

# THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The March of Time

WE count it to the credit of this journal that it was amongst the first to recognise the Russian Revolution as one of the great turning-points in the history of humanity; and also to say that, whether for good or ill, the abolition of Tsarism must be placed side by side with that European upheaval which unscientific historians have labelled "The French Revolution." In sober truth, it was more than that. It was the first phase of a European upheaval; it had its opening in France, but its courses covered the whole of Europe. Men may go generation after generation and never raise their heads, but once they have done so the experience counts in their future. The French Revolution brought to the light—for the first time—the "people." The Russian Revolution took the second step in showing the world the "people" in action. The two together demonstrate the fact that, for those with the will to act, human destiny lies in human hands.

Incidentally, it may be noted for the benefit of all dullards that, fundamentally, the same lesson faced the world in the German Nazi revolution. Here, too, we may see, if we have sufficient wit, the bulk of the German people, in the course of a single generation, transformed into devotees to one of the vilest social systems ever devised. People took pride in their own personal degradation, and counted as greatness the exhibition of their own littleness. The only feature that links the Russian and the German Revolutions together is the fact that both illustrate the pliability of human nature. We could do to-day with another Carlyle to deal with Russia as Carlyle dealt with mediæval France. Many of his narrative sketches may be questioned by those who count correct punctuation and a photographic record of events as of greater consequence than a scientific analysis of human motive. But in the long run we are all driven to recognise that revolutions have their causes and, often enough, their social justification. Carlyle's summing-up, in which he recognised both the evil and the greatness of the French Revolution, placed by the side of it the picture of the Irish people, who did not rise in revolution. He says of the French outbreak: "History ventures to assert that the French sans-culotte of 1793, who, roused from a long death sleep, could at once rush to the frontiers and die fighting for an immortal hope and deliverance for him and his, was but the second miserablest man." That delivery of Carlyle should be placed side by side with Paine's rebuke to Burke, weeping over the sufferings of the French aristocracy; he reminded him that he "remembered the plumage, but he forgot the dying bird."

### Religion and the War

When this war of ours comes to an end there should be a careful re-examination of a great many ideas and institu-

tions. We say "should be"; but the Englishman's pride that we never bother about carrying ideas to their logical conclusion—even to the extent that current circumstances permit—must never be forgotten. We delight in making reforms which re-institute old ideas in a disguised form. Camouflaged under a desire to improve the quality of our schools, the Government and Church leaders have manoeuvred to give the Churches a control over the primary schools such as they have not enjoyed for more than two generations. The Government has agreed with Church leaders, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the whole of the school time shall be saturated with religious beliefs. That is, of course, the exact policy which dominates the Roman Catholic schools. The Catholic Church has always said—and so far honestly said—that it is not enough to have religious ceremonies during a very limited period of the school time; religious instruction must be given by professed Christians, and instruction on secular matters must be of such a quality that it implies the truth and value of the Christian religion right through school time. How far this policy will be carried into effect remains to be seen.

In the case of the troops, the clergy, both at home and abroad, appear to be working fairly hard in the interests of their creeds and the maintenance of their status. So far as our information goes—and we get letters and visits from private soldiers, officers, sailors and airmen—the more intelligent ones prefer to keep their religion rather in the background; the less intelligent keep their religion to the front, often with rather disastrous results. The present-day soldier is on a different and higher level mentally than was the case in our youthful days, with the result that there is a larger number of men who write themselves down as Atheist, Freethinker, Rationalist, or simply without religion. The Air Force appears to have more Freethinkers than do the other branches—perhaps because on the whole they are better educated. The Navy, I think, comes lowest on the Freethinking list, but this is probably because they are constantly under the eyes of the officers; and there are still officers in all the Services who still appear to feel that it is equal to insubordination for a private in the Services to be without a god of some sort. We have no figures as to those who have signed a non-religious declaration, but judging from what we know the number must have greatly increased in proportion to the last war. Finally, there appears to be a very large number of discussion circles formed, and—we believe our information to be reliable—the champions of religion appear to pass some very uneasy moments. If the average padre is no better equipped than those which the B.B.C. parade before the microphone one would be surprised if it were otherwise. One can imagine them turning their subjects into Atheists. We should like to print some of their addresses in these columns. It would be very cruel, but it is all in the game.

## "The Great Lying Church"

The Roman Church continues to play up to Heine's characterising of what the gentle-minded Protestants of the 16th and 17th centuries called "the whore of Rome." In connection with the Forces, it appears to run a special monthly magazine with the title of "Stella Maris." In the issue that has been sent us there is a lengthy article on the Inquisition, and, judging from the letter which accompanies the booklet, there has been some discussion concerning the action of the Church in putting heretics to death for the greater glory of God and the safety of the priesthood. So William Lawson, S.J. (Society of Jesus), proceeds to set things straight—as the Church sees it, or as it would like others to see it. Mr. Lawson starts with what he considers a good opening. He asks, "What would you do if you saw someone giving poison to children?" And he answers the question to his own satisfaction by saying, "Somehow you would prevent the administration of poison." That is quite clear; naturally so, since the answer is embodied in the question. There really is no room for argument. Mr. Lawson might have put it much more forcibly had he been sufficiently wide-awake. He might have pointed out that, by the law of this country, if a man found himself in a situation such as is depicted, and if he did nothing to prevent the child swallowing the poison, the Common Law of England would charge him with being an accessory before the fact, and he would certainly be sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Had Mr. Lawson stated his case honestly he might have given his argument at least a resemblance to common sense.

The alleged argument is so ridiculous that in ordinary circumstances one would not have bothered with it. But Mr. Lawson is not an ordinary man. He is a mouthpiece of the Society of Jesuits; and, to do the Roman Church justice, it does not permit its representatives to enter the field of verbal warfare unless they are well-equipped for the battle. The Roman Church does not usually permit its agents gratuitously to air their folly.

But, as it happens, the fallacy—or foolishness—of Mr. Lawson is one that runs right through the Christian religion as a whole. It is the assumption that belief in the Christian doctrine is absolutely essential to man's eternal welfare; and the unbeliever is therefore one who is not merely under the curse of God while he is alive, he is damned for all eternity. Socially, the unbeliever is not one who is just taking the wrong view of a given situation or belief; he is literally serving out a poison which however much it may resemble wholesome food is none the less deadly. It was this belief that was responsible for the Inquisition, about which we shall have more to say later. It has been responsible for Christian intolerance in all its forms. When the wholesale slaughter of heretics by the Papacy in the earlier centuries occurred it was to protect the people from receiving poison. When Galileo, on his knees, declared that the earth did not move round the sun; when Bruno was burned at the stake; when non-Christians were denied civil rights or imprisoned for treating Christian doctrines as untrue—in all cases the sanction to religious crimes was that the people must be "protected from poison." We can almost thank William Lawson for putting so handy a term at our disposal.

I have space for a brief note only on another assertion from the same source. Mr. Lawson says, in defence of the charge that Roman Catholicism has always been an enemy to liberty, that mutual freedom implies interference, which we admit. Again, it is impossible to believe that Mr. Lawson is not quite aware of this fact, but in social life what shall or shall not be considered permissible is the result of a compromise in at least matters of opinion concerning the conduct of life; and no one would dream of labelling a member of society as a criminal for thinking that one line is preferable to another. Social life consists of a series of possible conclusions, with a decision of one line in preference to another as an agreed conclusion. Mr. Lawson says that the Roman Catholic Inquisition was set up in the interests of liberty and right thinking. The unbeliever was guilty of both imparting poison and the imposition of tyranny and cruelty. "The Church has the authority of God for its teaching; she knows what is false and what is true. She is responsible for the health and life of the souls of her children. She would be failing in the duty given her by God if she let anyone and everyone teach whatever seemed to be true."

All this we may take as a statement of the aims of the Church written for the benefit of fools. We use that last term deliberately, for upon it Mr. Lawson builds up his defence of what I have no hesitation of branding as a deliberate falsity. We will deal with this next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## A SHINING LIGHT

"Let your light so shine before men, they may see your Good works."

A GREAT ideal, but one which the good Christian can only aspire to through faith, a faith be it noted centred in the blind acceptance of the rulings of the priests.

It is no exaggeration to list faith as the backbone of organised professional religion. The preachers preach this ideal from dawn till dusk, from the cradle to the grave; in fact, it may be said to be the yeast used by the priest for his "dough."

Faith surely implies trust, confidence and honesty. The Christian Church, through its leaders and writers, should therefore radiate in their fullest meaning, Trust, Confidence and Honesty.

Does it?

Let us examine some statements, both written and verbal, made by members of the faith and others, which may help us in our assessment of the true value for good, of the super-Christian Roman Catholic Church, who for its leader and guide has no less a personage than Christ's own Vicar on earth.

Firstly relating to Trust. W. Teeling, Roman Catholic author, in his book "The Pope in Politics" (1937) writes:—

(Page 82).—"The political policy of Rome seems to become more and more identified with organisations on totalitarian lines. That Rome should feel it wise to work with dictators is not regarded happily by those democratic countries who are striving against dictatorship at every turn."

(Page 89).—"It might be said that his (Pius XI.) affection for Fascism and Mussolini is considerably greater than that of his Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli."

(Page 169).—"I understand it is correct to say that over half the Fascists in Great Britain are Catholics."

It is well to remember that all Roman Catholics in every country are influenced very considerably by the attitude of their Pope.

THREE BOOKS

"Germany and the Hitlerite State." By Dr. G. K. A. Bell. (Gollancz; 6d.).

"The Christian Faith and Social Objectives." By the Rev. F. V. D. Narborough. (Industrial Christian Fellowship; 6d.).

"The Edge of the Abyss." By Alfred Noyes. (John Murray; 5s.).

IT so happens that I have read the three books just listed, and I have read them in quick succession. The result has interested me, and should, I think, interest readers of these columns.

First of all, however, a few words about the three authors. Dr. Bell is the Bishop of Chichester, and is a man who has attracted some attention, even in these days when political platitudes are part of the normal fare of the sermon-taster, by his emphasis on things political. Mr. Narborough is a curate at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, whose broadcast sermons have attracted many people not normally churchgoers. Mr. Noyes is a poet of some distinction who has in recent years been converted to the Roman Catholic religion. A mixed bag of writers, then, and an even more mixed bag of books. Dr. Bell is mainly concerned to point out the follies of the outlook which has recently become known as "Vansittartism"—i.e., the theory that the German people and not the Nazis, are our enemies in this war. He marshals his arguments well, though he is, perhaps, a little overfond of adducing the German Christians as examples of non-Nazi Germany.

Mr. Narborough's little book is a reprint of a series of five sermons preached at St. Martin's, and I do not think that he would object to their being described as a new attempt at a synthesis between Christianity and Socialism, though, like so many older attempts, they will probably succeed only in annoying both the Christians and the Socialists.

"The Edge of the Abyss" is altogether another cup of tea. It is a forthright denunciation of the people whom Mr. Noyes has christened the "pseudo-intellectuals," and it throws contempt on practically every contemporary writer of any distinction, from Mr. H. G. Wells to Mr. Bernard Shaw, and from Mr. T. S. Eliot to Dr. Julian Huxley. It is, in other words, a book showing the true Christian stupidity of the faith which Mr. Noyes has recently embraced, together with the complete ignorance of things political which the Roman Catholic Church so wisely (from its own selfish angle) encourages.

Why I found the contrast between these three books so very interesting, however, is this: neither the Bishop of Chichester nor the Rev. Mr. Narborough seems to be especially concerned with the rigid orthodoxy of his views. "Anything to get more people in the Christian fold" seems to be their motto. Mr. Noyes, on the other hand, is only too eager to get everyone toeing the line of religious uniformity.

This seems to me to be a new phenomenon, and one to which all Freethinkers should pay due heed. We have gradually emancipated ourselves from the province of the priest; let us beware lest laymen force upon the people new shackles! Look at the popularity of the books of Mr. C. S. Lewis, of Mr. T. S. Eliot and of Miss Dorothy L. Sayers on religious matters. They would hold us to a far more precise form of belief than would be advocated by many a parson. That, as I see it, is the lesson to be drawn from a reading of the three books with which I have this week been concerned.

S. H.

God made a great blunder when he made the world before he made man. It may be taken for granted that had he made man first, and then consulted him as to the creation of the world, a great many difficulties and anomalies would never have occurred. As it is, man has to spend a great deal of his energy in removing difficulties that need never have existed.

As a nation we cannot trust the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Secondly, the matter of Confidence. We will now read an extract from the Society of Friends paper, "Echoes of Service" (No. 1,190), the issue for February, 1944.

"Argentina.—There is a movement on foot to expel or withdraw all Protestant missionaries from the Argentine. Cardinal Capelli, the Pope's nuncio in Buenos Aires, wrote a letter to Mr. Cordell Hull saying the reason this country had not aligned itself with the Allied Powers was because of the 400 Protestant missionaries within its borders, but if these were withdrawn it would facilitate the way for a closer co-operation. Mr. Cordell Hull replied: 'Is this the only reason? If so, that could be remedied,' but he added, 'you know that in all parts of South America where there are no Protestant missionaries the moral conditions are lamentably low.'"

This Cardinal Capelli is of the same creed as the many R.C. members of the British Parliament who are so strongly and loudly pressing for full religious liberty in the education of Roman Catholic children. It will be observed what religious liberty is shown to other sects, when the Catholics are so well placed as in the Argentine. The latest news seems to show that these devout, tolerant Christians in Argentina are now openly acting with the Axis.

Does this action engender Confidence?

Thirdly and lastly, Honesty.

The "Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury," in its issue of February 21, 1944, reported that "Cardinal MacRory, in his Lenten Pastoral, read in all Roman Catholic churches in the archdiocese of Armagh, wrote: "Eire deserved credit, in the circumstances for not having allied herself with the Axis nations, and offered them hospitality and assistance."

This is the comment of a professional Roman Catholic priest making his living in Ireland, to his Irish followers. The "News-Chronicle" on the same day reported, "The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (Dr. R. Downey), in his Pastoral Lenten letter, says the utter repudiation of the law of God by the apostles of Nazism made a deity of the so-called spirit of Nordic blood and soil. Its one and only standard is the over-riding might of race, and the hideous result of this gospel of force witnessed in hecatombs of victims, rivers of blood and tears, and hideous persecution and cruelty."

The is the comment of a professional Roman Catholic priest (an Irishman), making his living in England, to his followers in Liverpool.

In a debate on "German propaganda in Eire" (Hansard, August 5, 1943), Professor Savory (M.P. Queens University, Belfast), in the course of his speech, said, "Remember these citizens of Eire have a censorship. They have no opportunity of hearing the truth, as you and I have, if they censor broadcasts from a Prince of the Church like Cardinal Hinsley, and they prevent Lenten pastorals by Roman Catholic Bishops being published because they contain sentences favourable to this country."

Debating the international situation in the Commons on February 23, 1944, Mr. Stokes, Roman Catholic M.P. for Ipswich, quoted (Hansard) the Deputy Prime Minister as having said on November 18, 1939: "Peace to be lasting must result from the agreement of all, and not from the dictation of a few." Mr. Stokes followed this quotation by saying, "With which sentiment I entirely agree."

Mr. Stokes, speaking for the Roman Catholics in the debate on the Education Bill, especially in the Committee Stage dealing with Clause 14, seems to have completely forgotten his own sentiments.

Can we now believe that the hierarchy of this Roman Catholic Christian body is honest?

J. HENSHAW.

## ACID DROPS

THE Bishop of Warrington, we see from the Liverpool "Daily Post," has been talking about education. He believes in the new Education Bill because it will lead pupils to "the top of the education ladder"; it may lead them to the foot of the ladder, but it will take a deal more for them to get on the top rungs. For it leaves untouched the Public Schools, where comparative nonentities reach the social and political top because they are "destined" to it as they come from the proper families. Until admission to the upper schools is by ability, and not by cash and social position, we shall never see the end of the Duff-Coopers and others that might be named. When Mr. Churchill commended Lord Hartington to the electorate of West Derby it was not because he had political or other ability, but avowedly because he came from the "right" family.

The Bishop was speaking with greater sincerity when he said that "if the school was to rise to its true destiny it must be pervaded with the spirit of Christianity." We agree, because if Christianity is not pumped into the child it will hardly make any great impression on youth. What is meant by the "spirit of Christianity" we do not know, unless it stands for humbug. Finally, the Bishop warns the country against "the spreading wave of emotional materialism which threatened to submerge our country. Is Christianity in any true sense of the word to remain the religion of the English people, or are we to be in a great measure dragged down into Atheism?" We do not know what "emotional materialism" is; usually the charge has been that Atheism was too cold and left no room for emotion—or the clergy; but we rather like the "drag down" phrase—it is so Christian in its insolence. Also it offers a comment upon the capacity for lying that these Christians exhibit. One moment they tell us that Atheism has no stand in this country, which is lie number one, then they tell lie number two that the country is being drawn down to Atheism. Unfortunately, that is not the case; the British public has not yet raised itself to the intellectual level of Atheism. The existence of the Bishop and his kind proves it. One day better things may happen.

The Bishop was, of course, in dead earnest. His position was at stake. But Mr. Churchill recently treated the belief in God with a sarcasm that some may take with utmost seriousness. He was interviewed the other day by Dr. Spelman, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York. Of this interview the Archbishop says:—

"The question of religion came up. Mr. Churchill said he is a man of faith. He believes that Almighty God has saved England in several situations. Notably he remarked the failure of the Germans to follow up their success at Dunkirk, the calm sea which prevailed for the first day in many weeks."

Now, whether Mr. Churchill used these words, or whether the Archbishop used them for him, we cannot say with certainty. But taking the report to be true there can be no doubt that the Prime Minister was simply pulling the Archbishop's leg. Dr. Spelman lacks a sense of humour.

Whatever opinion one may have of Churchill no one will accuse him of being half-witted. In that Battle of Dunkirk we lost several thousand fighting men. The men were gunned from aeroplanes all the time the remnants of the army were making their escape. If the officers in command could have saved all the men, but preferred to save only a few, they would have been court-martialled and shot. And Churchill knew better than to suggest that Dunkirk occurred in order to enable the Germans to take the whole of France and so prolong the war. God has come out very badly in this war, and Churchill knows it. It is a pity that the Archbishop has not a quicker sense of humour. He cannot see a joke even when he comes across one.

The "Church Times" suffers a continual soreness because the B.B.C. will persist in treating it as though it was just a Christian denomination. But that is exactly what it is. Even the more (world) powerful Roman Catholic Church is just a

"sect." The Christian world is split up into a number of sects having in common just one thing—that of each calling itself Christian. Even in a single country there is a collection of sects—High Church, Low Church, Methodists, etc., etc. They are a living illustration of the fact that this divine revelation was so given that no one can be quite certain what it really means. If God has another revelation to give humanity we suggest that He should employ a couple of capable journalists to put into plain language what it is He means. The present revelation is just a mess.

The "Church Times" is also disturbed by the fact that no clergymen have been invited to sit on the Royal Commission on Population. Why should there be? The priest or parson has no special information on the subject and therefore can have no authoritative information to impart. The Catholic Church, with its celibate priesthood, will advocate unlimited babies—quality will not enter into their calculation. And, as clergymen, we do not know that other ministers of religion are better informed than laymen. They will judge everything from the clerical point of view, and that does not promise anything of real value.

What has happened to the Pope? Or, what has happened to the celestial powers behind the Pope? Why does he shiver and tremble at the probability, or even the possibility, that either the soldiers of the Axis or those of the Allied Nations may shatter St. Peter's, the chief Christian church? Time was when in such a situation God's chief minister on earth would have dared the armies to go to such an extreme of desecration. He would in the name of God have dared anyone to perpetrate such an act; and it is to God that the Pope would have appealed to vindicate his justice and scatter his enemies. But instead of this we find published in the British newspapers, and presumably in those of other nations in the war an appeal not to indulge in such a blasphemous act. Standing in the balcony of St. Peter's, he ignores God and says: "We implore all who have the means at their disposal to come to our aid." And as though to emphasise that it is of little use to wait for God to do anything against modern explosives, he adds to his pitiful appeal the significant sentence: "When hard facts dispel all illusion and hope, we cry for help."

Nothing like this has ever occurred in the history of the Church. While it looked as though the Allied Forces might never reach Rome, or that some agreement might be made with regard to respecting God's principal caravansary and world-famed showroom, man's pigmy efforts were sneered at, and the chief priest went his way praying and fasting—in private—and imploring people to put their faith in God. But now the game is up and the Pope, placed where he is by the grace of God and endowed with the power to "bind and loose," falls back upon an appeal to the people and tells them that "hard facts" have "dispelled" all hope of heavenly help. How have the mighty fallen!

But it is worthy of note that in spite of the desperate situation in which the Papacy stands, the business side of the sacred ramp is not completely overlooked. For we learn that a decree has been issued permitting the use, after Maundy Thursday, of oils that would ordinarily be burned during Holy Week. The Pope will explain to God the reason for not finding fresh oil for two minor sacred services.

All things considered, our second-class popes cannot afford to sneer at the want of religious action of the Pope in Rome. For one would have expected that with so much talk of a second front it would have at least paid God the compliment of another day of national prayer. It is true that previous days of prayer did not bring anything worth bothering about, and even God—in spite of Mr. Churchill's compliment (or was it sarcasm?) about God's guidance—might feel a little ashamed about Dunkirk. Still, it will not do to win the war without having grounds for thanking God for what he did. Worshipping God is not on account of what he has done, but what his followers expect him to do now and in the future.

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**E. WATSON.**—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible. We are getting back to our old form. Dying is the last thing we shall do.

**L. A.**—King's Regulations is quite clear on that point. You are entitled to be registered as following any religious system that exists, or to decline the lot and to be registered as being without any religion. We suggest that you apply to your superior on the matter. If you do not get your way, let us know, and we will place the matter before the proper authorities. It is a disgrace—but not a religious one—that a soldier should be robbed of his legal rights for the benefit of the clergy.

**G. GALE.**—We cannot say that the *official standard* of education in Church schools is lower than in State schools. But, with some exceptions, the equipments are lower, the buildings are poorer, and the teachers are not of so good a type. It is, in fact, one of the common cries of Church schools that they cannot compete with State schools where equipment is concerned.

The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of £10 from Commander C. Draper to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

Will those of our readers who kindly send us items of news to be used in these columns be good enough to give the name and date of the paper from which they are taken. We are obliged to set many cuttings on one side because this information is not given.]

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

TO-DAY (March 26) Mr. Chapman Cohen will be lecturing in the Bradford Mechanics Institute, Town Hall Square. His subject is "Christianity, What Is it?" The chair will be taken at 6-30 p.m., and there are a few reserved seats at 1s. A good attendance is expected not only from Bradford but also from the surrounding districts.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti's meeting in the Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow, was successful in every way. A good audience followed the lecture closely, and took full advantage of question time. The staff at the bookstall were kept busy attending to demands, and the local saints looked well pleased with the evening. Undesirable spirit companions may have influenced the one discourteous opponent. We congratulate Mr. Rosetti on having so successful a meeting. We know from a lengthy experience that a Scots audience very quickly discriminates between a good lecture and a merely passable one.

The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will hold its meeting to-day (March 26) in new premises. Mrs. T. Millington will give a reading from Colonel R. G. Ingersoll in the I.L.P., Room No. 13, John Bright Street, corner of Station Street, Birmingham, at 6-30 p.m., after which questions and discussion will follow. The local branch is fortunate in having an energetic secretary in Mr. C. H. Smith, and a full house will be the best form of encouragement to give him and his branch.

All Freethinkers interested in the future work of the Bristol and District Branch N.S.S. are invited to attend a meeting on Monday, April 3 at 21, Richmond Hill, Clifton, Bristol 8 (off Victoria Rooms bus stop), at 7-30 p.m.

The following letter reaches us from Mr. C. A. Morrison, one of our regular readers. It is taken from the "Wembley News."

"Frequently during the hearing of court cases witnesses carelessly read the oath, and as a consequence have to repeat it.

At Hendon on Monday a case was interrupted in a rather unusual manner. One of the witnesses was a Buddhist by belief, and when called upon to take the oath declined, saying he objected to taking an oath on the Bible, and that he merely wished to affirm. It was explained that the magistrates must be satisfied that a witness either had no religion or the taking of the oath was contrary to the witness's religion. After a slight delay the witness stood down while the position was clarified. The next witness to be called was of the Jewish faith, and here again the procedure is slightly different from the normal oath-taking.

When the first witness's turn came law books had been produced and quoted from, but there still appeared to be a hitch, and a third witness gave his evidence.

Eventually agreement was reached when the Buddhist gave the oath in his own language, but only after further law books had been consulted."

These cases are constantly cropping up but, it should be said, only in the petty courts, probably because in the higher ones there is a better acquaintance with the law and a greater desire for justice. And we must again say that in our judgment such incidents are largely due to those Freethinkers who are afraid of arousing prejudice if they proclaim themselves without religion. The religious clauses of the present Education Bill are a clear exhibition of what happens when minorities do not take advantage of asserting their rights for which men and women have struggled so much. Those who wish to affirm, in place of swearing, should decline to enter into any argument. The court is empowered to put one question only—"On what ground," and the witness may reply in one or two ways: "I have no religious belief" or "It is against my religious conviction," and he should decline, respectfully, any further questioning.

The gentleman who sends us the information concerning the oath also sends us the following letter:—

"The following extract may also interest you. It is taken from the District Commissioner's Report, High Wycombe and District Boy Scouts. (This is not from the 'Wembley News.') 'Baden-Powell regarded Scouting and Scout laws as a practical expression of Christianity, which would prepare the way for a more devotional religion when a boy reached the impressionable age of young manhood.'

Again:—

The Scout Promise: Duty to God. The view of Imperial Headquarters about our promise is given in the following extract from the official pamphlet entitled 'Deep Sea Scouts': 'First and foremost must come a really challenging consideration for the first part of the Promise. From our faithfulness about this will come the strength and inspiration for everything else. Every Scout must be sure of just where he stands in the matter. *Scouting embraces all religions, but has no place for the man who has none*, or for the man who is not prepared to do his best to make his faith and religious practice a compelling force in his life. The rest of the Promise, with the Law, points the way to put one's religion into practice, and to direct the fruits of our times of prayer and worship into effective living for others.' (My italics.)"

That also is an illustration of the various ways in which active Christians use discreditable methods to push a creed which, more than others, practises dishonesty and unfairness as though they belonged to the most precious of human virtues. If parents—whether religious or non-religious—wish their boys to grow up with self-respect and with a sense of the value of honest dealing and independence, keep them away from the Boy Scouts. They will grow up better men for having realised early in life the value of independent thought and speech.

## SOME CELEBRATED SONGS

## II.

IT would be unfair to omit a reference to some of the many tributes to the behaviour of the French officers and men which were recorded by the Protestant Bishop of Killalla, in whose castle the former billeted themselves. In his diary the good Bishop Stock wrote: "It would be an act of the greatest injustice to the excellent discipline constantly maintained by the invaders, that with every temptation to plunder . . . not a single particle of private property was ever carried away. And so scrupulous was the delicacy of the French not to disturb the female part of the house, that not one was ever seen to go higher than the middle floor."

Moreover, when General Humbert and his officers were returning to France, the former wrote as follows to his quondam host. After expressing his regret that the chances of war had obliged him to disturb his domestic happiness, he went on to say: "Too happy if in returning into my country I can flatter myself that I have acquired any claim to your esteem. Independently of other reasons which I have for loving and esteeming you . . . your good officers will demand my gratitude."

Of an officer named Colonel Charost the Bishop said: "Had we lost this worthy man by such an accident, his death would have spoiled the whole relish of our present enjoyment." This was in reference to an error made by a Highland soldier, who shot at this officer, being unaware that he had surrendered. The correct behaviour of the Bishop's uninvited guests and their men indicates the superior discipline of Napoleon's armies at that time.

Other songs, some of a later date, but all of similar significance, are "The Wearing of the Green," "The Croppy Boy," "Who Fears to Speak of '98" and "A Nation Once Again."

The fine sea songs of Charles Dibdin were written at that momentous time when Napoleon had assembled his invasion flotilla at Boulogne and Wimereux. There from his column, unless our bombs have destroyed it, the Emperor in effigy still surveys the Straits he dared not tempt—for Nelson intervened.

"At the express desire of Mr. Pitt's Ministry, Dibdin put himself to an expense of more than £600, by quitting highly lucrative engagements and opening his theatre (in Leicester Square) in a hot July, where he was instructed to write, sing, publish and give away what were termed War Songs." His enthusiastic response to this request was ill rewarded by a pension of £200 a year, and even this pittance was withdrawn by a succeeding Ministry—when danger had passed.

Dibdin composed the music of most of those famous songs, others were the work of John Braham, our greatest vocalist, whose singing of "Then Farewell my Trim-built Wherry," "The Jolly Young Waterman" and "Wapping Old Stairs" (which Colonel Newcome rendered "with trills and roulades in the Inledon manner"), my parents used often to recall as a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

"The Arethusa" is another of the old sea songs that must not be forgotten. The "Saucy Arethusa" distinguished herself in the memorable encounter with a French ship named "La Belle Poule," where:—

"On deck five hundred men did dance,  
The stoutest they could find in France;  
While our two hundred did advance  
On board the Arethusa."

The Arethusa fought "till not a stick would stand," and finally drove the enemy ashore on the coast of France.

This song was written by Prince Hoare who, it may be recalled, was the author of the once popular ballad, "No Song, No Supper" and "Little Taffline" (Dickens wrote "Tafflin"), which the future Mrs. Micawber sung so delectably.

Despite climatic conditions, hardship, poverty and John Knox, Scotland has, for its size, given birth to more minor poets than any other country, and of women poets far more—to its Transcendental Genius it is unnecessary to refer.

It is, however, to the Jacobite songs that we must turn when assessing the appeal of Caledonian minstrelsy at a fateful time. They chronicle the enthusiasm with which the Cause was upheld by chief and by churl and express a romantic devotion to the person of a beloved and unfortunate Prince. Some of these assert adherence to the Prince and scorn of the usurper quite frankly; others are veiled by innuendo and sly allusion.

Among the former are the evergreen favourites:—

"'Twas on a Monday morning, right early in the year,  
That Charlie came to our town, the young Chevalier,  
And Charlie he's my darling, my darling, my darling,  
And Charlie he's my darling, the young Chevalier,"

"The White Cockade," "The Sow's Tail to Geordie," "The Tears of Scotland," and who can hear unmoved the pathetic appeal of "Lassie Lie Near Me"? Some having a more recondite appeal are "The Blackbird":—

"I will go, a stranger to peril and danger,  
My heart is so loyal in every degree;  
For he's constant and kind, and courageous in mind.  
Good luck to my Blackbird, wherever he be,"

"Somebody," "My Bonny Moorhen" and "The Wind Has Blown my Plaid Away."

Several songs of a somewhat later date are for ever enshrined in the history of Scottish verse. Two, "Will ye no' Come Back Again?" and "Charlie is My Darling," were written by Miss Oliphant (Lady Nairn), and the former is still sung at the departure of a guest whom Scotland has delighted to honour.

The authoress was the child of a house which had given many devoted adherents to the cause of Charles Edward, in whose honour she was christened Carolina. Her grandfather was "out" in the '15 and '45, and her father in the latter rising, when he was with the Prince at Culloden and had converse with him at the close of that fatal day.

Others are that beautiful "lament," "The Flowers of the Forest" and "Lochaber No More"; to their music Scottish hearts still vibrate the world over.

In taking leave of these songs, we may recall Byron's witty and non-committal lines:—

"God bless the King, I mean the faith's defender;  
God bless—no harm in blessing—the pretender,  
But who pretender is, or who is king,  
God bless us all, is quite another thing."

Edinburgh was formerly the home of many adherents to the Stewart cause—there may be some yet. Some 65 years ago it was my privilege to be presented to a venerable lady who lived in one of the old houses in a once fashionable part of the city; she was aged 92 and had been in her youth acquainted with many persons intimately associated with the momentous affairs of the '45. There was an elegance of manner and a quiet dignity about this adherent to a long-lost cause that, young as I was, left an impression which has never faded. Among her old-fashioned surroundings she seemed remote from events of the day and to breathe the air of:—

Teacup—times of hood and hoop,  
And when the patch was worn.

In conclusion, it may be said that song has ever been a medium for the expression of our joys, our sorrows, and our aspirations. A German poet of other times, and other manners, sung of:—

Drei freundliche sterne,  
Sie heissen Lied, Liebe und Wein.

And Moore's lines remind us of the influence of two of these auspicious stars, for:—

Tho' love and song may fail, alas,  
To keep life's clouds away,  
At least 'twill make them lighter pass,  
Or gild them if they stay.

EDGAR SYERS.

**A WHOLE DAY FOR PRAYER**

There was glory in Greece without Christ;  
The Romans for him did not care.  
But in England  
His followers, apochryphal swallows,  
Are urging a whole day for prayer.  
The Russians advance without God;  
The Chinese Confucius prefer.  
But in England  
God's minions, with purblind opinions,  
Are urging a whole day for prayer.  
Troops fight for weeks without rest;  
Workers the time-off can't spare.  
But in England  
The devoted, with Te Deum quoted,  
Are urging a whole day for prayer.

S. B. W.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**JEFFERSON OR PAINE?**

Sir,—In a recent issue of "The Freethinker" it is stated that "Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence." This claim can be found in many books on America, but the following extract from "Modern Thinkers," published in Chicago, 1880, with an introduction by Colonel Ingersoll, tells quite a different story. Here is the extract:

"The claim that Paine was the real author of the Declaration of Independence is much better founded. I am inclined to think that he actually wrote it, but whether this is true or not, every idea contained in it had been written by him long before. It is now claimed that the original document is in Paine's handwriting. It certainly is not in Jefferson's. Certain it is that Jefferson could not have written anything so manly, so striking, so comprehensive, so clear, so convincing, and so faultless in rhetoric and rhythm as the Declaration of Independence." . . . Paine was the first man to write the 'The United States of America.' He was the first great champion of absolute separation from England; the first man to urge the adoption of a Federal Constitution, and more clearly than any other man of his time he perceived the future greatness of America."—Yours, etc.,  
JOSEPH CLOSE.

**A CORRECTION.**

Sir,—May I take this opportunity to correct T. D. Smith's assertion that Kingsley wrote: "The Church is the opium of the people."

Charles Kingsley was the son of a clergyman, and was himself ordained in the Church of England in 1842. He became successively Canon of Chester and of Westminster, and consequently it is incongruent to suppose that he should make such an observation. The true source of this pertinent remark is, I believe, in the works of Karl Marx.

While writing to you I feel you might be interested in yet another attempt of the Church to thrust its superstitions down the throats of youth.

Being a member of the Air Training Corps, I find that the C.O., in answer to a circular which is sent to every unit, thought fit to elect a padre, and he will presumably make regular visits on our parade evenings. So far I have not had the opportunity to ascertain the nature of his activities, but I am determined that should he attempt any sermonising, his efforts shall not pass without protest.—Yours, etc.,  
A. DURBAND.

**"UNFORTUNATE DIFFERENCES"**

Sir,—One passage in the interminable wrangles of Mr. Butler's Education Bill should not pass unnoticed in the heretical Press. When Mr. Astor suggested that a child should not be forced to take part in a religious service in which he did not believe, Mr. Chuter Ede, Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Education, replied: "I hope we shall postpone as long as possible the introduction to the child mind of those things on which we unfortunately differ." This, surely, provides a perfect argument for Secular Education.—Yours, etc.,  
JOHN ROWLAND.

**OBITUARY**

**HERBERT WILLIAM BARTLETT**

We regret to announce the death of Herbert William Bartlett, which took place on March 13 in his 57th year. The immediate cause of death was cancer, although he had been a sufferer from neurasthenia for a number of years. Independent in thought and action, orthodox beliefs lost all attraction for him. He was a lover of nature, of humanitarianism, and an affectionate figure in his domestic circle. Our sympathy is expressed to his wife and family.

The remains were cremated in the South London (Streatham Park) Crematorium on March 16, where before an assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was conducted by the General Secretary, N.S.S.  
R. H. R.

**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. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.: "The History of Morals—(I.) The Ancient World."

**COUNTRY—INDOOR**

Birmingham Branch, N.S.S. (I.L.P. Room 13, 38, John Bright Street, corner of Station Street.—Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Mrs. T. MILLINGTON: "A Reading from Colonel R. G. Ingersoll."

Blackburn Branch, N.S.S. (Public Lecture Halls, Northgate, Blackburn).—Sunday, 3 15 p.m. Mr. JOSEPH McCABE: "The Papacy and the War."

Bradford Branch, N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN: "Christianity—What Is it?"

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. James W. TAYLOR: "The Brave New World."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. E. HARRY HASSELL: "Christianity and the Child."

"QUESTIONS and ANSWERS" (Everyman's Brains Trust) can accept a few more Annual Subscribers for the duration. Specimen copy 7d. post free, from Editor, at 35, Doughty Street, London, W.C.1 (top floor).

"THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH." By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

"MISTAKES OF MOSES." By R. G. INGERSOLL. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

## LOOKING FORWARD

NOTHING is more inimical to spryness of mind than the hoard of apothegms and proverbs that we accumulate. Conjuring up, at some juncture, an all-too-familiar alembication of antique thought, we are easily beguiled into a lazy acceptance of it as adequate ready-made commentary or explanation. And even if, on the other hand, we smartly repudiate the mischievous words as they rise to our lips, we may thus engender contempt for something worthy of closer inspection. "All's fair," we may for instance find ourselves saying, or trying not to say, "in love and war"—and do we then ever pause to consider the far-reaching implications of that avowal in the domains of psychology, sociology and international affairs? Or take that endless straggle of quotations on Time—significantly apostrophised through the ages as a living creature, from Omar's "Fluttering Bird" to the recent "Gypsy Man"—and despite them all, how sketchy is our understanding of the queer matrix embedding past—present—future. Fascinating subject! Let us here "upon this bank and shoal of time" jump the tags and saws of time and look to—well, not to time itself, which is too huge a topic, but to—the future.

Willy-nilly, however, we must first touch upon the relation of to-morrow to to-day and yesterday. We, in the present, are agglomerates of thoughts, sensations and actions, each of which is in firm bondage to the past and the future. One set of bonds extends into our personal histories and then away beyond into the history of the race, of life as a whole, of the very universe. The other set, obscure but no less in strength, links to all that is yet to happen. Largely unconscious of bondage, we exist between the sets and know only the ever-changing transiency that is the present. Nevertheless, observing the constant transition of future into past and relying on clock-time, we can ratiocinate the present out of reality and describe it as an abstract point of intersection. Bergson persuasively argued that change quā change is the reality of realities. Nowness as a mental concept has an insistence and yet a subtlety and elusiveness that defies verbalisation: Virginia Woolf has perhaps best conveyed the atmosphere.

Futurity lends itself to a rough trisection into the immediate or "unconscious," the later-to-be-lived-in and the remote. By the immediate future I mean the approaching seconds, tumbling unobtrusively through nowness to the past. Our awareness of this future is slight because we anticipate it: we automatically predict the content of the seconds as they flow in. I take up the ends of my shoe-lace confident that the immediate future will be occupied by my tying them together. And so on. Experience has, of course, taught me that such predictions are not infallible, and indeed, in some circumstances—at certain moments during an air raid, for example—I am acutely aware of contingency. But on the whole my life, probably all animal life, depends for its existence on prevision of the immediate future.

The later-to-be-lived-in future, extending from, say, a few minutes hence to some years ahead, is progressively uncertain. It is the mould that gives form to our current thoughts and actions. Into its tantalising regions we project our hopes and plans. We contemplate it, or parts of it, now with confidence, now with trepidation, occasionally with excitement and rarely (vide suicide statistics) with horror. This future, too, has the special distinction of being the hunting ground of the undying race of fortune-tellers and prophets. The historical fact that the incidence of success in their predictions is quite fantastically low is apparently no deterrent. The secret is, I suppose, that their triumphs are so rare that the publicity value of each is correspondingly great.

The meagre attention given to the logic of prediction must have contributed to the common ignorance of the implications

of a prophetic announcement. To my mind the only tenable mechanism of "seeing into the future" is this: that certain individuals may have a subconscious extra-sensory knowledge of a mass of phenomena outside their normal ken and are able, again subconsciously, to extrapolate to probable future interactions of causal chains perceived in the phenomena. Any resultant prophecy would thus be a probability, the strength of which depended on two factors: firstly, the comprehensiveness of the prophet's insight, and secondly, the repercussions of the actual formulation of the prophecy. This second factor is at a minimum when the prophecy concerns events beyond human control—such as, for example, an earthquake. It is at a maximum when only personal behaviour is involved. If I were the world's most successful seer and I predicted your being killed in a train crash, it lies in your power to confound me by eschewing railways for the rest of your life. And as you travelled the future by road, carefully avoiding the level-crossings and passing gingerly over the railway bridges, you would not, I hope, be led into the error of believing that by saving your skin to help to prove the impossibility of exact prediction you were at the same time splitting the foundations of determinism. For a few moments' reflection will show that this hypothesis of prediction falls as easily into the ambit of a deterministic theory as a pauper into sin.

A peculiar interest attaches to the last division of futurity. The idea of a remote future, of almost limitless extension and witnessing profound and, we hope, salutary changes in man and his civilisation, is a comparatively new phenomenon. As recently as 200 years ago only a handful of the most advanced thinkers in Europe toyed with such a concept. The classical peoples were obsessed with mankind's decay or believed with Pythagoras in a cyclical advance and decay. Christian thought introduced the spectre of the imminence of a grand cataclysmic finale. And throughout history an analogy between the youth, maturity and senility of man and of mankind has been curiously and persistently attractive. The last important derivative of this was Rousseau's arcadian savage (who in our own day can be seen in such diverse settings as the gospel according to D. H. Lawrence and the fatuous advertisements of a patent food). Fontenelle's ridicule of this analogy was one of the early signs of a change of outlook on the future of mankind—a future which his contemporary Saint-Pierre daringly advanced to thousands of years of progressive human betterment. From then onward views of this genre claimed an expanding discipleship, began to infiltrate into political theory and eventually, in the middle of last century, tied up with evolution and industrialisation. One significant effect of this change was the transference of Utopias from distant but contemporary sites to the whole world of to-morrow. The fervour that accompanied this removal is now difficult to recapture: to re-read Wells's Utopian romances or Bellamy's "Looking Backward," is to find oneself rather envious of their cocksureness. In the wilderness of the 20th century we are tempted to doubt. Yet doubt and despair are themselves more noxious than their causes, and with a "Get thee behind me, cynic," we turn with relief to observe the Republican candidate for the U.S. presidency writing "One World", and an aristocratic British Premier hobnobbing with Comrade Stalin. Could Bellamy in his own period have found anything like so bright a pointer to the remote future?

N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

**PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.** By CHAPMAN COHEN: "What is the Use of Prayer?" "Atheism." "Deity and Design." "Did Jesus Christ Exist?" "Agnosticism or...?" "Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live." "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.