

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIV.—No. 6

Sunday, February 6, 1944

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Concluded from page 43.)

The Decay of Religion.

IT is part of the technique of modern Christian defence to argue in favour of the maintenance of a certain level of ethical conduct—a thesis that no one seriously contests—and then conclude that they have made out a case for the continuation of belief in God. The truth, of course, is that the morality of social life and belief in religion are distinct things with distinct origins and applications. Thus, we get such phrases as "religious morals" and then find that the two things have been deliberately confused. The defenders of religion argue for one thing, and then claim to have proven the truth of another. Christian morality, so far as it exists, is properly concerned with man's supposed relation with God, and conduct must be framed solely in connection with this relation, and once determined remains settled. Social morality is, on the other hand, concerned with the relation of human beings to others and must change, in form at least, with the development of social life. In the result, theological morality is born to die. Codes of social morality are born to develop. The distinction is important if one is to understand social evolution.

But Canon Peter Green, while assuming a concern with social morals, is really interested with man's relation to God. That is made quite clear by his saying that "The trouble began during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the rise of the materialistic schools of T. H. Huxley, Tyndall, Kingdon Clifford, Herbert Spencer, and others." I do not think that anyone would find fault with the social morality of these men or the schools which they are said to have inaugurated. In fact, they might be indicted on their moral teaching being of too rigid a form rather than the reverse. And why go back merely to the last quarter of the last century? Is it to suggest that the decay of religion is a recent event? Nothing could exhibit a greater falsity than that. The truth is that the noticeable decline of faith goes back for many generations; the decay of religion is not a phenomenon that can be dated in this fashion; the conflict of godism with humanism may be counted in centuries, and on the whole it has everywhere meant a weakening and a disappearance of the gods.

About twenty-five years ago Dean Inge said that the period of creating religious systems ceased with Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity. This is at least a recognition that the possibility of the appearance of gods is a phenomenon of a certain phase of human development. It was also a recognition that religions are born of social situations and do not come into being as tested or verifiable revelations of God to man. It is quite certain that the physical world unveiled to us by Copernicus, Galileo,

Harvey and Newton left no room for gods. Then at the end of the seventeenth century very many criticisms of religion from the ethical and social side began to develop. Mainly deistic in form, there was always in the background the menacing conception of Atheism.

Curiously, it may be noted in passing, a great impetus to Atheism was given, quite unconsciously, by Bishop Butler. The theists had attacked Christianity on account of the character of the Bible God. Butler met them with an ingenious attack. He pointed out that the qualities of the Bible God, to which the theists had objected, were exactly the qualities of the God of nature which had been assumed. Clearly, if the God of the Bible was to be rejected on moral grounds, the God of nature must be discarded on the same reasoning. The curious result was that Butler drove many to Atheism who without his criticism might have continued exchanging one absurdity for another.

In any case, there is no disputing the fact that in the latter days of the eighteenth century, and right through the nineteenth, there was a steady growth of Atheism, a statement not to be disputed even by its being given another name—for example, Agnosticism, by T. H. Huxley. Later came the development of the conception of evolution which reduced a "planned" universe to a howling absurdity; the whole to be crowned with modern Anthropology, which demonstrated the nature of religious ceremonies by disclosing their origin in the ignorance of primitive humanity.

If this thumbnail sketch is accepted as substantially correct, one may well ask why Canon Green dates the decline of the influence of Christianity to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and to the influence of a few famous men named? Granted that these men did their part in this development, as many are playing their part to-day, it is idle even to suggest that the nation-wide rejection of Christianity is just a thing of yesterday. Religious systems do not die out in that abrupt manner. The truth is that Christianity is taken with the one disease that is fatal to established religions—that of being found out. The road that Huxley and others trod was one over which for generations men and women had carried aching hearts and bleeding feet, but who were sustained by the conviction that in the end the truth would be recognised. The decay of Christianity cannot be placed to the credit of any one group of men; it belongs to the evolution of the race. It is a product of the onward march of civilisation.

Yet for purposes other than such as are selected by Canon Green, there is something to be said in favour of taking a particular period for study, and the last quarter of the nineteenth century offers a suitable ground. Thanks to the cumulative knowledge that lies ready, we may better understand the nature of the change that was taking place. The conception of evolution had become common property. We may remark that there never was any other theory to notice. A mere statement can never rise to the level of a theory.

It was always evolution or—blank. By the time of Darwin that much was generally recognised. To call the forms of living things as the work of God meant nothing. It was an expression of ignorance. The only question that could be asked about Darwinism was whether it was adequate as a complete explanation of the origin of species. But the situation was always evolution or nothing.

But a much more deadly fact accompanied the development of Darwinism. The ground of comparative mythology had been on the carpet for more than a century; the Christian religion had been placed with other religious forms, and the basic identity was undeniable. In the history of religious ideas, no work more clearly marked the opening of the new era in the scientific study of religion than did E. B. Tyler's "Primitive Culture," published in 1871, with the avowed purpose of explaining "the developments of the animistic philosophy of religion." He said quite clearly that you could understand religion only by taking "its lower phases as explanatory of the higher," and summed up his opinion—based upon numerous illustrations from primitive life—by saying: "Throughout the rituals of Christendom stand an endless array of supplications unaltered in principle from savage times." Whatever developments have taken place in the science of Anthropology, the conclusions of Tyler stand. There is no longer a mystery about the gods. We know their origin, and we can foresee their end.

Those with their minds alert to the twists and tricks of historic Christianity will note the change that has taken place with regard to the relation of Christian belief to secular ethics. They will have seen the radical change that has taken place with regard to the value of secular morality. In the earliest phase of its existence, the Christian Church made no claim to superiority in ethics in either moral teaching or practice. Some rules had to be observed, but the great historic feature of Christianity right up to very modern times was that salvation in the *next world* could be achieved *only* by faith in Jesus Christ. But the early Christians did not present themselves as ethical teachers. The whole significance of the salvation of the thief who was crucified with Jesus is that no matter how great the ethical crimes, all would be wiped away by a single act of belief. (Neither the Egyptians, the Romans or the Greeks appear to have made any great distinction between secular and religious ethics.) Death-bed repentance, immediate salvation by an act of faith only, were the bribes held out by the historic Churches, and right up to our own times that teaching formed a prominent feature of Christianity. We have, indeed, the official statement that even the performance of good acts by a heart not purified by Christ is of the nature of sin.

But during the past century a marked change has taken place that only the critical-minded have appeared to note. The emphasis by Christian preachers has shifted its ground—at least when they appeal to the outside world. The essential Christian teaching of salvation by faith is kept in the background. In its place we have the stupid theory that the morality of an ethical system must depend upon the acceptance of a belief in God. Canon Green, for example, cites with great appreciation this passage from a Roman Catholic writer: "If there is one thing which can be said with absolute certainty it is that the revolt against Christian ethics is due to the previous repudiation of the doctrines upon which it is founded." This is intended to be very

profound, strikingly impressive. And it might be impressive if one only knew exactly what it means. What is meant, for example, by "Christian ethics"? Does it mean honesty, truthfulness, kindness, a sense of justice, and so forth? But in that case these qualities are no more Christian than they are Mohammedan, no more Mohammedan than Jewish. These qualities have nothing to do with a religious creed, nothing to do with gods and devils. They are the product of social life—one might even enlarge it to the group life of the higher animal world. Note that not one of these speakers has the courage to say deliberately and plainly that social qualities are the product of religious belief. The lie would be too obvious. So it is put as the "Christian ethic," leaving it for the foolish and the interested to take up the cry. Anyone but a professional teacher of Christianity would recognise all that is involved in the statement. The earlier generations of Christian preachers had at least the common sense to admit the force of what they scornfully called "natural morality." What they insisted on was that all the natural goodness possible to man would not avail him in the next world if it were not accompanied with faith in Jesus. But Canon Green apparently lacks the courage to say in as many words what he suggests by the vaguest of statements.

I put on one side the confessions reported of men who owe their wrongness to their neglect of God, although I do offer my sympathy to Canon Green, who is so unfortunate to meet so many Christian people who behave as foolishly as is possible, and who most conveniently confess to the Canon that were it not for the belief in God they would seek condolence in drink—or worse. It would appear that the Christians Canon Green meet are of a much poorer quality than those it has been my fortune to encounter. For I do not find that with large numbers of them they really are as bad as these professional believers would have us believe. I find that so far as feeling and action are concerned, and unless something occurs to stir up the Christian side of their nature, they are in most instances quite decent neighbours, good friends, and altogether much better than the Canon believes his brother Christians to be.

In any case, this revival of the wicked unbeliever, and of the believer who, in losing his faith in the Christian God, turns straight away to the service of the Christian devil, will not do. Human nature is not really so bad as preachers would have us believe it to be. And when let alone the average Christian may show himself socially as good as the average Atheist. On the whole, Canon Green's essay reminds me of the skilful surgeon who delights in performing an operation that requires unusual skill. Like the professional preacher, he delights in very bad cases. But with an important difference. The surgeon works to make the "case" strong and well, and ends his visits with, "Now if you take care you won't want me again." The preacher says to his subject, "Whatever you do you must not try and rely on your own natural strength. You are a poor, weak, miserable thing who cannot be trusted to act as a good parent, friend or citizen should. Always dwell upon your weakness and rely upon God—and Me." The surgeon finds a weak man and leaves him strong. Otherwise he registers a failure. The preacher finds a man strong and leaves him weak. A man who is strong and self-reliant is of no use to the Christian Church.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A TRULY RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

"Thomas Hardy was one of the most Christian spirits that ever lived."—LORD DAVID CECIL.

CHICOT, my dog, is the most truly religious being that I know. Almost needless to say, he—very properly—worships Me as his Lord God Almighty. Not so much because I pay his dog licence—a matter in which he wisely takes no interest—as because I, from a canine point of view, have all the pleasant (and unpleasant) attributes of Deity!

It is I who give him this day, and every day, his daily bread—a fact of which he is keenly conscious. It is I who forgive him his trespasses, and he doubtless forgives them (except Mini, the house-cat) that trespass against him. It is I who deliver him from evil. And mine (obviously) is the kingdom, the power and the glory—Chicot can see that with one eye shut.

Every glance, every gesture, of his says to me: "Thou art my Lord God." He rigidly keeps the First Commandment and will have no other gods but Me; he sniffs at other gods that are not the One True God, like any Jew, Christian or Mohammedan. Worship other gods he will not. He knows. The true revelation has been vouchsafed unto him though not unto other dogs. That I am not Omniscient and Omnipotent he does not doubt, and he greatly regrets that I am not Omnipresent. When I return to him after a short absence on my Divine and mysterious affairs (beyond mortal dog's ken), his ecstatic tail-wagging says in every movement: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

If his Deity is angry, as all deities have a habit of being at times—it is the way of gods—what does Chicot do? He repents, fearing that the Kingdom of Hell is at hand. Having offended against my holy laws, he abases himself before me, goes down on his belly, bows his head in sorrow and repentance and shuffles himself in lowly humility towards my chair, his Throne of Grace, confessing his sins like any Roman Catholic, and craving Holy Absolution. "Have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner, O Lord," his attitude cries, louder than words. "Lord, I am not worthy—but speak the word only and thy servant shall be healed," is his text. When my relenting smile or word answers: "Thy sins be forgiven thee—arise and walk," not even the Sick of the Palsy in the Gospel moved with more joyful alacrity than Chicot does.

He knows that it is the business of a Deity—his *métier*, as the witty Frenchman said—to forgive sins just as it is the trade of a worshipper, canine or human, to profess repentance for past sins and to commit others in the future. Chicot knows the religious game and plays it strictly in accordance with the rules.

So do I.

Why not? It is nice being a deity even if you are only a deity to one small dog. Chicot probably imagines that I made the whole, round world and all that therein is, as well as the sun, moon and stars. Whereas, in truth and in fact, I did not even make his sleeping-basket or his dog-collar. But why should I undeceive him? Deities never do. The illusions of their worshippers are not their trouble.

It has been said—quite falsely—that "Man is the only religious animal." That admirable writer, M. Anatole France, whom to read is to love, has pointed out already the profoundly religious nature of Monsieur Bergeret's dog much as I do now. Camels not inaptly have been compared to Christians in their kneeling propensities for the reception of burdens. And the late Rupert Brooke has noted the religious nature of fish and attributed several fishy arguments in favour of Christianity to fishes in some pleasantly ironical verses. Quite lately Lord David Cecil has falsely stated that Hardy—the great novelist and determined Freethinker—was "one of the most Christian spirits that ever lived." Then so is my dog Chicot. And Thomas Hardy, who knew dogs as well as men, would agree with me.

The English clergy who lament the spread of irreligion and note the decay of the religious spirit in these latter times, should have regard to Chicot. He shows no falling-off in religious zeal; the tendencies of the age do not affect his worship. What an example of piety is he to our so-called Christians who have given up "Family Worship," a salutary practice which Chicot never neglects! How he keeps the Ten Commandments, even down to the Tenth, never coveting his neighbour's ox or ass or even his neighbour's maidservant! How he knows his duty to his god and his neighbour and orders himself "lowly and reverently to all his betters," as the Church Catechism teaches. The dog of Tobit, depicted in a thousand Church stained-glass windows, is no saintlier than Chicot.

True, he fights. (But can Stalin, or Churchill, or Roosevelt, or Hitler, or any of us, throw the First Stone at him for that?) True, he steals (But so do we all in some way or other, and did not Proudhon say, "All property is theft"?) True, he does not read what I write—a fault indeed. (But he is only a dog and he is too passionately interested in the writer to care about the writing, a predilection not hard to forgive.) True, he is "only a dog." (But his state is the more gracious since he is not a man and is, therefore, above human crimes and follies.)

Can you see any reason why you and I, or the publicans and harlots of Jesus, not to speak of the modern politicians, prelates and priests, and the rest of the knaves and fools that are dignified by the title *Homo Sapiens* should enter the Kingdom of Heaven before my dog Chicot?

Perhaps you can. Frankly I cannot.

The Christian religion tells me that a dog has no soul and that Jesus did not die to save dogs from eternal death, but only human beings like me and you—an unwise choice on the part of Jesus, it seems to me. The dogs were better worth saving. Especially Chicot, who, like most saints, is also a sinner—not of the Pharasaic variety that Jesus hated, but of the faithful, adoring kind like Martha's sister, whom Jesus approved. Now if only Jesus had possessed a decent religious dog like Chicot—he might not have possessed the exaggerated opinions about the desirability of saving mankind that he unfortunately cherished. Again, if Jesus had gone about with a decent dog, he would have been much happier than going about with those repellent Twelve Apostles. His dog's faithful lick would have been better than Judas's faithless kiss, and no decent religious dog would have deserted him like that cowardly villain, Saint Peter (whom no sensible Galilean would entrust with a key of the boathouse on his record, let alone the keys of heaven and hell).

Less religious beings than Chicot, less estimable and admirable creatures than Chicot, expect to be "saved" and to go to heaven when they die, and to be awarded eternal bliss for no personal merit at all. Verily, I say unto them that not only shall those publican and harlot friends of Jesus enter the Kingdom of Heaven before them, but also Chicot. That also means Me, for no place can be heaven to my dog where I, his Deity, am not. On the merits of Chicot alone I fully expect to get in, humbly following my dog, who will carry a copy of "The Freethinker" containing this article between his teeth as a reference to his character. If Saint Peter inquires as to mine, I shall have to refer him to Chicot, who, I hope, will say that I am not as wicked as most deities!

C. G. L. DU CANN.

Another prominent writer seems to have definitely left all religion behind. From a notice of Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell's book "Splendour and Miseries," we note that he sets aside all belief in the "Christian hope of redemption," but does believe in the glory of art as "the only true religion," and that humanity is only to be saved by itself. He seems like yet another "soul" lost to the Church.

THE TRUTH ABOUT "RUTH"

AFTER the pseudo-dramatic manner in which the B.B.C. poured out the four stunted chapters of "Ruth" on a recent Sunday; after their bold assumption that the tale itself is educative, moral, religious and genuine, it is time someone told "the truth about Ruth."

It is time a few questions were asked and answered about it, especially after the pain of listening to such sad, solemn, serious and sepulchral tones rendered in the name of "religion," and most suggestive of a "good, old-fashioned belly ache."

The B.B.C. choose their Bible Tales with a nicety that is nauseous. All gloom, all black-out; never a smile in the house. Their heroes gain priority in accord with the amount of blood, thunder, murder and sudden death shown; their heroines by the amount of wile, guile, servility and superstition.

That may be the Bible's fault, for its Old Testament characters have little to show beyond a low morality, a high superstition and a colossal ignorance.

"Ruth" is probably the best book in the Bible, for the main reason that it is so short.

Is there anything to admire in "Ruth"? Should we have been worse off without "Ruth"? Why was "Ruth" ever written? Who wrote "Ruth"?

There is nothing to admire; we should have been no worse off. No person knows why it was written; no one knows who wrote "Ruth." All we know about the writing of "Ruth" is that it is rude, crude and cramped in style, and cramped, crude and rude in texture.

It is not worthy of being put over the radio. Totally unfit for children, not fitted for the ears of young men and maidens, a mere laughing-stock for the wise and instructed, and a very unreligious work, unfitted to be put in any divinely inspired book such as the Bible, or in any non-divinely inspired novel of any pretence to decency and morality.

Ruth's "great love" for Naomi, which has been held as a standard of beauty and purity for generations, is really of a very low type; it is not so guileless, so clean, or so simple as that of her own sister-in-law, Orpah.

If Naomi "had heard in the country of Moab how the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread," it is certain that Naomi's daughters-in-law had heard the same rumour.

Despite this, Orpah obeyed Naomi and "returned to her mother's house," where she was neither certain of welcome or food after so long an absence. On the contrary, the scheming Ruth cried like a spoiled child not to be sent away. Rather than part from her "bread-ticket" she even offered to change her "God" if it were necessary. She did not want to be sent home, as was Orpah, like a broken doll. She was not going to let the mere matter of a God get between her and her chances.

She knew Naomi would be well received back at her own home town; and so she might not only get her "keep," but also stand a chance of setting her hat at some wealthy big-bug such as Boaz, of whom she must have heard tell.

The writer of "Ruth" was so crude, the tale so rudely told, that Ruth's mind is wide open.

Of poor Orpah, of obedient Orpah, neither the author or writer of the tale, nor Naomi, nor Ruth, nor "the kinsman," nor Boaz, ever mention her again. "Gone with the wind"; "Lost on the Moor"; "Robbed by Highwayman Boaz."

If Naomi could inherit what was her husband's, so could both Ruth and Orpah do likewise of theirs. This was admitted in so far as Naomi and Ruth were concerned. "What day thou buyest the field at the hand of Naomi," says Boaz, "thou must buy it also of Ruth." Thus was Orpah "chiselled" out of her share, but she never complained of the "very bitter" way "the Lord" had dealt with her.

When Boaz offered the "parcel of land" to "the kinsman," he offered only Elimelech's share; yet, when he bought it for himself he asked all present to bear witness that he had bought "all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's at the hand of Naomi."

That is to say, he bought Orpah's share without Orpah's agreement and knowledge, but with the conspiracy of both Ruth and Naomi.

A dirty deal. No wonder that "the kinsman" thought it was a swindle and that it would "mar" his "own inheritance" to be mixed up in it. No wonder he "drew off his shoe"—most probably in disgust.

Naomi's part in this story is not one she need be proud of. "The Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me," she moaned; "I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." "The Lord hath testified against me."

Had he? When next Christians sing the hymn "Who is on the Lord's side?" let them listen to the angel choir sing the reply, "Only Freethinkers, Agnostics and Atheists are on the Lord's side." Only such as these would defend the Lord's good character against the challenges of such as Naomi.

The Lord treated Naomi better than she deserved. No doubt she felt deeply the loss of her husband and two sons. Even Atheists do likewise without telling the Lord how evilly they are treated at his hands. At least they died in peace, and not in war or blitz. At least Naomi would know their graves. Fancy blaming the Lord for having given her one good husband, two good sons, two nice daughters-in-law, one nice "parcel of land" and a "mighty man of wealth" as a kinsman, favourably disposed toward her. What more did she want? What had "the Lord" done wrong to her? Did she expect her husband and sons to live for ever, and herself to never experience "the change of life"?

"The truth about Ruth" herself is that she wanted again to be a "glamour girl" and either attract a "sugar daddy" or a wealthy husband. She was not too particular how she "found grace" in the eyes of Boaz, so long as she found it. In this matter Naomi worked skilfully to get Ruth "off her hands" and yet have her own position secure. Boaz was both bought and sold. Orpah was "the goat driven into the wilderness." And as for the B.B.C.'s selection of Religious Tales, words would fail my pen had it all the ink, paper and dictionaries in the world to inspire it beyond saying: "They are very Irreligious after all."

B. B. B.

NORTHERN IRELAND'S GOVERNMENT GRANT

THE usual idea of a grant is a gift by a Government, but the Grant I write of is a gift from God to Ulster, the Right Honourable William Grant, J.P., M.P., L.O.L.B., Minister of Labour in the Northern Ireland Government. I have been honoured by a letter from this exalted personage. Here it is in full:—

"Dear Sir,—It is perfectly true that I did not answer your previous letter: I did not consider that it required a reply from me.

"I stand by anything I have stated in the connection that you mentioned. What you and your family are is no concern of mine, and I do not take any exception to it; therefore, I claim the same right as you to express my own views. Surely you would not deny me this?

Yours truly,

January 4, 1944.

W. GRANT."

There's a touch of political cleverness about that letter, for the uninformed reader could not possibly guess what it was about, and would be inclined to think that I had been pestering the honourable gentleman with my domestic troubles, and deny-

ing him freedom of speech. So as the matter is of interest to all Freethinkers, I'll tell you what led up to my being honoured by a letter from a Cabinet Minister.

A few weeks ago, in the course of a speech at Armagh, Mr. Grant said this war was being fought for religion and freedom, and he made some very outspoken comments. The "Belfast Telegraph" gave as his actual words: "The man or woman who would not fight for religion has no right to be on the earth at all."

Now, I have long experience as a writer, and as I know how quite a little mistake in a report can completely alter the meaning, I am always careful in controversy. I wrote Mr. Grant and pointed out that these words were a condemnation of millions of Russians and Chinese, and that there were many thousands of our own people who regard all religion as superstition. I instanced my own family, five of whom are in the Forces and who claimed their legal right to be classed as "Atheist." They would certainly not "fight for religion," and I suggested that the honourable gentleman owed an honourable apology for saying they had "no right to be on the earth at all."

Now, had I got any sort of reply, even telling me I was making a mountain out of a molehill, I would have laughed and forgotten the incident. But, after a fortnight, I began to have qualms about the millions of godless Russians whose morale might be weakened when they heard the doom pronounced upon them at Armagh. So I wrote again and, with a kindly thought for Confucians, I registered my letter. This drew the reply I have quoted.

The essential thing to note is that Mr. Grant admits that he said "A man or woman who would not fight for religion has no right to be on the earth at all." That is intellectually honest, but it is a complete contradiction of the sentence, "What you and your family are is no concern of mine. . . ." Now, come, Mr. Grant, as man to man, how can you square these two utterances?

There is ambiguity about the sentence, "I claim the same right as you to express my own views." A Cabinet Minister's secretary should write better English. But what Mr. Grant means is that I have the right of free speech and that I seek to deny it to him! Could there be a greater travesty of the real position? I subscribe wholeheartedly to the dictum of Voltaire: "I may hate your opinion, but I will fight to the death for your right to express it." Everybody who knows the political history of William Grant knows that is not his idea of freedom of speech. Nowadays the "right" to express one's views is permitted only to those in authority, or whose "views" are mild and meaningless. A Cabinet Minister makes the public statement that people who would not fight for another world in which they disbelieve, have no right to live in this world. His words get big publicity. The majority of the public take their thinking from the Press, and place more faith in the opinion of a "big man" than in that of a neighbour. That is quite natural, but there isn't the ghost of a chance that a protest from a rationalist would be printed. To any student of our recent history it is clear that very rigid censorship is exerted in every sphere of thought or action, and under the cloak of war emergency much that is good and true is denied utterance because it may be disturbing to complacency. On the other hand, the amount of downright lying—particularly by religious apologists who have it all their own way at the B.B.C., and the treatment of legend as factual knowledge can have but one objective. That is, the fooling of the minds of the people, particularly the young and impressionable. The Right Honourable William Grant is Sir Oracle, and I am but a Chinese Chow, for my bark cannot be heard.

Luckily there is "The Freethinker," the brainiest and bravest paper in the language contributed to by men and women who have no right to be on the earth at all, for they have spent a great deal of their lives in fighting against religion.

But when Freethinkers speak of fighting in this connection, they mean reasoning, writing, discussing and exchanging views, and nothing more. Bloody warfare is the Christian meaning of fighting, and Mr. Grant has played his part in that fearful incitement. I do not agree for a moment that the present war is being fought for religion, but I remember over twenty years ago I was in Belfast when there was a fairly considerable war for religion between Catholics and Protestants, and there were appalling crimes perpetrated. Hating each other for the love of God, the Protestants chased the Catholics from their work at the shipyards, and a certain Protestant who "did his bit" then was named Billy Grant. There were one or two Protestants who, actuated by human feelings, protested against the pogrom, and would take no part in the war on Catholics. It was then that the phrase was born that "a man . . . who would not fight for religion has no right to be on the earth at all," for my peace-loving friends had to flee for their lives.

The Right Honourable William Grant, Minister of Labour in the Northern Ireland government is still the same Orange bigot that he was a quarter of a century ago. Doubtless that's why he is where he is. He fits in well in "A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people," and under a Prime Minister who stated publicly that he would not employ a single Catholic on his estate. But it's a fearful thought that a man of this mentality should occupy a public position of importance to all sections of the community. For the utterance of the Right Honourable William Grant, Justice of the Peace, Member of Parliament, Minister of Labour in Northern Ireland, that "a man or woman who would not fight for religion has no right to be on the earth at all," is not the word of a wise statesman, but the vapouring of a blatant partisan.

Billy Grant, you've had it. JOHN FRASER LESSELS.

ACID DROPS

THE Archbishop of Canterbury welcomes the new Education Bill because, he says, "it is a measure of justice to the children of the country." It would be almost impossible to put a greater falsehood in so few words. Consider: a child goes to school and part of its education and—if we count the avowed aims of the Churches and of the Board of Education, and consider the Bill has become an Act—its instruction is saturated with a particular form of religion. So far as the school goes, it will learn nothing about the other religions that exist, it will be told nothing of the real history of the religion they are taught to believe, and it will have developed a sense of separation from others which should not exist in the developing intelligence of the young.

But school life—particularly that which is to reach to fifteen or sixteen years of age—ought to be the time when a sense of social solidarity should be created, and if matters on which difference of opinion must exist, more than one view of these questions should be stated. The aim should be unity in difference. But so far as the teaching that really concerns the Archbishop goes, his aim, and the aim of the Bill, is that children shall receive instruction which will be authoritatively given; there must be no indication made by the teachers that there are grave differences of opinion on the matter of religion, and the child leaves school not merely ignorant of the truth about religion, but with a strong prejudice against ever acquiring the truth. And that is what the Archbishop calls "a measure of justice to the children of the country."

We should remember, in justice to the Archbishop, that he does not stand alone in his philosophy. Did not Hitler say that the wholesale murder of men, women and children in Germany was "a measure of justice to the German people"?

The Free Church Federal Council "views with great concern the provision in the (Education) Bill for establishing new denomi-

national schools in substitution of old schools on other sites." If that is the farthest the Free Church Federation can go, Mr. Butler will have little to fear. If it were true to its professed principles it would oppose the State teaching of a particular religion and demand free and equal access to all educational institutions from the elementary school to the University. The bogey of cost should be ignored by all reasonable people considering the lavish cash expense of the war. The limit of a country's wealth is the character of its people and the quality of its natural resources. The war has given us an opening for real reform. Can we pluck up enough courage and common sense to take advantage of the moment? Another chance may not come again in a hurry.

We have given many specimens of the quality of professional preachers, but there is another kind of preacher who infests the daily or weekly press, and who seems to write because he believes there is an audience that will swallow almost anything if it is labelled religion, or written with a religious moral. A specimen of this may be found in a recent issue of the "Daily Mirror"; the writer is a Mr. David Walker. He commences with the not very profound remark that whatever you do you are more likely to succeed if you have faith in yourself. That is followed by the advice that you will do better if you have faith in something outside yourself, and that is brought up to date by the remark that for making war, faith in your country will serve. The latter would not have been said if we were not at war.

So far nothing has been said that would cause one to sit up all night pondering. But there is what may be called a moral, and that comes straight from the pulpit. For it turns out that neighbours, friends, family will not fill the bill. You must have "something beyond itself and beyond life." You must realise that without this "something" (a rather vague kind of thing to be looking for) you are liable to make victory a sham and the world a shambles. The beauty of this kind of writing is that you may go on for ever and ever, or at least until people are sufficiently intelligent to appreciate the verbiage that is thrown at them, or the editor decides that this kind of stuff no longer pays.

We find it hard to believe that writers of the kind of stuff cited do not know that all this is just wind. It would seem an insult to them to decide otherwise. Consider: to be animated by feelings that reach beyond what we may call personal benefits, for our aims to take a wider scope, and including the welfare of others, is so much to the good. It is an indication that one realises he is part and parcel of an organic community that develops by expansion in thought and action. Men may live within a very narrow circle, but Man can develop a larger character only by realising that he is an integral part of a developing and interlocked association. The best of our soldiers to-day are fighting because of such things as home, country, family, friends—the recognition that the wider view is not that of men eternally on their knees to an impossible God, but the appreciation of human evolution and its real values. We hope we are not taking Mr. Walker out of his depth.

High praise has been lavished on the number of capable leaders the Russian armies have. Certainly they appear to have outwitted, as well as outfought, the German armies. But there is a valuable lesson to be learned from this. The vast majority of these capable leaders have come from what we in this country would call the "common" people. The majority of our leaders—or the majority of those holding high positions—are people of the "upper class," from which is drawn the conclusion that the said upper class warrants its existence. Had the revolution in Russia not occurred these men of the people would hardly have been heard of. It was pointed out in the debate on the Education Bill that about 60 per cent. of the House of Commons are members of the upper classes. Of the working classes there appears to be only 2 per cent. There seems a moral in all this, and the moral is not hard to draw.

The Rev. Prebendary Welch is, we believe, the chief of the B.B.C. Religious Committee which is to see that nothing is said concerning Christianity that will run across the "Christian

Tradition." In discharge of this function it has lied and lied, and yet again lied to see that no one who speaks before the microphone shall be allowed to tell the truth concerning Christianity. Freethinkers who broadcast have their lips (religiously) gummed, while travelling padres may lie to their hearts' content in perfect safety. No one is permitted to contradict them. So we are not surprised to find Mr. Welch opening an article in "The Listener" with the remark that "Only the Christian Gospel faces the whole truth about human nature." For downright impudence Mr. Welch deserves a gold medal—and Lord Reith should present it to him. They are both ultra-godites.

The Rev. Gilbert Shaw writes in the "Church of England Newspaper": "Christ took our nature upon himself. This is the kind of thing that could only happen once." That is information, but is it trustworthy? How does Mr. Shaw know that God the Father has not another son or two in the background? After all, none of the Jews knew that God would suddenly spring a Son on them. They were taught by God that there was none other God but him, and then he appears with a Son and a shadowy something called the Holy Ghost, and declares the whole three, when reckoned up, equal one. So we would like to know how Mr. Shaw knows that there are no other members of the divine family somewhere in the background.

There is another curious remark made by Mr. Shaw. He says that the question of to-day is: "What think ye of Christ?" Now, we do not find in our journeying that anybody ever puts that question in the ordinary course of their movements. There are some men about carrying a large bill with something of that kind on it, but the man in the street, the man in the tram, the man in the bus, and the man in the pub never asks that kind of question; and if anyone tried it in the last-named place he would be told to "Dry up! We've come here to enjoy a quiet half-hour."

According to a German report, the Allies have bombed the Pope's summer residence. What a chance for advertising the Church was missed! The bomb might have been divinely guided to run round the residence of the Pope and then go straight back to explode over those responsible for this act of sacrilege. But when it comes to R.A.F. bombing it seems that God does not like to interfere.

But real faith dies hard. The Vicar of Christ Church, Shooters Hill, London, hopes that the Second Front will not occur because of the fearful loss of life there would be. Well, here is a good chance for miracle number one. Either God might influence the Allies to give way to Germany, or persuade the Germans to give way to the Allies. In our judgment, God will play the usual game of taking the winning side. Then in the face of a devastated world we shall see the farce of the King driving to St. Paul's to thank God for the *peace* he has brought about.

How much real liberty there would be if the clergy ruled openly, instead of being compelled to adopt cowardly methods to get their way, was shown by a recent vote of the Swansea Town Council. The matter before the Council was the opening of cinemas on Sunday. There appears to have been little discussion, but those who did speak complained of the number of letters they had received threatening them with an organised opposition if they voted in favour of the opening. In the end the Mayor brought the discussion to an end—probably there were more ugly things to come—by putting the matter to a vote. The Sabbatarians won by what was declared to be a substantial majority. If the majority against freedom on Sunday did represent a substantial majority, then Swansea must be in a bad state. But we question it, for the vote is given in the local paper as 25 votes against 23. So the people and the soldiers billeted in Swansea must roam about the streets on Sunday.

It is a curious but easily verifiable fact that the only man who can write a complete biography of God is one who does not believe in him.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,
Telephone No.: Holborn 2801. London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. H. MILLWARD.—You will see we have followed your example in not writing earlier. But thanks for good wishes, and take ours to an old and loyal Freethinker. Shall hope to see you in London again.

MRS. E. TRASK.—Many thanks for the excerpts you have made. We have not come across the book, but what we have of it will be useful.

TAB CAN.—Obliged for cuttings; always useful even when not immediately used.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.—Next week; crowded out of this issue.

T. OWEN.—Thanks for cutting. But you really must not expect a priest, particularly a Catholic one, to deal fairly with matters that touch his creed.

W. A. ANDOW.—Sorry, but restricted space forbids our opening these columns to a general discussion of the controversy between Messrs. Brockway and Gallacher. We have had to refuse many interesting contributions in the past four years.

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS

WE are pleased to see the following from the pen of Mr. Hannen Swaffer:—

"What have the Churches done about the Five Points? They drew them up in December, 1940, when we were in peril. Every child, regardless of race or class, should have equal opportunities of education suitable for the development of his peculiar capacities. Is it seriously argued that in helping to frame the new Education Bill with Mr. Butler—and in secret behind closed doors—our religious leaders tried to ensure that the public schools, now endowed by the State, should be thrown open to the poor, and that every child, regardless of race or class, should have an equal chance?"

The answer is that much of this was plain bunkum. The whole thing was, as we said from the outset, a plot devised by the Board of Education and the Churches. It is the Churches' last chance; it is also the opportunity of the people—if they can rise to it.

Of course, the newspapers did not print some of the best things that were said during the debate on the Education Bill. But some are worth preserving. Here are a couple. Mr. Moelwyn, Socialist Member for Carmarthen, said: "No system of education can call itself democratic so long as there remains within it the possibility of any child being prevented from getting a better education because its parents have no money." But if we do not have distinctive exclusive to a class, do we not run the risk of seeing many of the children of "Noble families" being left without a job?

Mr. Colgate, Conservative, objected to the exclusive qualities of the Roman Catholic schools. He said:—

"It seems to be the view that Roman Catholics must not be sullied by contact with others. Their religion should be able to stand up in contact with people of different creeds and different views."

Excellent in principle, but Mr. Colgate forgets an important thing which is true of all religion. Let the members of any religious creed permit their children to mix freely with those of other creeds, and in a very short time there would be no religions in existence. Religions live by their separateness. There never yet was a god who could survive for long if he permitted his followers to mix freely with the worshippers of other gods.

Lord Vansittart looks like creating displeasure in many religious circles. In the "Sunday Dispatch" he points out that both the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany had connived at the German policy of expansion that led to the present war, and that the "German State has always been as sure of the support of the German Churches as that of Social Democracy." In quoting a "former German Chancellor," he says "the German Churches have never made any stand or protest against German militarism. All that they have done is to protest, on the whole mildly, against religious persecution at home."

All this is quite sound criticism. But what we should like to hear from Lord Vansittart is whether the Christian Churches in any country have made a protest of any general character against the wars waged by the country to which they belonged. Did the Churches in this country complain when Mussolini let loose on Ethiopia? After all, Italy was a Christian country. Rome was the headquarters of the largest and the most powerful of the Christian Churches, but that did not prevent the Pope making a cash deal with Mussolini which brought in a sum of fifty millions of Italian lira and one billion lira in Italian bonds. Really, if Lord Vansittart goes on awakening reflections in this manner he will get himself into serious trouble.

We have said many times that the success of the Education Bill will mean a lowering of status and quality of the teachers. This is endorsed by the "Sunday School Chronicle" in a complaint at the "considerable opposition" that is coming from the teachers. Well, the teachers—those who have any real interest in their work—know that the rule of the Church will mean whether the commands are issued by the clergy direct or a "Christian atmosphere" is to saturate the schools and be controlled by laymen. It means a poorer type of teacher and a lower level of character.

If evidence is wanted we again find it in the "Sunday Chronicle." Referring to the teachers the "Chronicle" says:—

"These people want Christianity taught as if the teacher had an open mind as to whether the fundamentals of the Christian faith were true or false."

That is, in the "Christian atmosphere" that is to materialise, teachers must be convinced Christians. And head teachers must give assurance that they are true blue believers. Well, there are thousands of teachers who play the hypocrite where religion is concerned to-day. What will the situation be if the Butler conspiracy succeeds? It is almost mockery to even think that a higher type of character among pupils can be developed in such conditions.

We note that "Forward" publishes Mr. Du Cann's lines "Great War Poetry," which appeared in these columns recently, with acknowledgments.

We were pleased to see a good and useful letter on "Sabatarianism" appeared in the "Leyton Express" for January 15.

Mr. Reginald Sorensen, M.P., contributes a useful article to the "Sunday Dispatch" on behalf of a revision of our ridiculous Sunday laws. It is also announced in the same paper that Mr. Sorensen intends to raise the whole question of Sunday enter-

tainments. That is good, so far as it goes, but something more and better should be done. The whole of the Sunday laws, as such, should be set aside. And they would be if those who did not believe in this fetish had the courage to speak out. But those who hold office dare not run against their orders from headquarters. They must bark when the order comes, and "down" when that command is issued. And many of the other members who have not jobs fear attack in their constituencies if they oppose the Sunday fetishism.

THE SABBATH QUESTION

1.

IF a Christian or a Jew were asked to state the origin of the Sabbath Day he would immediately reply by pointing out that it was ordered to be kept by God Almighty in the Fourth Commandment. God, it appears, had taken six days in "creating" the Universe, and rested on the seventh, no doubt feeling very tired at such strenuous labour. So, we are told, "the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." And later Jews put in a tremendous number of restrictions which made it very difficult to do anything at all on such a holy day except live and recite special prayers.

The curious thing is that while the orthodox make a big splash of the Fourth Commandment which is in Exodus and which gives a clear reason why the sabbath should be kept, namely, because God rested on the seventh day after working hard for six days, Deuteronomy gives quite another reason. You will find it in chapter five. There, we are told, "thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." Here, then, we have another and quite different reason given for keeping the sabbath holy, namely, because God brought the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. And though this reason is clearly stated in Holy Writ and has just the same authority as the other reason, it never appears to have had the same popularity. I have never met any kind of orthodox believer who knows the text from Deuteronomy, and in any case I doubt if it would be taken to heart in the way the Exodus text has captured the imagination of the world. What more like a mere human is the picture of God who created the infinitely big and the infinitely little—all in six days—and then rested?

We must admit that the Jews have certainly done their best to keep the Sabbath day holy especially through many centuries of persecution. It is only when they were free to do as they liked in the matter away from persecution, as in England and America, that they have relaxed somewhat and are ready to brave the anger of Jehovah by performing all sorts of things on the Sabbath which have been more or less forbidden by their Talmudic teachers.

On the other hand, the average Christian is in a hopelessly inconsistent quandary, for though—if he is very pious—he is as strongly in favour of the Sabbath day as any orthodox Jew, he does not keep the seventh day at all, but throws overboard the express commands of the Bible he so fervently believes in.

The day which has to be kept holy is the seventh day, for it was on that day that God rested. And there is not a line in the whole of the Bible which makes the Sabbath any other day. Yet Christians refuse to obey the Divine command, and produce a host of typical theological reasons why they can throw it overboard and, instead, obey their Church Fathers by making the Sabbath the first day.

In that very orthodox work, Eadie's Biblical Cyclopaedia, the writer insists that "the fourth commandment cannot be annulled," and he adds that "the Creator blessed the seventh

day—declaring it to be a day above all days, a day on which his favour should assuredly rest . . . on that day God himself rested . . ." This seems pretty good reasoning, but Dr. Eadie has no difficulty in disposing of it. The Sabbath day was a Divine command—you were obliged to keep it, but after all it really does not matter which six days you worked so long as you kept the day following, which was bound to be the seventh day. Besides, even if Sunday is not the seventh day but the first, all you need do is to call it the Lord's Day—and there you have the Christian Sabbath Day without any further argument. Even the Lord himself must be impressed with the soundness of such able disputation.

The word Sabbath, we are told in Smith's Bible Dictionary, comes from Shabbath "a day of rest" or from Shabath, "to cease to do" or "to rest." On the other hand, the Encyclopaedia Biblica says the word Sabbath "cannot be translated 'the day of rest'." As in so many matters theological, you pay your money and take your choice.

It need hardly be said in these pages, however, that whatever was the way in which a day of rest came into being, or whoever first called it the Sabbath, or whatever that word means or does not mean, God had absolutely nothing to do with it. This is, of course, admitted by the more learned theologians in expensive works which very few of the faithful ever see, or if they did see, would ever believe. We know that the idea of seven as a sacred number emanated from pagan priesthods. It is connected with the moon's appearing every 28 days in all probability, though this is by no means certain. It may have some connection with the 280 (that is 7×40) days of parturition but nobody really knows, though both these numbers are very prominent in the Bible.

What we do know for certain is that the Egyptians consecrated the seventh day to "God the Father," and that both Hesiod and Homer called it "the Holy Day." Actually it was devoted to Saturn. Each day of the week was devoted to some planet—beginning with the Sun. The other six days were consecrated to the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, and the order is still more or less followed in the names we ourselves give to the days.

The Jewish writers and editors of the Bible appear to have "cribbed" almost all their stories or ritual from the nations surrounding them or among whom they lived. It is quite possible that the reason given in Deuteronomy was the first given for keeping the Sabbath day holy, and that the one given in Exodus came later as a result of imbibing the Babylonian Creation stories during the Exile. Certainly, it is very strange that so much of Holy Writ contains no allusion whatever to the Sabbath day. There is nothing in Genesis about it being a precept to be kept. It is not mentioned in Joshua nor in Judges nor in Ruth nor in Samuel nor in the first book of Kings. That is, something like 500 years are dealt with without a word about the Sabbath.

But there are a few curious stories in these books which admit of no easy explanation if we allow the Sabbath to have been rigorously kept by the Israelites. For example, we have the story of Jericho which, under Divine command, had to be encompassed by them for seven days. They went round it seven times on the seventh day, the priests blowing trumpets, and carrying the Ark. The question is—did they do this on the Sabbath day? If so, they were certainly violating the sacredness of the day in some respects, for Jews are not allowed to blow on trumpets or play any musical instrument on the Sabbath or, for that matter, do very much walking. The attempts of Biblical commentators to get out of the quandary are quite amusing and only convincing to those who do not have to be convinced—who always believe no matter what they believe.

I hope to deal with other aspects of the question in future articles.

H. CUTNER.

THE BLACK-COATED SHEPHERDS

An Ecclesiastical Satire

Put on your solemn, Sunday face,
When reading this harangue,
And lift your cap wi' reverent grace
On holy grun you gang.

Tak' carefu' stock as each Divine
Before you mak's his entry;
The pros and cons let us define
O' oor black-coated gentry.

They sit in judgment on our deeds
And rail us week by week,
We daurnae lift oor shameful' heids
In oor defence to speak.

Let us set doon as number wan,
No o' respect for years,
But just because he's the best man—
The Reverent Willit Queers.

His kirk is wee, his creed no' braid,
Their singin' no' euphonious;
But he himsel' is true and staid,
His elders sanctimonious.

The wee kirk folk aye sit and sing
And staun' up when they pray,
To the auld style they firmly cling
And still haud the fast day.

Feth! but it galls some folk we ken
To hear o' their fou plate,
This sustentation wap would en'
If a' gied at their rate.

Next, let us tak' the Pairish Herd,
In name if no' in fac',
For whit stray sheep has he e'er cared?—
The Reverent Steeple Jack.

He disna mix wi' ither herds
But bides aye by himsel',
And tells us in a gae few words
There's nae sic place as hell!

Upon a famous Sabbath eve
He preached a "temperance" sermon,
The Rechabites he did sair grieve
Wha drink jist "Dew o' Herman."

The wine, he didnae say, don't touch,
Nor luk on't when it's rid,
But, "tak' a little—no' ower much,
And see you get it guid!"

Yet wi' his wine and wantin' hell
And minus a' he needs,
I hae a private thocht mysel'
He preaches ower their heids.

Noo to the third o' them we'll turn,
To that wee birkie hot,
Wha'se righteous wrath sae oft doth burn—
The Reverent Trottie Trott.

It's a' the same wha needs his lash,
The members or the choir;
He blushes up and gies them't gash,
Impident wee spitfire!

It's tell't he's deevlish sair on thaim—
The silly lads and lassies
Wha play the universal game—
Hae ower familiar passes.

It's well kent that he's tryin' hard
To get anither place;
Few here his 'wa-gaun wid retard,
Or miss his surly face.

Then, Shade o' the Auld Doctor, next
The man o' neck and belly!
'Tis hoped, kind friends, you'll no be vexed
When so styled is Pompellie.

Oh! what a great contrast there is
Between the Doctor mellow,
And this successor here o' his,
Wha like a bull does bellow.

The gentle Doctor was in deed
And word alike refined,
But though he clappit each wean's heid
His was nae childish mind.

Nae word for weans has Rab at a',
Nae kindly smile or touch;
Of course, he's no himsel' a "paw"—
Which may account for much.

There's Mistie left; the only faut
Against him ane nicht cheep—
And really it amounts to naught—
He's no' the least bit deep.

If, on the whole, they're somewhat flat,
In judgment nane a Daniel,
Perhaps we should be thankfu' that
We've nae rake like Emmanuel.

And after a' in Derval here
There's sma' need for a Moody,
Whaur every ither ane's a seer
Wha's no' a goody-goody.

To catch the moral nane should fail
O' this long rhyming rant,
It's jist to ca' anither nail
In the coffin lid o' cant.

If ony truth you hae to tell
Or ony doctrine teach,
Mak' sure that you are richt yoursel'
And practise whit you preach!

T. F.

A curious epitaph on a tombstone at Burlington, Massachusetts:

Here lies the body of Mary Ann Lowder;
She burst while drinking a seidlitz powder.
Called from this world to her heavenly rest,
She should have waited till it effervesced.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND FASCISM

IN "The Freethinker" of January 16 Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann states a case for the release or, alternatively, for the judicial trial of Sir Oswald Mosley and, by parity of reasoning, of anyone else interned under Regulation 18 B. Mr. Du Cann, as we should expect, makes a good lawyer's case. I ask to be allowed to state, not a lawyer's, but an old Freethinker's and anti-Fascist's case on the other side.

Mr. Du Cann opens his article by a specious attack on Regulation 18 B, which, he says, ought never to have been enacted even "on the excuse of war." Readers of Mr. Du Cann's other contributions to "The Freethinker" will not be surprised at his refusal to regard war as a justification for exceptional measures. He is, of course, opposed to the war, and he naturally upholds the right of Sir Oswald Mosley or anyone else to enjoy the privileges of Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus and the rest of our constitutional liberties regardless of the effect on national unity and the prospects of victory.

But can we afford to decide this question on its legal merits in isolation from other factors in the case? There is an obvious difference between the imprisonment of ordinary felons and misdemeanants in time of peace and that of persons of notorious enemy sympathies in time of war. In the one case the existence of the community is not at stake; in the other it is. A thief or a forger may be acquitted by a miscarriage of justice or a technical flaw, and the worst that may be expected to follow is another theft or forgery which, after all, does not endanger the State. Hence the just solicitude of the law for the interests of the ordinary prisoner, who must be presumed innocent until found guilty by the judgment of his peers. The case of Fascist propagandists during a war against Fascism is manifestly different. Their activities prejudice the common cause and help the enemy. *Salus populi suprema lex*—the highest law is the safety of the nation. Hence Regulation 18 B.

So much I might say if I wrote only as an Englishman. But I approach this question more as a Freethinker and a progressive than as a patriot. I make no apology for saying that Freethinkers have a special stake in speedy and total victory in this war. Never since the wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries have two ideologies, one favourable and the other hostile to the enlargement of freedom, so unequivocally confronted one another on a world front. Fascism is avowedly a declaration of war on all for which we Freethinkers stand; and its deeds bear out its professions. We have had more than twenty years' opportunity to study its record, first in Italy, then in Germany, then in Spain, and now in Europe as a whole. It is our own fault that too many of us have been late in awakening to its significance.

Sir Oswald Mosley and his friends, by their deliberate choice, have made themselves the standard-bearers in this country of a crusade against our common freedom. They did not disguise their sympathy with Mussolini and Hitler. They flaunted it. They christened themselves the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists. They introduced into Britain the poisonous gospel of anti-Semitism. They made life in East London and elsewhere a hell by their brutality and thuggery. They set up the regime of the knuckle-duster and the rubber truncheon. The suppression of these men and their organisation was a matter of self-defence.

Mr. Du Cann suggests, and I believe with truth, that Mosley numbered big industrialists and other influential people among his backers. We know he had the support of Lord Rothermere. These facts are notorious. They make Mosley more dangerous. They are assuredly no reason for setting such men at liberty.

But some Freethinkers, among whom apparently Mr. Du Cann numbers himself, carry their principles to the length of demanding freedom even for those who would destroy freedom. They

insist that we should fight even a man-eating tiger according to the rules of sportsmanship. I would ask such people in what sort of a world they think they are living? Some nice debating society, perhaps, in which the chairman keeps order and speakers make their points amid discreet applause without rude interruption. Assuredly not the world of which Darwin wrote, in which group struggles against group for survival and in which the price of freedom is to keep your powder dry.

We Freethinkers wish to see a better ordered world in which differences are settled by discussion and not by violence. But we have not got that world yet; and some people are determined that we shall never get it. To get it we have unfortunately to fight. We have allies, and we have enemies. Events have made it pretty clear who those enemies are. They include, as Mr. Du Cann says, big industrialists and persons of importance. They include the Roman Catholic hierarchy. They include all Nazis and Fascists of whatever nationality, including Sir Oswald Mosley and his gang. We cannot fight them with Magna Charta and habeas corpus. That is why Regulation 18 B exists. In the name of common sense, use it. Do not throw it away and trust that the enemy will behave like sportsmen. They won't.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

ON SEX, COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

FEW will disagree with the statement that the subject of sex is of importance and interest to every man, woman and child, yet very few of us have the courage and decency to discuss it openly and cleanly.

In the clubroom or cocktail bar we tell stories and jokes about it, and we listen to and enjoy the stories according to our mental make-up. But if there is one among us who, in his opinion, is "above that sort of thing" or "not interested in vulgarity," or, alternatively, if "there are ladies about," we switch off to golf or cricket or whatever may be our passing fancy.

It is a pity, but it is so; it is a pity that we can't—or rather don't—discuss the subject of sex in the same frank and unhesitating manner that we discuss sleeping or eating or drinking, or any other perfectly natural appetite. If we did, there would be far less misery in the world than there is to-day as a result of our hesitancy, our wrong attitude in the matter.

It is easy to understand how and why we have got into our present frame of mind: we have been taught—most of us, at any rate—from our childhood up that there is something sinful in sex, and that it should only be spoken of—if at all!—between married couples and under cover of darkness. But that preaching is being rapidly out-moded and a saner and more sensible view is coming into fashion—whether we of the older school like it or not.

The cause of this change in thought and outlook is, of course, the spread of enlightenment here, there and everywhere. As someone once said, consequences are true to their antecedents, and in these days of free and general education, cheap press, cheap travel, the cinema and the radio, it is no more possible to prevent the people—especially the young and rising generation—becoming enlightened and throwing off the shackles of the mind and body than it is possible to stop the rising tide, or to shut out the noonday sun. It just can't be done, and we may as well take our primitive blinkers off and face the fact that the more we all know of this subject of sex—or any other subject for that matter—the better able we shall be able to control ourselves and lead clean and decent lives. Ignorance never was and never can be of any real and lasting value to anyone, whereas knowledge helps and protects.

Admittedly some knowledge—all kinds of knowledge, in fact—can be misused. Instances of this abound on every side, and it is probably correct to say that there will always be unscrupulous men and women who will abuse their knowledge and position for their own selfish ends. But that is no reason why the others should be kept in ignorance. On the contrary: to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and he or she who knows all the possible and likely moves on the draughtboard of life is much better able to counter a cunning or malicious move than one who is totally un instructed in the game. It is stupid to pit a novice against an experienced chess player; it is criminal to send a youngster out into the world totally unprepared for what there may be in store for her or him.

In the olden days the theory was that, "As He makes them so He pairs them," but experience has exploded that myth—as is evidenced by the great and growing number of people who apply for divorce or who seek a little congenial companionship outside their own homes. The truth of the matter is that the proper mating of man and woman is a scientific problem—which statement, it may be held, is enough to make even the cat laugh. So be it. But when the cat has finished cracking her sides at the apparent stupidity of the remark, we may as well get down to fundamentals, and settle in our own minds whether there is not, after all, something in this new theory, however daft it may seem at first sight. Animals and birds—horses, cows, sheep, dogs, pigs, chickens and what not—are carefully selected for breeding purposes, but in the great majority of cases men and women marry without any attempt being made to find out whether they are in every way suited to each other, physically and mentally, and therefore likely to get along in double harness. Granted that during the process of courtship a pair will get to know something—probably a good deal—about each other. That is inevitable—especially in these days when the chaperon has almost disappeared and courting couples spend so much more time in each other's company than formerly, and they are not listened to and watched as their fathers and mothers were—but as to whether they are both organically sound and alike in aims and ambitions is often enough left to chance or future discovery, and that is where the trouble begins.

For let us be frank about it and face a stern reality: once the novelty of living together has worn off—as in the majority of cases it soon does—and it begins to dawn upon one of a married couple that things are, well—not as they should be, disillusionment sets in and things begin to go awry. Should it so happen that the disillusioned party can and does then find some other interest in life—some interest that was really not required and would not, if things had turned out as anticipated, been sought after—and can, and does, devote the time and attention to that new-found interest which he or she would only too gladly have given to his or her partner in marriage, so much the better for the time being. But if the aggrieved party is a thoughtful person—and thoughtful people are to be found in all walks of life, irrespective of their social standing—no matter how pre-occupied he or she may be, no matter to what else they may turn their attention, he or she will always have a sense of something missing and something wanting, and the chances are the breach will grow.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

(To be concluded)

The physical slave has no bodily freedom; the mental slave has no intellectual freedom. The chattel slave was procured for a monetary price; the owners of mental slaves purchase them with religious, political and other falsities. Fear of hell is the religious slave-driver's whip and bloodhounds.

OBITUARY

November 7 last saw the passing, at Auckland, New Zealand, of a Freethought stalwart in the person of Jim Pugh. He left this country upwards of 20 years ago, and will be remembered by members of the Bolton Branch. He was a reader of "The Freethinker" for over 40 years, having received it regularly in New Zealand.

A Secular Service was conducted by Harry M. Partington, an old friend and late member of the Bolton Branch. I feel sure that all friends will wish to convey their condolences to his widow.

JOHN F. PARTINGTON.

CORRESPONDENCE

"WAR AND THE FUTURE"

SIR,—Your correspondent, S. Gordon Hogg, makes some strange comparisons and deductions. I would like him to state an alternative to the establishment of law and order between nations if wars are to cease, for certainly if mankind does not find a method, mankind itself will disappear—and will deserve its fate.

In Tennyson's beautiful forecast of the future when the war drums beat no longer, and the battle flags were furled, in the Parliament of Mau, the Federation of the World, it was the common cause of most which kept a "fretful world in awe"—wrapped in "universal law." And you cannot have law without force.

Your correspondent gibes at our police system, but would he care to walk about in London if the police force was abolished? It is not true that the police are there only to protect the "possessing" class (whatever that may mean); the policeman is certainly an important official in Russia.

And has he not heard of wealthy bandits? The Old Bailey record could supply a few names.

I suggest that helpful and not destructive criticism is called for, at this time, from all who are able to think.—Yours, etc.,

A. H. MILLWARD.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.: "Six Great Englishmen—5. William Wordsworth."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute). — Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Debate: Mr. HAROLD DAY (Social Credit) v. Mr. FRED RATCLIFFE (Marxian).

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Dr. J. DUNLOP: "Disease in War Time."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. F. A. RIDLEY: "Socialism and the Evolution of Civilisation."

PIONEER BOOKSHOP

Charlotte Place, Goodge Street, W. 1

A quantity of Freethought works for sale—Volney, Carlile, Holyoake, Foote, etc.

Also large stocks of progressive literature

Inspection invited. Open from 11.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

FOR SALE.—A copy of "The Devil's Pulpit," by Rev. Robert Taylor. Offers to Box 38, c/o "The Freethinker," 2-3, Fournival Street, London, E.C.4.

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

NEW EDITION

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL

By CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth 2/6

Paper 2/-

Postage 2d.

THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

BIBLE ROMANCES, by G. W. Foote. One of the finest Freethinking writers at his best. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians. Edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Passages cited are under headings: BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS, BIBLE ATROCITIES, BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES AND OBSCENITIES, BIBLE ABSURDITIES, UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 9d.; postage 1d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS IT? By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view. Price 2s.; postage 1½d.

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY, A Survey of Positions, by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH, by Colonel Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS, by C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

FREETHOUGHT

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester), by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING, by Chapman Cohen. First, second, third and fourth series. Price 2s. 6d. each; postage 2½d. The four volumes, 10s. post free.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST, by C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; by post 5d.

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

WHAT IS RELIGION? by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

GOD AND EVOLUTION, by Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD? By C. G. L. Du Cann. An enquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s.; postage 3d.

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

INFIDEL DEATHBEDS. The last moments of famous Freethinkers. By G. W. Foote and A. D. McLaren. Price 2s.; postage 3d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS, by G. W. Foote. Price 2s.; postage 2½d.

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

THE RUINS, OR A SURVEY OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF EMPIRES, to which is added THE LAW OF NATURE. By C. F. Volney. A Revision of the Translation of 1795, with an introduction. Price, post free, 2s. 2d.

PETER ANNET, by Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED, by Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FREETHINKERS. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

THE RESURRECTION AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS, by W. A. Campbell. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.

REVENUES OF RELIGION, by Alan Handsacre. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

HENRY HETHERINGTON, by A. G. Barker. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

What is the Use of Prayer? Deity and Design. Did Jesus Christ Exist? Agnosticism or . . . ? Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live. Atheism, Freethought and the Child. Christianity and Slavery. The Devil. What is Freethought? Must We Have a Religion? Morality Without God.

Price 2d. each.

Postage 1d. each.

THE PIONEER PRESS
2 & 3, Farnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.4