

THE FREETHINKER

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Logic of War

I THINK it not unlikely that the war which has been brought to an end may be known in history as "The Atomic Bomb War." That seems to be the greatest distinguishing feature of the world conflict. Poison gas made its official appearance in the last war, but it had its faults. It was not deadly enough, and it was not completely reliable. The bomb was more reliable and so that went on developing its accuracy and deadliness. Its credentials are to be found in elaborate pictures of ruined cities and the certified numbers of killed and wounded. The pictures of, say, Berlin in ruins and the number of killed and wounded—made up of soldiers, civilians and children, showed "good business," and in due course thanks was given to God for the help he had given "Us." Over and over again the joyous news was given in the Press, on the air, and in a final thanksgiving at our principal cathedral. God was congratulated on the help he had given, and plans were set going to be ready for any other wars that might occur. Of course it took some time to ruin a city completely by ordinary bombing, but that fault was remedied by the introduction of the atomic bomb. God had not forgotten his people.

What then is the meaning of the chatter—and a great deal of what is said is little better than chatter—concerning the atomic bomb? Our own experience was that the news was received with gravity and with a strong element of fear for the future. It was not concern for the Japanese that led to so many protests against the new weapon, neither was it due to a feeling that future wars would be more bloody than even this one has been. The "common people"—in high or low positions—were more or less familiar with what might happen, partly from novelists who had pictured an invasion from another planet armed with new and deadly weapons. And as these writers had not to explain how it was all done the invasion was carried out quite easily.

I think the silence with which the news of the new bomb was received was really due to fear—fear of the unknown, of a weapon that might defy defence. A single bomb had brought the Japanese to their knees. What might not be done to a small island like ours if it was suddenly attacked by an enemy armed with such weapons? There could be no organised defence in such circumstances. The known is easy to face, it is the unknown that excites fear. The bombs could be fired from great distances and an island such as ours literally blotted out before any defence could be offered. The new instrument opens a fine road for high-scale brigandage. The use of the bomb was welcomed by Allied leaders as an instrument that has

definitely brought the world war to an end. That may be true, but it may end in something very different.

It was a suggestion of Ruskin's that women alone might materially help peace if they would wear black directly war was declared. But we are a Christian people and no Christian Church has ever encouraged that kind of action. We are a Christian people and we act in a Christian manner. We call on God when we go to war and we thank God for his help when the war is won. And, true to form, when the war was over the Royal Family and earloads of eminent men and women solemnly thanked God for having helped us to slaughter a few millions of his children. Of course, God might have prevented the war, but that would have been a very dull performance at the side of helping in a war of the worst that mankind had ever experienced. Gods are not of the kind that do good in silence and blush to find it fame. Gods love advertisement. It is their food.

Preachers in a Fog

Now and again even the accredited representatives of God kick over the traces, or perhaps we ought to say get very restive. One of these is the Very Reverend C. C. Thicknesse, Dean of St. Albans. When invited to hold a service expressing his gratitude to God for slaughtering his Japanese children the Dean flatly declined. His reason for so acting is: "I do not hold a service of thanksgiving in St. Albans because I cannot honestly give thanks to God for an event brought about by a wrong use of force, by an act of wholesale indiscriminate massacre." To use a common phrase that decision does more credit to the Dean's heart than it does to his head. In the first place, if the Dean will turn back to his Bible he will see that wholesale and indiscriminate punishment is a regular method of God's. He even instructed his followers that when they approached certain cities everyone, old and young, good and bad, should be put to death. And his greatest effort in this direction was made when he arranged for punishing every person born because Adam and Eve ignored his orders. And to seal the matter, the Prayer Book of the Church plainly says that whatever sickness occurs to man "it is God's visitation." We do not see, therefore, any sufficient reason for the objection to thank God for killing Japanese men, women and children. God was running true to form.

Next, I do not agree that the atomic bomb kills more recklessly than does a bomb dropped from one of our planes. When our battleships bombard a town that is out of reach of the town's guns, or when the air is black with our bullets there is no selective power called into operation. Old and young, men and women, all fall victims. The aim in each case is the killing of the enemy, and "enemy" covers all. There is no concern shown to "the enemy," and "enemy" covers all—young and old, sick and hale. It might almost be said that the more deadly the material

used, and the greater the number killed in the course of the battle, the nearer we are to peace. If the Dean blessed the soldiers, sailors, and airmen, I can see no adequate reason for his not thanking God for killing the Japanese.

The Dean really must not jump in and out as he is obviously doing. I would agree with him that wars seldom settle anything. But I do not see how any believer in the Bible or any paid official of the English Church can hold to that.

It may not be foreign to the present situation to say that the gravity with which most people face the situation of war to-day has no vital connection with a reasonable conclusion that war is a bad thing. What has been forced upon them is the fact that war is a very costly and dangerous way of settling differences. The way out is to humanise life, and that the Christian Churches have never advocated save when the religious position has been given a front place. Nor can the blame for the persistency of war be placed to the credit of science. Even when the Christian Church did not inaugurate war there have been very few—hardly any—that have not had the blessing of the Christian Churches. And where religious opposition has been offered to a minor war it has come from the weaker and less influential of the Churches. As to the State Church its sanctioning national wars has been part of its sacred duties. The Dean of St. Albans may be a very, very good Christian, but he is a very, very bad reasoner.

A Careful Priest

The Rev. Neville Davidson is a good, cautious Scot, and is connected with Glasgow Cathedral. He lacks the logical mind of the ordinary Scot and would run with the hare and keep on good terms with the hounds. Preaching to a "very large congregation" he thanked God for seeing us through the actual war, but he set the responsibility for the war on the development of scientific knowledge. Thus: "These last years have revealed the intolerable terror of modern warfare which recognises no ethical standards that stop short at any atrocity, which ignores both honour and pity, and which spares neither man, woman nor child. Our material capacity exceeds too dangerously our moral capacity."

But this is sheer gibberish. It is, at its best, what they call in sporting circles, "backing both sides." He denounces those who have carried on the war—with the aid of God—and then invites them to come to Church and thank God for winning it by methods which are "without honour and pity," and which does not spare men, women or children. It looks as though the Reverend Mr. Davidson is trying to fool either God or man—unless he is aiming at fooling both. If God really led the British Forces to victory—without noting that he was crowning Atheistic Russia with victory—it surely puts the British Forces on a lower level than the armies of Russia. And as a British subject I protest against this insult to the British soldier, even though it may be part of a religious service. Personally, I believe that had God been left out of the business both he and the Churches would have been on less dangerous ground. The war has made the question: "What is the use of Religion?" more pertinent than it has ever been.

Dr. Davidson continues his address by trying another game. He tried to shift the blame to "science." We must admit that the Churches did their best to prevent science developing, and grant that if we had kept witchcraft going and the flat earth idea, if we had kept the sun going round the earth instead of permitting the earth to run round the sun, if we had kept in action the burning of witches, the repression of unbelievers, and a few other things, we never should have had a war in which an atomic bomb played its part. It may also be admitted that if God could have kept mankind from eating of the tree of knowledge we should certainly never have had the atomic bomb. But we must take things as we find them, and it will lie to the credit of the Reverend Mr. Davidson that he has done his best to keep God on top. He does this by laying the responsibility on science, thus:—

"Scientific knowledge and power have completely outstripped progress. The atomic bomb is the fitting and final climax of total war. In its pitiless and impersonal power it is symbolical of a century that has worshipped science and forgotten God . . . Science would be safe only if harnessed to noble purposes."

That is downright foolishness, the kind of foolishness in which theologians revel. If man had never discovered the art of making a fire there are multitudes of people who would never have been burned to death. If no one had probed into the secrets of nature, cures for disease would not have existed. If man had never learned to write I should never have been able to read this delightful cluster of absurdities that comes to me in the "Glasgow Herald." Somewhere in the Bible there is a passage that runs: "Get knowledge, but above all get understanding." I am quoting from memory, but I am certain as to meaning. And as I finish these notes there comes to me another Bible saying: "Though you pound a fool in a pestle with a mortar, yet will his folly not depart from him." There are some really wise things in the Old Testament—generally "pinched."

CHAPMAN COHEN

SOME NOTES ON ARCHEOLOGY

I.

OF the many ways in which the truth of the Bible and Christianity could be demonstrated, there is a very earnest school of Fundamentalists who pin their faith on Archeology. They do not, naturally, despise the other ways—indeed, they heartily support them; but digging in the Holy Land and elsewhere they think simply must bring to light overwhelming proof of God's revelation to man. At least, that is the opinion of the many excavators who have been working in the East, and who are so strongly supported by the members of the various Exploration Funds whose doings and discoveries come before the public from time to time.

I have already dealt in these columns with a number of the more popular works on excavation, such as "The Bible is True" by Sir Charles Marston, but the one written in 1917 by Dr. C. M. Coburn, an American, entitled "The New Archeological Discoveries," gives an excellent resume of the facts, and is specially valuable because it deals particularly with the New Testament and the life and times of the Primitive Church, and because the author is a Fundamentalist. Such a combination is

a guarantee that everything whatever in favour of the Church will be given, and I shall accept the facts dutifully recorded by Dr. Cobern as the truth.

First and foremost it is necessary to point out that most, if not all, the great discoveries have been made outside Palestine. One would have thought that if Egypt and Assyria could provide us with a profusion of riches regarding their ancient history, the case would be the same with Palestine. It must have been with great regret then that Dr. Cobern was forced to admit that "very few authenticated monuments of this period (the early Christian centuries) have been found in the Holy Land." He might have added also, of the Old Testament as well. Whether such kings as David and Solomon ever lived I have never been able to find out—except of course from the assurances of Jewish and Christian believers. Of evidence for their real existence, not a scrap has been produced from anyone. I would not urge from this that they are myths, but it is strange that Palestine has never yielded anything which gives independent proof that they reigned over Israel. Dr. Cobern says:—

"Not even one leaf of the Vulgate has been recovered from Bethlehem, the home of St. Jerome; not one certified ancient relic can be found in Nazareth, the home of Jesus—excepting an old well; while scarcely a solitary monument from the first century remains even in Jerusalem except, possibly, the Holy Sepulchre, and a few broken remnants of ancient Roman buildings . . . even the eleven cities which have recently been excavated in the Holy Land, while giving new light upon the era of the kings and patriarchs, have given us pitifully few remains from the era of Jesus and the Christian community previous to Constantine."

As far as topography was concerned much useful additions to our knowledge of the country became known, but the people who supported the Palestine Exploration Fund wanted just a little more than the site of some ancient temple or mosque in which, anyway, not a hint of the existence of New Testament heroes was ever found.

When it comes to Jerusalem, apart from Palestine in general, the case seems to be even worse, for while relics from about the fourth century came to light, "It must be acknowledged that few discoveries were made," sadly comments Dr. Cobern, "having any close connection with the New Testament text or New Testament times." Even these "few" discoveries do not appear in his book—an omission I greatly regret.

But although nothing corroborating the Bible story appears ever to see the light of day, the excavators are never disheartened or disconcerted. The way they console themselves is highly revealing. So long as they can find the remains of a town mentioned in the Bible like Ur or Jericho they are ready to overwhelm the sceptic. If a house or an urn or an inscription is found in some ancient site near enough to be identified as Ur, then the whole Biblical history of Abraham is corroborated. This is the town the name of which Abraham made famous, therefore he must have lived, therefore the Bible is true. Or some merchant's house in a site which is called that of Jericho comes to light, therefore the whole story of Jericho with its walls fallen down through the blast of a few trumpets is absolutely true, and again the Bible is vindicated. Yet if the reader carefully reads what has actually been discovered the real truth is just the reverse.

For example, Dr. Cobern gives an account of the remarkable excavations of Dr. Sellin at Jericho (1907-1909) where "no remains from the early Christian era were discovered excepting two crosses and two or three other Christian emblems" though a large town dating 600-400 B.C. was found with many utensils manufactured (presumably) in Greece. Among the remains were twelve Rhodian jar handles stamped in Aramaic with the words "To Jehovah." Now this very innocent discovery could be

easily passed by, but notice the implications. Why should the words "To Jehovah" be in Aramaic? Why not in Hebrew?

Readers may remember some articles I wrote in these columns many years ago in which I contended that Hebrew was never a spoken language in Biblical times—that, in fact, it was a priestly made-up language, something like the way in which Esperanto was made up, and that the story that the Jews once spoke it and gradually lost it in favour of Aramaic was simply not true. Since then I have read a great deal on the Hebrew language, and the more I read the more I am convinced I am right. And here in this discovery at Jericho is a further corroboration. If the Jewish people were not speaking Hebrew in the year 600 B.C. or so, when were they doing so? If they were using this language, it is simply inconceivable that they should write "To Jehovah," the most sacred name in their vocabulary, in Aramaic. Yet there it is.

Dr. Cobern is a master hand at dragging in Biblical heroes when they have no more right to be thus placed than the Heavenly Host of the Greeks. Here is a specimen of the way he loves doing it: Dr. Reisner in 1908-1909 made many remarkable discoveries in Samaria "long before the Christian era." They could find nothing dealing with Christianity at all, but among the sites excavated was "the old Roman road leading into the forum, which Jesus and his disciples must have known well." There was a Roman road, it must have been used by people, Jesus and his disciples therefore must have been among those people, therefore the story related in the Gospels must be true. The proof is overwhelming.

Even when an Herodian temple was unearthed, this must have been built "during the boyhood of our Lord" because the date given by the excavators is A.D. 12 to 15. Then there is Dr. Gaster's discovery of fifteen ancient phylacteries in Samaria, "the text of which goes back to the first century of the Christian era, being therefore the kind of phylacteries referred to in Matthew xxiii. 5." This proves the absolute authenticity of Matthew.

On the other hand, however, Dr. Cobern could do nothing with the "greatest single excavation ever made in Palestine" by Dr. Macalister in 1902-1909. It produced some "unique discoveries" but, alas, "the early Christian era is almost a blank." Although the site was only about twenty miles from Jerusalem, even Dr. Cobern found it difficult to plant "our Lord" and his Apostles anywhere near. In fact it is only when we get to the fifth or sixth century that "important" discoveries appear relating to Christianity, all of which must be very disappointing to the earnest Christian who wants some tangible proof of his creed nearer to the time of his Lord.

H. CUTNER.

COD'S OR MAN'S WAYS?

God's ways, says the Theist, are not men's ways; his power is greater than ours. The first part of the statement should be received with regret, if it is meant that man ought to imitate God; with pleasure, if it is meant that God ought to imitate man. If God exists, we may grant that he is greater—in power. But in kindness, in sympathy, in all that makes up the really admirable moral qualities, man is greater than God. Man makes habitable the places of the earth left uninhabitable by God. He discovers antidotes to the diseases God sends; remedies for the famine and distress created by God. The enduring and valuable fact is not God's love to man, but man's helpfulness and love for his fellow man. Man owes nothing to the gods that he has first created and then feared. These have always existed like a spasm in the heart and a cramp in the intellect, checking his noblest aspirations and damping his best efforts. It has been part of the work of civilisation to free man from the rule of the gods, and only as this has been successful has civilisation been secure or human well-being guaranteed.

ACID DROPS

"It is," says Chancellor R. J. Campbell, once well known as a London preacher, "the preoccupation of the modern mind to the exclusion of the eternal that is the principal reason for the prevailing religious indifference." We note that Dr. Campbell has not lost the capacity of letting go an obvious commonplace as though he was giving to the world a tremendous truth. Of course, it is true that the decline of religious belief is due to the greater interest in directions that are not religious. How else could the situation arise? But what one would like to know is, how does it happen that with power and position dominated by the Churches that men are now turning their backs on religion? We do not think that thoughtful and honest men and women will be long in providing a satisfactory answer.

The "reflections" of an examiner on the value of public school scripture lessons are interesting—to outsiders. For example, he finds that it is almost impossible to get pupils to memorise the simplest of names and incidents. We are not surprised, for the result is proof that the pupils have no interest in these Bible lessons. The boys never seem to be quite certain whether Moses belongs to the Old Testament or the New. We congratulate the boys on finding that the point does not matter. And so the report runs on. But there is nothing new in these discoveries. The Bible is forced upon the pupils; it has no relation whatever to what they know of the world in which they live. But there are plenty of useful subjects that could take the place of the Bible and which would command attention. Young pupils see through the foolishness of the lessons given, and as they grow up they are inclined to look upon their religious lessons as sheer nonsense.

There is one thing that is not present in this war that was very prominent in the last one. That is the effect of the war on religion. In the last war there was much talk of the religious impulse given to religion. Well-known clergy paid visits to the front (the front of the last war was not nearly so dangerous as was the front in this war), and they returned telling of how deeply interested were the men in religion, and how welcome were these clerical visits. In this war this kind of thing seems almost dead. The preachers were not so anxious to pay visits, and the attraction of religion to the men does not appear prominent enough to warrant reporting. At the beginning of this war the B.B.C. did what it could by having a "Padre" or two to do some broadcasting, but that dropped. Probably the stories were too great a mixture of humbug and lying even for the religious directors of the B.B.C.

We learn that there are a number of clergymen who declined to allow thanks to God for victory over the Japanese. The reason given was the use of the atomic bomb. Really we cannot appreciate their sensitiveness. These clergymen showed no repugnance to thanking God for our victory over Germany, brought about by a tremendous superiority of aeroplanes and other weapons, and our feelings are not sufficiently delicate to distinguish between the destruction of cities and the slaughter of women and children by bombing, and the same results from the use of the new weapon. If we believed, as these clergymen believe that God helped us to defeat the Germans with a tremendous superiority of gunning and bombing from planes, we should be quite ready to believe that God was at the back of the atomic bomb. But we suppose that clergymen look at these things from a different point of view.

A great many of the clergy of to-day must look back with envy to the condition of the Christian Church of a few hundred years ago. Certainly Mr. G. M. Young, a very earnest Christian writer, looks back with regret to what was, religiously, to what is. Writing in the "Sunday Times," he points out that "in 1850 it was debated whether the Church had half the population. In 1750 it had had nine-tenths, in 1250 it had all. Heresy was unknown. . . . The Dominicans had little to do except to quarrel with the Franciscans." Mr. Young might have carried on his analysis until to-day, when he would have written that to-day the Church can command not a quarter of the people, and it has to

be very careful to mix 75 per cent. of non-religious talk in its sermons. His way of saying that religion is withering is interesting.

According to the "Church Times," a survey by Mass-Observation has been made recently of the religious attitude in a London Borough. A "scientifically selected sample of residents" gave their views on religion—and it is not altogether surprising that religion does not come very well out of the test. Needless to say, quite a number of Atheists and Agnostics were interviewed, and like all unbelievers when challenged by religion, although "they doubted or denied the existence of God," their distinguishing characteristic was either they wanted to go back to religion, or were very unhappy, or some like going now and then to church, or they believed in religious education for schools. We have never met these kinds of Atheists and Agnostics ourselves, but perhaps they are a special species quite unknown to our movement, but who come out of their lairs in hundreds with tears streaming down their eyes at their unhappy condition due entirely to their lack of religion. We think the best place for them is really the Church.

On the other hand, the people who actually are believers and who always welcome anything to do with Christianity, even a Mass-Observation test, appear to be in a hopelessly confused state about it. Their "beliefs are a mixture of convictions and habits . . . and the relics of what they were taught as a child . . . these beliefs and prejudices are often put into narrow pigeon-holes so that one scarcely influences the other." This is something like we have been saying for scores of years without going to the trouble of Mass-Observation.

The outcome of it all is that the majority of those who call themselves Christians have no belief in a particular doctrine, they do not believe in going to church, they have no special prayers, and are very doubtful about the existence of God. What they understand by religion is "leading a good life," and that is not religion at all. A Christianity without creeds or doctrines is not of the slightest use to any Church. And Christian leaders know this to be the case. Organised Christianity has to-day neither the courage to live honestly or to die decently. It is just organised humbug.

When we have done with the fact of the decline of organised religion system we come to the deeper one that the history of religion is essentially the history of a retreat. The story begins with the gods as thick as flowers in spring. The existence of gods was taken for granted. Then, as man's social sense developed, there came a theory of good and bad deities, a plain reflection of man's own development. The gods came to school, and humanity was the only direction from which education could come. What man found to be good he often passed on to the gods, and we reach a very definite phase in which the human standard of good and bad found its echo in heaven. And now man has awakened to the recognition of the part he has himself played in the creation and education of the gods. It is that final phase that is now finding expression. That movement may be attacked by the churches, but the ultimate disappearance of religion is inevitable.

According to Mr. J. J. Kennedy, Commonwealth Comptroller in Australia, no less than five hundred different books have been debarred from entering the colony. Among these books were Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," Hemingway's "Farewell to Arms," Ovid's "Art of Love" and others that have in other countries had free circulation for many years. We must bear in mind that the Roman Church has great power in Australia, not so much on account of its numbers, but rather because of the organised strength of the Church and the carelessness of laymen. We have to remember the part the papacy played in Spain. Some time ago there was an attempt to bar the entrance into Australia of our Bible Handbooks, and only when we promised to take legal action was free passage granted—that is, so far as legal opposition was concerned. Other forms of illicit interference were continued, and will so long as religion exists.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. L. PASSET.—We have handed your letter to the N.S.S. Secretary. He will write you.

P. T. LECKIE.—Thanks for letter, with cutting.

R. H. UPTON.—We do not know the quality of Heinrich Heine's untranslated writings, as we do not read German, but we would expect that anything that Heine wrote would be good. Our set is the one translated by C. G. Leland. It is in twelve volumes and is considered a good translation.

A. J. ANDREWS.—We are not surprised. Most newspapers appear to think that it is part of their duty to protect religion. We do not mean they believe the religion they defend. It is just business.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from Mr. A. McDonald to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

For "The Freethinker."—W. Evans, £1 3s.

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SUGAR PLUMS

Will those who have by post and telegram sent congratulations to the Editor of "The Freethinker" and President of the N.S.S. on his having reached his seventy-seventh birthday, be good enough to accept these words as an acknowledgment of his feelings. He is proud of the fact that of his seventy-seven years, fifty-seven have been spent in the service of the Freethought movement, and there is much yet to do. Those years have been well spent and the ending will be the more gratifying if he says farewell to the world while still in harness. Mr. Cohen was once asked at a public meeting "What are you aiming at?" He replied "Understanding," and that is surely the greatest thing that anyone can give or take.

A well-intentioned person sends us a letter in which he offers to present us with a book that would help us to find God. But, heaven bless the man, we don't want to find God. More, we have no use for one even if we find him. More, if God wishes to find us, who is it who would or could prevent him doing so? Further, when God does visit men generally something unpleasant occurs, and we do not wish to run risks. Still further, God does not bother us, so why should we bother him. We did write a series of letters that were directed to God, but he never bothered to say anything about them, although he might have said "Thank you"; for they were protecting him from the slanders of his followers. So we think that after doing without God for so many years we had better let things rest as they are.

As we don't wish to be ungrateful to our well-meaning friend, we present him with two wise sayings from two wise men. The first is from Spinoza—to whom we owe much. He says that the meditation of a free man is concerned with life, not with death. He meant that a worthy character is not worrying about what will happen to him when he dies, but what amount of good can he do while he is alive.

SPECIAL!

In the early years of the war our premises in Farringdon Street were totally destroyed. Within forty-eight hours we had secured a new home, but owing to uncertain property values we were forced to take the tenancy subject to a quarter's notice. Recently the building changed hands and we were set searching for new premises—not a very easy job. But we have succeeded in obtaining a new home within five minutes walk of the present one, and when we have got over the difficulties of obtaining decorative material, etc., we think there are possibilities of expansion. We shall have certainly more room, and that is important. We hope to turn accident to our purpose.

The second saying is also from a man to whom we are indebted, but not to the extent we owe to Spinoza. His name is Emerson. One of his sayings is: "You will never see anything worse than yourself," and on our own account would add to it: "You will never appreciate properly anything better." What one gets out of life is generally what one puts into it. Historical and doctrinal Christianity has usually taken man at his worst, and has worked hard to develop a consciousness of man's possible rascality. For a good example we commend the B.B.C. 7.55 preacher. He preaches the weakness of man when he should be encouraging him to develop the best he has. He would have man always on his knees when he should be standing upright. There are few men who are quite such worthless beings as the B.B.C. would have us believe. That is all.

The Rev. S. A. Barrett is one of many parsons who want the Church to provide popular tracts for the people—tracts not only cheap but convincing. But the snag is not the price, but the matter. The reverend gentleman wants the tracts to be to the point, and written so that the "outsider" could understand and appreciate them. But who is the "outsider"? We would like to meet any Freethinker who would in the least be influenced by any Church tract, however well written. But by "outsider" is meant perhaps a Christian? Well, even then it would be rather difficult to convince any believing Nonconformist that the way to salvation is the "High" Church of England. Why does not Mr. Barrett take up one of our own tracts and try to demolish it? Perhaps he feels beaten before he commences!

One of our Sunday papers tries to cheer us up with the information that the ending of the war—if it can be said that an armed peace is freedom from war, is peace—is evidence that God is with us. Well, if we can trust our religious teachers, he was with us all the time, but the war began and it went on. Now it has—shall we say—dulled down, and we are informed that we must look to "the protecting providence of God." That was said to Oliver Cromwell, but he had sense enough to retort that we must keep our powder dry all the same. God always appears to be on the side of the largest and best armies with the most numerous and best guns. Even the very pious Montgomery refused to advance until he had a good supply of weapons. God was with him all the time, but the deciding factor was the men and their equipments. A Scotch Elder once excused himself from giving thanks to God because he did not wish to approach God in a spirit of sarcasm. To thank God for the close of our war is more than sarcasm, it is a deliberate insult to common sense.

Of course, Christians tell us that God has nothing to do with the horrors of our war. But it is not the Atheist who saddles God with responsibility for either war or peace, victory or defeat. It is the Christian who insults human common sense, and, if there is a God, impeaches the deity. If there is no God sitting up aloft and regulating things, as a railway signalman directs a train in this or that direction, then to impeach God would be very foolish. Years ago Thomas Carlyle said: "God does nothing," and that is endorsed by all in fact, even though they may march to deny it in theory. Civilisation is the work of man, not God. We can forgive man for blundering into war, but how can we forgive a God who could prevent war, but is not interested enough to do so. The Allies are now indicting men for promoting the war. The Atheist is one who brings God into the court of common sense and awaits the verdict.

INTERLUDE OR ENTR'ARTICLE

“. . . . He loves your people;
But tie him not to be their bedfellow.”

THE Military War has ended—or nearly; and loud has been the rejoicing over two great Victories—one in War Politics and one in Peace. Freethinkers, at least, do not need to be reminded that often the most serious danger to the Common People springs from the “rebound” after Victory; and that can be seen in many parts of the World at present. Can the coming “Free” Elections in liberated Lands be manipulated to favour Minorities of Privilege—Economic and Ideologic, National and International, interlinked; and can the Atomic Bomb—the new “Hand of God”—be reserved for the same Select Circles? These be two World Questions of Primary Importance to that Great Majority—the Common People.

The Chinese were the first to suffer Fascist attack, on September 18, 1931—14 long years ago; and Max Werner, in “Reynolds,” August 12, 1945, says: “The defeat of Japan liberates not just China but the Chinese, and in the Northern part of the country the Russian troops will come as liberators, however they may appear to Chiang Kai-Shek . . . Out of it will come a strong and free China and that ultimately means a strong and free India.”

I have just started to re-read, first in 1943, “The Birth of New China” by Arthur Clegg and “Battle Hymn of China” by Agnes Smedley: to me, the best of many books on China. Agnes Smedley has that biologic “something” which makes a real Freethinker—“unmouldable” by any Sociological Authority. Her book is one which, once started, must be finished; and, incidentally, pages 40-45 shed a light on the failure of “Liberalism” in the U.K. I recommend both to all Freethinkers; and, while I'm at it, I would add “The Language Problem” by E. D. Durrant, which shows how Esperanto is established as the “Inter-Com.” for the World's Common People.

After all, it was because of China that Stalin and his fellow U.S.S.Rian Leaders made the momentous change in Policy which, in the end, saved the Economic Socialism of the East and the Political Democracy of the West. “His” treatment of Esperanto—only temporary, I hope—arose from the same implacable purpose; so there is some link, in this “Entr'Article,” with previous themes. What follows, from the “Freethinker” of February 21, 1937, shows how the Pioneers of the Idea have to pay the price.

(“Lu Sin” is described as “Lu Hsün” on pages 63 and 64 of “Battle Hymn of China.”)

“CHINA AWAKES.

A CHINESE ‘THOMAS PAINE.’

The terrific struggle in Spain between the forces of Human Progress against “Nazi” reaction and brutality must stir the imagination of every Freethinker, in every Region of the World. It DOES arouse us to renewed activity against those Black Armies, amongst which Religion finds its friends.

It may interest Freethinkers to know that the same struggle has more than begun in the distant East. Through the Esperanto journal “Chinio Hurlas,” I have learned much—at first hand—about the new movement in China. Apparently it started about 1935; and it is a combination of all kinds of “advanced” and liberty-loving Chinese against Japanese invasion, tyranny and imperialism. Its progress appears to point to ultimate success; although we can read but little of it in Western Regions.

The New Movement is called the “National Liberating Movement of China.” Liberal-minded intellectuals and great numbers of students are in its ranks. The “All China Student National Rescue Union,” in its tribute to Lu Sin, “represents 240,000 students in eight towns and two provinces.” The

November number of “Chinio Hurlas”—not long received—contains a short account, by “Maro,” of the life of one of the intellectuals. As becomes a great Chinest, Lu Sin was a Secularist in life; so, I have Englished the story for our readers. The closing lines could be better rendered by the poetical pen of Bayard Simmons; but I have had to put them in my more pedestrian prose.

‘Lu Sin is dead.

‘In the early morning of October 19, the heart of our mighty author ceased to beat. The Advance-guard Thinker of our Epoch, who so courageously and persistently fought for the future of Humankind, for the Liberating of the Chinese People, has left us for ever. The Workers of the whole World have lost one of their best comrades: immeasurable is the loss!

‘It was Lu Sin, this just dead genius, who laid the foundation of Chinese modern literature. It was Lu Sin who most fearlessly, by his works, dissected the putrid corpse of Feudal China and showed the right way to the construction of a new, free, China. For three long years he tirelessly fought, diligently worked, with always more energy, always more confidence; while his contemporaries, his one-time comrades, either became traitors or, having lost courage, deserted from the battle front, one after another. Lu Sin dedicated his whole life to China Revolution. He always stood on the side of the oppressed hundred millions.

‘Lu Sin was born in 1881, in the town of Shao-shin,* in the Chekian province. When 13 years old, he had to live with some charitably disposed relatives owing to his parents being impoverished. Afterwards, his father died; and he left his hometown in the hope of finding an opportunity to enter a free school. He entered the Seamen's School in Nankin when he was 18. After six months, he left the Seamen's School and in another school commenced to study the mining of ores. Having finished the complete course, he was sent to Japan, where he decided to study medicine; because he saw that medicine had much helped the “Meiji” reform in Japan. For two years he studied in the Medical College at Sendai. Then occurred the Russo-Japanese War; and, by chance, he saw a photograph of a Chinese, whose head was struck off for spying. He came to the conclusion that bodily health alone would not save a mentally unconscious people. One had to create a new literature, before everything, to awaken the people. With the help of some friends he started publishing books, but failed because of social indifference.

‘He returned to China when he was 29. He taught for several years. From 1918 he began to write novels which had great influence on modern Chinese literature. On March 2, 1930, he joined the “Left Authors' Union.” After the Manchurian Affair (1931) he wrote for several papers and magazines, articles sharply criticising the shameless compromise of the “national traitors.”

‘In the beginning of this last year, he was laid up by sickness and suffered for about six months. Nevertheless, he watched with great attention the growth of the “National Liberating Movement.” In an article, written during his sickness, we find these lines:—

“By the intensifying of the Japanese offensive and the sharpening of the national crisis caused by the treachery of the perfidious Government, most of the Chinese People, not wishing to become slaves, have become aroused and have arisen. They are raising their countless clenched fists, to break asunder the chains by which the enemy has put the yoke upon a half-colonial China. The students are the most fearless pioneers in the National Liberating Struggle; therefore the National Rescue Movement, initiated by them, certainly shall spread throughout the land, and even between the darkness and the light!”

* All names are written as printed in the Esperanto paper

"On the organising of the United Front, he wrote:—

"I think that, in the anti-Japanese Front, we must welcome every anti-Japanese force whatever. I have read, and I support, the policy of an anti-Japanese United Front presented to the whole people of the land by the present revolutionary party of China. Unconditionally, I join this United Front. The reason is that I am not only an author but a Chinese; therefore I consider this policy absolutely right."

"After his death more than 10,000 people—students, workers, women, intellectuals, clerks and even children—gave to him a last salute. More than 5,000 took part in his funeral procession, singing the funeral hymn:—

"Oh! Our Teacher, Rest in Peace.
We march on, by the signs you left;
And soon shall come that day,
When we shall stand before your Tomb;
And tell you of your Will, fulfilled."'"

The present difficulties in China are much the same as in Greece, Poland, Italy, France, Belgium and other liberated lands. Are the Elections of Governments to be "Free and Democratic" or manipulated in favour of Minorities of Privilege? The Chinese Communists gave up the transfer of the land to the peasants when they joined (or began) the United Front Liberating Movement. Chiang Kai-shek, from about two years after Dr. Sun Yat-sen's death, stood for an "Independent" Nationalist China, but in the Interests of Privileged Minorities. That is the "clash" in all liberated Lands.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

CHAPEL IN THE WOODS

THE woman was wearing a large hat with a white feather. It made him think of shooting parties when he was a young man, and his lips softened. I'm the gamekeeper, he said.

Oh dear, she said, I suppose I shouldn't be here? Visitors are not allowed, he said, not officially. Thank you, she said; but this chapel . . . did the count come here often? Not often, he told her, but when he did come it was a grand occasion. The nuns would be there, praying for the dead; and the organ would be playing; and the young one laid out on the bier with the candles burning round her. Then the nuns would move off through the wood, chanting as they went, and the count would be left alone. It was always evening, you understand, and the count would stay long after the candles had guttered out.

No, she said, no, I don't understand. Was it always death which brought the count here? She shivered a little. Did he feel it his duty to watch alone with the dead? Somehow, she said, I feel as if I had known the count. The formal grounds, austere house, and this chapel . . . A spiritual light shone in her eyes as she thought of the nobleman and the evening sun through the stained-glass windows. Tell me, she said, where is the convent.

We hired the nuns, he said, from any travelling theatrical company in the district. It was an easy role for them to play. You needn't be frightened: the young one—she wasn't really dead. We used a strong narcotic. He took two paces towards her. You mustn't think of this as a chapel of the dead, he said; this has always been . . . a little temple of love.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

OBITUARY

It is with regret that we announce the death on August 24 of Mrs. Sarah Corina, wife of Andrew Corina and mother of a family of Freethinkers. Mrs. Corina, together with her husband, left the Roman Catholic Church more than forty years ago to become an Atheist under the leadership of G. W. Foote and a Socialist under the influence of the "Clarion." The emancipation led to a working partnership for "the best of causes." She was on the platform when Chapman Cohen registered his Jubilee visit to Bradford. Although the mother of eight children she yet managed to take a part in many movements including Co-operation, and did useful work for Halifax Co-operative Women's Guild.

She was staunch to the end, and while lying on the hospital bed she ordered away a priest who came to her on the ground that she was once a member of the Church. Her action was typical. The sympathy of all who knew the family will be freely given.

The cremation took place in Bradford on August 28. A Secular service was conducted by Mr. H. L. Searle, treasurer of the Bradford Branch N.S.S. He paid a touching tribute to a notable character. Both the N.S.S. and the Co-operative Societies were well represented.

ADVERTISER (Single Man) desires lodging accommodation, or would rent or buy house, or be willing to consider any reasonable proposition in this connection. East London district preferred, but not essential. Please write in first instance to Hodge, 10, Raneliffe Road, East Ham, E.6.

WANTED (October 1) Lodgings, Part Board, by University Student. Central London preferred.—Box 72, c/o "The Freethinker, 2/3 Fumival Street, London, E.C.4.

EVOLUTION. WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT. By GORDON HOGG Sevenpence, post free. Factual Knowledge (Education) Bureau, 35, Doughty Street (top floor), London, W.C.1.

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., MESSRS. SAPHIN, HART, WOOD and PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., W. B. CURRY, M.A., B.Sc.: "Post-War Prospects."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bristol Branch N.S.S. (Durdham Downs).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. G. THOMPSON will lecture.

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

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Debate: MESSRS. EDWARDS and REILLY.

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

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY will lecture.

Padiham.—Wednesday, September 12, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Worsthorne.—Friday, September 7, 7.15 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. F. J. CORINA: "Science and Religion."

A HUMBLE REMONSTRANCE TO HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI.

YOUR MAJESTY,

I, one of Your loyal Atheist subjects, present my dutiful respects to Your Majesty and I rejoice at the great and glorious victory which has been won over Your enemies.

Under Your beneficent rule all men enjoy the hard-won and cherished freedom of religious belief and of unbelief. Your Majesty professes the doctrines of the Church of England but this in no degree diminishes the loyalty of Your Atheist subjects, for our tolerance does not stop short of the Throne. We heartily deplore that the statutes of the Realm should deny to the Crown the elemental freedom acknowledged as a right to all under it and we would have these statutes amended.

In the war the people of Your Empire, though differing among themselves in religious belief and unbelief, were yet one in their determination to resist the oppressor and to establish in practice the principles of justice and toleration. These things which united us were greater than the things which divided us. We were not united in the recognition of the existence of Almighty God.

The end of the European war was a solemn moment. We immediately recalled the sacrifices of those who had died and suffered and we felt for those who remain to suffer for the rest of their lives. We wished to join in one common act of recognition of those sacrifices and to derive strength from a triumphant statement of those aims which had sustained us through the dreadful years. Only Your Majesty had the authority to speak for all.

In Your Majesty's broadcast address first place was given to thanks to Almighty God. Immediately the feeling of solidarity and of fellowship in a great cause was broken. The magic of a tremendous moment was dispelled by the intrusion of an opinion denied by many, and some listened no more to Your Majesty. Their feelings were too deep to tolerate any falsity of statement on their behalf. Nothing less could be worthy of the occasion than the ascription of full and undivided honour where it was due.

The great principles which have united the people of the Empire during the war have also united us with America and Russia and they are the only hope for the world peace so anxiously desired by us all.

I therefore beseech Your Majesty that when You speak to all Your subjects on matters which deeply concern them all You avoid the expression of partial opinion so that none of us are excluded. Only in this way can the full dignity and power of the Throne be realised.

Long live Your Majesty!

DRANOEL SEKWAH.

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FICTION AND FIGURES

III.—INDUSTRIAL INSURANCE AND MONEY-LENDERS.

THE separately published Appendix "G" to Sir W. Beveridge's Report on Social Insurance includes a "Memorandum of Evidence by the Industrial Life Offices Association" (representing 25 organisations) from which the following extracts are taken:—

"Industrial Assurance has played a great part in developing habits of thrift amongst the wage-earning classes." (Appendix "G"—page 172.)

"Industrial offices have rendered very real and valuable service to members of the public individually and to the general well-being." (Appendix "G"—page 174.)

So much for our beneficent insurance magnates—as for money-lenders quotation is unnecessary. The name alone is sufficient and to say that they "batter upon the misery and misfortunes of the unfortunate" would by many people be considered an understatement rather than otherwise.

Now for the figures: A money-lender is entitled to charge interest up to 47 per cent. per annum, but usually he wants 60 per cent. per annum—not, as he will explain, because this means more profit, oh no, but because it makes the calculations so much easier—60 per cent. per annum equals 5 per cent. or 1s. in the £ per month and there you are.

On this basis and to an approved borrower he would advance roughly £106, against repayments of £12 per month for one year—£144 in all. Each payment would both cover interest and reduce the capital balance, thus out of the first £12, £5 6s. (5 per cent. on £106) would be for interest, leaving £6 14s. for reduction of capital and so on from month to month until complete liquidation after the twelfth payment.

Turning now to Industrial Insurance, Table XXV. of Appendix "D" published on page 255 of Sir William Beveridge's Report, gives the average cost-ratios for the period 1937 to 1940 for 15 separate offices. These vary from 32.9 to 48.0 so that the insured gets back, all told, from 67.1 per cent. to 52 per cent. of his money.

A group of 133 insured persons at 5d. per week premium each would pay just about a total of £144 in a year like our borrower.

Out of this they would get back, eventually, between £96 12s. 6d. from the best Company and £74 17s. 7d. from the worst, whereas, as we saw, against the same sum paid to the money-lenders charging 60 per cent., £106 would be given as a loan and in advance.

It is true that apart from profits, wages, etc., the Insurance Companies out of what they retain have to pay income tax and collecting charges which are high for small premiums collected weekly, but so has the money-lender and if his collecting charges are rather less they cannot be much so because he has often to chase hard for his money, moreover he sometimes loses part or the whole of the money advanced whereas Insurance Companies make no bad debts on premiums which must be paid before anything is paid out in benefits.

So which comes out the better from the comparison? and hadn't we better revise our ideas a bit regarding the respective value to society of Industrial Insurance Companies and money-lenders?

W. A. GOURMAND.