

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

God and the Law

EVERY now and again there crops up in this country the case of some parent or guardian who is foolish enough to believe that the New Testament means what it says. The New Testament is God's truth, and that is not the plain truth of everyday life. In this country—which on the authority of the Prime Minister and the clergy is a Christian country—if a child, after contracting a disease, dies without medical attendance the people who are responsible are guilty of an offence at law. It may be said that the fact of the parents being good, sober parents—good, sound Christian parents—should protect them, but none of these things has any bearing on the situation. They may quote the passages concerning lifting up the sick and praying to the Lord, in a law court; the only time God plays any part in the proceedings is to provide the chance for a Christian to tell a lie after calling God to help him speak the truth. In effect, the Judge meets all such cases of neglect—medical neglect—by saying, "We are not concerned with whether you are good Christians or not. We are not concerned with whether you are believers in the New Testament or not. What we do know is that you knew your child was ill. You watched it getting worse in spite of the prayers you offered for its recovery. You knew that by the law of this country you should have set the teachings of Jesus Christ and the New Testament on one side. The sentence of this Court is therefore—" And there the matter ends. None of the clergy of any rank has the courage or the honesty to stand up for these deluded people. There is the law of the land, and the law of the New Testament. The two do not agree; so look out for squalls.

The latest case of a conflict between the New Testament and the law comes to us from Australia. It lies before us as reported in a Sydney paper. A little girl, aged seven, died from an attack of pneumonia without a doctor being called in. Of course, the child might have died even had a doctor been in attendance. The law is adamant. It says in effect, "Of course, medical skill might have failed and the child might have died in the very presence of the doctor. That is quite true, but the law would put it that with the doctor present it might have been saved; by trusting entirely to the help of God the child stood no chance whatever." And the judge would base his attitude, as does the law, on the assumption that, case for case, doctors are miles ahead of God in saving life.

The parents in this case belonged to the "Restored Apostolic" Church. We have no knowledge of what this Church is like. We consulted a very cumbersome volume which contained a list of many hundreds of Christian

sects, but while it gave accounts of Reformed Baptists, a Reformed German Church, a Reformed Presbyterian, a Reformed Wesleyan and so forth—without telling us whether it was the people who were reformed or its pastors—it told us nothing about a "Restored Apostolic" Church. There is one solitary case of Restorationists—which might mark repentance after a robbery—but that is all. So we must leave the Restored Apostles and its minister and get on with the poor parents who were being tried as criminals for really believing, on the strength of the New Testament, that sick people will be cured if they are properly prayed over.

It was on the advice of the pastor, or priest, or chief Bible-banger that the father and mother of the child relied upon its being saved. This chief said he believed in the Bible. We do not know whether the Judge also believed in it. There are indications that he did; but he went for the poor chief Restorer of Apostles as though he was an impostor of the darkest dye. From the language he used, we feel sure that the pastor would not commend the Judge for a comfortable seat in heaven. He probably booked him for one of the least comfortable sections of another place. But his language was Christianly polite, even if some social ends were rather ragged. He told the Judge he was following the New Testament. The Judge retorted that he was "an old scamp, a hypocrite and a humbug," and this reiteration of substantially the same thing was so comforting that he repeated it three times. He assured the high priest that if he had his way the Restorer of Apostles would be sent to prison, and rounded off the matter by telling him that the preacher's only god was Mammon. To which the Restorer retorted: "There is probably a big difference between my salary of £4 10s. and yours." The Judge thereupon threatened him with the hospitality of the State prison, but finally left him to find his own sleeping-place. The parents of the child were sentenced to three years in prison. But it was a "suspended sentence," which probably means an early freedom.

A Game for "Mugs"

Now it seems to me that this matter is worthy of some attention, particularly as the children in our own schools are to be given greater and stronger doses of this New Testament than children have had since 1870. In the first place, it is to be noted that the pastor was following one of the plainest directions contained in the New Testament. (This may soon have greater play in the State schools than has hitherto been openly encouraged.) One may admit that even the Churches will stop short so far as taking the New Testament as a guide where illness is concerned. Yet the teaching of that book is quite clear. It says, "If any be sick . . ." "Any." There is no doubt here. They are to call in the elders—

another name for pastors or priests—and the Lord will save them. It is the most positive medical regulation that exists. And did not Jesus himself say that his followers should eat poisonous things and they should not harm them? One wonders what that Australian Judge would have said to Jesus if one of his followers had followed his promise—and died?

There are other evidences in favour of this Australian servant of the Lord. In the Church of England Prayer Book there is the definite order to clergymen that whatever the sickness is the sufferer is to rest assured that "it is God's visitation." All this seems to run in favour of the Sydney preacher and is dead against the Judge. And if the Judge was right when he called the Sydney preacher a humbug, what are we to say of the whole body of the Church of England preachers? All these spiritual leaders are pledged to uphold the kind of thing for teaching which the Australian Judge denounced the Sydney preacher. It is the preacher who was true to his salt. Our own clergy escape criticism because they have neither the courage to preach the "true-gospel" nor to champion those who do.

There is also the oldest, the most powerful to-day of Christian organisations, the Roman Church, which apparently commands the services of many of our political leaders. This largest portion of organised Christianity has a widely established traffic in practices that is a disgrace to any body of people claiming to be considered civilised. There is, for example, the "St. Joseph Cord," which is not, we think, quite so well known in this country as it is in Australia, the United States and other places. A sample of the "Cord" lies before me as I write. The Order was established more than a couple of centuries ago and was "canonically approved by Pope Pius IX in 1859." Other favours have been shown it since. It has headquarters in the U.S.A. and in other countries. The "Cord" has seven knots, which have a religious significance, and the days of "indulgence" guaranteed by the "Cord" depends upon the amount "given." These indulgences secure complete or partial remittances of sin committed.

This kind of thing can be done by the Roman Church with impunity. If a few priests had been summoned before the Australian Judge who was so angry with people who believed that the prayer of faith would cure the sick, we have no doubt he would have dismissed the case. But every now and again Spiritualists are summoned and punished for calling back the dead. We admit that in many of these cases the procedure is very crude, but what will you? We cannot all reach the top of the scale of spiritual humbuggery at one jump. Most of us must be content to travel the road slowly. We may commence with ninety shillings per week, but we live in hope. I am quite sure that the Judge who was so scandalised by the leader of the Restored Apostles Church would have been more polite to the defendant if he had been a hawker of the "Sacred Cord."

One more example. Within a stone's throw of "The Freethinker" there is one of the oldest churches in London—the Church of St. Etheldreda. And in that church there is celebrated the festival of St. Blaise. St. Blaise lived a long time back, and one day found a child dying of strangulation from having a fishbone in her

throat. St. Blaise prayed and the bone jumped out. So St. Blaise became the patron saint of all who have bad throats. Once every year not merely common people but hard-headed (little-brained) City merchants and others visit the Ely Place church to pray and donate to be protected from sore throats. Of course, there are responses—for a real Roman Catholic miracle usually takes care of that; and a priest goes solemnly round the church saying to each, "May the Lord deliver you from the sore throat." And all who do not have a sore throat are justified for their faith.

How far removed from the ninety-shilling-per-week leader of the Restored Apostles is this from the other case named? Nay, how far from the instructions given to the clergy of the English Church that, whatever illness overtakes us, we may rest assured that it is God's visitation, this is from deliberate humbug we leave to our readers. The preacher who believes it may have a salary as high as £15,000 a year. The leader of the Restored Apostles must be content with ninety shillings per week. We think that Australian Judge should reconsider his judgment.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

TWO OUTSTANDING ARCHÆOLOGISTS

THE lives and achievements of two distinguished scientists, John and Arthur Evans, are well and truly portrayed by Miss Joan Evans in her "Time and Change" (Longmans, 1943; 21s.). These renowned archæologists greatly enlarged the outlook of their science. Sir John Evans, the father, was among the first to establish the human origin of the prehistoric stone implements and weapons discovered by Boucher de Perthes in the gravels of Abbeville.

At a time when our planet was commonly regarded as some 6,000 years old, the evidences of man's antiquity dating back hundreds of thousands of years were sceptically received by conservative scientists. Even Evans doubted until he examined the artifacts themselves, and saw them extracted from undisturbed strata intermixed with the fossil remains of animals long extinct in Europe. Evans had previously regarded the Britons of Cæsar's day as ancient, but now further discoveries in Sicily, Devonshire and elsewhere reinforced the testimony of the finds in France. Evans noted: "It will make my Britons quite modern if man is carried back in England to the days when elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses and tigers were also inhabitants of the country."

The conventional chronology of the Churches was now discredited by these revelations, and the path was smoothed for the coming revolution of thought that the evolutionary scientists and philosophers accomplished. As Joan Evans justly observes: "No discovery of a new civilisation . . . could have the same scientific and philosophical repercussions: for the establishment of the existence of man in Quaternary times involved a fundamental re-orientation. It was the proof by Evans and Prestwich of the validity of Boucher de Perthes' discoveries in 1858, that by its extension of the time of man's habitation of the earth made the theories of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' published in 1859, directly applicable to *Homo sapiens*."

Of course, there was the customary outcry against the innovators; but plain evidences of man's high antiquity rapidly increased, and the great Lyell, so long in suspense concerning the truth of evolution, now surrendered, and with his "Antiquity of Man," issued in 1863, became an influential advocate of the cause. Also, Evans' contributions to archæology were recognised in 1862 with his election to a Fellowship of the Royal Society.

In the same year Professor Owen read a paper dealing with the just discovered remains of the archæopteryx, a reptilian-like bird, from a Jurassic deposit. Owen, however, omitted to mention this primitive bird's brain, so Evans prepared casts of magpies' and jays' brains and found they closely resembled the cast in the slate; while later Evans detected the impression of the bird's jaw and teeth preserved on the slab.

Dr. Hugh Falconer, then Secretary to the Royal Society, was highly delighted with Evans' important additions to Owen's address, and, when Owen's imperfect study was published, Falconer urged Evans, whom he had hailed as Prince of Audacious Palæontologists, to publish a complete account of his remarkable detections, and this appeared in print in 1865.

In 1866 John Evans met Canon Greenwell, a swearing cleric more concerned with science than theology, and liked him greatly. "He belongs," he said, "to the bearded clerical order and is eminently unclerical in his manners and manner of thinking and a very sensible man." Certainly Greenwell's services to science were important, and his painstaking studies in prehistoric burial sites in Britain threw a flood of light on early man in our island.

After ten years' critical study of ancient stone implements, and after visiting and inspecting nearly all the known prehistoric sites in Europe, including those of Scotland and Ireland, Evans now possessed one of the finest collections in the world of the flint and bone artifacts of early man, as well as many specimens of stone and other primitive implements still used by surviving savage tribes.

Evans' vast and varied knowledge, especially his wide acquaintance with the antiquities of Britain and Ireland, enabled him to compose his classic "Ancient Stone Implements, Weapons and Ornaments of Great Britain" in 1872. The centuries that have elapsed since Palæolithic man devised his flint artifacts are evident from the transformations that have since occurred in terrestrial conditions. "To realise the full meaning of these changes," averred Evans, "almost transcends the powers of the imagination. Who, for instance, standing on the lofty cliff of Bournemouth, and gazing over the wide expanse of waters between the present shore and a line connecting the Needles . . . and the Ballard Down Foreland can fully comprehend how immensely remote was the epoch when what is now that vast bay was high and dry land, and a long range of chalk downs 600 feet above the sea bounded the horizon in the south? And yet this must have been the sight that met the eyes of those primeval men who frequented the banks of that river, which buried their handiworks in the gravels that now cap the cliffs."

Sir John Evans' son Arthur was destined to revolutionise classical conceptions concerning the predominant part played by the ancient Greeks in the evolution of civilisation and culture. Dr. Schliemann had already revealed the ruins of Troy, while the younger Evans was to establish the existence of a long vanished and forgotten civilisation in Crete that far antedated the achievements of old Hellas.

When a young man, "Little Evans—son of John Evans the Great," as Green, the historian, termed him—travelled in the Balkans and returned to England by way of Lapland with the archaic treasures he had collected. This was the first of many fruitful journeys to the Near East, and to him Ragusa became one of the abiding glories of the globe.

In the 90's, Evans and his assistants began their excavations in Crete, and the site selected was at Knossos, where the remains of a long vanished civilisation were soon disclosed. "At the start a labyrinth of buildings was revealed. As early as the second day they came upon the remains of an ancient house, with fragments of frescoes." Then, notes the explorer, was made visible "The extraordinary phenomenon: nothing

Greek—nothing Roman—perhaps one single fragment of late black varnished ware among tens of thousands."

Evidences continued to accumulate which demonstrated that an advanced civilisation, coeval with that of ancient Egypt, flourished in Crete centuries before the historic Greeks and Romans had emerged much above semi-barbarism. The Minoans of Crete possessed a written script, but unfortunately all efforts to decipher it have so far failed. When writing to his father, Arthur Evans declared that: "The great discovery is whole deposits, entire or fragmentary, of clay tablets analogous to the Babylonian, but in inscriptions in the prehistoric script of Crete. . . . These inscriptions, engraved on the wet clay, are evidently the work of practised scribes; and there are also many figures no doubt representing numerals."

The ruins of a prehistoric palace were laid bare and countless objects of art discovered. The ancient Greek tradition, so long dismissed as legendary by modern Hellenists, but which the Greeks had preserved, was now shown to be true. The reputation of Arthur Evans as an archæologist of the first rank was consequently established beyond all dispute. Many honours were showered upon him and he became, like his father, a Fellow of the Royal Society.

A severe earthquake occurred in Crete while Evans was in the island and serious damage was caused. That Knossos was anciently consumed by fire seems certain, but on other occasions it appears probable that the palace and other buildings were overthrown by seismic disturbances. "When," suggests Evans, "in the great palace of Knossos we find evidence of a series of overthrows, some of them on a scale that could hardly be the work of man, there seems real reason for tracing the cause to the same seismic agencies that we have certainly to deal with in the case of the recent earthquake. It may be possible even to fix approximately the date of seven earthquakes, four of them of great severity, between the last century of the Third Millennium and the beginning of the 14th century B.C."

Sir John Evans died in 1908, in his 85th year, and therefore lived to see his son's brilliant achievements acclaimed by the learned world. Yet Arthur Evans remained far from satisfied with the attitude of many Oxford scholars and other men of letters towards science, while he deplored the apathy and indifference of the masses towards the intellectual aspects of life. Their excessive devotion to sports and pastimes he regarded as detrimental to our position as a nation.

Evans' religious outlook was unorthodox. His biographer tells us "he was a Deist, with a real reverence for religion, whether it were the Christianity of his English neighbours or the Mother Worship of Minoan Crete, but it was an unshared faith. The only creed he was ever heard to utter was: 'I believe in human happiness.'" T. F. PALMER.

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

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ACID DROPS

TWO soldiers were charged with having stolen some sacred objects from St. Patrick's Church, Bolton. They were sentenced to a term of imprisonment, and there the matter, legally, ends. If they had stolen from any other place the result would have been exactly the same. But what is worth commenting on is the way in which the heavenly hosts, from God the Father down to the little winged messengers of heaven, disregard their duties. Once upon a time the robbers would have been struck blind, or they would have been struck with leprosy, or they would have dropped dead—in one of the many pleasing ways which God used to register his ill-temper. But to-day two men can break into a church, they can seize sacred articles, and they are not punished by God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost. The host of angels are quiet and undisturbed, and it is left for a mere policeman to do what is necessary to protect the church. How have the mighty fallen!

The Rev. W. H. Elliott says: "I wish to goodness that the Church were more interested in Christian psychology." But why the Church? There are plenty of first-class alienists who would diagnose their qualities and their ailments for a moderate fee. But to ask the Church to diagnose the leaders of the Churches is too much like the man in the asylum who informed a visitor from outside that the funniest resident was a man who thought he was Jesus Christ. "That," he said, "is just nonsense, because I am he."

The Governing body of the Church in Wales has decided that what Wales needs is more bishops. There are at present six. It reminds one of a man taking increased drinks of whisky to get rid of drunkenness.

There seems to be quite a run on dancing girls for their appearance in performances for the benefit of this or that church. And in Scotland, too. One of the promoters of these dancing performances said that John Knox would have welcomed this combination of the Church and stage. We advise them to read what John Knox had to say of women in general. That great religious law-giver said that "the sight of women was blindness, their counsel foolishness, and their judgment phrenetic." As a parting kick, he said women "were weak, feeble and foolish." They were unfit to hold office of any kind, and declared to be the port and gate of the Devil. But nowadays the Churches are in such a hole that they snap at anything that promises to bring people to church, if only out of curiosity.

There has been a quite unusual number of celestial creatures floating about the atmosphere during the past few years. "Our Lady" has made several appearances, minor figures such as ordinary saints have also fluttered round, and now we learn from a local paper that the Virgin Mary has made her presence near Carn School House, Co. Wexford. Some school-children saw her first, the eldest being 14 years of age. Since then there have been thousands of pilgrims who have visited the local shrine. Quite a good show—no, we ought not to use that word "show," for in the ordinary show one must pay to see what there is going. But with a "holy shrine" each person gives what they please. We believe the latter method pays best. We close with the offer of our back garden to any of the lower saints who may feel they are crowded out by the "big shots." They will be well treated.

The following is taken from the "Daily Express" report of an address given by the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, Mr. Martin:—

"Among recent achievements of the society was the prevention of vulgar music-hall shows on Sundays in 26 places, the total prohibition of Sunday cinema shows in 16 districts."

He then proceeded to "ridicule the suggestion cinemas were opened on Sundays mainly for the benefit of men and women of the Forces, and denied that the society had ever tried to interfere with clean entertainment at their stations for the Forces."

Mr. Martin and his society, it should be said in their favour, raise no objection to men who listen to these entertainments;

the real crime is that they should break the "Sabbath" Mr. Martin and his creed seem well matched.

The Dutch Churches are arranging for a day of prayer. The Prime Minister has sent a telegram asking the Archbishop of Canterbury to join them in this appeal to God. But we have had so many appeals to God, and so much of it, that God may not be pleased to have his English followers cropping up every few weeks in this way. The Dutch people have suffered heavily in this war, and a God who was worth his salt would not need to be prayed to. It may be taken as a polite reminder to God that, as he knows all things, he knows what he ought to do without long strings of prayers. These days of prayer seem to us to be double-edged. Certain it is that no decent man who could help, and who knows what is going on, would need torrents of prayers as to what he ought to do. God knows everything and sees everything. To the outsider he seems also to make a mess of everything.

The Rev. D. R. Davies says in the "Record" that there is no more magic in the realm of religion than there is in that of matter. We beg to differ. Religion is based on primitive magic—particularly the Christian religion. What are the miracles of Jesus: turning water into wine, raising dead men from the grave, feeding a multitude of people with a few loaves and fishes and having more food on hand when the meal was finished than when it commenced? Take the magic out of religion and all that is left is a mass of misinterpretations of natural phenomena.

Dr. H. A. Hodges, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading, in the course of a lecture adopted what is now a very common plan. Aware that Christianity is losing ground, he complains that—

"The trouble to-day is that so many Christians are not awake to the changing situation and thought concerning it, and many non-Christians are aware of it."

Now, we like to see fair play even when our opponents are concerned, and it is not correct to say that Christians are not awake to the change of opinion concerning religion. But if they are intellectually honest Christians—and there are some of them about, even if those in high places cannot come within that category—what are they to do? They cannot follow the example of the Archbishop of Canterbury and make Christianity in public a mere branch of sociology and then run off to church and act as though they were living in the 18th century. It is the development of social life that has given intelligent and honest Christians the choice between ignoring modern thought and upholding medieval thought or throwing over Christianity altogether. And when Dr. Hodges asks whether religion should be tied down to the "old style" the answer is that Christianity is not a religion devised by men—it was given by God to man—and if they are honest to their salt they will keep to historic Christianity, with its primitive absurdities and impossibilities.

We are not quite certain just where Dr. Hodges stands, but we have a suspicion that he is rather primitive in his views. A man who can in 1944 solemnly and sincerely say that "Christianity first taught the truth about the Fall" really almost loses the right to talk seriously.

Bishop Tsu of China thanked the Convocation of Canterbury for the welcome given him when he brought the greetings and gratitude of the Christian people in China to the Church of England. He went on to say, however, that it was a great joy for him to see the strength and solidarity of the Church in this country! We hate to damp his ardour, but if he imagines that a Convocation really represents "the strength of the Church" he has a deuce of a lot to learn. There is no more divided Church in the world than the Church of England. Apart from the "High" and the "Low" sections, and the hatred the "Catholics" in the one section bear for the "Protestants" in the other, the Church has many other smaller sects, and large numbers of unbelievers and indifferentists. Not 10 per cent. of believers go to church, and altogether religion is in a bad way. But probably the Chinaman was just "kidding" his Christian listeners.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,
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TO CORRESPONDENTS

- M. VANSTONE.—We heard from his daughter lately. He was a good man for whom we had considerable respect.
- D. FELLOWES.—Thanks for calling attention to Dr. Buck. Your note will be used.
- FOR "THE FREETHINKER" FUND.—C. W. Hollingham, £1.
- E. C.—Obliged for pamphlets. They will be useful when occasion arises.
- E. S. W.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.
- A. GODFREY.—MSS. to hand, but we are overladen at present.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS

THE Rev. Hartly Brook, of Braintree, has given public notice that he will not permit marriages in the Parish Church until the couples come to him and prove that they are true Christians. That, on the face of it, seems to be a rather difficult thing for anybody, young or old. What does constitute a true Christian is something that has puzzled people ever since Christianity existed. How are the people who wish to be married sure that they are true Christians? And how is Mr. Brook to satisfy other Christians that he is a true Christian? The Roman Church will certainly not agree that he is. The differing Protestants will not agree that he is; nor will the semi-religious "there must be something behind everything" crowd agree that any one preacher is a "true Christian." We suggest that Braintree folk should arrange a public discussion to decide what is a "true Christian." If they settle that question once and for all before the next world war arises they will have done something worth noting.

But there is another important thing to be considered. First, in this country there is no such thing as a religious marriage or a Christian marriage. The only marriage recognised by the English law is one that is registered by a Registrar of Marriages, and he has nothing to say about religion of any kind. The Vicar of Braintree does not declare a couple as being truly married because he is a priest. He knows full well, although he is not honest enough to tell his people that he can only declare a couple lawfully married because he holds a licence as a Registrar of Marriages. His religion has nothing to do with it, and it is an act either of gross ignorance or overwhelming religious intolerance for him to shut his eyes to the facts stated.

But there is another and greater consideration. When an official or a number of officials are appointed to carry out certain duties, they cannot refuse to carry out the duties of his or their post. He can resign his post if he will, but he cannot say, "I will not carry out the duties which I promised to perform." And the remedy for that lies in the Courts. A Court order can be asked for, which will order the party concerned to do his duty; and we are not sure whether he might not claim damages against a man who has declined to act. The Registrar of Marriages as such has not the slightest right to ask what the couple who wish to get married believe in with regard to religion. Even the historic marriage ring may be dispensed with. In this

country, from the King to the crossing-sweeper, there is no marriage recognised at law save in the terms stated. We leave it to those who know Brook to decide whether this is a case of ignorance or of downright bigotry.

We are pleased to learn that the members of the Leeds Branch of the N.S.S., backed up by friends in Bradford and elsewhere, have resolved to conduct a strong Freethought campaign. We hope that all who can help will. The chairman's name and address is Mr. M. Feldman, 58, Meanwood Road, Leeds. We hope to hear of good results.

Birmingham Freethinkers who remember the late Ono Melton and his useful work for the local N.S.S. branch will be interested to know that his son will debate the question "What Ought We to do with Germany after the War?" with Mr. E. Markley, on behalf of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. to-day (October 29), at 3-30 p.m., in Room 13, 38, John Bright Street (corner of Station Street). Many opinions are being expressed on that question, and a set debate is not only attractive but should also be useful.

In the Public (Lecture) Halls, Northgate, Blackburn, to-day (October 29), Mr. C. McCall of Manchester will lecture on "The Papacy and War." Mr. McCall is a very promising speaker with something worth saying. He has youth on his side, and we feel safe in promising an interesting evening for all present. Doors open at 6 p.m., the lecture begins at 6-30, and admission is free. The local N.S.S. branch deserves all the support Freethinkers in Blackburn and surrounding districts can give it.

The Oxford Branch N.S.S. is making steady progress. Mr. Archibald Robertson, M.A., was a recent speaker, and on Wednesday, November 1, Mr. W. Hawley will speak on "Freethought in Industry," at 1, Caroline Street, St. Clements. The lecture begins at 7-30 p.m. There are many Freethinkers in Oxford, and a really strong and useful branch should result.

The following is from the "Buenos Aires Herald" for September 8:—

"'Citizen Tom Paine' was bought by Frank Tuttle a long time ago, but he let his option lapse and it goes to Walter Wanger. Walter has bought it from the author, Howard Fast, and plans to make a story of the Revolution with all the famous characters.

He will not go into Paine's religious beliefs nor his tendency toward atheism. Rather he will make a real saga of the Revolutionary period with four principal characters—Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Paine. Well-known actors will be chosen to play these four men. We haven't had a good story of the American Revolution in a long time, and Walter plans to spend a considerable amount in making an authentic story."

For some time Paine—a man who fought for freedom in three countries, but whose influence has been felt in five times as many—has been coming to the knowledge of the people. But in the land of his birth a full recognition has yet to come. Christians of all lands combined to lie, and lie, and yet again against one of the world's greatest reformers. His reply to "Where liberty is there is my country," was "Where liberty is not, there is mine," was a faithful summary of his life. He gave us—among other things—a Beveridge Plan a century and a half before Beveridge was heard of, and fought for the rights of man when the very wording of it meant imprisonment.

To not many does the world owe as much as it does to Thomas Paine. And not to many have the Christian Churches paid so constant a tribute of lies and misrepresentations. Even "Citizen Tom Paine" does not truthfully express this great reformer. "Citizen" is too narrow a description. He was in both theory and in deed a citizen of the world. Paine himself would have asked for no better a term; no other man has better deserved it. The cutting from the Buenos Aires paper is evidence that the venom of Christian influence is as poisonous as ever. We think that if we had to indict the Christian religion by a single charge we would be content to take the Christian treatment of Thomas Paine.

WAS ROBERT BURNS A SKEPTIC?

To the EARL OF BUCHAN (January, 1794)

Liberty, thou art a prize truly, and indeed invaluable, for never canst thou be too dearly bought.

To SIR JOHN SINCLAIR (1789)

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge is certainly of very great importance both to them as individuals and to society at large.

To PROVOST MAXWELL (December, 1789)

Shall I write to you on Politics or Religion? Two master subjects for sayers of nothing. Of the first I daresay by this time you are nearly surfeited, and of the last, whatever they may talk of it, who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy.

To MR. CUNNINGHAM (February, 1790)

All my fears and cares are of this world. If there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it.

To MRS. DUNLOP (June, 1789)

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness. And whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

To MR. CUNNINGHAM (September, 1792)

But of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical. Will you, or can you, tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to illiberalise the heart. They are orderly, they may be just—nay, I have known them to be merciful—but your children of sanctity move among their fellow creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence and a foot spurning filth and a conceited dignity.

To MR. MUIR (March, 1788)

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a broken piece of machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so, at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants. If that part of us called mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man, away with old wife prejudices and tales. Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as they are always weak of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived. A man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow men, even granting that he may have been the sport at times of those passions and instincts, he goes to a great unknown being who gave him those passions and instincts and well knows their force. These, my worthy friend, are my ideas. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself, particularly in a case where all men are equally in the dark.

To MRS. DUNLOP (December, 1789)

Can it be possible that when I resign this frail and feverish being I shall still find myself in conscious existence. When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those who knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious corpse is resigned into the earth to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I be yet warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories of another world beyond death, or are they all alike, baseless visions and

fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane.

What a flattering idea, then, is a world to come. Would to God I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it. There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I again recognise my lost, my ever dear Mary.

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters, I trust thou art no impostor, and that revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed off on credulous mankind.

“For prayin’ I hae little skill o’ot,
I’m baith dead sweer an wretched ill o’ot.”

“God knows I’m no the thing I should be,
Nor am I e’vn the thing I could be,
But twenty times I rather would be
An Atheist clean
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.

“Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.”

(Collected by) R. HOWDEN.

THE REGIMENTATION OF YOUTH

The Church Protests

A BOY leaving school to enter the workaday world of the office or factory is in danger, in the eyes of the Church, of escaping from priestly influence. To limit this danger, Boys' Brigades and Scout Troops were organised. The boys were given uniforms, drilled and suitably instructed. The Sunday morning parade was a prominent feature of these movements. To the hideous blaring of the bugle and beating of the drum, they marched to receive the weekly dose of superstition and prejudice. To the parsons this was good; the greater the number so organised the better the work.

Workers anxious to enjoy an extra hour or so sleep on Sunday morning, and unfortunate enough to live near the route of the parade, protested in vain against this atrocious disturbance of their plan. In the eyes of the parson one should not be in bed on a Sunday morning, but in the pew.

To protest against this on the deeper ground of the regimentation of children, and the inculcation of the militaristic spirit, was equally futile.

The outbreak of the war increased this regimentation and widened its scope. There came a rapid development of so-called pre-Service organisations for both sexes. The A.T.C. had a greater appeal than the Boys' Brigade, and those of the age quickly transferred. It was the intention of the Government that the Youth was to be trained on a mass scale. The R.A.F., the Army and the Navy were to have at their disposal a reservoir of partly trained personnel. The women's Services were to be catered for in a similar way.

These organisations became amazingly popular with the Youth, who joined them in thousands. Many people viewed this development with alarm. It savoured too much of militarism, was a Fascist tendency, and greatly to be deplored. Others

ly for greeted it with enthusiasm, regarded it as a step to be encouraged and continued after the war.

Whether admirable or deplorable, the Church has so far acquiesced. It has participated in its activities and endeavoured to reap advantages from this development. Parsons became Padres to the units and associated themselves actively with the movement. To the Church it appeared as a heaven-sent opportunity to increase its influence.

This situation appears to be changing. Something has gone wrong. This admirable arrangement does not appear to satisfy the Church. The clergy in the Midlands have gone on the offensive against it.

The campaign opened with a pronouncement by the Vicar of Leicester, the Rev. R. J. Collins, who voiced a protest against the Sunday morning parades of these movements. "The time is surely coming," he said, "when the Church will have to take a definite stand against the regimentation of Youth."

A reporter of the "Birmingham Mail" immediately interviewed Archdeacon McGowan, Vicar of Aston, and the Rev. Noel F. Hutchcroft, minister of Birmingham Central Mission.

Said the Vicar of Aston: "It is a very serious matter, especially for those churches which concentrate on Sunday morning services."

He goes on to explain that the Commandant of the A.T.C. recently issued an order that units should parade only on two Sunday mornings per month, and that the suggestion was made that they should begin early, their training being preceded by a short parade service. It would appear to be this limitation to which the Vicar objects. He proceeds: "I think it would be true to say that some local Commanders have not paid much attention to that order; and I know that the Army Cadet movement has not implemented that idea in some instances."

"There has been further difficulty," he continues, "in the Church over the Home Guard and their use of Sunday morning. It means that church officials and other devout worshippers . . . never attend church on Sunday mornings."

The Vicar approves of the girls' organisations, however, and of the Sea Scouts. "The former," he says, "do not normally parade on a Sunday morning." The Sea Scouts do, but "they always begin with prayer."

"There is no doubt at all," he adds, "that the country will have to make up its mind whether it wants the Church to be assisted in its work or not."

He concludes with the view that, "If the service for Youth grasped the nature of their work, and realised that it was no use teaching a boy to drill unless he was also taught to live, there could be no cause for complaint that we are heading towards a Nazi conception of Youth regimentation."

The Vicar has been quoted fairly and at length. The phrase "heading towards the Nazi conception" was given headline prominence by the "Mail."

It is a reasonable inference from the words of the Vicar that with the regimentation of Youth as such he is not concerned. He does not object to it. He is satisfied with the regimentation of the girls, and with the boys of the Sea Scouts. They are very commendable in his eyes. The one starts with prayer and the other does not parade on Sunday morning. His objection to other organisations, including the Home Guard, is that it keeps them from church. This not only isolates them from priestly influence, but lightens the collection plate. These two things no priest or parson can tolerate in silence. J. H. R.

(To be concluded)

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CORRESPONDENCE

BYRON

SIR,—I regret that Mr. Gordon Hogg should have thought it appropriate to say that I "appear content to rake in the dust-bin"; it is an indecorous phrase. My references were to the written expressions of opinion of well-known people—Shelley, Dean Inge and J. E. Trelawny.

In a letter to Captain Daniel Roberts, Trelawny said: "What a damned close calculating fellow he is, God defend me from ever having anything more to do with him." And in his "Journal" he wrote: "He treated women as things devoid of sense or soul," and "he treated Mrs. Shelley shabbily, I might use a harsher epithet."

Byron, while professing friendship for Shelley, acted a traitor's part in the affair of the Hoppner letter.

Writing to his publisher, Murray, he referred to the unhappy Claire Clairmont, Allegra's mother, whom he had seduced and abandoned, as "a damned bitch."

I could add many more records similar to those cited.

Of Byron it may be said: "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it." He died in an attempt to assist the Greek patriots, his last letter was to his sister Augusta, and his last thoughts were of her—the only woman he truly loved.—Yours, EDGAR SYENS.

THE LAUGHTER OF A CHILD

"Strike with hand of fire, oh weird musician, thy harp, strung with Apollo's golden hair; fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft toucher of the organ keys; blow, bugler, blow, until thy silvery notes do touch the skies, with moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering on the vine-clad hills; but know, your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh, the laugh that fills the eyes with light and every heart with joy; oh rippling river of life, thou art the blessed boundary-line between the beasts and man, and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fretful fiend of care; oh, laughter, divine daughter of joy, thou canst make dimples enough in the cheeks of the world to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief."—*Intellectual Development*, INCERSOLL.

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 H. J. LASKI: "Ethics and Politics."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Birmingham).—Sunday, 3.30 p.m., Debate: "What Ought We do with Germany after the War?" Messrs. O. MELTON and E. MARKLEY.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Public (Lecture) Hall, Northgate, Blackburn).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. C. McCALL: "The Papacy and the War."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. R. J. H. DAY: "Knowledge and Speculation."

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: A Lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. E. REDFERN: "Problems of the Peace."

Oxford Branch N.S.S. (1, Caroline Street, St. Clements).—Wednesday, November 1, 7.30 p.m., Mr. W. HAWLEY: "Free-thought in Industry."

"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN——"

THE factory children of the Industrial Revolution fell into two classes: (1) apprentice children, (2) free-labour children, or children living at home with parents or guardians. The apprentice children were the first to be employed. The early spinning machinery invented whilst the wonders of steam were still unknown needed water-power for its working; hence the first mills were placed on streams, and the necessary labour was provided by the importation of cartloads of pauper children from the workhouses to the big towns. London was an important source, for since the passing of Hanway's Act in 1767 the child population in the workhouses had enormously increased and the parish authorities were anxious to find relief from the burden of their maintenance. Jonas Hanway . . . was one of the founders of Magdalen Hospital and introduced the umbrella. By the Act generally called by his name, passed in consequence of his untiring exertions, all London parish children under six years of age were boarded out . . . at not less than 2s. 6d. per week. . . . Before this Act very few parish children survived to trouble the authorities. Hanway himself estimated the death-rate at 60 to 70 per cent. The Act, according to Howlett, caused a deficiency of 2,100 burials a year. To the parish authorities, encumbered with great masses of unwanted children, the new cotton mills in Lancashire, Derbyshire and Notts were a godsend. It must be remembered that, as a committee in 1815 pointed out, in London relief was seldom bestowed without the parish claiming the exclusive right of disposing, at their pleasure, of all the children of the persons receiving relief. The manufacturers were anxious to oblige, and in one case at least a Lancashire millowner agreed with a London parish to take one idiot with every twenty sound children supplied. The guardians had thus available a system of transportation for poor children, which was cheaper and more effective than the transportation system that had brought relief to the London prisons.

These children were consigned to their employers at the ages of seven and upwards, till they were twenty-one. Next door to the mills prentice-houses were built, and in these two buildings their young lives were spent, at best in monotonous toil, at worst in a hell of human cruelty. . . . A model mill at Styall, near Manchester, employed from seventy to eighty children procured from the Liverpool workhouse, living in a small prentice-house near the mill. Here, where kindness was the rule, and the children's education was supervised by members of the owner's family, noted for its benevolence, the working hours were seventy-four a week, or over twelve hours a day, Saturday included. The majority of mills worked fifteen hours. In many of them, work, like the stream, never stopped all night, and the children who had tended the machines all day crept into beds just left vacant by the children who were to tend them during the night. . . .

A vivid picture of life in these prentice mills was given before the 1816 committee by a certain Mr. John Moss, governor of the workhouse at Preston. For a year, from February, 1814, to March, 1815, he had been master of about 150 parish apprentices at a cotton mill at Blackborough, in Lancashire. The London children came at ages ranging from seven to eleven, the Liverpool children from eight to fifteen; all were bound till they were twenty-one. Their regular working hours, Saturday included, were from 5 a.m. till 8 p.m., and with the exception of half an hour at 7 a.m. for breakfast, and half an hour at 12 for dinner, they were working continuously the whole time. They were, however, allowed to eat something while working in the afternoon. There were no seats in the mill. When lost time had to be made up they were working

from 5 a.m. till 9 or 10 p.m., and this sometimes lasted for three weeks on end. On Sunday always some, and sometimes all, were employed from 6 a.m. till noon cleaning machinery. At night Mr. Moss regularly inspected their beds, "because there were always some of them missing; some sometimes might be runaways, others I have sometimes found asleep in the mill." The bedding was simple and unclean. A blanket to lie on, and another blanket with a horse cover to throw over them. During his time sheets were introduced. Nobody from London came to look after the children, who, according to Mr. Moss, developed into depraved characters. Once before Mr. Moss's time, when the mill had stopped payment under its former proprietors, the children were taken from the mill in a cart and turned adrift near the sands on the Lancaster road.

These cotton mills, crowded with overworked children, were hotbeds of what was called putrid fever, and it was an epidemic at Radcliffe in 1784 that first drew public attention to the condition of the apprentices. . . . No outside person, whether parent or magistrate, had any right to enter a mill or a prentice-house; the apprentices were, in fact, absolutely at the mercy of their employers. The law in theory gave them a remedy; by 20 Geo. ii., c. 19 (1792) an apprentice could appeal to a magistrate against his ill-treatment, and if the case were proved could obtain his discharge. . . . But the risk that a child who passed his life shut up in the prentice-house and the mill could find his way to a magistrate was not very serious, and if he succeeded it was as likely as not that the magistrate would turn out to be his own or a neighbouring employer. Gisborne tells us that cruel punishments were inflicted on those who found some means of complaint.

Fourteen or fifteen hours' confinement for six days a week were the "regular" hours; in busy times hours were elastic and sometimes stretched to a length that seems almost incredible. Work from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m. was not unknown; in Mr. Varley's mill they worked from 3.30 to 9.30. At the mill, happily called "Hell's Bay," for two months at a time they not only worked regularly from 5 to 9, but for two nights each week worked all through the night as well.

It was physically impossible to keep such a system working at all except by the driving power of terror. The overseers who gave evidence before Sadler's Committee did not deny that their methods were brutal. They said that they had either to exact the full quota of work or to be dismissed, and in these circumstances pity was a luxury that men with families depending on them could not allow themselves. The punishments for arriving late in the mornings had to be made cruel enough to overcome the temptation to tired children to take more than three hours in bed. One witness before Sadler's Committee had known a child who had reached home at eleven o'clock one night get up at two the next morning in panic and limp to the mill gate. In some mills scarcely an hour passed in the day without the sound of beating and cries of pain. Fathers beat their own children to save a worse beating from the overseer. In the afternoons the heavy iron stick known as the billy-roller was in constant use, and even then it happened not infrequently that a small child, as he dozed, tumbled into the machine beside him and was mangled for life, or, if he were fortunate, to find a longer Lethe than his stolen sleep.

J. L. HAMMOND AND BARBARA HAMMOND
("The Town Labourer," 1760-1832, pp. 144-160).

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