is not to be wondered at that they often give up the struggle.

Perhaps the Duke of Devonshire got near to the solution of the problem when he pointed out that the question was not one

of a purely economic nature, because the birth rate was higher in the slums than in the garden cities. He almost had the solution in his hand, but he either did not know it, or dare not declare it. Obviously, if the birth rate is higher in the slums than elsewhere, the remedy for a falling birth rate is to create more slums as fast as we can.

There is nothing morally wrong about this suggestion, whatever you may think, because if (as Lord de la Warr says) the fundamental problem is to get the unborn born, all other questions must be subordinate to this fundamental one. So on with the slums, and up with the birth rate!

But there was one lord at least who did not regard a falling birth rate with horror, and who seemed to have some plain, common-sense ideas about the question, rather than the fantastic theories of his brothers, which neither fitted biological fact nor made sociological sense. Lord Dawson of Penn pointed out to his brothers that knowledge of birth control, which, he said, the Churches made the mistake of putting completely out of court, enabled people to say that they would have children by choice rather than by chance. Just that—but it was far too simple for some of our muddle-brained lords, who cannot be happy unless they are tying themselves up in a maze of stupid asininites. Plainly to see the wood, despite the trees, isn't a lordly attribute after all.

Lord Dawson's hint that a high infant death rate usually accompanied the old-fashioned high birth rate seemed to be beyond the comprehension of some of our lordly minds. So I don't suppose it would be much use *my* trying to convince their lordships of an even more significant fact—that human happiness can never rest upon sheer gross numbers, but must rest upon capacity to get the best out of life, which sometimes requires that there shall be fewer, not more, to enjoy what is available.

Of course, I realise that I am much too ignorant to appreciate the finer points of this population question. Not being bred in the fine British military tradition, I cannot perceive, as some of their lordships perceived, that there is a question of soldiers and future wars involved in this matter. That aspect is beyond the grasp of my plain, unimperialist mind. Nor can I, as one who does not “belong” to the group in whose interests the people are required to breed, appreciate the need for a mass of human material in the home country, as part of the scheme for the exploitation of the greater masses in our “possessions” abroad. Only a brain surmounting an old school tie could grasp these finer points.

So it is quite possible that I am wrong when I say that the human animal can preserve itself without recourse to the wasteful natural method of mass breeding; it is quite possible that I am wrong when I suggest that human development has placed within man's reach the possibility of escape from the more onerous aspects of automatic parenthood, and now offers sociologically safe parenthood, by choice, with its immensely greater prospects for sheer individual or personal enjoyment of life, especially from the female point of view.

It is quite possible that their lordships, as decadent pillars of a decadent imperialist outlook, which requires masses of human raw material for its own survival, may be right, and may know what is best for the future well-being of the people; whereas I am all wrong.

But I don't think so!

F. J. CORINA.

#### • BACK TO ROME

Back to Rome! Back to relics and holy water, and childish superstition, and cunning, unscrupulous priestcraft, and suppression of liberty, and persecution and murder of heretics! Back to the glorious condition of Spain! Back to the state of Italy under Papal Dominion! Never!—G. W. FOSTER.

## ACID DROPS

A COPY of the "Cape Times," dated April 21, that has just reached us contains an account of an interesting debate in the House of Assembly. There is a Church Labour Colony at Karkanas, partly subsidised by Government money. The land appears to have been granted, and partly subsidised, by the Government, and the Church acted as a kind of trustee for the welfare of the people. There are now 450 families settled, but it was made impossible for them ever to own their own plot of land, although in some cases a plot may be worth £1,000. Settlers who had been there forty years had not even the right to choose a member of the School Board, and if a settler is turned out of his plot the maximum compensation is not more than £200, although the plot may be worth £1,000. The land was granted to the Church under certain conditions, one being that all profits should be devoted for establishing reading rooms and improving the status of the settlers. The member who raised the question in the House asserts that although the profits had accumulated to £129,000 nothing had been done. The settlement had been turned into a capitalistic monopoly.

It is a pretty story, although it might be duplicated in many parts of the world. In this case the matter was raised by Senator Conroy, who holds the post of "Minister of Lands." Mr. Conroy says that for making public the scandal he has been accused of attacking the Church. That, again, is a very common dodge.

We are fighting a war for freedom, physical and intellectual. So runs the theme. The statement is backed by the Churches and by our leaders. But there are limitations to the freedom that Christians have in view. We in this country have Sunday laws which prevent our going to witness a theatrical play on Sunday, and there are thousands of places in the British Isles which prevent children playing games on Sundays, and forbid adults using their cricket grounds or other forms of sport, whilst the vast majority of museums and public libraries are closed on the one day in the week that most people have free. All done avowedly to satisfy a number of religious bigots. To these we might add the dishonesty encouraged with those weaker brethren who are afraid to say outright what they really think about the Christian superstition. Even in our universities there are many holding professorships who feel afraid to say what are their real opinions about the Christian religion. Still, we are fighting a war for freedom—with limitations.

There is a way of stating a truth that ends in telling a lie. It is a practice well known by two sections of society—parsons and professional politicians. A common form of the political lie is presented in the form of "Such-and-such a reform was carried out by my party." So it may have been. But a closer study of the situation often reveals the fact it was a part reform which could no longer be denied, and in its mutilated form was adopted so as to prevent a more radical move being made. In this way the people have often had to wait for a generation or two to get what should have been achieved at a much earlier date.

An example from the religious world is of much the same type, with a difference. Here, for example, is an East End parson, Rev. F. W. Fitkin, who offers a number of examples, from which we take two. The first deals with social reform in general. Mr. Fitkin says that—

if the Church as such did not rise against evils inherent in the scramble for wealth . . . Christian men did in considerable numbers. . . .

The first half of the statement admits the case against the Church, and if the impetus to reform was bred by Christianity, the impulse in its strongest form should have come from the Church. And in any case, considering the number of non-Christians and anti-Christians who have always taken a strong and creative part in social reform, the Christians who may have helped are in no better position than those who were opposed to Christianity. Honesty would have said that men, irrespective of their beliefs about religion, played their part in bringing about reform. But we have truth number one, which in the telling is the equivalent to a lie.

The second example is in relation to education. Mr. Fitkin has it thus:—

"In spite of the fact that the National Society had been building schools up and down the land for fifty years before the first School Board, one is still asked, 'Why has the Church always opposed the education of the common people?'"

And that turns a truth into a lie. What Mr. Fitkin should have pointed out is that the Roman Catholic policy of demanding the right to control education—which did not touch the common people—was followed by the English Church after Roman Catholicism had legally ceased to exist in this country. They formed schools, of a kind, because they simply would not expose their children to Church of England influences. Even then, right up to the passing the 1870 Act, English elementary schools were behind Continental ones. And, moreover, it was the poor character of the instruction given in the existing elementary schools which compelled the State to take charge. And even then the State schools met with strong opposition. We suggest that those who wish to know just what education under the Church was worth, to read "The Town Labourer" and "The Age of the Chartists," by J. L. and Barbara Hammond. The other volumes in that series are also worth consulting. Mr. Fitkin's articles appeared in the "East End News" for June 18.

The Bishop of Birmingham is reported in "The Times" for June 21 as saying that "The quality of the clergy had fallen during the last generation." Dr. Barnes is too modest in his statement. The quality of the clergy has been falling steadily for over a century. How could it be otherwise? There is not a single historic position of Christianity that has not been shattered. Conscientious men know this to be a fact, and the Churches must put up with whatever they may get. The best of them solace their conscience by preaching a mixture of watered-down sociology and leaving Christian doctrines outside. Result—a poor mentality in the pulpit, brightened a bit by those who teach one thing and believe another.

A pamphlet has been published by the "Christian Education Movement." It wants "the Christian faith to serve as a common basis for religious teaching in schools." But the "Church Times," as one Christian to another, is "agin it." In pious horror it says the pamphlet might have been written by a "Unitarian," and a man with one god only is anathema to the "C.T." And he deserves to be so treated for having such a small stock of gods in a world where they are so plentiful. It is as bad as it would be if Queen Mary had only one lady-in-waiting. All good Christians should insist on having their children supplied with at least three gods who must be lumped together as only one—a state of things that must have all the attraction to a child of daddy swallowing three pennies and then pulling a threepenny-piece out of his boot. The serious side of this really funny situation is that these people all demand to bring their fantastic imaginations into the schools. But, then, if Christians cannot be *brel* how is a new generation of believers to make its appearance?

The B.B.C. appears to have upset some of their Roman Catholic friends. It appears that a parson, letting himself go over the microphone, suggested that Jesus was a true working man, "just like other workers, working at the bench for the sustenance of his younger brothers and sisters." (There is, of course, no indication in the New Testament that Jesus ever did any work beyond that of an itinerant preacher.) But the picture of Jesus as an ordinary workshop jobbing carpenter, and of the "Virgin" with a family, led to some inquiries asking the B.B.C. what it meant by such "blasphemy." The B.B.C. replied that the speaker did not mean what he said, whereupon the "Universe" inquires what the hell—or words to that effect—he did mean?

We also give it up, but in the Apocryphal New Testament we find that occasionally he did some work, for we learn that while Jesus was one day loafing in his father's workshop a plank was found to be short of the required length. So Jesus took one end of the plank, his mother's husband took the other end, and it was stretched out. If only Jesus were here to-day, what might not be done to help win the war?

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**W. W. SMITH.**—The passage in the report, "It mattered little to the Jews whether they lived under proper government or under anarchy, for they suffered no less under the one than the other," is from Graetz's "History of the Jews." What the author meant was that historically the Jews suffered under whatever government existed, or in places where settled government was absent. "Anarchy" in the text has no reference to the "anarchy" advocated by Kropotkin—whom we met—and regarded as the finest man we have ever met.

**S. BURROUGHS.**—You are quite correct in your two statements: (1) That we always use the word religion as implying the belief in "God" or gods. Language becomes useless or misleading when it is used as meaning one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. (2) It is well known that there are forms of what is called Buddhism surrounded by the grossest superstitions. But we were dealing with the real Buddhism which has nothing to do with gods. Buddha's system is quite destitute of "God" and has no room for one. Such a term as "unconditioned Absolute" is unconditioned nonsense by whomsoever it is used. Buddha aimed at dealing with nature as we know it, and there is no room in it for a god. From one point of view his system was strongly pessimistic, but his insistence on the play of "cause" and "effect" was persistent.

**W. J. FREEMAN.**—We agree with you that to call the "Christian Spirit" a beautiful thing is misleading. The method that makes it such could as easily turn anything into good no matter what its nature is.

**A. O. WORLEY.**—We note your delight that the B.B.C. "Anvil" has decided that "honest doubters" will be saved. But consider. Suppose they are sent to heaven and so miss the splendid company that has gone to the other place! After all, they are worth a little unpleasantness in the temperature. But think of eternity with Calvin and Knox—they were defined by Ingersoll as resembling the lower and upper jaws of a hyena. They were able men, but their character was spoiled by their religion.

The General Secretary of the N.S.S. acknowledges, with many thanks, a donation of 2s. 6d. to the Benevolent Fund of the Society from Mr. Parsival.

**H. L. DAVIS.**—Paper will be sent as requested for the next three weeks. Thanks.

**FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.**—M. Feldman, 7s.

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 General Secretary of the N.S.S. will leave for a short vacation on July 16, and during his absence only matters of pressing importance will be dealt with. Anything at present needing attention should be forwarded without delay.

In our spare moments we are given to walking round our bookshelves, calling here and there on old friends, and just leaving a mere visiting card on those who have never risen above the status of mere acquaintances. Both deserve recognition, for he who cannot win wisdom from a fool will never get all that a philosopher is willing to give him. We don't, for example, know how many now read Oscar Wilde, but his writings are a wonderful mixture of extravagance and shrewdness, and often one is used to emphasise the other. His essay on "The Decay of Lying" is a good illustration of this. And here is a passage from another essay that is worth thinking about:—

"As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar it will cease to be popular. The change will, of course, be slow, and people will not be conscious of it. Intellectual criticism will bind Europe together in bonds far closer than those that can be forged by shopman or sentimentalist. It will give us the peace that springs from understanding."

This seems to contain a deal that is worth considering; but consideration implies understanding, and understanding is rare. The vast majority wish to be told what they ought to believe. Understanding threatens brain-fag.

Here it is again! One Christian is afraid another Christian is going to steal the pitch. This time it is Bishop Myers, Vicar Capitular of Westminster, up in arms because he fears much planning of the future will be pagan. That, of course, means it will favour Protestantism, and may even leave the Roman Church out in the cold. What a world there would be if there was no method of at least weakening the power of these loving Christians towards each other.

It is a pity that the B.B.C. "Anvil" does not induce an educated Athiest to play the part of "Devil's Advocate." For instance, at a recent "session"—that sounds more important than "meeting"—a question was asked—or invented: "Why is it that so many people are of such an excellent type and yet are not Christians, while so many Christians are of a not very admirable character?" The reply was a very old one, and the members rushed at it as though it was a wonderful discovery. It was that these non-Christians had the good fortune to be born into a Christian environment and had sucked in Christian morality with their mothers' milk. The bad Christians were so few they did not matter much.

Now if we are to go back to "mother's milk" in this way, then we need only assume that Roman Catholics would explain the goodness of Protestants by reference to their Catholic mothers' milk, and so down to the first Christians whose goodness would be explained by their Pagan mothers' milk, and so on to the most remote time, to explain one generation by a preceding one. Such must be true at all stages or it is not true at any stage.

Of course, the truth is that the human race is a kind of carrier which transmits from generation to generation what has been thought and done by those who lived and died. That is as true of bad qualities as it is of good ones—with this difference. If the conduct of a people makes for the disintegration of society, or even for its worsening, then the dice are loaded against it, for no society can practise on a large scale anti-social conduct without it leading to social disintegration. That is, of course, the scientific view of social evolution, but we cannot expect the "Anvil" to appreciate it.

There seems to be another burst among the prophecy-mongers. In 1919 God's Word proved that the war would end in 1918. That is the right way to boost a prophecy. Wait until it happens and arrange calculation accordingly. Then, as some of the ungodly jeered at the prophecy, Daniel was re-studied, and it was found that the present war would end on April 30, 1943. A still further search leads to the conclusion that this war will end in December, 1945. After examining the evidence we are convinced that the war will end some time after September, 1943.

The important thing to the Churches is not whether God is satisfied with us, it is whether we are satisfied with him.

## FOOTE AND WHEELER

"The only noble things in this world are great hearts and great brains."—G. W. FOOTE.

YOUNG members of any movement receive considerable inspiration, I think, from reading and hearing about the work and struggles of their predecessors. Perhaps this can largely be attributed to the essentially heroic nature of the history teaching they receive in the schools, and it can be—and, no doubt, often is—carried too far. Yet in an intellectual sphere such as Freethought, it is surely a very desirable and good thing, though it should always remain "this side of idolatry."

The history of Freethought throughout the ages provides ample material for the most ambitious admirer of heroism and gallantry, but as we come nearer to our own times and reach the men who started the actual societies to which we belong, and the actual papers we read, the attraction becomes naturally greater. Much as we venerate Bruno, Voltaire or Shelley, they can never be as close to us as Bradlaugh! He lived almost in our own time, and yet sufficiently long before us to be viewed in some perspective, and he, deservedly, holds a singular place in our hearts.

This does not mean, however, that we forget his contemporaries, for he was surrounded and assisted by men and women well worthy of the great tradition they upheld. My own admiration of those who were associated with Freethought in the last—and early parts of this—century, is such that I cannot acquire enough knowledge of them. Nothing pleases me more than searching through old volumes of "The Freethinker" and similar journals, or the informative "Secular Almanacks"; and I read and hear with delight the reminiscences of those who can still take me back to the days, so near, and yet, it seems, so far!

About Bradlaugh, of course, our knowledge is fairly extensive, though not complete, but we know much less about G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler, and many others connected with them, to whom we owe so much to-day. Even a photograph or autograph is interesting and helpful in enabling us to picture the two men who worked together on this paper for about 16 years; and established its reputation, but acquaintance must come principally through the medium of their written work.

One can glean some idea of the great friendship that existed between them from Foote's personal tribute to Wheeler a few years after the latter's death, recalling the days of the famous blasphemy trial:—

"Frail in body but firm of soul, he would have gone into the Pass of Thermopylæ with me whenever I beckoned him. Nearly three years ago he left my side, under a more imperative bidding than mine. But he is still as present to me in thought as on the day he died, though not so obtrusively, and in the pauses of my work, I sometimes find myself smiling and whispering 'Joe.'"

Such was the affection between these two gifted and clear-sighted comrades who willingly gave their best to the cause they loved, and the lasting value of their work is singularly amazing.

Wheeler's "Biographical Dictionary" is, of course, indispensable to Freethinkers, and his "Footsteps of the Past" is a splendid scientific study of human evolution, revealing a rare understanding of anthropology, unhampered by any bonds of theology or custom. It is truly typical of Wheeler that, on first reading "The Golden Bough," he wrote and congratulated Sir James G. Frazer, but regretted that the writer had not carried his work to its logical conclusion, and explained Christianity as he had so many other religions.

Wheeler's other book was "Bible Studies and Phallic Worship," which again shows his painstaking care and scrupu-

lous attachment to the facts, which make his volumes such examples of scientific accuracy. In addition, he collaborated with Foote to produce the valuable "Crimes of Christianity," and a little volume in appreciation of Voltaire on the bicentenary of the great Frenchman's birth. Together, Foote and Wheeler also edited "The Jewish Life of Christ."

Foote's works are much more numerous and more literary. Indeed, few men had such an extensive knowledge and appreciation of literature as G. W. Foote, and fewer still were able to convey it to their readers in such fine style. Chapman Cohen has rightly said that "he wielded the most able and the most cultured pen ever devoted to the service of British Freethought. In both his speaking and writing there was a rich allusiveness that indicated the man of wide reading, sound judgment and superb taste."

It is sufficient to say of Foote's "Shakespeare and Other Essays" that they are well worthy of the great subjects with which they deal, while his two volumes of "Flowers of Freethought" will be treasured by all who read them. In his Preface the author wondered if his title would be thought too ambitious, but he explained: "These articles are flowers of my Freethought; the blossomings of my mind on particular occasions, after much investigation and pondering."

To-day they are as fine and interesting as ever, and I do not think they could be better named. They are truly "Flowers of Freethought"!

He gave us also—among others—the witty and satirical "Bible Romances" and "Bible Heroes," and the very different "Infidel Deathbeds" and "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought," while, with W. P. Ball, he was responsible for the invaluable "Bible Handbook." He also wrote a large number of varied pamphlets, and it is him (often again in association with Wheeler) we have to thank for cheap reprints of the great Freethinking works of Hume, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Paine and Anthony Collins, and for acquainting us with Freethought literature generally—a task for which he was so well fitted. Foote's organising work, too, helped largely to make the Freethought movement what it is to-day. He was also a very able lecturer, and on occasions he must have reached great heights of oratory. His "Defence of Free Speech" is unsurpassed, and earned the praise of many eminent people, including the Judge before whom the speech was made.

Difficult as it is to make the decision, however, I think the greatest of the numerous debts we owe to G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler is this journal. It was Foote's child and he did his best work for it. Wheeler was a sub-editor as well as a friend, of whom any editor could be more than proud. As a combination—and that is what they really were till Wheeler's death—they were unrivalled. Individually so high, their powers in co-operation were astonishing. Ever critical yet ever appreciative of true worth, they said what they thought, that and that alone, and they gave the Freethought movement a literature of which it may well be proud. The best—indeed, the only—way that we can pay the immense debt that we owe to these two great friends and their many worthy assistants is to continue the work they did so well.

C. McCALL.

## THE DEVIL

The half-hearted religiosity of latter-day Christianity may choose to ignore the fact, but it remains none the less true that he who refuses to accept the demonology of the Gospels rejects the revelation of a spiritual world made in them, as much as if he denied the existence of such a person as Jesus of Nazareth; and deserves, as much as anyone can do, to be earmarked "Infidel" by our gentle shepherds.—T. H. HUXLEY.

## WHAT EDUCATION ISN'T

I HAVE just read an article in "The Spectator" of May 28 that gained my attention by its title, "What Education Is." Generally its purpose seemed to be to point out the futility of much of the teaching given in our schools and to suggest that more care be devoted to practical subjects on the one hand and "The Good" (presumably character-forming interests) on the other. Rightly or wrongly, I came to the conclusion that the writer's concern was not with education at all, but merely with that ever troublesome bone of contention, religious teaching.

For his criticisms of present-day curricula were of the kind that could only secure the assent of the unthinking. You know the sort of thing—the successful men who have forgotten all the mathematics they were taught at school, the eminent scientist who is helpless when a slight adjustment of a wireless set is needed, the Englishman who finds his class-taught French useless when he lands on the Continent because the inhabitants talk too fast for him. So why teach these things? Well, many thousands of fine young men who would no doubt have agreed with Mr. G. W. White's sneers at mathematics a few years ago have had to go back to school for a year to learn enough of this subject to defend their homes against air attacks. And there would be no wireless at all but for unpractical scientists with meaningless theories. And everybody who has lived in France after learning school-French has found it invaluable after the first few weeks there.

Not that I will not agree that education in this country leaves much to be desired. My quarrel with Mr. White, "The Spectator" and all who write and publish criticisms like those cited above is that they only find fault in order to pave the way for the introduction of more of their own pet obsession into the schools. Here is how the article under consideration did it:—

"If the task of education is to fit the individual for the service of humanity, may it not also be described as a guiding of the soul back to God? By God we do not necessarily mean the personal Deity of Christianity, but simply that unseen power, to which all men of goodwill, whatever their creed, acknowledge allegiance in their hearts; that power in which inheres moral, intellectual and aesthetic goodness."

Now, inclined as I am to be suspicious of people who write and talk like this, I see in this passage just the same technique of seeking the assent of the intellectually lazy as characterised in the writer's points against the teaching of mathematics, and so on. I can, indeed, easily imagine readers of "The Spectator" swallowing it whole, and luke-warm Rationalists mildly approving. For the conception of education as fitting the individual for the service of humanity is a truly noble one; and surely we can be broad-minded enough to let him who penned this high thought describe it as "guiding the soul back to God," particularly as he is so careful to point out that he only means "that unseen power . . . to which all men of goodwill . . . acknowledge allegiance." No, I still smell a rat!

The fact is that an education that will fit the individual for the service of humanity and a system of instruction that will guide the soul back to God are not one and the same thing, as the writer of the article suggests, but two irreconcilable opposites. The former aims at producing free, informed, self-reliant members of a progressive society; the latter can only transform children with a capacity for better things into docile, ignorant, fearful dupes of privilege-seeking tricksters. They will not be less so if, instead of the traditional God of Christianity, Judaism, Islam or what not, they are content with Mr. White's magical "unseen power." It simply isn't true that "all men of goodwill" acknowledge such a power as the source of moral, intellectual and aesthetic goodness; and any education worthy of the name has no place for "unseen powers" to enlighten the young on the nature of facts whose origins, development and potentialities can

be adequately taught by reference to the observable actions and impulses of human beings alone.

The sinister aspect of such articles as Mr. White's, and the speeches of political leaders in which religious teaching is extolled as "the rock on which the sturdy character of the British people was founded," "the bulwark of family life," and "the main-spring of our hard-won liberties," is not so much that they are totally untrue as that, intentionally or otherwise, they are grist to the mill of those who seek sectarian advantages by controlling the education of the young. There is no public controversy as to whether school-lessons shall be given about "unseen powers" that are the source of moral, intellectual and artistic qualities. Nobody wants that kind of religion taught to the children. The claim of the sects is for the specific teaching of Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and the creeds of other bodies politically powerful enough to be amongst the privileged, at the State expense, but under the control of the sects concerned; and all who at the present time assent to Mr. White's woolly species of religious teaching (or to the kind that Mr. Churchill says he hopes will continue in our schools) may well find that their acquiescence will saddle the nation with an unjust, inefficient and costly system that will act as a brake on progress for generations to come.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## THE JEWS AND JESUS.

STR,—I have no intention of discussing Celsus, his imaginary Jew and Origen. I pointed out that the whole motive of Justin's "Dialogue" was to convert Jews to the belief that Jesus was their Messiah. He did this by showing, or trying to show, that Jesus was "foretold" in the Old Testament. It was therefore impossible for Trypho to discuss any other Messiah. Incidentally, some Christian translators use the word "Christ" instead of "Messiah."—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

## LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Uyde Park): Thursday, 7 p.m., Messrs. WOOD and PAGE; Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. E. C. SAPHIN and supporting speakers.

## LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11 a.m., Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A.; I.L.D.—"The United States (3), The Growth of a World Power."

## COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place, Blackburn): Sunday, 6-45 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

Blyth (Fountain): Monday, July 12, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON, a Lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway): Sunday, 6-30 p.m. (if wet, Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate), a Lecture.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End): Saturday, July 10, 7-15 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON, a Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): Sunday, 7 p.m. Debate: "A God-Ordered Universe"—Messrs. F. SMITHIES and GORDON LIVINGSTONE, M.A.

Hapton: Monday, July 12, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

Higham: Friday, July 9, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields): Sunday, 3 p.m.—Mr. W. A. ATKINSON, a Lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Bigg Market): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

North Shields (Harbour View): Tuesday, July 13, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON, a Lecture.

Padiham (Waterside, near Footbridge): Sunday, 11-30 a.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

## MRS. NEIGHBOUR!

## I.

THE chill of winter lingered this March day, so that the previous night's frost, followed by early whiteness on everything, was being but slowly dispelled by morning sunshine.

Said Mrs. Noah Curwell: "I must've caught another cold Saturday. It was draughty in the shops, and one has to wait so long to be served. I'm sure that's how I caught it. I sneezed and coughed endlessly Saturday night. Now I could shiver my head off. Ugh."

As evidence of her feelings, the woman shivered violently, but not to the extent of doing the physical damage to herself that she stated.

Seated before a blazing fire in a large easy chair supported by cushions and wrapped in a rug, Annabel Curwell seemed to justify her friend's comment, "You always were a starven creature, Bel, even when a girl."

"Yes, Jane; and I don't get any warmer with age."

Perhaps her absence of fat and flesh, her positive leanness, was a cause. Visible parts of her, hands and face, were long and bony and white. Yet her eyes were bright and keen, her mouth firm but sensitive, flexible in its wide curve, with a touch of petulance.

Annabel Curwell was active and restless, a trifle nervy and peevish. She did her own housework, but often eased off to recuperate in cold weather. Summer suited her admirably, the hotter the better. Then she became animated, good tempered, showing herself at her best as a lover of company, a lively social being who talked well.

Her visitor having kissed her, declared she had got too warm walking to want to sit by the fire, so went to the window, which was at the side of the room.

Asked Jane Mattam: "Did you go to chapel yesterday?"

"No," answered Annabel Curwell with a discontented laugh. "So you can tell how bad I felt."

"I can, indeed. You'd miss anything before chapel."

"I did miss it, badly. Chapel's my sustenance for the week."

"A meagre diet, Bel. If I wanted to be offensive. . ."

"You'd say as you're thinking: that I don't fatten much on it."

The other woman nodded, and both laughed. Though not meeting often, their friendship was real; more sincere for lacking ostentation. In most ways, bodily and mental, the two contrasted, which strengthened their friendship.

Resumed Jane Mattam: "I'm sure your minister missed you."

"He did, so he told Rose and Silas. I expect he'll be round to see me before the day's out."

"After I go, I hope," said the visitor with such sincerity that her hostess laughed, in which Mrs. Mattam joined.

She stood up, a tall, well-built woman with a good colour on her pleasant face, which could be stern; showed much self-will.

"Don't go yet," cried Annabel in dismay, "and leave me lonely."

Jane Mattam suddenly stilled to attention, asking after a moment's silence, "Was that a knock at the front door?"

"I didn't hear it."

"Shall I go and see?"

"No," replied Annabel Curwell a trifle fretfully. "If it's anybody let 'em knock again."

Mrs. Mattam resented herself as someone passed by outside the window. Neither woman noticed him. Annabel Curwell started in surprise when the backdoor latch rattled.

A few seconds later a deep voice from behind the inner door inquired, "Is anyone at home?"

Intense relief lit up Mrs. Curwell's face as she explained, "It's the minister, Jane."

The latter eased her attention to outside movements and noises, but her features stiffened as she turned suddenly towards the window.

## II.

When the living-room door opened Annabel Curwell stared at the entrant with anticipatory delight, her lips parting to a smile, her weary, dissatisfied eyes brightening till her countenance was near cheerfulness.

He who entered was a short, though sturdy, man having a big head surrounded by a fringe of grizzled hair. Clean shaved, he was pink of complexion, with a wide smiling mouth and round grey eyes.

Pulling off his gloves and laying them with his hat on the table, the visitor advanced to Mrs. Curwell, asking in an assumption of great interest, "And how is the elect lady this morning?"

So saying he took her hand, not shaking it, but retaining hold of it as he gazed into the woman's eyes, she looking eagerly back with an expression little short of adoration.

She answered: "Much better now you've called, Mr. Jerrishaw."

"Of course. That's my function, to visit the sick and see them improve as I do so."

"I do for sure. Last night I was really ill."

"I knew that, or you would've been at chapel, as were your son and daughter."

"Certainly I should. I don't miss a service unless forced to by my disabilities."

"I know you wouldn't. Your spirit's willing, and overcomes your weakness of flesh."

The Reverend Penley Jerrishaw laid down Annabel Curwell's hand, and seemed to be losing interest in the exchange of compliments.

Glancing round he walked to the radiogram, inquiring, "Did Silas get those records I recommended?"

"Of course he did. You've such excellent taste in music he couldn't do better than buy on your advice."

"Yes. But you'd laid a sound foundation bringing him up on 'Messiah' and other Handel. Now he can enlarge his stock on similar lines."

Coming back to the fireplace the minister warmed his hands. Reaching up to the mantelshelf he picked off it an open envelope and looked at the address, saying with a smile: "Miss Curwell shouldn't leave letters about. I'm tempted to read it."

"You'd better not. It's most likely a love letter."

"All the more reason why I should read it. She may need my guidance on such matters."

Replacing the letter on the shelf, the Reverend Penley Jerrishaw turned and looked queringly at Mrs. Mattam.

After her first scornful glance at him she swung round and stared through the window, unmoving.

The minister's face went serious, puzzled, then broke into a broad smile. Stepping across to Jane Mattam he gave her a hearty slap on her shoulder, exclaiming, "And how's Mrs. Neighbour?"

Slowly the woman turned her head, her cheeks red, her lips compressed to a hard, angry line as she regarded the man with expression of aversion and contempt in her glittering eyes.

Rising to her feet she walked past him as if he did not exist, and said to Mrs. Curwell: "I'm going now. I'll come again when you're alone. Good-bye, Bel."

"Good-bye, Jane."

As the door closed Penley Jerrishaw asked in a bewildered voice, "Have I offended her?"

"I'm afraid you have. She's one of my old girl friends, true as steel, but very particular about correct behaviour. And she dislikes your profession, of whatever Church."

A. R. W.