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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Expansion of Man

THERE have been many definitions of man. The theologian has defined him as a religious animal, the anthropologist as a tool-using animal, and there is Carlyle's definition of him as a clothes-wearing animal. These all present aspects of man that are more or less instructive, and if I venture to add one more to the list and call him an expanding animal, it will not, I think, prove the least instructive or the least interesting of the batch. For one of the characteristics of man, the one in virtue of which he is most clearly marked off from the rest of the animal world, is precisely this quality of expansion. And by that I do not mean the mere covering of a larger part of the earth's surface; that would be to imitate our shallow-pated imperialists, who count a people great because of the extent of territory they command, forgetting that in the absence of other things the more numerous a people are the more worthless they become, and the graver the danger to the rest of the world. What I mean by the expansion of man is the capacity that human nature possesses for a development of interest and feeling which express themselves over an ever-widening area, and embrace a growing circle of objects without any alteration to its fundamental qualities. Like one of the lower organisms throwing out feelers in search of sustenance, human nature is continually groping after wider knowledge and greater comfort. And from that point of view, humanity as a whole may well be likened to a huge organism struggling blindly after it knows not exactly what, and yet something that it is bound to secure as the one condition that makes life worth living.

The Community of Man

This principle of expansion holds good in science, in ethics, in sociology, and even in religion. And it follows from the very conditions of animal existence. The essential condition of life is adaption to environment, and by the very fact of its own growth the adaptation of humanity to its special environment is secured by an enlargement of ideas and feelings which corresponds to ever-enlarging boundaries. Nature, in fact, seldom works by the destruction of old organs and the production of new ones, but by adapting the old structure to new conditions. Whether we are dealing with actual organs or with functions this holds good. There is an enlightening of the intelligence controlling the old instincts, a truer perception of the nature of human interests, a breaking down of established barriers of caste, sect or nation that stand in the way of a new development, and that is about all. From the group to the tribe, from the tribe to the nation, from the nation to the race, we see this principle of expansion constantly expressing itself. It does not stop at the human race. One very

marked effect of the growth of the conception of evolution has been to link man more closely than ever to the animal world, and has led to a rational claim of kinship with the whole of the animal world. In spite of retrogressive steps here and there the world is being knit into one. Even the present series of disasters from which the world is suffering is only serving to drive home the lesson that the welfare of humanity must be considered as a whole if the part is to reap any substantial benefit. A genuine independence is only possible on the condition of the development of a rational interdependence.

Man and Morals

The growth of the moral sense will well illustrate what has been said. We have created nothing that is fundamentally new. The same impulses that animated our ancestors animate us. They sought the gratification of their own pleasures, the realisation of their own desires, and so do we. The difference here is not one of aim or motive, but of method. Nature, incredibly wasteful in mere material, is penurious to a degree in general ideas. One or two simple ideas may be drawn from the groundwork of the apparently endless variations of the animal kingdom. And so with morals. A few very simple ideas serve here. The basic principle of all animated life is self-preservation. But note what occurs. Man is a member of a group, in any case, of a family. And this means that his thoughts are never wholly occupied with self to the exclusion of others, which is only another way of saying that his consciousness of self is large enough to embrace others. So it happens that, quite apart from the purely intellectual perception of ways and means, causes and consequences, man's moral growth consists in an enlargement of moral feeling and the application of moral principles over a widening area. "Thou shalt not steal" meant little more to primitive humanity than that stealing was forbidden to members of the tribe. And even now there is little condemnation attaching to a white man stealing from a black one living in another country. But the conception of right and wrong as co-extensive with the whole of humanity is growing, which is only another way of saying that as man has developed, his experience is teaching him to regard every other man as possessing the same rights that he himself claims, and is bringing him nearer the conception of humanity as an organic whole, with the possibility of securing a general co-operation against the organic and inorganic enemies of the race.

The Dissipation of Deity

In religion we have the same state of things. Much of the talk that one hears about the purification of religion is sheer verbiage, but often it does indicate the application of those feelings hitherto associated with religion over a wider area. Originally the domain of a deity is limited to

the tribe which worships him, and his work is to keep that little piece of the world in order. But as tribes are reduced in number by conquest and amalgamation the gods follow the same path, and their concern becomes co-extensive with the larger whole. But what religious ideas gain in extension they lose in definiteness and efficiency. There can be no question that the religious ideas of primitive man are far more definite, the work of the gods far more positive than is the case with civilised mankind. The savage has some difficulty in finding a corner of the world that is beyond the control of the gods. Civilised mankind is hard put to it to explain what they do or why they do it. This, however, is only one side of the process. Looked at closely this "enlargement of God," to use an expression of a French writer, is only another aspect of human knowledge and feeling. It is, as a consequence of man's own development, that the gods become what they are to-day. Civilisation humanises the gods as it wipes out primitive peoples. A better acquaintance with the character of natural processes makes interference with them by deity inconceivable. The conception of God becomes enlarged until it ceases to touch life at any perceptible point. This physical world of ours, science teaches us, begins in vapour and ends in solidity. The gods we have been taught to worship began as solid existences, and are gradually being reduced to vapour.

Man and the Herd

Sociology enforces the same lesson. There can be no question that the factor of combination is a very valuable one so far as the struggle for existence operates between tribes. The welfare of each is best achieved through the welfare of all. The self of each is buried so that it may rise in a stronger and more serviceable form. And it is precisely for want of appreciation of this principle that the world is as it is to-day. Undoubtedly the war has put back the thoughts of many to a stage out of which some of us thought we had finally emerged, and our statesmen, with a complete lack of scientific training, are writing and speaking as though the doctrine of evolution had never been heard of, and quietly assuming that one nation can really grow stronger by assuming supremacy over other nations, or by preventing them becoming strong. We said often enough during the struggle that it required little intelligence to carry on a war—skillful appeals to the lower passions of men under the guise of a lofty patriotism are enough. War, once started, carries itself along and manages to justify itself by its own failures. But it does take both intelligence and courage to conduct peace. Our War Lords to the contrary, it was never the vital problem to kill Germans; the vital problem was living with them, and that has to be faced when all the fighting was over. And the problem of Germany is the problem of the world as a whole—the problem of how the peoples of the world are to live together. That is one which can be solved only in terms of the conception of humanity as a world-wide organism instead of the militarist ideal of a number of independent organisms with mutually destructive activities.

The Imperialism of Man

To sum up. From the earliest times we may picture man as an organism which is continually expanding as a

condition of its own growth. It is this that does, in fact, mark man off from the rest of the animal world. An animal community remains the same generation after generation. If its existence conflicts with the existence of another species, or even variety, there is no assimilation, but a destruction of one or the other. The problem here is purely physical and biological. In man we are less concerned with biological than with psychological growth. Man's nature is, in short, fashioned with respect to a dual application. The one is his own preservation as an individual organism. The other is towards the group of which he is an inseparable part. It is this which really warrants us in speaking of a human society as an organism—not merely because the parts work together, but because they cannot be understood out of relation to each other—and there is no hope for humanity out of this line of development. It is this fact which more than anything else is gradually breaking down those barriers of nationality and race that have hitherto kept peoples apart. If this process continues, well and good; but there is no reversing the evolutionary process. Either the process continues or civilisation will end in disaster. We have had enough and to spare of the imperialism of this or that group of nations. The welfare of the race depends upon our ability to displace it with the ideal of the Imperialism of Humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

BRITAIN v. ROME

IT was a far-sighted prophecy of Charles Bradlaugh that ultimately the struggle with religion would resolve itself into a clash between the Roman Catholic Church and secular interests.

To-day the soundness of Bradlaugh's prediction becomes more and more apparent in Britain, and the outline of the final picture is now more clearly defined as the forces slowly adjust themselves into line for the coming politico-religious battle, Britain versus Rome.

Outside Catholic circles the general disintegration of religious belief and thought is openly admitted, and usually deplored. There are pious regrets at the all-round weakening of religious belief, and futile hopes of a regeneration of Christianity in its Protestant forms, but underlying these there appears to be developing a tacit recognition of the menace of Roman Catholicism to those features of British social life which, besides having become non-Catholic by tradition since the time of the Reformation, have also proved progressively useful to society.

Though sensible people are not fooled into thinking that we ever had a fully democratic order in Britain, they do recognise that we have enjoyed certain essentials of democracy which have not existed in those countries where Rome has exercised great power, and they recognise also that such features of our national life are threatened by a development of Roman Catholic influence to a degree that retards progression to a further stage of democracy. I repeat, sensible people realise this danger, though most politicians seem to be unaware of its existence.

With the return of our service men and women from many places where it has been possible to see the influence of the Roman Church in power, this sense of awareness of the Roman danger to democracy is being sharpened. It is to be hoped this fact will strengthen the determination to curb the activities of this Church which though its theology is of the most "otherworldly" character, nevertheless exists, so far as its hierarchy

is concerned, simply for the acquisition of political and secular power.

Within the relatively tolerant system of British social life, Rome has been able to penetrate into spheres of influence to a degree that would be impossible for non-Catholics in a Catholic country. In such countries the test of social and political worthiness is measured by the degree of allegiance to the orthodox (Roman) Church, which represents the ruling caste.

But in Britain the position in political life has so deteriorated that even the orthodox (Anglican) Church has lost much of its pull, and what really counts now is the degree of allegiance or acquiescence to the 5 per cent. minority of Rome. Or, to put it another way, in a nominally Protestant country, where Rome is numerically very weak, her power has become such that she imposes the religious tests upon our politicians, and not those churches that are more typical of the religious minds of the nation. And this despite the fact that the theology of Rome, and her numbers, have suffered a decline like the rest of the churches!

Wherein, then, lies the explanation of this anomaly? Probably in three main factors. Perhaps the least important of these factors is the inane idea of many politicians that the religious outlook of a person need not influence the political outlook, and that a Roman Catholic may be as good a "progressive" as any other in secular matters. This leads to a position in which the general philosophy and political aims of the Roman Church become obscured in the scramble for votes, which, so far as Catholics are concerned, are usually given, not for the general good, but under guidance from the Church, for the good of the Church.

Another factor is perhaps the lack of personal moral courage in most politicians, for it is rarely, if ever in these times, that a political figure will throw down the gauntlet to the Church and call for a show-down, even on matters fundamentally affecting the political ideas that he stands for. The submissive requirements of "party loyalty" seem to have knocked all the sparkle out of many good men. How long is it since any Socialist educationist, for instance, stood firmly by the one-time basic principle of secular education?

In Bradford recently, birthplace of the I.L.P. and of numerous other Leftish and progressive movements, Socialists were competing with Conservatives to show how much they loved this reactionary Church by giving it £120,000 out of the rates for dogmatic schools which, 40 years ago, their Socialist predecessors condemned as obstacles to the progress of Socialism, and bulwarks of capitalism.

Sir Charles Trevelyan, a converted Liberal who proved a better "progressive" than many of those who converted him to Socialism, resigned his presidency of the then Board of Education in disgust at the abandonment of principle that took place in the 1929 love match between the Labour Government of the day and the Catholic Church. And they let him go!

Undoubtedly, then, lack of courage has been a big factor in producing the present ridiculous position, in which reformers wriggle uncomfortably in their chains of religious reaction, while we still remain without the greatest need of a progressive democracy—an enlightened electorate, produced by a sound education system.

For this abandonment of basic principles in 1929 the Labour Party of to-day may suffer severely in the years ahead, for the schoolchildren of 1929 and thereabouts are the younger electors of to-day upon whose imperfect education all the forces of reactionary propaganda, political and religious, will be brought to bear in time for the next General Election.

If the secular education and anti-dual-system principles of the early Labour reformers had been adhered to in 1929, and the Party had stuck to its guns in face of the Roman Catholic rebellion led by John Scurr, it is possible that under Trevelyan's system our young people might have been taught more thinking

and less believing and thus provided an insurance against the malice and propaganda that any progressive government must now face in its attempts to reconstruct the world on more sensible lines.

Thus do the Roman Catholic triumphs of the past echo mocking laughs at to-day's British democracy—for it has been mainly due to the Roman Catholic resistance of the past 15 or 20 years that the obsolete dual system in education has been preserved with its dogmatic schools, more concerned with the next life than this, and more interested in creating a "Catholic atmosphere" than a rational human outlook among our children.

The third, and, I think, the most important factor in giving Rome her undue influence, has been the organisation of her meagre political strength through movements which, like the Church itself, never relax their vigilance and extend their political activities to the point of a form of refined political blackmail—sometimes with more blackmail about it than refinement. But this subject deserves a section to itself, and we will go further into the question in the next article.

FRANCIS J. CORINA.

A MYSTIC STREAM

THINKING in terms of analogy is fallacious because it likens things that are different. As Chapman Cohen would say, if things are different they can't be the same. Analogies also fail because they imply more than is intended. For these reasons, Athos Zenoo's series of articles, purporting to be "Scientific" sociology, were ruined by his use of the analogy of two streams flowing side by side, sometimes mingling, sometimes separating.

This analogy is fantastic for in nature when two streams come together the waters so mingle that they cannot again separate. But there is also the implication, which presumably "A.Z." did not intend, that there is a similarity in the two streams and that they flow in the same direction.

Without a doubt economic development is progressive. It has been attaining a greater degree of complexity, it shows an increasing degree of productivity involving wider area of distribution, making possible the survival of a greater population and an increasingly higher standard of living. One might think of that as the onward flow of a stream, but the influence of religion is the reverse, religion "Advances" backwards. The idea of two streams flowing together in opposite directions is quite mystical. What is wanted is not an analogy but an appreciation of the facts.

To save a long dissertation we might see the difference between the "two streams" by comparing two definitions, which should be acceptable to "A.Z." For religion we take Tyler's "Belief in Spirits" and for economics, Marx's "Method of Production and Distribution." A little consideration shows that the "Belief" is a question of theory, and the "Method," one of practice. Theory and practice are not two separate streams but two aspects of experience. It has often been argued that wisdom is a balance of theory and practice. So it would appear that "A.Z." shows a lack of wisdom in using the old metaphysical trick of trying to separate in fancy what cannot be separated in fact.

Theory, whether religious, philosophic or scientific, has reference to the same world, the only one we know, the world of experience. It has reference either to the physical or psychological, the individual or sociological aspects of experience.

It is now commonly recognised by students of anthropology that religion arises as a psychological misunderstanding. But it also involves a misapprehension of the social factor. To illustrate, Frazer's definition of the totem as a "personal relationship" does not state the obvious, that it is also an emblem or symbol of group association. To the totem can be traced our flags, banners, swastikas and uniforms with which

we personally associate ourselves. The totem was enforced by the taboo, the "Thou shalt not" to which can be traced our regulations and laws. The totem, based upon similarity of motive, mutual aid, is progressive; while the taboo, an expression of ignorance and fear, is repressive. Here we have that mystical characteristic of our actions, which are at the same time both individual and social, rational and emotional, theoretical and practical. But in terms of magic and religion.

Religion is the oldest ideology, magic the oldest technology, and the medicineman was the oldest of the "experts." Though generally discredited, magic still persists, for instance, in Marx's words, as the "dead hand of the past" in the "fetishistic aspect of money." Changes in economic circumstances produce changes in both social organisation and in individual outlook, in both theory and practice. With the change from hunting to herding animals man discovered "sex," a subject so tarnished by religion as to be even now a delicate topic for discussion. This gave rise to ancestor worship, from which we get our ideas of lineal descent, and hereditary privileges. The medicineman was identified with the totem, became priest-king; and from this we get our idea of the sanctity of royalty.

Economic development arises in the needs and circumstances of the times, but religious theory is derived from traditions from the past. The one involves social reorganisation, the other, the persistence of old ideas, customs and institutions. With hunting ideology carried on into the herding stage, hunting implements became weapons of war, and there arose the need for a "Leader." The search for a "Leader" still continues to-day. Here we have the first stage in the "caste" system, and from the same period we derive the animosities of the feud. Old ideological justifications persist with the new technological development, from these war-like times we inherit the concept of life as mystical conflict, as dialectical antagonism. Here also we have the first of the recognisable mysteries, for instance the war dance. From one of these we have inherited a method of trying to avoid our responsibilities by the use of a scape goat.

When man began to cultivate the soil there developed the fertility cults, from which are derived the carnival and the country fair. With the development of agriculture came the astrological superstition and the calendar of saints. We also get the landed aristocracy, a further addition to the caste. From here also we get the glorification of sacrifice, and the "slave virtues." The technology of the time was the mystery. It was the method of seed sowing and of harvesting, and it was the political assembly. The mystery was the method of production and its mystical ideology was magico-religious. With the development of trade and commerce we get another addition to the caste. This increase in castes and the advance of the aristocrat and merchant led to the breakdown of theocracy.

But the intellectual development became so abstract as to completely lose touch with current technology. The Greek intelligentsia lived in a world of shadows and engaged in "shadow boxing." Rationalisation led to a variety of "side-show" ways of gaining solace vicariously. Hence the cumulative sense of frustration arising from this escapism. From this period we get the political pantomime with its pomp and pageantry. The denunciation of magic led but to the glorification of religion. Sophistry and rhetoric led to the body-politic becoming the body-theologic. The ecclesia became the church. The saviour god was identified with the Logos, the *raison d'être*, and the fertility cult mystery changed to the miracle play; associated with the solace of post mortem rewards and purgatorial punishments which sanctified the pain and suffering of this vale of tears. Philosophy had failed to find a social ideology.

Never at any time have these "two streams" been separated. Every step forward has been hindered by religious ideology. The industrial development of a machine technology has not dis-

persed it. This intellectual amoeba still exists together with atomic energy. The conditions of its existence still persist; there is plenty of ignorance, and of fear; especially in reference to social matters. We still have the ideology of the jungle and the technology of the wide open spaces. We are still in a world of "shadow shows," drifting on a mystic stream.

H. H. PREECE.

FREEDOM FOR THE CHILD

PERHAPS the worst product of the late—but not lamented—Coalition Government was the so-called "New" Education Act. A dismal failure in many respects, it was positively dangerous in others. It left the unsatisfactory and very unequal system almost exactly as it was, and took retrograde steps with regard to religious instruction. It was singularly feeble and indecisive with its few and meagre advances but outstandingly daring in its retreat. At a time when sweeping and revolutionary changes were called for and sadly overdue, this most important of all problems was treated with timidity and with little consideration for the child who is to be its victim. Mr. T. H. Elstob, who is the Hon. Secretary of the Secular Education League, has rightly characterised it in terms of *Æsop's* fable of the mountain which laboured to produce only a mouse. I suppose the Act represents just another instance of the much-lauded reform that simply isn't anything of the sort!

For those who are really interested in education (and I hope this includes all readers of "The Freethinker") I heartily recommend the recently published book "Hearts not Heads in the School" (Herbert Jenkins Limited; 7s. 6d.) by the well-known rebel, A. S. Neill. Here we have a serious attempt to understand the child mind and to treat it with the care it deserves; to regard every child as an individual with the same right to freedom as an adult, and not simply as a candidate for examinations. "A free child is a personality," says Mr. Neill, "but a disciplined child is a torn creature compelled to be insincere because he is a dual personality—self and an imposed model," and "if we want to see a happy, cultured, sincere population we shall have to demand that the child will be free." The many education plans, he insists, are not good enough because they take the school as their centre and not the child—in some cases they have forgotten the child altogether. Obviously it will not do. You can build the finest and most beautiful schools imaginable, but it is useless until those schools have abolished fear. Fear of the cane and strap—fear of the master—is still a very real thing in our schools, and Mr. Neill is rightly condemnatory of it. He would abolish "all competition and rewards and punishments," and instead of discipline—which is little more than the aforementioned fear—he wants to see "self-discipline coming from a community ruling and not from an *Ersatz* father or mother or big brother."

To us, who have known the fear of punishment when French "swotting" had been shirked or when that accidental blot fell on the page of composition, Mr. Neill's aims seem idealistic. A boy of 15, who left school twelve months ago, was thrilled when I read parts of the book to him, and recalled how his school was like "a little concentration camp." Cane and strap—regular use for trivial offences and for inability, ridicule by the teacher in front of the class, slaps across the head for not being in line in the playground, and so on. Looking back, we must all recognise a lot of truth in this description, and then Mr. Neill's ideas are no longer idealistic, they become an essential requirement for the new world which everybody is talking about.

After all, the ideas are not founded on thin air. Summerhill, "that dreadful school" as it has been called, they have been put into practice and have proved very successful. There, co-education is a fact and not a fancy: not just confined to sitting in the same classroom. "Never in Summerhill has

there been any suggestion that sex is wrong or sinful or immoral." Teachers do not "play Bach to children who are longing to hear Duke Ellington"; they do not force an unwilling child to attend the maths. class; there is no discipline and no punishment, no "yes, sir" and "no, sir." The children govern themselves and are on terms of equality with the teachers. And there is no religious teaching.

Mr. Neill realises, of course, that it is impossible for the ordinary schoolteacher to adopt these methods in the ordinary school. He appreciates the difficulties which the elementary schoolmaster finds himself up against. But he is of the confirmed opinion that the freedom of the child is the crying need of to-day, and he exhorts:—

"Parents, you must fight for your children, but do fight for something of value. Leave the minor reforms (smaller classes, older leaving age, etc.) to the compact majority: concentrate on hearts and not heads, demanding that all children must be free from external fear and hate, demanding that their education should free their emotions. Wage war on all moulders of character, all moralists, all suppressors. Take as your educational motto: My child must first of all be happy at school."

Certainly, some of Mr. Neill's suggestions are urgently needed. Abolition of punishment is one, abolition of religious teaching is another. Religion is not on the Summerhill curriculum because—as Mr. Neill says—it is "dangerous and anti-life." "It is impossible," he maintains, "to be taught religion without forming inhibitions and repressions, because religion, in its attempt to mould human character, must demand the repression of human urges and desires; must belittle the body and over-value the soul." And he denounces completely the Christian attitude towards sex.

He is opposed to cramming a child's head with knowledge, a good deal of which is practically useless; it is the emotional side of the child with which he is most concerned. A. S. Neill is a psychologist, and although—as he points out—probably no school of psychologists would own him, I venture to suggest that he is doing much more valuable work than many acknowledged members of the so-called "schools." He wishes to see a world of fellowship, but: "There can be no real fellowship unless a community is free from taboo and morality and fear," and "there is only one way—freedom of the individual in a free community."

This book is, indeed, the best value for money that I have encountered in my rounds of the stalls in a very long time. Written with such perception and appreciation of child nature, such a disregard for orthodox views, and such a broad, human outlook, it carries a vital message for to-day. Its author is thought by many to be a crank, and he is well aware of this. It does not worry him, however, for he knows the value of the work he is doing, limited as it necessarily is. How successful he is and how enjoyable he finds it may be judged from the last sentence in his chapter on "Freedom in Education": "Frankly, I don't know why I am writing about freedom; it all seems so natural and delightful to me, after twenty-three years of life in a community of free children." Another revealing touch is: "There is no problem child: there is only an unhappy child." Nor can I miss mentioning the final chapter of the book which is a tender appreciation of the author's wife and fellow worker at Summerhill, who died on April 30, 1944.

In short "Hearts not Heads in the School" should be read by all who teach children, have children, are likely to have children, or indeed, have been children. Many will find themselves in disagreement with a good deal of it, but even they will, I think, acknowledge its sincerity. Others will think it all very nice but too idealistic. Well, idealistic writings have helped to produce revolutionary changes in the past, and given sufficient people inspired by A. S. Neill's ideas and ideals, who knows—a dream might come true!

C. McCALL.

AIN'T IT TRUE?

Life's a funny racket—if you likes that kind o' fun;

If you don't—then poison's useful and it's quick.

It will save you lots o' trouble and I'll lay you ten to one

You'd be better off a'shovelling coals for Nick!

There's only one sort rules the roost in this old chicken-run—

It's the Twister who knows ev'ry dirty trick.

The rest—well, they don't count—there ain't no place

For poor but honest, decent blokes to tread;

The under-dog don't get no chance in this 'ere crooked race,

He's chucked aside and trampled on instead.

But when he's kicked the bucket—then the Dence becomes the Ace—

He finds himself important—when he's dead!

The Banker doffs his topce when the coffin passes by;

The Dustman gets the Duke's respectful bow;

They all salute the carcass—but not one o' them would try

To help him on his feet alive; but now

It's all quite different—well—he had the sense to die;

That sort of alters everything somehow!

Yus—you'll be a blinkin' Someone when you're dead and gone for good;

When you can't come back to Earth again and beg for work and food;

And the Parson in his Nightie will send you to Gawd Almighty—

If he's paid the proper fee—that's understood!

Meself—I've bin a soldier, see? I've learned a thing or two;

I knows the kind o' stuff they always feed us—

When the Country is in danger, then they calls on me and you,

And it's you and me they gits just when they need us.

But when they've got us nicely hooked—By Crikey! ain't it true?

How they change their blasted toon and how they bleed us!

You're dirt and scum—no more than crawling ants;

And you're herded worse than cattle in a shed;

They shuvs you here and shuvs you there and kicks you in the pants—

On a bit o' stinkin' straw you lays your 'ead.

They marches you and drills you till they bloody nearly kills you

And a thousand times you wishes you was dead!

But you'll be a blinkin' hero when you've stopped a bit o' lead;

When the Doctor can't do nuthin' more and covers up your bed;

When they can't no longer hound you—then they'll drape a flag around you

And salute a bloomin' Hero—when he's dead!

So you see, old son, it goes to prove it's only wasted time

To struggle on for just a crust of bread:

The cards are stacked against you—unless you turns to crime—

Then you'll make a pile or be a Business Head!

But remember, when they've cheated you and swiped your only dime

What nice things they'll say about you—when you're dead!

Yus—they'll say nice things about you when the last Good-bye's been said;

When in a little wooden box you're nice and neatly spread;

When no more this world can hurt you—then at last you'll know the virtue—

The freedom—peace and joy of being Dead!

W. H. Wood.

ACID DROPS

So Ilford is after all to have its Sunday cinemas. Encouraged by the local clergy, the Sabbatarians came up in great force and scored a heavy victory at a public meeting. They evidently thought that settled the matter, but a vote was taken of the citizens in the district to settle the official decision, and the result was an overwhelming defeat for the bigots. Given a free vote, and there are few towns in Great Britain which dare to vote against Sunday cinemas, the fight should now concentrate on the complete abolition of the absurd restrictions which so often hamper production of first-class shows. The Almighty, anyway, appears to be deserting the Society which specially caters for Sabbatarians.

We do not often agree with a Catholic priest but when we do we like it to be known and to give our reasons. The other day, Fr. Ripley at the Cenacle Convent in Liverpool, declared that far from making any progress in converting England to the Catholic faith the conversion of England was actually receding. They ought to have at least ten millions of Catholics here by now due to immigration from Ireland, conversions, and their higher birthrate. Instead the number was a little over two millions—due to the fact that Catholic homes were so little Catholic these days, and also perhaps to mixed marriages. Thus it was impossible to catch up to the general population and "the country would never be converted," he added. Fr. Ripley thought prayer, however, would help as well as preaching in streets—the dear innocent!

No, Canon Law is absolutely definite on the point, insists the "Universe" in answer to an inquiry. Women priests are simply not allowed in the Catholic Church. After all, women should be content with their other work for the Church, and remember that even "our Lady, though God's Mother, was not endowed with the priesthood." And if that does not settle it, we sadly fear nothing will.

There are still people who talk about Charles I. as a martyr. For example, the Bishop of London the other day claimed that "Charles I. resisted all attempts to divorce him from the Church for whose sake he laid down his life." He was in fact the only martyr "put on the roll of the Church of England since the Reformation." As Macaulay pointed out in his essay on Milton, the king simply could not be trusted. Over and over again he broke his word to the people and to Parliament. Moreover, what Charles was resting on was one of the most ancient but the most absurd superstition that God is incarnate in the king, and it was this that he insinuated even during trial. As a matter of fact that is not quite dead in this country. It is both stated and implied in the Coronation service that takes place in Westminster. We dealt with this some years ago, but we have it brought to light in the case of the Japanese. We may deal with it at length very shortly. It gives the key to much that is not explainable in other directions.

According to the "Daily Mail" and also other communicants concerning the state of Germany, there is a great rush of Germans to join the Churches. We are not surprised. Naturally many of the pastors are not certain whether this rush to Church is due to belief in Jesus or the desire to stand well with the conquerors of Germany. We believe that the last factor is a very active one but it should not be forgotten that Germany before the World War had its quota of sincere believers in Jesus Christ. Many, probably most, of the men and women now on trial in Nuremberg are quite sincere believers in Jesus Christ. It is useless trying to set these criminals on one side as not being genuine. Hitler really believed that God had "called" and many of his leaders were pronounced believers. If the Christian religion was a real guard against villainy and brutality these qualities would have been very much weaker than they are. Nor should we overlook the fact that for large-scale brutality never was there a more useful background than the Christian doctrine of Hell.

"God moves in mysterious ways. . ." Everyone knows the rest of the verse. But there is no question that if God moves at all his movements are very mysterious. For example, a little while back thanks was given to God for giving us victory over Germany. But if God does stop wars, why in the name of all that is sensible did he not stop the Germans going to war at the beginning instead of waiting for six years? A general who failed to take the earliest opportunity of beating the enemy would be turned out of his command. Perhaps "God moves," etc., is just an exhibition of humour. But now God's followers are quite perturbed as to whether God will interfere in time or whether he will let loose atomic bombs on a huge scale and wipe out humans but leaving some as he did Noah; let us hope for a better quality. Altogether God seems a very weird kind of planner and executor.

But there is at least one of God's accredited representatives on earth who is getting very uneasy with the way things are working out. The Bishop of Rochester has very grave doubts as to whether Christianity will survive. He has been studying the report issued by the Church of England and designed to consider ways and means of bringing the people back to the Church. The Bishop of Rochester takes his gloves off so far as avoiding the pictures that reporters so often print in this connection. The Bishop sees before him little that does not threaten disaster—empty churches and careless or disheartened preachers for the most part. Writing in the "Sunday Express" for February 3, he says:—

"There can be no doubt that increasingly throughout the present century there has been a widespread drift from religion, till to-day it is impossible to exaggerate the gulf that separates the Church from half the inhabitants of England."

We don't know why the present century is dated for the crumbling of Christianity. That began long before the last or present centuries. Christianity has been breaking up for over three centuries. What the more recent times have seen is a more rapid disintegration of all religion, from all phases of life. But we may expect some tampering with facts in the interests of the Church. Still it is a measure of the way in which religion is losing ground to find a bishop of the established Church analysing the present situation as follows:—

1. Ninety per cent. of the population owe no allegiance to any Christian Church.
2. People in general no longer base their moral standards on Christian principles.
3. The ordinary man to-day seems to be unaware of the spiritual in man. No longer does he take for granted that he has freewill as a child of God. Instead he is rapidly becoming a determinist, regarding himself as the creature of environment. . . This is perhaps the gravest feature of the situation.
4. Youth is largely indifferent to Christianity, finding in religion no relevance to life and in life itself no meaning.

We must leave the bishop alone for the present, but we may note that having said so much that is true he probably feels that he is justified to wet his very Christian tongue with a lie. The youth of to-day, he suggests, finds life without religion lacking all meaning. But that is simply not true, or rather—a more polite form—it is religious truth. Life to youth has a new meaning and a better one. If youth reads what is now easily within reach of all, life is getting more and more what we consciously choose to make of it. We can mould the forces of nature for good or evil. In other words—we think we are citing Bacon—developing youth is discovering that we can obey nature in order to become nature's master. It is with this discovery that the Churches have really to grapple. But the poor bishop is quite upset.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

Mr. Cohen has not been lecturing much recently, but he will be addressing the Conway Discussion Circle on Tuesday, February 26, at 7 p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on "The Fallacy and Dangers of 'Race.'"

So far as we are aware Dr. Hornibrook is a new figure in the world of poetry. If we are correct we compliment him on his virgin effort, if we are not we shall look round for further acquaintance with one who writes with feeling—and strength. The author presents readers with about a score and a-half of poems that show he is one who can look the world in the face and appreciate both the darker and the lighter sides of life with weighed appreciation. We particularly like the two poems on "The Potter" and "A Suicide." The title of the booklet is "Cobwebs in Dreamland." The publisher is the "Pendulum Publications"; price 1s. 6d., postage 1d.

"How the Churches Betray their Christ: An Examination of British Christianity" is the title of Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann's latest pamphlet. It is one of those cleverly expressed sarcasms that not everyone will appreciate or understand. Even Christians—not of the bigoted type—will find much pleasure in the reading. Price 9d., postage 1d.

We have never been satisfied with the advocates of the theory that the world is overpopulated, or that the population will, if we are not careful to keep up the birthrate, shrink into next to nothingness. Fear seems to have a lot to do with both lookouts. That gives us greater readiness to note the appearance of "Britain's Birthrate" by our contributor, Mr. Francis Corina. Mr. Corina is as usual full of fight, and also as is usual his weapons are short and sharp. We agree with him that a smaller birthrate means a decline in civilisation seems to us quite unwarranted. The price of the essay is 1s., postage 1d.

Our compliments to Perth—at least to the sensible ones—for it has made history by being the first place in Scotland that has opened cinemas on Sunday. But it is conditional. There are it seems four cinemas in Perth. According to the "Daily Record" the first suggestion for Sunday amusements came from a chaplain. But he wanted fifteen minutes for a religious service which the cinema people rejected because it would lead to sectional religious squabbles. Then the Perth magistrates decided that some Sunday entertainments were advisable on account of the number of servicemen in Perth. So it was arranged that one cinema out of the four should open on Sunday. The exhibition would be in rotation. That covers what we may call "Scottish" carefulness. If God burns one or two of the shows we expect they will be closed. If nothing happens it will be decided that the angels see no harm in Sunday performances and they will

continue. We mention the angels because they must have such a dull time that two or three hours once a week at the "pictures" will be welcome.

The Belfast Branch N.S.S. has arranged two meetings this week-end. On Saturday evening at 8 o'clock Mr. F. J. Corina will lecture on "Youth and the Future" in the Lecture Hall, Old Museum Buildings, 7, College Square North, and on Sunday, at 7-30 p.m. in the Bakers Hall, 122, Upper North Street, the subject by the same speaker will be "Freethought or Christianity?" It will be Mr. Corina's first visit to Belfast and we wish him and the local N.S.S. branch a very successful week-end.

Mr. C. McCall will be speaking for the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society in the University College Lecture Theatre, Shakespeare Street, to-day at 2-30 p.m., on "Materialism: A Scientific Philosophy." Nottingham Freethinkers will no doubt take this opportunity of hearing one of our young speakers.

Those readers who are interested in the Shakespeare problem may care to attend the John O'London's Literary Circle at Kingsway Hall on Wednesday, February 20, at 7 p.m. There is to be a Brains Trust composed of members of the Shakespeare Fellowship among whom we note are two of our contributors, Mr. W. Kent and Mr. H. Cutner. Admission 1s.

Apropos of what we have said with regard to the tactics of the Catholic Church with regard to marriage, it may be well to note that the only power that has been able to use its domination to weld or partly weld people of different religions and nationalities with moderate success was the pagan Roman. With all its faults it placed "law" in a prominent position, and wherever it planted itself it carried the principles of Roman law with it. As a matter of fact the Roman law is still treated with respect by our own lawmakers. It was above the colour bar and was charitable to all religions. The only religion Rome suppressed was Druidism, and that was because it involved, or was believed to have involved, human sacrifice.

In this connection we may note the following from Professor Westfall Thomson's "History of the Middle Ages," published in 1931. He says:—

"In its best period from the accession of Augustus in 27 B.C. to the death of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 180, the Roman Empire was an intelligent, efficient and healthy social organism. Better than most governments it combined two merits. To the upper class it appeared as an intelligent system of administration. To the lower class it appeared as a protector of life and property, of justice in the courts, of honest and not onerous taxation, and of the principle of non-interference in their intimate daily life, their language, their social institutions, their religion."

It is no reply to what has been said by pointing to the faults in the Roman Empire. The saner way is to consider the evil that followed the triumphant rule of the Cross, and that the revival of Europe came with a return to the ancient philosophy and its development in the face of the Christian Church.

There is something that is (mentally) childlike about some of our preachers. For example, here is Canon A. E. Baker who thus propounds the way to believe in Jesus Christ: "The problem of the incarnation is beyond all human solving, so we can do nothing but believe it, and we ought to believe it because it is incomparable and therefore indescribable. There were people who had met Him in the street and were with Him at dinner parties." So meeting someone in the street and going to a dinner party proves that He was God. Well, we have met those who told some wonderful yarns at dinner parties—towards the end of the show. And so it goes on with the Canon scoring every time. For the less you know the more you shall believe. We know that Jesus was the son of God, because God was the father of Jesus. It is long since we came across anyone who is so complete a Christian as Canon A. E. Baker.

A DEFENCE OF THE RESURRECTION

I.

SOME years before the war I reviewed "The Flight From Reason" by Arnold Lunn in these columns. His thesis was, if I remember aright, that to believe in Materialism, in a mechanistic science, in the discoveries Anthropology has made with regard to the origins of religion—in short, to advocate Free-thought as we do, was really *unreason*; while to believe in relics, counting beads, miracles, the efficacy of prayer, the Virgin Birth, Hell, the Devil, angels, and so on, was thoroughly reasonable. It was we Freethinkers who were in a headlong flight from reason.

Mr. Lunn was highly satisfied with this diverting performance and felt ready to meet any Devil's advocate in a public debate. Unfortunately the goddess of reason led him to choose Mr. Chapman Cohen, and the result was so devastating for him that—I think I am doing him no injustice—wild horses would not drag him to another debate with a representative Freethinker. Thus, though it is true that he valiantly threw out a challenge to meet anybody in a discussion on the Resurrection, directly it was accepted, Mr. Lunn recollected a whole host of previous engagements which had priority. It was very sad, but he simply had no time for a debate.

All this was before the war, but the question of the Resurrection must have bothered him immensely for at long last he has written a book in defence of that "Unique Event" in the history of the world—a book specially for non-Christians, as naturally all Christians unhesitatingly believe it or they wouldn't be Christians. This accounts for the fact that "The Third Day," as he calls it, has had quite a good time at the hands of pious reviewers. It was obvious from the way they dealt with it that all they knew about the Resurrection was that it happened. They seemed as ignorant of anything else in the controversy as they would be in a discussion on Einstein's Relativity.

Mr. Lunn, however, knows that merely saying the Resurrection happened to a bunch of sceptics is not enough. For instance, there was a book published last century called "Supernatural Religion" which made so complete a hash of supernatural religion that only blind, very blind faith, can supply the antidote. Mr. Lunn has never read "Supernatural Religion," but he came across the reply made to it by Canon Lightfoot, and he breathed again. Exactly what it was in this reply which saved Mr. Lunn we are not told, but it could not have been anything in defence of miracles or the Resurrection for the canny—or very cute—Lightfoot, utterly unable to reply to the chapters in which they are crushingly dealt with, concentrated on showing that Cassels was wrong in speculating on a date or quoting an authority, or giving the tense of a Greek verb. Cassels put some of these things right in a new edition, and his argument stood exactly where it stood before; but Lightfoot decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and courageously refused to discuss "supernatural" religion. He hadn't the ghost of an argument in him, and the "reply," which so strongly influenced Mr. Lunn is one of the poorest performances in apologetic literature I have come across. Mr. Lunn thinks it is enough to quote a Fundamentalist writer named Salmon, who calls Cassels a "windbag." It is, however, Salmon himself and Lightfoot who are the windbags. And neither of them give the slightest hint that they know the Free-thought case. One would have thought that since writing "The Flight from Reason," Mr. Lunn would have at least made an effort to understand it himself; but there is hardly a hint in his latest book that he has learned anything about it at all.

Perhaps this is too sweeping for what Mr. Lunn has learnt is that before he can defend the Resurrection he has to defend miracles in general, and to do this he actually goes to that well of gross fraud—*Lourdes*. Now why does he go to *Lourdes*? The answer is very simple—it is extremely difficult to get any critical

survey of the "miracles" of *Lourdes* worth reading. Let the reader try and he will at once see the truth of this.

Of what use is a pamphlet published by the Catholic Truth Society and written by a Jesuit like Fr. Woodlock? He is not a doctor, nor has he ever seen an authenticated cure. The books published in France are mostly or all by Catholics, and the Catholic doctors who give medical "histories" of the cures are not, in almost all the cases, actual witnesses. Zola's "*Lourdes*" is at least half fiction, for he was writing a novel not a documented and guaranteed history. Thus, to give a list of "cases" and triumphantly claim that the "facts" are irrefutable and unanswerable is quite easy when writing for religious sheep. But Mr. Lunn avowedly is writing for sceptics and he has made the unpardonable error of mistaking assertion for argument. I think it is worth while to examine some of the cures he gives, for few readers of this journal will have the means of checking or refuting Mr. Lunn's claims—though they might well believe there is a snag somewhere.

The facts are set forth in a brilliant little pamphlet written by Mr. Joseph McCabe about 20 years ago: "*The Lourdes Miracles*" (Watts), which should be far better known. Fortunately, he deals with the "miracles" Mr. Lunn confidently brings forth as undeniable proof that miracles in the supernatural sense of the word do take place in these days. Almost all the authority Mr. Lunn gives is Dr. Le Bec, "the senior surgeon of a Paris hospital who was president of the Bureau des Constatations" established at *Lourdes* in 1882 to test "the alleged miraculous cures at *Lourdes*."

Mr. Lunn gives three-and-a-half pages to the case of Peter de Rudder—who was *not* cured at *Lourdes* at all. We are told that he shattered his left leg in 1867, and even after seven years the bones had not united. To prevent amputation he went to the shrine of Oostacker, near Ghent, to "ask our Lady of *Lourdes*" to cure his leg. His doctor, who says he saw him two or three months before the cure, testified that there was suppuration and the bones were badly separated. This was "confirmed by witnesses who saw de Rudder a few days before the cure." He went to the Grotto, commenced praying, felt "a strange sensation," then walked three times round the Grotto completely cured. He was "immediately taken to a neighbouring chateau," was examined, and it was found that the bones had completely united; there was no shortening of the bone, and "the cure was attested by the entire village." Even after his death the bones "when exhumed, fully support the above history of the case."

Even Professor Haldane who read the Catholic Truth Society pamphlet "A Modern Miracle," was obliged to write that he thought "the odds are that the bones were united, and the septic wounds healed in a few hours, the most probable alternative being a pious fraud enacted by a large number of people. The only remarkable element in the cure is its speed." Professor Haldane obviously did not think it worth while, or perhaps he never thought at all, that the only way to understand the "miracle" of de Rudder is to go to the "authorities" and trace back his case. To swallow any description of a modern miracle from a Catholic Truth pamphlet without independent investigation is to show similar credulity to that of a Catholic convert like Mr. Lunn.

The real truth, as shown by Mr. McCabe, is something very different from the account given by Mr. Lunn—and Mr. McCabe quotes *only* Catholic "authorities," including Dr. Le Bec.

Will the reader believe from the above account which I have taken from Mr. Lunn, that although the "miracle" which cured de Rudder took place in 1875, the actual "inquiry" from which Mr. McCabe says "very much of the detail took place seventeen years afterwards, in 1892." Not only that, it is admitted that even among the peasants who (it is said) testified to the cure, there were neighbours who "regarded Peter as a rogue and malingerer, and they gave him a good thrashing for his fraud."

H. CUTNER.

INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC CULTURE ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE WEST*

THE wonderful rendering of an art which flourished under the patronage and protection of Islam, quite unrivalled in the early Middle Ages, is such an important chapter in the life of mankind that I regret, in the time at my disposal, it is impossible to give it full justice. Islamic art developed with a lightning rapidity in Asia and Egypt and in parts of Europe due to the dynamic fervour of a new religion which provided the means of unification of different races and brought about a new philosophy and outlook of life, hitherto despised by other religious teachings. To quote Finlay, "Who does not know how in those gloomy and lamentable ages, in which Europe was enveloped in the darkest shadow of ignorance, the Arabs alone, with the greatest industry, applied themselves to the promotion of the sciences."

It was the Arab doctors of medicine and the Arab philosophers who gave new life to the study of all sciences and arts. It was the Arabs who kept burning the Greek flame of learning and this passion for higher ideals can be best judged by the conditions for granting peace to the Emperor Michael III., by the renowned Caliph Al-Mamun, when he asked that there should be given to him all the writings of the learned Greeks which were preserved in the Imperial Library at Constantinople (814). European culture expressed its debt to Islamic learning when Avicenna and Averrhoes were represented in the apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas, in the great fresco by Taddeo Gaddi in the Church of St. Maria Novella in Florence. Muslim architecture is only one facet of the rare jewel of Islamic culture, and it can be best appreciated in its proper setting. Architecture is inseparable from all the causes which influence the evolution of art. In examining these causes, it will be found that Islam followed the usual processes; it borrowed, adopted, adapted, developed and lent.

If we are to understand this intercourse between Islam and the West, we must find the points of contact. These are mainly the relationship of Islam with the Greek Empire of Constantinople; the great trade routes which took the products of the east all over Europe and as far north as Scandinavia; the Islamic domination of Sicily; the Islamic domination of Spain and to a lesser degree, the Crusades. The exile of the Nestorians to Persia and the Exodus of Greek scholars after Justinian's persecution were amongst the first inspirations to Islamic scholarship. Greek Philosophy is the root of Islamic schools of thought,† as acknowledged by Al Jahiz of Basra: "Did we not possess the books of the ancients, in which their wonderful wisdom is immortalised and in which the manifold lessons of history are so dealt with, that the past lives before your eyes? Did we not have access to the riches of their experience which otherwise would have been barred to us, our share of wisdom would be immeasurably smaller, and our means of obtaining a true perspective meagre?"

It is not, therefore, surprising that the best exponents of Aristotelian theories are Muslim scholars most famous of all, Al-Kindi. Thinkers of Cordova translated Greek philosophers from Syria, and although the study of philosophy started at Baghdad, Islamic Spain became the centre of classical studies and English scholars such as Robert, the Englishman (the first to translate the Qur-án), Michael Scott, Daniel Morley and Adelard of Bath, flocked to Toledo in search of learning.

The Western world was greatly influenced by translations from Arabic into Latin, one of the best of Aristotle's commentators

being the Spanish Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averrhoes, 1198). Ibn Massara's Empedoclean theories greatly influenced religious thought in Europe. At a much earlier period another school of translations, that of Hunayn Ibn Ishaq Al-Ibadi and his nephew who travelled on purpose to Alexandria were to no small degree responsible for the revival of philosophy in Europe. To the school of learning of that period we owe the names of Thabit Ibn Qurra and Qusta Ibn Luqua, physicians, and Al-Razi, known as Rhazes, whose work *Al-Hawi* (comprehensive book) was translated into Latin under the auspices of Charles I. of Anjou.

It is difficult to sort out exactly what Islam owes to Constantinople and what Constantinople owes to Islam, as both were in close contact, friendly or otherwise. What the effect was on arts, of the first siege of Constantinople during Mu'awia's reign is little known, the Arab historian Tabari being silent on the point. Sicily played no small rôle in the spreading of Islamic knowledge and arts in Europe; it is in Sicily that Abdul Malik exiled many of his subjects who had revolted at Kairwan.

It is to Al-Idrisi that King Roger II. of Sicily entrusted the writing of a book on Geography, and the world map by Marino Sanuto (1321), dedicated to the Pope was a copy of an Arabic Map.

Frederic II. not only surrounded himself with Arabic scholars but even used a Saracen army against the Pope. As a matter of fact, during the Norman rule in Sicily, in the short space of two hundred years, a magnificent series of achievements in arts, sciences and literature was accomplished, where Islamic inspiration was the dominant keynote. When the Normans conquered Sicily they found, in addition to the native population, Greeks and Arabs, remains of Byzantine or Arab domination.

Greeks and Arabs were infinitely superior to the native population in culture. The Normans adopted Greek and Arabic traditions and most of the high officials belonged to one of the two races already mentioned, in this, Normans following the Achemenid Persians' examples.

The Crusades were a pretext to economic and social necessities at the time, the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 being a proof of that. Only to a small degree did they contribute in spreading Islamic culture. To the crusaders we owe the foundation of trading quarters by the Venetians and Genoese. To these traders we owe the importation into Europe of such things as sesame, maize, rice, lemons, apricots, shallots, etc., and carmine, lilac, alum, cloves, incense, aloes. Many names as "Muslin" (from Mosul), "Baldashins" or "Baldacco" (Baghdad), "Damasks" and "Damascenes" (Damascus), "Atlas" (Silk Satin), "Taffeta" (from Perra Tafich), Grenadine (Granada) and even "Atabi" or "Taby" are Arabic. Pepys mentions in his diary that "he wore his Taby silk waistcoat," and the name of "Taby" coat is derived from that epithet.

The diffusion of Arabic numerals is due to these traders, especially that blessing of mathematicians, the nought or *sifr*. And no smaller blessing was the foundation of the first hospital in Europe by Louis IX., Les Quinzevingts, after his return from the crusade (1254-60). In this he modelled it on the first hospital ever founded, that of Harún-Al-Raschid. It can be mentioned at this stage that all medical curricula up to the end of the sixteenth century were based on Avicenna's canon and on the writings by Rhazes, especially in Vienna and Frankfurt. The influence of Islam through trade, can be assessed by the fact that coins with Arab inscriptions are to be found in Russia, Scandinavia and most remote parts of Europe or Asia. Italian banks of Genoa, Pisa, Sienna, etc., used with the Byzantine gold coinage bearing Arabic inscriptions, the Saracenati, until Innocent IV. protested in 1249. In France, up to the end of the 13th century, Arabic gold coins with Hijra dating were used. The British Museum possessed a coin of King Ofa of Mercia with an Arabic inscription and, better still, an Irish cross with a central enamelled medallion bearing the inscription *Bi-ism-Allah*.

* Being the text of a lecture delivered at a meeting of the Muslim Society in Great Britain, held at 18, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on Saturday, April 19, 1943.

† We are afraid the picture is rather overdrawn here. The root was provided to these schools of thought by the Scriptures of Islam. The Greek or any other philosophy may be said to have supplied imagination and colour.—Ed., "I. R."

Many words such as "algebra," "cheque," "magazine," "admiral," "tariff," "arsenal," "alcove," "sofa," "mattress," "talisman" and even "baroque" are Islamic in origin. The Cordwainers Company owes its origin to Cordovan Leather.

PROFESSOR HECTOR O. CORFIATO, S.A.D.G.
(Professor of Architectural Design in the University of London)

From "The Islamic Review"

(To be continued)

"BE NOT RIGHTEOUS OVERMUCH"

THIS wise maxim has often occurred to me in thinking over the career of the marvellous youth Pascal; for perhaps no life exemplifies more clearly the evil results of neglecting the "Preacher's" advice, results pregnant with mischief not only to himself but also to the world at large. The Preacher was thinking of the harm the unco' guid would personally suffer; but in Pascal's case many others have felt it and may feel it for years to come.

It is possible that no human being was ever more highly gifted for mathematics and physics—to say nothing of other kinds of study—than Blaise Pascal. Everyone knows how, at the age of twelve, without any previous training, he discovered the thirty-second proposition of Euclid, and how, a little later, when mathematical theorems were presented to him, they came as propositions he had thought out before. At twenty-three he demolished Torricelli's famous theory that "Nature abhors a vacuum," and proved his case by directing an experiment on the Puy de Dôme. At almost the same time he was working on the theory of probability, and other branches of pure mathematics, with such effect that he has been regarded with but little exaggeration as the founder of Conic Sections. Everything, in fact, marked him out as the likely leader in years to come of mathematical and physical discoveries. What Galileo had achieved would be carried further and perhaps outdone; some even of Newton's work might have been anticipated. The great Descartes recognised his superlative ability.

Unfortunately, he fell under religious influences, and yielded himself, with his matchless ardour, to their spell. Three times he was, as the phrase goes, "converted," and there was no Ecclesiastes to keep him within bounds. After the first conversion he was good enough; after the second he was a little too good; after the third he was certainly righteous overmuch, with the sanctity that may have suited Francis of Assisi, but was out of place in a born physicist.

His religious friends may have been saintly, but they were assuredly fanatical and bigoted. As the result of a sermon by Father Singlin, he felt a kind of ecstasy in which he seemed to see the divine presence, and imagined that literally all his powers, all his thoughts, all his aims, must be given without reserve to God; and he took a cell in the monastery of Port Royal, which was then ruled by Father De Saci. Now De Saci (like Singlin but more strongly) held that philosophers and physicists were sinners, trying to discover what God intended to keep secret. Pascal maintained his ground for some time, but finally gave way, and devoted the whole of his energies to what, as he decided, was the only way in which God could be served—that is by neglecting reason and refusing to study the works of God. Henceforth, no mathematics and no physics. His *Pensées* are not scientific: his Provincial Letters, with all their amazing ability, have to do mainly with minute theological points on which the Jansenists differed from the Jesuits. "All Europe," says Macanlay, "read the Letters and laughed," but only a few learned anything, and that was suspected of heresy.

Pascal had few more years to live; but, had he not been righteous overmuch, those few would have given the world much of permanent value.

If Lucretius had seen this tragedy he might have added another story to illustrate his famous text—

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

E. E. KELLETT.

CHILDREN AND RELIGION

D. L. WEBSTER'S criticism of "Freethinking Father" in "The Freethinker" for January 6, 1946, needs further criticism. He may not be brave, and it may be that circumstances may have decided to shorten the length that he was fortunate to have reached.

Family responsibilities as a rule is the deciding factor allied sometimes to "self-preservation as well as protection of those who belong to us."

It has been said that not only does religion rule but so does also money and according to our pocket's contents, so we may be that much bolder in paving the way to freedom for our children.

But suffer poverty with sickness with your "friends" who become more conspicuous by their absence; and know as Freethinkers do the many odious channels through which the Agents of Jesus can cause further mental anguish.

That's been my experience.

Thirty years ago I became acquainted with Freethought and I've read "The Freethinker" ever since, and it has helped me to many years of research work through which I have become an avowed Atheist—on the active list; among the workers, ready at all times to debate openly or privately; doing my duty. But what about my children? I made up my mind before they arrived as to how best to fit them to grapple with religious questions, and certainly not by ignoring it. Philosophy has taught me to teach my children to behave themselves; to be helpful and sympathetic towards anyone if need be, irrespective of their "beliefs."

So I allowed them to be taught religion in the usual way in the common schools for the people because Freethought has taught me that if bishops cannot answer religious questions from their masters, how the dickens can my children answer mine? So much for the value of religious teaching.

The seeds of religious absurdities are usually already planted in the minds of parents and consequently passed on to their children in more ways than one—a very fertile continuity before it reaches the school for further instruction. The children of influential people as well as the poor are equally infected. Hence the importance of Freethinkers wherever they may be to muster as much courage as they can afford, and insist upon justice in understanding. To take advantage of the painstaking and expert literature that "The Freethinker" is constantly recommending if the desire is to become "well informed" and fit to meet the rascals of religion wherever they may be found. The object of the great lying Church is to keep you in a state of bewilderment and ignorance; so the task of the newcomer to Freethought is by no means easy.

Their task is to re-educate or re-adapt themselves for the duties of fair play and not foul.

Let us be encouraged by the lines of great poets: "That we need not fear any man whilst we can rest in ourselves to be true."

Don't be gulled by those folk you may meet who say they are well acquainted with Freethinkers' or Atheists' miserable and hopeless talk. They may be folk who are by no means fools and know far more about business and finance than they do about religion.

I recently met two workers and introducing "The Freethinker" as I have done for many years, the first one remarked, "Religion's not worth bothering about." This man had attended G. W. Foote's lectures, etc., etc., so he had evidently given up that task to learn Freethought thoroughly since the time that "fighter" died. I never had the pleasure to listen to him but I've read his thoughts on "The Star of Bethlehem" and he was the first editor of "The Freethinker."

Well, it's up to the greatest religious experts (?) to knock down the skittle of Freethought with skill if they'll only try. I asked the first worker whom I mentioned whether he thought the forty bishops in the House of Lords were worth bothering about financially; but this question touched upon the all-important item through which we live, and upon which most people are sadly ignorant. So I was able to at least reinterest my friend in what Freethought stands for, and the duty that each one of us owes to it.

Worker number two looked over my shoulder in the cafe, and seeing that I was reading "The Freethinker" asked if Cohen was still alive. I replied, and asked if he was interested in Freethought.

His reply was that we were "flogging a dead horse" and again I asked if he thought the forty bishops were really dead yet, reminding him that no doubt even they wished they could live on wind, but when money seems to be paramount, well, here's a chance for miracle workers to work like hell to bring gladness and joy and "peace on earth towards men."

But the education of daily workers is strictly limited to what some philosopher said "excessive work blunts the understanding" to find any time to re-educate themselves or enter the arena of Freethought. Our methods may differ in introducing Freethought, but so long as we "do it" we can rest assured we are paying tribute to the pioneers of the past.

TIMOTHY THOMAS.

CORRESPONDENCE

CHILDREN AND RELIGION.

Sir,—I read Mr. Baron's letter ("The Freethinker," January 27) with much pleasure.

I have often marvelled at the way in which writers in "The Freethinker" treat this as a simple question. Father has only to issue his fiat that children are not to receive religious instruction, and it will be carried out un murmuringly by mother and child. This is indeed wishful thinking. Mother, for example, may ask whether Freethinkers hold as a dogma that father is a dictator in the family, and mother's opinions on religion of no value. This question will be particularly difficult to parry if at the time of marriage father was not a Freethinker.

It is sometimes suggested that there is something craven in the conduct of a Freethinker who does not withdraw his child from religious instruction, but he may ask for some indulgence if that means much friction at home. After all, the father may come off lightest if he insists. The mother may resent it, as she probably has closer contact with the school authorities, and the child may not want the segregation which is inevitable daily if it is withdrawn.

All my three children, for the reasons given, have not been withdrawn. Not one has displayed any interest in religion.—Yours, etc.,

W. KENT.

"TO A GREAT SOLDIER."

Sir,—I would like to protest against the unfair and inaccurate statements made by Mr. Gould in his "odious" comparisons of Patton and Montgomery. I hold no brief for Christians, but at the same time I am not prepared to entertain such bigotry as apparently possesses Gould and so obscures his mental outlook as to tinge and distort his general assessment of a man's capacity and real worth.

Montgomery, he implies, lacked the personal bravery of Patton; the former keeping at "a safe place behind the lines," while the latter was "at the head of his men." I do not admit this; but even if for the sake of argument one does so—was it not the more praiseworthy, considering the supreme value to the whole campaign—rather than as a mere unit—that precautions should be taken to ensure Montgomery's safety? In my opinion it is the disgraceful imputation of a mean and petty mind. "Patton believed in the strength and skill of his men." Montgomery on all occasions expressed a similar belief. Referring to Montgomery as a "Puritan preacher," Gould continues: "It is no secret that his men all hated him for that." I deny this, entirely. I have contacted hundreds of soldiers under his command and have heard their highest expressions as to the solid worth of Montgomery's character, conduct, and military genius.

If Patton "slapped the face of a shell-shocked soldier" and adopted other unconventional methods, "what matter," says Gould. But, I would add, mere impetuosity, erraticism and tyrannical use of power are hardly desirable qualities. These were replaced in Montgomery by the attributes of humility, patience and unwearied concentration in the solution of military problems ahead. I do not wish to minimise the personal valour of Patton, yet I am convinced that historians, not biased as Gould by whether the man had or had not a religion, will record a true verdict by acknowledging and paying tribute to Montgomery's part in defeating the aggressors and thus removing some of the calamities of the human race.—Yours, etc.,

BEATRICE OXBURGH.

P.S.—I confidently expect the publication of above, as I know how bitterly correspondents have rightly complained through the medium of "The Freethinker," the ignoring by Joad and others of their letters to them. I am trusting that "The Freethinker" will not be guilty of similar conduct but will publish even if it does not agree with this letter.—B. O.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.: "Forerunners of British Rationalism." Conway Discussion Circle, Tuesday, 7 p.m., JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES: "Reason and Atomic Energy."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Belfast Secular Society (Lecture Hall, Old Museum Buildings, 7, College Square North).—Saturday, February 16, 8 p.m., FRANCIS J. CORINA: "Youth and the Future." Sunday, February 17, at Baker's Hall, 122, Upper North Street, 7-30 p.m., FRANCIS J. CORINA: "Freethought or Christianity?"

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Rev. DUDLEY RICHARDS: "Thus Saith the Lord."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Dr. C. A. SMITH: "That Patriotism is a Bad Thing."

Nottingham (Cosmopolitan Debating Society, University College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m., Mr. C. McCALL: "Materialism: A Scientific Philosophy."

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