

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVI.—No. 24

Sunday, June 16, 1946

Price Threepence.

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Ourselves and Others

THE present Archbishop of York is, to quote Dickens, "sly, devilish sly." In fact, to tell the undiluted truth, the high dignitaries of the Church have always, in every age, been distinguished as experts in the art of saying one thing and meaning another. There was, for instance, the way in which Christians handled those who were convicted of "blasphemy" in the good old days. After being tortured day after day—Hitlerite torture flourished in Christendom long before Hitler—the conclave of priests handed the condemned man over to the civil authorities—with the admonition that there must be no shedding of blood. The order was an indication that the heretic should be burned with green wood so that the death would not be too rapid. Aside from later inventions the early and medieval Churches could have given the men being tried in Germany a start and easily romp home.

Let us return to the Archbishop. Dr. Garbett is seriously disturbed over the disregard—among Christians—of the "marriage vow." In passing, I may say I do not believe that married life is worse today than it was a couple of centuries ago. Measuring the situation by the number of divorcees will not do. Divorce was at one time almost impossible for most people, and the Church was not upset by the married life of those days. The 17th and early 18th centuries did not pride themselves on *better* married lives, they were merely different—in some respects. There was more religious humbug, but married life went on, and the Churches did not complain.

Now Dr. Garbett is disturbed over the "disregard of the marriage vows," which is not greater than it was when the Church ruled. Moreover, so far as marriage goes there is, legally, in England no such thing as a religious marriage vow. Dr. Garbett knows that perfectly and his ignoring the fact shows that the artfulness and the disregard of truth in religious quarters is as strong as it ever was. "Those whom God hath joined," etc., has no legal meaning or value. There is no legal need for even the age-long ring. Even a marriage by the Archbishop in York Cathedral would count for nothing unless the church and Archbishop had been licensed by the secular powers. The Archbishop first connives at a civil marriage, and then cunningly suggests that it is the absence of religion that is responsible for the "misfits" in the civic world.

There is another feature which really makes one wonder whether the Archbishop is simple, or just clumsily artful. He marks with alarm the number of unhappy marriages, but without telling us whether the members who are so unhappy in their marriage have been married inside or outside a Church. If that were done we should be able to form some kind of a judgement as to the power of religious influences as against secular influences. But he offers us

a plan which—on the surface—will saddle the responsibility for ill-fits upon the Secular State, while placing all the successful ones only to the credit of the Church. This is his plan:—

"I myself believe that if all marriages were taken in a registrar office it would be easier for the Church of England to confine the subsequent use of its marriage service to those who are its own members and accept its teaching that marriage is a life-long union."

Once again I must say that whether a marriage is created inside or outside the Church makes no difference, the only legal marriage is the secular one, and the Church during a registration of marriage ceases to be a "sacred" building and the parson sinks, or rises, to the level of a secular person registering a secular contract. Nothing can prevent that. If the Church lacks a licence, or the parson lacks a licence the religious marriage is of no value whatever. There are still people who hold that our present monarch is not the legal King of England. But the law says nothing at all. King George will still draw his salary, and he will go on functioning as King. The descent of the Stuarts does not count. . . .

What is it then that the Archbishop wishes to bring about in the interests of better married lives? The reader has it before him, and one must confess the reply is "sly, devilish sly," and yet not very deep. Let us take cases. Suppose that in the course of a year there are, say, 10,000 divorcees with people who were married at a Registry Office, and only 500 married in a church. The Archbishop will point to the superiority of the Church. . . . But the Archbishop will not permit a religious service connected with a marriage in church until a certain time has passed. In plain words, the Archbishop says give me all the happy ones and we will call them Christians. The registrar will keep all the unhappy ones, and this will count to the discredit of the non-religious world. Was there ever a clearer case of "Heads I win, Tails you lose?" It is like a doctor who never loses a case because he treats only the perfectly healthy. It reminds one of the ancient Greek story of the priest who pointed to the gifts from those who had crossed the seas in safety. And the man said, "Where are the medallions of those who never came back?" The priests in different ages do not alter very much. But I am afraid that the Archbishop of York is making a grave mistake when he assumes that the people of today have learned nothing from their experience.

The Vicar and the Jolly Rogers

I have lived in Essex for over 50 years. Essex has some very beautiful scenery, and also a large number of very old churches. Their age may serve as an apology for their existence. But it is clear that so far as the Christian religion is concerned the rot has set in. So I was not surprised to find in an Essex newspaper an appeal for 5,000

"young clergymen." It is not the people who are asking for the clergymen, it is the clergy who are asking for the people. In fact, all over the country the religious leaders are appealing for more listeners. But the rot has set in, and it is not to be removed by 5,000 raw preachers.

A large number of factories have been established on the part of Essex nearest the river. The development of factories has been very great, and there has also been an attempt to provide various kinds of entertainment for the workers. Among these is a club for youth with the title of "The Jolly Rogers Club." I like that title, it reminds me of my early years and smacks of scenes of "derry-do." But it happens that the meeting place of the "Jolly Rogers" is attached to the Church, the use of it was granted by the Vicar. But the "Jolly Rogers"—that title alone is worth £5 of anybody's money—did not go to Church, and the Vicar retorted by ordering the boys to leave the church property. The Vicar was evidently not interested in the Club, and the order was clear—either come to church or clear out. The reason given by the Vicar was that "Most of the boys are definitely opposed to the Church," and he was frank enough to say that, "had they been merely apathetic to the Church he would not have minded it much." He was at least frank, more truthful than are most parsons in such a situation. But the "Jolly Rogers" were not to be frightened—what gang would have been with such a title? They declined to sell their freedom for a meeting place. In true Jolly Roger style, they pointed out, "Nothing was said about church-going in the original rules of the Club." It was clear that the Church had caught a tartar. The boys met determination with determination. They said, "We are fighting to keep the club together even if we have to meet in the park. . . . We will keep the name of Jolly Rogers wherever we may be." Now that is fine. We hope that other youth groups will cease playing into the hands of the clergy. Quite enough of this humbug of concern by the priesthood for the welfare of youth. We hope the "Jolly Rogers" will maintain their independence and keep their flag flying. If they need a little money to carry on we shall be pleased to assist. If others would insist on the same independence of character the country would be the better for it. We salute the "Jolly Rogers Youth Club."

War and Peace

A little while ago a question was raised in the House of Lords as to whether the control commissioners in Germany had ordered the complete destruction of German war memorials of the 1914-18 war in addition to the war that has just closed. The reply was given by Lord Latham. He said:—

"The occupying Powers were pledged to the complete elimination of Nazi and military influences and doctrines. In pursuance of this pledge the Allied authorities in Berlin, on May 13, signed a directive for the liquidation of German military and Nazi memorials and museums which tend to reserve and keep alive the German military tradition, to revive militarism or to commemorate the Nazi Party, or of such a nature as to glorify the instruments of war. The British representatives agreed that the operative date should be 1914, in deference to the strongly expressed wish of our Allies. Mementoes of articles

of merit and grave stones are to be spared, and certainly the British authorities interpreting this directive will not seek to move those memorials which consist of little more than a roll of the fallen."

I think that is, on the whole, good sound commonsense. The German people have been brought up to believe that the greatness of a nation depends upon military power and large "possessions," and that is just nonsense. No country has yet become really great in virtue of its military power. If we appreciate the lesson that is now before us as a consequence of war, the scantiness of food, the open exhibition of criminality, the development of house-breaking as an occupation, and other forms of degradation we shall—if we have any wisdom left—recognise that war for both victor and vanquished is a dangerous and demoralising occupation. It threatens the higher aspect of life. There are some things worse than war, but the certain truth is that you cannot have war without losing some of the finer aspects of civilised life. Victor and vanquished must pay the price for dislocating civilised existence. Six years of dislocation and limitation of freedom of thought and movement, the substitution of military law—properly said to be no law at all—will take longer than a generation to wipe away the influence of a world war. The loser will mood over the "might have been," the winner glorifying himself for the power displayed by himself over a broken enemy. If people cannot see this, then our civilisation is indeed built on a poor foundation.

In the circumstances, I think it is sound philosophy that if the Germans are ever to be brought back to a healthy civilised frame of mind it is necessary, and at all costs, to drive home the fact that modern war rapidly gets rid of whatever scraps of decency it may have had.

I agree that if the future is to atone for the past we must keep the minds of all people free from the belief that war can advance the higher forms of civilisation.

But then I lift my head, and my eyes fall on our daily papers and their accounts of the huge display of military strength on the land, on the sea, and in the air, all a tribute to man's power of destruction, and I wonder—?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

OTHER PEOPLE'S GODS

IV.

The God of Bernard Shaw

THE adventures of Bernard Shaw in search of God have led him from Atheism to Creative Evolution, a faith that causes him to give his Deity the name of the Life-Force. In many respects his god resembles that of Samuel Butler and that of Jesus Christ—which is high praise to give any god. No god of such kind can be, like most gods, utterly contemptible.

What converted Shaw from a convinced and aggressive Atheist to a vitalist appears to have been—judging by his own words—the horror of the concept of a mindless, purposeless universe engaged in a meaningless struggle for hogwash. As he truly says, when one thinks of that, one's heart "sinks into a heap of sand within," but so it does when one contemplates a butcher's slaughterhouse or an inoperable cancer, or the bomb of an heroic airman dropped near a cowardly babe in his cradle. Yet one does not replace these realities by fiction in one's mind because the heart sinks at these! However, Shaw violently retreated from Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, and wrote the preface and

play of "Back to Methuselah"—and in that preface and play you may find his God.

Of course this retreat of Shaw's is emotionalism. His conversion, like Saint Paul's, seems to be for a highly inadequate reason, but conversions generally are for reasons which seem adequate only to the victim of them and never to the cool, dispassionate spectator.

Shaw's God is not a person, not anthropomorphic. He is not the Jehovah of the Old Testament; the Ancient of Days, half-benevolent, half-dangerous, painted by Michael Angelo; the old Nobodaddy of Blake. He is a spirit, a purpose—if you can conceive such a thing apart from something animal, vegetable, or mineral, but having its being in them all, I suppose. Like the Prayer-Book God, he has neither "body, parts, nor passions." He works on Sundays, as well as week-days, unlike the Old One who didn't. He is to be worshipped by action (including word and thought) not by flattery, gifts, or deceit, like the Old One again. That is to say, in spirit and in truth.

We, like all created things, are the children of this spirit, therefore members of one another and unable to hurt or help another without helping or hurting ourselves or this Purpose. Shaw's God is not all-wise or all-powerful or all-loving: his method is one of trial and error; and he discards his mistakes, of which Mankind may be one. He is an Elan Vital like Bergson's: a Life-Force.

To many people Shaw's God must be one of the more attractive deities because, quite clearly, in many respects he is credible to a modern mind since he conforms to what we experience in life. By postulating him one can explain a lot. But so one can by postulating the Ruler of the Universe as a Spirit of Evil or a President of the Immortals sporting with mortals. And Shaw's God is a useful god. By believing in him one has a reason for living on, for being virtuous and public-spirited; that is, for being one of the elect, a spiritual aristocrat. If one must have a god (and it seems that many weak and weary folk need one, as a child needs a toy, a young girl a sweetheart, a cripple his crutches, and senility its chimney-corner) one might do worse than borrow Shaw's as Jacob stole Laban's. Failing one's ability to invent one's own—which most people manage to do without realising it!

As a master, Shaw's God is no less difficult to serve completely than Jesus Christ's. One must serve him faithfully, not on Sundays nor on one's knees alone, but all the days of one's life, and sitting and standing too. He has no artificial rewards or punishments of heaven or hell, except the heaven or hell within us and the ones we create not merely hereafter but here and now.

Neither Bernard Shaw nor Oscar Wilde have ever been considered as shedding new light upon Jesus Christ. Yet I think both these Irish playwrights do—and very valuable light too. Shaw's idea of "the great change" in Jesus which transformed a sane and interesting man into a lunatic believer in his own god-head, becoming arrogant, uncivil and abusive, and virtually committing suicide, is novel, plausible, and thought-provoking. So is Wilde's idea of Jesus as artist, telling the young man to give all to the poor—but not for the sake of the poor but for the young man's own good. It is not the first time that "sinners" have got nearer to Jesus than the orthodox, and any Christian cleric who could make Jesus credible and alive as these two writers can would have an avid congregation. Also he would be unfrocked as a heretic, poor wretch!

It is easy for Shaw, in expounding his God, to use many of the old Christian phrases about him.

Shaw, by the way, is no Christian: his views on the Atonement and Resurrection are heretical, but he accepts much of Christ's teaching as common sense must. He can accept a Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one God obviously, and see "the whole Creation groaning and travailling" towards some "divine far-off event," some "Beyond" as his Lilith puts it, which is "enough." Vague and far from enough—a hard-headed critic

might say. But perhaps Man will progress through Super-Man to union or identity with God. This is "as far as Thought can reach." But is it?

Shaw does not pretend completely to know his own God—and therefore do not let me pretend to. But I hope I have given an honest introductory account of Shaw's phantasm which is interesting enough to deserve acquaintance at first-hand in Shaw's own writings.

We are all children in the dark—and terrified of the darkness before and after. But Shaw with the heart sinking into a heap of sand is like the imaginative child, who, with the desperate bravery of its cowardice, insists on inventing an Adult Companion, a Father who is there when he is not! He has "found it necessary to invent him" as Voltaire said. But there are stronger spirits who find it unnecessary, as well as undesirable, to give themselves or others a dose of fiction. They secrete their own courage and do not rely upon phantasms of the brain. Such hearts do not sink into sand but harden into rock before the Medusa-spectacle of the problem of human helplessness in a universe of utter indifference.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

GO BACK TO GOD!

ALL the Churches, for once, are united. They are united in informing a not-too-willing-to-learn world that the only way to secure international peace is to return to God. (Show me the way to go home!) But as Nazis, Fascists, Yanks, Frenchmen, Englishmen and many, many more were all fighting for Christianity, regardless of whose side Christ was on, I fail to see how we can have gone away from Him.

Surely, too, there is an element of the doubtful in this plea to return to the Lord. None of those to whom the invocation is addressed have been to see the great divinity, and from that angle I defy even Donald Soper to tell us how it is humanly or immortally possible to return to a person (!) of whom we have no dependable knowledge and in support of whose being there is not the minutest scrap of evidence.

Many statesmen of the past century have said they are following the lead, the teachings and the ideals of Jesus Christ. They have led us into racial warfare, brutality in its crudest form, and into an innumerable string of minor and major European wars. BUT as they have only been following Christ (and we have their own word for it that they were) surely their Leader is to be blamed for the trouble they have caused. (One scapegoat is as good as the next.) Yet these great Churchmen have the insufferable cheek and audacity to get up and tell us to return to God!

They cannot produce Him, and even Tojo could show us Hirohito; they have only a collection of books, the authors of which could have given lessons to the authoress of "Forever Amber," to "prove" his existence. And we can only secure international peace by going back to something we can't see, hear, or believe in!

As for me, I see the choice as being one between evil-goodness and good-evilness, no choice at all. When my time comes I shall return to a gentleman to whose care many Christians have already committed me—I shall return to the Devil.

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

Pamphlets for the People

What is the Use of Prayer? Deity and Design. Did Jesus Christ Exist? Agnosticism or . . . ? Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live. Atheism, Freethought and the Child. Christianity and Slavery. The Devil. What is Freethought? Must We have a Religion? Morality Without God. Gods and their Makers. The Church's Fight for the Child.

Price 2d. each.

Postage 1d. each.

ACID DROPS

Concerning the election in Italy. It was widely stated in the Press that the Pope had threatened anyone who voted for the Communists would be consigned to eternal damnation. We repeat that all the papers noted the threat, but not one of the papers we saw had the courage to protest against this interference of the papacy. We may also take it that the same threat will comprise any Catholic voting for Communism. We are not championing any political form. We are only calling attention to the dumbness of the Press and the Government with this interference of the papacy in what should be a proper vote from all concerned. The Roman Church is a serious threat to freedom of thought and action wherever it exists.

The old saying that when rogues fall out honest men get their dues is illustrated by a passage in "The Protestant Times," issued in Liverpool. In a recent issue it said: "Many people are astonished at the way the Governments of Great Britain and America lend themselves to the wishes of the Vatican, but when we consider that the British Civil Service is packed with Roman Catholics we cease to wonder." We have for long pointed out the manner in which Roman Catholics are placed in key positions, and we again point out the scandalous and impudent threat of the Pope that Christians who vote for Communists may be excommunicated—which is one of the most terrible institutions that can be used—to Catholics. The Allies might well have pulled up the Pope for his outburst. We confess that the most powerful of all representatives of Fascism could hardly act different from the way he did.

Once again we must hand it to the Roman Church for some striking publicity. The Vatican has established a "hierarchy" on a grand scale for China. Headed by Cardinal Tien, who is the first Chinaman to get the red hat, 20 archbishops and 79 bishops have been appointed there, and there are as well 138 vicariates and prefectures. Out of 450,000,000 Chinese, there are 4,000,000 Catholics, and they are bamboozled by many high-sounding titles such as making Cardinal Tien "Vicar Apostolic of Tsing-tao and titular Bishop of Ruspe" as well as "Archbishop of Pekin." We wonder what the Vatican would think of the Chinese Government establishing a Confucian Hierarchy in Rome, with some Confucian priest made Grand Cham of the Vatican, as well as Confucian Mandarin of St. Peter's? Wouldn't there be a divine row? But the Chinese had got through religion, to a very considerable extent, before Christianity was heard of. And the chance of China becoming Christian is as likely as the Christian Churches becoming lovers of fair play in religion.

Mr. E. H. Mander, Headmaster of Halesowen, "protests against teachers being presented as Atheists and Agnostics." We are afraid that this means he does not want teachers in his school to be unbelievers in Christianity. And that is at the same time a promise of intolerance. In action it means that many of those who are in his school will be invited to be dishonest in expression, and end to some degree a less effective teaching. But the flight from Christianity, which Mr. Manders dreads, will continue.

Dr. H. G. Wood, Professor of Divinity, also rejects the decline of believers in religion, but he says teachers had been misrepresented. But he does claim that "there is a considerable breakdown of ordinary morality." Of course there has been a lowering of morals and always will be when a longish war takes place. For one ounce of good that comes from war there is a full stone of evil. There is no need to prove it, it is all round us. In war men steal when they can, lie when it is profitable and forget the quality of civil life in the excitement of war. Christianity has never prevented these phases of life, and it never will. There is a great lesson to be learned from it, but it will not come through flashy displays and parades. We wonder what Mr. Wood has ever done really to teach people the meaning of morals?

It is astonishing how interested people have grown over the discovery of the Atomic Bomb. This was not due to it being another step in man's understanding of nature, but simply because it killed so widely and so certainly. Even then the fact that it killed a number of Japanese people did not bring satisfaction.

Neither did the fact that the first complete trial of the bomb was brought about by the joint working of the U.S.A. and Britain—both of whom may fairly claim that the majority of the people of the two countries are Christian. Any formal regret that so many Japanese were killed by a single blow was drowned by the fact that the bomb might come to this country. The bomb has a searching effect.

But the bomb is here and it will stop, and when war comes again it is certain to be used. Christianity has never stopped war, it has sanctified it. In the days when "Knights were holy" the man before he became a full-fledged knight spent a day at the altar praying for God to guide him and after he had become "godified" his first proof of God being on his side was to seize a castle and run off with the daughter or wife of another knight. If he succeeded God had helped him. If he was not successful then he did some more praying to get some worthy conquest. Seventy-five per cent. of these knights of old would have been, by scientific examination, labelled as of the criminal cast, and likened to the American gang of criminals.

To get back to our bomb. The bomb kills, if it fails in that it is of no use. It is not a thing of beauty nor can it be trusted in the hands of one nation more than in the hands of another. War has always had that aspect. The shaking of hands was always the clasping of the right hand, and the right hand was the sword hand, and each one grasped the hand of the other to secure safety. That, after all, expresses the confidence of each in the other. The Russian leaders do not appear to trust England, and there are plenty of well-placed Christians in this country who offer open enmity to Russia as evidence that God is still with "us." So if we wish to find the value of Christianity think of the atomic bomb and of the situation of the world of to-day.

The Bishop of Chester warns us that food is getting scarce. He also adds that it is our duty to obey the Government and not to complain when food is really hard to get. That is all that the Bishop can do to help us out of a very grave situation, and one which may grow worse before it gets better. But we would remind him that God did once send birds carrying food for one of his favourites. And his own son once fed a multitude of people with a handful of bread and fishes, and had more food when the feast was over than when it started. Now why can he not repeat now what he did so easily in the East? Or was the whole game just a hoax?

Canon Anthony, Vicar of Lowdam, Notts., explains in a Saturday thought why things do not happen as we like. For example: A little while ago the fruit was looking very healthy, the priest had prayed for it. People went to bed happy and contented. But in the morning there came a frost and the fruit was ruined. Outsiders might well imagine that God was having a game with them. But the Canon was equal to the situation. He explained that the weather had killed one lot of products but there was a better growth of something else. It looks as though God will never want fools to protect him against the onslaught of common sense.

The Bishop of Liverpool also contributes to the religious aspect of the food shortage. He says it is our duty as Christians to support the line the Government has taken. That may be good or bad counsel, but we should like to know what bearing that has on belief in the Christian religion, and where does obedience to the Government come in? Perhaps some ardent Christian will explain.

Cardinal Griffin wants to get rid of all divorce. Why? Only because the Roman Church does not allow it—unless they are persons in good positions and with wealth. But what do the leaders of the Church, the archbishops and bishops, and priests, etc., know about married life and the conditions that give ground for divorce? The Cardinal advises that husband and wife should be kind to each other, but with many complex separation is the best thing that can happen. It is time these shaven-headed bachelors held their tongue where marriage and divorce are concerned.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.
Telephone No. Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 from Mr. J. Humphreys to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

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

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

Lecture notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

Time and circumstances prevent our giving in this issue of the "Freethinker" a full report of the Conference of the National Secular Society. There was a good gathering at the morning and afternoon sessions. A list of the delegates present will be given next week. The public meeting in the evening was an unqualified success in spite of the difficulties caused by the V-Parade, and it was pleasant and inspiring to see again so many familiar faces as interested as ever in the cause for which we stand. The Executive's Report will also appear next week.

One of our daily papers said the other day, with an air of wisdom, that what rightminded Churches want is "simple Bible teaching." That is quite wrong. What the Churches want is simple pupils. Having got that they will quite easily turn children out satisfactory Christians. The important thing is to keep the pupils simple. Another one of our Sunday papers let loose the profound discovery that we could not understand English history if we abandoned Christianity in teaching pupils. We agree. How could pupils understand what has taken place in English history if nothing was said of witch hunting, or men being burned alive because they differed from the authorised religion of the time? How could children understand the quarrels that took place over religion or the imprisonment of men and women for the fantastic crime of blasphemy if religion was ignored? It is not the Atheist who wishes children to grow up without knowledge of Christianity, but he wants to have the truth about religion not the fantastic mass of lies that make up Christian history.

It is a curious thing but religion is the only subject that regards intolerance as sacred. Men differ on the validity of scientific theories or on political opinions, on taste in art, on the regulations of social life and many other things. Religion is the only force in which bitter intolerance manifests itself as a cardinal virtue. Men and women count it as something to be proud that they never read anti-Christian books or listened to anti-religious opinions. Religious virtue thus becomes a mixture of stupidity and pigheadedness. Intolerance is essentially a religious virtue. The last first-rate bigot will die only when the last godite bites the earth.

No one more enthusiastically insisted that the archaeological discoveries in Palestine and nearby countries helped to prove the truth of the Bible than the late Sir Charles Marston; yet in a notice on his recent death the "Church Times" refers to his enthusiasm as "sometimes embarrassing to distinguished archaeologists," which is a very disingenuous way of saying that

his "proofs" of Bible truth from their discoveries did not exactly fit the facts. The real truth is, of course, that archaeology has never given us any proof whatever of the existence of any of the better known Bible characters. They are just myths.

On Saturday, June 15, the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will hold a whist drive at 38, St. John Bright Street, at 7 p.m. Tickets, which include refreshments, are 2s. each and it is hoped that all members will help to make the social side of the branch's work successful.

It is very regrettable that those who prepare speeches for Princess Elizabeth did not avoid such nonsensical pieces as formed part of her speech in the Albert Hall gathering: "What we owe to God's guidance." She should be taught to remember that the people of this country are a very mixed lot where belief in God is concerned. If she is herself wide awake she must think that we are making God responsible for some nasty things as well as nice ones. If and when the Princess mounts the throne her subjects will be all kinds of people, and it may be better to praise them for what they do as human beings instead of putting their deeds down to a mythical deity.

Mr. George Mathers, the Lord Commissioner of the Church of Scotland, says that "few of our grandfathers would have understood the sense of realism and absence of cant which marks the Church to-day." Really, we haven't noticed the absence of cant in the Churches. The cant has just taken another form. But the cant is there, and the humbug is greater. It must be when we pretend to believe something which to-day is given the lie by all the science and scientific philosophy at our disposal.

A few weeks back we called attention to one of the best plays, certainly the one most needed, that has appeared for some time. The play was entitled "The Pick-up Girl," the author was a lady living in the U.S.A. where the play had a good run. The subject was not a pleasant one. It was not of the kind that the B.B.C. would introduce to anyone under eighty-five, or to any Christian who might see the reflection of his own mind. The play appeared here at the Lindsey Theatre Club. It was enthusiastically attended and several West End theatres are after it. But for public exhibition the Lord Chancellor must give his sanction. His is a curious job, but a man must live even at the cost of good plays. And to justify his examination he bans, first, that fearful word which is never heard apart from medical men in closed rooms, "Abortion." (If we are not mistaken Mr. Churchill used that expression of Hitler). Then he took the following (the scene is a juvenile court):—

Judge: "What was the defendant wearing when you entered the room?"

Policeman: "Mr. Jenkins was wearing a ribbed undershirt. . . Elizabeth was wearing nothing."

The Lord Chamberlain altered it to: "They were both wearing nothing." On receiving this, Mr. Peter Cotes, who is responsible for the production of the play, cabled to the author, Miss Shelly, who promptly replied that not a word was to be altered. We congratulate all concerned to have refused the insult offered by the Lord Chamberlain although we expect the poor man thinks he is keeping people "pure."

Prayers have been offered to remind God that the people living in the Lake areas are sadly in want in rain. Judging what the weather has been like in our districts, we should imagine that he has got things mixed. Perhaps some of the rain that we have was intended for another area. What an outcry there would be if water companies did not manage things better than God seems to be doing it.

What an upside down place this world is. In this country there is a glaring want of believers to keep the Churches busy. In Scotland the Church is crying out for ministers to go abroad for the benefit of those believers who need ministers. In these islands the clergy are shouting for recruits to give them something to do. God seems to have dates and places nicely mixed.

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

"WHAT'S in a name?" Juliet asked, and went on to say, "That which we call a rose, by any name would smell as sweet." When Shakespeare put these words in the mouth of his heroine, a young girl of 14 years, ignorant and inexperienced, he probably knew what he was about. Shakespeare, surely, was aware of the value of a name. For example, consider the title of the tragedy from which the quotation is taken and substitute, say, "John and Agnes" for "Romeo and Juliet." The illusion of the romance of soft Italian skies would vanish. Herbert Farjeon, author and critic, said that the play, "Julius Cæsar," would not have been acted so often had the title been "Brutus." There is more in a name than meets the eye—or ear.

We form a mental picture of the people unknown to us by their names. We do this unconsciously. Do we not anticipate more from Rosemary than from Ruth, from Hector than from Horace? The names that have become famous have a stately and eloquent ring. One calls to mind the outstanding achievements of Abraham Lincoln, Marcus Aurelius, William Shakespeare, Napoleon Buonaparte, Alexander Pope, Maximilien Robespierre, Grace Darling, Mary Wollstonecraft, and so on. It is observed also that a great name is often associated with a place, the name of which is as appropriate as it is harmonious: Sir Walter Scott with Abbotsford; George Washington with Mount Vernon; Horatio Nelson with Burnham Thorpe; William Shakespeare with Stratford-on-Avon; Thomas Carlyle with Ecclefechan; William Wordsworth with Rydal Mount.

Actors, authors, musicians and singers know the value of a name. J. H. Brodribb became famous as Henry Irving, and S. Clemens as Mark Twain. John Rowlands became the celebrated explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, and Charles F. Browne as the writer, Artemus Ward. It would appear that William Jones and Alfred Smith commence life heavily handicapped, but if fortunate in climbing the ladder of fame the owner of an uninspiring and unassuming name straightway adopts a mouth-filling pseudonym. To the lady novelists of bygone years the question, "What's in a name?" was important, but for another reason. The lady novelist was obliged to conceal her identity as it was considered unbecoming in a lady to write books. Hence Mary Ann Evans became "George Eliot" and Charlotte Brontë wrote under the name of "Currer Bell." Emily Brontë chose the name of "Ellis Bell" and the French novelist, Marie Beyle, became "Stendhal." Both Dickens and Thackeray had pen names at an early stage in their careers, thus reversing the usual procedure. But these eminent novelists knew the value of a name when applied to certain characters in their novels. The results, both appropriate and amusing, are discerned when studying the characters of Pecksniff, Gradgrind, Chuffey, Pickwick, Chuzzlewit, Cheeryble, etc., appearing in Dickens works, and of Becky Sharp, Jeames de la Pluche, Foker, Altamont, Dobbin, Tusher, etc., in Thackeray's novels.

To return from fiction to fact. The Puritans distinguished themselves by their fantastic choice of names in their endeavour to throw off all semblance of the world and acquaintance with worldly things. Their record is unsurpassed in the history of names: Praise-God Barebones, Glory-be-to-God Pennyman, Hew-Agag-to-pieces-before-the-Lord Robinson, and Man-is-born-to-trouble-as-the-sparks-fly-upward Ireton. Probably it was a Puritan who called his dog "Moreover," from the Biblical text: "Moreover, the dog, came and licked his hands." This story is paralleled by the proud parents who insisted—to a bewildered curate—that the name of the child was "Sirs," and that it was a scriptural name. When pressed for proof the parents triumphantly referred to the verse: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved." It is not recorded whether the curate baptised the child as requested.

Individuality in names is to be welcomed, despite the fact that it is often held that people are snobs who add or alter a letter in a surname. There is no reason why a man should not alter

Smith to Smythe, or why J. H. Brown should sign himself J. Hayward Brown to distinguish himself from a multiplicity of Browns.

The practice of giving children two "first" names was unknown in England before the reign of the Stuarts, and was rarely adopted down to the time of the Revolution, and did not become common until the period of the Hanovers. Surnames cannot be traced farther back than the tenth century. Their origin is simple enough. So long as persons bore only single names there might be 50 or more persons of the same name in every little community. Hence there gradually grew up the habit of adding a distinguishing epithet commonly noting some personal peculiarity, place of birth, residence, trade, etc. Such names as Brown, Black, Grey would denote, perhaps, colour of hair; Long, Short, Little from a bodily conformation; Noble, Rich, Earl, from a station in life; Archer, Fletcher, Smith, from a trade or occupation; and English, Scott, Ireland, from country of origin. Nowadays a child may be burdened with as many as five, and even six, names. As a mark of respect to relatives and for other reasons the names become strung out to an absurd degree. It is possible that this practice may supply one answer to the question, "What's in a name?" A legacy?

There are many instances of coincidences which have determined the linking of the name of a person with his business or profession. What better name could have been devised for Mark Lemon, a former editor of "Punch?" Gounod derives his name from garlan, to sing. Hugo signifies intelligence. The name of Victor Hugo is particularly appropriate, for here we have a victorious intelligence! One can understand how an obscure Corsican born with such a name as Napoleon Buonaparte might have conquered the world.

A parent was accustomed to indulge in little homilies when addressing his child. He would repeat his son's name, and add with pride, "There's a name to live up to!"

S. GORDON HOGG.

A NURSERY RHYME

The original foundation of the following nursery rhyme is somewhat curious, but seems ridiculous and far-fetched viewed in the light of modern ways of life:—

(No. 53)—Robin and Richard were two pretty men,
They lay in bed till the clock struck ten,
Then up starts Robin and looks at the sky;
Oh! Brother Richard, the sun's very high, etc.

(Coll. Dutch: Robb'in hand rije schie harrd, W'eer toe Pipe rete t'hijc mihenne, T'll laeye in bijeed, T'ijle de Kloche strake t'Henne, etc.)

"The Priest once admitted to the Farmer's house, there's a stop to all natural order in it. If the master of it is married and passive (hen pecked), the Priest is sure to want the Mistress all to himself (for his use; in reference to his power over the female as the father confident of all her inclinations, peccadillos and motives of action). Bound down by the strict rule of their order over burning desire the man of cloth betakes himself to the family of the henpecked husband. The husband is a cuckold in a few moments, should the Confessor secure admittance!

"The mistress on her part regards this mad fellow as a piece of good fortune to her (as a good thing, a lucky hit). Who the resulting offspring is to belong to, the rule of the law has decidedly fixed (proles sequitur nuptias). The child, as the law rules it, is that of the Industrious One. (Cloddy, the Saxon.) Perceiving yourself the object of sneering gossip, you are looked upon as a fool by all your neighbours.

"Without hesitation, Cloddy, in a rage, packs off the man of the chalice (Priest) to the other world (sends him to eternity; puts an end to him for ever). We must have a finish of this curse to society, let the whole race of the surplice (Monk, Friar) be sent hence; and let there be no squabbling about it, so do it at once."

E. H. S.

CORRESPONDENCE

"THE QUALITY OF MERCY."
SIR,—Anyone who gives a "roseate picture" of life under a long sentence of penal servitude is deficient in imagination, and judges, in particular, become hardened through their terrible tasks.

The treadmill and the crank have indeed gone into the chamber of horrors, but were working within the lifetime of many persons still living, and were defended in their day, or perhaps rather, tolerated, through popular ignorance and indifference. But, as Mr. McCall rightly says, "Our attitude towards crime is still far from being either rational or humane." Prisons affect people very differently. Thus, though they have been greatly improved, a certain number of men commit suicide every year through fear of going before a criminal court, and, in a prison, the most elaborate precautions are always taken to prevent suicide.

The modern forms of torture are mainly mental. In prison, there is a "vile repose" which withers the hearts and minds of prisoners, and even of warders, and works no remedy.—Yours, etc.,

TAB CAN,

Author of "A History of Penal Methods."

A HACKNEYED PHRASE

SIR—All of us at one time or another have had dimmed into us the well-known and hackneyed phrase, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat."

It is high time that such a phrase and the popularly described belief in it was discarded from now on, especially amongst fellow Freethinkers.

Actually it is a popular misquotation from Saint Paul. The correct wording should really and truly be: "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." (It is taken from Thessalonians II, iii. 10.) Saint Paul was, at the time of this writing, addressing a small body of Christian converts somewhere in Thessalonica, where it appears that some of the people to whom he was speaking were evidently making rather a nuisance of themselves; because in the very next verse it is written, "For we hear there are some which walk among you disorderly and working not at all, but are busybodies." He was apparently engaged in giving instructions to a persecuted religious minority during the very early age of hand-labour. Saint Paul continued his address by telling the assembly, in other words, to "watch their step." Saint Paul had never seen a modern power-station, an automatic lathe, nor a power-driven loom, or anything of the marvels that are commonplace amongst us today, therefore it is absolutely ridiculous to continue to quote his words as though they were addressed to the 20th century.

To apply to modern men the very text of such an address would simply have to be re-written to read: "If people cannot get money to buy, it is useless producing food to eat." This, you will see is quite a different state of affairs, brought about by the introduction of the Mechanical Revolution of about 100 years ago, plus the endless cycle of ingenious inventions with their consequent improvements or adaptations that have followed in their wake.

In peace time plenty for all does really exist. A certain American industrialist, speaking in 1937, said the following weighty words: "If an engineer-dictator over industry could be appointed and given complete control over all raw materials, machinery and trained labour, he could flood, smother, and bury the whole of the people under an avalanche of goods and services such as no Utopian dreamer ever imagined."

Later on I will give more facts to emphasise and develop this train of thought, which should be digested by every one of us interested in creating an era of abundance in an artificial world of scarcity.—Yours, etc.,

Ed. H. SIMPSON.

MATERIALISM RESTATED, by Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

GOD AND THE CO-OP. Will Religion Split the People's Movement? By F. J. Corina. Price 2d.; Postage 1d. 12 copies 2s. post free.

OBITUARY

EMILY WATTS.

We regret to announce the death of Emily Watts which took place in her 58th year after a long illness. She was a sincere Freethinker and interested in the Socialist and Co-operative Movements. The general progressive views prevailing in her domestic circle made a material contribution to the happiness of her home. To the surviving husband and son we offer sincere sympathy in their great loss.

The remains were cremated at the Islington Crematorium, Finchley, North London, where before an assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S.

R. H. R.

ARTHUR E. POWELL (Johannesburg).

Mrs. Biddy Powell, of Rosebank, Johannesburg, has suffered a grievous loss by the death of her husband, Arthur E. Powell, which took place on May 13. Their married life was passed in the closest of companionship in which freedom, understanding, and loyalty prevailed, and their golden wedding would have been celebrated on June 5. Both were longstanding members of the National Secular Society and regular readers of "The Freethinker." Our sincere sympathy goes out to the widow in her great loss, and by his death we suffer the loss of a faithful friend and supporter of our movement over many years. The remains were cremated and a Secular Service was read by a friend.

R. H. R.

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, 4 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., MESSRS. E. C. SAPHIN, J. HART and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., H. L. BEALES, M.A.: "The English Middle Class."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Rationalist Association (Hope and Anchor, Edmund Street).—Tuesday, June 18, 7 p.m., Mr. GERALD BUNN: "Looking Forward with Glances Backward."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute).—Sunday, 7 p.m. A Freethought demonstration. Several speakers.

Council for Investigation of Vatican Influence and Censorship (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, London, S.W.1, opposite St. James' Underground Station).—Friday, June 14, at 7 p.m. Subject: "Menace of Catholic Action." Speakers: F. A. RIDLEY, REV. A. ROBERTSON.

A PIOUS PROFESSOR

A VERY popular type of book today is the one which apparently grants all the Freethinker's assertions against religion and yet apparently demonstrates that religious beliefs are essential to man's well being. This is the case with a recent work entitled, "Civilisation, Science and Religion" (Pelican Books, A. 135) by A. D. Ritchie, Professor of Philosophy at Manchester University, a work which covers a large area in a small space and must inevitably suffer; but which, in my opinion, has worse defects than this. It is also one of the many books which seeks a way out of present-day problems by an historical approach.

It is true that the author denies any attempt "to prescribe for the ills of society," his job being "to sketch the history of a tradition." But he does think that we can learn from "man's history of partial success and partial failure," and the lesson—as he sees it—is that: "For a standard of values and a criterion to distinguish progress in civilisation from regress we can look to Christian tradition only." Thus the solution, such as it is, is once again the same as that reached in numerous other works of a similar type, and its unsatisfactory nature can be clearly demonstrated.

Professor Ritchie confesses that Christianity brought no "new ethical code" or "new social policy," Jesus not being "a Galilean Confucius or a first-century socialist," and, he continues: "Indeed, there is very little in the moral teaching of the New Testament that is not taken from the Law and the Prophets, and that is not to be paralleled in Stoic or Platonic philosophy. There is in Christian moral teaching a new method of approach and the emphasis is different, but these things are secondary." Accepting this statement, I ask myself what is the value of Christianity in our present plight. Surely, with the world in such a sorry mess, the two things most urgently needed are a "new ethical code" and a "new social policy." Neither of these can be supplied by the Christian religion—it brought neither when it first made its appearance so we can hardly expect them now. What it did bring which was so advantageous was the news "that though of our own initiative we always fail and generally fail badly, we need not depend on our own initiative, for God is ready to help." That was the first part of the Christian "message." The second portion of "good news" was that Christ "had overcome death." And a Professor of Philosophy is prepared to write nonsense like this in 1945, treating it, mind you, with due respect! Evidence, do you ask for, you sceptical, unbelieving readers of "The Freethinker?" Such evidence was "not promulgated by means of documentary or other material evidence, such as would be produced before a court of law or a commission of inquiry by scientific experts." Then, with sublime understatement, Professor Ritchie says: "Probably no such evidence existed." (My italics.) Anyway, how could you require concrete evidence of the resurrection? The evidence for their faith was "the disciples themselves; their lives given for their fellows, their incredible labours, their joy that rose above all suffering."

If this is a sample of philosophical reasoning, then it is time we took Woolsey Teller's advice to "ditch the philosophers." Even taking the above description of the disciples' behaviour as being accurate, it is obviously no evidence for their faith, but only evidence that they held that faith strongly—one could say with truth, fanatically. And a fanatically-held belief is not necessarily true. Men have believed in the most foolish things and even given their lives for them, but this has no bearing upon the truth of those beliefs. "It is no use quoting against this the worst things the worst Christians have done," says the Professor, and I agree with him while on the question of truth or falsity of belief, but I would like to repeat that the good things they have done constitute no argument either.

He is determined to stick to his "living witnesses," however, and it seems that these become his "tradition" to the present

day, for he admits again that we have no further material evidence concerning these matters. Matters which, I suggest, are of extreme importance to Christians. He owns, too, that "Christians have never been in complete agreement from St. Paul's day till now," a fact which appears to cast some doubt upon the value of Revelation, and which is also rather damaging to the aforementioned "tradition." Though this may not perturb Professor Ritchie, it might puzzle some of his readers. So might the—surely blasphemous—suggestion that Jesus Christ was "liable to errors of judgment," otherwise, "He could hardly have chosen Judas Iscariot to be one of the Twelve Apostles." It is "monstrous" to suppose that Jesus knew Judas would betray Him—it would mean that His relations with the Twelve "were based on deception the whole time." No! He must have been "mistaken" about Judas, or "the story in the Gospels would be nonsense."

C. McCALL

(To be concluded)

ADVICE TO PARENTS

Listen, Mothers, Fathers, all—
 When the parson pays a call
 Asking why you don't let Freddie
 Go to Sunday School—Be ready!
 Tell him it's against your will
 Soiling infant minds with swill.
 Fancy telling Life's beginners
 They are miserable sinners!
 Little toddlers scarcely able
 Yet to say their Twice-time's Table
 Hear the parson's choicest bit
 From the Book of Holy Writ,
 'Telling of God's awful ire;
 Burning in eternal fire—
 All who do not bow to him,
 (Parson's looking really grim!)
 Then by way of lighter fare
 Wholesale slaughter is their share—
 Hearing how this God above
 Slew the first-born in his love.
 Babies butchered! What a theme
 For giving them a nightmare dream!
 This is followed by a Hymn
 Of praise and thanks—a pretty whim!—
 To One so gentle, tender, kind,
 What stuff to feed the infant mind!
 O what twaddle! O what trash!
 A God of Love who loves the lash!
 Let no child of yours be caught
 By such teachers. Have him taught—
 Not from such blood-thirsty pages,
 Relics of the Darkest Ages—
 But from Man's enlightened mind;
 Have done with superstition blind.
 Take him in the parks and fields,
 Let him learn what Nature yields.
 Let him breathe the air that's free—
 Not poisonous Divinity!

W. H. WOOD.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.