

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXV.—No. 25

Sunday, June 24, 1945

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Mixed Dish

THE one thing I am certain of in writing these notes is that the title will be justified. It is a mixed dish, but so is a good dinner. A dinner of soup, meat, pudding and fruit is far more tasty than a "blow out" with one form of food only. And even with a single kind of food, sweet and sour condiments combine to bring out the qualities of each kind. Or to take another example, on which we may without conceit speak with a certain degree of authority, a man addressing an audience may have one thing to say, but unless his speech is a very brief one, his hearers are likely to be bored before he has gone very far. Perhaps one might carry the idea further, even to the point of whimsicality; for after all, the qualities of things are dependent upon the clash of opposites. A liar is objectionable because a truth-speaker is not. Things are known to be what they are because other things are different. And last, but I hope not least, if I have been able for so many years to go over what is substantially the same ground time after time, it is that what I have to say is not a mere repetition of what has so often been said. Perhaps it is because truth is many-sided that in the long run it overcomes a lie, which is usually very monotonous.

It is due to two of my little army of seekers who, unasked and unpaid, materially, keep us informed of events we might otherwise miss, that we publish the following letters that appeared in the "Co-operative News" of recent date:—

No. 1.

RICHARD CARLILE.

STR,—I was disappointed to find from the article on the Reformers' Memorial in Kensal Green Cemetery that the name of Richard Carlile is not inscribed thereon.

That the name of this courageous thinker and mighty fighter should be omitted is unpardonable, for it is owing to the martyrdom that Carlile and his courageous shopmen endured in the cause of the freedom to publish the printed word that we are even able to read the "Co-operative News." This faithful toiler for the betterment of the "submerged tenth" endured many years of suffering and imprisonment for his concepts of freedom, and must be numbered amongst the immortals.

Many in the co-operative movement will endorse my plea that amends be made for this long neglect now that the opportunity has occurred.

ERIC A. WILLIAMS.

C.W.S. Canteen Manager.

No. 2.

RICHARD CARLILE.

STR,—May I write in support of Eric A. Williams? To be ignored by the capitalist Press should be a tribute, but in co-operative circles such lack of appreciation is deplorable. Is the reason for this omission due to this brave man's freethought or has the co-operative movement acquired "respectability?"

Education committees would be doing a public service by drawing attention to the activities of this pioneer of free publication.

It would be interesting to know how many co-operative directors, officials, &c., have heard of this fighter for freedom who still remains (even to those who claim enlightenment) unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

Birmingham.

A.W.H.

Now there is nothing new in this state of things. No body of men in this country did more to create and establish the Co-operative Movement than did Freethinkers; and not merely for the Co-operative Movement, but also for freedom in general and apart from the towering figure of Thomas Paine, the next that comes on the list is Richard Carlile—I had almost added the hackneyed phrase "lion-hearted," but I believe that the lion is not a very courageous animal. It attacks more from fear than a love of fighting. It is true that Carlile did not fight because of a love for fighting, but he hated injustice and tyranny and fought against both as few men in our history have fought. He spent more than nine years in prisons, but with the men and women who supported him he carried out his promise that what the government of his day said should not be printed, that would he print. And he kept his word. He came to London an unknown man, he became one of the greatest reformers of his day, and a blazing incitement to all who loved freedom. To the people he said, "The more tame you have grown, the more you have been oppressed and despised, the more you have been trampled on." Trevelyan said but the simple truth that "Carlile suffered and achieved for the liberty of the Press more than any other Englishman of the nineteenth century. He and his like bore the brunt of this early struggle which secured immunity for those who published unorthodox works."

High praise, but deserved praise. And it must be noted that Carlile found his helpers among the Freethinkers of his day. The Hammonds, with justification, call Carlile "the Don Quixote of liberty of mind." His example of inflexible purpose broke down the government intentions to crush freedom of thought and speech so far as force could accomplish it. He also gathered round him such men as Watson, Holyoake, and their like who proved themselves unbreakable. Carlile's defiance "You may break me, but you cannot bend me" was carried out to the end. The real liberation of the "common

people" began in this country with Thomas Paine, and it has been increased so far as their spirit has been kept alive. Those who talk most glibly to-day of "Democracy" are careful never to mention the names of these great men and women who were reformers because they were heretics. I think it was Voltaire who said that history was nothing more than lies about the dead. That was true enough in its way, our greater sin has been that we have not alone told lies about the dead, but we have buried our great dead so deeply that they are almost forgotten. The governing classes hate the reformers while alive, and slur their names when they are dead. The two letters of protest which we have reprinted are evidence of this. The Co-operative Movement was mainly built up by unbelievers in the Christian religion, but when the time for celebrations come the picture presented is that of a great religious movement with parsons in the foreground.

Religion and the Law

Here is another instance of religious influence, not belonging to the past but to the present, and if the principals in this case had happened to be both Atheists there would have been an outcry, and possibly questions would have been asked in the House of Commons concerning it. It began with a charge brought against a Roman Catholic priest, who gave his address as Oulton Abbey, Stone, Staffordshire. The Roman Catholic priest was charged on the 4th of May, with indecently assaulting a boy of 13 years of age. The case came on for hearing on the 4th of June. There was no defence and the priest was "bound over." There the purely legal aspect of the matter ended, or appeared to end, but there is another phase. We make no comment on the case further than to state the plain facts. These appear to be as follows. When the case was called in the arranged court, and at the usual opening of the court at ten o'clock, the Stipendiary Magistrate was asked to withdraw the case because it had already been tried in another court, and the hearing had taken place at 9.30 instead of the customary ten o'clock. The accused priest had pleaded guilty, and he was bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. We imagine that no similar handling of a case has ever taken place. The Chief Constable, who had this one in hand, expressed his surprise at this procedure and he said, "I had given strict instructions that this case should come before the Stipendiary Magistrate this morning." No explanation has been given why this special court was called at an unusual hour and without the knowledge of the officer who apprehended the priest.

Mr. George Hawley, the Magistrate's Clerk, and who seems to have played a prominent part in this amazing case, said to a newspaper reporter, "We are quite capable of dealing with such cases, and in this case we went ahead without the police. The man had pleaded guilty, thus giving himself right away. So we did not need the police." That, however, is not quite the point at issue. The Stipendiary Magistrate who came prepared to try the case, said to a "Daily Mirror" reporter that "he was anxiously awaiting an explanation of how a case could be dealt with by another court without anyone outside knowing anything about it." We expect that many other people are trying to solve this problem.

The priest had pleaded guilty and was bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. We rather fancy that the "punishment" leans to leniency for such an offence.

But the most peculiar reason for acting in the way noted was one that must have astonished most people. It was given by the Magistrate's Clerk, Mr. Hawley. He says, "Churches are losing their congregations fast enough these days without a priest being held up to public scorn, so in the interests of everybody and to please his people and solicitors, we put forward the case to 9.30 instead of 10 o'clock," and he winds up by saying "I am an Atheist. The priest is, of course, a Roman Catholic, but no matter what his religion was I should have taken the same action."

Now we would agree with Mr. Hawley that the Churches are rapidly losing their hold on the people, but I have yet to learn that this justifies trying a case in such a way that the public is substantially shut out. Of course there are instances where a judge has the power—I should say properly has the power—to order all not connected with the case to leave the court. But in this case the officials appear to have taken it that it was part of their job to see that nothing is publicly said that will weaken the power of the Churches. I agree that magistrates, and even judges do try to protect the Churches so far as it falls within their power. But that is a state of things that most level-headed citizens would condemn. I am quite sure that most judges would disown that conception of their duties. I am also certain that if an Atheist was charged with a similar offence there is not a judge, or a judge's clerk, who would say that the offender must be let off lightly because the number of Atheists must not be restricted. As to Mr. Hawley being an Atheist, I, as an Atheist from boyhood, hope that his description of himself is not correct.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A RATIONALIST

IN his "Men Movements and Myself" (Dent, 18s.), the late Lord Snell reviewed a period similar in length to that embraced by George Jacob Holyoake in his "Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life." Snell's period proved equally stirring, while many of the problems confronting Holyoake remained unsolved. Still the later generations witnessed many ameliorations, although our complacency is sadly ruffled by the ever increasing difficulties that now arise from day to day.

In several respects Snell's career was remarkable, and his ascent from his earlier peasant boy status to that of a political Peer of the Realm verges on the romantic. Also, his autobiography is interesting to Freethinkers as it records Snell's personal experiences of all the advanced movements of his time. Born near Nottingham in 1865, in rural surroundings, he notes that:—

"The intellectual torpor of an English village sixty years ago may be illustrated by the fact that until I left the one in which I was born I never saw a copy of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' or any of the works of Charles Dickens, and I never heard anyone mention the names of Lincoln, Wilberforce or Lloyd Garrison. But many precious pennies were coaxed from my usually empty pockets for the needs of missionaries to the 'heathen.'"

Snell experienced the pleasures of poverty in full measure as periods of unemployment, with all their attendant miseries, were constantly recurrent. Yet, he counts it as a major blessing that from the age of twenty onwards, the work performed to sustain life was the very labour he would have chosen for himself had he been given a free hand.

Wages were extremely low, but the cost of living was far lower than it is to-day. Snell enjoyed a few free evenings, and his Sunday was his own, and it was at a Sunday gathering in the market place that, for the first time in his life, he heard the authenticity of the Bible and traditional Christianity called into question. Reared in rigid orthodoxy, with the reward of a blazing hell for all unbelievers, this experience came as a complete shock. To the lad's amazement, the sceptical speaker was no repellent creature, but a well-known and highly respected citizen with advanced Unitarian views; a form of heterodoxy now shared by many Anglican divines.

In 1881, Snell heard the awful name of Bradlaugh and, amid the doubts and uncertainties that then disturbed his mind, he determined to see and hear the blasphemer when he came to lecture in Nottingham. On this occasion Bradlaugh's subject was Ireland, and Snell tells us that "Bradlaugh was already speaking when I arrived, and I remember as clearly as though it were only yesterday, the immediate and compelling impression made upon me by that extraordinary man. The impact of his personality reached me just at the moment when I was ready to respond to any plausible call to service, and my capitulation to his resounding appeal was immediate and enduring. I have never been so influenced by a human personality as I was by Charles Bradlaugh. The commanding strength, the massive head, the imposing stature, and the ringing eloquence of the man fascinated me, and from that hour till the day of his death, ten years later, I was one of the humblest but most devoted of his followers."

Snell also acknowledges his indebtedness to G. W. Foote, Mrs. Besant and other Freethought advocates who visited Nottingham. He was thus induced to join the N.S.S. and later, the Ethical Society. His studies were now extensive, and Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, Tylor, Draper and many other intellectuals were drawn into requisition, while he was especially impressed by the writings of Lubbock. Holyoake, earnest as he was, seemed feeble as a speaker and made but a transient impression. Still, his outspoken utterances and his sterling services to the Co-operative cause entitled him to a niche of honour among the eminent working class leaders of his century.

With an outlook emancipated and enlarged by Freethought, Snell turned his attention to social problems and their alleged political solutions. Mistakenly enough, the Secular Movement now appeared to him, as to most Socialists, as a mere negation. Snell ignores the fact that the old Radical reformers were nearly all Secularists. He urges that: "Merely to reject certain theological doctrines which previous generations had accepted did not appear to me to be a sufficient or satisfactory philosophy of life."

Snell, however, does not specify any representative Secularist who ever claimed that it does, and he lived to learn that even within the Labour Movement itself, theological influences served very effectively to darken counsel. The resolution in favour of Secular Education carried at every Trades Union Congress was deleted from the agenda when the Labour Party feared the loss of the Catholic vote.

In 1930 the then Labour Government, while fiercely assailed by the legitimate Opposition, had also to pacify the Romanist insurgents within its own ranks in relation to education and birth control. Snell avers that:—

"When Sir Charles Trevelyan's Education Bill was introduced, they sought in the opinion of their colleagues to make it serve, in an inequitable degree, the special interests of their Church, and they contemptuously rejected every proposal for compromise that was put before them. The impression that they created during this controversy was that they were not the masters of their own minds, and that their ultimate allegiance was not either to their own party or to the nation, but to their Church."

Indeed, John Scurr several times asserted that the Catholic members "could not modify their demands without the approval of the 'hierarchy' of their Church."

There were many Catholic electors in Snell's constituency, and pressure was brought to bear upon him, as it undoubtedly was upon other non-Romanist Members of Parliament, to accede to the demands of the Church. Snell was the member for East Woolwich and the priest of one of the Catholic churches in Plumstead insolently intimated to its representative that he "should vote for the amendment which postpones the coming into operation of the Education Bill, until financial assistance out of public funds is given to non-provided schools," and threatened that if he failed to vote accordingly "the Catholics of Plumstead will seriously consider their continuance of their support for your membership at the next election." Snell proudly replied: "The Catholic voters in the East Woolwich Division will rightly decide for themselves how they shall vote at the next election, but I should dishonour both myself and my constituents if I permitted myself to be intimidated by the threat you think it right to make on their behalf." Of course, Romanist intransigence proved fatal to Trevelyan's excellent measure and left the path open for the passage into law of the reactionary measure recently rushed through Parliament.

Religious instruction in schools supported by the State at the taxpayer's expense, has long been a bone of contention. Spurgeon, Dale, Parker, Halley Stewart and other consistent Nonconformists; many Anglican luminaries, and statesmen such as Joseph Chamberlain and John Morley have all recognised the justice of purely secular education in publicly supported schools, while leaving religious teaching to parents or guardians or the religious denominations concerned.

To further this policy the Secular Education League was founded in 1907. A powerful executive council which included Arthur Henderson, Thomas Burt, Conan Doyle, George Meredith, H. G. Wells, Eden Phillpotts and many other outstanding men was formed, while Snell became responsible for its executive and propagandist activities until he was appointed a member of the Labour Administration. Public demonstrations have from time to time taken place in favour of the only equitable solution of this controverted question and much spade work was carried out. But despite all this expenditure of enlightened energy, the obscurantists have thus far succeeded in gaining their ends. Let us trust, however, that the day will dawn when the present Education Act, thrust upon the public by a moribund Parliament, will be drastically amended along rational lines by a far more progressive Legislature than the one about to expire.

T. F. PALMER.

JUNE

O the glory and the glamour of the glowing days of June,
When the sun exults in splendour as he lords it o'er the day,
And the earth leaps forth to greet him on her sempiternal way
In the great profound unsounded of the azur'd heav'n's lagoon.

O tis then we hail the advent of the light-long days of June
When full-chaptered with beauty she awakes the plighted hour
To the all-inviting rapture of the Summer's festive dow'r
While her jewell'd skies of sapphire crown the year's resplendent noon.

And perchance, on wings of fancy, in the lovely days of June,
Looms a vision, bright, prophetic, of a future that shall rise,
When a fairer lovelier June-time shall inspire the social skies,
And the Nations be fore-gathered, rivall'd all, to march in tune.

FREDERICK STEAD.

SORTING OUT THE ASHES

COULD there be a greater exposure of the claims of Catholicism than the way it is expounded from the pulpits of its churches? It is the practice of "The Sydney Morning Herald" to give, every Monday, a report of one of the priest-delivered sermons the previous day. It's hard to believe that a perusal of these could fail, except in the case of the mentally-stunted and feeble-minded members of the community, to utterly destroy every lingering shred of belief in the Bible, even by professing Catholics themselves. For the entertainment they afford—because "entertainment" is, perhaps, the most complimentary word that can be applied to them—I here propose to give the reports served up by "The Herald" in three successive Monday issues of that paper.

First report, under the heading "Resurrection," reads:—

"The resurrection of the body would, in substance, be the same for all," said the Rev. H. J. Kennedy, who preached at St. Canice's, Elizabeth Bay, yesterday.

"The bodies of the elect," he said, "would possess the four endowments of impassibility, brightness, agility, and subtlety. Through impassibility the body, now so languid, changeable, and subject to suffering and disease, would no longer experience any sort of infirmity, pain, or alteration.

"Brightness meant that the human body, so earthly and obscure, would become luminous and resplendent. Christ gave a glimpse of this on the day of His Transfiguration when a ray of His divinity made his face radiant as the sun and His Garments white as snow.

"Through agility the body, now gross and unwieldy, would become so light that it could without difficulty be transported in an instant from place to place as if it were no longer a body but a spirit.

"Endowed with subtlety, the body would be able to penetrate the hardest and densest substances. Christ entered into the Supper Room even though the doors were closed."

Surely the limit, this, in pretentious knowledge! Father Kennedy speaks as if he had returned to this world from the after-life—had lived the after-life. What other authority could he have for going into such intimate details regarding the "luminous and resplendent" character of the body, and declaring that the body, "no longer subject to any sort of infirmity, pain, or alteration," could "penetrate the hardest and densest substances"? Entirely the outcome of a delirious imagination is the picture that Father Kennedy presumes to present of the after-life body.

Served up for Catholic consumption in "The Herald," the following Monday, was this further choice ebullition, headed "Resurrection of the Body":—

"The doctrine of the resurrection of the body was an essential part of Christianity," said the Rev. Patrick Croke, who preached at St. Canice's, Elizabeth Bay, yesterday.

"The justice of God," he said, "required that the body which had been the faithful instrument of the soul in serving God should share in its glory. The body that had served the soul in offending God by dragging it into the mire of sin should be punished.

"The body shall not always remain in the grave. The earth, which is nothing, after all, but one huge cemetery, must give back its dead. At the end of time, the earth will appear as a heap of ashes. The dead will rise from the depths of the ocean, from marble tombs, and neglected graves, from battlefields and cathedral vaults.

"The question was frequently asked," said Father Croke, "how was it possible to rejoin the scattered elements of the body after time and nature had reduced it to such a condition as to leave no vestige of its former existence. The answer was that nothing was annihilated in creation.

"There is corruption or decay, which means dissolution of the component parts of an object; but not reduction into nothing. God, who made all things out of nothing, knows where the different parts of our corrupted bodies are, and He will be able to reconstruct them, which is easier than to create them. God will bring back to life all the bodies that ever lived and died upon earth."

Thus, Father Croke represents God as gathering up all the ashes of all the dead, rejoining all the scattered elements, and bringing back to life all the bodies that ever lived. What a stupendous undertaking, therefore, does he foresee for God on Resurrection Day! But this re-assembling and restoration, Father Croke declares, will be easier than the creation of life. Hitherto the priestly presumption has been that God is All-powerful, that in all things with Him the mere wish is the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. But Father Croke is not content with revealing the knowledge he has come to possess regarding the ashes and elements. In some mysterious way, known only to himself, he is able to grade God's powers as to what is the easier or more difficult. The simple explanation for the vapourings in which he indulges would appear to be that Father Croke is fully alive as to what Catholics will swallow, and that there need not be the least restraint in dishing it out to them—for the ultimate benefit of the priestly coffers, and the glory of the Holy Mother Church.

"The Next World," the third Monday issue report in "The Herald," reads as follows:—

"The majority of the people lived as though the next world had no existence, except in theory," said the Administrator, Rev. John Ferrari, who preached at St. Canice's, Elizabeth Bay, yesterday.

"That there is a hell is evident from Divine revelation," he said. "Fifty passages may be cited from the Old and New Testaments that brush away all doubt. If the word of our infallible God has any weight we cannot escape the conviction that hell exists for the wicked or unrepentant sinner who dies with the malice of grievous sin on his soul.

"From reason alone it might be very difficult to establish the existence of hell and its eternity," said Father Ferrari. "But reason illumined by faith gives added weight and force to Divine revelation. In justice, therefore, God, who rewards the good with eternal blessedness, will condemn the wicked with eternal punishment. Otherwise the scales of eternal, rigorous justice would not be balanced.

"If there is no hell, there is no need of a judgment. If there is no final reckoning, there is no eternal justice. If there is no justice, there is no God. The believing, God-fearing person finds no difficulty in accepting the teaching of the Church on hell. It is only the unbeliever, the lax Christian, who, to save his conscience, says there is no hell."

Here it is sufficient to note that the preachment is that there is no escape from the conviction that hell exists; that for the good there is eternal blessedness and for the bad eternal punishment; and that only by the infliction of eternal punishment can the scales of God's justice be balanced. Is there a humanised or semi-humanised creature on earth to-day who could know a moment's happiness if he felt or believed that all the time there were forever roasting in hell the countless billions who have not had the blessings of the Church? Even professing Christians must recoil in horror at the thought. Yet this is what we are told by Father Ferrari to be the justice demanded by an all-merciful, all-loving God!

Conclusions I wish to emphasise from the three sermons I have cited are:—

- (1) That they are typical of what is preached and published more or less throughout the Christianised world; and
- (2) That in purporting to give the fantastic details they do as to the gathering of the ashes of the dead—the elusive, penetrating qualities of the resurrected body, and the sufferings to

which God has consigned the unrepentant—the preachers themselves must be enlightening and alienating even those whose support they are seeking to retain.

So much pulpit deliverances are to be welcomed for the reason that what they must amount to is a process of unconscious self-destruction.

Back of everything, of course, is what is held to be the Biblical basis of the religion expounded through the churches, Anglican as well as Catholic—the creation of the world in six days, the tempting of Adam by Eve, and the origin of sin.

For a parallel to all this fiction, I do not think we could have anything better than the Chinese legend, "Pan Ku and the Creation of the World," which reads:—

"Pan Ku, the Chinese Adam, arranged the five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, and earth) in their proper order, and constructed the universe, a labour which occupied him for 18,000 years.

"At the end of this period, as he had been growing six feet every day, he was over 7,000 miles in height, and broad in proportion.

"At his death his head was changed into mountains, his breath into winds and clouds, and his voice into thunder; his left eye became the sun, his right eye the moon; his beard was transformed into stars; his four limbs into the four quarters of the globe; his blood into rivers; his veins and muscles into the strata of the earth, and his flesh into soil; his skin and the hairs thereon into plants and trees; his teeth and bones into minerals; his marrow into pearls and precious stones, while the micro-organisms of his body became the people of the earth.

"During the stupendous labours of this Architect of the Universe, the dragon, phoenix, unicorn, and tortoise, which were hatched from the mundane egg, were his constant companions. These four divine creatures are the progenitors of the animal kingdom."

Christians, it may be, will join in the laugh at this posterous conception of creation. But is there anything at all more ludicrous in it than that presented by the Bible? Just as reverently was Pan Ku received by the Chinese as has the God-story of the Bible been accepted by Christians. Both have their followings in their respective territories. Or, rather, Pan Ku did have until, in later years, the Chinese discarded him as a crude, primitive imposition; and in that way, therefore, they now have the laugh entirely against Christians with their God and the Bible.

J. Y. ANDERONEY.

FICTION AND FIGURES

No. I.—FREETHOUGHT AND THE B.B.C.

REPLYING to the debate in the House of Commons on April 8, 1943, and referring to the Governors of the B.B.C., Mr. Brendan Bracken said:—

"But in all their doings they strive to be fair to all sections of the community. They have no political partisanship and no religious bias."

The Rev. James W. Welch, Director of Religious Broadcasting at the B.B.C. in a letter to the Manchester Guardian published on October 28, 1943, wrote:—

"The B.B.C. broadcasts some 230 hours in the Home and Forces programmes, and of these only seven and a-quarter hours, some three per cent., are given up to Christian religious broadcasts. It is certainly true that humanism, agnosticism, and atheism are not preached within the periods set aside each week for the broadcasting of the Christian religion. Why should they be? . . . In its

religious broadcasts the B.B.C. confines itself to the Christian religion. But no such restriction applies to broadcast talks in general . . . and it is proposed shortly to broadcast a talk on humanism by a non-Christian."

We have since had this broadcast—it lasted 15 minutes! The Archbishop of York (Dr. Garbett) in a broadcast talk on November 4, 1943, said:—

"Broadcast religious services in the past 20 years have helped to bridge the gulf between the man in the street and the Churches."

In a table of listeners' likes and dislikes relating to 1942 and published in the "Manchester Guardian" on May 14, 1943, the B.B.C. gave the following percentages for its "Religious Services":—

	Per cent.
Enthusiastic Listeners	16
Neutral Listeners	30
Hostile Listeners	11

If we add to the "neutrals" the balance of 43 per cent. of unrecorded votes we obtain 16 per cent., 73 per cent., and 11 per cent. respectively, figures which are not far away from those indicated by the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. H. A. Wilson) in his address to the Church Assembly, London, on June 23, 1943, when he said:—

"It has been estimated that 10 per cent. of the population are definitely attached to some Christian religion, but I think this too optimistic, 30 per cent. are kindly disposed to Christianity and put in an appearance at Church on special occasions, 50 per cent. are totally indifferent and 10 per cent. definitely opposed."

Now for the figures:—

If we combine the Bishop's percentages with those of the B.B.C., we obtain averages, in round numbers, of:—

- 14 per cent. definite Christians.
- 75 per cent. indifferent or neutral.
- 11 per cent. hostile to religion.

Mr. Welch informs us that 7½ hours (435 minutes) per week are devoted to religious broadcasts, so, on the basis of 11 to 14 we—the anti-religious section of the community—should obtain 5½ hours (340 minutes) of broadcasting time per week.

According to the Archbishop of York these religious broadcasts have been going on for 20 years, during which time Mr. Welch has graciously allowed us in all 15 minutes, that is, three quarters of a minute per year. Slow progress admittedly, but sure, and have we not the assurance of Mr. Brendan Bracken that the Governors of the B.B.C. are striving and have striven to give us a fair do?

We must not expect too much, like Mr. Twain, when he wished to descend a mountain by glacier to his hotel two miles away; the glacier accommodation was good and there was ample room, yet he must needs go off at the deep end all because of the speed. At seven feet per year he reckoned it would take him 1,500 years to reach his hotel and he wouldn't wait that long. "They had better transport than that," he said, "way back in the States." Perhaps they had, but this Yankee hustle business can easily be overdone, and the dignity of the B.B.C. Governors must be respected. "Festina lente" is their staid motto.

But to return to our muttons. At the present rate of three quarters of a minute per year we Freethinkers will arrive at our full quota of B.B.C. time (5½ hours per week) in exactly 23,573 years and 4 months. Now that really is a long time, and whilst nobody would wish the B.B.C. Governors to over-excite themselves in their efforts to be fair to all parties, I think we might reasonably ask for some slight increase in the rate of progress without being suspected of wishing to hustle them unduly.

W. A. GOURMAND.

ACID DROPS

The Bishop of Southwark (London) has discovered that: "By the most overwhelming victory in recorded history God has given peace and Christian civilisation one more chance." Which same delivery makes one wonder whether these pious gentlemen ever pause to consider what deep dyed fools they are, or what hard-shelled idiots they imagine the people are. Surely one of these two things—or the two combined—must be true.

Consider the imputations of such a delivery. God has given us peace. If that is the case why did he not give us peace without slaughtering so many millions of his alleged children? These millions do not benefit from the peace God has given, for they are dead, and the evil marks that every war leaves in its track will be with the survivors. Let us suppose that Churchill had up his sleeve a method of winning the war directly it began but refused to use that weapon before cities had been destroyed, human nature brutalised, and millions of the people had died terrible deaths. What would be said about our Prime Minister? Would it be enough for him to say that he had resolved there should be no peace until the massacres, the tortures, and the evil had been worked? All that we gather from these expressions of the clergy is deadening sense and feeling so long as they can secure their own positions.

The Bishop of Chelmsford hopes that none of the clergy will publicly engage in the General Election. Presumably he would rather have the servants of God to work quietly underground to achieve their religious aims.

Everyone knows that the ordinary newspaper is on the side of God, so long as it helps circulation. And it is probably with the idea of helping that one paper labelled the B.B.C. preachers as "Wheepies." In this it was backed up by some remarks made in a recent Diocesan Conference at Carlisle. There it was said: "We are told to preach a gospel of great joy. Instead the tone is enough to make people weep," and the Director of Religion for the B.B.C. has also said that "nine clergymen out of ten are affected by the parsonic voice. It is an unfortunate fact that it is for us to put that right."

But if an outsider may be permitted to defend the clergy we would urge that this complaint is not fair to the clergy. Consider, first of all, every clergyman is called by God to his task. God even works through the Prime Minister to select an Archbishop. This being the case it is only right that God goes on urging the clergy what to do and how to do it. The clergy have distinctive dress, they have a distinctive language, they have distinctive manners, and it is only running true to form when they adopt a distinctive intonation. How should we know that a parson had been called by God if there was not something distinctive about him?

Besides, take a wider view and consider how the New Testament yarns would read if they were not expressed in a distinctive way. Consider the corner stone of the birth of Jesus:—

"The birth of Jesus was in this wise. When as his mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But . . . behold, the angel appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 'That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.'"

Now age and constant usage has enabled people to read this story and people have believed it. But suppose that had been put out in the every-day language of the present time. How many would just wink the other eye and comment on it to the disadvantage of the "virgin." Constant use in an archaic form has dulled criticism. Put it into modern terms and the reply would be a broad grin. The "Daily Mail" must be careful or it will be charged with being un-Christian and that might affect its circulation.

Theresa Neumann is the name of one of those "miracles" the Catholic Church is always producing. She is known as the "stigmatised" peasant woman who never eats anything, and who has had no other "sustenance" than her daily Communion for seven years. Some fast! But we wonder who believes it? Especially as she is "a practical hard-working peasant" with five cows to look after. She was reported killed during the war but she has turned up in perfect health. Needless to say that when the Germans shelled her home all the rooms were damaged except hers which was quite untouched. And it is this kind of intellectual nourishment that is hailed as great news by our leading Catholic journals.

At last the Portuguese hierarchy has organised the first "peace" pilgrimage to "our Lady's shrine at Fatima," the scene of the marvellous miracle where the sun careered round the sky for the benefit of some very devout children. Two hundred thousand people went there, there were long queues for confession, 30,000 "Sacred Hosts" were used at the Consecration, the statue of the Virgin was paraded before 100 stretcher cases, and in one morning 50,000 pilgrims had received Holy Communion. In fact, everything was done to impress "our Lady" that this was something bigger than Lourdes, yet alas, not a solitary cure has been reported, at least not one which was in any way checked. It is most inexplicable. Even the fact that many pilgrims crawled part of the journey on their knees does not appear to have impressed the Virgin very much. Perhaps she is waiting for a few of our own Catholic converts and intellectuals to lead the way. What about Mr. Arnold Lunan and Fr. D'Arcy?

There is trouble in the Free Church of Scotland. To brighten up the Churches it is suggested that there should be instrumental music in the Church in order to liven up the proceedings. This, however, is strongly opposed on the ground that it would split the Church if so drastic a step was taken. The suggestion was not adopted. Scotland so far as Church music in the Free Church is concerned, stands where it did. It reminds one of the good Scottish preacher who met the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" movement with a "Thank God, there has never been a pleasant Sunday afternoon in my church."

Speaking in the Town Hall, Newark, the Bishop of Southwark complained that the Church lacked personnel. He said: "There are not enough to go round." That was a very poor analysis of the situation. The truth is that the Church can no longer attract to its service men of superior ability, and so far as the people are concerned they get steadily less and less concerned with the whole business.

The Head Master of Dean Close School says that the "School should show its pupils that man is dependent upon God." The school, if it is to be healthy and helpful should do nothing of the kind. Its primary aim should be so to train the young that there is a feeling of confidence in one's self, and that feeling should rest on the conviction that the individual can only lift himself to a high and progressive level when he recognises that he is one with a community. If he does get this far he may be trusted to take his place as a really useful member of society.

We take the following from one of our daily newspapers:—

"The Bishop of Ely (Dr. Harold E. Wynn), speaking at Cambridge to-day, said that for many years he had been seriously disturbed and baffled by the indifference of many fellow countrymen to the claims of our religion.

The attitude of many, not anti-clerical in the Continental sense, has been succinctly described by the farmer who told his parson, 'Your hobby's church, mine's pigs.'"

The Bishop is too modest in his language. It is not mere indifference of this and that individual that the Bishop and his kind have to face, it is the fact of the decline of religious belief that he is facing. There is more than a mere number of people losing faith in this or that Church the clergy have to admit; it is the decay of religious belief as such that we are witnessing.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. A. DAVISON.—Thanks for cuttings. They will be useful.

C. L. RICHARDS.—We are quite well, but could do with a little more leisure than we have. But after all we are doing better to die working than live simply waiting for the end that awaits us all, and doing nothing meanwhile.

W. E. DAVIDSON.—Thanks for the paper. It is one that we see only occasionally. We shall use it in our next issue.

F. WATERS.—There is no immediate possibility of the Editor's "Almost an Autobiography" appearing. It is entirely a question of paper.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from Lt.-Com. C. Draper to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

J. EDWARDS.—We have read your letter with interest and we will see what can be done. The difficulty is the paper shortage.

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

We are pleased to be able to report that the editor's new booklet "Thomas Paine" is selling very well indeed. We had a large printing but it looks as if there will not be enough to go round, and it cannot be reprinted until the paper allowance is more liberal. The price of the booklet is 1s. 3d., postage 1d. We suggest that a copy presented to a liberal-minded friend will serve as a good piece of propaganda. It comes like a bombshell to those who are not acquainted with the true story of the great Englishman.

It seems very difficult, so long as we are dealing with what one may call "outsiders," to get anything like a fair statement concerning Thomas Paine. One gets from what one may call the outside world, either silence or misrepresentation. The latest example was that provided by "Citizen Tom Paine," already noticed in these pages. A large part of this book was a mere caricature of Paine, and we are acting charitably if we say that the untruthful parts were put in mainly because they promised to be attractive. So poor, honest, self-sacrificing "Tom Paine" was once again thrown to the lions—or asses.

For example. A friend is good enough to send us a notice of "Citizen Tom Paine." The writer evidently knew nothing first hand about Paine, and accepts the fantastic picture of Paine as authentic. Paine is said to be a "mendicant of revolution, ugly and generally threadbare and starving," which almost ranks with the famous act of a recent President of the U.S.A. who, with regard to Paine, told three lies in three words, and so holds the medal for misrepresentation. We wish we had the power to force each of these men who so easily lie, and lie about Paine, to write a truthful summary of the character of Paine as presented by Moncreux Conway. It is true that the result would be a good sized room full.

One of our welcome contributors to these columns, Mr. William Kent, author of several books on London, and of a particularly fine study of the religious attitude of Charles Dickens, is preparing a book that should be of interest to Freethinkers, particularly. It is a volume which will be made of suitable quotations. Mr. Kent writes that while the book must be adequately representative of prominent Freethinkers such as Paine and Ingersoll, there will be a particular welcome for significant excerpts from writers not usually classified as such.

That last point is worthy of particular notice and Mr. Kent is inviting readers of the "Freethinker" to associate themselves with the work by sending what they consider as fit for such a volume. Those who wish to take part in this should write to Mr. W. Kent, 71 Union Road, Clapham, London, S.W.4. Fullest particulars are asked for whether in verse or in prose. It is hoped that the volume will be ready by Christmas, which following an old pagan custom is a period of present making.

We know little of General Eisenhower and of his ability as a soldier; we must take the opinions of others. But here are a few sentences of his in reply to the praise that was given him at the Guildhall reception:—

"Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends.

His position is a symbol of great human forces that have laboured arduously and successfully for a righteous cause. His honours cannot hide in his memories the crosses marking the resting place of the dead."

If we are any judge of language that is rhetoric at its best and human nature at its greatest. We hope he writes an account of his war-time experiences.

In a recent Brains Trust broadcast Dr. Malcolm Sargent expressed his horror at the way the German people—he said—read Nietzsche and, like that philosopher, hated Christianity. It was not surprising that a nation which hated Christianity were guilty of the atrocities committed by the Germans, especially in concentration camps. This proved too much for Bertrand Russell who strongly demurred, and it was pointed out that after all Nietzsche also despised the German people. In the face of this, the lame excuse was put forward that Nietzsche had Polish ancestry. The truth is, that Nietzsche's "Will to Power" would never have been identified with all that is bad in Germany if he had not been so strongly contemptuous of Christianity as a slave religion. Dr. Sargent was obliged to confess that he had hardly read a line of Nietzsche, and that is the position of most people who try to show he is to blame for Nazism. But Dr. Sargent's attack on Nietzsche was typical of a good deal of the "brains" in the Brains Trust.

Some woolly headed reader of the "Catholic Times" writes the editor asking whether "Almighty God knew evil before the Fall of Man." Straightway the editor, who is apparently in close touch with God, replies that "God knew everything from all eternity." The next step should be a vote of censure on God having known the trouble would come, and just stood by watching the circus performance. Of course, being Atheists, we are not so ready to make God—whoever or whatever he is like—appear as next door to a criminal. Let us hope that if there is a God, he is not quite that mixture of folly and criminality that some of his followers make him.

Bishop Barnes, of Birmingham, says that "a clergyman ought to be a protagonist for social reform." How these clerics love to juggle with mere words. Everyone is more or less interested in social reform, but the important consideration is, what does he consider social reform? So far as the bishops are concerned reform to them stands for a strengthening of clerical control.

A POSTCARD FOR A PAGE

Cyril Joad Replies to William Kent

WILLIAM KENT, c/o "The Freethinker."

"What, please, is all this about? That I haven't answered your letters? I am afraid that that is at the bottom of it all. Really I'm awfully sorry, but please try to imagine what it's like to get well over 20 letters a day every day of your life. Still, I am sorry about yours.

C. E. M. JOAD."

DEAR SIR,—You may have heard of a terse reply once sent by Beerbohm Tree to a would-be dramatist:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have read your play. Oh! MY DEAR SIR." Substitute postcard for play and you will know what I think of your "reply."

My open letter contained eleven paragraphs. You refer only to one—of small importance. It is also easiest answered—another example of the blind eye I complained of! If you have little time to write letters, apparently you have little time to read them. I am surprised you do not have more letters; your fans are remiss. At any rate, you do not get over twenty on Sunday, and you should not stick to your correspondents' stamped addressed envelopes any day even if you have left the ethical movement. Of the million and a-half words I have had in print, I have had to type almost all myself, in addition to many letters. You will forgive me for supposing that secretarial assistance, which I cannot afford, might be possible for you.

It is certainly fortunate for you that you overlook only letters of a critical character. You must be careful. Supposing one from the office of the B.B.C. or the "Daily Express" escaped your eye? You might be money out of pocket, and you cannot afford it. I suppose you also missed the letter in the "Daily Telegraph" to which I alluded? Perhaps you have decided not to stand as a Labour candidate for Parliament because your correspondence is so much in arrears! Or do you fear that Hoggish fellow might placard the constituency with pars. from your pacifist productions (they would hardly suggest political prescience), or advertise your record of recantation? Some, not enamoured even of a Brains Trust candidate, might ask whether Socialism, like Rationalism and Pacifism, would go into the limbo of forgotten things? Moreover, the hecklers who can be kept out of Broadcasting House and Conway Hall must be tolerated at elections.

Once I assisted to raise your reputation. In his last years I knew John Burns intimately, as will appear when the paper supply is equal to producing my lengthy biography. He had hardly heard of you until his bed-ridden state brought him to listen in. Twice he dubbed you a comedian, and I demurred. When, however, I saw you announced to take part in a "Daily Express" Travelling Brains Trust, I did think it sounded like a circus, which usually has its funny man. How edifying for the recent ethical leader to be harnessed to the chariot of our political Tamburlaine, Lord Beaverbrook!

Still, you must be used to bridles at Broadcasting House. There they have tempted and tamed you. You must not, however, think anybody is going to be foolish enough to think it is like a German Concentration Camp where men with free minds are forcibly detained. E. M. Forster told the B.B.C. what the author of "Aeropagitica" might have thought of it. I wish you had such courage. It would cost you more than you have.

I was glad to hear that at Conway Hall only a small majority saved the pilot from being dismissed before he sensed that the time had come to depart. I have no doubt he would like to have given the Conway Memorial Lecture first. It brings a fat fee—

a fact that makes the lavish vote of thanks ludicrous. Nobody ever thinks of passing a vote to his typist at the close of her day—isn't she paid for it?—but lecturers are often thanked as if they were always sacrificing themselves to their audiences!

My overlooked letter referred to your answer at a "Daily Express" Brains Trust. "Christianity will not disappear because I think it is true, and God will look after his own in the last resort." I did want to know—it is a fair question—what your true Christianity is, Trinitarian or Unitarian, Sacramentarian or Quaker, Roman Catholic or Protestant, miraculous or merely human; the worship of a Christ-God or the following of a man Jesus? Also, what histories you have read that persuade you that your hypothetical god had a particular interest in Christianity? A fellow named Joad who had an epistolary debate with Arnold Lunn did not seem to take this view! Once in the "New Statesman" you referred to the "Sermon on the Mount" as having been taught for nearly two thousand years. This was equally amazing. According to writers like Coulton and Owst, the mediaeval mind had no cognisance of it. Preaching then was concerned with doctrines and sacraments. Christian ethics was a second line of defence only in recent times—when Christian theology was found out.

There are those who suggest that one day you will resolve all our mysteries from a pulpit—some say a Roman Catholic one. I am not quite convinced of this, though Broadcasting House and Beaverbrook are apprenticing you to authoritarianism. I do not want to wait so long. I am older than yourself. Moreover, think of the long queue there would be—at any rate for many weeks—to hear the Rev. Cyril Joad! Probably if I did get in, I should say, adapting Meredith:—

"Ah what a dusty answer gets the soul,

When hot for certainty from this our Joad!"

Finally, what now of the God you found? You left him on the mat at Conway Hall. Did he not take on as you hoped? Someone said "Joad has found God, won't God be pleased?" Perhaps this was not a good investment. We all wait now for the conversion of Huxley and Kingsley Martin. Thinking of a hymn of my boyhood, we should imagine the bells of Heaven ringing if Joad brought those souls returning from the wilds!

Perhaps I had better put in my entry in next year's "Who's Who," under "Recreations"—"Baiting big-bugs!"

Yours unrespectfully,

WILLIAM KENT.

FROM VICTORY TO VICTORY

A GENERAL Election should be a serious and interesting event. The selecting of an Executive body of citizens, to be entrusted with the nation's welfare for a number of years, by the exercise of a vote which places upon the voting citizen a social obligation and responsibility should, if properly understood, be one of the major factors in the art of citizenship. But citizenship is not a strong point with the average Britisher today. £ s. d. is an easy first, and those things which can be visualised as having a cash value become the important things in life with far too many people. One result of this is that a last minute sensation on the eve of a General Election poll will outweigh programmes, promises, policies, and past records and re-direct votes by thousands. The success of such tactics fertilises the soil for the growth of corruption in politics, including the abuse of power. Now the abuse of power is a very godlike and Christian virtue. The Old Testament bristles with stories of Jehovah's abuse of his power over mortals. Death, plagues, boils and lice were always at hand to drive home the point that He was the Lord. Jesus promised immortality in an incinerator to all who would not accept his demon-infested fanatical teachings. Whenever

and wherever Christians get the chance they follow the example of their god and saviour. The policy of the B.B.C. is an example of the Christian's abuse of power, the latest Education Bill is another, and so on. Keeping that point in mind, the influence of the Christian religion in political propaganda can hardly be other than to help lower the moral tone of political life. With few exceptions politicians do not drag god and religion in from choice, neither do they do it for fear of the people: a candidate who went right through his election campaign without any reference to god or religion is not likely to receive many reminders from his constituents. But if few citizens are aware of the power of the churches to-day, public men are, from experience, fully alive to it, and realise that an occasional dose of religion dispensed in public, although it may corrupt his conscience, will purge any charge of unbelief or Atheism. The vote counts, its quality does not. So during the General Election campaign god will be dragged all round the constituencies. Fresh from his paradoxical exploits on the battlefields of Europe, where fighting on both sides he ended a five and a-half years struggle with himself in complete victory and total defeat, he will now be called upon to do duty from the platforms of all the rival political parties. The candidates will use god as a rubber stamp to mark their rival 'isms as acceptable to "Our Lord" from Conservative platforms, Jesus Christ from Socialist platforms and the Carpenter of Nazareth from Labour platforms. With the help of god each political party will denounce the others, and god in turn will denounce all of them and support all of them. True, it's a bit of a mix up but quite unavoidable when rival interests have one god between them. Like my fellow passenger in the train on VE Day who said he thanked god the war was over. I replied that I was more fortunate than him. I hadn't got a god so escaped many stupidities and could be honest and grateful to the men who had won the war for us.

It must be remembered that General Elections are not lost and won by omniscience supporting all the candidates. The electorate plays a part. The same voters do not all vote for the same party every time. The turnover of votes is a well understood electoral phrase and that is where god plays a big part, planning and scheming, giving a new twist to a man's party loyalty, poaching a quota from every party as the raw material for the "turnover of votes." The mixing of a fellow's political views must be immensely interesting and wickedly amusing to a god, I am sure I would get much fun from it; doping a Tory with a nip of Karl Marx, and a Socialist with a tot of "Dear Winnie," a transfusion of Independent into a Communist, and an injection of Common Wealth into the Liberal, a game of political general post between Tweedledee, Tweedledum, and Uncle Tom Cobby. God travels from victory to victory. God will win the election for the party with the majority of successful candidates; there will be more losers than winners when the election figures are announced, but win or lose god will have helped them all and will be thanked when the new Parliament reassembles. There is just an outside chance of a miracle government. Information has been given that the Common Wealth Party will run 32 candidates in the election. If from the 32 candidates god can return a majority party to the House of Commons, and give us a Common Wealth Government with a good working majority, I think we can give a promise that very many Freethinkers will re-examine their negative attitude towards miracles.

R. H. ROSETTI.

BYRON

Few men so impressed themselves upon their generation as Byron. Tennyson has told us that when he died it was as though the firmament had lost some mighty star in whose vanishing the world was left in darkness. When Byron went flashing and glowing down the troubled skies, trailing clouds of glory, his sudden quenching affected men with the sense of some elemental phenomenon.

M.

ROAD TO SUCCESS—VIA PRAYER

ACCORDING to latest reports in the Press, it is stated that prayers will be said in thousands of churches for the success of the present San Francisco Conference. Also, as usual, the Catholics are out to try and rule the roost in international politics through the Conference. They never miss an opportunity, do they?

With regard to the prayers it seems to be such a great waste of very good time. In the first instance we have all been told by the clergy that we cannot lose because we are on God's side. If that is true, then of course the San Francisco Conference *must* be a success. Therefore why pray? On the other hand, if the success of this Conference is not certain it still seems a waste of time to offer prayers to God because he just simply does not appreciate them. We know this because it has been tried so many times before. God is so unreliable. After all, prayers have been said for many things over a long, long period now, but they never seem to do any good for God just works in his own sweet way oblivious to all. There were many prayers said for peace but he gave us war. The peoples of Czechoslovakia and other European countries ought to know by now what use prayer is. During this war there have been prayers at the launching of battleships for their success against the enemy, but they have often had a boomerang effect when the ships have been torpedoed. Prayers have been said for the success of fishing fleets and they have returned to port with broken nets and no fish. What would have happened if some great statesman had let us down to the extent that God has done? He would undoubtedly have been kicked out on the back of his neck, but not so with God. He seems to be the perpetual Dictator who can always get away with it much to the advantage of his satellites, the ecclesiastical functionaries.

How many churches have suffered bombardment after consecration? However, the good pious religionists never seem to notice these things at all. The only things they do notice are those such as crosses being let untouched whilst other places are bombed to blazes. These latter cases, of course, are what are known as miracles; in the former cases, well, God knows best.

Then of course there is the usual blurb in progress with regard to thanksgiving for victory. Millions of men and women of all nationalities have given limbs and in some cases lives as their contribution towards that victory, but no thanks are due to them. Oh no, give all the thanks to God who so generously sponsored this war by supporting the armaments people and the others who were directly responsible for the bloody mess into which the whole of humanity has descended. He didn't make any effort to prevent these people from committing their dirty deeds, but he is to be thanked because others got us out of it. But hush! We must not say such things. That would be almost too much like blasphemy and we can be punished for such a crime. We must blame poor wicked Adam for the war because it was due to his ignorance that evil came into the world. Nevertheless, let us praise God when we come to our senses and stop the damned silly nonsense of butchering one another.

Whenever there is blood, tears and death one will find Christianity there ready to jump in and take a hand in affairs. The Catholics are not alone in this although they can be regarded as the more formidable enemies of Freethought. To attend purely and simply to spiritual welfare would mean complete annihilation for them, so they must of necessity take part in worldly affairs too. However, they sway in politics according to which way the wind blows. Prior to Marshal Stalin recognising the Church and before he entered the war on the side of the Allied Forces the Catholics were one of Russia's most bitter opponents. Now the Catholic archbishops are going to issue a proclamation to the effect that the Russian and Democratic States are incompatible. When Fascism has now collapsed so ignominiously the

Catholics want to be on the winning side. They did very well out of Mussolini so now they hope to do very well out of his enemies. I wonder what Franco—that fine Christian gentleman—is going to think about it all now. No wonder that Christians can whoop with joy and proclaim that they will always win. The man who moves into the other camp after his side has been defeated must always win, but then it is an old game with the Church. Nevertheless, when things were not so good (in the good old days) the Catholics had ways and means of subduing the people to their will. To-day that organisation—although perhaps not so strong as in former days—is still ready to stoop to the lowest level in its fight for power, only, at the moment, such things as inquisitions, etc., are not necessary. With the passing of time the Catholic Church has grown more subtle in its methods. Others do the fighting, then the Church steps in and takes the spoils. This method, of course, is only the reverse of what used to take place when missionaries settled first amongst natives and later the troops marched in.

It does not need a spiritualist medium nor yet a medicine man to foretell that the San Francisco Conference will be a success. In spite of God and his angels or the Devil and his demons, the Conference will be a success, but the churches seem to have doubts so they are making certain beforehand.

With regard to their prayers after victory has been proclaimed they are telling God all about it beforehand so that he will be prepared. "Advertise beforehand" seems to be the slogan of the Church. Prepare the Lord so that he will grant us victory knowing that he is to receive the thanks of the many once the job is done. When we look around after the cessation of hostilities and we see many minus arms, legs and crippled in various ways then we will surely know whom to thank. If we are prepared to thank God for final victory—then we must also thank him for the mess that has already been created. But, if we say that God is *not* responsible for the blood, strife and infamy of it all, then why on earth be so illogical as to praise him only for the good things in life? Of course, we are dealing with illogical people! They declare that their God moves in mysterious ways. They certainly follow well in the footsteps of their master by also moving in mysterious ways! Mystery is the keynote to success so far as the Church and its satellites are concerned; without it, we should all understand too much, and that would never do.

Once the fetish and madness of prayer has been cast aside and real methods taken to prevent wars then only may we live in peace. Doctors don't pray for their patients, they administer medicine. The world is very sick, is it not about time that the medicine was administered instead of prayer?

LOUIS ROMANIA.

THE NATURE OF METAPHYSICAL THINKING

A SHORT while ago I loaned a copy of Paine's "Age of Reason" to a friend by way of an introduction to Freethought. When the book was returned I had the pleasure of answering quite a lot of questions. It reminded me of the controversy in these columns over the necessity of "Bible banging" as against the scientific exposition, so wide were the subjects involved.

This, of course, is an indication of the necessity of Freethought. The amoeba still exists, together with the Super-man. We still have the savage in our midst. Then came a question which rather took me by surprise; what was the position of Reason in my scheme of things? In endeavouring to answer, I felt that I was handing out Ancient Philosophy, something that had gone out of fashion. I remembered Hogben's "Flight from Reason," and after subsequent rumination, I concluded that we no longer live in an age of reason. We are now living in an Age of conditioned reflexes, of inhibitions, of complexes, of libidos and super egos, of dozens of instincts; an Age of a

new metaphysic of electrons, protons and neutrons, of indeterminacy, of curved space and an expanding Universe.

This new metaphysic has brought us into a new age of sophistry, of obscurantism. Never before have we accumulated so much knowledge, and never before was so much said by so many about so little. For anyone who tries to elucidate, we find a hundred mystery-mongers. Sensation-mongering in the yellow press has its corollary in this mystery-mongering. Never before was clear thinking more necessary, never before was it less appreciated. Brevity may be the soul of wit, but one would never suppose that clarity were the soul of wisdom. Neither brevity nor clarity is the soul of Sophism, and the modern sophists are adepts in verbal juggling; usually a quaint mixture of ancient philosophy and modern science. This has the effect of making confusion worse confounded. A typical example of this ancient and modern, of this obscuring the obvious, may be given from a review of a book in the "New Statesman" by C. E. M. Joad. "The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking" by Dorothy Emmet appears to be a genuine attempt to elucidate a problem, and it is interesting to see how Joad uses it as a peg on which to hang his hat. That he is continually restating her position goes without saying, for he uses the old trick of standing up the skittles in order to knock them down. But her case appears to be so clearly stated that he has to resort to stating what he thinks she *ought* to say, and covers this by handing her a bouquet. Nevertheless, he does not dare too much because "Miss Emmet is too old a hand at this business."

After some antiquated garbling, he says, "But that is not how Miss Emmet puts it!" Her main contention is that metaphysical thinking is analogical. By that she means that "it takes concepts drawn from some form of experience or some relation within experience, and extends them either so as to say something about the nature of reality, or so as to suggest a possible mode of co-ordinating other experiences of different types from that from which the concept was originally derived." Thus, "We are," according to Miss Emmet, "thinking in terms of analogies, of analogies drawn from within our experience." What is more, we do not for the most part know that this is what we are doing."

Well, that seems clear enough, it might almost have come out of Chapman Cohen's "Materialism Restated." "Metaphysics starts from an analysis of experience."

How then does Joad get his rabbit into the hat. This is really the interesting part of the business. He takes the desperate step of stating his confession of faith, I believe, says Joad. "I believe that metaphysics is doomed from the moment that we give up the notion that the mind in experience makes direct contact with a reality external to itself who features experience reveals." Here we have the Credo, which introduces the ghost of a god, and also the ghost of a revelation, and there is more to come. We cannot describe the beauty of a Beethoven quartet, or the reality revealed to mystical contemplation, because we have no language available. "Language invented to convey the meanings and uses of this world cannot easily be transformed into a vehicle for the meanings appropriate to another." So, the ghost of another world. A creed, a god, a revelation, another world; what more *could* a true Christian want?

But the sweets come at the end of the banquet, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. "If metaphysics is merely concerned, as she suggests, to interpret relationships within our experience, then we cannot, it is clear, know a reality outside our experience at all. In short, we could not make statements about it."

Well! Who said there was no mystery? The fact that Joad and others can talk, and fill volumes, proves that there is, and as long as these people can talk, and fill volumes, there will be

H. H. PREECE.

LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

MR. C. DU CANN'S interesting tribute to the memory of Lord Alfred Douglas revives memories of what was to many people a Golden Age.

Despite Wilde's errors and disgrace, Lord Alfred and other friends were loyal to him. He has become a legendary figure, and the tragedy of his *début* is remembered by few. Much of Lord Alfred's poetry was admirable, and the poems cited by Mr. Du Cann will remain; but some of his earlier work was marred by an attempt to render it voluptuous by the use of out-of-the-way words, the meaning of which is obscure. In one poem, "Jonquil and Fleur-de-Lys," I think, there is the following verse:—

"For the room was filled with a soft, sweet light
Of ambergris and apricot.
And round the walls were angels bright,
With lute and flute and angelot."

This will hardly bear analysis; and when I asked Lord Alfred what was the meaning of the word "angelot," which I could not find, he confessed that he did not know. Some readers of the "Freethinker" may recall a little controversy which he and I had on its pages. This was anent a question which he addressed to Wilde at the Cafe Royale in the days of his youth: "Would you have me forsake my artistic perceptions?", and my statement that his father and my old friend, Frank Cobbett, used to lie in wait in Albemarle Street to chastise Wilde. The latter statement was verified by Mr. Charles Watts, who recalled an occasion when he was visiting the Marquis of Queensberry at his hotel in Albemarle Street, "when he suddenly rushed from the tea-table when Wilde passed and like a madman tore down the street vowing vengeance, and only just escaped reaching his prey."

Lord Alfred fell out with the notorious Robert Ross, who was Wilde's executor and the original of Arthur Wilmot in "Sinister Street," because he would not permit Ross to use the "Academy" as a medium for his undesirable propaganda.

Lord Alfred was, in his young days, a turbulent person, he used to write abusive letters to his father-in-law, Colonel Custance, and to the King and others, abusing the Colonel. Colonel Custance then put in force the order for Lord Alfred to come up for judgment. This he disobeyed and went off to France, a warrant was issued for his arrest.

The history of Lord Alfred's marriage was as follows. Olive Custance originally wrote expressing her admiration for his poetry and her sympathy in his troubles. They met by appointment at the South Kensington Museum, and afterwards at the house of Lady Anglesea. Miss Custance was at this time engaged to her cousin (Montague, I think); but Lord Alfred used to send her a dozen telegrams a day begging her to marry him, which at last she did.

They were not happy for long; but I will not enter into the unhappy causes of their estrangement. One is glad to know that in later years at Hove they were reconciled, but they did not live together.

There is a mediaeval touch in much of Lord Alfred's work, it may have been fostered by Wilde's injunction to the youthful poet when he was about to visit a cathedral city, Winchester, I think: "Plunge your hands, dear boy, in the cool of Gothic things."

In conclusion, I knew Lord Alfred—"Bosy" to his friends—his father "Queenie" and Wilde, they were a remarkable trio. When Lord Alfred used to visit me at Hove, and when we met in the bookshop in Church Road, he was always cheerful, and often humorous.—R.I.P.

EDGAR SYERS.

BUCHENWALD

ONE of the most carefully inculcated half-truths, "plugged" by practically all the newspapers in this country, is the suggestion that the Nazi-organised concentration camps, such as Buchenwald, were supported by the whole German people, and that the unfortunate inmates of these camps were all foreign slave workers.

The great merit of Mr. Victor Gollancz's "What Buchenwald Really Means" (Gollancz; 3d.) is that it destroys this idea once and for all, proving, beyond all dispute, that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the camps were German Jews, Communists, Socialists and other opposition groups. The fact that so many Germans were interned under the terrible conditions of Buchenwald or Dachau proves the existence of a strong anti-Nazi element and finally disposes (or should dispose) of the allegations of Lord Vansittart and his parrot-like followers in this country and abroad.

Only at one point is a Freethinker compelled to part company with Mr. Gollancz. He confuses the issue by the introduction of the suggestion that the anti-Nazi civilisation is essentially Christian in its origin, whereas the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful Christian sect in the world, is definitely pro-Fascist whenever and wherever Fascism looks like proving victorious. One of the earliest attacks of the Nazis was on the Freethought organisations.

S. H.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields. 3.30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., various speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.: "The Historic Sense."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. V. SHORR will lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. HAROLD DAY, and various speakers.

Bristol Branch N.S.S. (Durdham Downs).—7 p.m., Mr. G. THOMPSON, a lecture.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., debate: Rev. G. LIVINGSTONE v. Mrs. M. WHITEFIELD.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. BARKER will lecture.

Read (Lancs.).—Wednesday, June 27, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Todmorden (Market).—Saturday, June 23, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Worsthorne (Lancs.).—Friday, June 22, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street (Room 13)).—Dr. E. GOMMUN (Oxford): "Clerical Influence on Viennese Politics"; 3.30 p.m., tea 5 p.m.

Cardiff Branch N.S.S. (Severn Road School).—Friday, June 29, 7.30 p.m., continuation of discussion on Fetishism.

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