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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

An Old Story

WE have always suspected the absolute value of the old saying—that truth is mighty and will prevail. It is obvious that some proportion of truth will always prevail, or the human race would cease to exist. Nature has a rough-and-ready reply to those who cannot or will not pay a certain amount of obedience to necessary facts. It simply wipes them out. Trust in God was very strong in the old Cromwellian days; the dominant maxim was "Trust in the Lord," but it was accompanied with the advice, "Keep your powder dry." Mr. Churchill has over and over again said that God is on our side, but he also drives home the lesson that we must put every ounce of effort into our work if we are to beat Germany. The bitterest pill that the clergy in this country have had to face was an alliance with "Atheist Russia," but the common comment to-day is: "What would have happened if we had Russia against us instead of with us, or if she had stood aside?" Christians may believe that God will cure the sick, but the Christian, when sick, calls in a doctor in case of accident. Safeguards taken, we may leave the rest to God. In other words, we may play the fool so long as our folly is not taken too seriously.

The truth here is that the average man prefers to walk along familiar paths, and whether these beaten roads are "spiritual" or "material" does not seriously affect the truth of our generalisation. The lie that the safety of a people is dependent upon this or that political party; the social lie that the stability of a community depends upon the maintenance of a privileged class, or that we must look to the perpetuation of "public" schools for efficient "leaders"; the nonsensical theory that a priesthood, of some sort, is indispensable to the maintenance of decency, these and other "vital lies"—to borrow a phrase from that charming, but too-little-read writer "Vernon Lee"—flourish generation after generation as though they were the foundations of society, without which civilisation would come to a rather "sticky" end. It is true that "truth" is never absent from the stage, but it makes its appearance with such timidity that it invites neglect and ill-treatment, while a lie confronts us with all the confidence of established strength.

But of all lies the religious lie is the most persistent. It is the easiest to establish and the hardest to disprove. Religious lies are not subtle, perhaps for the reason that they are not manufactured either by or for subtle minds. If they have been most prominent during the regime of Christianity, it is only fair to say that the Christian Church as a whole has fought for existence under harder conditions than ancient paganism. Pre-Christian religious beliefs developed mainly as a natural product of the environment. The religious beliefs that after came into existence were natural, inevit-

able products. But when Christianity came upon the scene it had to face a situation that had already marched a considerable distance along the scientific road. It had to choose between alternatives—one that was suicidal, the other which involved lusty lying on a gigantic scale. Historically, it took the latter course. It established itself as the champion of the crudest, the most ancient of primitive superstitions. It had to lie to live, and to suppress the better learning as a condition of its own survival. It was fitting that the period in which the Christian Church was strongest should be summarised under the heading of "Dark Ages"; and that the awakening of Europe should be marked as a rebirth of the ancient wisdom of pagan and Roman culture. History has an interesting method of asserting itself.

Vital Lies

One of the oldest "vital lies" of the Christian Church was concerned with the life and death of those who deliberately rejected Christianity—or on a lower level neglected it. Both kinds seemed to get along very well without religion, which merely added to their wickedness. So Christian leaders very obligingly drew up a list of weaknesses and infamies which every good Atheist would refer to and carry out. One of these was the wicked Atheist who openly defied God; the other was the Atheist who repented his sins when too late for repentance. Both of these kinds of Atheists were well to the front when we first became interested in the nature and quality of Christian propaganda, although the first has practically died out, and the second exists only by implication. This fact made us the more surprised to find only a few days ago the Rev. Barbara Thomas, a preacher of the Unitarian Church, reviving the old story that Charles Bradlaugh stood up before a "mass meeting" and challenged God to prove his existence by striking him dead. It was a ridiculous lie, and I am afraid that Bradlaugh took the accusation too seriously; but I must confess that I did not expect this particular lie to be resurrected in a Unitarian chapel, which was once regarded as a retreat for Atheists who, lacked the courage openly to proclaim themselves without a God. G. W. Foote's retort to the Unitarian who said to him, "But you will admit that Unitarianism is a half-way couch for Atheists to rest on," was, "Yes, but most of you Unitarians go to sleep on it." And after all I could never see on what logical ground the belief in one God could be claimed to be higher than belief in three. I admit that one boil on the back of the neck is better than two or three boils. But after all they are all boils. It is a question of quality, rather than quantity, that is on the carpet. And actually one would think that a family God sitting there with his son and a "holy" ghost, which may be more tangible than an ordinary one, provides the nucleus of a family party which would make heaven a little more tempting than it is at present. Unitarianism

does not appear to develop very much. As it is, it raises no vital issue and solves no real problem. To use Foote's simile, it serves only as a couch on which the traveller sinks into a perpetual sleep instead of indulging in a nap and then concluding his journey. After all, the Christian God, theoretically, does something. But the Unitarian God, as defined by Miss Thomas, appears to do nothing but exist, and mere existence must cover the dullest and the most irritating thing that one can conceive.

God and His Sinners

Of course, there is nothing new in this challenge to God. But the challenge was generally, as in the case of Prometheus, in the interest of mankind. The Christian version was of a more selfish, or at least more individual, quality. The best pagan fights with God were of a less selfish fashion than that which emerged under Christian influences. Christianity took hold of a position which displayed some degree of dignity and transformed it to the level of a tavern squabble. Polytheism has, naturally, usually been more tolerant than Monotheism, and never offered so bastard a character as Christianity created. It is also worth noting that the "wicked Atheist" did not gain a commanding position during the earlier Christian centuries. The Christian "Reformation" of the sixteenth century seems to have developed the figure very rapidly. The growth of dissent in this country in the seventeenth century gave it a fillip; it was at its strongest during the eighteenth and the larger part of the nineteenth, and then declined about the eighties of the last century. To-day it marks—at least in an open and courageous way—a plain retrogression, even to leading Christians, to a very low level.

I have a fair collection of this class of pamphlets and booklets, and they all run along the same lines. They begin with the child evading its prayers o' nights, and proceed to its running away from Sunday school (this is largely a Nonconformist phrase). Later he collects a number of wicked companions, plays cards, frequents taverns, begins to read the wicked works of Paine and Voltaire, etc., neglects his wife and children, and finally dies shrieking for Jesus to save him, with the devil standing in a corner waiting to carry him off to hell.

In fairness it should be said that all did not run the full course. Many repented in good time—while they were still hearty enough to take on the character of a saved sinner. They were cute enough to find Jesus when no other course was open to them. Travelling from place to place, often with a percentage of the collections paid them, at other times with a guaranteed fee, they related their villainies—the greater and more important; and scores of young people must have longed for so sinful a career rounded off with so brilliant and so profitable a finale.

I wish to be quite clear and fair—the Freethought case is too strong not to give the Christian plenty of rope. So I do not wish it to be assumed that Freethinkers are all impeccable, as against Christians, who are either rogues or fools. Far from that, we affirm that Freethinkers are to be found who are no better than the average Christian. I have known Atheists who were liars, or drunkards, neglected their family, who have been ready to sell honour in order to secure a profitable "political career," or to sell themselves for a title; in short, who have behaved just as though they had been brought up in Christian homes and

were regular attendants at church or chapel. In fact, I deny that Christians have a monopoly of vice, as I deny they have a monopoly of virtue. Christians form a very generous proportion of bad characters, but we cannot grant them a monopoly. They have their share of criminals, as they will realise if they will study the lives of our prison inmates, but they have no justification for claiming a monopoly.

Nevertheless, there is a scientific, a sociological reason why heretics in general are likely to move on a higher level of conduct than do the orthodox—whether we take the orthodox in religion or orthodoxy as a whole. The heretic is one of a minority, or he would not be a heretic. He therefore carries with him a guarantee of his sincerity—mark, I say his sincerity, not his being in the right. He might be palpably wrong; that makes no difference to the generalisation. The Archbishop of Canterbury may be as honest as a sucking curate, but I have no guarantee of the fact while he holds the highest theological post in England with a large salary and a prominence he would never have secured had he been just a man in an ordinary position.

We see illustrations of this in every direction. The man who solemnly jumps to his feet and bares his head at the first bars of "God Save the King" may feel deeply that in some mysterious way the King, any King, is essential to the well-being of the country. But if one looks at these devout men and women, the overwhelming impression is just boredom, and a few bars is as much as the average audience will stand. On the contrary, a man who will not stand up because he does not believe in electing rulers centuries before they are born runs a risk of having to pay for daring to have an opinion on such a matter. One day when our heresies become orthodoxes we shall still find the same situation manifested. Human nature, as I have so often said, varies but little in its modes, but it does alter in the way those qualities are expressed. Perhaps that is what we mean, or ought to mean, when we talk about progress—the same human nature expressing itself on higher levels.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE LONG DARK CONTINENT

DR. JULIAN HUXLEY'S "Africa View" (Chatto and Windus) brilliantly illuminates East Africa, with its various vexed problems. He stresses the brevity of his stay in Africa, which occupied sixteen weeks only. Yet this acute scientific observer devoted all his energies to his task of studying and reflecting over African affairs. As his informative and well-illustrated volume demonstrates, his intimate relations with African experts, and his extensive acquaintance with the literature dealing with the once Dark Continent, enabled him to master more in a few weeks than the average tourist in a generation.

Ever animated by a broad humanism, Dr. Huxley's conclusions merit attention. His range is wide, and his fine descriptions of African flora and fauna, the varied phenomena of native life and their impact on Colonial administration are both striking and suggestive.

The area embraced by Huxley's volume is, he observes, "the Colony of Kenya, the Protectorates of Uganda and Zanzibar and the mandated Territory of Tanganyika." These have an area of over 680,000 square miles—nearly eight times that of Great Britain—and a population now probably numbering over 11,000,000. Of these 11,000,000 only about 30,000 are Europeans.

and about 100,000 Arabs, Indians and Goans; the rest, some 99 per cent., are native Africans.

Among the many complicated problems confronting the European authorities is that of the tsetse fly, one of the worst curses of East Africa. Two-thirds of Tanganyika is infested with this pestilent insect, and its range increases. Kenya seems free from the scourge, but it threatens Rhodesia and Nyasaland and remains a serious problem in Uganda.

Tsetse is more malevolent than the malaria mosquito, for we gather that, when the tsetse fly "appears at the border of native cultivation and a few cattle grow sick, the people generally take to flight, desert their homes, drive their beasts away in search of a fly-free country, and in a few years there is no trace of cultivation." The bush soon invades the earlier clearings and furnishes an ideal breeding-place for the tsetse, from which it extends its dominion over new territory.

The tsetse sucks the blood of both wild and domestic animals; and there are several varieties of these pests. One remedy is to clear the bush in which they breed, but in areas as large as France this is impossible. Local clearings, however, may be made, and the reclaimed soil placed under cultivation. Many experiments have been conducted to lessen the evil, and perhaps in the long run science may solve the difficulty.

Opinions differ concerning the advisability of exercising direct or indirect rule in East Africa. Sir Donald Cameron was anxious that Huxley should witness the latter system in operation. As Huxley intimates, "The principle of direct rule is that native peoples are to be administered, their taxes collected, their disputes settled, their schools and hospitals, seed farms and irrigation works and other social and economic services provided, all by the interposition of the Central Government, working through agents directly appointed by it.

"Indirect rule," on the other hand, continues Huxley, "means the employment of the existing institutions of the country for all possible purposes for which they are adequate, their gradual moulding into channels of progressive change, and the encouragement within the widest limits of local traditions, local pride and local initiative, and so of the greatest possible freedom and variety of local development within the territory."

Lord Lugard was the first successful promoter of this latter principle in Nigeria, and his "Dual Mandate" is a classic on the method. But in some of the more primitive communities indirect rule is at present not workable. Still, in most parts of Tanganyika success seems assured. Huxley opines that "the development of the native inhabitants along lines fitting them to take over more and more the government of their own country" has proved far more promising than its warmest advocates anticipated. Yet, pitfalls may appear, and one native ruler appointed by the Government for indirect administration embezzled money entrusted to him.

If the purely secular services of the Missions are usually satisfactory, missionary meddling with native customs reveals much prejudice and misconception. With the Kikuyu people there is an initiatory rite for both sexes. Huxley observes that "after initiation boys and girls do not marry for some years, but in many, perhaps most, primitive tribes are allowed, and even encouraged, to enjoy considerable sexual freedom. In this tribe, however, only a modified form of sexual intercourse is allowed to the unmarried, in which physical virginity is preserved and the birth of children rendered impossible."

Apparently, the female initiatory rite was formerly performed by elderly women well skilled in their task, but now, owing to the many changes brought about by European influences, this painful operation is all too frequently performed by clumsy and incompetent practitioners.

The Church of Scotland Mission opposed the practice, which might have been modified by enlightened teaching. But the Mission's inflexible attitude "has crystallised in opposition all

the reactionary traditionalism of the tribe, and has caused the rite itself to be regarded by the more jingo section of the Kikuyu as the central symbol of their tribal patriotism."

All Kikuyu converts who upheld the rite were refused Holy Communion, and the native masters in the mission schools were called upon to pledge themselves to oppose female circumcision. Consequently, states our author, there "was a dearth of communicants and, a deal more serious, the closure of the out-schools in the big area served by the mission."

Early explorers, such as Livingstone and Burton, rendered yeoman service and promoted the opening up of Africa. The missionaries have long entrenched themselves in the continent. The Protestant and Catholic missions exercise great authority and control substantial sums of money. Many doubtless serve a progressive purpose in sustaining Western culture in savage lands. But, as Huxley suggests, while some of these missions justify their existence there is no one policy to which all subscribe.

The medical missions are invaluable, but in these science is in the ascendant. The value of the many schools for native instruction is indisputable, however much this may be lessened by the theological prepossessions of the many conflicting sects. Some bodies inculcate sanitary improvement in surroundings where this was a crying need. Also, some religious edifices possess architectural beauty. Yet, Huxley reflects, "Even those two great cathedrals at Kampola have their discouraging aspect. For there are two of them only because they are rivals. They are visible memories of the fact that Uganda was the scene of the last religious war between Christians. They are symbols of the fatal disunion of Christianity which invades Africa, divided into dozens of separate sects, each assuring the black man that it alone holds the secret of his eternal salvation—and implying, if no longer asserting, damnation to the rest. What wonder if the natives become a little bewildered at the sectarian divisions of the white man's religion!"

It is significant that the first school in which Catholics and Protestants could co-operate was founded by a native chief who deprecated intolerance. The Government schools are non-sectarian, and in some instances the Romanists have striven to separate native Catholic teachers from this heretical association. Several attempts of the secular authorities to establish toleration have been thwarted by Romanist zeal.

In Kenya, Government inspection of mission schools is restricted to those in receipt of a State grant. Therefore, "the Roman Catholics have chosen to do without the grants so that they enjoy complete freedom to teach what they like, of whatever standard they like."

This narrow sectarianism encourages fanaticism among the native Christians, whose love for one another is not pronounced. Still, Huxley seems hopeful of improvement now that prospective missionaries are being educated and attend courses of study in England before they enter Africa. Thus, they may gather "from the lips of experts the latest discoveries and ideas as regards biology and anthropology, sex education and psychology, and discuss the bearings of all these subjects on their work."

Huxley stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Leakey, who showed him their wonderful collection relating to the existence of primitive mankind in Eastern Africa. The famous cave which yielded the richest results of Leakey's investigations has added materially to our knowledge of early man's handiwork. Thousands of prehistoric tools and weapons, ornaments and other remains illustrate the activities of men who lived many millenia ago. Boneheads and obsidian instruments, so splendidly made that they are still usable, are especially noteworthy; while the remains of their human artificers have been discovered. They were of Aurignacian type and "were of great height, running to well over six feet, with huge faces, and primitive in possessing an

enormously thicker brain-box than any existing man, with a relatively smaller brain inside it."

If Britain continues to pursue its present humanist policy in Africa, the future of the Colonies and mandated territories is likely to be bright. Many British administrators are men with liberal principles, whose minds have been moulded by the beneficent influences of contemporary science and culture. They thus possess a superiority over less progressive officials who tend to view African problems too exclusively from a standpoint now out of date.

T. F. PALMER.

THE DESTRUCTION OF LIBRARIES

THE newspapers published the other day the stirring news that 100,000,000 books had been collected as a result of the great salvage drive, and they seemed particularly proud of the gallant efforts of the army of helpers who made this number possible. I have no means of finding out if the figure is correct, but I expect that it is not far from the truth. A few thousand of these books have been found to be of more or less rarity and saved for our libraries, and some millions have also been put aside to replenish libraries which have been wholly or partially destroyed as a result of bombing. Some more millions have been sent to Service men all over the world, and we know that the ultimate fate of these books is the incinerator. All the rest will be or are being turned to necessary use in our armament factories.

It is passing strange, but throughout the ages there seems to have been a passion for destroying books. Take, for example, the famous Alexandrine Library, which contained the greatest number of books ever collected in ancient times. It was gathered together by Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, who died about 284 B.C.; and who wrote a life of the great conqueror, greatly admired for its authenticity and fine writing—a work of which not one copy has come down to us. It is said that there were 700,000 volumes in the Alexandrine Library, nearly all of them the original, not copies. Such a collection must have been priceless, for Ptolemy and his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, ransacked the then known world for the treasures of literature. They managed to add the complete collection of the public library of Athens, established about 550 B.C., which had been taken to Persia by Xerxes and later returned, and to which Aristotle joined his own collection.

It was under the reign of the second Ptolemy that the Jews of Alexandria, who formed a large colony, persuaded him to have the Hebrew Bible translated in Greek. The version known as the "Septuagint" is the result, but how far the current story of the way the translation was made is true we have no means of knowing. It is probably quite untrue.

This great library was visited by travellers and the learned of all nations, and any books they brought themselves were either incorporated in it or copies were made for that purpose. Egypt, in fact, was the great repository of ancient learning.

About the year 47 B.C., that greatest of all Romans, Julius Caesar, went to Alexandria to interfere on behalf of Cleopatra, and set the Egyptian fleet on fire. The flames spread, "accidentally," to the library and almost completely destroyed it. It was perhaps the greatest blow learning has ever suffered, for there must have been historical works of incredible value wiped out, the loss of which to history is incalculable.

Antony did his best in partly repairing the damage by managing to obtain 200,000 parchment rolls, but these, with large numbers of ancient Egyptian esoteric works, were burnt by Diocletian, and in A.D. 273 Aurelian gutted the rest, with few exceptions.

Again an effort was made to get a huge library together, and 400,000 volumes were eventually housed in the great Temple of Serapis. But in A.D. 391 riots took place between the Christian monks and the worshippers of "pagan" gods, and some of these took refuge in the Temple. The pious Emperor Theodosius then ordered the destruction of both the library and the Temple, an act of vandalism faithfully carried out by the Christians.

It should be added, also, that Julius Cæsar destroyed the ancient library belonging to the Celtic Druids, kept in the fortress of Alesia; while Alexander the Great burnt the original of the Avesta, written, we are told in "Moons, Myths and Man," by H. S. Bellamy, "in the old Persian tongue, with golden letters, on 12,000 cowhides, or consisting of 21 volumes of 200 leaves, each containing 100,000 verses."

Whatever was left of the library in Alexandria is said to have been destroyed by the Caliph Omar in A.D. 642. Gibbon reports the well-known words of Omar: "If these writings of the Greeks agree with the book of God, they are useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree, they are pernicious and ought to be destroyed." And destroyed they were. But Gibbon had grave doubts, and felt "strongly tempted to deny both the fact and the consequences." Dean Milman, his editor, however claims new facts since Gibbon wrote supporting the story. The Mahommedans, on the other hand, claimed that the Crusaders burnt the library at Tripoli, containing 3,000,000 books, on the plea that they belonged to the false prophet of Arabia.

There was a wonderful library at Rome, founded by Augustus Cæsar, which contained, among thousands of precious volumes, the whole works of Livy. It escaped various attacks made on Rome by Goths and Vandals; but when Gregory I became Pope, as he hated all classical literature—and Livy in particular—he had the library burnt in the public square. The rarest MSS. were destroyed, as well as the most priceless pictures and sculptures, by this Christian apostle of God. He died in A.D. 604. That is one way in which the Christian Church preserved the classics.

Another library, that of St. Sophia, was founded by Constantine and added to by Julian. It certainly contained the choicest examples of everything that made for pagan culture in MSS. and works of art. In the 8th century, that famous Christian body, the Iconoclasts, who claimed nothing should detract from the worship of Christ, set to work, and in a few centuries they destroyed everything they could get at. Not until printing multiplied the number of books, and made their destruction almost impossible, did the senseless vandalism cease.

When Columbus discovered America and the Spaniards began their conquests in the New World, they found immense libraries—as well as untold wealth in other directions. The old Catholic Christian spirit prevailed: the inhabitants were systematically slaughtered—some authorities give the number at 40,000,000; but no mercy was shown either to the wonderful books, the labour of centuries, which had been carefully preserved by the Incas, the Peruvians, the Aztecs and other native races. "Never," says Prescott, "did fanaticism achieve a more signal triumph than the annihilation of so many curious monuments of human ingenuity and learning."

Torquemada and Cardinal Ximenes both distinguished themselves by burning thousands of volumes—many, of course, the most valuable Jewish works of all sorts—and ancient classical literature. And I need hardly call attention to the way in which anti-Christian literature of every kind, particularly the works of Celsus, Porphyry and other scholars of the first centuries of the Christian era, was burnt or ruthlessly destroyed. We still have the Roman Catholic "Index," as it is called, which forbids the faithful to read heretical works—works, alas! the Vatican finds it impossible to suppress.

When Hitler came to power the same furious rage against books took possession of all good Nazis. The only book in the world worth reading and preserving was his own "Mein Kampf." All "Jewish" books, as far as possible, were destroyed; and writers like Heine forbidden to be read. The wonderful library collected by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, dealing with sex—perhaps the greatest collection ever got together—was wiped out. And how the Nazis, like their Christian prototypes, rejoiced! And with all this senseless destruction comes the demand for *more* books. The Fighting Services ceaselessly demand books. Publishers have never done so well; the libraries have queues and long waiting lists for special books. It is a strange paradox.

It is printing—so long so violently opposed by the Roman Catholic Church—which has saved the learning and knowledge preserved in books. It has saved our libraries, and may one day, if it is not now, be considered the greatest of all discoveries. And it is an absolutely *secular* one. H. CUTNER.

GOD AND THE "DOODLE-BUGS"

I DO not believe in intuition, whether claimed by Hitler or Mrs. Robinson. A result is either calculated or guessed at, and we cannot command accuracy in either case. A guess may be a sheer guess, or one supported by precedent, as in the case of what is likely to follow a day of national prayer. It can only be guessed at; but misfortune has so persistently followed previous days of national prayer during this war that, on precedent, one feels on fairly safe ground in regarding any such future days as warnings of trouble to come. Too much of that might find a fertile cell in C3 intellects; so with the invasion of France the King deputised for the clergy in a call for continuous prayers from both sexes of all ages.

From the angle of religion, the prospects should be brighter because the mere fact of kingship connects the wearer of the crown with the divine family—it makes him a sort of son-in-law to God. If that is worth anything at all, a small measure of family loyalty and help should not be asking too much. But I held to my belief that, in spite of passing the buck on to the King, trouble would still follow the prayer push, and events have justified that belief.

It appears, according to clerical assurances, that we have been selected by God as the instrument for liberating occupied Europe. The honour is really embarrassing, more so because we are such a modest people. Of course, God knows best; but we know better, and have strengthened the instrument by adding unselected Americans, Canadians, Czechs, Poles, French, Italians, etc., and coloured races. The complication does not end there. Occupied Europe is being liberated from two sides. On one side of Europe we, the selected instrument, are fighting heroically to carry out God's mandate; but on the other side the Red Army, unselected, unmandated, and not bothering about God at all, are hammering away at the same job. The situation provides a very useful means of finding the difference between God's selected instrument and a godless instrument; between God's work and man's work. Let us be quite clear that a comparison of results is just that and nothing more. Unfortunately for God, he is left well in the rear on comparing results. The unselected, unmandated armies of Soviet Russia are advancing, on an average, ten times as fast as the selected and mandated instrument. The square mileage of Europe liberated by the unselected instrument is enormously greater than that achieved by God's selected instrument. Whilst the unselected Red Armies are fighting in real summer weather the selected instrument fights in the worst weather for twelve years; and a London evening paper shows a picture of men of

the 8th Army in Italy rescuing their rations from a rain-flooded field. What a pity we decided that we were the instrument selected by God to liberate occupied Europe—and to open our churches for prayer all day, only to see them as empty as drums. Such tomfoolery may represent Parliamentary mentality, but it does not represent the intelligence of the mass of British people.

If God selected us to liberate occupied Europe, then he selected Germany to occupy, oppress and rob the occupied territory, or Christianity is not true. Along the same lines, Germany has been selected by God to use the "doodle-bug"; and the "doodle-bugs" are being used not against the unselected, unmandated, God-ignoring Soviet territory, but against God's own selected instrument, England. Americans, Canadians, French, Poles, Czechs, etc.—all those who are helping us—are untroubled. We are the sole sufferers; we appear to have been specially selected by God for "doodle-bug" bombardment. Somehow it doesn't seem to make sense. A Christian acquaintance informed me the "doodle-bug" was God's punishment for our not attending church. That could not be so, as I pointed out that a military chapel crowded with worshippers became a bull's-eye hit for a "doodle-bug," resulting in many casualties. Conceding that he appeared to be more in God's confidence than myself, I, very embarrassed, asked, if the "doodle-bugs" were sent by God to punish us, why did he allow us to shoot so many into the sea. His reply was very convincing—I would know one day. When that day comes I shall not be interested in "doodle-bugs," and the only person interested in me then will be an undertaker. Besides, the "doodle-bug" is an easy proposition. There is no mystery or secret spiritual meaning to it. It is merely a link in a developing military culture, and a military culture that has reached an enormous magnitude under Christian patronage. David used the primitive ancestor of the "doodle-bug" to slay Goliath. By the 14th century Christians were using a clumsy type of artillery, which in turn has been developed into the frightful engines of death and destruction of modern guns. At one time England's shores were protected by a feudal army in which service was limited to 40 days. By the end of the 17th century soldiering in Christian England had become a profession, a full-time job. In the 18th century the army of Britain was 17,000 strong; by 1912 it had reached 1,000,000 men. In 1905 seven leading Christian nations in the world spent £281,000,000 on their war machines; by 1912 they were spending £700,000,000. We will close with a very appropriate quotation from Thomas Hardy, who in 1924 wrote:—

"Peace upon earth was said, we sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison gas."

R. H. ROSETTI.

ACID DROPS

WE really do like the way in which religious papers clear up religious difficulties. For example, the Roman Catholic paper, the "Universe," explains to a correspondent that the Jews, when they helped in the Crucifixion, were "instruments of the divine will." But we have always taken that view. Consider what would have happened if the Jews had not cried "Crucify him." Clearly the whole performance would have broken down, and Jesus would have had to go back home and tell his father that the whole plan was smashed—the Jews would not play. But after making the situation clear, the writer says the Jews "were conscious, deliberate instruments." But that simply shifts the responsibility back to God. It seem to be quite a mix-up. The moral would seem to be—Don't get mixed up with gods.

In Leicester, the Humberstone Road Church has been carrying on a Christin campaign, in the course of which the pastor paid a visit to a factory. He reports that the "workers" received him "well"; the management invited him to come again. We note the invitation to come again did not come from the workers. They were just polite.

Dr. Scott Lidgett was once the leader of the Nonconformists. He is now in his ninetieth year, and is quite pleased with the new Education Bill—having forgotten, one kindly assumes, much that Nonconformity pretended to stand for. But of the Bill, he says: "For the first time Parliament has sought to give religious worship and instruction a place." But Nonconformists once upon a time insisted that it was not the State's duty to teach religion, and to give everyone a fair and equal chance of expression. But that, as we have been saying for more than half a century, was just bunkum. Nonconformists were always in the market, and could be bought over, as events have shown, whenever the Established Church offered them a share of the plunder. Events have shown this diagnosis to be correct. Sound social principles were never a feature of any form of the Christian Church. It is not we alone who say this. Christians say it themselves—at least by their actions, which really do speak louder than words.

Meanwhile, the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking at the Worcester Diocesan Conference, says: "Everyone must realise to-day that we are drifting away from organised religion." And he is driven to admit that this is due to the "urbanisation of life, culture, literature and legislation. In other words, developing life makes for religious decay. We must say that we have been saying this all our life, but we did not get a palace and £15,000 a year for saying it. The Archbishop is now hoping that the Education Bill will help. We have our doubts, to some extent. The Bill and this Government may help, but the end is only delayed.

Mr. H. A. Williams, writing to the "Church Times," is seriously disturbed as to the meaning of the "Catholic Movement" in the Church of England. Mr. Williams is also confused as to what is meant by the Church being the final authority. Mr. Williams properly replies that "Church" is left undefined. But if Mr. Williams is looking for clarity of language in reply to his confessions he will certainly be disappointed. Mr. Williams also is disturbed because while there is deferential homage paid by the English Church to "disembodied ideas of episcopacy," there is disrespect and disobedience shown by the same people to the bench of bishops. In plain words, they "dunno where they are." But that is the case with most religionists nowadays.

"Our Lady," better known in this country as the Virgin Mary, appears to be multiplying her visits to earth. We hope it is not due to the existence of family squabbles; that would give rise to another war in heaven. In that case, however, it is well to remember that the first revolt led to Satan and a number of his followers leaving heaven for good. What would happen if Mary left heaven it is hard to say; the withdrawal of her son from the heavenly ranks might follow, and that would give rise to a very grave situation.

But one feature of these appearances is depressingly common. She appears in out-of-the-way places—this time it is in the village of Bonate, in Lombardy, at the foot of the Alps. But surely this appearance in such places marks a great waste of time and energy. Why not appear in Pall Mall, or in Paris, or even in Berlin? Better still, what about Broadway, U.S.A.? Even in the great square in Rome? Consider the effect if all the time the Pope was making his speech "Our Lady" was hovering above his head, or sitting on his shoulder? This kind of thing seems to be terribly mismanaged. If it were even handed to one of our leading film producers the whole thing would be better staged and would bring more lasting results. We offer these suggestions gratis. But exhibitions should be exhibitions.

Should a song or hymn not blessed by a priest be sung in a Roman Catholic cathedral? That is the question asked by some Roman Catholics. After all, the King is not a Catholic; he is barred from being one. What religion he should have was settled long, long before he was born. But some Roman Catholics appear to be getting uneasy, and heaven itself might be puzzled if in a Roman Catholic cathedral God is asked to bless a King who is pledged to regard the Roman Catholic religion as a false religion. For our own part, we should like to see the King at liberty to choose any religion he pleases, or go without any if he felt so inclined.

A Church Committee has been formed to grope with the great increase of gambling, and which is expected to be greater when the "boys" come home. We think that the announcing of such a committee is very unwise. To begin with, the clergy who are with the Forces announce that there is a great increase of faith in Jesus, and there is promised a great revival of religion when the war ends. But to form special committees of parsons to prevent the loose-living of the returned men does not seem to fit the statements made by B.B.C. padres and others. We do not expect any serious trouble from gambling, but we do expect that some trouble may arise if the men who return are more interested in social reform and less inclined to champion the Christian Churches than they were when they entered the forces. In fact, we feel inclined to bet the committee two to one that our guess as to what results will follow the peace is not far from the facts. We may deal with this topic at length in an early issue of "The Freethinker."

After all, there is a great deal of nonsense talked in connection with gambling. That a great deal of evil arises from excessive gambling is undeniable, but the cure for this is not preaching against gambling, but by creating other avenues of adventure. It is the dullness of life for so many millions that is responsible for the gambling mania. Note the fact of the number of men—and women—who gamble in various ways, and consider whether, in the majority of cases, it simply does not pay. Note also, as an associated fact, the number of people who commence to "gamble," and then give it up because it does not yield a profit. Finally, examine the kind of life led by those who persist in gambling. Get these facts together, and the creation of the gambling mania offers at least an explanation of the situation.

The Christian attack on gambling is, in essence, that it does not pay. Homes are ruined, lives are wasted, poverty increases, and so forth. But what kind of material profit does a man reap in climbing mountains, merely to come down again, or to risk his life in travelling through unknown parts of the world, taking chances of being poisoned by experiments in the laboratory, and so forth? Then turn to the dull, miserable, brain-killing occupation of a great deal of the manual labour in the workshop, where the workman does not *make* anything, but merely handles a small piece of the complete article that is to be, and you will be within sight of the truth that gambling offers an escape from the brain-dulling consequences of modern industry. We do not say that gambling cannot be crushed, but it will only be done by providing something like healthy adventure. We must find a healthy equivalent for adventure if we are to bring gambling to more reasonable proportions. The ethical denunciation of gambling is little more than the religious attack, minus a god. It will prevent gambling on the part of those who do not care for it.

The world war might well be called a war of the gods. The Japanese Prime Minister says that "Until divine help comes we must endure every hardship and do everything in our power to overcome." Hitler has always proclaimed that he was called by God to place him on top of the world. And there is no doubt that this applies to us. The only exceptions are China and Russia. But as they only muster about six hundred million, religiously, they need not be bothered with. Besides, it was the godly people who brought about the war. The Russians and the Chinese merely came into it. "Up the gods!"

"THE FREETHINKER"

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Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. H. HANGER.—Very pleased to have your approval of the articles, but there is no chance of reprinting them just now. Want of paper is the main cause.

C. LUFF.—It is astonishing what faith religious folk and Spiritualists have in medical men when it suits their purpose. There are very many cases in which a certificate of death has been given, and the alleged deceased one has recovered. And the miracles performed by laymen are very numerous. Thanks for sending the account.

L. SANDERSON AND J. CATELL.—Want of space, chiefly, prevents insertion.

S. GLADING.—Sorry, but there are many things we should like to publish, if we had more time or a double pair of hands.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 3s. from Mr. A. McDonald to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

R. WATERMAN.—We were never foolish enough to describe the whole of the Russian people, or even the majority, as Atheists. In fact, we many times corrected other people for so doing. But we did, and do, describe Russia as an Atheist State, just as we may describe England as a Christian State. It is the official status of the Government that one must be guided by.

FOR "The Freethinker."—J. Humphrey, £1 ; I. Yettram, 6s. 9d.

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.

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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

IT is a curious fact that the new Education Act which has been forced through the Commons and, of course, passed by the House of Lords, tends to prevent the class of teachers who could explain the real meaning of religion from doing so. For it is not the first stage of scientific understanding of religion that will be given to children, but a form of Church religion on which more than half the population deliberately turn their backs. The children are to be taught to believe in the established religion of the Churches, and it will be the lot of the clergy to see that this is taught only by those who believe in it. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said, the school is to be "saturated" with religion, not merely while the Christian religion is being taught, but during the whole of school-time. The children will be living in England, but they will be taught religion as though they belonged to an undeveloped tribe of Central Africa.

There are, of course, no open and honest tests for religion where teachers are concerned. That would be too manly, too honest, for present-day Christianity. Non-Christian believers will not be refused admission as teachers, but they may be relieved—on

"conscientious grounds"—from teaching religion, and that is another way of labelling them as non-believers and of denying them promotion, even if it does not weaken their chances of entering the teachers' ranks. Under the new Act the rule will be: "Conscientious and educated teachers are not welcome."

And yet the only teachers who could teach the meaning of religion honestly and conscientiously are those who do not believe in it. They could teach the children the history of Christianity, how it is built on a childish and impossible theory of cosmology, bring forward the analogies among existing primitive peoples, study the Bible as a rich book in folk-lore, and in other ways explain the Bible in terms of the twentieth century instead of the fifteenth. By this method the Bible would be read with understanding. The episodes narrated in the Bible would rank as part of the story of human development, instead of illustrating the tricks and falsities of an interested priesthood. The young scholars would have nothing to unlearn, and all acquisitions would fall into the proper place.

Of course, all this sounds like a romance, but really all that is required for its success is just honesty. But to get to that stage is to imagine a perfectly honest Government and the reduction of the parsonage to their proper place in the picture. And to accomplish that puts the defeat of Nazism on the footing of a holiday game of cricket. It assumes the honesty of both the Government and the Church.

We do not know how many times we have called attention to the unreliability of the B.B.C. In religious matters that is open and avowed. The rule there is that nothing must be said that will weaken anyone's faith in Christianity, and the standard rule is that the lower forms of Christian belief or, to put it in another way, the least educated, must be taken as a guide. Anything that will shock them is taboo. In other words, the most ignorant of believers is taken as a standard for all speakers.

But there is worse to follow. The almost farcical Brains Trust which aims, not to get at the truth of everything, but to see what certain people can answer off the spot, not to get the truth and lay it before the people, is rapidly becoming ridiculous, although for those who figure in it—at an extravagantly generous rate of payment: fifteen guineas and an expensive lunch—the publicity counts. But even that is not without its dishonesty, for it is now admitted that what the public hears is not the speakers but a record, and it is also admitted that the reason for the lunch was that it gave time and opportunity for cutting out undesirable passages.

But we did think that the weekly summary of proceedings in Parliament was genuine. Now it seems that even these are "doctored" before they reach the public, and what the Member of Parliament says in the broadcast is what the B.B.C. permits him to say. We are indebted to the "Evening Standard"—the best of our evening papers—for the information that the speakers must submit their manuscript to be vetted for blasphemy, inaccuracy, bad taste and indiscretions. After this the manuscript has to go up higher for a final vetting. What amount of trust can one have concerning the trustworthiness of anything that comes to the public from such a source? It is not enough for any speaker to say that there may be nothing very important; the chances are that the part which is omitted is the part the public ought to know. Russian Czarism, German Nazism, Spanish double-dealing, and the like, would raise no objection to a broadcasting on those terms. No more effective way of fooling the public was ever adopted than this plan.

And the way out? There is only one that we can see. Men of standing, of experience, of wisdom, should decline absolutely to take part in the B.B.C. broadcasting unless they alone are to decide what they shall say. That would leave the B.B.C. with a section of speakers who would stink in the nostrils of the enlightened section of the public. After all, it is not a great thing to ask of writers and speakers. It is only asking them to display a fair modicum of respect for themselves and their sense of duty to the public.

THE RATIONALISTIC SPIRIT AND ACTION

III

Our Life is but a little holding, lent
 To do a mighty labour; we are one
 With Heaven and the Stars when it is spent,
 To serve God's aim.

—G. MEREDITH.

THE end of life as the fulfilment of divine purpose has received various interpretations by its professed oracles. The "salvation of the soul" and its path to the hereafter is one leading feature of theistic faith. But their related regulative codes range from asceticism to comparative licence. The Muslim is permitted a matrimonial establishment which in the Christian system amounts to "sin," while forbidden indulgence in wine. A casual remark of the Christian "founder" is made to buttress a rigid divorce law, while wine is praised in its sacred book. . . .

Then the expanding practical modern outlook has largely relegated theocratic sanctions to their original purport and associations; and certain secular standards of conduct come into play through experience and desire. In a country like England, where sport has long been an obsession from peer to dustman, its standards of honour enter into popular parlance and judgment: to "play the game," "it's not cricket," "a good sport," a "square deal." So that a new organon cannot treat a historic "society" as some *tabula rata* on which to write simply abstract principles and theories of conduct. Rather must it accept whatever experience has shown to be native and valid, whilst seeking finer modes of action and satisfaction.

Regarded in this naturalistic sense, "God's aim" becomes truly the expansion of living itself at the highest reach of vitalised existence, and the development of human personality and its favouring conditions.

First of these conditions is health or wholeness, the original Anglo-Saxon equivalent of the word "holy." Holy living in this sense has its springs in biology—in all that furthers high vitality and power, physical and spiritual. Right conduct—morality—is thus at one with the unfolding of all our capabilities and their disciplined co-ordination to this end. "Sin" and "vice," words used loosely in ordinary preaching, are correlative with everything that carries morbid and devitalising consequences. This, too, answers the question sometimes raised in connection with supernatural sanctions: as to why otherwise we should seek the "good." An answer to hand lies in its literal usage—occasionally overlooked in its more recondite association. That usage implies all that is worthy, sound and reliable in matters animate and inanimate; while "bad" is its very antithesis. In one definition, good = valid, virtuous, proper, fit, seasonable, palatable, salutary, full, beneficial, competent, skilful, kind, benevolent, faithful, pleasant, honourable, unblemished, cheerful, polite, serious, companionable, brave, well-formed, mild, friendly, wise and prudent; that which contributes to diminish pain or to increase happiness, richness, abundance, prosperity. So that organically and spritually the most complete and admirable life must be all compact of goodness in its entirety.*

For complete human development there is requisite corresponding circumstance, which may be indicated shortly under a formula of liberty and equity. They begin with decent conditions of birth and nurture; sound education all round as a preparation for active life. They presume adequate resources at adult age to support similar amenities of family association.

* As normally accepted. . . . To-day we witness a reversion; a nation and its leaders make Evil their Good!

They imply scope for the expression of personality, responsible citizenship, the conduct of public affairs by a consensus of opinion evoked through the widest freedom of thought and discussion, served by related institutions. All of which rests on equity and commonalty; where every variety of talent shall have its opportunity of fruition.

The path to its concrete achievement, however, opens up a wide controversial field which would take us beyond the present survey of first principles.

Yet there is one obstacle in connection with these principles—freedom of thought and inquiry—which may receive attention here. That springs from mental prepossession, interest and dogmatism. Neither is this found alone among "reactionaries," but extends into circles deemed "advanced." It is strongest, perhaps, as regards religious issues, but is not confined thereto.† . . . Human affairs being subject to mutability and error, truth, in social concerns and philosophic relations alike, is difficult to discern and discover. At best, it can only be reached through open-mindedness, the frankest canvass of all propositions, the severest testing in the light of experience of all institutions and modes. Accurate reasoning under an ever-keen criterion of logic, evidence and fact is a law of betterment; to think new and think true is the pole-star of progressive advance. Anterior, therefore, to the form of free institutions is a zealous conservation by citizens of this principle of unfettered examination and reconsideration in every department of mental and social activity: law, science, medicine, philosophy, economics, social hygiene. . . . How public opinion, so maintained, can best be organised and brought into association with State administration and policy is a study in itself in the sphere of political mechanism.‡

If this holds good under normal circumstance, still more will it apply when faced by the conditions of a world turned upside down; where the values which determined doctrine and theory have gone amid battle-smoke and destruction.

† A London daily recently quoted Mr. Redfern, President of the Institute of Journalists, charging the National Union of Journalists with attempted dictatorship—from below. "The Union has for a number of years unsuccessfully endeavoured to close newspaper offices to any but its own members. It has even proceeded to the extreme of trying to prevail on the printers to refuse to set so-called non-union 'copy.' . . . If the Union's Fascist methods were to succeed, no journalist would be able to earn a living if he did not join the Union, which, by its affiliation to the T.U.C., is identified with a particular brand of politics (and with a particular political organisation) that is repugnant to thousands of working journalists, including myself."

In a brochure on the (capitalist) Press, Hamilton Fyfe declares: "With wireless at their disposal, British Socialist Ministers would be in a position to give the nation the truth and to answer immediately all their enemies' perversions and mis-statements. At the same time, the controllers of newspapers publishing false news or slanderous comments (whatever this may imply) could be prosecuted under a Defence of the Realm Act and instantly tried, being sent to prison, if convicted, without the option of a fine. . . ."

Mr. Greenwood, of the Labour "Opposition," said in Parliament, while expressing a pious wish for the real representation of the people, this was best secured through the two (main) party system, and minor groups must decide under which umbrella they would prefer to shelter. . . .

‡ Wherein one of the subtlest questions involved is the relation of spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic forces to the State.

Free political institutions are often classed under the term "democracy." This, again, is used loosely by friends and opponents of what it is supposed to stand for. Strictly, it means to-day a Government resting on the support of the people, both men and women, enfranchised at adult age. Yet in our own country the powers of Parliament matured long before this summation was reached. The system, where operative, varies in its action in different countries: in the manner of elections, the organisation of parties, the form of the franchise, the powers of Parliament, the relation of the executive to the legislature and the judiciary itself. The most satisfactory means of meeting its requirements remains for fulfilment. In England, later developments in connection with its working exhibit shortcomings which call for public attention.*

And as the "economic" factor complicates the general issue, this, in conclusion, must have appraisalment.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

* The Proportional Representation Society, London, publish a timely pamphlet, "Two Problems of Post-War Democracy: I.—The Election of Parliaments. II.—The Formation of Governments." (6d.)

FREETHINKERS AND EDUCATION

PARTY politicians still being, on the whole, the supine creatures that they have always been in the past, it was not to be expected that Mr. Butler's Education Bill, with its abject surrender to the Churches, would fail to pass into law in every detail. Every child will then be almost forced to have religious instruction of the most "die-hard" kind. Admittedly, there is a clause in the Bill which states that any parent shall have the right to withdraw his child during the period of religious instruction; but anyone who remembers his own schooldays will not need to be told that any such withdrawal would tend to react unfavourably on the child concerned, since children are always inclined to "take it out" of those who are, in some mysterious way, different from the herd.

Yet there must be some solution for Freethinkers, Rationalists, Infidels, Agnostics, Atheists (I care not what we call ourselves), who regard this forcing of religion on the child as the worst kind of psychological invasion. And, as I see it, this solution is in our own hands. Mr. Butler, as befits a Tory, did his best to retain those homes of snobbery, the "public schools," by saying that, provided the standard of teaching was satisfactory, independent schools of this kind should be allowed to carry on. I imagine that the educational development of this country will even allow new schools to be opened.

That, as far as I can judge, is the loophole for Freethinkers who do not wish their children to be given the stupidity and absurdity of orthodox religion. We shall have, sooner or later, to get together to see what can be done in the way of secular schools. There are, of course, a few of these already in existence, of which the best known is that of A. S. Neill; but there is room for a lot more.†

These will not necessarily be boarding schools. I feel that, near to London and the other great cities, there might easily be started day schools which would attract the children of Freethinkers. There would, of course, be fees to pay; but Freethinkers will expect, as usual, to pay twice over. And I think that they will find this a good investment, for children brought up in a healthy secular environment will quite certainly have a real advantage over their less fortunate brethren whose education is impregnated with the out-of-date precepts of superstitious religion.

† I have no doubt that the editor would be pleased to publish details of these if readers would provide addresses, etc.

"But what of teachers?" some readers may well ask. "After all, when the war is over, we are told that huge numbers of teachers will be required." Well, there are many teachers who are members of the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association, and who would jump at the opportunity of teaching in a school run on purely secular lines. And, in any case, have not nearly all the organisations of teachers passed resolutions against the forcing of religious instruction on an unwilling or unreceptive child? I do not, indeed, feel for one moment that the provision of teachers would cause any difficulty at all. The main problem will be one of finance, and that is something that will take a deal of overcoming. Schools cost money to run, and Freethinkers, from the nature of their cause, are infrequently overflowing with worldly wealth.

So here is the chance for the Freethinker millionaire, if such an unlikely individual anywhere exists. A few thousands of pounds would go a long way; and we might suppose, without being unduly optimistic, that, if the fees were not too high, the Freethought schools would be paying propositions in a few years.

This is an idea which bears thinking over. Religious reaction is growing and applying an iron grip to the State schools, and the only answer appears to be a chain of independent Freethought schools. We must set out to attract the independent-minded teacher, for there is no doubt that this will be an educational experiment of the greatest value. A scholarship scheme to provide free tuition for the promising children of parents who are not wealthy would have to be worked out at the same time.

Well, fellow Freethinkers, what do you think of it? This is a scheme which must obviously be well thought over before an attempt is made to launch it. But if something is not done along lines similar to those which I have tried to indicate it is very much to be feared that the Churches' scheme to fasten the chains of piety on yet another generation will be only too successful.

S. H.

THE MUSEUM MIND

I

QUINTUS GRANGE has the museum mind. Anything modern is repellent to him, distasteful; or he ignores it altogether. Conversely, he loves the old, the ancient, the antique, what is archaic and historic. This attitude is natural to him, not a pose. A new object sends his mind trailing back to its origins or old parallels. Faced with the novel, he seeks similarities in the past.

One wonders what makes him so. All men have a tinge of it. Even the revolutionary becomes eventually a conservative; but in Quintus it is wholehearted devotion to what is outmoded or discarded. He knows why men have buttons on their coat cuffs and the back of dress tails; why boys' stockings have a coloured pattern round the top, and a host of other sartorial relics about which the rest of us never give a thought—or care. As might be expected, Grange is untidy himself.

It may be his early life and education which sends him harking back, but he never tells us much about his childhood. One gathers he was the son of middle-aged parents, brought up old-fashioned, among old books and pictures and music, and at school preferred history and literature to science or mathematics.

Yet that is true of all of us. We are reared in the notions of previous generations. We do not get modern ideas till we break away from home and leave school. Simply, Quintus Grange did not escape. He remained immersed in the detritus left behind as the river of life sweeps on.

To Grange's regret, he has to work in an industrial town where chances of archæological research are few. Melston has no cathedral, abbey, priory, monastic or castle ruins. Of ruins there are plenty, but they are recent—results of slum clearance. These Quintus watches carefully, determined not to miss the least bit of antiquity.

Meeting me in the street one day, he bore me in triumph to a nearby shop having a modern facade. With the shopman's smiling permission, Quintus took me through, showing me the second room was over a century old and the third more than two centuries, evidenced by bits of masonry and beams and wide chimneys.

Dropping his voice to a thrilling whisper, he said: "Come and see the cellar."

Down there in the gloom and damp, I was informed it was the town lock-up four centuries ago. No use my saying that made it no more value to the tradesman as a store—less than a new one.

What is historic in the town Quintus Grange finds: as a coaching entrance to an inn, some adze-dressed beams in a roof, the crypt of the church with the trunk of some forgotten knight's statue, the stocks and whipping-post overgrown in the park, a field formerly a millpond till filled in, the Dusty Miller Hotel getting its name from being on the site of a watermill and so on. He knows all the council regalia and borough charters; can instruct the town clerk on details of them. When an old public-house was found to have lath-and-plaster gables Quintus wrote to the local Press demanding their preservation. He often does so, but with small effect. Grange has some reputation as an archæologist, but little notice is taken by townspeople engaged in manufacture.

II.

This antiquarian concentration is no advantage to Quintus. He is assistant relieving officer, knowing more about origins and subsequent development of poor laws than their present administration. He will never get promoted, being regarded as a little mad, quite untrustworthy in business. Take him out to eat or drink and he leaves his companions to order, satisfied with nearly everything, though he can tell when the viands or beverages were first consumed in England and from where they were introduced.

Coming from another part of the country, I mentioned to Quintus that a dealer in my home town had a collection of cycles back to the hobby-horse. He went to see them, coming back to thank me for giving him such pleasure. A perfect new machine would not have drawn from him a glance. He travelled into the Black Country to watch an old Watt beam engine pumping, gloating over it.

I remember meeting him after a holiday spent in London. He could not stop talking about it. The whole of it had been spent in visiting London's historic sites, as were many subsequent ones. When other men discuss next year's automobiles, Quintus Grange is interested in the oldest specimens such as he gazed at eagerly in South Kensington Museum. Antique dealers and secondhand shops are a joy to him. Most of his holidays are spent visiting and viewing remains and survivals from past ages.

Art galleries, museums and similar places draw Quintus irresistibly. Pictures and prints he loves—old ones, brown and dingy, of no æsthetic importance. He listens to old music, ballads and folk stuff, reads old books and poetry, is satisfied with Shakespeare as a dramatist and Hardy as a modern novelist.

True enough, there is a vast body of art, music, literature and drama in English going back half a millennium and more, but one must walk among it circumspectly, critically, choosing and rejecting.

Quintus Grange does not. He revels in all old arts and crafts, wallows in them. No good to tell him those productions by hand or imagination were once new, modern, innovations. The argument means nothing to him. They are now old; therefore fascinating.

There is danger in this museum-mindedness. Quintus has nearly to be dragged to the polling booth to vote, though he can talk glibly of hustings, pocket boroughs and other defunct political practices. He cannot be made to realise that all institutions must be overhauled and effete matter jettisoned. Perhaps most warning example is the Irish—a whole nation museum-minded—to whom Cromwell is still a hated foe and the Battle of the Boyne a recent defeat.

All men are touched at least to a slight degree with the museum mind. When it gets to Quintus Grange's extent it is obstructive. He and his kind may find freedom only a museum piece unless they watch and work that it be not so superseded.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE

AN old man of 75 years lay dying. For a lifetime he had turned a deaf ear to religion and steeped his soul in every current crime. He had robbed the orphan and plundered the widow; he had wrested from the hard hands of honest toil the rewards of labour; had lost at the gaming table the wealth with which he should have endowed churches and Sunday schools; had wasted in riotous living the substance of his patrimony, and left his wife and children without bread. The intoxicating bowl had been his god; his belly had absorbed his entire attention. In carnal pleasures passed his days and nights, and to the maddening desires of his heart he had ministered without shame and without remorse. He was a bad, bad egg.

And now this hardened iniquitor was to meet his Maker. Feebly and hesitatingly his breath fluttered upon his pallid lips. Weakly trembled the pulse in his flattened veins. Wife, children, mother-in-law, friends who should have hovered lovingly about his couch, cheering his last moments and giving him medicine, he had killed with grief or driven widely away. He was now dying alone by the inadequate light of a tallow candle, deserted by heaven and by earth.

No, not by heaven! Suddenly the door was pushed softly open and there entered the good minister whose pious counsel the suffering wretch had in health so often derided. Solemnly the man of God advanced, Bible in hand. Long and silently he stood uncovered in the presence of death. Then with cold and impressive dignity he remarked, "Miserable sinner."

Old Jonas Lashworthy looked up. He sat up. The voice of that holy man put strength into his aged limbs, and he stood up. He was reserved for a better life than to die like a neglected dog. Mr. Lashworthy was hanged for braising a minister of the Gospel with a boot-jack. This touching tale has a moral.

Moral to this touching tale: In snatching a brand from the eternal burning, make sure of its condition and be careful how you lay hold of it.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

When reason's Ray shines over all
And puts the saints to rout,
Then Peter's holiness will pall
And Paul's will Peter out.

—ANON.

GOD AND THE VICAR

Sometimes the foolishness of God's representatives on earth—unless it be that it was their stupidity that led to God appointing them—almost exceeds belief. Here is a gem from the "Eastern Gazette" which will illustrate and justify what we have said. The Vicar of Holy Trinity writes: "Why has God permitted the enemy's flying bombs? Was not the raiding all over the land enough? Why does not the Lord say, 'Stay thy hand'?" That seems sensible enough, but probably too sensible for it to be admitted in the Church.

So the Vicar gives a reason. He says it is "a final appeal to England to follow the example of our King and Queen to their weekly attendance at the house of prayer." That is quite clear. God presumably inspired the King and Queen to go to church regularly so that the people, like so many brainless idiots, would carry their stupidity to the extreme limit. But the people will not go to church, so God permits the people who are quite innocent—old men near the grave, infants who cannot be guilty of offence, the lame, the sick, the youth that has never had time to develop itself—to endure the flying bombs rained on this country.

Well we can imagine the autocrat of heaven behaving thus, or stupid or artful parsons talking in this way. But can any sensible person think like this? If the Vicar's reasons be a good diagnosis, and we admit it falls into line with what our religious leaders are saying, it would certainly be more decent, more human, to curse God and die than to crawl in worship of such a being. But we suppose the Vicar knows his people.

CORRESPONDENCE

ANOTHER PROTEST.

SIR,—One of the purposes of "The Freethinker" is to win people to the support of rational ideas, and one of my objections to Mr. Du Cann's pacifist outpourings being given such prominence in our vehicle of propaganda (at a time when the fate of all progressive humanity depends on the defeat of the barbarian Hitlerite army by force of arms) is that his idealistic and non-realistic philosophy retards and damages the progressive forces. For instance, he lumps Stalin in with Hitler. All, bar the hopelessly dumb, know that Stalin, like Chapman Cohen, dedicated his life to the liberation of mankind from exploitation and superstition, and he has succeeded in a manner unparalleled in the history of our globe. His political and intellectual honesty and integrity are unquestioned. Other things being equal, were Mr. Cohen to find himself in Roosevelt's or Churchill's position, would Mr. Du Cann label him a holy, sacred and divine political mountebank? And if not, why not? It is the experience of losing several interested readers that makes me feel a little sore on this point. They were disappointed to see so much valuable space in "The Freethinker" allotted to Mr. Du Cann's pacifist propaganda and negativeness, and the arbitrary lumping together of the present acknowledged leaders of the forces of progress with those of the most reactionary, barbaric bunch of brutes known to history.—Yours, etc.,

C. A. MORRISON.

[We do not think that many of our readers will be offended by seeing articles with which they disagree.—Ed.]

"YOUR M.P."

SIR,—Had Peter Cotes known that I have been a reader of (and sometimes a contributor to) "The Freethinker" for 40 years, it is possible he would not have made the suggestion about a "blurb."

Having read several of the books of Douglas Reed, I am aware of his anti-Semite bias, but it should also be realised that Reed is violently anti-Nazi.

Reed's books must have been read by hundreds of thousands of people (they are in our public library), and I again suggest that, as a Continental journalist of repute, his writings will repay any Freethinker who cares to read them.

I have not yet had an opportunity of reading "Nemesis?"—the story of Otto Strasser—but I can assure Peter Cotes that I shall bear his remarks in mind and use my own judgment.—Yours, etc.,

T. D. SMITH.

OBITUARY

ALDERMAN GEORGE HALL.

With the death, on August 6th, of Alderman George Hall, of Manchester, the northern section of the Freethought Movement loses a stalwart champion. Alderman Hall, who was aged 71, had been a member of Manchester City Council for 22 years, and for several years was chairman of the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society.

He was one whose association with civic and public life strengthened, rather than diminished, his belief in the need for militant Freethought, and far from compromising on religious issues, he at all times fought them courageously. In connection with an effort to establish Sunday games at Manchester a few years ago, he publicly played bowls on a Sunday afternoon, and refused to be bound over at the police court, preferring to go to prison for a few days. He also found himself officially adrift from the Labour Party owing to his refusal to be bound by party policy.

With his strong independence of character, however, he was striking evidence of the fact that an honest man with the courage of his convictions can "get on" with the public, for this party rebel and avowed Atheist was so well loved by the public that he not only retained his seat on the Council while adrift from his party, but ultimately became an alderman. In business, Alderman Hall was a fruiterer, building up two successful Manchester shops, and becoming president of the National Federation of Retail Fruiterers from a very humble start.

It was typical of his honesty of conviction that he left clear instructions that there should be no sham or humbug about his attitude to religion when he died. Knowing that there would be a civic funeral, he insisted that it must be purely secular, and he desired it to be conducted by Mr. Chapman Cohen. Unfortunately, Mr. Cohen was unable to travel to Manchester, but the service, at Manchester Crematorium, was conducted by Mr. F. J. Corina in the presence of a representative civic assembly and a number of Manchester Secularists.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Messrs. WOOD, PAGE, and other speakers.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Various Speakers.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Cliviger (Lancs.).—Friday, August 18, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Debate. Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. A. REILLY.

Fatfield (The Bridge).—Monday, August 21, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON will lecture.

Higham (Lancs.).—Monday, August 21, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market).—Sunday 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

New Kyo, Durham.—Thursday, August 24, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON will lecture.

Padiham (Lancs.).—Sunday, 2.45 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Wheatley Lane (Lancs.).—Wednesday, August 23, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Keighley Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Adelaide Street, Keighley).—Brains Trust, 2.30 p.m., Rev. FRANK HARWOOD, Alderman W. J. JOHNS and Rev. GAWTHORP HOLMES representing religion; Messrs. F. J. CORINA, H. DAY and H. STEWART WISHART representing Freethought. Question Master, Councillor A. R. BENTLEY.

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