

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

To-day and To-morrow

THE war has sufficiently advanced for us to be certain on which side military victory will rest. We stress that phrase because war is only the end of a beginning; it can never be the beginning of an end. War can only clear the arena for the greater and the more permanent conflict of ideas and ideals. In human development, it is the imponderables that ultimately count and dictate the direction of human ambitions. Men live and die for ideals, and in so bloody a war as the present will die with a smile on their lips. It will be a bad day for humanity when this is not true. But we must beware of our phrases and see to it that we are not misled by mere words. For ideals are various, and may be attached to right or wrong with equal ease. Put it that the war of arms will be, we hope, followed by the war of words and we shall be nearer understanding.

To what extent does the cry of "Never again" give us a lead? If all it means is that Germany shall never more be in a position to again plunge us into a world war, the lesson will have been very, very dearly bought. Let us remember that the last world war was brought about by an unknown student killing an insignificant grand duke. We may take it for granted that for many generations Germany will never have the opportunity of plunging into war. But let us not forget fifty millions of dissatisfied Germans in the middle of Europe may well serve to incite ambitious rulers to turn them to their own ends. There would be nothing new in this, it is only another form of the famous "balance of power." Moreover, armies are made for use, and although they may look ornamental it is not as ornaments only that they exist.

We all want, at least for a time, a world peace. Some of us hope to see created a world of peace, and on an enduring basis. Personal agreements between two nations, or small clusters of nations, will not do. They have been tried, and sooner or later broken down. There is also a number of plans for the after-war world, with a number of agreed clauses, but what exactly they are worth who can tell? We have had, with a flourish of good phrases, an "Atlantic Charter," by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, as a step towards perpetual peace. What is its real "court of law" value? Very little, when we compare phrases with facts. We are told that the U.S.A. and Great Britain do not "seek aggrandisement either territorial or other." But we never have. They have always been taken over in the interests of others. Both countries, we are told, "will not seek territorial change without the freely expressed wish of the people concerned." We wonder whether that covers all the coloured peoples who are at present being held for their own good? There is a further assurance. Free access is to be given to the use of the

materials of the world. Good, but for the qualifying clause that this free access must be subject to "respect for the existing obligations," which does not sound quite so good. After the destruction of Nazism, people shall "live their lives in freedom from fear and want." Again good, but we are in the dark as to who will decide that a people have enough to banish want, and who will decide when a people have freedom enough. And in reading this document one cannot forget our Prime Minister's declaration that "what we have we hold," which would seem to cut across the essence of the Charter. It almost looks as though some wit of the past might refer to the document as "The Atlantic Chatter."

Consider another situation. Looking over a number of newspapers and other means of enlightenment we discover that after this present war Poland will have a strong army and navy, a good show of war-planes, etc. Russia will also maintain a large army, an air force, and an enlarged navy too. Naturally Britain, with its far-flung Empire, will insist on maintaining every sort of armed force on the land, in the air, under the sea and on the sea. France will also demand strong armed forces, of all kinds, if only to keep an eye on her German neighbour. Turkey will increase its armed forces, particularly war-planes, and may join hands with Greece and one or two of the Balkan States. Czechoslovakia will also be armed, with or without alliances. Spain will retain its armed forces, if only in memory of her friend Germany. Holland, Belgium, and probably other European States, will renew their arms. So much for Europe, although one ought to reckon with non-European States, who will be armed, and who thus may excuse the whole of Europe rearming. All this really seems a peculiar way of securing perpetual peace. Perhaps I ought to explain that I am not a professional politician, and so may have misunderstood the situation.

But if these armies are required, not for making war but for maintaining peace—and I am far from thinking of an immediate abolition of national armed forces—there is another plan by which wars may be avoided. Why not ask the signatories of the Atlantic Charter to add another clause, which shall suggest to the different nations the creation of an armed force, in all its forms, and make it unlawful for any nation to maintain a private army, navy, etc.? In other words, why not take advantage of the war sickness that may exist when this war ends and set about abolishing national wars altogether?

In our own history, there was a time when a man said, with all the gusto that usually accompanies an unwise saying, "I am the guardian of my own honour." And he proved his ability to do so by sticking a sword in a man, or by gathering a large number of retainers and so beating a smaller number belonging to his adversary. And when one killed the other the survivor exclaimed: "My honour is satisfied." But there gradually developed another stage

when people realised that these duellists were often enough just mere bullies, and in any case you could not prove the other fellow to be wrong because you stuck a sword in him. Then the pistol or dagger person came down from his pedestal and was recognised as just a bully. And when a man felt himself wronged, he was told he must appeal to a tribunal which would impartially examine the alleged wrong done and so set things right. The days of the bully were over. The common man came into his own.

Of course, this particular piece of idiocy had its origin in religion. It was part of the stupidity that "God" protected the righteous and punished the wrongdoer. But experience gradually forced upon people the conclusion—in fact, if not in theory—that God, any god, was about the worst adjuster of right and wrong that one could find.

Why, then, not apply to conflicts between nations the plan that we have worked out with private quarrels? For the settlement of quarrels between nations, let there be introduced an international force drawn from as many countries as possible, the force to be responsible to an international court administering laws that have behind them the support of all that will unflinchingly implement legal decisions?

There are, of course, some obvious objections. A nation would no longer be able to annex a smaller nation for its good, compel "natives" to work in mines or gather rubber for another people's benefit. But there are usually inconveniences attached to any arrangements, no matter how good they may be. But we can abolish private national wars if we will, and if we cannot, then we of the older generation may feel that age really has its compensations, for we shall be dead when our descendants have got a second wind and are ready to once more set out saving the world.

Religion and the Future

I have but scant space to deal with another fruitful cause of war, and which has a number one capacity for sowing, or certainly strengthening, hatred between peoples. I mean religion. What is the outlook for our churches, and for religion apart from the churches? In the after-war period the churches will struggle desperately, primarily to hold their own, if possible to strengthen their position. Thanks to the Churchill Government, the Churches will enter the field strengthened by the new Education Act, which—for the moment—gives the clergy a greater control in the schools than they have had since the pre-1870 period.

But against this we may count the tremendous religious landslide that is taking place. Here and there are two factors at work. First, there is the impact on established religions of the new Russia. After nearly twenty years of persistent religious lying against "Atheistic Russia," the Churches have, for the moment at least, been forced—not to withdraw their lies, the Churches never apologise for lying—to confess that Atheistic Russia is a better Russia than existed when it was saturated with religion. That is a fact which can no longer be disputed.

Another factor to be reckoned with is the mental calibre of our fighting forces, which now represent the whole of the people in a way that has never before existed. Moreover, the technique of war itself has radically altered. The old "theirs not to reason why" is no longer applicable.

The men are better educated and they are thrown back on their native intelligence in a way that is new for armed forces. I have not the space to elaborate this phase, but it must be borne in mind. The sum is that the fighting men who return home will have a degree of individual mental independence that must have its influence of social development.

What effect will this have on the status of religion? We may take as an indication an editorial which recently appeared in one of our leading religious papers, the "Church Times." It is the editor who speaks, and he does not disguise his fears for the future, and in the light of what he says his statement that service with the forces has had a "transforming effect in arousing interest in religion" indicates as much fear as hope. The real value and nature of the interest is to be found in the confession that those whose interest leads to religion are only a minority. And whatever hints are given of the value of the "Padre's Hour" with the troops is discounted by the statement that "those most intimately concerned point out that the real issues of religion are too often ignored"—by the preachers. This certainly indicates the ethical quality of the reports that one gets from preachers who have the B.B.C. at their service. To a vast number of the armed forces, the general opinion of the men is that a lot of Padres are very decent fellows, but religiously they are just figures of fun or material for baiting.

Finally, on the question of the compulsory Church parade—a standing insult to those told they are fighting for freedom—the "Church Times" admits that "the great majority have rarely the initiative or the interest to attend voluntary service." The men and women of the forces attend services when they must, and stay away when they can.

It is to the credit of the editor of the "Church Times" that he sums up his survey by saying:—

"The men in Great Britain's citizen armies have an intellectual keenness which is new in this country's history. The effects of popular education are at last showing themselves. . . . The average soldier, sailor or airman wants to get to the bottom of things, and religion is one of the subjects he desires to explore."

This must not be taken to indicate that it connotes a desire to accept Christian, or even religious, beliefs, a fact the editor is candid enough to admit, for he says:—

"There is no definite movement towards Christianity in all this, and it would be Utopian to read too much into the frequency with which theological issues crop up at Brains Trusts and discussion groups."

We agree. Religions are neither perpetuated nor established by arguments, and the Christian Church above all has always discouraged questioning as much as it could. The true Christian does argue himself into believing, he accepts it and finds reasons for it afterwards. The danger that fronts all the churches to-day is the number of the younger generation that are asking for evidence before believing.

Very much like Hitler shrieking a promise of victory when he is on the borders of annihilation, the Churches try to distract attention from its rapid decay by staging a revival. They ignore the fact that revivals, when genuine, follow a decline, but when it comes to stage a revival of

Christianity—real Christianity—one can only smile. The Churches saw a chance with the revolution in Russia, and held its deplorable state as a reason for clinging to Christianity. It tried at the beginning of the war to convert it into a fight for Christianity. Both lies failed, more than failed; it increased the general distrust where it had not existed, and endorsed it with those who had already broken with the Churches.

For the moment it has, with the help of a Tory and Church Government masquerading as a Coalition Government, gained a footing in the schools. How long that hold will last remains to be seen. The teachers could, if they had the courage, drive the clergy back to their churches and be masters in the schools. Mainly it is with them a question of Principle versus Promotion. We think that Principle will win. And the situation would be ridiculous were all those who do not believe in the State teaching religion to withdraw their children from religious instruction.

Meanwhile the Churches will continue to wage the war against modern thought. They will shriek that their poses and manœuvres point to a revival of religion. It will not do. At most they are—if I may take a phrase from Heine—"bringing of the sacrament to a dying god."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE CARPENTER CENTENARY

ONE hundred years ago (August, 1844) was born Edward Carpenter, one of the English pioneers of Socialism. As one who pre-eminently stood for ethical and social action on rational grounds, and for the fullest freedom of thought, speech and publication, he deserves the tribute of all Freethinkers.

I knew Carpenter slightly, and I still possess a pamphlet of his on "Non-Governmental Society" which he gave me. One of his executors, Mr. G. W. Clemas, is a great friend of mine, as he was of Carpenter, and through him I met Gilbert Beith, the brother of Ian Hay (Major-General Beith), whose book, "Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation," contains essays by Havelock Ellis, Lawrence Housman, E. M. Forster, Ramsay MacDonald, Lowes Dickinson, Nevinson and others, and is well worth reading.

In many respects Edward Carpenter was a remarkable man. Schooled in England, France and Germany, he became an English clergyman, but gave up a Cambridge Fellowship, Holy Orders and a curacy in 1873, for he felt he "must leave or be suffocated." He became for the next seven years a University Extension lecturer, but flung that up to live in a cottage near Millthorpe and live by manual labour; to keep in touch with "the workers" and to write a book of Whitmanesque poems, "Towards Democracy," which has had at least 15 editions printed and still has its admirers. This, indeed, is a book to get for those who wish to understand the essential Carpenter.

Entirely altering his mode of life, Carpenter became a market-gardener, doing the actual work on the land with his own hands, and spending his spare time in Socialist propaganda in Sheffield and elsewhere. He went to America and met Walt Whitman, his great hero; and then to India, where he studied the ancient wisdom-religion. Returning home, he spent the rest of his long life in handicrafts such as sandal-making, in lecturing and in writing books; and before he died he received the homage of 300 of the most distinguished men and women of the

Left. But the more he changed his life the more he remained the same: the earnest preacher of human perfectibility and social reform.

Three of Carpenter's books still live and are worth purchase and attention: "Towards Democracy," "The Intermediate Sex" and "Love's Coming of Age." For the second and third books Carpenter deserves great praise for his courage in writing and publishing them in days when homo-sexuality was regarded with Biblical horror and a subject beyond discussion. It is difficult for young men and women of to-day, accustomed as they are to homo-sexuality as a joke on the music-halls, as a matter for a police-court fine rather than the Old Bailey, or for psychological treatment at the Tavistock clinic instead of a term of penal servitude, and as a subject for plain and frank discussion amongst themselves or in an Aldous Huxley novel, to realise the Victorian and Edwardian taboo. But the memory of the brutality and wickedness with which the genius of Oscar Wilde was ruined may remind them of the cruel stupidity that prevailed in the early 1900's when Carpenter wrote his temperate, informative and serious books on this subject.

Of course, it is not only to pioneers like Carpenter that we owe a wiser and saner attitude in Britain. Science has taught us something. We know now that homo-sexuality may be due not to innate "sin," but to the wrong functioning of endocrine glands in the body, and to the accident of birth. Once more it is a case of "There but for the grace of God go I," as the religionist horribly puts it, attributing the grace to himself and the lack of the grace to the other fellow.

Many of Carpenter's reforms have come about less from his preachments than from war influences. For instance, he passionately preached and practised the simplification of life. Habitually he went about hatless, in open-necked shirt, belted trousers, sandals, and no more—a common costume to-day. He escaped from the stuffy Victorian drawing-room into the open air, and even did much of his writing out of doors. He believed, like Ruskin and Carlyle and other middle-class prophets, never forced by necessity to do servile and degrading tasks, that there was something inherently noble in manual labour, especially of the non-machine kind—a fallacy that still prevails in the unthinking deification of "the working classes." Manual work, the open air, simplicity instead of complexity, natural freedom on the land instead of industrialism in towns—this was the gospel of Edward Carpenter.

Necessarily, he is at the moment to some extent demoded. The Socialist and Communist movements have taken another turning, through urbanisation, committees and statistics, towards State-worship. Carpenter did not believe in Governments; he was essentially a philosophic anarchist of the order of Thoreau, Bakunine, Kropotkin and their school. He believed in a non-Governmental society, not in State Socialism. He wanted—and rightly, too—"a self-supporting society based not on individual dread and anxiety, but on the common fulness of life and energy." He wanted—and rightly—that we should all have our bare living provided, free from carking cares, so that we should be set free to do the useful work of our choice and affection: not for the profit of the business exploiter or the State, but for the welfare of the freed society.

The picture which Carpenter drew of society in his day, deadened by fear, anxiety and care, is no less true to-day—except that we are also afraid of death and mutilation and destruction by war. Here it is:—

"The wretched wage-slave, who rises before the break of day, hurries through squalid streets to the dismal sound of the 'hammer' engages for 9, 10 or 12 hours and for a pittance-wage in monotonous work which affords him no

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ACID DROPS

THE "Glasgow Evening Citizen" gives an account of a "Bible racket" that is being worked in the American Army. The report is that "thousands" are making "good money" by sending to the troops Bibles and Prayer Books with light steel coverings to protect the soldiers. It is pointed out that instead of such Bibles protecting the wearer, they increase the danger, for whereas the bullets might bury themselves in the covers and pages of a book, one coated with steel would act like a "dum-dum" bullet.

Alongside of this there is another form of the same type of swindling. A list of the names reported over the German radio as prisoners are noted. Then follows a visit by some stranger saying they have messages for the families in question, for which a charge from 15s. to £25 is asked.

Of course, with both these rackets religion, the Christian religion, is involved. The latter one mentioned is the most nauseous, but both are bad. Yet, let us pause. The Cardinal of Westminster circulated among Roman Catholic soldiers—we fancy there was a charge made when possible—crosses which soldiers wore over their breasts—and as the Cardinal had blessed each one it was believed they would protect the man wearing it. Yet one of these cases only is recognised because it is associated with religion. The other exposes a man to imprisonment because the object is not sanctified. But in both cases the trick relies upon the ignorance of people for their success.

In the "Leader" for August 19 a very pertinent point is raised by Mr. F. R. Lewey, late Mayor of Stepney, with regard to the rebuilding of the churches. He asks whether it is necessary to rebuild all the churches? The sensible answer, and not one that need be based on opposition to the Churches, is obviously in the negative. It is calculated that less than one-fifth of the churches would comfortably accommodate all who have any desire to attend, and the rebuilding will be done at the country's expense. Not merely at the expense of the country, but they will be built at a time when it will be difficult to supply men and material enough to rebuild homes.

But if we know anything of the situation, we can safely say that priority will be given to the churches in a great many instances. The people who want homes must wait. It is almost certain that for some years we shall have intense overcrowding, which will be excused by the government of the day on the grounds of want of men or material. The greater reason to go slow with regard to the churches, and to keep their rebuilding to the demands of the general public.

We gather from the Press that there is a growing dislike of national days of prayer among believers because a great number of Germans are also playing the same game. We can appreciate the objection. In these busy times it is easy to get messages reaching the wrong quarter or the origins of the communications getting mixed. We feel certain that the Papacy will be suggesting to God that he must not be too helpful to Russia, we know that Germany claims it is carrying out God's will with regard to the status of favoured "races," the Jewish prayers will naturally remind God that they are his chosen people, and that it is time they received better treatment. And with all these conflicting aims it would not be surprising if God decided on washing his hands of them all, and let each lot go to hell in their own fashion.

For ourselves we repeat our suggestion, seeing that God does not seem to pay any special regard to the prayers that are rocketed to him, why not adopt a more independent and manly disposition by sending, not a petition, but an ultimatum? We know—all history teaches us—that worship is really the food of the gods. Gods have been powerful, active fellows only so long as the supply of praise rang strongly. When the stream began to run thin, their power decreased, and when the stream of praise and service dried up completely they died out altogether. We have tried for generations the kneeling and praying method; now let us try another plan. Let every church be closed and adorned with a notice to heaven that there will be no prayers of

praise or petitions until the gods do something, and if something does not happen within a reasonable time, and with unmistakable evidence of origin, all praise to gods will be abolished for ever. We could at least try the experiment; and a democracy should be independently minded.

The B.B.C. has been running a series of talks on "Life After Death." A very elementary sense of fairness would have invited two speakers, one in favour of the belief in a future life and an unbeliever. But the B.B.C. does not work along that line, and we are quite certain that if Jesus ever lived, and if he was really one-third of the Deity, and if he comes back again, and if he broadcasts a message, we are certain the B.B.C. will insist on censoring his speech. Censoring has become more than a habit with the B.B.C.; it is a mania.

So the B.B.C. enlisted a Canon of the Church to discuss the subject. We have no doubt but that even his MSS. was censored, but it was in safe hands. He would say nothing that would seriously disturb the most ignorant of Christians, and it is for that type the B.B.C., on its own confession, functions. Still, one must admit that the crudity of the Canon matched well the crudity of the class of listeners for which he was catering. He was quite certain everyone will live after death, and they will go to either a pleasing or painful eternity. But that is not at all fair. God is one who is, theoretically, responsible for man being what he is. And that statement is not affected by man having a "free" will, or any other sort of will. God would know what he would do, and he might easily have prevented man taking the wrong corner.

Even a Canon of the Church should see this much. Of course, if a man had been so built as to do what is right instead of doing what is wrong, there would not be an excuse for the multitude of parsons who adorn the earth. Parsons are as much dependent upon wrong-doers for a living as doctors are upon sick people. The distinction here is that the doctor counts a success when he can say to his patient, "I shall not want to see you again." The parson says, "You must be sure and visit me regularly so long as life lasts," and counts all who do not come for treatment a dead loss. Or, to put the matter in another form, with medical science a man is to be congratulated when he does not further need a doctor. In religion, the "sicker" the spiritual patient is the more gratified is the priest.

A provincial paper raises the question whether it is likely or possible for Christian parents to trust the education of their children to Atheists? Likely, we should say, No; for Christian parents are not, as Christians, so much concerned with the education of their children as they are that they shall grow up as supporters of this or that Church or religion. But there is no valid objection to Freethinkers teaching the children of Christians, provided that the teachers are qualified, and the parents think of the future of their children on a higher social level than the well being of this or that social level. To begin with, the children so taught would not have to unlearn quite so much as happens in many cases. They would accept religion when they met it, and that must happen if life and history is to be understood as a phase of human development. Their minds will be better ready to appreciate differences of opinion and estimate their values at something like their real social value. They would not be less ready to fight for ideas, but there would be a clarity of purpose and a greater possibility of a better understanding of human history. The evil of it is that one has to hammer into people's heads considerations that should be self-evident.

We should imagine that the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Malvern, does not find attendances at Church in a very flourishing state. At any rate, he believes that if the mountain will not come to him, he will go to the mountain. So he has set out to arrange for twenty-five services in twenty-five houses. His first job will be to find the twenty-five houses, but he says he has no intention of becoming an "ecclesiastical corpse." The man is determined, but is not likely to keep this house service going for any length of time. We should much like to know how he gets on. He will not find it difficult to find any number of people who do not attend church, but we are doubtful if he will find enough to make his church tolerably full.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- J. WOOD.—Thanks for paper; the pertinent part was all that mattered.
 - B. COOKE.—We are not at all surprised that your letter was not accepted by the paper in question. After printing the clotted bosh on "Signs in the Sky" it would have been too cruel for the editor to print a criticism of it.
 - C. MARTIN.—Your experience as to religion in the Forces endorses what we hear from many sources.
 - T. H. B.—Quite a lively discussion. Congratulations. We are hoping for better local work when this war—the active part of it—is out of the way. We agree with your judgment on the other matter. But it is well to remember that all who reject Christianity, or religion in general, are not, of necessity, Freethinkers. That requires a rather superior mental make-up.
 - C. M. LEWIS.—Thanks. Will be very useful.
- FOR "THE FREETHINKER."—D. Finlayson, 2s. 8d.

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SUGAR PLUMS

THIS is not exactly a "Sugar Plum" note, but we have no other place where we can put it; but just as we are going to press we hear of the death of Mr. H. Anderson of Leicester. Mr. Anderson has been connected with the Leicester Secular Society for upwards of thirty years, and for many years has been the secretary. No one could be more sincere in his devotion to Freethought, and his work was carried out with a cheerfulness that was delightful to note. The Society may not find it easy to find a successor, but the example of Mr. Anderson should spur the new secretary to his best. We shall feel that something is missing when we again visit Leicester.

A Mr. Richard Walters takes us to task because we do not handle Christianity with "respect." Well, why should we? A person who has any real self-respect for truth and common sense does not give respect for anything which he believes is either ludicrous or dangerous, or both. When Confucius was asked would he love his enemies, he replied: "What shall I give to my friends?" And he summed up the matter by saying he gave love to his friends and justice to others. That was the proper distinction well stated. We have not and never have had any respect for religion, Christian or other. We have found it interesting, but then we were always interested in finding how others come to reach conclusions different from our own. And when we find educated people claiming to believe ridiculous things, and labelling the ideas of savages as essential to civilised communities we give them justice. We reserve our respect for better men with better ideas.

This point of view was well put by Dr. Thomas Arnold, a famous father of a famous son, in his "Lectures on Modern History" published just over a century ago. He said: "To tax anyone with want of reverence because he pays no respect to what we venerate, is either irrelevant or is a mere confusion. The fact, so far as it is true, is no reproach, but an honour; because to reverence all persons and all things is absolutely wrong; reverence shown to that which does not desire it, is no virtue; no, not even an amiable weakness, but a plain folly and sin. But if it be meant that he is wanting in proper reverence, not respecting what is really to be respected, that is assuming the whole question at issue, because what we call divine he calls an idol; and so, supposing that we are in the right, we are bound to fall down and worship; so, supposing him to be in the right, he is no less bound to pull it to the ground and destroy it."

Now that seems to us to put the situation fairly and reasonably. We respect the right of every Christian to air as much foolishness as he mistakes for sense. But we also retain our own right to expose that foolishness by argument, by satire and by plainly expressed contempt. These are all weapons that have played a great part in the mental development of peoples, and it will be a sad day when that right is surrendered.

A word of recognition is due to the "Gorton and Openshaw Reporter," a Manchester weekly newspaper, for its generous and fair treatment of the late Alderman George Hall, not only in its obituary notice, in which lengthy mention was made of Alderman Hall's Freethought activities and connections, but also in its report of the funeral. No attempt was made to conceal the purely secular nature of the cremation service, and a lengthy extract was printed from the address by Mr. F. J. Corina, outlining very clearly the nature of the Freethought philosophy. It was also stated that "no prayers or hymns were in the service." Such honesty of treatment stamps the newspaper as being in a category rather higher than most—and perhaps it also illustrates that when Freethinkers, taking part in public life, have the courage to make their Freethought known, newspapers will also develop sufficient courage to pay them the honour and respect which they deserve.

A very useful controversy on the value of religion has been running through the Birmingham Press. The letters published are lively and to the point. We note our old friend Burgess among the contributors. We should like to see the general Press used to a greater extent than it is at present.

The Dean of St. Paul's verger is retiring. This is not a world-shaking occurrence, but we chronicle it because the verger says he remembers the time when the Cathedral was packed and late comers had to stand. To-day, unless there is a "show" on, such as a visit by the King and Queen, who are "advised" to attend as part of the show, the late comers have a very fine collection of empty seats from which they may satisfy their choice. It should be said, however, that the lack of worshippers does not affect the number of officials or their salaries. And, in common with all these Cathedrals, there are some very nice pickings for the Lord's anointed. Some of these plums run to a thousand a year, and often in return it means only a few sermons.

As a kindred note, it may be pointed out that the decay of religion has also affected homes of ideas that are discredited in other places—the public schools. Originally all, or nearly all, the "Heads" were clergymen. Now quite a number of headmasters are laymen. They are, of course, professing Christians in this free country; they would not otherwise be appointed. It is said that only twenty-four out of eighty-nine headmasters are ordained. The schools also used to be a very comfortable place where the weaker intellectual qualities found it possible to get a job in the lower branches of the religious business.

APPLES AND ACCIDENTS

IT has for a long time been one of my contentions that the "man in the street" has never been quite so dumb and asinine a creature as he is made out to be by those superior persons who love to talk down to others, often from a pedestal of narrow specialisation so slender in its main stem that a good breath of common sense can set it wobbling, and occasionally blow it completely over.

The man in the street is a little dumb, of course, or he would not tolerate being talked down to as he does; sometimes he also suffers from numbness, commencing in the region of the neck and extending upwards. But I am looking at the position in a relative sense, and I maintain that, relative to the degree of dumbness and asininity displayed by his so-called superiors, the man in the street is not unduly afflicted. I would rather say that he shares in a common affliction, exhibited as much by his superiors as by him.

A pretty example of what I mean was contained in a recent Brains Rust session, where several people, discussing the question of whether or not fruit trees should be grown alongside our highways, talked quite a lot of bilge about the "moral" problem involved—whether young people would steal the fruit; and soon all sorts of mealy-mouthed "moral" aspects were raised, some of them betraying highly sensitive and well-developed private property complexes (as though private property could exist on a public highway). But it did not occur to any of these brain-rusters that the moral question would settle itself. The whole of their pedestal philosophy, I feel sure, could have been extinguished at a single puff by one of our ordinary men or women in the street, who, during the mental meanderings of their aerial advisers, must have twigged at once that, if apples were grown on the highway, and were easy of access, only hungry people would feel inclined to pick them? And who better than such people should be allowed to pick them? Apples scarce, let's have some more; but who cares about apples galore! Life is that way. And no self-respecting boy would think of robbing an apple tree on the roadside, though I venture to think that the ancient art of orchard-raiding would go on with the same vigour as of old.

With similar superiority to the apple-apologists of the B.B.C., some of our newspaper brain-rusters have been discussing the question of road accidents. The problem arose as to how our children could be trained to use the roads and to behave with road-sense. Various superior theories were put forward, but it did not seem to occur to any of the theorists that, in addition to education in road-sense, there was needed the further essential of the facilities for providing that education. So many people talk of the need for this or that form of education without making it clear how school time is to be provided without affecting other necessary subjects. Consequently, such desirable training as road-usage often goes by the board, or at best is squeezed into the curriculum of a school in a fashion that renders it ineffective.

Now I feel sure that if we asked the man in the street to find a place in the school programme for such training he would be less dumb than many of his superiors. The man in the street happens to be the one whose children are usually knocked down, and with a soundness of judgment born of his own recognition of what proved to be most useful and least useful in his own education, he would start at the top of the school bill and knock out the first half-hour or so, which is devoted to religious instruction; or, in other words, to learning the rules of the road leading to the next world.

Having wiped out the heavenly highway code, he would substitute the earthly highway code, recognising that, if his children wish to enter heaven at the proper age of three score years and ten, they must learn first things first. No doubt those

very superior people, the parson and the religiously minded teacher, would reply that it just couldn't be done; that children must be taught to have faith and to trust in God before anything else. And they could quote the supremely superior authority of Mr. Butler and his Education Bill, which put so much store by the heavenly highway code that that feature of education (!) has to be improved at once, without waiting for the end of the war. At this majestic show of superior authority the man in the street might be troubled a little by that numbness of the neck upwards that I mentioned. After all, Cabinet Ministers, parsons and (some) teachers are a little awesome—until you understand them.

But a persistent man in the street might even then stand up to them and argue that teaching the earthly highway code fulfilled God's purpose better than the heavenly highway code because it would not only produce traffic-conscious children, but in a short time traffic-conscious road-users of all varieties, in view of the fact that children grow up; and that such people would live more safely and happily, thus preserving the Great Design.

Probably he would then be told that only parsons, teachers and Cabinet Ministers, as superior people, understood the Great Design and God's purpose, and that he must do as the superior people told him because common people cannot understand God's will. If he continued to argue after that he could be prosecuted as a "Red" or something of that kind, or they could get his boss to sack him and put him on the dole.

Then the heavenly highway code could remain, triumphant but treacherous, and God's will could express itself without further interference, while little children were suffered to go unto Jesus by the short-circuit route of a bang in the back from a ten-tonner. And our superior people could still hold up their hands in holy horror and say, "We should teach our children road-sense at school—but not at God's expense."

Curious how thoughts wander! This article started with an apple. But then, so did the rest of mankind's troubles.

F. J. CORJINA.

TELL ME, ARCHBISHOP—

Our God's a mighty god of war,
Well-pleased with dripping human gore;
But Jesus, is no soldier-son,
He never drew a sword or gun.

By all I've heard, by all I've read,
Of all the words that Jesus said;
He never raised a hand to fight
But let the wrong defeat the right.

And if to-day he came on earth,
Of German or of British birth,
What would he say, what would he do?
Tell me, Archbishop, tell me true.

—C. G. L. DU CANN.

"THE MOTHER OF GOD." By G. W. FOOTE. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

"MATERIALISM RESTATED." By CHAPMAN COHEN. With chapters on "Emergence" and the "Problem of Personality." Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

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"THE RUINS, OR A SURVEY OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF EMPIRES," to which is added "THE LAW OF NATURE." By C. F. VOLNEY. A Revision of the Translation of 1795. with an Introduction. Price 3s.; postage 2d.

THE CARPENTER CENTENARY

(Concluded from page 319)

interest, no pleasure; who returns home to find his children gone to bed, has his supper, and worn out and weary soon retires himself, only to rise again in the morning and pursue the same deadly round, and who leads a life thus monotonous, inhuman and devoid of all dignity and reality simply because he is hounded to it by the dread of starvation. The big commercial man who knowing that his wealth has come to him through speculation and the turns and twists of the market fears that it may, at any moment, take to itself wings by the same means; who feels that the more wealth that he has, the more ways there are in which he may lose it, the more cares and anxieties belonging to it; and who to continually make his position secure is, or thinks himself, forced to stoop to all sorts of mean and dirty tricks. Over the great mass of people the same demon spreads its dusky wings. Feverish anxiety is the keynote of their lives."

It is still true—though "dull, apathetic anxiety" would be better. But the British wage-slave has either a building society mortgage on his house or a few miserable War Savings Certificates, and is not going to revolt. A petty capitalist himself, he believes that the next order of petty capitalist to himself (to which order he aspires either for himself or his children) has greater joys, and so *ad infinitum* to Lords McGowan, Nuffield and their type. The Atlantic Charter of Churchill and Roosevelt may talk "freedom from fear," but every sensible man of the world knows that when the fears of war end the fears of peace (more subtle and more deadly to the soul) will begin.

The passage I have quoted shows both the excellencies and deficiencies of Carpenter. He does not think deeply enough; he has a defective sense of style; and while he is not unreadable, his monotonous and level seriousness does tend to boredom. For instance, it is not "simply" dread of starvation that keeps the wage-slave at work; it is partly habit, partly the convention of his little world, for what would mother and wife say if George did not go to the factory as usual? It is also gregariousness: the instinct of the herd; and there are other complex causes instead of the one simple cause which Carpenter assumes. Posterity will not read Carpenter as Ruskin will be read; and this is a pity.

Carpenter wrote a successful Socialist hymn, "England Arise," which gained great popularity; but since England has been engulfed in the British Empire, as well as in Scotland—every hotel register tells us that the English exist no longer, Britons having taken their places—this, too, is out-moded. However, as Bernard Shaw quotes it at the end of his play "On the Rocks," where the unemployed "can do nothing but sing, to an accompaniment of police-baton thwacks, Edward Carpenter's verses," it may be remembered as long as Shaw's political comedy lasts.

Carpenter was not in the exact sense of the words either a philosopher, a political or social economist, a mystic, a poet, a prophet, or even a populariser. But compounded of all these, he was a memorable man; and he was, above all things, himself. "I can safely say," he declared in his old age, summing up his life-work, "that I have done the thing primarily and simply because of the joy I had in doing it and to please myself." No better reason can be given for doing anything; and this is probably the true motive for most human words and actions.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

Let us be gentle with critics; so often they have nothing but their ignorance wherewith to measure the quality of the thing advertised.

OBITUARY

HARRY CHARLES WHITE

The tragic death of Harry Charles White will come as a shock to many Freethinkers, especially in the West Ham area. Whilst swimming, he became entangled in weeds and was drowned. An enthusiastic Freethinker, he joined the West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. when a young man and soon took his place as a front-line member. As a lecturer, musician, M.C. or help in any capacity, so long as it was for the movement, it was a labour of love, well done, and with a buoyancy of spirits that made him a popular and valuable right hand man. He was 50 at the time of death and leaves a widow and three children. Our sympathy and grief is with them in their great loss. The remains were cremated at Woking Crematorium on Friday, August 18, where before an assembly of relatives and friends, among the latter being Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Warner, representing the West Ham Branch N.S.S., a secular service was read 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. 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

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Birmingham): Sunday, 3.30, Mr. T. MILLINGTON—"Morality and Conduct."
- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): Sunday, 6.45, Mr. J. V. SHORTT will lecture.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Various Speakers.
- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Debate. Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. A. REILLY.
- Enfield (Lancs.): Friday, August 25, 7.30, Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
- Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market, Memorial Corner): Sunday, 7.0, Messrs. T. W. BROWN and J. W. BARKER will lecture.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields): Sunday, 3.0, Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
- Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market).—Sunday 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.
- Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. MOSLEY.
- Oswaldtwistle (by Public Library): Thursday, August 31, 7.30, Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
- Read (Lancs.): Wednesday, August 30, 7.15, Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
- Worsthorne (Lancs.): Monday, August 28, 7.30, Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

WANTED

The Christian Sunday, by A. D. McLAREN. A Heretic's Thoughts on Christianity, by "UPASAKA." Letters to a Country Vicar, The Foundations of Religion, Religion and Sex, Letters to the Lord—all by CHAPMAN COHEN. Address: Box 12, Pioneer Press, 2/3, Furnial Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4.

THE RATIONALISTIC SPIRIT AND ACTION

IV

"There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."—RUSKIN.

IN Turgenev's "Dream Studies" there is a word-picture of two beautiful youths walking together in embrace: one dark, pale, sombre, the other fair, bright, joyous; and they are presented as symbolical of life itself—always linked to the twin urge of hunger and love. As in organic nature, so with human nature, these twin factors are behind the basic activities we class as economic. To find at once the means of providing food, clothing, shelter, and for the preservation and rearing of offspring; to provide these in an ascending scale of desire and satisfaction—from the wants of the rudest savage to the highest accessories and refinements of civilised usages and art.

First as regards the criterion of wealth. Remarks J. S. Mill: "Everyone has a notion sufficiently correct for common purposes of what is meant by wealth. It is no part of this treatise to aim at a metaphysical nicety of definition where the ideas suggested by a term are already as determinate as practical purposes require. . . . To be wealthy is to have a large stock of useful articles or the means of purchasing them." . . . Yet it is on a precise understanding of what we include under this term that the advancement of material well-being depends—the kind and quality of the things we desire. With a clear conception herein, our next concern is their production and distribution through the community.

The *soi-disant* science of political economy was fostered in this country during the last century or so by thinkers who were, in the main, sceptics as regards religion. It sprang from an interest in human society and welfare as an object of enthusiasm in lieu of the mystical realm of theology. Some of its exponents, however, adopted the assumption that there was a form of orthodoxy in this connection, and they had discovered it. A similar feeling animates certain of its revolutionary votaries of an opposite camp. In its dynamical aspect, no subject is less suited for dogmatic approach. Broadly considered, the only defined economic "laws" are either "laws of nature" or enhanced modes of practical utility. They refer to the means of amplifying natural resource and fertility by observation of their process and its assistance by scientific method; or the adaptation of material to some service or article of use in the least costly way, measured in time, labour and capital; and in the exploitation of new material combinations by technical research.* By such methods, where a few bushels of corn were won from the soil as the meagre results of medieval agriculture some thirty or more bushels may now be garnered. Where small and lean kine was what the farmer showed we have to-day the massive livestock of all orders: the splendid horses, the varieties of poultry; the range of fruit, flowers, vegetables—a product of selective breeding and cultivation.

"Nature is made better by no mean,
But Nature makes that mean."

A similar cultural approach applies to the whole layout of industrial production. It gives a lead to an exact appreciation of wealth *per se*; a matter distinct from the mechanism of production and exchange, which grows in complexity with the expansion of material civilisation. Much of economic dissertation is concerned with this means at some given time, with industrial and commercial statics—continually affected by mutation and change. Many of the most controverted issues resolve into

* The use of chemistry in the invention of "plastics" is an illustration.

matters of public or private advantage: questions such as the basis of currency and taxation; should private property in land continue; or the State assume direct responsibility for material prosperity. . . . These things have no finality in themselves. What imports us here are fundamentals.

Industry is one and interdependent, and manufacture, mining or agriculture are but convenient divisions of its process. Manufacture consists in utilising the material of Nature—the primal source of sustentation, wool, cotton, wood, clay, what not, for every requirement in garments, dwellings, furniture, tools, utensils. Trade is moving these things about and exchanging one product for another; facilitated to-day in its wider aspect by modern invention. And the gravamen of wealth from a humanist regard lies in the quality of the things produced and the general desire and taste which induce their creation to support and enhance expanding weal and welfare. This is shown in the nature of the life it is sustaining; the sort of men, women and children—their physical, mental and moral stature it serves to rear and nurture. In (its vocation, therefore, two leading factors enter. First is a virile people, possessed of a cultivated sense of its wants and satisfactions. Then there comes its aptitude for making or raising the commodities it needs and the general character of output. The higher the quality the greater the technical skill involved in execution (even with machine methods), the larger the reward availing to the worker himself. Hence we get a realistic interpretation of the "economy of high wages." Third, in return to the same end there will obtain a movement of contingent prosperity in a recurring cycle; high demand and reward—the nobler arts of living extended, in contrast to its antithesis of low or inferior demand and remuneration.

A nation possessed by such a concept of wealth would be consistently alert as to the amenities which subserve whole or healthy existence. It would preserve as a matter of course exceptional aspects of the countryside and beauty as a trust for public delight: where the National Trust in being has done such excellent work. The sense of æsthetic fitness in things would be implicit in its action and purview. Such maladjustments as slum areas, smoke pollution, unwholesome conditions of labour would be impossible of continuance. Between dirt, ugliness and industrialism there is no necessary connection. We have discovered that light, sunshine, pure air, personal and communal cleanliness aid production and the physical efficiency of the worker of every grade. Nor can any "exchange value" we put upon such desiderata, which extends to all sound modes of scientific meliorism indicated in the proposed National Medical Service.

So in relation to the more recreative side of action, it will accord with those cultural elements concerned to promote the Arts that minister to this service, and will readily co-operate with kindred associations such as C.E.M.A., or the organisation of dance and song by the folk themselves as with community drama. Neither will it ignore the call of the open air; its manly games, sport and pastimes. . . .

As the world tragedy draws to a close, devotees of the aim we have exposed will be resolute to ensue it as the one foundation to bring cosmos out of chaos. And we will leave the outlook on a note from the spiritual aura of English song:—

"Star of Faith the dark adorning
All through the night,
Leads us fearless toward the morning
All through the night.
Though our hearts be wrapt in sorrow,
From the hope of dawn we borrow
Promise of a glad to-morrow
All through the night."

AUSTEN VERNEY.