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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

In Defence of God

IT has always been a favourite pastime of mine to get hold of an idea, wise or foolish, useful or useless, carry it to a logical conclusion, and then note where we had got to. Another source of interest has been to imagine that certain things exist, even though we know quite well they do not. Both of these plans really help one to understand more clearly where one stands. That may help us more accurately to value both our own position and the position of others. Wisdom does not always come by way of hard thinking. The existence of one of the wisest and best-known lines of Burns came, not from burning the midnight oil, but from watching a louse crawl over the bonnet of an over-dressed woman in church. It was this that gave birth to:—

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us,
It would frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion;
What airs in dress an' gait wad lee' us,
And ev'n devotion.

Research would certainly show that many of our wisest conclusions owe their being to trifling occurrences. If we cannot always find "books in the running brooks," we may, with Gilbert, discover "wisdom in the folly of a fool." Even the New Testament's "Much learning doth make thee mad" can help to throw light on the attitude of the earliest and most authentic attitude of the primitive Christians towards learning. I doubt whether the accumulation of mere learning has ever made a man wise, but the capers of a learned idiot must often have strained the patience of those who could not suffer a fool gladly. And so far science seems unable to establish a relation between quantity of brain and intellectual capacity.

We have not really wandered away from our original idea which we had in commencing these notes, although some readers may form that opinion. We are aiming at putting before Christian readers a view of their religion which they are not likely to get from many papers outside "The Free-thinker." We want them to imagine that God really does exist. We may also assume that God has feelings and ideas that are at least as good and as wholesome as those man has. We must indeed think of him acting as we do in order to secure what our armies mean when they talk of establishing a bridgehead. Christians tell us that God so far resembles us that he can be pleased or angry; he can help us in our troubles or punish us for our faults. In other ways he displays all the fundamental qualities of man. And when we assume that man is made in the image of God we are stating the existence of a general identity, for it is impossible to have man in the image of God without assum-

ing that God is also in the image of man. Whether God or man suffers most from the identity we leave an open question. The statement that the likeness has reference to "spiritual" qualities only we can set on one side. God and man are, in substance, identical. The Bible says that God made man in his own image, and God may well be annoyed when he takes a close look at his prototype. On the other hand, man has no cause for over-elation when he looks at God's character.

We may assume, then, that God exists; also that he is not lower than man—an ideal man. We may also assume that he is one who dislikes continuous flattery, as Disraeli would have said, when laid on with a trowel; and that God is tired of being told that he is good, wise and benevolent, just and powerful, while his own special creation is as full of "sin" as a sieve is with holes, and men are powerless to do anything decent without a miracle being performed. As a matter of fact, neither God nor his followers come through the ordeal of criticism well, even from their own side. The character the Christian gives himself would never get one a post in even a newspaper office.

A body of followers, weak and incapable of behaving decently without a miracle occurring; a God who stands in relation of parent to child but will do nothing to help them unless they continually drench him with praise, and even then does nothing greater or better than can be done without his assistance, and ends by creating a situation that brings credit to neither side. It is not surprising that the orthodox position of God's followers should be on their knees with their eyes shut. If Christians would, where religion is concerned, just stand up with their eyes open——?

God and the Archbishop

Now let us forget both the God of history and the God of the Churches, and take it that God is as good and as intelligent as a really decent man. That is the highest compliment we can pay him. I don't know anything that is really better than a good man—unless it is a good woman. Then God will do what he can to help mankind, will be sympathetic to those who do wrong, remembering that if he had made man differently his conduct might be better than it is. We may further assume that there really is a future life, and that the dead go direct to heaven for judgment. Let us then assume that there arrives in heaven a Christian of standing, say, an Archbishop. I select an Archbishop because he is a nice mixture of the heavenly and the earthly, also because he is selected in the first place by the Prime Minister, then by God, and it may be noted that God has never been known to question the judgment of the Prime Minister. That is the highest praise that can be given to either. Finally, the scene is in heaven and God is face to face with one of his Archbishops.

God: Who are you?

Archbishop: I am the Very Reverend Dr. Drywater, Archbishop of Blaketown. I have come here straight from the earth.

God: Really, I have never heard of you, but then I am very busy helping people.

Archbishop: But it was you who called me to the post of Archbishop. You selected me out of several Bishops.

God: I have no recollection of having done so. Perhaps one of my angels has been hoaxing you. There is in fact only one Church in which I interfere with regard to appointments, and that is the oldest one. But then I only select one person; afterwards he fixes all the rest. But I understood that it is the Prime Minister who appoints the Archbishops, either he or the King, or both of them acting together. No, I simply decline to be responsible for you Archbishops.

Archbishop: But I felt your call, and when I felt it I prayed to you for strength to carry out my duties—while my wife was arranging for the removal of some of our things to my new home.

God: There is evidently a mistake. Perhaps it is one of the tricks of my old rival Satan. And it is quite a common thing for people to mix the two of us up in such a way that he prevents my getting here a great many I should like to see. But never mind; what do you want?

Archbishop: I have come to confess that I am a miserable sinner.

God: Of course, I shall have to look up your record, but I wouldn't bother about that. Our arrivals have been considerable, and you have on earth a maxim that beggars cannot be choosers.

Archbishop: But I know that I am a sinner and without your help I shall not be deemed worthy of a seat near the throne.

God: Will you tell me why you are so insistent in having yourself labelled a sinner? All the Christians who come here start off with the confession that they are sinners and unworthy of being in Heaven. Surely *all* Christians cannot be bad. They can't all be of your brand: I wonder whether I shall ever meet a Christian who is bold enough to tell me to my face that he is good enough to deserve a front seat before the throne, and therefore demands one as his lawful right? If some Christians of that character would come here I would meet them gladly. I might even anoint them.

Archbishop: But it is part of the Christian religion that all human beings are cursed in original sin.

God: What original sin?

Archbishop: The curse that you placed on every child that came into this world after you had created Adam and Eve. Only you can wipe away that stain.

God: I have heard that before, but it is just nonsense, downright criminal nonsense. More, it is insulting to me. Do you think that because so helpless an ass as Adam did something I told him not to do that I am foolish enough or vindictive enough to curse every child that has been or will be born? What for? Don't you see that it would be playing directly into the hands of Satan. Besides, I made both Adam and Satan, and if I had made Adam stronger and Satan weaker things would have turned out differently. I am as much to blame as anyone.

Archbishop: But if Adam had never sinned there would never have been a Christian Church, and certainly no one

would have attained the position I hold. Without "sin" the Christian Church would never have existed; no one of my rank would have ordered the people to pray to you. There would have been no one to sing your greatness.

God: Well, so much the better. When I made man I soon wished he would behave better than he did, but I certainly did not want all his offsprings to be bad also. Where would have been the sense of making *all* men sinners? No one but a brute would have arranged that, and none but a fool would have tried so hard to stock the land for Satan. I can see now that I ought to have made Adam so that he would develop a taste for knowledge. It would have made him either less curious or more intelligent.

Archbishop: But surely the fall of Adam was part of your plan, and also your son should die a criminal's death so that you might forgive those who repented. Also—

God: Stop here. You believe I would not help humanity unless my son, my only son—the only member of a real family I have had—unless my son died a painful and ignoble death?

Archbishop: That has always been my belief. Besides—

God: Stop, you mean skunk, stop and get out of here as quickly as possible. I have had enough of you and your kind. Henceforth I will throw open the gates of Heaven to those who do *not* spend their time praising me. My visitors may be fewer than they are now, but their quality will be better. At any rate, I will prove my quality, not by punishment, but by my welcome because they have not hesitated to say what they thought of the God you held up for admiration. It is not I who have to save these people: it is they who will do something to save me.

But will they come when I invite them? I do not know. So many of the best men and women have gone to Hades—thanks to you and your kind—that they may wish to join their friends. Thanks to you and yours, Lucifer has had the pick of men and women for thousands and thousands of years, and I doubt that many of them would care to mix with you and your friends that are here. Now I understand the full meaning of "Heaven for climate, hell for company." Anyway *you get out*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

AN ANTIDOTE TO ANTI-SEMITISM

IN a series of brief biographies, Paul H. Emden has presented a most illuminating survey of Jewish services to civilisation and culture in Britain. This informative volume, "Jews of Britain" (Sampson Low, 1944), covers an extensive field and reveals the influence of Israel in art, science, banking, commerce, literature and education. The work proves that much of the popular prejudice against Jews is animated by sectarian animosity and insular ignorance. That the Jews, like others, have their black sheep is not disputed. Doubtless the sanguinary persecutions, both past and present, have tended to sharpen the wits of the sufferers. For centuries the less aggressive and more refined Jews have been extensively eliminated, and those who have successfully withstood their assailants have tended to survive. Natural selection, here as elsewhere, operates, and Gentiles may sometimes pay a penalty for ruthless persecutions in the past.

Nor has the persecuting spirit been confined to Christianity, for the treatment of Spinoza and other bright intellects by orthodox Jews disproves that. Indeed, apart from Buddhism in

its purer forms, no religion has been free from intolerance. Still, Freethought is very general among educated Jews to-day, especially in Western Europe and the United States.

The great "Oliver Cromwell not only allowed the few Jews residing in England to remain, but to openly profess their faith. Emden intimates: "It was in this typical English way that after an absence of 365 years Jews returned officially to England. Cromwell had never formally authorised the re-settlement; he had connived at it, and until the reign of Charles II, who in 1664 confirmed the privilege tacitly granted by Cromwell, the Jews had no legal status in England."

Raphael Meldola has been ranked as the greatest Jewish man of science who ever served in Britain. He was eminent in several departments of science, especially in that of chemistry. He was a leading entomologist; a convinced evolutionist and Rationalist; an intimate friend and correspondent with Darwin, and the discoverer of the aniline dye termed "Meldola's blue."

Another Jew who made invaluable contributions to science was Ludwig Mond, who, like Meldola, had outgrown the Jewish creed.

Chaim Weizmann rendered priceless services to Britain at a critical period during the first World War. In 1915 there was a serious shortage of acetone, essential to the production of T.N.T. (trinitrotoluene). "The deadlock," states Emden, "had come about in this way. Acetone was produced by the destructive distillation of wood; but when the urgent demand for high explosive for Navy and Army increased at a rate never before experienced in the history of warfare, it became disastrously clear that there was not enough timber to meet the demand." In this dilemma; Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, appealed to C. P. Scott, then Editor of the "Manchester Guardian," for help and advice, and Scott recommended the Minister to consult "a very remarkable professor of chemistry in the University of Manchester willing to place his services at the disposal of the State."

Weizmann was born near Pinsk in 1874 in what was then Russian Poland, and after Lloyd George's interview with Scott the chemist was invited to London. He undertook the onerous task and soon succeeded in converting the starch of horse chestnuts, of which there was a plentiful supply, into acetone, and thus a very serious shortage was overcome.

The Schusters are a remarkable Jewish family, although the present generation have forsaken the faith. Sir Arthur Schuster, the celebrated scientist, acted as adviser in several research departments during the first World War. Originally a banker, Schuster was attracted to science and was appointed Professor of Applied Mathematics in the University of Manchester, but later devoted his attention to physics. He was in charge of four solar eclipse expeditions and was the recipient of many honours both in Britain and abroad.

Until the late 19th century the ancient universities were practically closed to non-Churchmen, and, quite naturally, intellectual Jews were concerned in the creation of a non-sectarian college. The banker, Israel Lyon Goldsmid, was a firm friend of education. The intimate friend of James Mill, Ricardo and Brougham, he took a prominent part in founding University College, London. He liberally supported the protagonists of negro emancipation and rendered financial aid to Joseph Lancaster's educational endeavours. Also, he powerfully supported the penal reformers, and, as a genuine humanitarian, he was deeply solicitous to second all efforts to banish pain in operations by an extended use of anaesthetics. He had ample opportunities to watch this development; from University College his interest had been drawn to University College Hospital, "my hospital," as he called it; and both were under his constant care." Goldsmid was also one of the treasurers of Robert Owen's Philanthropic Society, and he owned the estate on which Owen's community and housing

experiment at Queenswood in Hampshire was initiated in 1839. Unfortunately, this laudable endeavour failed and came to grief in 1844.

The foundation-stone of London University was laid in 1827, and the new college was declared open to all denominations or none. The older universities demurred to the granting of degrees by London University, and reserved their own to those who subscribed to the Church of England oath, with the result that scientists so eminent as Sylvester and Hartog left Cambridge without a degree. Although Sylvester was a mathematician of the first rank and was, as Emden recalls, "Second Wrangler in 1837 and later received honours from learned societies—the Royal Society made him a Fellow in 1839, when he was 25, and awarded him the Royal Medal in 1861 . . . he could not graduate until the passing of the Universities Test Act in 1871."

The famous economist, David Ricardo, was by profession a stock jobber for the greater part of his career. A Jewish genius, destitute of any scientific training, he nevertheless ranks as in some respects the greatest economist of the 19th century, whose brilliant theories materially influenced both John Stuart Mill and Ferdinand Lassalle.

Like so many other celebrated Jewish families, the Ricardos came from Spain. Fleeing from the clutches of the Inquisition, they sought security in Italy, and then settled in Leghorn, a Marrano city of refuge for persecuted Jews. Later, in the 18th century, they emigrated to Holland's freer atmosphere, where they prospered. But as Amsterdam declined as the monetary centre of Europe, while England advanced in industrial and commercial importance, members of the Ricardo family crossed over to London.

David's father, Abraham Ricardo, was proud of his promising son and expected much from his abilities. But religion, as usual, clouded the fair prospect; for the father was morbidly orthodox, while the son proved indifferent to the Judaic cult. As Emden observes, "Independent in thought in every way, in his private concerns and later in his business affairs, David even as a young lad had begun to waver from the faith of his forefathers."

Ricardo's recusancy was intensified when he married a Quakeress who was herself disowned by the then austere Friends for her breach of their Marriage Code. Moreover, when Ricardo entered Parliament he took the official oath as a mere formality. With his sacrilegious marriage, all business transactions and social intercourse with his father came to an end. "Abraham Ricardo," writes Emden, "had the Prayers for the Dead recited for the renegade. No reconciliation seems to have taken place, and Abraham Ricardo had to bear the recurrent sorrow of one after the other of his many children abandoning their inherited faith."

So successful was Ricardo on the Stock Exchange that in 1819 he retired from business with a fortune of £500,000, an enormous sum at that time. All students of economics are deeply indebted to Adam Smith's *magnum opus* the "Wealth of Nations"; but this great pioneer study inevitably left much for future explorers, and another independent thinker, Walter Bagehot, has expressed the view that "It was Ricardo who made the first map; who reduced the subjects into a consecutive shape, and constructed what you can call a science."

Sir Sidney Lee, Israel Gollancz and other scholars are among the many other illustrious Jews met with in Emden's volume. This able biographer discounts several stories concerning well-known Jews that have obtained currency. Still, Emden himself is guilty of a preposterous misstatement. For when dealing with the metaphysician, the late Professor Alexander, he alleges (page 436): "It has been said of this distinguished thinker—the first British philosopher to attempt a system of philosophy—that by his austere life, kindness of disposition and devotion to science he, of all modern philosophers, most nearly suggested Spinoza."

Be this resemblance what it may, Alexander was most certainly not the first not merely to attempt, but to create a vast system of philosophy. It seems almost incredible that a Jewish man of letters has never heard of, or completely forgotten, Herbert Spencer's monumental achievement to which he devoted his life, his "Synthetic Philosophy." Beyond dispute, Spencer's evolutionary writings did almost as much to revolutionise the thought of the 19th century as the biological researches of the great Darwin himself.

Still, one trusts that the "Jews of Britain" will be widely read, as it is unquestionably one of the most important works dealing with the Jewish people published during recent years.

T. F. PALMER.

GEORGE E. MACDONALD

(1857—1944)

IN the death of George E. Macdonald last July, at the advanced age of 87, American Freethought lost one of its sturdiest supporters. Almost the whole of his long life was devoted to the Cause, and probably no other contemporary American Freethinker worked harder or more devotedly for the movement. He did little platform work, but his two volumes, "Fifty Years of Freethought," the story of the New York "Truth Seeker" from 1875, contain a mass of information which will prove most valuable for any future historian.

He was born in Gardiner, Maine, his father, Henry Macdonald, being later killed in the American Civil War. There were two sons destined for farm labour work, but labour of this kind appealed to neither. The elder brother, Eugene, had gone to New York as a printer, and soon came into contact with D. M. Bennett, who, after trying many ways of gaining a living, decided to publish a Freethought paper which he called the "Truth Seeker." The first number appeared in 1873, and it did not take Bennett long to get into his stride. A born controversialist and an indefatigable worker, he poured out attacks on Christianity and the clergy with great vigour and acuteness, and commenced, in addition, to publish the works of many of the great Freethinkers. Under the guidance of his brother, George Macdonald soon became an expert compositor, and, mostly through Bennett's prolixity, got his first lessons in the art of editorship.

But Bennett was in some ways a remarkable man, and he certainly knew how to attack the Christian superstition, as witness his published debates. The atmosphere of the "Truth Seeker" gave both the brothers Macdonald an unrivalled introduction into the many creeds and sects which had their birth in America, and it is to their credit that they did not succumb to any of them, but kept a level head—one of George Macdonald's principal characteristics. Bennett himself swallowed Spiritualism, and just before he died in 1882 he joined the Theosophists. He never found keeping the "Truth Seeker" going at all easy, and was at times ready to suspend it. He wanted "to sell out our business to someone who can run a paper without money and live upon air at the same time." George Macdonald, in noting this remark, drily comments: "A distant successor of Bennett has read those words with understanding." It never was easy to run a Freethought journal—not even in London.

That obscene rat, Anthony Comstock, made things hard for everybody with advanced ideas if sex was even remotely suggested, and he eventually managed to get poor Bennett into his clutches through his sending a pamphlet entitled "Cupid's Yokes" through the post. He was given a sentence of 13 months in gaol by a judge called Benedict, who seems to have had a blood brother in Judge North, who later sentenced

G. W. Foote for "blasphemy." There was great indignation in both cases, but both "criminals" had to serve their sentences.

While Bennett was in gaol, Eugene Macdonald took his place as editor and George became foreman of the compositors. In the meantime, he was both writing and delivering lectures here and there and cultivating a style which remained his own all through the years which followed. There was in it always that quiet chuckle which made it so readable—a humorous turn of phrase born with him and not easily acquired. George even burst sometimes into poetry, or at least clever verse. Later he commented:—

"I have often wondered how the writing game chanced to appeal to our family. Mother made the first venture; then my brother, and in the time I am now speaking of I felt the urge to take a few chances. We had no literary or more than literate antecedents; and not one of our kin, who were numerous, ever developed the writing faculty. . . ."

Bennett was eventually released and was given a great reception. George Macdonald, 40 years or so later, protested he wished to speak with extreme harshness of no one, but felt obliged to say of Comstock that no man he ever knew "touched the low level of this repellent blackguard" as a sneak and hypocrite. And it must have been a bitter pill to swallow for this beast to hear how Bennett's admirers got up a subscription to send him on a lengthy trip abroad. Bennett did not long survive his return.

Already George was becoming a power on the "Truth Seeker," and, young as he was, also a convinced Freethinker and proud of it. He was, however, perplexed at the way in which not a few of the old contributors to his paper returned to some form of belief, either in Theism, or Spiritualism, or Theosophy. We have had similar "conversions" here in England.

As soon as Eugene Macdonald became the editor of the "Truth Seeker," George added to his duties as foreman and proof-reader the role of assistant editor, and he seems to have had a very busy time. His work brought him into contact with almost all the notable Freethinkers of his day—Ingersoll, John E. Remsburg, Dr. E. B. Foote and his clever sons, S. P. Putnam, T. B. Wakeman, Benjamin R. Tucker and many others. To follow all these contacts is quite impossible in this short article, but they taught him that most difficult quality to acquire—tolerance. Freethinkers in America, as here, agree in denouncing the Christian superstition, but find it often difficult to agree on many other things. The team that helped his journal could have had no kindlier chief, no one more thoughtful—or tolerant.

In 1888 George Macdonald left New York for a while and married Grace Leland, who survives him with two sons. He tried to run a Freethought journal in San Francisco with Putnam, and later a paper called "The Eye"; but he eventually returned to New York and to his brother Eugene. He met G. W. Foote and Charles Watts when in 1896 they went to America, and wrote some very interesting impressions of the two English Freethinkers. In 1899 Ingersoll died—a very great loss to American Freethought, though it had already sustained many losses of important men and women like Putnam and Mrs. Ernestine Rose.

Early in 1909 came the death of Eugene Macdonald, and George took his place, in the end only relinquishing his editorship when he had reached just under four score years of age. About the year 1931 the "Truth Seeker" changed its format and became a monthly instead of a weekly.

George E. Macdonald not only wrote the history of American Freethought in the two volumes I have referred to, but also his extremely interesting autobiography, interspersed with shrewd, kindly and witty reflections on many aspects of our

social life. To them I send the reader if they want the details, for I cannot condense his 1,200 pages into two columns of this paper. In his long life he was a devoted soldier in the best of all Causes, but his sword was never used except with gentleness.

As Woolsey Teller, his colleague for many years, says: "Those who are beneficiaries of his work will gather round and place a wreath of memory on the bier of one who for 87 years lived a courageous and triumphant life." It is a befitting epitaph.

H. CUTNER.

ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCHES TOWARDS RUSSIA

IN spite of the courageous and outspoken articles of the Dean of Canterbury, which are like a Voice crying in the Wilderness, to the student of recent European history the unreasoning hatred for the Soviet Republics both from religious and political sources must be something of a mystery. No such antagonism existed in the case of Russia under the Czars, although no knowledgeable and fair-minded person can deny the enormous general improvement in that country since the Russian Revolution. All agree that the conditions of the "mujiks" were unspeakable under the Czars. To imagine that such a trouble-maker as Sir John Simon would have had the folly and the impudence to threaten war with the Republic if certain sabotaging English engineers (self-confessed) were not promptly released, would have uttered such threats against Czarist Russia is unthinkable; Simon's spite was directed only against the U.S.S.R.

One can imagine what the present state of Great Britain would have been if Hitler had not been foolish and treacherous enough to declare war against his former ally, who, if only neutral, might have altered the whole history of the world. One would have thought that our people owed the greatest debt to the U.S.S.R. as the saviours of England; but both from the political and religious standpoints "gratitude is a keen sense of favours to come," and all gratitude vanishes when the benefits cease.

It must be obvious that politics and religion—at least that of the Anglican Church in their hatred of Russia—must have something in common; and it may be instructive to ascertain what this common ground may be. To state that Russia is "Atheistic" (which is not true) is the ground, as the Churches allege, is simply so much "eye-wash" in the approved religious manner. The basic reason is that Russia is no longer a fruitful source for contributions from the faithful—and the stupid. The existing enormous wealth of the Churches, Anglican and Catholic, is sufficient testimony to the religious proficiency in the art of cadging, both now and in ages past. That the Catholic Church is the richer simply means that they have had a longer innings. All is grist which comes to the clerical mill, whether by "offerings," "indulgences" or "contributions from the faithful," coupled with such practices as simony, extortion and Government grants. It says volumes for the clergy "eye to the main chance" that the English Church recovered in about 400 years from the fact that burly Harry had his hand in the till. This "game of grab" extends from the Church as a whole to individual "incumbents" (brave word), who have the habit of pointing out in their church magazines that the contributors to "Easter offerings" are not expected to make any inquiries as to the destination of this money; it is regarded as the private plunder of the vicar. One is reminded of the advice given by a merchant to his son: "When you go into the world, get money; get it honestly if you can, but get it." The preachers of the Gospel of the Son of Man, "who had nowhere to lay his head," seem to have followed this advice most faithfully.

Time was when religions made wars and directly profited by them; but circumstances have altered, and now wars have a business basis—and in no instance was this more apparent than in revolutionary Russia, where the brigandage of Koltchak, Denikin, Kerensky and Wrangel was directly financed from the British Exchequer; war against a former ally. The cause was that certain British "magnates" had received exploiting concessions from Czarist Russia, and, with characteristic impudence, expected the Bolsheviks to honour these "obligations." In private life, no one buying a house would expect to saddle himself with the debts of the former owner; yet commercially this is expected, if reinforced with strong political backing.

The Christian Churches, whether Anglican or Roman Catholic, possess vast wealth, quite apart from begging, and Church estates are administered in the same way as other commercial and profit-making enterprises, the only difference being that Church revenues often originate from very unsavoury sources—witness the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the slum properties they hold. The Church of England is favoured in many ways. Church buildings pay no rates nor taxes. Churches on which no raid insurance premiums have been paid claim the right to being reinstated at the nation's expense, and as a prior charge. Whether they will succeed in this latter impudent demand remains to be seen; but much depends on the "political pull" which the Churches possess.

Churches and "big business" being thus closely interlocked, it is obvious that both would have a "thin time" in present-day Russia, which accounts for much of the prejudice against the U.S.S.R. in capitalistic and so-called "religious" countries. Atheism has nothing to do with the matter, as there is no such hostility on religious grounds against the many millions of "infidels" in countries, at least those which can be permeated by the Bible, the missionary, the gin bottle and the trader—always closely allied in any scheme of "civilisation" supported by the Christian religion. That is the reason why the U.S.S.R. is singled out for ostracism; and it is here where the ground for the next war may be sown, as in 1919-20. Russia, also, is the only European country which could receive, and absorb, a colossal indemnity in cash, goods, or service (the only three ways in which a vast indemnity could be paid) without fatally damaging its own internal economy. That is a major crime in the eyes of the capitalistic countries, even including Germany.

HERBERT CESCINSKY.

ACID DROPS

WHAT a pity it is that Field-Marshal Montgomery cannot keep the foolishness of his religion distinct from the technical quality of his war-making. In a broadcast to his men he very properly and justly praises the way they have fought. The men deserved the compliments paid them, and the leader the praise given him for his handling of the very trying situation he had to face. And it must be no light thing for a man to decide movements, the outcome of which are of so far-reaching consequence. But why not stop at that? Why drag in the nonsensical text, "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"? So far as anyone can see, "the Lord" has done nothing. He has, theoretically, held back fine weather, which must have cost the lives of many and cheered the spirit of the Germans. If our Field-Marshal is really on intimate terms with God, and he often speaks as though he is, he should remind him that his playing fast and loose with the weather is at least making many open their eyes.

To the ordinary man, that is, the non-religious man, Caruso, who was executed by the Italian authorities, would appear as just a greedy, vicious brute. But he was a good Roman Catholic and, according to "Reynolds," the Pope sent him, for consola-

tion of his last moments, his blessing and a rosary to cheer his last moments and, presumably, to secure him a good place in heaven. We are quite sure that the large number of distinguished men and women who are in hell would protest at his company being forced on them.

From the "Northern Whig," Belfast, we learn that there is some trouble over the important question whether it is lawful for children to be permitted to play games on Sunday. Judging from the type of Christianity that is prevalent in Belfast, we should say emphatically that it is not; and the "unco' guid" would, with the sanction of our own Lord Chief Justice and the Lord's Day Observance Society, produce much evidence to prove that much of the crime we have is derived from the fact that Sunday observance is on the decline. We are aware that statistics, reasonably handled, do not bear out the statement. But what are mere figures compared with our Sunday observance? It is true that Mr. J. H. Campbell, a member of the Belfast Juvenile Court, says that "It is not a sin for children to play on Sunday any more than to play on Monday." But that is absurd. It looks as though Mr. Campbell ought to be asked to send in his resignation.

"Psychic Times" has taken us to task very severely. It assures us that Spiritualism has always claimed to be a religion. Of course, "religion" is a very elastic word nowadays and may mean anything, and so will serve to cover a liking for spirits either aerial or liquid. But if this champion will look up the history of Spiritualism he will learn that in the past a great many have denied that it was a religion from the theological point of view, but simply asserted the continuation of individual life. The question of a god was left aside. Now it appears to cover any form of foolishness, and it is probable that Spiritualism is now treated by most as a religion. Why not? There is no law against folly in this country. The tax is on wisdom and common sense.

The Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Guy Warman, thinks that in the settlement of after-the-war problems many people may forget Christianity. We can assure the bishop, and others, that a great many men and women will get back into civil life with much altered ideas concerning the value of the Christian religion. By that time the many coloured lies of both the clergymen with the forces and those who are at home will find themselves facing many opponents who were formerly friends. There will be a decided slump in the Christian stock market.

Yet another Day of Universal Prayer is in the offing. This time it is for "religious education," which quite properly is separated from real education. The snag here is that there is really no such thing as "religious education." There is only instruction, and the distinction is vital. Education involves drawing out all that is in one's character. Instruction is the kind of training used by showmen who have animals on display. It is a pity that so many should take one as identical with the other.

As a celibate—in theory as well as in fact—Roman Catholic Archbishop Downey says men and women need education—he means instruction—in the matter of bringing up children. He finds that parents pamper children, without being alive to the extent to which children pamper parents. An example of this is in the way that thousands of boys and girls see through the foolishness of the religion of their parents, and yet pretend to still believe the ridiculous things they were taught. Unless children were so far considerate the loss of customers for the Churches would be much heavier than it is.

To ensure that only absolutely "sound" teachers are to teach in Roman Catholic schools, an institution has been formed with the high sounding title of "The Prospective Teachers Religious Examination." This body makes it impossible for anyone to enter a Catholic training college unless they obtain one of its Certificates, or already have a specified Religious Certificate. Prospective teachers must know their Catechism and, at least, a "Shorter" Bible History, and of course they would get short

shrift if the slightest taint of heresy crept into any other lesson whatever. Roman priests stalk the schools with as good a nose for heresy as any Gestapo agent has for anything taught in a German school savouring of anti-Nazism. And yet Roman Catholics protest when their beliefs are likened to Nazism!

And from the Protestant side we get the Northampton College of Technology dropping techniques for a while, and inaugurating a series of lectures specially designed for Sunday school teachers, lay readers and lay preachers, to cover the Old and New Testaments and Church history. In addition, there is to be a course in the Art school to make religious models and to illustrate Biblical scenes. It occurs to us that all this would provide a good chance for a Freethinker to join the classes and ask a few awkward Biblical questions. It might lead to being eventually expelled, but it would be good fun while it lasted.

We do not know what part "Indulgences" now play in the Roman Catholic religion, but it was once a source of large income to the Church of God. It will be remembered that the sale of Indulgences on a cash basis roused the ire of Luther and led to his break with the Church of God. But there are other forms of income that still play their part in the oldest and richest Christian Church in existence, which must bring in a very large sum of money. No fixed charge is made, as in the case of candles, which are lit to gain a specified favour from some of the Saints, but we take it that the larger the candle the more the Patron Saint is likely to be led to do what is asked. There used to be a paper in Australia which issued columns of information saying how many candles were burned for particular Saints and the answers—for having made a profitable sale of a house, finding work, etc. The pages read much like a patent medicine advertisement with grateful thanks from such as swallowed the concoction.

We were reminded of this traffic when we noted in the "Catholic Herald" for September 29 a number of acknowledgments from grateful believers. We do not believe that a charge is made for the Saints' names, but we may take it for granted that thank offerings, or expectations of favours to come, accompany the petitions to the Saints. Here is the list. It is headed "Thanksgiving Notices" and is placed under "Classified Advertisements":—

"Thanks to St. Jude for favours received (D.C.). Thanks to Mary and St. Jude for favours received (A.B.). Grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart, St. Francis, St. Joseph and St. Jude for successful effort (M.A.B.)" and so on.

Some of the ads. note that the advertiser promised the Saint, or group of Saints, publicity. This follows the line of the quack medicine vendor, and is obviously intended to stir up the Saints to extra efforts. There is no publication of those who pray for an advance in salary and then find they are "sacked." Only the hits appear in the "classified" advertisements of the "Catholic Herald." By the way, it would be worth knowing whether, when the Pope granted Mr. Churchill an "audience," the Pope promised to range the Saints on the side of the Allies? If he did, that should be published as widely as possible. It might drive the Nazis into immediate surrender.

It is only fools who will believe that the influential people who did so much to poison the public mind with regard to the new Russia all changed their opinions when the Soviet Government became our ally. They did not. They merely remained quiet, and there are already murmurs of the wrong kind at work. So we are pleased to find A. J. Cummings—who usually knows what he is talking about—warning us that, in spite of the great body of goodwill towards Russia, "there is a sour anti-Soviet bloc, inside and outside Parliament, on the look-out for every opportunity to discredit Moscow or to rekindle anti-Soviet prejudices." The warning is needed. And one must never forget that with this attempt one may always count the efforts of the Roman Church. We believe Mr. Cummings is well alive to this fact, but it appears to be a newspaper rule not to say anything that will seriously offend the Vatican and its supporters in this country.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

H. HARVEY.—We are afraid there is no likelihood of a complete form of the Editor's books and pamphlets. It would be rather expensive, in any case. The only chance we see is that someone takes it in hand who wishes to punish those who purchase the set.

T. W.—You take the matter too seriously. To be scandalised in the way you have been should be met with a smile; or if the other parties keep it up, with a laugh.

BENEVOLENT FUND, N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 4s. from Mr. S. C. Merrifield to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS

MR. COHEN will lecture in The Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow, to-day (October 15), when he hopes to meet old acquaintances and perhaps make new ones. "An Hour with the Gods" is an attractive subject and should make an interesting afternoon. The lecture begins at 2.30, doors opening at 2 p.m. Admission in free, and donation tickets may be had from Collett's Bookshop, 15, Dundas Street, Glasgow, C. 1, and from 75, George Street, Glasgow, C. 1.

Members of the Forces, either sex, passing through London are invited to call at the offices of the National Secular Society for information on any religious or non-religious questions in which they are concerned or interested.

Lord Elton may be classed as one of the pets of the B.B.C.—where the interests of religion are concerned. We are not surprised. Where religion is concerned he may be trusted to play a B.B.C. part. He finds no faults in religion, save such as Christians agree with; he has a number of religious acquaintances who tell him the same kind of yarn that has been hawked about for at least three generations, and he always meets men who "yearn" for God, and are never happy till they find him, although they lose him again before many moons have passed. He has just that degree of suavity that forms such an important feature in the outfit of the type of priest who is glad he is a layman, while laymen say he ought to have been a priest.

Here is a sample of Lord Elton in his religious best. In an article in the "Coventry Evening Telegraph"—we suspect one of those that are syndicated—Lord Elton asks whether it is true that modern youth is godless. This is one of those fatuous questions that marks the pulpit. He begins with the often quoted statement that only a very small percentage of the population goes to church. But somehow extracts comfort from the fact that these figures refer to the whole of the population, but

ignores the fact that if youth only was taking the count, the evidence against the Churches would be heavier. Next, with great ingenuity, he suggests that "the war has stirred up numbers of young men to talk about religion." (We agree with this, as a number of them are now regular readers of "The Freethinker," and they do talk about religion.) Lord Elton obviously wishes his sleepy readers to assume that taking more interest in religion is the equivalent of believing in religion. We can assure him that even the older people are not quite foolish enough so to read facts.

Quite in harmony with the religious policy of the B.B.C., Lord Elton says that "the darkest failures of our materialistic age has been the failure to teach an elementary knowledge of religious truth in the State schools." The foolishness of this amounts almost to imbecility. First, the darkest of our ages, say from the last quarter of the eighteenth century until the first half of the nineteenth, was exactly the period when religion was in full power, whilst the first seventy-five years mentioned saw the tremendous growth of the nonconformist societies, the spread of Sunday schools, and the huge development of missionary societies. Lord Elton should try again, and if he wishes to meet some of the youth who take a real interest in education, the pages of this journal will be open. That should be more effective than preaching to those who mostly are already Christians.

But in the course of his inquiry Lord Elton becomes unmistakably Christian. He met a young naval officer who told him that the youth under his control did not go to Church (he means before they joined the army, because in the army they are driven like sheep to church service) because they thought they ought not to go to church unless they were good, and by "good" they meant practising "sexual continence." That is very revealing, and it discloses more than any other thing—Lord Elton.

We are soon to have a greater measure of freedom than we have at present. The streets are to be better lighted; there is to be a greater choice of foodstuffs, and our political leaders are considering how much freedom we can have so that their own positions will be neither threatened or exposed. The B.B.C. is also preparing for one of its dashes for freedom. The Radio column in the Sunday "Observer" tells us that there is to be greater freedom of discussion. Aneurin Bevan has debated with Quinton Hogg, Lord Vansittart will with Kingsley Martin, and the small trader is to discuss with a representative of the big retailers.

The writer of the article, W. E. Williams, asks why we cannot learn "that we are to have on the air that other democratic liberty—perhaps the foundation one—of debating religion from premises that are not necessarily those of the Christian doctrine." Bless the man; the only direct opposite to religion is Atheism! Does he really think the B.B.C., with its avowed intention of keeping out anything that would shake the religious beliefs of anybody, will arrange a debate "Theism versus Atheism," with a real representative Atheist to be one of the disputants? That is certainly not the Christian idea of fair play. We think Mr. Williams must have been writing with his tongue in his cheek.

Bishop Liston, head of the Roman Catholic Church in Auckland, has protested to the Prime Minister against the introduction of a book into the schools because of the influence it will have on the children. As usual, this Catholic Bishop does not stumble at a lie more or less. The book seems to be used in the social lessons, so we presume it is not intended for the very young. But the Bishop is mad because there is no mention of God in the creation of the world, there is no mention of the "supreme book" (the Bible), and the outline of Christ's teaching is a "travesty." As in other places, the emissaries of the Roman Church are adepts in underhand work and shady influences, and it will be interesting to find whether the Bishop will get his own way or not. He will at least have one sympathetic official in this country: the Minister for Education, for he has just manoeuvred the legalising of the State schools in a way that fifty years ago he would have found impossible.

MR. SHAW'S POLITICAL STOCK-POT

Vices and Virtues

("Everybody's Political What's What?") By Bernard Shaw.
Constable & Co., Ltd.; 10s.)

I. ITS VICIES

MR. BERNARD SHAW'S latest book reminds one of a dish of "fruits of the sea" at Naples, in which dish anything marine from octopus to star-fish may appear. It is a hotch-potch containing bits of autobiography; excursions into economics and religion; expressions of purely personal opinion and prejudices; a pillorying of the Russian Professor Pavlov; and a hundred other ingredients of the wizard's cauldron. The whole is extremely vivid, entertaining and readable, containing as it does the truth, the part-truth and anything but the truth as well.

The work has been widely acclaimed throughout the whole English Press as a *tour de force* for a babe aged 88 years. But if an author is not wiser at 88 than at 65; and cannot write up to his past standard, he should retire as other workers do. There is no more case for senility in authorship than in any other fields—rather less; and critics must not be disarmed by an author describing himself as "a very ignorant old man." Very ignorant old men should plant the bergamot or grow roses, or contemplate the spectacle of approaching non-existence with appropriate emotions, or do something equally harmless to themselves and others instead of playing about with the dynamite of political and religious ideas.

The book has many virtues, like the present-day Voltaire who has written it, and not a few bad blemishes. To deal with its faults first. It is garrulous and repetitive, and should have been submitted to a competent sub-editor before publication. For instance, Sir Clifford Allbutt is made to tell us a trifling thing about scarlet fever—namely, that its cases differ—on page 245, and he is dragged up again on page 334 to say it again; and the 40 inoculations of Lawrence of Arabia are also a twice-told tale. There are others, I regret to say. There are also shocking misstatements of fact, as when Mr. Shaw says: "No ordinary criminal can be tried twice for the same offence." If he will come with me to the Old Bailey in any law term, I will show him ordinary criminals being tried twice or even thrice for the same offence whenever the jury disagrees at the first trial.

Another fault of the book is that it is *demodé*. If Mr. Shaw wants to see how such a book should be written in the modern manner, he should take up Robert Sinclair's devastating book on Metropolitan Man, where a specific official witness is called as evidence for every point in the effective and horrifying speech for the prosecution. My Shaw himself never calls any evidence. Consequently, he never convinces and never persuades. He makes "a brilliant opening speech"; and having opened his case sits down, or rather leaves the Court. Then he wonders why the jury of ordinary English men and women think he is playing with his case instead of fighting it, and refuse to take him as seriously as he desires and deserves.

He is foolish enough to believe—actually believe!—in overstating a case (he says people won't listen otherwise). If he had seen as many good cases lost through over-statement as I have, he would not believe that! Anyhow, he can take it from Quintillian and Cicero if he won't take it from me. Has he never heard of the still small voice following the earthquake and the whirlwind?

The worst fault of the book is its incorrigible literary romanticism. Utterly divorced from political realities as Mr. Shaw is, he deals with only the contemporary newspaper illusions, such as Marxism, Fascism and the like.

Take such political realities as Agriculture and Oil. Agriculture does not receive a paragraph of attention, though every

single man, woman and child depends absolutely upon it. Oil is never mentioned except as "palm oil" or corruption. As to war-time legislation being done by private trade associations and civil servants in secret conferences, and merely passed by Parliamentary old women, Shaw has no idea of such happenings! He doesn't know the political world he lives in. There are only three references to Churchill, all cursory, one literary and none to his Premiership; 11 to Jesus; 25 to Hitler; 15 to Mussolini; 17 to Napoleon; 14 to Shakespeare. Literary and Scriptural allusions are innumerable. But not a single Blue Book or official document is ever cited. Mr. Shaw, after all his great practical experience and his membership of the Authors' Society, does not even know his business as an author well enough to insist on a list of his works being put in this book for the benefit of his new readers—a lesson that admirable author Arnold Bennett taught me; and one distrusts Mr. Shaw's pontifications on economics after noting that!

All these blemishes I could forgive. One other I cannot. Namely, that this book blows the thesis of "Back to Methuselah" sky-high, and I had hoped that thesis might be true. For this work is not better than its predecessors: it shows no advance; it is chiefly a repetition, and one fears that one has got as far, not as thought, but as Shaw's thought, can reach. This is grief. So, after all, not by lengthening life can we increase our wisdom, though by increasing our wisdom we may lengthen life. But—

"From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driveller and a show."

The book is essentially inferior to the more pedestrian "Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism," and even to the religious squib of "The Black Girl." One is not consoled by the fact of its extraordinary verve and readability, for, after all, daily popular newspapers of the worst and most sensational character exhibit these traits. And England expects that Mr. Shaw on every publication day will do his duty by being readable. But he ought to do more than his expected duty; he ought to do better than merely tickle the ears of the groundlings by easy readability.

After all, Mr. Shaw is our greatest Freethinker. Has he got as far as Free Thought can reach? Has he tired of image-making and image-breaking? He is older than Voltaire, and he has given us nothing better than "Candide"; perhaps no one could do anything better of its kind than that masterpiece. But at 90 the late little Lord Halsbury was Lord Chancellor of England and at his mental best. Let us hope Shaw will improve in his 90s. It is tragic to think that he has reached the end of his mental development.

No reviewer in England except a heartless fellow like myself will be hard on a patriarch who tells us that in his second childhood he is producing what is essentially, after all, a work of *belles-lettres*. It is too much like smacking the tender infant in the kindergarten. As Shaw once prophesied, the literary patriarch may "dodder and dote and platitudinise and pot-boil," and the noble army of reader-martyrs will sing the "Te Deum," when, in my opinion, they ought to be howling the "Nunc Dimittis." But Shaw, like the Dickens' character, is "tough and devilish sly"; he, in the current jargon, can "take it." He is not to be snuffed out, like John Keats—not even by flattery. He knows perfectly well that this book is no real guide to politics for a Disraelian Vivian Grey, and that its title is misleading clap-trap under which he has dished up an Italian *minestrone* of his old ideas.

In a second article I hope to deal with the virtues of the book, which are much greater and more important than its vices. Ten people have bought the book on my recommendation to date, so it is necessary to justify that social expenditure—as Mr. Shaw, being a preacher of collectivism while vigorously practising egoism, will agree.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

THE SOLDIER IN LITERATURE

"Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."

—SHAKESPEARE, "Othello."

ALTHOUGH life has been called a battlefield, and all histories are filled with records of wars, the soldier has not had more than his share of attention at the hands of authors. Homer's "Iliad" contains incomparable passages on the warriors of the old world, which lift the mind as mountain air refreshes the body. Plutarch, in his famous "Lives," writes of ancient heroes in such noble language that his record has been taken to the hearts of countless thousands of strenuous men through many centuries. Shakespeare, too, has reproduced with the happiest effect "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome," and his "so-potent art" filled his plays with unforgettable portraits. Recall the awestruck recognition by Brutus of great Caesar's ghost:—

"O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!

Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords

In our own proper entrails."

But Shakespeare's military interest is not by any means confined to classic times. He introduces "the vasty fields of France" and "the casques that did affright the air at Agincourt." Prince Hal is one of his finest soldier characters. It is the call to duty and his ready response that first shows Hal's quality to an incredulous world. Not a vestige of the midnight carouses with Falstaff and his boon companions impairs his efficiency when "young Harry" leaps into the saddle fully armed "like feathered Mercury." Sir John Falstaff, too, is not a criminal nor a coward, but he is a good-natured giant who fights for pence and solid pudding. Abstract virtues have no attraction to him, and he bolsters his position with irresistible wit and fun, which make him easily the greatest humorous figure in the world's literature.

Othello is a soldier of heroic grandeur and simplicity, nobly generous and unsuspecting; and Macbeth is a warrior, honoured by his fellows, who, when he stands at bay against overwhelming odds, breaks out, with undying courage:—

"Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,

And thou opposed, being of no woman born,

Yet I will try the last."

But Shakespeare's soldiers deserve a volume to themselves. Unfailing, unrivalled, they stand the test of the populous centuries; for of their great author it might be said:—

"A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,

Framed in the prodigality of nature,

The spacious world cannot again afford."

The soldiers in the pages of Defoe and Smollett are noteworthy; but they are excelled by the magnificent portrait of the veteran warrior which Laurence Sterne has given us. Sentimentalist that he was, Sterne eclipsed all his rivals with his superb characterisation of "Uncle Toby." Thackeray did well with his "Colonel Newcome" and "Henry Esmond," and many of his sketches of half-pay veterans are exquisite. Charles Lever, too, filled his pages with warriors of the Peninsular War; and Henry Kingsley, especially in "Ravenshoe," tried hard to capture the soldierly heroes of the Crimea. But Dickens, "George Eliot," Charles Reade, Anthony Trollope and other Victorian writers were all more attracted by the "black army" than the red; and, while their books are filled with brilliant portraits of clergymen, there are few military men worthy of remembrance. That very great novelist, George Meredith, restored the balance, and has given us a splendid gallery of military portraits; his "Vittoria," containing some superb battle scenes, written in that incomparable prose which he alone had the secret of.

The last of the literary giants, Thomas Hardy, has introduced many soldiers in his novels and poems, from "Sergeant Troy" in "Far from the Madding Crowd" to the titanic figures in "The Dynasts."

Among present-day authors, Rudyard Kipling has contributed some brilliant soldier studies, and since Dickens no one has roused so much laughter. "The Taking of Luntingpen" and "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney" recall the open-air humour of Marryatt and the high spirits of Fielding and Smollett. Despite the small canvasses he has chosen, Kipling has achieved wonders, and his "Drums of the Fore and Aft," and other masterpieces, are among the best short stories in the language. In quite another vein is the fascinating "Barlasch of the Guard," by Henry Seton Merriman, who only just missed being a great novelist. In this clever study of one of Napoleon's fighting men, he came dangerously near perfection. Few more uncompromising criticisms of the effect of continuous war upon the quality of manhood has been penned.

The prose and poetry of the 19th century is full of romantic militarism. From the days of Byron, who died like a soldier, to the time when Swinburne rolled his richest thunders against the despots of Europe, the great English writers were veritable knights-errant. Liberty knows no frontiers, and the liberation of Italy roused the English poets to some of their noblest efforts. Byron declared that Italy's dream was "the very poetry of politics." Shelley's sympathy gave us the immortal lines on the "Euganean Hills" and the "Ode to Naples." A later and a greater writer, George Meredith, in "Vittoria" and "Sandra Belloni," hailed Mazzini and his colleagues as soldiers of freedom. Arthur Clough's "Amours de Voyage" depicts the adventures of an Englishman in Rome in 1849, when the red-shirted Garibaldians were defending the Republic against Oudinot's French bayonets. From her Casa Guidi windows Mrs. Browning watched the struggle, and her muse was inspired by the same theme. Swinburne, however, surpassed them all in the ardour of his devotion and in the rapture of his praise:—

"The very thought in us how much we love thee

Makes the throat sob with love and blinds the eyes."

Indeed, "Songs Before Sunrise" are unique in the whole range of the world's poetry. More enduring than marble are the noble lyrics of which Mazzini and the cause to which he dedicated his life were the inspiration:—

"Of God nor man was ever this thing said,

That he might give

Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead

Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,

With fast-sealed eyes.

And bade the dead rise up and live again,

And she did rise."

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in a poem on the refusal of military aid between nations, said that by this he was certain—

"That the world falls asunder, being old."

This love of liberty was a common possession of the 19th century writers, and the nobility of the cause always inspired nobility of utterance. John Ruskin was at his fiercest in his denunciation of the desertion of insulted Denmark. One of the lesser-known poems of James Thomson portrays a Pole ready to die for his native country, although he realises that his country must be defeated:—

"Must a man have hope to fight?

Can a man not fight in despair?

Must the soul cower down for the body's weakness,

And slaver the Devil's hoof with meekness,

Nor care nor dare to share

Certain defeat with the right?"

Whitman, in scores of pages, wrote himself a citizen of the world, but his thoughts were enriched and purified by the awful experiences of the American Civil War. There is no false rhetoric or brazen bravado in his "Dirge for Two Veterans":—

"The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music;
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love."

With quieter eyes, the veteran of the Victorian intellectuals, Thomas Hardy, has achieved the masterpiece of "The Dynasts," a magnificent work without a rival. The subject is the titanic struggle of the Napoleonic wars. It begins with the preparations of England to repel an expected French invasion, and it ends with the carnage of Waterloo. The death of Nelson inspires the author, and his tribute is lyrical:—

"Who in simplicity and sheer good faith
Strove but to serve his country."

Nor was it a mere atmosphere of spirit that this doctrine of military intervention, in the cause of liberty all over the world was taught by these great writers. William Watson, in his forceful "Purple East," was quite explicit in his desire to have the Turk driven out, bag and baggage; and Swinburne's denunciation of the White Czar for the persecution of the Jews has re-echoed ever since. During the 19th century the wheel of time has come round full circle, and the lighted torch of Liberty, which had been held by Byron, had passed through hands of inspired poets during succeeding generations. Whilst millions of men face each other, desolating countries and destroying life, we need an inspiration for our faith in human destiny. Such a message is sounded in the following lines from Swinburne. They are from the speech of England in the chorus of the nations crying out to their mother, Liberty:—

"I am she that was and was not of thy chosen,
Free and not free;
I fed the streams till mine own streams were frozen,
Yet I am she
By the star that Milton's soul for Shelley lighted,
Whose rays ensphere us,
By the beacon-bright Republic far-off sighted,
O, mother, hear us."

MIMNERMUS.

[REPRINTED]

ON FARM SUNDAY

I

HAVING sauntered this far along the country road, the two men leaned over a gate and looked across a meadow. The rising slope led up to a hill so low as to be only a mound, atop of which was a little church. Farther on a by-lane led to it, but the two men stayed at the gate and watched. Time was a Sunday morning in the middle of May. The two small bells in the squat tower had ceased their ting-tang a brief while previously.

From the door of the church emerged a short procession. Preceded by a choirman in white surplice and black cassock, bearing aloft a cross, there followed a choir of about half a dozen boys and three or four men. Behind them, pacing slow, walked the vicar, carrying an open service book. After him straggled the tiny congregation, a score of adults, mostly women, and perhaps two dozen Sunday School children, mainly little girls in brightly coloured or white summer frocks.

This cortège was singing, whether hymn or chant or psalm the two listeners could not determine at the distance, the thin

sounds growing fainter as the party vanished behind the leftward curve of the mound beyond the graveyard wall.

The farmer and his visitor from town turned their heads and looked each at the other, faint inquiry in their eyes, slight smiles wrinkling their lips.

"Well?" ejaculated the farmer interrogatively, knowing his friend's readiness of comment upon what he saw and heard.

This time the guest did not seem so quick to do so. Instead, he said meditatively: "I see in your county newspaper the bishop says Church and countryside have co-operated effectively to make this Farm Sunday a success."

Having finished filling his pipe, lighted it and carefully extinguished the match, the farmer replied: "So it appears."

His companion laughed, saying, "Really it doesn't appear."
"No. It's like all Church services and ceremonies; only a minority attend. If more than a dozen are present the parsons say it's a success."

"A startling commentary on the co-operation statement."

"Co-operation," repeated the farmer slowly, with a disdainful smile. "Co-operation! I like that way of putting it. From the bishop's and parson's point of view it is excellent. They draw big salaries for their soft jobs, which we who work hard have to help to pay."

"What're you going to do about it?"

"I don't see much that we can do—only stay away from church, as I do."

"As most people do."

"Aye."

"And, of course, give nothing to the Churches."

"Unfortunately, that doesn't affect 'em much. The bishops and parsons live on tithes and endowments and fees which go on whether there's a congregation in church or not."

II

Both men smoked silently for a minute, the visitor having lighted a cigarette.

He said: "Wandering about the country as I do, I've noticed other things beside the big stipends and light duties of country parsons."

"What are they?"

"The splendid positions in which the churches stand. Imposing on the credulity of your ancestors, the Church secured for its edifices the best site in the villages."

"And pays no rates on 'em like we do on our farms and the villagers on their properties."

"Quite so. More noticeable are the rectories and vicarages."

"I'm glad you've observed that."

"Yes. Usually they're the best houses in the villages; large, well-built and sunny, with ample gardens and pleasant aspects. Houses in which one could live and enjoy life, given sufficient income."

"As the parsons are."

Again a silence, broken by the farmer asking, "Did you look at the Church schools?"

"No, not inside; but I've heard a great deal about 'em."

"What?"

"That many of 'em—hundreds of 'em, taking the whole country—are in bad state; some dilapidated."

"Exactly. They vary from quite good condition down to places I wouldn't shelter animals in. It sounds incredible, but there're schools without water supply, others lacking sanitation, beside those so badly in need of repair and decoration that the work of school cleaners is wasted on them—useless; shows no result."

"I take it you didn't send your own children to the village school."

"I did not." The farmer was emphatic about it. "I wanted something better for my boys and girls, and, being able to afford it, I had it. That's no reason why the workers' children shouldn't have decent schools to attend."

"No. Meanwhile, I see all the churches and their vicarages and rectories in fine condition."

"Oh, yes. The Church can find money for show, display, propaganda, handsome accommodation and high pay for its officials, but not for schools or anything beneficial to the community."

"What's to be done about it?"

"I don't know—only, as I said before, stay away from church and give nothing to it."

"Then you don't go so far as a Black Countryman whom I heard say the churches ought to fall on the parsons and bury 'em."

"No. We country people are more gentle and polite."

"Often too much so."

The farmer mused a while before saying thoughtfully, "I think the wealth should be taken off the Churches and put to better use."

"And the parsons sent to work."

"Agreed. Why shouldn't they do some useful hard work, as my men and I do?"

"It would be an interesting spectacle to see a bishop hoeing turnips."

"And a pleasant one."

Both men laughed and loitered comfortably back to the farm.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

MAN AND HIS GODS

"Cathedrals and domes, and chimes and chants—temples frescoed and grained and carved, and gilded with gold—altars and tapers, and paintings of Virgin and babe—censer and chalice—chasuble, paten and alb—organs and anthems and incense rising to the winged and blest—maniple, amice and stole—crosses and rosaries, tiaras and crowns—mitres and missals and masses—rosaries, relics and robes—martyrs and saints, and windows stained as with the blood of Christ—never, never for one moment awed the brave, proud spirit of the Infidel. He knew that all the pomp and glitter had been purchased with Liberty—that priceless Jewel of the soul. In looking at the Cathedral he remembered the dungeon. The music of the organ was not loud enough to drown the clank of fetters. He could not forget that the taper had lighted the fagot. He knew that the Cross adorned the hilt of the sword, and so, where others worshipped, he wept and scorned."—INGERSOLL.

CORRESPONDENCE

ANTI-SEMITISM AND DOUGLAS REED

SIR,—At the risk of prolonging a correspondence which threatens to get nowhere, may I point out that your correspondent, Mr. Smith ("The Freethinker," September 24, 1944), would appear to be an abler straw-splitter. It is only now that Mr. Smith even reads Reed's best-known work, and claims that because it ran to 18 editions, that fact alone "speaks volumes." But does it? Nat Gould, Ethel M. Dell and Ruby M. Ayres were all best-selling writers without convincing anyone that they had anything much to say. Hitler's "Mein Kampf" ran into many more than 18 editions without the entire world being impressed by its truth. And, as a Freethinker, Mr. Smith would surely hesitate before recommending the Bible, merely on the ground that it happens to be the world's "best seller." It is Mr. Smith who has chosen to assert that anti-Semitism "is another example of religious bigotry." I shall not quarrel on that score, and merely point out that it is his champion who calls Reed "a religious bigot." Mr. Smith can't have it both ways! Finally, anybody who stirs up racial hatred at this particular time is, wittingly or unwittingly, playing Hitler's game, and is therefore an accomplice of the enemy. This is mere "reasoning," and I trust it will appeal to one who terms himself a Freethinker.—Yours, etc.,

PETER COTES.

SUNDAY AND CHILDREN

SIR,—I would like to congratulate Mr. J. Campbell, R.M., on his outspoken defence of the liberty of children on Sundays, at the same time I venture to suggest that Mr. Campbell misses the point of the problem. If children are allowed to have the full use of playing fields on Sundays the danger is, from the church's point of view, that in time they will be unable to distinguish a difference between that day and any other week day. They may come to realise in time the fact that each "day" is simply a revolution of the earth on its axis—nothing more nor less; and that the "first" (or "seventh") revolution is exactly the same as the other "six."

Furthermore, if children are allowed to enjoy themselves on Sundays, they may question as they grow up why they may not play football and tennis or enjoy racing, boxing, etc., on each seventh revolution of the earth!—Yours, etc.,

V. KILPATRICK.

BYRON

SIR,—Your contributor, Edgar Syers, in his article "The Isles of Greece" appears content to rake in the dustbin in dealing with episodes in the life of Byron. The comparison with Shelley puts Byron in very bad odour, because Mr. Syers writes only of Shelley's virtues and Byron's vices! Both poets have bequeathed us very rich legacies. Bernard Shaw said that Byron had the best brain in Britain, and Goethe said that "were it not for his hypochondriacal negative turn, he would be as great as Shakespeare and the ancients." Bearing in mind these lofty eulogies of Byron, it would have been more interesting and instructive if Mr. Syers had given us a revaluation of the poet's works. It is as idle to compare the characters of Shelley and Byron as it is to compare their poetry. O Byron, the good has been interred with your bones!—Yours, etc.,

S. GORDON HOGG.

ONLY 68 MILLIONS

It lightens our troubles considerably to learn from Lord Vansittart that the Allies have not the task of treating 80 millions of Germans as though they were all not merely bad, but incurably bad. He explains there are only 68 millions, so that, we assume, makes the task quite easy. Sixty-eight millions—they can be attended to in our spare moments.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

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

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Professor J. C. FLUGEL: "Psychology of Moral Progress."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Mr. E. V. TEMPEST: "Religion in the U.S.S.R."

Glasgow Secular Society (Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow).—Sunday, 2.30 p.m., Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN: "An Hour with the Gods."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. F. A. RIDLEY: "Ancient Slave Risings and the Origins of Christianity."

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