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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Origin of Parsons

THINGS are not always what they seem. For instance, there is a famous saying which comes from a comedy of ancient Rome. One of the characters is noted for his listening to private conversations. On being rebuked the offender retorts: "I am a man and all that is human is welcome to me." This is obviously sarcastic on the part of the author, and reflects little that is good in the nature of the speaker. Yet it has become a very famous saying, and one may safely say that many sayings have achieved immortality in the same way. Men do not always mean what they say, neither do they always appreciate the wisdom that others deduce from their language. One is reminded of the French stage character who discovered that for years he had been speaking in prose without knowing it. Many a fool has let loose a chunk of wisdom, and dullards are not above giving to the world a fragment of wit.

Now I am not a very great lover of curiosities. There are, of course, things and opinions which interest me, but I am not at all interested in the way that a well-known writer does his work, how the Queen dresses, how many cigars the Churchills smoke, what food finds favour with Bernard Shaw, and so on. I am not even anxious to see the author of a book which I have read with pleasure and profit. I have read the book, I have appreciated it and I advise others to get a copy, and that is all. I do not plead that these qualities are good or bad. They are just part of me.

But there is one thing which has always awakened my curiosity—a desire to know something that seems to defy a complete and satisfactory answer. Expressed in seven words, it is: "Are parsons born or are they made?" I use the term "Parson" in a genetic sense; it covers all the varieties known to man—low and high and broad Church, dissenting and established, parsons in embryo, and who may form a kind of missing link between parsons and just ordinary beings. And I offer this subject in all seriousness. It is one that has always given me food for thought, and I am sure others have been puzzled, and remain so.

Perhaps it was because I had chosen parents who were not Christians that the sight of parsons confused me. They did not dress like other men, and dress is a rather important factor in distinguishing one individual from another. Then their intonation when speaking was not always in line with other folk. In my native city, there was an annual fair—two fairs to be accurate—and these fairs provided us with all sorts of human curiosities. There were men without arms, others with an enormous growth of hair all over the body, what were known as Siamese twins joined together, enormously fat men and women, dwarfs and giants, etc., and somehow or other I placed the parsons along with the show specimens, who were not confined. I concluded that when the shows moved on some of the specimens—

deliberately or by accident—were left behind. I also think I confused, at one time, parsons with the men who came round to collect money for gas. Later I saw my mistake. Gas illuminates, parsons do not.

So the question of origin of parsons remained. A little light came when I met the saying that true poets were born, not made. If poets, why not parsons? The situation was suggestive. As it was the sight of a falling apple that suggested to Newton the theory of celestial gravitation, so that chestnut, "poets are born," haunted me. Literature—such as I contacted—gave me but little help, but I did find the great Montaigne dealing with religion under the chapter heading "On Cripples." That seemed to fit in with the "Fair" shows. I also found Oliver Wendell Holmes suggesting that parsons were a kind of religious microbe, and so my puzzlement increased.

My next step was taken after my coming into contact with fragments of writing which now dominate the field where religion is concerned. Anthropology seemed to settle the question. Our semi-civilised parsons, according to the Anthropologists, were the survivals of a very wide-spread species, still in existence in full form with uncivilised people. These new teachers of mine held that "persistence" of type is very common. Physically we have it in our material structure. But we also have it in many of our habits. We have prayers for rain, which is a striking and important thing among uncivilised people, and which is still to be found in Churches and other religious centres. The different chiefs call up their different gods, and while we have military uniforms so had our primitive forebears special costumes for their priests.

This would, however, favour the theory that parsons are born, not made, since it tends to prove that the parsonic qualities are inherited, just as some pigeons have developed the quality of tumbling, bees build cells and store honey. But here it is only fair to note that parsons indignantly protest against any such derivation. Indeed, they claim that they are without ancestry, and they were just called into being by a power of which we know nothing. So the origin of parsons remains—indeed, they seem quite unexplainable.

But whether parsons are taken as having been born or that they just happened to be, they are interesting people. First, their function is unique. They are not here to impart useful information. No one dreams of consulting parsons on any matter that is verifiably useful. No one dreams of consulting them on matters of fact, or if they are consulted it is not because they are parsons, but because they are just humans.

Parsons are beyond question agents for a world of which nothing is known, or concerning which nothing can be known. The priesthood is the only organism whose function is to deal with a non-existent environment. Or consider the qualities manifested. They are so peculiar that more than

one prominent authority has divided the human race into Men, Women and *Clergymen*. They have a category of their own, they come from no one knows where, and they return to the same region. A parson believes that he is called by his God to fill the post he occupies. But at the same time he knows that his career has been selected for him as is the position of a doctor, a lawyer or a carpenter, he knows that—if the post is a well paid one—that earthly influence operated in placing him where he is, and he believes that his God would move him to another place—if the salary was larger. And yet, in spite of these facts, he *believes* that a mysterious power has placed him where he is. It really looks as though to understand the clergy one *must* mark them off as something unique.

In a scientific enquiry no avenue of search may be neglected, and I give the following for what it is worth. Anyone who has watched the Penguins in the Zoo may have noticed the suggestiveness of them with a typical parson. The black and white colouring, the gravity with which they sit thinking of nothing in particular, their activity when feeding times come, their struggle with the poor eel to get his share, all this reminds one of the contests and activities of the clergy. May not the whole thing be an exhibition of one of those "archetypes" that used to be so popular with the clergy? There is again a curious suggestiveness about the description of penguin as, "body elliptical, head small, bill moderately long, tail short." Modesty would cause the parsonic bill to be described as "moderately long," the *tale* is shorter than it used to be, and if we take the body as the equivalent of parsonic reasoning, there is no denying the elliptical character.

On the other hand, those who believe that the parson is made and not born, will be content to rest their case on an entirely different interpretation, that is, the effects of habit and training. Himself a priest, Sydney Smith divided the human race into three groups—"Men, Women and Clergymen." To those who are not very witty themselves this has been looked upon as just funning. But we would remind them that it is the way of quick witted men so to express their fundamental opinions. Seriously, their arguments would be run in this way. If we take two children of the same parents and subject them to widely different courses of training the results will probably be very different. If one is taught to take little for granted, to subject whatever comes before him to analysis, he may not develop to be a Newton or a Darwin, but he will be marked as of the scientific type. If we take the other child and cram him with doctrines and dogmas that have no connection with sound knowledge, bring him up on a history that is specially to conceal truth, we may certainly expect to have a product of the religious type.

We have to consider the power of self-deception. So long as men of mediocrity find a living waiting for them in the various churches applicants will be found. Five hundred a year for preaching a doctrine and providing a social standing is a tempting bait to many. The general motto is too often that which runs "Prove all things and hold fast to that which pays." The most subtle enemies of the Churches are among those who may find a secure place in society by following the road of honest thought and speech.

Finally, there is the psychological law that we have only to repeat a thing a certain number of times to believe it. Many of our clergy are in this position—not exactly

hypocrites but who come to believe their own stories through the force of repetition. And a man who sets out to deceive others very often ends by deceiving himself.

So I am content to leave the matter at this point. It is the kind of argument which if properly managed would suit the B.B.C. But unfortunately the B.B.C. is not so concerned in getting at the roots of things as it is to persuade people that they are discussing a subject when they are only talking about it. It follows the most dangerous of methods because it does honestly and openly suppress. It is supreme in the art of inducing people to fool themselves.

Martin Luther likened the policy of the Roman Church to that of a horse drawing water from a well. The horse goes round and round, but it never got any further. So the B.B.C. gives discussions, but it never gets into the region that marks the heart of a problem. It is dangerous in discussion, because it never really seriously discusses.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CARLILE'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

WHEN in 1819 William Cobbett ostentatiously transferred the bones of Thomas Paine from New York to London, his crazy conduct excited astonishment and ridicule. Nevertheless, Paine's Deistical and Radical writings had, for a generation, played an important part in liberalising public opinion.

The most eminent living English historian, Prof. G. M. Trevelyan, O.M., avers in his *British History in the Nineteenth Century* that Richard Carlile "suffered and achieved more for the liberty of the Press than any other Englishman" of that period.

This dauntless champion of freedom was born on the fringes of Dartmoor at Ashburton in Devon, and to him was due the persistent influence of Paine. Having served his apprenticeship with a hard taskmaster, he became a tinsmith. A man of sterling character, he himself informs us: "I was a regular, active and industrious man working early and late, when I could get work enough to do, and when out of the workshop never so happy anywhere as at home with my two children. . . . I had a notion that a man was a fool not to make right application of every shilling. Many a day I have breakfasted early . . . worked hard all day, eaten nothing and carried home some sixpenny publication to read at night."

Carlile suffered privation in the trade depression of 1817 and his thoughts turned to politics. He adopted Radical sentiments, studied as extensively as he could, greatly admired Orator Hunt, Leigh Hunt's brother, began to scribble and sent his effusions to various publications.

Placed on short time in his trade, he borrowed a sovereign from his employer and purchased 100 copies of Wooler's *Black Dwarf*. These he placed in "twenty different shops in London and its vicinity that had never sold them before. My ardour," Carlile continues, "was not to be damped by any danger or difficulty. I persevered, and many a day traversed thirty miles for a profit of eightpence."

Among Carlile's periodicals were those of W. F. Sherwin, who had been dismissed from his employment for avowing himself a political disciple of Paine. Sherwin came to London and submitted a pamphlet to Hone and other advanced publishers, but without success. He therefore concluded that, in order to reach the public, he must possess his own printing press. From his shop in Fleet Street, he later issued a weekly paper—*The Republican*. This organ's title and contents proved unpalatable to Sidmouth, so it was renamed *Sherwin's Weekly Political Register*. Sherwin also decided to confine himself to printing

thus leaving the risks of publication to others. He then sounded Carlile and offered him the use of his office if he would publish the *Register* and pay the rent. This offer Carlile accepted, thus saving Sherwin from prosecution as Carlile refused to give evidence against him.

Under official pressure, Hone suppressed his political parodies, but Carlile defiantly republished them. This led to Hone's arrest and trial, while Carlile was himself arrested and sent to prison "in default of bail of £800, though he was hardly worth as many pence." He remained in gaol for eighteen weeks, but on Hone's acquittal he was released untried, but without compensation, so he was as poor as ever. Still Carlile's sufferings made him conspicuous as a man to be reckoned with, and he was either hailed as a hero or pelted with abuse.

During Carlile's imprisonment the Attorney-General laid an information against him. Despite this, Carlile and Sherwin, in addition to their own writings, published Paine's *Common Sense* in the *Register* as well as the *Rights of Man* in weekly instalments. Many other Reformers were intimidated by the Government, but Carlile never flinched. Instead, he published a half-crown edition of the *Rights of Man* with a two-volume edition of Paine's *Political Works* complete at a pound without interference.

In 1813 the Unitarian Relief Act was passed and now it was decided to test the efficacy of this measure by republishing the *Age of Reason*, the earlier publication of which had been prohibited by fine and imprisonment. So Carlile commissioned Sherwin to print 1,000 copies of this blasphemous production. Tracts denouncing Paine's writings and defaming Paine's character abundantly appeared, while Sherwin wrote one appreciative account of the heretic, while Rickman "to counter-act foul slanderous lies" composed another.

In 1819 Carlile rented a prominent shop-front in Fleet Street to advertise his publications. Deeply as he revered Paine, whom he regarded as one of humanity's supreme benefactors, his faith in printed matter as the infallible guide to man's felicity was even greater. "My whole and sole object," he assures us, "from first to last, from the time of putting off my leather apron to this day, has been a Free Press and Free Discussion. When first started as a hawker of pamphlets I knew nothing of political principles. I had never read a page of Paine's writings; but I had a complete conviction there was something wrong somewhere, and that the right application of the printing press was a remedy."

With Carlile's republication of the *Age of Reason* there appeared on the walls of the Metropolis notices announcing this fact. For a month sales were slow and it seemed as if the publisher would remain unmolested. But a few weeks later, the Society for the Suppression of Vice presented a Bill to the Old Bailey Grand Jury and trouble began. Carlile promptly tendered bail and postponed arrest. Public interest was aroused; sales mounted and a second edition of 3,000 copies was printed. The notorious Home Secretary, Sidmouth, instituted proceedings and a further information against Paine's *magnum opus* was filed, and additional bail required. Carlile was cited to plead and impaled till Easter Term. But, as Wickwar states in his *Struggle for the Freedom of the Press*, "before then the secretary and solicitor of the Vice Society unexpectedly went with his clerk to the Chief Justice, swore that the sale of Paine's *Theological Works* was continuing and obtained a warrant. . . . Two hours later Carlile was in Newgate, the Common Gaol of the City of London, and there passed the night without a bed. Four days later he was liberated on common bail."

The meddlesome Vice Society now presented another indictment for the publication of the *Deist*. At Trinity Term Carlile pleaded Not Guilty to the new charges and complained that charges were being increased so as to prejudice his defence. But thus far, it was uncertain whether he would ever be tried, as several informations filed two years earlier were still inoperative.

Carlile did his utmost to bring his case for trial. Copies of the documents concerning the prosecution containing all the impious passages in the *Age of Reason* most reprobated, were published at low prices. When presenting the public with the Bill of Indictment, Carlile stated that he desired to display its glaring fabrications and absurdities. "The distinguished boobies who take the lead in the Society for the Suppression (or rather the encouragement) of Vice, amongst them on the bench of bishops, saintly Sidmouth and the pious Wilberforce . . . charge an endeavour to convey a sublime notion of the Supreme Being as incurring His high displeasure."

While in Newgate Carlile wrote an open letter to the prosecuting Society in most unflattering language. He admonished his assailants that they manifested "the same disposition as their ancestors who kindled the flames in Smithfield."

With Francis Place acting as intermediary, Jeremy Bentham offered to furnish Counsel for Carlile's defence. But this kind assistance was declined as, in conducting his own case, Carlile could confront the Attorney-General in person while welcoming any suggestion from sympathisers likely to favourably influence the jury.

The trial at the Guildhall created wide attention and during its second week "Mrs. Carlile took £500 in the shop where the *Age of Reason* was sold, while the circulation of Carlile's *Republican* reached 15,000 copies."

Ultimately, Carlile was sentenced to two years' imprisonment which he served in Dorchester Gaol. He was fined £1,500 for publishing the *Age of Reason* and the *Principles of Nature* with security for future good conduct in £1,000 himself with two others of £100 each.

Carlile trusted his business would continue, but the authorities now entered his premises and closed his establishment. Later, they confiscated and destroyed his stock of printed matter. This was a deadly blow and, for a time, irreparable. Well might Carlile protest to the Treasury solicitor: "I am not only imprisoned for three years, but am for a certainty imprisoned as long as the present system of Government continues, as you have not only obtained the infliction of a heavy fine, but at the same time have taken steps to prevent the payment of that fine, with an ultimate intention of keeping me in prison whilst your employers can keep their places."

T. F. PALMER.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Perhaps one ought to take it as a sign of the times that the Archbishop of Canterbury should have made the discovery that "human rights belong not merely to Jews and Christians." He also discovers that Jews and Christians derived rights from a divine revelation, and they belong to all men because all men are children of God. All this sums up as being simply a mass of complete nonsense. Greece and Rome were teaching in their philosophy of life that certain human rights belonged to all men, irrespective of religious belief, long before Christianity was heard of. Slavery existed in the ancient world, but slavery was a misfortune rather than a god-imposed servitude. Greece and Rome—in spite of slavery—still insisted on the human equality of man. The colour strain, as a disqualifying thing, did not exist with either Rome or Greece. That was a thing of Christian creation, and even when slavery is formally abolished in our own possessions the mark of the slave on the coloured man is strongest where Christianity is influential. And if it is again said that Christian people worked for the abolition of modern slavery, the reply is that it was also Christians who had to be suppressed before slavery was officially abolished. We use the word "officially suppressed," because it is worthy of careful examination. Certainly the ill-treatment of children in the early part of the nineteenth century in the interests of manufacturers was as ghastly as anything that slavery has ever produced.

ACID DROPS

We would not suggest for a moment that a man like the Bishop of Chester would not speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on matters which concern religion. First, he tells us that there are hundreds of thousands of people who are interested in religion and think the present a good opportunity "to win back our nation to the true religion of God." But "winning back" implies a heavy loss, and while men and women may hold foolish ideas for ever, once their eyes are opened there is nothing that can close them again.

The Bishop finds courage in the fact that "one of the most prominent figures in the Press of England told him that whenever one of his papers prints a pro-religious article he is overwhelmed by thousands of letters from his readers thanking him." The Bishop is very simple, and the paper king is very cunning. In most papers of that class some religious article appears regularly, and the bombarding of newspapers by the theatrical body of good Christians is known to everyone—except the simple-minded bishop.

On the other hand, we gather from the "Whitby Gazette" of August 2 that Father Raynes, of the Superior Community, is alarmed at "the rising tide of Secularism." He has also discovered that there is "a rising tide of Secularism and an Agnostic, if not an Atheist, attitude." We are sorry to have to give Father Raynes another shock, but the distinction between Atheism and Agnosticism is just that which separates tweedledum from tweedledee.

The heads of the Churches in this country have combined to offer prayers during such time as we are joining with others to secure the peace of the world. We did not know that the situation was so recognisably bad that God had to be called on to help us.

We wonder whether Canon Boster is a keen humorist, or in sheer stupidity drops into a very good truth? For example, he says, "Humanism existed in the world to-day because of the vacuum caused by the Christian Church which had failed to get its message across." Read for the failure of the Christian Church, that "the Christian Church lost its power of suppressing science and the higher literature, and of the developments that led to the awakening of Europe, and lost ground on the development of almost every sense of science and social life. And in spite of wars, robberies, etc., the world of to-day is better than the world that was once dominated by the Christian Church." We growl to-day of discomforts in conditions that the "common" man never experienced. He can move in a freedom that he once never had, he can read and write, and there are good chances that the next generation will be placed better than we have as yet. Man has done what God and his Church failed to do. Perhaps that is what Canon Boster meant to say.

The Rev. W. Elliott continues his weekly article; "continues" is a good note here for his "continuation" could be labelled "recapitulation" with complete truth. Even when something is said that might stand for a good point he manages to make it completely commonplace. For instance, he tells us as evidence that our manners and characters have not improved of late years; of a man in Oxford Street who held the door of a taxi open for a lady who stepped in without a word of thanks. The man said "I didn't want her blasted money, but she might have said 'Thank you.'" Of course, but if Mr. Elliott had thought he might have said that this was evidence of development, for a century ago the "common" man in such a situation would not have expected a "grand lady" to say "thank you" in such a situation. And at that period religion was much stronger than it is to-day.

Whenever a Christian preacher is very emphatic he is right one may safely decide he is wrong; and if he talks about a "Christian truth" one may decide that it is not a truth at all. Consider the first. Dom Gregory Dix delivered a lecture at St. Paul's Cathedral, and in the course of the address he said:—

"If there be a God at all, if he be worth believing, he must be good. . ."

But that is just unadulterated nonsense. If "God" exists is one question. It is after the evidence for a God is settled that the road is open to decide whether he is good or bad, or just worthless. "Goodness" is a matter of quality, but existence is—just existence. A knife may be a good one or a bad one, but in either case it is a knife. There seems no foolishness to be too great for use in the interests of religion.

The Vicar of Saint Asaph is disturbed in mind because some people have suggested that there will be no need for Sunday schools now that religion is in the schools. We appreciate the Vicar's concern. If children are used to getting their religious reasons away from the Church the clergy will get much of their power wiped out. If a similar situation occurred on the non-religious field there would probably be a strike on the part of those interested. But how can the clergy declare a strike? The mass of the people would smile and let it go at that, and the adults would stay away from Church for ever. The clergy have our sympathy.

The United States holds the secret of making the most deadly bomb in existence. Next to the U.S.A. comes Britain—so far as we know. Not to be behind, England has further produced a "secret" Spitfire that is jet-productive, that is, it can be set going and will reach its destination while the man who shoots remains on the ground. We dare say that Russia is also making the same preparations for peace. It is fine news. It assures us that we shall have peace; we must have peace even though we have to blow the globe to pieces to get it. We wonder whether we shall live long enough to see another war in the interests of peace? We do hope that our American, British and Russian scientists will not waste time trying to create an eatable pound loaf.

Here is a case of the direct interference of God. We quote it as it is given in the newspaper:—

"Walking into the blood transfusion centre at Southmead Hospital, Bristol, a working-class man said he had come to donate some blood.

"But we haven't sent for you," said the doctor in charge.

"My call has come from above," the man replied.

"He was told that the mobile unit was in Exeter and there was no staff in Bristol to deal with him.

"Very well," said the man, putting on his hat, "I'll go to Exeter. Something tells me someone will need this blood to-day."

"As the man was so determined, emergency arrangements were made to take his blood on the spot, and the man went away after refusing to give his name. He was booked as 'Donor 77.'

"Half an hour later, Bristol Royal Infirmary rang up and asked for Group A blood for a dying woman.

"It must be fresh," they said.

"The only bottle of fresh blood available in this group had been given by the working-class man.

"It is the most remarkable case in my experience," Mr. A. McCrudden, secretary of the transfusion centre, said yesterday. "There is only one sad feature. The patient, after rallying for a time, died."

It looks as though God miscalculated the strength of the ailment.

South Shields has voted against the Sabbatarian bigots in no uncertain fashion. The voting in favour of Sunday cinemas was nearly 20,000, while the hosts of God himself could only muster just over 5,000 against. This is what is vulgarly termed a nasty smack in the face, but God is never discouraged so long as some sheep can be found to carry out his—well, his work. In the Stanley district of Durham the Sabbatarians are preparing their campaign as thoroughly as they can, though by no means all the clergy are on their side. One of them refuses to work with the Lord as he does not believe it to be the duty of the Church to dictate to the people in these matters. But the result is in no doubt. Religion will once again get it—"in the neck."

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. J. FREEMAN.—Sorry to hear of your accident. Hope you will soon make a complete recovery.

R. A. RASMURE.—Shall appear, but at present we are much overladen with articles.

J. DURATT MACULAY (Sierre Leone).—You are quite wrong in assuming that the Secular Society in any way are wanting in respect for the coloured people. You will find plenty of prejudice in this country as in others, but that may be taken as losing its popularity. It is true that the "colour" creed owes its development to the Christian period. It did not exist in pre-Christian times. We are sorry that we cannot introduce you to a school in this country such as you are looking for. We beg to acknowledge 5s. gift to the "Freethinker."

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

Here is a good story of Thomas Carlyle. We take it from George H. Lewes's "Life and Works of Goethe." Lewes says in a footnote: "I heard a capital story of Carlyle at a dinner party in Berlin, silencing the cant about Goethe's want of religion. For some time he sat quiet, but patient, while certain pietists were throwing up their eyes and regretting that so great a genius should not have devoted himself to the service of Christian truth. Carlyle sat grim, until at last he broke silence and in his slow emphatic way said: 'Mein Herren, Did you never hear the story of that man who vilified the Sun because it would not light his cigar.' Not a word was spoken in reply."

"Four Dialogues of Plato, including the Apology of Socrates," may be safely commended to all, and it is just as useful to read the dialogues as to read those who talk about them. They are simple enough for anyone to understand, and full enough of wisdom to repay the reading. To this selection is added the interesting fact that the translator is John Stuart Mill, and further an interesting introduction of forty pages by Dr. Ruth Borclhardt. The issue is by Watts and Company; the price 10s. 6d.

Another booklet is "The Church of England, a Study in Industrial Depression," by Christopher Churchpuse (Watts and Company, price 1s.), a booklet that will be found interesting and useful. It gives a good summary of the plight in which the Church is to-day.

Special prayers were offered in Norfolk asking God to send sunshine while the crops are being gathered in. We protest against the semi-Atheism in this appeal. God should know what he is doing, and judging from previous events there is nothing that pleases God more than to permit what looks like a first-rate crop and then turning loose terrific rain that will ruin the lot. Of

course, if people had courage and sense they would immediately shut up the Churches and decline to praise God for his kindness. But religionists appear to love a grovel, and the worse the treatment received the more marked the grovel.

To-day (18th August) The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has arranged another of its popular rambles to Lickey. All members and friends of the movement are invited to join the party. Meet at Lickey Terminus at 3-30 p.m. Tea at Cofton Tea Rooms at 5 p.m. We hope a fine Sunday has been selected and that the party will be a large one.

The last Test Match will be on August 17, 19, and 20. It is to be noticed that August 18 (Sunday) is left blank. It is the Sabbath. But a final meeting of the Selection Committee will take place on August 18—the "Sabbath." But we are left wondering whether in the sight of the recording angel there is any difference between playing on the Sabbath and making arrangement for playing. It seems that you cannot touch religion without brushing against humbug and hypocrisy.

A CLERGYMAN FROM NECESSITY

"I DO not suppose he had any dogmatic and doctrinal opinions in respect to religion. In his heart of hearts he despised and derided all that the world wrangles and squabbles about. But he had the true religion of benevolence and charity—of peace and goodwill to mankind—which should be all-sufficient, be the truth of the great mystery what it may."

In these words, Lord Greville drew the character of Rev. Sydney Smith (1771-1845), whose life is presented in book-form by Hesketh Pearson under the title, "The Smith of Smiths," a designation which is acknowledged to have been originally given him by Lord Macaulay.

Here, says Pearson, are some of Sydney's scattered sayings, which, however true, were perhaps a little unexpected in the mouth of a clergyman:—

"The observances of the Church concerning feasts and fasts are tolerably well kept upon the whole, since the rich keep the feasts and the poor the fasts.

"Church and King in moderation are very good things; but we have too much of both.

"I must believe in the Apostolic Succession, there being no other way of accounting for the descent of the Bishop of Exeter from Judas Iscariot.

"Lady Cork was once so moved by a charity sermon that she begged me to lend her a guinea for her contribution. I did so. She never repaid me, and spent it on herself.

"My idea of heaven is eating pates de foie gras to the sound of trumpets.

"What a mystery is the folly and stupidity of the good!"

"There is not the least use in preaching to anyone unless you chance to catch them ill.

"What a pity it is that we have no amusement in England but vice and religion!

"England is almost the only country in the world (even at present) where there is not some favourite religious spot—where absurd lies, little bits of cloth, feathers, rusty nails, splinters and other invaluable relics are treasured up, and in defence of which the whole population are willing to turn out and perish as one man."

In a reference to "The Smith of Smiths," G. K. Chesterton wrote: "Nothing is more notable about the generous and joyous impatience of Sydney Smith than the fact that he hated the frenzies of sectarianism even more than the mummeries of Rome"—a somewhat remarkable statement for a man who gloried in parading the alleged virtues of the Catholic faith.

Besides being, in the words of Lord Jeffrey, "the gayest man and the greatest wit in England," Smith eloquently pleaded the case for the better treatment of the poor, was a powerful advocate for the abolition of slavery and a foremost apostle for Catholic emancipation, and fiercely denounced the English educational system—the universities no less than all the other establishments of the period.

For example, writing to a friend who had sent his son to Cambridge, he said: "You have put him there to spend your money, to lose what good qualities he has, and to gain nothing useful in return."

But it is to what he had to say as "a sporter of the cloth" that I rather prefer to confine myself.

Merely one of his devastating comments regarding missionaries was: "Let us ask, too, if the Bible is universally diffused in Hindostan, what must be the astonishment of the natives to find that we are forbidden to rob, murder, and steal—we who, in 50 years, have extended our empire from a few acres about Madras over the whole peninsula and sixty millions of people, and exemplified in our public conduct every crime of which human nature is capable. What matchless impudence to follow up such practice with such precepts! If we have common prudence, let us keep the gospel at home, and tell them that Machiavelli is our prophet, and the god of the Manicheans our god."

Illustrated in the following extract from "The Smith of Smiths" are Sydney's courage in the voicing of his own convictions and the fairness he was ever-prepared to extend to opponents:—

"In March, 1825, a meeting of the clergy of Cleveland to petition Parliament against the emancipation of the Catholics was held at the 'Three Tuns,' Thirsk. Sydney attended it, making his first appearance on a political platform. He spoke, of course, against the majority petition, proposed one of his own (for which he obtained two supporters), and told his reverend brethren exactly what he thought of them.

"A month later the clergy of the East Riding of Yorkshire held a meeting for the same purpose at the 'Tiger Inn,' Beverley.

"Again Sydney spoke, and this time he was in a minority of one. 'My excellent and respectable curate, Mr. Milestones, alarmed at the effect of the Pope upon the East Riding, has come here to oppose me,' Sydney informed the meeting, 'and there he stands, breathing war and vengeance on the Vatican.' As a matter of fact, Mr. Milestones had asked Sydney whether he would resent the opposition of his own curate; but Sydney was not a man of that sort, and had assured him that 'nothing would give me more pain than to think I had prevented, in any man, the free assertion of honest opinions—that such conduct on his part, instead of causing jealousy and animosity between us, could not and would not fail to increase my regard and respect for him.'

"Sydney delivered a trenchant speech, making it as brief as possible, 'from compassion to my reverend brethren, who have trotted many miles to vote against the Pope, and who will trot back in the dark if I attempt to throw additional light upon the subject.'

"When he sat down a poor clergyman whispered his complete agreement with every word Sydney had said, but confessed that he was the father of nine children. Sydney begged him to remain a Protestant. Always anxious to discuss everything with everybody, Sydney asked the servants at the inn what they thought of the question, and reported their views to a friend: 'The chambermaid was decidedly for the Church of England. Boots was for the Catholics. The waiter said he had often (God forgive him!) wished them both confounded together.'

Sydney was the originator of many phrases that have become world-famous. For example, "A square peg in a round hole" and "A delusion, a mockery, and a snare." A witticism, too, for which he was responsible is that regarding a surgical operation to get a joke into a Scotsman's head. He was one of the founders of—and for many years one of the principal contributors

to—"The Edinburgh Review." A few more of his coruscations, recorded by Pearson, are:—

"I never read a book before reviewing it—it prejudices the mind so.

"Men who do good things are much more valuable than those who say wise ones.

"In England, when a man is a fool, we only trust him with the immortal concerns of human beings.

"Don't expect too much from human life—a sorry business at the best.

"In the Church, a man is thrown into life with his hands tied, and bid to swim. He does well if he keeps his head above water.

"You have met, I hear, with an agreeable clergyman. The existence of such a being has been hitherto denied by the naturalists. Measure him, and put down on paper what he eats.

"Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated, often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing anyone who comes between them.

"There are no pecuniary embarrassments equal to the embarrassments of a professional wit—an eternal demand upon him for pleasantry, and a consciousness on his part of a limited income of the facetious.

"It is vain to talk of the good character of bishops. Bishops are men—not always the wisest of men—not always preferred for eminent virtues and talents, or for any good reason whatever known to the public. I have seen in the course of my life, as the mind of the prelate decayed, wife bishops, daughter bishops, butler bishops, and even cook and housekeeper bishops.

"Nothing can be more disgusting than an oratorio. How absurd to see 500 people fiddling like madmen about the Israelites in the Red Sea!

"Every fresh accident on the railroads is an advantage, and leads to an improvement. What we want is an overturn which would kill a bishop, or at least a dean. This mode of conveyance would then become perfect.

"It is very remarkable that the most eminent men in every art and science have not been educated in public schools.

"Let me warn you against the melancholy effects of temperance. You will do me the justice to remember how often I have entered my protest against it. Depend upon it, the wretchedness of human life is only to be encountered upon the basis of meat and wine.

"God has made nothing so curious as human creatures."

It is not to be wondered at that a man so capable of expressing himself never soared to the height of becoming a bishop. Only by force of his genius, it would seem, could he have remained a cleric of the church. "Sydney was more destitute of reverence," declared Professor Saintsbury, "than any man who ever lived."

Many of his friends were infidels, says Pearson, and their views did not excite suspicion and fear in him, adding—by way of final summary of the great wit and, at the same time, reformer of his day—that he was a clergyman, not from choice, but from necessity.

J. Y. ANDERONEY.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

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

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, by Lady (Robert) Simon. Price post free, 2s. 8d.

WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD? By C. G. L. Du Cann. An enquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

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

CORRESPONDENCE

AN OPEN LETTER.

To the Director of B.B.C. religious broadcasting, Rev. J. W. Welch.

SIR,—You will perhaps remember that in the interview you gave me at the B.B.C. on the morning of February 9, you expressly said that you agreed non-Christians should have the use of the microphone in order to present their views and that you were (then) doing what you could to bring this about. Your promise is now more than five months old, and you can hardly be ignorant of the fact that up to the present moment your Christian efforts have been fruitless. Not, of course, fruitless for your Christian side, but for the side of fair play, and ordinary decent behaviour which is rightly expected from ordinary decent citizens of any country. You, on your side, may retort that, as it has taken nearly two thousand years of Christianity in order to *make a beginning* of converting the world to Christianity, you can hardly be expected to get any sense of fair play into your B.B.C. religious department in the span of a paltry five months. Evidently something of the kind must have happened, and this is why the microphone is becoming more and more a non-stop Christian mouthpiece. Moulthing of Christian principles, Christian ethics, Christian truths—all based, obviously enough, on Christian greediness, Christian bad manners.

One other thing you said on February 9, was to the effect that "the reality of God could not be proved by and through the (mere) use of our reason: that the Christian himself does not attempt to prove the existence of God by or through his reason." You certainly hit upon a sorrowful truth here, as statistics in lunatic asylums show; and, indeed, the more bereft of reason humans become, the more (fanatically) certain are they of God's existence, reality. And reasonable humans feel the deepest pity towards them. Your B.B.C. religious department, however, merits no such pity, nor can you worthily claim to receive the infinite patience meted out to you, for long years now, by millions of good-living non-Christians in this country. Your microphonic Christian bad manners, greediness, have become unbearable.

As regards "your approaching God by and through discarding your reasoning powers," there is a typical Christian example of this being done on page 18, in the booklet, *Towards the Conversion of England*. This specific approach is contained in these printed words:—

"The good news which the Christian faith offers to the world begins, therefore, with the good news of God's nature. At the heart of the universe there is no 'fortuitous concourse of atoms' but a living Being, personal, or rather supra-personal."

This Christian information is certainly *news*; and may we look forward to another series of B.B.C. Christian talks, devoted to telling us how you reached the "heart of the universe," or even how you came back to this one-thousand-million-years-old Earth? You really have no right to withhold the knowledge which you must possess in order to have located the "heart of the universe." Yet you *have* done this, otherwise you would not be in the position to inform us that in this particular place "there are no atoms, there is a living Being?" These are categorical statements, the stupendous truth of which is obviously unknown to at least one scientist, our astronomer royal, Sir H. Spencer Jones. In his book, *Worlds Without End*, he speaks of universes millions of light-years away from us; and in his following statement, in the same book, he does not seem to have met with any signs of either your "heart" or "living Being." This is what Sir Harold writes: "A ray of light takes eight minutes to come to us from the Sun. To cross from one end of the solar system to the other it takes eleven hours. To travel to the nearest star it takes four years. The journey across our local star-cloud takes 2,000 years: that from the Sun to the centre of the galactic system takes some 22,000 years, whilst to travel from one end to the other of the whole galactic system something like 150,000 years is needed."

Once again, Dr. Welch, would you ask the B.B.C. religious department to come to the (their) microphone, and tell us—as a beginning—how they managed to get across even the "local star-cloud" on their way to the presence of that living Being in the heart of the universe?—Yours, etc.,

ELIZABETH MILLARD.

26, Redburn Street, Chelsea, S.W.3.
August 1, 1946.

FRANCO AND FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—Mr. W. E. Nicholson, referring to my article on "The Church in Politics," says: "Consequently the Freethinker who was sufficiently up-to-date to realise that the choice was not limited to this dictator or that dictator, but also included no dictator, supported the Vatican against the Kremlin."

The so-called Freethinkers who supported Franco were supporting two dictatorships—Franco and the Vatican. The Vatican is, as H. G. Wells truly says, the greatest force for evil in the world to-day. Franco defeated the Republicans with the help of the Vatican, Hitler and Mussolini. The bombing of Madrid and Guernica was excellent practice for Hitler's Air Force for the later bombardment of London and Coventry.

The Vatican stands condemned before the world of decent men and women as the most criminal organisation that has ever existed on this earth.

As a Freethinker I firmly believe that any cause the R.C. Church champion, must be a corrupt one, and that any movement they oppose must have some merit.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

SIR,—I am indebted to Mr. W. E. Nicholson for an interesting piece of information. I did not know until I read his letter that any Freethinker could support Franco. One lives and learns.

I cannot follow Mr. Nicholson's economics. But his history, which I am able to check, is so faulty that I have little confidence in the rest of his statements. He defends his support of Franco at the time of the Spanish War on the ground that at that time the Kremlin was more dangerous than the Vatican. Dangerous to whom?

And suppose it was so. The Government attacked by Franco was not a Communist Government nor a dictatorship. So what? Try again, Mr. Vatican-Freethinker Nicholson!—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

OBITUARY

H. W. COTTINGHAM.

With sorrow we have to announce the death of H. W. Cottingham, of Birmingham, which took place after a short illness. He was at one time secretary of the local Branch N.S.S. but whether as an official or a private member of the Branch his heart was always in the movement, and his help as well as his personality will be missed by his colleagues. To his widow and family we offer sincere sympathy. The remains were interred at Longe Hill Cemetery, Selly Oak, Birmingham, on 1st August, where a Secular Service was read by the Branch Secretary, Mr. C. H. Smith.
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 (Highbury Corner) 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

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

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., a Lecture.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Hancoat.—Monday, August 19, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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

Liverpool Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, opp. Lewis's).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. J. CORINA.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m., Mr. T. MOSLEY.

Read.—August 16, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

CATHOLIC TRUTH

"THE POPES," published by the The Catholic Truth Society, from which the following descriptions and figures are taken, dissected and re-arranged. The preface says for the first 200 years, up to Pope Victor 1st, the dates are unreliable. Starting with Victor there have been 242 Popes. Out of these 242:—

Popes	Years
54 reigned for 1 year or less	54
23 " " 2 years "	46
21 " " 3 " "	63
15 " " 4 " "	60
14 " " 5 " "	70
127	293

An average reign of 2 years 4 months.

For first 850 years 72 Popes were canonised Saints.

For last 1070 years only 5 Popes were canonised Saints.

The following were murdered by anti-Popes or faction Pope fights, etc.: Nos. 112, 114, 118, 130, 134, 138, 164, 194, 117, 148 and 122.

It has occurred where an anti-Pope ousted, or had the elected Pope murdered; then he was elected Pope.

Stephen 6th tried the corpse of his predecessor and annulled his ordination, but he himself was strangled in prison.

Banished Popes Nos. 18, 58, 96, 107, 145, 155, 162, 165, 198.

Popes who tried to reform abuses in the Church: Nos. 116, 135, 136, 143, 148, 150, 151, 153, 155, 156, 157, 160, 198, 200, 210, 211, 218, 220, 221.

Schisms in the Church mentioned by Popes Nos. 16, 21, 48, 50, 70, 150, 179, 201, 202, 206.

Anti-Popes mentioned by Nos. 36, 48, 59, 94, 111, 131a (3 no name), 147a (3), 146, 153, 157, 162, 193, 194, 200, 203, 210, 211, 218, 220, 221.

Practised simony and nepotism: Nos. 64, 137, 138, 154, 196, 212, 231, 238.

Elected through the influence of three prostitutes, Theodora and her two daughters, Marozia and Theodora the Younger: Nos. 119, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 143, 144, 145, 130. No. 130 only 18 years old; No. 145 only 14 years. (See remarks re Youth.)

Of doubtful validity: Nos. 131, 132, 146, 147, 200.

Bad Popes: Nos. 102, 119, 144, 147, 210, 212.

The chair mentioned as vacant by Nos. 190 and 194 for two years each. Pope Clement 14th suppressed the order of the Jesuits in 1773; restored by Pius 7th, 1815.

In Pope Gregory 12th reign there were three Popes; John 25 and Benedict. At the Council of Constance, John and Benedict were deposed. Gregory abdicated and Pope Martin 5th was elected.

Pope Leo 10th was made a Cardinal at 14 years of age. Pope Pius 9th the infallible Pope "was a Pope of a great heart if not of a great mind," introduced the dogma of infallibility and the Immaculate Conception.

In 1888 Leo 13th, in one of his Encyclicals, declared the State ought to tolerate no religion except the Catholic. Under present conditions the Church acquiesces, but in happier days she would exercise her own liberty, also, he said, no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true Socialist.

Christopher Dawson, writing in the "Catholic Times," May 4, 1934: "We pronounce as follows, Socialism cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic Church."

W. R. Inge, D.D., says Leo 13th restored the Holy See to the respect it had lost. He was a scholar, a statesman and a man of high character. Pius 9th, who instituted the Dogmas of Infallibility, says he was an ignorant man, no hoax was too gross for him.

The Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., M.A., quotes St. Thomas Aquinas as saying what a great pleasure it would give Catholics to see heretics burning in Hell while they enjoyed eternal happiness.

In Spain the burning of heretics became an element in the public festivities.

Council of Trent, called to counteract the reformation, stated anyone reading the Bible without permission from the priest would not get absolution.

Cardinal Manning once said that it was the duty of the priests to subjugate and subdue, to bend and break the will of the English. England is the head of Protestantism, the stronghold of its power conquered in England, it is conquered throughout the world. Manning wrote of Brodley, one of his secretaries, on the death of Brodley's mother: Nothing is really changed, but the Visible presence and the audible Voice, she is nearer to you than ever before. Writing to Lord Acton regarding Newman, whom he always called Doctor: Many would wonder how he could remain a Catholic.

Saint Thomas More, writing to a monk in defence of Erasmus Bible translation, says: You say there is no need for a translation, we have the Vulgate, it was the best the Church could get then and to use it now does not prove it is a perfect work. He describes the monks as contentious, superstitious zealots, among whom are criminals, wholesome and poisonous plants on the same stem, that is what Erasmus denounces, and if you blame him you must blame Jerome, who says much worse of monks than Erasmus has said.

In 1493, when the two Americas were discovered, Pope Alexander 6th said: By drawing a line from North to South of the Atlantic through the Azores I gave all discovered and undiscovered lands on the west side to Spain, and all undiscovered on the east side to Portugal.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

The works of some authors are proclaimed, others are merely published.

* * *

Wearisome books and termagants are usually left on the shelf.

* * *

The man who is "well versed in books and shallow in himself" is the paddler who gets out of his depth.

* * *

Reviewers read many books in the course of a week! Novel heroes?

* * *

Dr. Johnson said that a man is a fool who writes for nothing. Perhaps so, if his works were read only by fools!

* * *

If every man possesses the material for a book, most volumes would be pretty thin.

* * *

Alexander Pope said that most authors steal their works, or buy. Copy cats?

* * *

It has been asked "What can a book be more than the man who wrote it?" Of a bold type perhaps.

* * *

An author's first impression on the public may prove more than just a first impression.

* * *

Charles Lamb said: "There are books which are no books." "Blank" verses, obviously!

* * *

A man was heard to say: "Show me a man's library and I'll tell you what he thinks." Making it Public so to speak.

S. GORDON HOGG.