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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Church and the People

WE had intended to delay comments on the proceedings of the Church of England Assembly until the official report was issued, but on inquiry we find there is no certainty when this will happen, so we must do the best we can by using the newspaper reports, which, while condensed, are sufficiently elaborate to enable anyone to appreciate the quality and nature of what was said. Naturally, a deal of time was taken up with details of what one may call the trade union proceedings of the Assembly—retiring allowance of the clergy (the sum of £400 annually was mentioned as a minimum sum), the poor sums received for marriages and funerals, and so forth. We have no serious complaint at the clergy demanding enough for their labours to live decently, but as it happens that a huge part of Church incomes is derived from indirect taxes on the general public, we merely submit that they who want the clergy should be the only ones to pay for their services. Expressed rather differently (we cannot say in a less worldly manner), the demand of the clergy for better "emoluments" is not distinguishable from a Trades Union Congress demand for higher wages. The only distinction is that the latter may say, without any exaggeration, that the labours of its members are indispensable to the well-being of the community, while the former asks for increased pay and retiring allowances for an industry that is admittedly declining in importance and the felt need for its products. As the Church Assembly admitted, the demand for the spiritual wares of the clergy and the Churches is now less in demand than it has ever been in the history of this country. But conceding the maxim that the labourer is worthy of his hire, the facts concerning clerical incomes are not so bad as they were made to look by some of the speakers. One could fancy the tears shed when the Bishop of Winchester said that while in some parishes the clergy ministered to less than 500 people, others were wrestling single-handed with parishes with a population of 10,000.

That sounds as though the clergy—some of them—really are overworked. But, as we shall see presently, on the admission of the Assembly, the number of people who are interested in any Church—Established and other—are very few, and if we take the portion of the very interested in any Church, the number of those with whom the English Church clergy have to "wrestle" is really not large. And in any case, it is only a very few of this number that call upon the clergy to do anything more for them than preach in the church. In this connection the complaint of the clergy is not that they are overworked, but that so very few ever give the clergy a chance of "wrestling" with them. One Bishop moved that stipends should be brought to a minimum of £400 a year, but he did not move a corresponding deduction in the salaries of Bishops. Of course, the New Testament does say that a labourer is worthy of his hire, but judging from the demand for religion as a saleable commodity, the price paid for it should naturally be very low. People complain of the scarcity of cheese, or beer, or fruit, but we have no recollection of crowds assembling demanding more religion or more parsons.

### The Few and the Many

The proceedings of the Church Assembly was opened by Lieut.-Col. Oldham. He broke the ice of the meeting and the hearts of the clergy by saying that not 20 per cent. of the English people owed allegiance to "any Christian Church." Fancy, of every six, people you pass in the streets, five of them have nothing to do with the Church! Out of every twelve, ten have nothing to do with any Church. The last count is not quite correct, so we will throw in a little baby on the Christian side. Of course, this does not mean that the rest of the people are all Atheists, but a religion that does not invite people to sing, or jump, or howl, or in some way make themselves a torture to the ear and a sense of soreness to the eye is not likely to live long.

At a later session of the Assembly the Bishop of Chelmsford "weighed in" and robbed the situation of any possibility of reasonable hope. He said "the decay of faith was a world-wide phenomenon." It looks almost as though common sense is catching. Cheerfully the Bishop went on to explain that one might break up the population of this country thus: 10 per cent. of the population were definitely attached to some Christian religion, 30 per cent. were kindly disposed towards Christianity and put in an appearance at church on special occasions, 50 per cent. are totally indifferent, and 10 per cent. are definitely opposed to all religion.

If we read this aright, it means that at least 5,000,000 of the inhabitants of this country are Atheists, and that leaves out of sight the 50 per cent. that is totally indifferent, which must surely have a large proportion of Atheists, even though they may not care openly to pronounce themselves

as such. The Church must feel itself in a very desperate position when it admits these—to them—damning facts. We remember that when some years ago we suggested there were 7,000,000 Atheists in this country one of the newspapers thought I must have been indulging in wishful thinking. We now find ourselves in company with the Church of England Assembly in this opinion, and no one in the Assembly had the courage to question the statement. When lying for the greater glory of God is so openly disclaimed things must be getting serious for the Churches.

It reminds one of the course followed by Goebbels. When the Germans gained victories over certain bodies of people ineffectively armed and smaller in numbers, the possibility of the Germans being defeated was met with a jeer. Now the possibility of defeat is confessed, the use of lying, in that direction, to the world at large is openly discarded. The decay of Christianity is admitted, and poor Joad will discover he has found God just at the time each is least able to help the other. His conversion, to use a theatrical phrase, indicates bad timing.

There was another piece of evidence endorsed by the Bishop of Chelmsford. Col. Oldham told the Assembly he had learned from the Archbishop of Canterbury that while he always gave part of his speeches to "Spiritual (Christian) issues, the newspapers paid little attention to that part of his address." We are not surprised. Newspapers are quick to find out what the public require and the number of English people who are either not interested in religion or who are definitely too large in numbers to be attracted by empty talk about the value of Christianity. Not that the Archbishop's speeches on secular matters are of first-class value. They are not. He is, after all, an Archbishop, and a man with a title in this ultra-democratic country always demands a certain respect and arouses curiosity. Witness the number of newspapers publishing the news that the Duke of Norfolk has actually visited a number of agricultural districts riding on a bicycle with a companion, a feat that thousands of men do every day, covering a greater area, and without any advertising. And the yarn, spun by public men from the King downward, that England, with its 20 per cent. of churchgoers, is fighting this war for the preservation of Christianity. The declaration of the Church Assembly ought finally to kill that legend and shame those who first circulated it.

### The Road to Honesty

There are several conclusions we may draw from the admissions made in the Church Assembly. The first is that what is needed is not more preachers but better teachers, with greater honesty from our public men in general. Not the least of this exhibition of honesty in public life needs to be applied to the question of education in the public schools. It is clearly not the business of the Government to introduce more religion into the schools. It should be equally plain that the plot between the Archbishops and the Ministry of Education should be abandoned in the names of democracy and decency. The 80 per cent. that are not interested in Christianity are not on the whole inferior to the 20 per cent. who are sympathetic towards Christianity. Their standing aloof from the Churches is rather due to their having paid some attention to the value and truth of historical Christianity. As things stand, one cannot successfully deny that State-established religion is the greatest breeder of humbug and intellectual dishonesty that

we have, to say nothing of the petty tyranny a religion patronised by the State will always evoke.

Freedom should be the birthright of all, and it should begin with the King. He should be released from officially believing in a particular creed, for where a man or woman is forced to profess a particular religion there is no guarantee that he or she is not living a lie. The King should have the same right to select his own creed that is given to a dustman. And a complete removal of religion from official social life could not but make for the development of a better character.

We could, and we should, relieve English citizens from the insult that they cannot be trusted to speak the truth in a court of law without calling for the help of God Almighty. The abolition of religious teaching in State schools would prevent the minds of children being loaded with ideas and doctrines that maturity—in the majority of cases—dissipates, and avowance of belief in them is nothing but a manifestation of dishonesty.

With the *complete* disestablishment of religion we should no longer bar the way to reasonable enjoyment to museums, to reading rooms, to games and recreation on Sunday. The "sacred" Sunday would follow the road along which so many primitive superstitions have gone.

Above all, we should, by the complete disestablishment of religion, do something towards making citizens honest in their speech and in their social dealings. We should come nearer to taking man at his worth, and his worth would be expressed in terms of social value. We all would be learning the great social lesson that a better world cannot be created while we continue to perpetuate primitive superstitions as the most valuable of truths.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### ROMANIST AVERSION TO INTELLECTUAL LIBERTY

MEN who venture to think freely concerning the Romanist faith of their birth or adoption are seldom molested if they conceal their misgivings. Far different is the fate of eminent scholars and scientists who not only embrace modern thought, but dare to openly avow their conversion. These Modernists are soon assailed by the Ultramontane authorities and ordered to submit to the hierarchy's commands. If they recant they may be restored to favour, but if they continue their studies and contumaciously persist in the publication of their pestilent opinions, their excommunication with bell, book and candle becomes merely a matter of time.

In Part II. of his intensely interesting and revealing "Romanism and Truth" (Faith Press, 1931; 7s. 6d.), Dr. Coulton outlines the slow and painful development of Freethought in the mind of the Abbé Houtin who, after much mournful meditation, was ultimately driven from the Church he had venerated so sincerely. After suffering severe privation, he was constrained to confess that he might have obtained far greater remuneration by the surrender of his outspoken MSS. to his spiritual superior—presumably for destruction—than he ever gained from the sale of his works.

Catholic intellectuals such as Duchesne, Loisy, Tyrrell and Mivart, so long acclaimed in Romanist circles as outstanding examples of the freedom of thought reigning within the Church, were all either coerced into silence or banished from the fold. A Breton like Renan, Duchesne was originally a staunch supporter of Papal despotism, but his later literary and scientific

studies broadened his outlook. His lectures at the Institut Catholique caused a flutter in the orthodox camp and, under the pretext of his necessity for leisure for private study, Duchesne's lectures were suspended. When later permitted to resume his teaching, one of his most brilliant students was Alfred Loisy, who became professor in the Institute. Marcel Hébert, another sceptical priest, joined Duchesne and Loisy, but the former's faith was so severely shaken that, when his views were officially condemned in 1902 by the Archbishop of Paris, he cast the Church aside and became a layman.

The Abbé Loisy had many admirers who proudly pointed to him as an illustrious scholar and thinker, who, despite all Protestant and infidel denials, plainly proved the open-mindedness and liberality of the Church. Indeed, for the moment it appeared that the Papacy might adopt Modernism as its policy. But a reaction soon set in. Duchesne submitted and confined himself to safe studies, while St. George Mivart, "of whom," notes Dr. Coulton, "Romanists boasted as one who could reconcile great scientific distinction with their own faith, had died in excommunication after his articles in the "Nineteenth Century" and "Fortnightly" of January, 1900, on his refusal to sign a formula of faith presented to him by Cardinal Vaughan." Also, in 1906, the most eminent English Jesuit, Father Tyrrell, renounced his allegiance to the Society.

Mivart was an early convert to Rome, and his name and fame as a scientist were long associated with those of the Jesuit geologist, Alphonse Renard, who became a married man. Both the Pope and the Catholic University of Louvain bestowed a doctorate on Mivart. But with the publication of his articles on happiness in hell and kindred topics, his liberal Catholic friends advised him to cease writing. Mivart, however, was determined to ascertain whether it were possible to fearlessly investigate serious scientific and religious problems within the bosom of the Church without official interference. Were, he said, his writings to escape condemnation he aspired to secure "some really good grounds for the hope that a progressive as distinguished from a petrified Catholicism might be able to live and flourish." His articles, however, were placed on the Index, and the approaches of Cardinal Vaughan being unacceptable, Mivart's excommunication followed. Clerical machinations and evasions led Mivart to declare his final conviction "that an impassable gulf yawns between science and Roman Catholic teaching."

Prior to Leo XIII.'s death in 1903, the reactionaries were active and alert. Under his successor, Pope Pius, no matter how eminent the writers, their modernist works were placed on the Index, and at least one liberal Catholic magazine ceased publication. A severe censorship was enforced in France and Italy, and even the much extolled Brunetière, whose conversion had been hailed as a stupendous Catholic achievement, became suspect.

The Modernists protested, but were silenced or driven from the Church, so determined was the hierarchy to maintain strict orthodoxy. As Coulton notes: "The students of the Catholic Universities in France were forbidden to attend, without express episcopal permission . . . lectures at the State Universities on such dangerous subjects as history and philosophy. Attempts were made to eject four too liberal professors from the Institut Catholique of Paris. Tyrrell attempted to raise an international fund for the maintenance of priests against whom the Bishops were acting; but he was dissuaded. Loisy, who refused all submission, was excommunicated by name as one 'whom every man ought to avoid.' (March, 1908.)"

In Germany the commotion was less, but even there much bitterness of feeling was expressed. Not only did the Pope cause a medal to be struck depicting the Holy Father holding his Encyclical and slaying a loathsome monster, with the inscription "Condemnation of the Error of Modernism," but in 1910 all priests and aspirants to the priesthood, teachers in Catholic

schools, colleges and universities were to swear an anti-Modernist oath under which they pledged themselves never to employ scientific or historical methods of inquiry in relation to the pretensions of the Papacy.

Catholic propagandists falsely asserted that the oath was almost a matter of form, and little might have been heard of it in England, where the Church was on her best behaviour, save for a courageous woman's definite refusal to observe it. As Coulton records: "Miss M. D. Petre belongs to one of the oldest and most honourable of Roman Catholic families; to some of the time-servers who have blamed her, she might have replied, *mutatis mutandis*, very much as Bishop Ullathorne replied to Manning: 'My dear sir, allow me to say that I taught the Catechism with the mitre on my 'ead when you were a 'eretic.' She was Tyrrell's literary executrix, and was preparing his autobiography and life for the press; the hierarchy wished to control her; and she was called upon by her Bishop to subscribe to the condemnations contained in *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* [Encyclicals of Pius X.]. She asked why, as a laywoman, this should be required of her; she, like many others, had read these two documents with pain, since they seemed to condemn such writers as Newman and Tyrrell and to hamper the mind's natural freedom in face of historical and scientific facts."

The Bishop made no answer to this, but renewed his request. Miss Petre's rejoinder to the prelate afterwards appeared in "The Times." She refused to append her signature to the declaration, and bluntly inquired whether she could have episcopal assurance that every condemnation and pronouncement in these Papal decrees must be taken as *de fide* and would be henceforth regarded in the same sense. "The Bishop of Southwark made no reply to Miss Petre," we read, "but unwilling to excommunicate publicly a lady who bears one of the greatest names in English Roman Catholicism, he secretly gave orders to his priests to refuse to her the sacraments in his diocese."

The bulk of the clergy bowed to authority. Some signed under protest, and the Pope was compelled to dispense certain professors in German Universities from the oath while stigmatising them as poltroons "who remain miserably enslaved to the judgments of men." With the expiration of the time limit imposed, it is estimated that some two score clergy only in the Church had declined to ratify the oath. Apart from fear, economic and emotional considerations determined the conduct of even convinced Modernists, and Coulton seems justified in concluding that Tyrrell may have been correct in his estimate of 40,000 as "the number of Roman priests who could not accept, with perfect honesty, all the condemnations and propositions of *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi*."

During the struggle in France the Modernists scored a transient success. Duchesne was elected to the French Academy, while his orthodox opponent was rejected. Yet Duchesne's historical addresses had been forbidden in several seminaries when lithographed for students' use. So, when invited to publish them, he asked: "Do you know of any insurance company against the Index?" Exercising the utmost precautions in his statements and suggestions, he succeeded in evading the Papal censorship for his "Histoire Ancienne de l'Eglise." This work was highly praised in a Jesuit Review; the Pope gave his approval and the University of Louvain conferred a doctorate on the brilliant illuminator of Church history. Then, with deadly irony, the Italian edition of Duchesne's "History" was forbidden to students in Italian seminaries "even for simple purposes of reference," and as "even dangerous and even fatal to its Catholic readers."

Duchesne desired peace and offered to revise his text, but the censors were inexorable, and every edition of the formerly boasted answer to sceptical scientists and men of letters was

## THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

### I.

MOST readers are aware that, fundamentally, there is little difference between the methods used by the Nazis to spread their creed and by Christians to spread theirs when they were in power. A general statement like that demands a concrete example, and I invite Freethinkers to study the famous massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, which, though very well known as an event in history, is by no means as well known in all its terrible details.

We were taught it at school, of course; that is, it was referred to when we were reading about Queen Elizabeth. Our school histories dwelt as little as possible upon its horrors—and quite rightly, too. Later, in better histories, some of us were allowed to learn the way it was engineered by the Catholics in France against the Huguenots, and our blood was made to curdle if the account was written by some ultra-Protestant. On the other hand, the Catholics have always been moving heaven and earth to shift the blame for the Massacre from their religion on to "politics." They cannot get away from the historical fact that it was the Catholics who were responsible, and that it was the Huguenots who were the victims; but it was not religion, not the Christian religion and, above all, not the Roman Catholic brand, that was responsible. It was "politics."

Amidst the babel of voices it is not easy to get a balanced judgment. Much as the Protestants want to blame the Catholics, they have a suspicion that Christianity does not come well out of it. They can shriek that Roman Catholicism is in reality the Whore of Babylon, but they know in their hearts that, however corrupt in their opinion it is, it still represents Christianity in mint perfection in the opinion of its adherents. It is the religion as Christ gave it, and Protestantism has had to accept its Gospels as "gospel truth." It is by no means an enviable position for Protestants, but what are they to do?

The Massacre of St. Bartholomew has produced a large number of books all vying with each other in an effort to get at the truth. From the works of contemporaries such as the various letters of Ambassadors, and actual foreign witnesses of the Massacre, to the sober recitals of learned historians, it is possible to piece together something like what actually happened; but the whole of the truth may now never come to light. This, however, may be said: the modern historian is most likely to give a correct picture, for his tendency is nearly always to mistrust exaggerations of any kind. In fact, he is almost ready to indulge in not a little whitewashing. An infamous Pope like Alexander VI., or cads like Henry VIII. and James II., seem to find no difficulty in getting well-meaning apologists.

One of the latest works on the Massacre of St. Bartholomew is that written by Sylvia Lennie England, Ph.D., published in 1938, and readers who are interested are strongly advised to get it. It attempts, as dispassionately as possible, "to relate the plain story of the deed, to disentangle the truth (if that can be done) from the many and confused contemporary narratives, to review the evidence for and against the question of premeditation, and finally to offer some solution of the problems of St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572." And for us, her recital of the events fully justifies the assertion that the Nazis have shown nothing new in putting over their religion; it was all done quite as well in the same way by Roman Catholics for many centuries.

Given a religious dictatorship, and something like the Massacre was almost bound to follow. The rise of the Huguenot party in France was a big blow to its hierarchy, and it was a still bigger blow when that party was making some advance in political power. The various factions under the Condés and the Guises, made no secret of their hatred for each other. The Christian apologist pleading for Christian unity will have some

difficulty, I think, in proving how his religion breathes nothing but love of mankind, when he reads what the followers of the Duke of Condé did to those of the Duke of Guise, and vice versa. But the Huguenots had a greater figure than Condé as their leader, and that was Gaspard de Coligny. In an age which bred ferocious religious fanatics (who must have given Hitler many an admired model) Coligny stands out (with Henry of Navarre) as a gentleman. It is not surprising both were assassinated by Roman Catholics.

In dealing with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, we are apt to forget that it was preceded ten years previously by the Massacre of Vassy. What the Duke of Guise did to a number of poor Huguenots here is strongly reminiscent of what Hitler has done to his "conquered" peoples. Fifty or sixty "common" people were killed and nearly 200 wounded; and large numbers were robbed as well. Catholics took care to make it a precedent. For, "following the example of Guise, other massacres took place," Huguenots being imprisoned, bound in chains and given no food for days; then bound in twos, killed and flung into the river. Miss England records that for his glorious work in this direction the Catholic majority acclaimed the Duke of Guise "as though he were a new Crusader." And she adds: "The first War of Religion—but this applies to them all—was marked by fierce cruelty, of which the Massacre forms not merely the beginning but the type. Blaise de Monluc, on the Catholic side, and the Baron des Adrets, with the Protestants, vied with each other in savagery. The latter considered, however, that his massacres and executions were merely retaliation for the ferocity of his Roman Catholic enemy."

It will be seen that, in spite of St. Bartholomew being considered by modern Catholic apologists as "just politics," or at least "mostly politics," the beginning of the quarrel was based on religion and, as far as I can make out the truth, it was the Catholics who started it. The "dictatorship" of Roman Catholicism is an integral part of its system—and therefore of Christianity.

The Huguenots were finally defeated in December, 1562, but it was followed by the assassination of the Duke of Guise in 1563. The atrocities committed by Alva in the Netherlands made the Protestant party in France anxious again for their fate, and more civil war was the result. Again, the Huguenots were beaten and were forced to accept peace in 1570.

In the meantime, the Queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, who seems to have wanted all political power to be hers alone, began to take a more prominent hand in the game. She hated Coligny, and looked with great disfavour on his influence with Charles IX., her son. "The reign of Charles IX.," says Miss England, "has been called her reign: this is certainly true of the first part. Later, the ultra-Catholic party grew in power, and clashes between the supporters of the two religions were never really absent from the everyday life of the ordinary citizen. To Catherine, the struggle was political, but to few others was it anything but religious." It is necessary to bear this in mind, and to remember what the religious background was like when attempting to understand St. Bartholomew's Day. There was bound to be politics, but it was religion—and the Christian religion at that, with all its power of dictatorship—that was the root cause.

H. CUTNER.

### A COLOSSAL WASTE

Suppose that all the money wasted in cathedrals in the Middle Ages had been used for the construction of school-houses, academies and universities, how much better the world would have been! Suppose that, instead of supporting hundreds of thousands of idle priests, the money had been given to men of science for the purpose of finding out something of benefit to the human race here in this world!—R. G. INGERSOLL.

## WIT AND HUMOUR: CLERICAL AND OTHERWISE

ONE of the commonest mistakes which people make—especially editors of newspapers—is to regard wit and humour as something intrinsic, without reckoning with the other factor, the mentality of the reader or the listener. Leaving out, for the moment, the question of nationality and language, such as the wit of Dr. Goebbels, for instance, there is what one can call international humour, such as a fat man running after his hat on a windy day, which invariably provokes a laugh from the white man and the negro alike.

Personally, I can imagine nothing funnier than Timothy Shy, of the "News-Chronicle," and the Rev. W. H. Elliott changing jobs, but that is my personal opinion only. I would like to see Timothy Shy advising the hysterical mothers as to mental puzzles about the doings of the Creator in these days of trouble, and Elliott, in his new job, might make the Shy witticisms more understandable—to me. At present Timothy is often far above my mental level, whereas the Rev. Elliott is always amusing, even if something like the attempts of a well-hooked fish to escape from the line, utterly oblivious of the fact that he has hooked himself, so eager is he to take other people's troubles on his own shoulders. It must be very difficult to get out of the pulpit habit—where there is no answering back.

In the "Sunday Graphic" of July 4 the Rev. Elliott gives an exquisite example of this self-hooking coupled with the usual effrontery of the clerical know-all. No poser ever puzzles these clerical gentlemen in the least. This the following extract and the reply show quite clearly, although it might raise some doubt as to the relative positions of instructor and instructed. Note also that it is one of the selected questions, and one cannot charge the Rev. Elliott with picking out the easy ones:—

### REV. W. H. ELLIOTT REPLIES

*The Rev. W. H. Elliott welcomes letters from readers who feel in need of his help, and the Editor invites correspondence on any topics arising out of his articles. Here Mr. Elliott replies to questions selected from his letters.*

"In some of your articles and replies you have emphasised that those who pass on from this life are not 'called' by God, but that what He does is to receive them. I agree, but what does puzzle me is: 'Does God send us into the world?' I have always looked on my three healthy, happy youngsters as God's gifts. But what about the many little ones born into homes where they are not wanted, illegitimate ones, and those born with weak intellects and crippled bodies?"

### REPLY

"In all these cases you have mentioned the suffering was caused, directly or indirectly, by the misuse of human free will. The laws of birth cannot be suspended because some people misuse them and bring into the world untold suffering.

Of course, I am not saying that in all these cases (except where the child is unwanted) the parents are to blame. Disease and accident enter in very often. Don't bother about the darker side of the problem. You are certainly right in regarding your children as gifts from God."

Both the query and especially the reply constitute the usual farrago of nonsense, but one wonders if, by any miracle, the rev. gentleman sees the logical implication of what he states, or if his correspondents are really satisfied with his "explanations"? In these days when letters cost 2½d. in postage, while the Rev. Elliott gets his stuff into the "Sunday Graphic" free—and probably gets paid for writing it—there is little difficulty in wearing the other person down. He can, as with "Letters to the Editor," shut down when he likes, and if any letters of complaint ever reach him he can forget to "select" any such.

The Rev. Elliott refers to what he calls "human free will" as distinct from other kinds, which, if this means anything at all, must involve actions without causes, hence the "freedom," but if this be over the reverend gentleman's head, what is the difference between one man killing another in the exercise of this "free will" and a savage dog doing the same thing? If one is not exercising free will, what does the term mean? And if the one, why not the other? Elliott's definition of "free will" is obviously not being amenable to discipline, whether of a sergeant or an Almighty—or a minister of the Gospel. Consequently, if the Almighty "applecart" can be upset by a man exercising his "free will," what is to be said about a disobedient dog? And does this dictum apply to a Hitler or a Goebbels? What a state of affairs, and how humiliating for the Almighty.

The Elliott jewel box is not entirely empty; there are still other jewels, such as the distinction between "wanted" and "unwanted" children. The blame or otherwise attaching to parents is really delicious. Does this also apply to unwanted puppies and kittens? And is this the warrant for drowning them at birth? Consider how one of these unwanted dogs or cats can upset the Almighty by exercising its "free will." Would the Rev. Elliott suggest the exclusion of these unwanted children from Army service? And is that all the study of the Bible has taught the Rev. Elliott about procreation? And does the distinction only apply to the children of unmarried parents, remembering that the marriage ceremony—that is the Church of England idea—quite incidentally financially profits the Church and its clergy? And how would he find out whether the children of the most expensive marriage ceremony were "wanted" or not? And what is the Almighty doing about the matter anyhow? And what about the Royal Bastards of Charles II.? Were they "wanted" or not, and what did the Restoration clergy have to say about the matter at that time? Or did they copy Brer Rabbit as usual? And what has the Rev. Elliott to say now? And what about the present campaign in all countries for more children, the "cannon fodder" of future wars? And why are the clergy exempted from these conflicts, other than as "padres"? Surely the English clergy have something to fight for, if only the retention of their "stipends."

HERBERT CESCINSKY.

## ACID DROPS

THE "Morning Advertiser" continues its policy of taking the Churches under its wing in leading articles, despite the poverty of the writer so far as an appreciation of the nature of morals and social discipline. For example, we are told—

that it is futile to teach youngsters the practice of such virtues as discipline and self-control unless at the same time we give them a proper grounding in the Christian faith which provides the ultimate sanction for these virtues.

Now there is surely enough of this undiluted nonsense round the terms used in the "Advertiser" editorial without the editor showing that muddled as the average preacher may get when he handles social subjects, an ordinary journalist can give him a good start and then romp home. No one can hope to beat the pulpiteer in the art of distributing mental hog's wash, and we can give the editor only a third-class decoration for his efforts to hold up a crumbling Church.

For example, discipline and self-control are not distinct things: they are different names for two things that are identical in quality. But discipline may be either good or bad. No one could be better disciplined than the youth of Naziland, no burglar could exercise self-control waiting for the coast to be clear before breaking into a house. And why is Christianity the *only* ultimate sanction for discipline and self-control? The ultimate sanction for anyone's conduct is the sanction that by force or choice he is led to obey. The Christian faith can supply sanctions

only for such as believe in Christianity. And with modern Christianity that appears to mean anything that a Christian believes is worth having. Meanwhile the fact is there for the Editor of the "Advertiser" to see that the best men and women are usually found with those who do not accept a supernatural sanction. It is, in fact, their frame of mind which helps to keep Christians moving along something approximating to straight lines.

One of our readers sends us a cutting from the "St. Helens Reporter," which suggests that the State is not playing fair with Roman Catholic parents when they are forced "to pay their full share for the maintenance of Council schools from which they derive absolutely no benefit, and have also to provide a considerable cost of the maintenance of their own schools, in which children are educated according to the dictates of their own conscience." Now that is a very common cry and, like so many Roman Catholic lies, it lies in fact if not in form.

In the first place it is not true that Roman Catholics pay large sums of money to support schools from which they derive no benefit whatever. It is to the interest of everyone that people shall grow up having received a certain degree of education along certain lines. Each of us is interested in the other merely as members of the same group. Secondly, if the Roman Catholic pays for the upkeep of non-Catholic schools, the non-Catholic pays for part of the upkeep of Roman Catholic schools, and also, it may be noted, by relieving Roman Catholic churches from the payment of taxes. The children of Roman Catholics may be taught all that is to be taught in the matter of secular education, and it would be left then to the Roman Catholics to teach children only their peculiar religion. Would Roman Catholics agree that the State should build and staff schools for Atheists, Agnostics, Buddhists, etc.? If not, why not?

We agree that the suggestion just made would be impossible of execution. It would mean chaos.

The man we are criticising writes as though the authority of parents over children is absolute. It is not. It never was, and it never will be. It certainly is not so far as the Roman Church is concerned. It is not the "conscience" of the child that is marked here, but the convictions, often ill-digested and dangerous, that is in question. And behind the parent stands the priest, who declines to permit the well-being of a secular society to be the standard by which education and other things must be tested. We know that, so far as this world is concerned, citizens are the better for the education they receive. What is its effect in some highly improbable other world is another question, and one with which the secular State is not concerned. If it were really, honestly and heartily concerned, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews or Atheists might, for special reasons, be forbidden to exist at all. The whining of Roman Catholics over their "wrongs" wherever they are allowed to rule the roost is an old spectacle, but it is beginning to lose its power—so long as it fights in the open.

Now that Mr. De Valera has got back to power, Father Gannon, S.J., has discovered that he is "the strongest and most intelligent figure in the League of Nations." We have a little difficulty in deciding as to whether this eulogy is meant to be a compliment or otherwise. However, the real reason why Mr. De Valera is thus singled out appears to be that Catholics are very anxious not to be left out of the peace conference—when it comes—and want the Irish leader to take the principal part as chairman. Religious impudence could hardly go further; and its value can be judged by asking, if Mr. De Valera had been a Protestant whether Father Gannon would have been so certain of his "intelligence and strength" and his worth as the chairman of the coming peace conference?

The "Universe" is very disturbed at the shortage of priests in Rome, and it prints—alas! without comment—the reasons given by the Vatican newspaper for this shortage. Here they are:—

"The shortage is due to the impoverishment of moral values, the decline of the religious spirit in the home and

the schools, the general decline in morality, the widespread prevalence of materialistic ideas, and the lack of understanding of the mission of the priesthood."

This is not a description of materialistic and brutal England, be it noted. It describes Rome—the Holy City of the Pope and Christendom, of relics and special miracles, where the people are such simple and saintly believers. The people of Rome have also the special privilege of being so near the Vatican and seeing—and hearing the Pope in person. It really is very amusing.

But even worse is happening in Milan. There are actually occurring outrages against the Blessed Sacrament itself. "Children are being employed as new Judases to betray Our Lord," wails Cardinal Schuster. "They are the work of an organised body of men." Note that here again we are not in England, but in Milan—in the Pope's own country. Surely the Holy Roman Faith is not being betrayed in such a devoted religious country as Italy? What do English Catholics think about it all?

In the face of these two solemn pronouncements, it is most interesting to read what the special correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" says: "The Pope is the most important man in Italy to-day. . . . There is a power growing inside the Vatican which is alone capable of welding the Italian people into a sane Christian régime again." So that, after all, the great Italian nation is, at the moment, not Christian at all! What a disappointment for their friends in England!

The "Church Times" is furious that "every indication goes to show that the Board of Education has decided against full denominational teaching, even if it were to be given by regular members of the school staffs." And it threatens: "Neither the Board nor the National Society has heard the last of this implicit contract to establish undenominationalism; there are still Churchmen left who do not propose to acquiesce in it." So what! A fat lot of good these silly threats are. But we welcome them all the same. The more the threats and squabbles, the more likely will the country as a whole go secular in its own schools. For nothing else will stop these stupid and undignified bickerings.

The censorship of the B.B.C.'s religious directors allowed a bad slip to appear in the item devoted to July 4, America's Independence Day. Among the great men enumerated as responsible for that Independence, the name of Thomas Paine was actually allowed to be given, together with those splendid paragraphs—which have passed into literature—at the beginning of the "Crisis." We can only excuse the lapse on the grounds that the B.B.C. did not know that Paine also wrote "The Age of Reason," the book which perhaps has made more non-Christians than any other. Still, we must be grateful for the slip. The name of Paine may linger in the memory of some listeners, and they may even have the curiosity to find out who he was and what he wrote; and very few people can go through "The Age of Reason" with reverent faith undisturbed.

One of the questions asked of the "Anvil" recently was why did not the Pope insist that all Catholics in all countries lay down their arms, refuse to fight at any cost, and thus stop the war? Father Beck had a try at answering this poser, with the result that it was with very great difficulty that the chairman was able to restrain the meeting from a free fight—in words. The other Christians refused to accept Father Beck's explanations or apologies. In the end, he was allowed the last word with the triumphant declaration that, at any rate, everybody accepted the "five points" put by the Pope in 1939 about the war, and that even Protestants thought the Pope important enough and powerful enough to be constantly appealed to to stop the war. We have an idea that the chairman was very glad to get away from any further discussion, for it sounded to us as if murder was in the air when Father Beck had finished. We think the "Anvil" is a magnificent institution to prove how these Christians love one another.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

S. R. GAINES.—We are pleased to receive your high appreciation of "The Freethinker," and hope it will never cease to receive same. But you refer to the arrival of the paper as "intermittent." The copies leave "The Freethinker" office regularly; the non-arrival of any must be attributed to the enemy—blast him!

G. L. COLEBROOKE.—It is impossible to answer your question in a few words without running the risk of misunderstanding. We must refer you to our "Materialism Re-stated" for a careful explanation of the terms you use. The whole of modern science is based on a right understanding of "Materialism."

W. J. F.—A good and useful letter. Keep the ball rolling.

T. WILLIAMS.—We should be very pleased to reprint our edition of the "Age of Reason," but cost and scarcity of paper are in the way. We are, however, considering reprinting the sketch of Paine (running to 45 pages) which appeared in our issue of the book as a separate pamphlet.

A. ROBERTSON.—Next week Crowded out.

FOR DISTRIBUTING THE FREETHINKER.—C. W. Hollingham, 20s.; F. J. C., 18.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS

OUR readers will, we are sure, welcome "Will You Rise From the Dead," by Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann. The pamphlet has all the forcefulness of the author's pen, and his critical examination of the Christian legend of the resurrection of Jesus provides much material for debate. It is a production we can with confidence commend to our readers. The price of the booklet is sixpence, with one penny extra for postage.

Charles the Second explained the popularity of a preacher of his day with a certain section of the public by the summary remark, "His nonsense suits their nonsense." The combination of the same factors may very easily account for the popularity of C. E. M. Joad with a section of the public to-day. Easily acquired information and a modicum of understanding is an outfit that will carry a man far with a large section of the public. To that class the Bible advice to get knowledge but, above all, understanding falls on deaf ears. But even to this class "Ye Gods!" by Lloyd Cole and Benson Herbert (Lloyd Cole, 89, Chancery Lane, price 1s. 6d.) should provide interesting reading, and may awaken to activity the critical ability that all have more or less developed. The essay ranges over a very wide field, and apart from the chapters on "The New Physics," "Emergence," "The God of Experience," "Christianity," etc., touches upon a variety of subjects that will be interesting to readers.

The clergy have been working very hard to create the impression that one of the things our men crave for most is religion. Of course, those who know the men in the armed forces are quite aware that it is mainly a case of deliberate lying. It cannot be called a mistaken calculation because the facts are obvious. Even the much-photographed regiments of men standing to attention to a public thanksgiving only means that the men were ordered

to be there, and they obeyed the orders. We have undeniable evidence that never before were there so many Freethinkers as in the present army. To a large proportion religion is not wanted.

We were reminded of this situation by a letter—one of many—just received. It comes from a soldier, and a new reader of this journal. He says that what struck him "most forcibly" (he had probably been misled by the talk of people such as is provided by clergymen of different types, and they always forget to tell us the way in which they are often guided by the better educated men of the Forces) was "the utter indifference of the Christian religion by ninety-nine out of every hundred soldiers." That is quite applicable to those out of the Armed Forces. If it were otherwise the clergy would not be so desperately anxious to secure new privileges and power, to say nothing of the constant cry that social reform cannot be secured unless the Churches are in command.

Prebendary Moore Darling recently told a religious gathering that preachers had got to kill "that amazing bleat which was called the clerical voice." We think that far more important than killing the clerical voice is to kill the clerical mind, which is, in the main, a storehouse of primitive ideas and stupid prejudices. And a step towards that end might be the removal of the clerical dress. There is nothing more certain than that the moment a man begins to assume a specific dress that marks him off from his fellows, his mental development is affected—and generally for the worse. The most pompous of policemen is, inside his uniform, more pompous than he is outside it. A judge feels more of a judge in his war paint than he would be if he tried people with himself wearing the same dress as the man he is judging. Carlyle's philosophy of clothes has not yet lost its pertinency in judging the world.

To come back to the parson and his voice. Here it is not the mere intonation that gives him—to himself as well as to his congregation—a sense of superiority, or at its worst a sense of the inferiority of the people to whom he is preaching; the language he uses also plays a great part. Take this for an example:—

Mary was espoused to Joseph. Before they came together she found she was with child of the Holy Ghost.

Now suppose it was put into current English and the reference was to ordinary people. It would read something like this:—

Joseph was engaged to Mary, but found before they were married that she was about to become a mother. But she explained to him that the child was conceived of an angel that came down from heaven at the command of God. And Joseph believed her.

Would not the parson who put it in that way have found numbers of the congregation smiling rather broadly?

So we would warn Prebendary Moore Darling to be careful. The wearing of the clerical dress, the use of the clerical voice, the expression in an outworn form of speech, the calling of a church a "sacred building" and so forth—all these things combine to make the people in 1943 profess belief in a story that without these accompaniments would be recognised for what it is—a mere fable.

Mr. Bernard Heywood, the Chairman of the C.E.M.S., is particularly concerned with "the disparity between the numbers of men and women who are in close and active association with the Church." The men appear to be in such a minority that the above Society is arranging for a special campaign "for men only" with a "remarkable list of speakers." We suspect that the "remarkable" list is only remarkable in the imagination of Mr. Heywood. The men he ought to approach are not those who are really Christians, more or less indifferent, but those who are actively opposed to Christianity. A campaign designed to rope in Freethinkers with a record of huge successes would be something to boast about—not merely making a lukewarm Christian into one a little warmer. How about arranging a debate between one of the remarkable men he has chosen and a representative Freethinker? That might stir up the men—perhaps in a way which he would, however, deem most unfortunate.

## BOOKS WORTH WHILE

**"Japan and the Pacific."** By Jack Chen (published by Lawrence and Wishart, London; 76 pages; 1s., by post 1s. 2d.).

Absorbed as we are in the struggle against Hitler, many of us fail to realise the enormity of Japan's war in the Pacific. Few people are more competent to write on this subject than an educated Chinaman. This book by Jack Chen will give the reader a knowledge of what the other half of the world is doing and has to face. Our ignorance about Japan applied not only to the average man in the street, but also, to a much greater degree, to our own politicians. Yet, as Mr. Chen points out, the Japanese Imperialists have never been reticent about their ambitions any more than has Hitler about his. The author says: "Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Savants and Militarists have, time and again, openly declared their plans of conquest. Every Japanese child is taught the sacred words of 'Jimmu Tenuo,' the First Emperor: 'We shall build our capital all over the world and make the whole world our dominion.' . . . In history for middle schools the modest boy is taught that such a character as is possessed by the Japs is without a parallel throughout the world. As a student he reads, 'It is now clear that the salvation of the entire human race is the mission of our Empire.'"

In school, in college, in civil life, in the army, in the press and in his religion, the Japanese is taught to believe that he is a superior being to that of all other nationalities. It is exactly the same theory as Hitler's 'Pure Aryan Race.' The story of Japan's brutal conquests of various parts of China has persisted since 1874, when Formosa was attacked, and the tragic part of all this brutality directed against the peace-loving, ancient nation was, that without the help given to Japan by Anglo-American business these conquests would have been impossible.

From 1937 until the Anglo-American trade ban, Japan imported more than two-thirds of her war imports from America, England and other Allied countries. If we turn to the vicious policy of Chamberlain and the other Men of Munich, we find that they apparently thought that after Japan subdued China, they would be able to reap a financial benefit.

Those people who still defend Chamberlain's action in Munich maintain silence on what he said on the Chinese question in the House of Commons on November 1, 1938. It was as follows: "China cannot be developed into a real market without the influx of a great deal of capital, and the fact that so much capital is being destroyed during this war means that even more capital will have to be put into China in the future when the war is over. Who is going to supply the capital? It is quite certain that it cannot be supplied by Japan. Therefore, when the Rt. Hon. gentleman appears to contemplate a future in which Japan will have the monopoly of Chinese trade and we shall be excluded from it altogether, I say that is flying in the face of facts."

This is how the author of "Japan and the Pacific" sums up this brilliant (?) speech of the Appeasement leader: "They did not, or would not, see that Japan was moving against Britain through China. Hong Kong was, to all intents and purposes, lost in 1938 when Japan seized Canton. The appeasers were fatally fascinated by the idea of maintaining Japan as the 'Policeman of the East,' as the potential big stick with which to beat the Bolsheviks in the East, as Hitler was to do in the West, as the big stick that would keep the Colonial East in subjection when all else failed. Just as Czechoslovakia and Austria were sacrificed to the reactionary plan of anti-Soviet war in the West, so China was sacrificed to that plan in the East. That policy of appeasement led to catastrophe for Britain in both cases. It was just that knavery and stupidity for which the Japanese schemed and prayed. As a result of that policy

they were able to begin the big task of conquering China with British and American help. Fortunately for the world, the British people, surprised and angered by the dangers into which they had been led, threw off the appeasers in the nick of time and resolutely set out on the path of democratic unity with the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. against Fascism."

In this book, in the chapter "Inside Japan," the author gives us a very vivid picture of the social and economic conditions in Japan, especially since her unprovoked attack on China. He shows how the working hours have been increased, how the cost of living has risen by over 50 per cent., taxes have soared while the birth-rate has dropped. But what is even more interesting to read is that in 1939 there were 487 strikes involving over 52,000 people. This does seem to show that there are limits to which even the Japs can be driven by their militarists.

It was the Chinese continued resistance and the might of Russia which eventually made the Japanese turn towards the Pacific, their policy being, in their own words, "Defence in the North. Advance in the South."

Mr. Chen deals briefly but trenchantly with the collapse of the British, Dutch and Americans in Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, the East Indies and beyond. They were the main objectives. Australia and New Zealand do not enter into the first phase of the attack. It is just as well for us to realise what a powerful, well-organised and fanatical foe we have to fight; but against this enemy the ill-equipped armies of China have fought for six years, and are still fighting.

Speaking of his own people, Jack Chen says: "China has unleashed a People's War against the invader. The Chinese coolie and peasant is no longer bewildered and helpless; strong in their new-won national freedom and democracy, they have waged a thousand battles against a better-armed enemy . . . and won. . . . They have made themselves unconquerable. The experience of the fighting in Burma has shown again that when supplied with modern weapons, China's armies are more than a match for the Japanese; once "given the tools" they can "finish the job" in the East.

Anybody who wants to acquire a really intelligent grasp of what the War in the Pacific means, not alone to British, American and Dutch possessions and the Dominions, but the effect of this struggle on the whole world, should buy "Japan and the Pacific." This book is an excellent shillingsworth, and the fact that its author is a Chinaman makes it all the more interesting.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

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## "GROWING PAINS"

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When pain and anguish wring the brow.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Sometimes we think we're pious when we're only bilious—THOMAS HOOD.

NOT many years have elapsed since it was widely held by parents that many children suffered with a disorder vaguely described as "growing pains." As time went on the pains in some instances disappeared, or became less acute or less frequent. Continuance of the ailment and lack of suitable treatment led to complications which caused the sufferer permanent ill-health, or resulted in early death. Nowadays the symptoms are usually recognised for what they are, i.e., rheumatic ailments, and are treated accordingly, with results that are mostly beneficial provided treatment is undertaken at the onset.

Looking at the earth with its peoples as one single unit, which has survived the onslaughts of disease for many thousands of years, it is seen, and felt, that the body continues to suffer acutely—not from the ravages of time, but because the relations between its component parts are not in harmony. The earth, in



short, continues to suffer with "growing pains." Will the ailment prove fatal should suitable treatment not be forthcoming, or must the body remain incapacitated, with increasing bouts of pain? The ailment is war. The treatment is—no, the ailment is of too complex a nature for a simple prescription, but there are pointers deserving of mention.

Religion has two methods of treatment which, according to the sponsors, afford eternal relief. The first method is to get born again and the second is to undergo a change of heart. Some people favour the first method because, having made a mess of one life, see no reason why another life might not prove as diverting as before. The second method is the same as the other, being in effect the mixture as before. The mixture (religion) has been administered times out of number. It has in turn been mild and severe in action; thin and thick in texture; and pale and blood-red in colour. Sometimes the patient has taken the drug willingly, but sometimes gentle persuasion has been necessary. Even severity and violence have been used, and there have been times when such force has been necessary that the outlook for the patient has been dark for ages.

But "we must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us," as Hamlet remarked. Until man rids his attic of the lumber of superstition the cobwebs will continue to render the air dark, dirty and dank, and so prolong his discomfort.

It is this unhappy state of affairs—as in affairs of State—that contributes to the causes of growing pains, such conditions being the breeding ground of the disorders of credulity, supineness, envy, hate and all uncharitableness. The periods of comparative ease that occur between the bouts of pain (slaughter, misery and starvation) are insufficient to ensure steady progress of the patient. The paralysing effects of custom and tradition prevent him from stretching himself with full abandon of limbs and from reaching full stature. What time remains to treat the growing pains before the causes become so incorporated in the system that eradication becomes impossible?

The judgment that is passed on the man who is unable to benefit from the lessons taught by that worthy master, Experience, is usually very severe. What can be the nature of the extenuating circumstances that he must plead, because of his inability to discern that "war is an out-of-date method of struggle"?

A weekly journal in bygone days prefaced its editorial comments with the following jingle:—

"The world is a bundle of hay,  
Men are the asses who pull:  
Each pulling a different way,  
The greatest of all is John Bull."

A scathing and ironic indictment! The rhyme could now be rendered more appropriately thus:—

Poor man is a bundle of nerves,  
His teeth and his sword are on edge,  
Is he getting what he deserves  
Failing best use of his knowledge?

The Greek philosopher Epicurus held that happiness will be most surely gained by him who has the fewest wants to gratify. This appears reasonable enough until one reflects that although wants may be few, one perhaps may be enormous, such as wanting the earth, which is as futile as crying for the moon! Would not life be less complicated if wants were more simple?

Our sick world wants to get well, but persists in aggravating the very conditions it wants to ameliorate. Such perverseness recalls the story of the negro who suffered pain, self-inflicted, by knocking his head against a wall. When asked why he persisted in such extraordinary behaviour he replied; "Because it is so nice when I leave off!" This story always causes a laugh. "So much the worse for the negro," chuckles the audience. Just

so. "And so much the worse for mankind," shrieks War—as the very earth lies wracked with pain.

"For none goes forth to slay his kind  
In these sweet Christian times,  
Unless he's pushed on from behind  
By fear of others' crimes."

Meanwhile, "How's the old complaint?" as Benjamin Disraeli used to say. S. GORDON HOGG.

## A FREETHINKER'S UPRISING

A GREAT many of the active Freethinkers appear to have been children of non-Freethinking parents; and we have often heard interesting accounts of the intellectual progress of these persons. In my own case, however, I received a Freethinker's upbringing, for which I have never ceased to be grateful; and while it may be true that the children of most actual Freethinkers turn out to be irreligious, they usually seem passive and uninterested in the subject and suggest that it is no use flogging a dead horse. Thus, my father was indeed quite surprised at my taking an active stand on the religious issues.

For my father, although an active Atheist, never brought me up as one, nor did my mother influence me. They neither hid Freethought from me nor kept me screened from religion.

At the age of twelve I was nearly top of my class in Scripture study, although it is true that from that time my father withdrew me from Scripture lessons in order to avoid saturating me with Christianity as compared with non-Christian views. Still, at fourteen, I was of my own volition attending a daily school chapel service. The music of the chapel services influenced me so much, I confess, that I felt quite friendly towards religion at the time, though I was never a faithful believer.

Finally, at my last school, the headmaster repeated the same lengthy prayer every morning, while the whole school stood in silence. It was this eternal repetition which helped to make me sceptical. I was sixteen at the time, and from then on I began to study the subject with concentration in order to form my own conclusions.

My voluntary work as a steward at the World Union of Freethinkers' London Congress in 1938 brought me into contact with many more foreign and British Freethinkers, and their discussions helped me considerably.

Later I was able to study the subject objectively in courses on Morals and Religion, under Professor Morris Ginsberg. Studies in Sociology and Psychology also helped me to understand the nature and origins of supernatural beliefs, while my work in philosophy and logic gave me more profitable pointers in my search for truth. In my spare time I organised meetings at which Christians, Deists and Atheists argued on equal terms.

This was what I consider a real Freethinker's upbringing. An asset of which anyone could be proud.

Do not teach your child that Atheism is undoubtedly the truth; rear him in such a way that ultimately he can genuinely make up his own mind without pressure from you of that kind. Give him knowledge and information, yes, and occasionally you may say, "I personally do not believe there is a God." But remember that children place an exaggerated importance on the opinions of their parents, who are thus liable to influence them, either directly, or by causing a reaction to the opposite, throughout life. Never let your child take your word for it that Freethought is "good," or Christianity "bad." Encourage him to work it out for himself later, if he wants to know; and in mentioning your own views emphasise that *your* opinion is not worth more than most other people's.

So it has come about that I have become an Atheist, and a militant one. Many say that religion is to them an intolerably boring subject; and in some ways I am inclined to agree. But

I feel that I cannot afford to let it bore me. The drive behind my work for Freethought is the fact that the number of paid priests arrayed against us in this country is of the order of 40,000, whereas in the whole of the British Freethought Movement there are only one or two paid positions. We *must* keep our principles in the public eye, for everywhere the Churches are making an effort to swamp us, backed by huge capital and 37 broadcasts a week from the B.B.C.; and what have we got to fight them with? Relatively little capital, no regular broadcasts at all, and the added difficulty of frequent censorship of Freethought by the National Press to overcome. Between us is the vast mass of the indifferent, dangerously open to the influence of continuous propaganda.

The Churches are after our children and everybody's children. In this they see their greatest hope, and they are right. They wish to hammer Christianity into the children so that it will not come out again. Our Minister of Education is with them. Let us save our children from this ghastly plot, which if it succeeded might well blot reason from our civilisation, and so eventually ruin human endeavour. For their own sakes we *must* save the coming generation from the mental paralysis of premature indoctrination, and see to it that they are brought up able to judge for themselves.

BASIL BRADLAUGH BONNER.

## A DEFENCE OF DETECTIVE STORIES

ONE of the most interesting features of the literature of the past twenty or thirty years is the emergence of the crime story as a distinct literary *genre*. Tales of crime which have been published during that period vary from the purely sensational type of "thriller," such as was popularised by Edgar Wallace, to the intellectual study of criminal psychology, of which Mr. C. S. Forester's "Payment Deferred" and Mr. Francis Iles' "Malice Aforethought" have been the most noteworthy modern examples.

What I am concerned to do in the present paper is to show that the superior reader who refers to "these detective stories" with a sniff and an upward tilt of the nose is in actuality contemning what is perhaps the most distinctive fictional product of our era.

I do not intend to suggest that detective stories present either the finest or the most immediately characteristic features of the epoch in which we live; but I do say that many of the most acute brains among the literary craftsmen of our time have been largely engaged with the problems of detective fiction, with the result that much of the most outstanding prose of our time is to be found in the pages of Mrs. Agatha Christie, Dr. Austin Freeman, Mr. A. E. W. Mason and Miss Dorothy L. Sayers.

This is in no way a new feature of literature, for I am not at all sure that Wilkie Collins' "The Woman in White," "The Moonstone," "Armada" and "No Name" do not contain the finest prose writing of Victorian times. Even "Ravenshoe," the best novel of the greater of the two Kingsleys, is in essence a tale of crime, and of the working out of an involved and complicated plot of fraud and deception. Edgar Allan Poe, whose tales of Dupin, the criminal investigator, were the foundation of the detective story, was also in his way the original inventor of the essentially modern type of short story, which in our time has led to as curiously varied writers as Mr. T. F. Powys, Mr. H. E. Bates and Mr. Dylan Thomas.

I know that there are many objections which have been raised against detective stories. First of all, it is said that they are essentially "escapist." They deal with a world which is completely unlike the world in which we live, and suggest that right is always entirely triumphant over wrong, that murderers are

always hanged and thieves imprisoned. To this accusation the detective story may to some extent plead guilty. Escapism is a crime of which many types of literature may from time to time be accused, and I do not know that it is in every case actually a criminal offence. To escape from the world in which we live to-day is not always a bad thing, for after all, the world is an evil place in these days of war. But I do not know that the detective story is necessarily more fundamentally "escapist" than much modern verse; it is quite certainly less so than the "romance" which views the world through quite obstinately rose-coloured spectacles.

Another, and to my mind, far more cogent objection is that the average story of crime presents a picture of life which is too limited in its scope. Its colours are too clear and vivid. All the softer of the human emotions are quite deliberately omitted, and it is concentrated on the violent and the abnormal. There is, as I have admitted, something to be said for this objection; but it must be borne in mind that we live in violent and abnormal times, and a type of literature which reflects violence and abnormality may be in many ways characteristic of the age. Of course, I do not for one moment suggest that the people of to-day go about murdering their friends and relatives; but I do suggest that we live in a time when violent death is something which has deliberately to be faced by each of us, and a literature which does this, though sometimes in a regrettably flippant way, cannot be calmly dismissed as quite divorced from the tendencies of the time.

There are many writers who write bad detective stories. Their prose is slipshod and their plots ill-constructed and full of clichés. That can be quite readily admitted. But are there not so-called "straight" novelists who equally write badly? Are there not poets whose verse is poor stuff, impossible to understand, and inaccurate both in its observation and its syntax? Just as Mr. Eliot must be looked up to by all poets, just as such younger poets as Mr. Henry Treece, Mr. Alex. Comfort and Mr. Hendry attract all serious readers, so, in my view, the "old-timers" like Dr. Austin Freeman deserve our respect, and such younger men and women as Mr. E. R. Punshon, Miss Dorothy Sayers and Mr. Geoffrey Morgan (author of "Murderer's Moon," an exceedingly promising first novel, published a few months ago) should be studied as possibly important writers of the period.

I think that there has been an exceedingly unfortunate division in our era between the supposed "high-brow" and "low-brow" writers, and it is time that this division was destroyed. The writers of detective stories should not be looked down upon as mere producers of purely commercialised trash, as opposed to the "straight" novelist, who is concerned with problems of artistic integrity of which the crime novelist knows nothing.

Admittedly there are many writers in all spheres whose outlook is primarily commercial, and nothing is too strong to be said in denunciation of their complete subservience to the demands of an unintelligent public. But the writer of detective stories does not necessarily write down to a public which he regards as being composed of unintelligent fools. Frequently readers of such tales are intelligent folk, and they respect intellectual integrity in the books they read.

Art has many levels, and it may be that the general cultural level of the detective story is not high. But, because Mr. George Belcher does not produce work of the Rembrandt level, he is not regarded with complete contempt. I feel that the writers of detective stories have a right to demand reasonable treatment. We do not ask for favours from the critics. We demand that our work should be dealt with as drastically, and as seriously, as that of our friends who happen to write novels on themes unconnected with crime. We recall that such people as Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and Conan Doyle, in the past, and as Mr. Day Lewis (under the pseudonym of "Nicholas Blake"), Mr. Eden Phillpotts and Mr. A. E. W. Mason in the

present, have not found the detective story beneath their dignity. Is not the time ripe for a reconsideration of our critical standards, and for the elevation of the detective story to a more sensible position in the hierarchy of English literature? S. H.

### MOVEMENT

Dr. C. J. Wright, president of the Free Church Federal Council for Manchester and District, said:—

"I know there is a movement in the soul of the nation even though it be rather inchoate at present.

"It doesn't quite know where it is going, but there is a definite movement." —"Daily Sketch," June 23.

What, without moving, hither moving whence,  
And, without moving, whither moving hence?  
We know not where what's moving but, we feel,  
Movement, of movement must be evidence.

Thus, up or down or in or out we move,  
Though whether in a "Movement" or a groove  
We know not—but are moved to recognise  
That something, somewhere, somehow, this must  
prove.

Meanwhile, within this moving whirlpool, we  
Feel our souls moving—though inchoately. . . .  
(Another and another cup, to move  
The memory of such fatuity!)

ALAN GILL.

### ROMANIST AVERSION TO INTELLECTUAL LIBERTY

(Continued from page 283)

placed on the Index. People naturally wondered how a work, supposedly so beneficial to the faith that the Pope had praised it, could contain such dangerous teachings. So to reassure the faithful, the Papal press "hastened to declare, 'from a trustworthy source,' that the Pope himself had been able to read Mgr. Duchesne's work 'only during the forced repose imposed on him by an illness,' and that he had been 'deeply shocked' at it."

Tyrrell was converted as a boy to Rome and joined the Jesuits. But the systematic tampering with truth in which the Church excelled, and the impossibility of reconciling Catholicism with common sense gradually sapped his faith. The doubts and misgivings Newman mournfully experienced after his conversion were repeated in Tyrrell's melancholy meditations over the machinations of the Society he had entered in his youth. Indeed, Coulton surmises that "Reading Wilfrid Ward's 'Life of Newman' after Tyrrell's 'Autobiography,' we may ask ourselves seriously whether, if the great Cardinal had gone over at the same age, as fresh to life with the same physical vigour, he also would have pronounced the Everlasting No, and refused to make further terms with a system which he now saw on all its sides."

The excommunicated Loisy was appointed Professor in the Collège de France and renounced all the creeds. Tyrrell, however, claimed what he deemed a true Catholicism to the last. The dark obscurantism of the Roman clergy, the persecuting proclivities and sullen antagonism of the Church towards science and culture, with her direct and indirect encouragement of mendacity and double dealing, deeply wounded the conscience of a man temperamentally religious, in the sense of ever aspiring to do the right.

T. F. PALMER.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### ANOTHER B.B.C. FAKE.

SIR,—On the evening of Sunday, 27th June, the B.B.C. gave a broadcast to home and overseas listeners descriptive of the many activities that take place in Hyde Park. The microphone transmitted the music of the military band that was playing there that evening, the voice of the chief superintendent of the park, the experiences of the manager of the Lido, and examples of the oratory from that hot-bed of unorthodoxy and revolution, the speakers' forum by the Marble Arch. Here at last the B.B.C. lifted its ban on the free expression of uncensored opinion—or seemed to.

But if the B.B.C. hoped to get away with a particularly artful and contemptible fraud on listeners, it counted without "The Freethinker" secret service, which is able to reveal that, while the rest of the broadcast was just what it purported to be, the Marble Arch part of it was one hundred per cent. fake. What listeners heard did not come from the park at all, but from a broadcasting studio. The "speakers" were not Marble Arch ones, but actors cleverly impersonating them, while the heckling and the laughter that were heard were "produced," as other dramatic effects were, by a well-rehearsed studio "crowd."

We challenge the B.B.C. to deny the truth of our version of its Hyde Park broadcast. And if it can give any better explanation of the hoax than its notorious policy of never allowing listeners to hear any but safe and respectable opinions, we shall be pleased to publish it.

P. V. MORRIS.

#### PRAYER

Prayer is now generally recommended as a pious exercise. But whoever prays to God without expecting an answer is, as Coleridge said, indulging in a species of self-magnetism. It is like any other kind of dram or drug. A Christian soldier might fight better after a prayer, but so he might after a glass of brandy. It may be said that prayer is at least a conscious communion with one's ideal, but that is possible without simulation and self-deception.—G. W. FOOTE.

### 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. (Hyde 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 J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc.—"New Light on Hypnotism."

#### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

Burnley (Market): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): Sunday, 7 p.m. Debate: "Man is Biological, Not Spiritual"—Mr. F. SMITHIES and the Rev. G. LIVINGSTONE, M.A.

Humeat: Friday, July 16, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): Sunday, 6-30, Mr. J. W. BARKER—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.

Nottingham (Old Market Square): Mr. T. M. MOSLEY—a Lecture. Read: Wednesday, July 21, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON—a Lecture.

Wheatley Lane: Thursday, July 22, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON—a Lecture.

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