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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

An Unlucky Author—and the Consequences

THERE are cases where a man has risen to fame on the basis of a single book. That was all; and book lovers looked in vain for more. But writing of the finest order can be neither taught nor bought. It cannot accurately be said to fall like the gentle rain from heaven," for it comes with a compulsion that will not be denied. Genius is a force that must find expression when and how it will. It can be killed; it can never be coerced.

But there is one author, well known to all—at least by name, whose fame does rest on a single book. He was famous in his day, and his day lasted for many centuries. But in the end, it was the book upon which he had risked his all that made for his disaster. Perhaps that disaster was as much the making of his friends as it was of his enemies. I do not like to call the book a *bad* book, because I incline to believe with those who deny the existence of a (morally) bad book. There are grades of qualities, but bad, morally bad, books do not exist. Usually those who label a book as "morally filthy" carry "filth" in their minds, and are dissatisfied when the supply runs short. It is a case of demand and supply. There is no such thing as an unclean book, but there are plenty of unclean minds. Books, as books, may be graded as good or bad examples of literature, and there we should let the matter rest.

To get back to our one book author. His name is one of the very few that are without a known meaning. The author called himself "God," but what "God" means no one has yet been able to discover. No one knows where he, or it, came from, and no one can be certain as to what he came for. According to some self-made authorities he came to teach men right and wrong. If that be so, then he must stand out as one of the worst teachers that ever lived. All we know is that he did write a single book, by dictation, and there our knowledge stops. He produced his book and accompanied it with terrible threats as to what would happen to those who altered it or failed to obey its decrees. They were promised torture and death in this world, and an everlasting torture in some other world to come. Never was a single book so disastrous; at the side of it the sacred book of Hitler sank into the shade. It is true that Hitler did not prevent other books appearing, but, copying this one book author, they all, Germans, had to form into line. God's influence was equally disastrous. It may be true that this one book author did not use the numerous scientific cruelties that Hitler did, but he did his best, and he had the advantage of claiming that death did not end punishment for abusing or neglecting his book. But both were strong adherents to a totalitarian rule both in this world and in the world to come.

Consider that it was the rule of this one book of God which led to the crushing out of the learning and freedom of ancient Greece and of old Rome. It used freely the instruments of torture, finishing with the slow burning alive of all who dared adversely to criticise this God's one book. The ancient world had given us glimpses of the size of the earth, it had given us a round earth travelling round the sun, a theory of evolution that was crushed by brute force. Much later Bruno was sent to the stake, and Galileo to prison, for telling us some of the truths concerning the world we live in. Copernicus held back his epoch making works until he was approaching death. Newton's theory was savagely attacked on account of its not being at all in harmony with the teachings of this one book God. And almost in our days, the developments of many branches of science have been checked on the same ground. Evolution that had been suggested in ancient Greece was declared sinful, and as late as the first quarter of the nineteenth century Robert Chambers, when writing his "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," had to take care that his name should not appear. Still later it was the accredited agents of God who did what they could to prevent evolution gaining ground because it disagreed with the teachings of God's book. Of all the single book authors, none of them did the evil that the one book God did. He made a curse of what should have been a blessing. He would have kept man in ignorance in order to prevent the sales of his own book. His churches worked hard, but they gradually lost ground. To-day the one book God is less bothered with than he has been during the whole of his existence. This one book deity has been something of a perpetual nuisance.

Why Bother About Jesus?

Unfortunately for this one book author, he is now compelled to fight against his open enemy—or deserters—he has to deal with bodies of men and women who substantially leave him out of the picture, and reduce his one time miracle-working son to a mere hawkler of commonplace ethical teachings that are the common property of all civilised people, and, indeed, belonged to the whole of the human race.

To-day there is a body that call themselves "Modern Churchmen," which in itself is a suggestion that historic Christianity is to-day no more than a worn-out discredited superstition. According to these, Jesus did not come from heaven with the deliberate intention to be crucified to gratify his father's determination to make someone suffer before he would forgive the human race for not being better than he made it.

Of course, this is not said quite so openly as we have put it, but the truth of it is unimpeachable if we follow historic Christianity, or even if one studies the prayer books and teachings, and compares the Christianity that is put before

us by preachers and leading laymen with the historic presentation. For example, I have but to stretch out my hand to find a presentation of Christianity by a Bradford clergyman who says quite openly what Freethinkers have been saying for centuries. He says, quite plainly, of the story of the New Testament, "An instructed Jew (at the time of Jesus) would be familiar with the thought in almost every passage attributed to Jesus. A cultivated Roman, reared in the literature of the Greco-Roman world, would find no difficulty in the narratives of blind men restored to sight, of lame men regaining the use of their limbs, of divine heroes born of a virgin mother, and of dead men restored to life. These were the normal products of that mental climate."

Here again, we get from the same clergyman:

"Possession by evil spirits was a form of belief natural to the cultural level at which the Jews of Jesus' day stood. They believed that these evil spirits entered into the human organism. . . . Jesus seems to have shared their opinions. Even more embarrassing to the modern mind is his apparent acquiescence in the popular belief that they could be expelled by exorcism, and that he himself practised the art. . . . But the prophets of dissolution are dead. . . . Mankind did not begin with a perfect Adam. Womankind did not emerge from the extracted rib of the first man. Suffering did not enter into the world, nor did the tragedy cast its shadow on humanity as the result of the first man's disobedience. These are fairy tales and they have faded into the light of a common day. . . . In view of the claims with which I am dealing, I must ask can we conceive Jesus believing in and understanding the Copernican system, or following the reasonings of Newton? Is it possible to think of Him as following the dialectics of Aristotle or entering into the enjoyment of the art of Phidias? Political science is a necessity of civilisation. But what proof is there in the evidence before us that Jesus had any conception of society as the product of human reason dealing with the facts of associated experience. . . . His world, on the evidence before us, was that of Palestine, its problems those of Galilee and Jerusalem, and its literature that of his own nation."

In other words, the Jesus story with its miracles, its angels and devils, belongs to a low level of social life and intellectual culture, from which pagan Rome and Greece and Egypt were fast stripping themselves, only for their culture to be buried for a thousand years. Even Hitlerism was not a greater threat to human development than was the victory of the Christian Cross. Avowed Hitlerism lasted for a few years; Christianity lasted for a greater number of centuries.

Here is another example of the same quality, from a body of men sufficiently wide awake to see the absurdity of accepting the mixture of folk-lore and downright primitive ignorance as an account of literal history and happenings. It comes from a speech delivered at a meeting of the "Modern Christians"—who apparently hope to retain the Christianity minus all that goes to make Christianity of any importance. I take my information from one of our daily papers dated September 18. The speaker was the Rev. Francis Walter Moyle. He says, "I believe that

the ordinary Englishman regards the story of the Virgin birth as a complete myth, as a fable." "Ordinary Englishman" is rather stretching the fact, because the "ordinary Englishman" seems ready to swallow any ridiculous tale that forms his religion. I fancy that Mr. Moyle is over-complimenting the intelligence of the English public when religion is before him. He is better when he says:

"I am certain that there are many people in this country who could be brought to a full experience of the living historic Jesus when this myth of the Virgin birth has been quietly, carefully and fruitfully put away."

That is very, very bad. If Jesus was not a God, and did not come from heaven, via Mary, then the whole thing drops to pieces. If he was a mere man telling his listeners—not new, but good things—he was only saying what other men said before, and which many, many people observed before it was developed into a set sentence concerning civil behaviour. The "Modern Churchmen" wish to have the magical without having the miraculously born Jesus. And that simply cannot be done. Mr. Moyle is in a fog, and nothing can be gained by swapping one absurdity for another which is just as absurd, with a slight adjustment of part of some ancient folk-lore.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

PAGAN APOLOGETICS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

I.

IT has often been remarked that we know next to nothing about the first century of Christianity. Since the Voltairian historian, Gibbon, first commented with biting irony upon the fact, it has now become generally recognised that the Pagan world of antiquity hardly noticed the arrival upon the historic scene of the religion which History, even more ironic than Gibbon, had destined to be its eventual successor. The picturesque legend that, upon the first Christmas Day, the seamen off the Dalmatian Coast heard a voice crying: "The great Pan is dead," is a mediæval legend which originated after Constantine, and which has not a vestige of foundation in fact. For the contemporary Pagan world was blandly unconscious of the fact that the Christian cuckoo was being hatched in its nest. One should not, perhaps, make too much of this, at first, surprising fact. Religions were two-a-penny in the far-flung Roman Empire. And the Jews, amongst whom Christianity originated, represented a kind of underworld of their own. And one which had for political reasons, a decidedly unsavoury reputation in the ruling circles of the Roman Empire, as we gather from Tacitus, Juvenal, and other Roman authors.

It was not, in fact, until the 2nd century A.D. that we get the first notices of the new religion from Pagan authors, who were also Roman officials whose work, rather than any literary curiosity brought them into contact with the new sect. First Pliny in A.D. 112, and then Tacitus a few years later, give us our first glimpses through Pagan eyes of the new religion. Pliny, in his official capacity as Roman administrator, merely asked the Emperor Trajan what he should do with the new sect which occupied, so to speak, a "borderline" position from the Roman legal standpoint. Whilst the celebrated reference of Tacitus, in his "Annals," to "the execrable superstition," is forcible but not very illuminating. To be sure, Tacitus, another former Roman Asiatic governor, was probably merely repeating the official point of view, and, in any case, was an historical novelist with a genius for phrase-making rather than a scientific

historian. And when, a little later (c. A.D. 130), Suetonius, in his "Lives of the Caesars," alluded to the new sect, his reference was too vague to shed much light on the followers of Christ, whose name, incidentally, he did not even trouble to spell correctly (viz., 'Chrestus'). But, then, Suetonius, whom one always feels would have made such a magnificent editor of "The News of the World," has even less claim than his predecessor, Tacitus, to be considered as a scientific historian.

Thus far, up to about A.D. 140, when a whole literature of Christian "Apologetics" suddenly began with the "Apologetics" of Justin, Aristides, Quadratus, etc., we have virtually no written information about the new sect which came from the outside world. For what we have acquired from the Pagan authors already cited tells us hardly more about the rising Christian Church than the bald facts of its existence and recent origin in Palestine. The Pagan historians, followed in this respect by the later Pagan apologists, naturally assumed the "historicity" of Jesus. After all, they were describing, or fighting Christianity on its own ground, which, naturally, did not take up a "mythical" position in regard to the person of its alleged founder! When, however, we get down to about the middle of the century, by which time the fluid "Christianity" of the New Testament had hardened into the "Catholic Church militant here on earth," and had thus become a social force to be reckoned with, the situation suddenly and completely changed. In the "Apologetic" literature of the Church which began with Justin Martyr about A.D. 140 (the earlier work of Quadratus has been lost), we find that these Apologists are not interested primarily in academic controversy in and for its own sake. Quite the contrary! They are replying to a formidable attack upon the new religion, alike from Jews and Pagans.

The very existence of such an attack, if it proves nothing else, at least obviously demonstrates two things: The growing power of the Church, and, therewith, its growing menace to Pagan (and Jewish) religion and society; and the existence of a formidable literature of Pagan and Jewish "apologetics," to which the Church had to reply on its own intellectual level if it wished, at least, to make an impression upon the educated and official classes, whose support was ultimately essential if it wished to achieve the "spiritual" and social conquest of the Roman Empire. And by, at least, the closing years of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.), the Catholic Church was already in sight of supreme power, as we can see from the gloomy prediction of universal ruin arising from its ultimate triumph with which the Pagan apologist, Celsus, closes his "True Word" (c. 178 A.D.). The only surviving anti-Christian polemic which, thanks to the later (c. A.D. 248) "refutation" of the Christian theologian, Origen, that quotes and thus preserves so much of Celsus' text, has survived in a form recognisably similar to the original.

We may usefully direct a glance at this Pagan literature—that from the standpoint of Judaism need not here concern us—which probably began *pari passu* with its Christian opposite number, from the time of Justin Martyr (c. 135-65 A.D.). In doing so, we are forced to rely to some extent on hypotheses and conjectures. For victorious Christianity, from the time of Theodosius "the Great" (sic) (A.D. 379-95) who, far more than the eclectic Constantine, was the first really Christian—and persecuting—Emperor, systematically wiped out every trace of this literature, and, apart from the fortunate accident which preserved so much of Celsus, plus a few fragments quoted by other Christian authors, none of it now remains. However, its "general line" is more or less known to us if only from the writings of its Christian opponents, which have survived.

It is perhaps relevant to add that one fact alone goes far to prove the formidable nature of the Pagan literary attack. We here refer to the extraordinary latitude which the Church was forced to permit to its own controversialists in reply. For example, Minucius Felix, the most readable and rational of the

Christian apologists, hardly mentions Jesus, and confines himself to an academic defence of Monotheism, which 80 per cent. of educated Pagans would have accepted; and to a refutation of the grosser charges made by popular rumour against the Christians. Charges, we may add, which were certainly false, at least as far as orthodox Christianity was concerned, though possibly true in part of some of the more extravagant heresies of the modern "abode of love" type, which, also, were not unknown in the early Church. Charges which the best Pagan apologists, like Celsus, scrupulously avoided bringing. In Minucius Felix's "Octavian," the dogmatic system of the Church is never mentioned, and the Scriptures never quoted. Though Irenaeus was already writing against "heresies" (186 A.D.), and the "Muratorian fragment" (c. 180 A.D.) gives us a recognised canon of "inspired" Scripture. Obviously, ancient, like modern, apologists had to be careful!

The Pagan literature against Christianity extends from Celsus, if not earlier, down to the (lost) work of the last great Pagan champion, the Emperor Julian, whose "Apostasy" gave Christianity such a fright that it has gone on blackguarding the great "Apostate" (c. 330-363 A.D.) for 16 centuries; for, as we have elsewhere shown, what Constantine had done, his far greater nephew could have undone equally effectively! For, despite ecclesiastical "history" and its sycophantic secular imitators, there was nothing "inevitable" about the ultimate victory of Christianity. Undoubtedly, the two most famous works of this literary genre were "The True Word" (or "Account"—Greek Logos) of Celsus (c. 178 A.D.), and "Against the Christians," by the neo-Platonist philosopher and scholar, Porphyry (c. A.D. 270). N.B.—Prior even to Celsus, attacks on Christianity existed, as we know from Minucius Felix, who refers to such an attack by Fronto, the tutor of Marcus Aurelius.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be continued)

FREE THINKING UPON NUREMBERG

IN plain and flat contradiction of the teachings of Jesus Christ so-called Christian nations have been sitting in judgment upon the former leaders of a neighbour Christian nation. Jesus having said: "Judge not, condemn not" and "Forgive your enemies," and even forgive your brother seventy-and-seven times (though one of the Medici pointed out that he never bade us forgive our friends!), naturally his loving adherents do the opposite.

This is the way of the world and the rule of human nature: to divorce profession from practice, the word from the deed. We need waste no time bemoaning it.

Now that the trial is ended, one can comment with decency upon its proceedings. Enough indecent comment has been published for months; and now the voice of decency begins. It must have been a shock to the average British newspaper-swallower when Lord Justice Lawrence and Mr. Justice Birkett uttered words of praise for the dignity of German defendants whom the British Press had pictured as stripped of all dignity. These eminent and fair-minded British Judges had been sent to bury Caesar and returned to praise him. Also Dean Inge had decided that the religion of Jesus did not call for death, though Rome and Canterbury were silent! Finally, Mr. Bernard Shaw, a voice as hard, clear and cutting as a diamond, perhaps the only living English writer known and respected throughout Europe and the world—said that the condemned men should be freed instantly.

These are three provocations, and rich provocations too, to a little independent thinking. Let Freethinkers think a little.

Justice—nothing more nor less—was the professed aim of the Nuremberg trial. Now as the late Lord Hewart observed in a

celebrated dictum, justice must not only be done but must manifestly *seem* to be done. It does not seem to be done when the victors try the vanquished. All except the victors may find such a spectacle a trifle unconvincing.

As judges, the nationals of the Allies were clearly barred. Only neutrals could fitly judge, "for none may be judge in his own cause." The court should have had Swiss, Swedish, Turkish judges (or even fellow-Germans as judges). Then onlookers and even the Germans themselves might have been satisfied.

Moreover, one of the English judges, Sir Norman Birkett, although one of the most fair-minded and judicial of living Englishmen, a man pre-eminently fitted to judge most causes, was especially a wrong choice in German and neutral eyes since he was formerly "Onlooker" of the B.B.C.—a passionate propagandist against Nazism. A propagandist can never be regarded as a detached and unbiased judge.

By posterity, by neutrals and by living Germans, the composition of the Court is vulnerable to valid criticism. This is a pity. For if the Court itself be vulnerable, its verdict is necessarily so. This particular verdict on the face of it seems discriminating, careful, fair, and utterly uninfluenced by the vileness of outside clamour by populace, press or politicians. Yet can posterity, neutrals or living Germans accept it?

Again, prosecutors must come into Court with clean hands. Can those responsible for that most fearful crime against International Law, the bombing of the two Japanese cities, fitly condemn the Nazis for their abominations? Asiatics ask this question and even thoughtful Englishmen are beginning to ask it.

History will probe remorselessly into this trial. As invariably history will reverse the process and try the prosecutors and the judges. Political trials always make martyrs and always the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." It is no way to destroy their gospel to turn the leading Nazis into martyrs condemned and slain by their enemies.

And what is any death sentence, whatsoever, but the adding of a State crime to the crime it seeks to punish? All killing, whether in war or peace, whether within or without the law, is manifestly wrong. It is strange indeed that any man, himself doomed to die at any unknown moment, should regard a mere inevitability as a punishment. It is stranger still that Christians professing death to be "the gate of everlasting life" and "union with Jesus" and "rest in the Lord" should inflict death, "dear beautiful death, the jewel of the just," as a punishment. These Nazis, religious to a man, will have their scarlet sins washed as white as snow (if they merely repent) in the blood of their Lord and Saviour who prefers one sinner to ninety-nine just persons: and the mercy of God which is infinite, will take them into ineffable bliss.

A most strange and most Christian punishment, indeed! You might call it returning good for evil, especially when you compare the blisses of eternal life in Paradise to the horrors of temporal life in Germany to-day.

The conclusion of Bernard Shaw that these defendants having been condemned should not be slaughtered is right. There has been too much slaughter already, and there will be too much future slaughter arising from this slaughter. No gain will come from their deaths, and the satisfaction that multitudes will feel over their extinction will harm the living and not the dead; and those capable of it will be better and happier if deprived of it.

By the way, when Mr. Shaw excepts from death sentences only "cobras, mad dogs and incurably-mischievous persons," I differ from him. Cobras, as not being vegetarians may have incurred Mr. Shaw's dislike, but for cobras who do not menace me and live peaceably, except for their natural victims, I have no death sentence. It is not the cobra's fault he was not born a Shaw and he may think his state the more gracious. A mad dog can be muzzled and possibly cured, most "mad dogs" not being mad. As to incurably-mischievous persons, what a question-begging adjective! Who has known one? If there are

any, why should the incurably psychical be killed and not the incurably insane or the incurably physically-afflicted. Besides, the mischievous are generally the salt of the earth and merely State-opponents very often. Once allow the righteousness of "killing-no-murder" in a single instance and the case against Cain is damned, and every blood-shedding from war to private vendetta will justify itself.

But so much for the Nuremberg trial. "Perceive my son with how little wisdom the world is governed." But there is always some sense in things foolish and some good in things evil. The Nuremberg trial is not the world's wonder it was feigned to be; but, at least, the conscience of the average man spoke there, even if it spoke inadequately and ludicrously. And that it should have managed to speak at all is something. But how much better if it had been allowed to say: "War is a crime and a bi-lateral crime at that. Let the neutrals try the war criminals on both sides." That, however, will be the eager task of our superior posterity.

C. G. L. DUNCANN.

"NO REVERENCE FOR ANYTHING"

IN his biography of Henry Labouchere (1831-1912), Hesketh Pearson hints his subject's agnosticism in these words:—

"Already he was considering a political career, his experience of life—and his own common sense—having made a convinced radical of him. He had absolutely no illusions about his fellow men, and his convictions were the sole result of reason and observation. 'In sending me into the world,' he confessed, 'nature sent a person without prejudice or bias, and consequently absolutely impartial. I form my conclusions upon facts and not either upon the dicta of other men or on foregone conclusions.'"

Pearson says that Labouchere had no reverence for anything and he could not be shocked, adding:—

"As a firm believer in individual freedom, he frequently shocked the House of Commons by telling it that revolutions were occasionally necessary: 'I have always been in favour of revolution when people have not got their rights and are unable to obtain them by constitutional means.' He described the taking of the Bastille as one of the noblest deeds in history—'a deed which was for the benefit of the whole human race.' On general principles he favoured rebellion. 'Who would now be called the greatest man in the United States? Why, Washington. And who is known as the greatest man in England? Hampden.' Law and order were no doubt admirable things in their way; but they should not be bracketed together, because the worst disorders that ever occurred in the world were due to laws—unjust laws."

With the remark that "the Established Church was a constant object of his scorn," Pearson thus goes on to describe Labouchere's political-religious attitude:—

"Most of its members, he declared, were Tories first and Christians next. It owned vast properties which by rights should have belonged to the nation. 'Let each sect sit like a hen on its own eggs and hatch them, and not use the State as a sort of incubator to hatch its own sectional eggs.' That was his view; and as the Church of England wallowed in profits at the expense of believers and unbelievers alike, he was always urging disestablishment and disendowment.

"On points of doctrine he did not distinguish between the various beliefs. 'I respect all religions equally,' he said, which was his way of saying that he respected none. 'I have no objection to any man in the world believing in anything he pleases,' he further declared, with no doubt the mental addition, 'if he wishes to be such an ass as to believe in anything.'

"And when the question of the burial of non-conformists in Anglican churchyards was discussed, he declared, 'I am in favour of religious equality not only above but below the sod,' which

for some recondite reason the House of Commons received with cries of 'Oh! Oh!'

Pearson gives the following example of the way in which Labouchere was so often "forced to remind his countrymen of their religion":—

"I see that some persons are proposing that prayers should be offered up regularly on behalf of our troops in Afghanistan. Seeing that our troops are armed with Martini-Henries—and our generals are able to win 'decisive victories' at the cost of one or two wounded but with 'great slaughter' among the enemy—would it not be Christian-like and magnanimous if someone were to propose that prayers be also offered up for the unfortunate Afghans?"

From 1880 to the end of his political career, Labouchere represented Northampton in the House of Commons—was a fellow-member of Bradlaugh for that constituency for ten years, and resolutely and forcefully stood by the latter in his fight for the right to take his seat by making an affirmation.

Says Pearson in reference to Labouchere's support of Bradlaugh in the House of Commons:—

"To a continuous accompaniment of mocking laughter, he delivered such phases as this: 'It is contrary to and is repugnant to the feelings of all men of tolerant minds that any gentleman should be hindered from performing civil functions in this world on account of speculative opinions regarding another world.'

"When Bradlaugh was unseated by a legal verdict, Labouchere went down to Northampton to help him win another election; and from the spirit in which 'the Christian member' assisted his atheistic friend we may infer his ironic attitude towards the whole affair.

"At a public meeting he spoke of Mr. Gladstone in a phrase that has become historic: 'Men of Northampton, I come to you with a message from the Grand Old Man. (Cheers.) I went to see him before I left London. I told him of our errand here, and he laid his hand on my shoulder, saying in his most solemn tone, "Bring him back with you, Henry—bring him back!"'

"The intimate nature of the interview was perhaps a little over-emphasised; but Gladstone was thenceforth to be known as 'the G.O.M.,' sometimes even as 'Gommy'; and the expression has since been debased by application to numerous decrepit celebrities."

Labouchere, who favoured cremation, is quoted by Pearson as saying to Harcourt in the House of Commons:—

"The Home Secretary has told us that he would feel afraid he might be poisoned if other people were burned. 'My relations would immediately poison me,' he says. 'One cousin would poison me, another cousin would burn me, and neither cousin would hang for it.' Well, I think that is within the range of practical politics. But the Home Secretary also says, 'Look at Christianity! When Christianity came they ceased to burn the dead.' I should like to point out to him that many sects of the Church have always been in favour of burning, for they used to burn heretics on both sides, even before they were dead. Then the right hon. gentleman tells us that it is a question of sentiment, or feeling. I do not know who has that feeling. So far as I am concerned it is a matter of absolute indifference to me whether I am buried or burnt or anatomised or anathematised."

Labouchere never took part in the prayers in the House of Commons.

"He was," says Pearson, "that apparently abnormal product—a perfectly normal man, who wished people to do just as they pleased, never interfered with others, and would not let others interfere with him."

Before becoming a member of the House of Commons, Labouchere was for some years in the diplomatic service, and had become a widely-admired figure as the founder-editor of "Truth."

The stand he took with regard to the Monarchy, together with his vigorously-expressed opposition to Royal grants and votes, earned him the distinction of being denounced as a reptile by Queen Victoria and the then Prince of Wales.

His personal attitude towards the Reigning House was quite clear.

"I do not," he said, "feel the slightest loyalty towards the Royal Family. Indeed, I do not understand the meaning of the term 'Royal Family.' My loyalty to the Queen is a feeling of respect for the visible emblem of the laws that we ourselves have made, and I honour her because of her sterling qualities and for the good sense she has shown during her reign."

Here follows the comment by Pearson:—

"But it was in connection with the Queen's grandchildren that Labouchere's 'sincere admiration' of Her Majesty had to be taken on trust, and to enter into the Queen's feelings we must forget her position and think of her simply as any old lady whose investments were being tampered with by an unscrupulous and unsympathetic stranger. 'The extreme limit of our obligation is to provide for the children of the sovereign,' he declared, 'and a little reflection will show the necessity for such a limit. George III. had thirteen children; and if each of his children had as many, it is an interesting little sum to ascertain the number of descendants that would have to be provided for now.' He repeated his assertion that the Queen was quite rich enough, with an annual income of £700,000, to make handsome allowances to her grandchildren, and remarked, 'Sufficient for the reign are the children thereof.'"

To an inquiry by the Prince of Wales: "Do you suppose I should drown my children like puppy dogs as soon as they are born?" Labouchere replied, "No, sir; but your Royal Highness should live within his income."

Pearson concludes:—

"On Sunday afternoon, January 14, 1912, Labouchere was dozing, when a spirit lamp on the table by his side was knocked over and flared up. His eyes opened.

"Flames?" he murmured. "Not yet, I think."

"He chuckled and dozed off again, and just before midnight on Monday the 15th his eyes closed for the last time.

"He had wished to lie by the side of his wife in the cemetery of San Miniato; but there was a rule that only Catholics could be buried there. An appeal having been made to the authorities, it was discovered that by a curious coincidence the cemetery was just then passing from the possession of some religious body into that of the municipality. The bar against heretics was thus removed, and Labouchere was placed close to his Catholic wife in consecrated earth.

"It should be added that his wish was dictated by affection, not piety, for he never wanted to be taken on the Establishment, even of a better world."

Is there not inspiration for us all in the life of Labouchere—combining as he did the qualities of radical, freethinker, and humanitarian, and whose efforts represent a by no means inconsiderable contribution to the material and intellectual progress of Britishers generally?

J. Y. ANDERONEY.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

There was a "packed" meeting the other day at a Presbytery of Glasgow. This was not due to a rush of worshippers to God; it was really a matter of dealing with the demand for increased salaries, which now stands at an annual sum of £380. One of the representatives of God complained that once upon a time ministers of the Church were the best-paid men; now "the average minister finds himself in a very inferior position." He might also have added that God no longer sends birds to feed his preachers, and the trick by which Jesus fed a multitude by a handful of bread and fishes died with "Our Lord." These are very trying times for all of us.

ACID DROPS

The Bishop of Manchester is concerned with what will happen to the Church when the population of Bolton and other areas leave to make room for new improvements. We cannot say, but we have a suspicion on the matter. Church attendance is very largely habit, and when men and women leave for a new quarter large numbers do *not* renew their connection with the Church. Multitudes are attached to the churches by a mere thread, and even that is breaking rapidly. If the powers above could repeat some of the tricks that occurred in Jerusalem there might be a revival, but that is not likely. Our deep sympathy with the Bishop of Manchester.

The following reads very much as though one parson is inclined to revolt. The Vicar of St. John's, Palmers Green, writes in the parish magazine:—

"On the second Sunday in September we were bidden to pray for reasonable weather that the harvest might be saved and gathered in. We did so, and that day it promptly rained harder than ever. I should not be surprised if this experience didn't start some of us wondering again about the whole subject of prayer. . . But I would ask you to consider one further question. Has it never struck you that our prayers may be heard by someone else besides God?"

It is a pity that the Vicar had not the mental courage to tell God a bit of his mind instead of suggesting that Satan also listened to the prayers and so pushed God into the background. Really if we believed in either or both of these supernatural beings we would try and keep good terms with Satan. God ought to do what he should without demanding that men and women to grovel before him.

Juvenile delinquency in Liverpool is on the increase in spite of the fact that most of the delinquents have come from religious homes, and have religion forced on them at school. The leader of the Liverpool City Council, Alderman Shennan—probably in despair—is now asking four live bishops to come in and help as well as two hundred clergymen, though so far none of these representatives of God have managed to explain why their charges show such "criminal" traits. The point to note is that "blatant materialism" or "shoddy secularism" cannot be blamed, and the clergy are doing their best to explain the juvenile crime wave as not being due to the failure of their religion, but as due to anything else that comes into their heads. So we can only ask again, why has the excessive religion taught to the young in Liverpool failed to prevent their criminal delinquencies?

If we must have religion in the schools it is gratifying to note that the (Ireland) Education Bill permits teachers to stand aloof from the religious lesson. There is strong opposition to this clause and the Protestant Bishop of Clogher has denounced the clause as putting a premium on unbelief. It is doing nothing of the kind. It is only arranging for teachers to express their own self-respect, and so they would be better calculated to be entrusted with the education of children. One of the vilest remarks that has ever been made is for parents to say concerning their children, "I will let my children grow up to believe in Christianity and leave it to them to find out what is true when they get off my hands."

In these days of quick communication at great distances of the globe it is not surprising to find that the shrinking of the Christian and other forms of religion is common wherever a people are in touch with modern science and modern thought. No one will, therefore, be surprised to learn that the growth of Freethinking is not merely common to the white men, but to those of colour also. Some time ago there was a surprisingly good broadcast on the native races returning from the war. The speaker, not a coloured man, said plainly that the natives are returning from the war with a determination to have a share in the culture of the White world. We heartily wish them success. Other things equal, the coloured man is capable of absorbing all the culture the White Race has gained. Perhaps Smuts might lend a hand in this direction.

But we see from the recent "Cape Times" that the Archbishop of Cape Town is seriously disturbed by "the flight of religion." We can appreciate his fear, for when religion comes into touch with a higher civilisation it begins to weaken. That is the truth that meets us from all parts of the world. The Archbishop will have nothing to do with those who condole themselves with the reflection that given time the old power of religion will be restored. He believes, and is right in believing, that once men begin to falter—we should say "understand"—the return steps are rarely taken again.

Mr. Tom Braddock, Socialist M.P. for Mitcham, is evidently an Atheist and, unlike many others, he is not afraid to say so. The "Daily Record" reports Mr. Braddock as saying: "I have never said a prayer in my life or asked anything of a supernatural power, and I resent the suggestion that we are all miserable sinners and can only be saved by some supernatural power. I never went to a church and I never went to a Sunday School; and as I never came under the Church's influence I never knew I was a sinner." If all the men in the House of Commons were as intellectually honest as Mr. Braddock appears to be the country would be better off than it is at present.

The advance of Freethought is to-day shouted from the housetops by Christian preachers. One recent example out of many was furnished by the annual meeting of the Liverpool and District Congregational Union, held at Liverpool. The president of the meeting made no disguise that the power of the Churches was rapidly declining, but somehow he managed to place all that is unpleasant as due to the weakening of Christian belief. And that is just nonsense. There is a disjointment of life at the moment, much of which is a consequence of the world war; but there is forcing its way through an upheaving that is a forerunner of all great changes. The truth is that man is awakening to the power and capabilities that may well be the forerunner of a new life for all, and a rapid development of human betterment is before us.

The hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who go to Lourdes, Fatima, and other Continental shrines make the "Universo" sadly recall that, as far back as 1420, we in England also had 100,000 pilgrims visiting our national shrine at Canterbury. And what good did all that religious fervour do to anybody? Let anyone read how "heresy" was then treated by the Church; how heretics were tortured and slaughtered in those good old times in England. Some of the scenes of horror described by the old chroniclers surpass the horrors of Belsen—but pilgrims went to the shrine at Canterbury! The Roman Church never has repented its savagery, and never will.

The New Education Act in Northern Ireland will see the end of all the old Education Acts; but it is going to have one feature which will gladden the hearts of all the faithful. Religious education is to be compulsory, and there is going to be religious daily work. In county schools it will be "undenominational" (which in Ulster really means Protestantism) and "denominational" in voluntary schools. Ulster already has a reputation for rabid religious bigotry, and all this religious instruction will see that its set standard this way is thoroughly kept up. Still, we expect things will not be allowed to go their own way so easily. Even in Ulster there must be people who have found religion out.

Anything that will help a Church in distress is welcome. For example, the Bishop of London is shocked at there being 44,000 divorce cases being settled—we take the numbers for granted; but the Bishop's method of handling the matter is just laughable. He thinks that if people went to church once a week there would be a falling-off of divorce cases. We do not see how going to church will prevent any couple making a mistake. The Church has nothing to do with the legalising of marriage, and it is obvious truth that it was the unworthiness of the Church in controlling marriage that led to making all marriages subject to the civil and non-religious State. And after all, the vast part of happily married life easily outdoes the unhappy ones.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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London, W.C. 1.
Telephone No. Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. LESLIE.—Obliged for news cutting. Will be used.

THOMAS WILLIAMSON.—We do not support any denial of freedom of thought, whether it comes from Russia or anywhere else. But one should bear in mind that Russia was in a terrible state before the war, and has had to face one of the fiercest wars the world has seen. There is no question that the existing Russia is better than the one that was overthrown. How much better time will show. The real difficulty is for men to show justice with strength.

E. F. RUSSELL.—Thanks. Next week.

A. HANN.—Thanks for note, but we did not give any date for the quotation from Mark Twain, and the matter cited is applicable to any date.

JACK LESLIE.—Thanks; useful.

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

Recently the "Sunday Times" printed as an item of news that Charles Bradlaugh refused to take the oath when elected to Parliament. The statement was made by Monsignor R. A. Knox, and it was quite wrong. One of our readers promptly wrote to the paper saying that Bradlaugh never refused the oath but claimed the right to affirm. He then said he would go through the formality and would regard his oath as an affirmation. That was also refused and it led to one of the most scandalous scenes that ever occurred in the House of Commons. In the end Bradlaugh won, and later was able to induce the Commons to pass a Bill which allowed every person to affirm where an oath was usually required. It was a great victory won by a great man.

The letter, noting the inaccuracy, was sent to the editor of the "Sunday Times" for correction. The space required was about three or four lines. But the editor replied that he could not find space for these few lines owing to "pressure." Obviously the lie of the priest had to be protected. We understand that a number of protests were made. But the Roman Catholic priest was saved from exposure.

There appears to be something in the nature of a "strike" among the common clergy in Wales. There is a revolt against an increase in income for the bishops from £300 to £1,000 per year. The "common" are in revolt on the ground that they need an increase more than the bishops. The Rev. Ellis Evans says that he and his like need a "rise" much more than the bishops, and says bluntly that if the bishops cannot manage on their present payment they should give up their "mansions." We expect that the bishops will have their way.

It is generally recognised that in many parts of South Africa Christianity of an old form—and therefore the more honest form of the Christian faith—is fairly strong. An example of this we

SPECIAL

At the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Bradford there was a lengthy discussion on a motion standing in the name of the Manchester Branch. There was no prospect of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, and as the President was not in favour of the motion it was resolved that the matter be dealt with at a Special Meeting called for further discussion at a later date.

This has now been arranged for Sunday, October 27, in the Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1., the discussion to be taken at 3 o'clock. Branches of the N.S.S. may appoint delegates, and all members may attend on showing their membership card. Those who are without cards will be given one from the General Secretary at or before the meeting, and all members will have an equal right to speak and vote. It is hoped that all who can attend will do so.

(Signed) CHAPMAN COHEN,
President.

find in the "Rand Daily Mail." In the Vereeniging Town Council the question was discussed whether or not a person applying for office or employment by the Council should continue to be questioned as to his religious opinions. After much discussion the inquiry concerning the religion of anyone aiming at employment under the Council will be continued. We in this country should not look down to the South African bigots, because we have the same thing in this country, although it is not official. The difference is that we are rather more hypocritical than are the primitives in South Africa.

One hundred and seventy young Churchmen the other day met in the Conway Hall to pledge themselves to observe the duty of attending the Eucharist on Sunday. Ye gods, we can imagine the ghost of Moncreaf Conway grinning liberally.

Readers who are interested in the Jesus Myth Problem should make a note of the debate which takes place in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on October 22, at 7 p.m. The two disputants are Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., and Mr. H. Cutner, and there should be a lively exchange of views on "Is Jesus a Myth?" Debates are very infrequent these days and this one should attract a good audience. Admission is free with a collection.

The Newcastle Branch N.S.S. opens a very attractive syllabus of lectures to-day arranged for the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street. Mr. McCall, of Manchester, is the first speaker, and his subject is "The Menace of Religion To-day." The lecture begins at 7 p.m., admission is free, with some reserved seats at one shilling each. Mr. J. T. Brighton and the branch officials are working hard and long, with the conviction that Freethinkers and sympathisers in the area will come forward with the necessary help to ensure success.

The "Daily Record" for October 4 contained an advertisement asking for someone "to take charge of a boy (Protestant)." We can understand the need for a nurse, but we wonder whether it was the boy who insisted on having a Protestant nurse. Strange things happen to the godly nowadays.

The Emperor of Japan was an incarnate god. So alas was and is our King. He was made an incarnation of God at the Westminster religious ceremony. Our God-King is safe; the God-Emperor of Japan has ceased to be a god—he was knocked out with an atomic bomb; and the poor people are puzzled as to how they are to approach the king—all that is left. Perhaps the Japanese will presently ask for that part of the Emperor that was God to be restored. The difficulty is that once a god loses his post it is not very easy to get it back again.

BIBLE TRANSLATION

II.

IF the Authorised Version of the Bible is admittedly a faulty one, what are we to say of the Revised Version? In his excellent discussion on translation, "Intertraffic," Mr. E. S. Bates says: "The accuracy of the Revised Version is a provisional accuracy." This looks like small consolation for those fervent believers searching for the true Word of God. If, at the end of the 19th century, the finest body of Biblical scholars in England and America could only reach a "provisional" accuracy in translating God's special revelation to mankind, the outlook is very bad indeed. It is at least doubtful whether present day Biblical scholars or translators have reached a higher degree of learning than their predecessors.

It is rather curious that Mr. Bates says nothing about Dr. Robert Young's famous "literal" translation of the Bible which appeared as far back as 1863. Young was a fine linguist with an exceptional knowledge of Hebrew and kindred languages, and he spent his life elucidating the difficulties he found in the "original" Hebrew and Greek of the Bible. What he thought of the Revised Version can be seen in his books: "Concordance to Eight Thousand Changes of the Revised New Testament" and "Contributions to a New Revision; or a Critical Companion to the New Testament." I doubt whether any of the Churches will ever again produce such a scholar on the Bible—though if any do, he is very likely, through such intense study, to come right over to Freethought.

Mr. Bates might also have told us what he thought of Dean Burgon, a fierce enemy of the Revised Version, which he considered to be of no value whatever. He ridiculed the three great manuscripts, the Sinaiticus, the Vaticanus, and the Alexandrinus, as giving a better text than those upon which the A.V. is based. In fact, he claimed that Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, among others, are "depositories of a fabricated and depraved text." He wanted to know whether there could not have been in the fourth and fifth centuries "refuse" copies of the Bible, copies obviously so bad that they served later to be of use only for other writings to be written over "God's Holy Word." Yet some of these "palimpsests" are appealed to as of greater authority than the Received Text (i.e., the A.V.). For those interested in translations of the Bible, Burgon makes engrossing reading, and it would be a great pity if the courageous, and certainly very angry, old critic were ever forgotten.

Of course, the real difficulty in translating the Bible is that words and ideas two or three thousand years old in various languages do not mean the same as we mean by them. Does "righteousness," for example, always mean the same, whether in the oldest portions of the Old Testament, in the latest parts of the New Testament, and in our own 1946 English? If the answer is "yes," the next query must be, "how do you know?" and there is no answer to that. We simply do not know what the "original" writers of the Bible actually meant by the word "righteousness." Nor do we know what the words which we translate "soul" or "spirit" originally meant. And one can multiply these uncertainties by the thousand.

From the Freethought point of view, there is also another consideration. Supposing we did translate the Bible accurately, each word exactly as it was originally "thought" to be—what then? Would that make the Bible more true, more inspired, actually the veritable Word of God? Of course not. Rightly or wrongly translated, the Bible would be exactly what we now consider it to be, a depository of old legends, fairy tales, and folk lore, intermixed with some good and dubious moral teaching. There is very little history in it, and certainly none that matters two hoots. Why should the quarrels and petty jealousies of some tuppenny tribal chiefs in Palestine worry us these days?

Whatever may be thought on this point, however, it is a fact that it is quite impossible to get at the meaning of writings mostly made about two thousand years ago by people with extraordinary ideas of the Universe writing in strange languages, and trembling with fear of the Unknown. This was recognised by Robert Bridges, who wrote:—

"It is necessary that the philosophy of the Hebrews and the Greeks and their metaphysical ideas should be understood and defined, and faithfully reproduced by a consistent use of special equivalent terms; and these do not exist. Our English words are labels for other ideas, and cannot be readjusted and assorted to match with ideas that are outside our mental horizon. This makes any pretence of verbal accuracy in a literary translation impossible; it is not within the compass of human skill."

Mr. Bates comes to the conclusion that if the official versions of the Bible are not satisfactory, there are two others which he can recommend as being the best that can be had at the moment. The first is the translation of the Old Testament, the "Holy Scriptures," compiled by Jewish scholars of North America (published here by Routledge at 5s.), and the Basic English version of the New Testament. But he avoids telling us what effect a reading of these two translations will have on our faith. Shall we believe? Shall we once again turn to God—or what?

Either there is a God who gave us his Word so that we can walk humbly, reverently, in his ways, or there is not. And no minute discussion on textual variants, on the worth of one manuscript of the Bible compared with another, on disquisitions as to when or where a copy or a version was written, can ever again add one iota to the credibility or authenticity of the Bible. Books may pour out of the press dealing with "inspiration" or prayer, or infallibility, or sin—it matters not, the Bible as a Holy Book or Precious Word is finished. Whether the Churches base their authority on tradition, or on the Word, or on both, is also a matter of indifference. Any Church which, in this age of science, can solemnly assure us that the nonsensical miracles of the Bible are true history, vindicated by tradition and the Bible, is simply out of the pale of serious discussion.

Interesting, therefore, as any discussion on the text of the Bible and its versions may be from the purely academic point of view, and I admit that I find it hard not to finish a book dealing with these things, the fact remains that it is purely a waste of time. Its only object can be, bringing the erring sinner back into the fold, and anyone who has once given up belief in the Bible is not likely to retract when he is made aware that certain passages of certain books were in the past wrongly translated, and now for the first time have been corrected.

Have we then to give up our criticisms of the Bible? By no means. So long as it is the great fetish book of Christianity, so long as it is boosted up on every possible occasion as God's Holy Word, so long it will be our business to attack it. And I am afraid it still has a long life before it.

H. CUTNER.

DODECANESE DRUIDRY

SO often do we read of native customs and their religious origins that travel is often disappointing because we cannot find first-hand evidence of the things of which we have read. We are forced to return to England in order to study the surviving superstitions of our ancestors. Symi, a small island in the Aegean, made up for many disappointments elsewhere.

The day I arrived at the island a ceremony was taking place which would have made J. M. Wheeler rejoice. The Christian and Pagan rites which attend a keel-laying were taking place in one and the same ceremony. Symi, it is said, is where Agamemnon placed his contract for the fleet which besieged Troy and to-day wooden ships are still fashioned as they were then—

blueprints, no slipways, but just an adze, a bandsaw and a great deal of brute force.

As I stepped on to the quay I could see on a sandy waste patch nearby a group of men gathered round a long square haulk of timber lying on the ground. Curious, I approached and found that a Greek Orthodox priest resplendent in a black gown and wearing a long white beard was busy blessing this piece of timber which I now found to be a new-laid keel. While the Christian prayers were still being said another man with a sharp knife cut the throat of a small, frightened goat and emptied its blood along the keel until the white pine was dyed crimson. The prayers ended and trays of wine and cakes were circulated among the crowd. I accepted the wine, which was excellent, though I could not bring myself to eat one of the small butter cakes. "Timeo Danaos et Doughnut ferentes," as one might say. On the whole there was not much difference between the sacrifice of expensive wine at an English launching and the sacrifice of a seven and sixpenny goat at a Greek island keel-laying.

Easter at Symi brought new rites to see. In the village square were to be seen small bread representations of pregnant women and in the swollen bellies were implanted hard-boiled eggs. Bell ringing—a most unpleasant sound when there are only two bells—continued through the night and explosions never ceased. Normally, I was told, fireworks were used to augment the hideous din but as war was still raging squibs were scarce and they had to make do with dynamite. The next day showed that quite a number of the islanders had been severely injured, one man losing his right hand by a premature explosion. I asked several people whether or not they did not think the whole thing rather silly. All of them were surprised at the question and one Easter enthusiast said: "And do you not have similar celebrations in your country?" I was about to say: "No, of course not," when second thoughts rushed into my mind. I smiled and said: "Yes, I suppose we do in a way." And don't we?

LYNDON IRVING.

ESCAPISM

THE question whether Anstey's satire and Well's propaganda is rightly to be considered as escapism can only be answered by a definition of the term. Not only is it "possible that Anstey did not realise what he was doing," but it is also possible that R. H. does not realise what he is doing in answering his own question. In the "Detective Story Today" he put the question "Is escapism necessarily bad?" In a Victorian Escapist he answers that: "Escapism is not invariably bad." The question raised is whether the word is being mis-used and misunderstood in the "fashionable literary jargon of the day." Charles Bradlaugh argued that the mis-use of the word Atheism was all the more reason for using it, and he gave a definition. What is wanted in the case of escapism is not a definition so much as an exposition of the ideas contained in its legitimate use. Perhaps an attempt will answer the question and at the same time give some explanation of how it is "the world is in an almost completely crazy state."

The basic idea comes from Shopenhauer. Finding himself local with the hopeless metaphysical tangle of the introspective philosophy of his day, Shopenhauer tried to straighten things out by putting a different point of view. Classic philosophy tried to conceive things in positive terms, desire was an actual if not a real thing; hence the squabble about mind and matter. In the same way the objects of desire were equally positive, hence the search for the eternal verities and the desire for happiness. The philosopher, like the Christian, found himself faced with indefinable incomprehensibles; no positive definition is acceptable and these positive terms turn out to be negative. These, said Shopenhauer, are not the basic realities. There is one thing

that is beyond doubt, and that is pain. Life is not a search for truth, for beauty, for peace, for happiness; but a striving to avoid pain, to escape the painful truth of cold hard facts. The question then becomes, not what are the inscrutable verities, but what is the nature of the things we find so painful? Here we have a positive line open to investigation, recognising pain as a consequence of something as well as a factor in our behaviour, which is a reaction to whatever produces pain.

We have different conceptions of the eternal verities, we each live in a world of our own. An artist's idea of the world is different from that of an engineer. Our ideas are determined by our education and culture, by the degree of sensitivity and sensibility. And, as with the world as idea, so also with the world as will; what we think of the world is also determined by our feelings and the circumstances which give rise to them. If a man or for that matter an animal, is held so that its movements are restrained, it struggles. As with our physical movements, so also with our mental cravings. We struggle against that which is unendurable. Deprived of liberty, we crave for freedom; in the absence of security we crave for it. A man kept in darkness in confinement, will crave for light, crave for liberty; will go mad. In our mental striving we endeavour to gain satisfaction in seeing what we crave. A starving man thinks of food, will see food; a sex-starved man has visions, dreams. We see what we want to see, we do not see what we do not want to see. A dream is a short insanity, insanity is a long dream.

Shopenhauer is somewhat difficult reading owing to the metaphysic he struggled against, but his basic ideas are less strange today than they were when he burst upon the world. His ideas were unorthodox. Anyone with respect for orthodoxy in philosophy or science would do well to reflect upon the extent to which modern psychology was derived from the ideas of charlatans and cranks. The initial step came from Paracelsus, who not only discovered laudenaum and its use in relieving pain but also gave us the bed-side manner of the medical practitioner. His great reputation was built upon the use of physical and mental dope. He conceived human behaviour on the analogy of magnetism; just as a magnet can affect another piece of iron, so also can one man influence another. This gave rise to a cult of animal magnetism, the high-light of which was mesmerism. Mesmer supposed a fluid by means of which a strong willed person could mesmerise a weaker individual. The subject occasioned much controversy and quackery; and discussion and experiment disclosed the fact of hypnotism, which has proved extremely useful in subsequent research.

All this produced a change in our attitude towards things; just as magnetism needed a new standard of evaluation in physics, so also did psychology need a new approach and a new criterion. We no longer try to explain psychology in terms of physics. But further, the use of hypnotism gave us a new technique. Experiment by the alienist in connection with mental disorders, and later by the psycho-analyst, leading to psychopathology and dream psychology, disclosed two facts of vital importance. First, the difference between the normal and the abnormal is one of degree and not of kind; second, forgetting is not the absence of memory, but is just as positive, just as much an expression of desire. Just as memory can be and is trained and cultivated by repetition, so also is forgetting. We know more about it than did Shopenhauer, for we now know the mechanism and the consequence of the desire to forget. It operates by means of evasion and distraction, by rationalisation and sublimation, using the method of inversion and substitution; finding ecstatic joy in pain, or finding in pleasure an antidote to the painful truths of cold hard facts.

There is a grave danger in striving to blind ourselves; in striving to forget. It is a bad habit because we might succeed in forgetting, and then be unable to remember. In that case we should need the hypnotism and suggestion of the alienist or psycho-analyst, to stimulate our memory. Burying our heads in the sand is no solution of any problem, and, though we no

longer remember, we still feel the influence of the painful thing from which we strive to escape. The position then is that though we feel and react to the stimulus, we are no longer conscious of the nature of the stimulus; we are no longer in the realm of the conscious, but of the unconscious. Such is the character of what is called the unconscious mind, it is the result of forgetting; of the habit of escapism. Instead of thinking of this as a mysterious entity; instead of talking about Ids, Libides, Egos and Super-egos as if they were metaphysical entities, we should recognise these as names given to the various types of psychological behaviour; of reactions to stimuli; criteria by which we describe the psychological aspect of our behaviour; our desires and emotions.

The difference between sound and unsound mind is one of exaggerated idiosyncrasies. Though exaggerated, the abnormal is the type of the normal. We are all escapist to a greater or lesser degree. The problem would not be so difficult if we were concerned only with physical or biological considerations. As individuals we might, through understanding, learn to control ourselves, but the subject is much wider than Shopenhauer thought; man is a social animal, and the exaggeration of, if not the idiosyncrasies themselves, are social in origin. The influence of the parents, the home life, and later, the school, develop the habits of the child. Not only has the child plenty to escape from—blame, punishment, ridicule, misunderstanding—prevarication is the only defence against an irate parent; but the child also learns the customary modes of escapism from his parents and associates. He learns to laugh when they laugh, though the child does not see the joke; to drink, to dance, to go to cinema or church, or whatnot, and the child is quite ignorant either of the origin or of the consequences of the customs, which are inherited from the past. Here, with the habit of forgetting expanded into custom, personal memory is totally inadequate; the social memory needs stimulating; we forget far too easily and far too much.

It is vitally necessary to realise the sociological character of psychological development. It arises in the influence of the parent upon the child and in group association. The disastrous consequences, and the character of, the desire to forget, expressed socially, is seen in the development of religion. With religion, inversion reads its own feelings and motives into inanimate nature, and personality into the material world; it substitutes tradition for experience, belief for knowledge, faith for intelligence, and superstition for understanding. It is expressed in the taboo, the folk law, the restrictions and restraints of religion, the bondage of custom and dogma. In its development it shows all the idiosyncrasies of lunacy. The social dream is a form of social insanity expressing a form of social insomnia; which attains the fury of fanaticism. Acquiescence, mental amnesia, self-abnegation, expressed socially spells chaos and annihilation.

In recognising the connection between consciousness and memory, we might realise that there is a difference between amusement and intellectual recreation. With the animals, play develops the faculties to ensure survival; it should do the same with man.

H. H. PREECE.

AS CUNNING AS A CRAFTY CRADOCK

It appears to be more than probable that John Cradock, Vicar of Gainford (MDXCIV), might have given rise to the above proverb. He was a high commissioner for Durham, a justice of the peace, the Bishop's spiritual chancellor, and vicar-general. He confounded the jurisdiction of the above offices, and made one to assist the other. He took bribes as a magistrate and did numerous other underhand practices. Mr. Waldron, in his "History of Gainford," records a few of his crafty misdeeds, vide p. 82, etc.

E. H. S.

CHRISTIAN MATHEMATICS

I.

ONE hears and reads so much publicly of Christian ethics and morality, Christian principles, Christian way of living, Christian education, Christian virtues that it would not be surprising to hear of Christian engineering or Christian navigation. The U.S.A. has had for many years a sect professing Christian Science, officially the Church of Christ Scientist.

Wherefore it is worth while to devote a few minutes to consideration of Christian Mathematics.

Eschewing fractions the basic theorem is that one equals three and three equals one. Verbally this is worded as trinity in unity and unity in trinity, but the arithmetical aspect concerns us. That three equals one and one equals three has to be received as axiomatic by all who profess and call themselves Christians.

As Euclid said of other axioms, it is neither capable of nor needing proof. Attempts to do so lead to intricacies of involvement beyond the wit or grasp of man. True enough the Athanasian Creed rather rhetorically essays argument, and as Matthew Arnold pointed out gets into a bad temper over it.

The Creed escapes the dilemma by deciding there are not three incomprehensibles but one incomprehensible. To the plain man that is sufficient to conclude we can know nothing about it, but theologians, metaphysicians and other paid agents of incomprehensibility keep on harping on the theme.

The hymn writer plumps for the singular by singing:—

"Three in one and one in three,
Maker of the earth and sea."

The operative word being presumably "maker."

On a larger scale another hymn writer sings of:—

"Multitudes which none can number."

II.

This looseness in definition is far too common in Christian mathematics. Religious people speak and write and sing glibly of myriads, hosts, multitudes, throngs, eternity, everlasting, for ever, unending; with no attempt to make clear the limits of counting, and, one fears, with but vague concepts themselves. Not for them the elaborate but precise calculations of astronomers with their millions of light-years any more than the exactitude of other scientists who use mathematics as the instrument both of discovery and exposition.

Yet the perfervid author of Revelation does not hesitate to annotate with numbers his frenzied visions. He tells us of seven churches, spirits, stars, seals, angels, thunders; four beasts, horses, angels; four-and-twenty elders; ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels; two hundred thousand thousand horsemen, and numerous other numbers small and great. The devil is bound for a thousand years. The Beast has seven heads and ten horns and his mark is six hundred and sixty-six. There are a hundred and forty and four thousand elect. A thousand gross seems a small gathering out of the gross total of all the tribes of Israel.

So it goes on up and down the Bible, both Old and New Testaments; statistics flung about with startling profusion, giving an air of precision, but largely meaningless; as mythical as the events they enumerate.

III.

As in Revelation problematic figures and symbolic numbers have fascination for non-mathematical minds, particularly when preoccupied with religion. Hence the craze for measuring the Pyramids and deducing prophecies therefrom. A few years ago one crude American sect invading Britain boldly proclaimed "Millions now living will never die." Forecasts from Biblical texts are their speciality.

Modernly the churches strive to produce big membership figures. By counting all baptisms, confirmations and other ceremonial attendances and congregations on occasions like Easter the total can be swollen far above the average attendance. Contrarily finances are kept as secret as possible, which is just what the public should know, notably stipends.

But that one equals three and three equals one transcends all other in Christian numerology, inescapable, to be accepted by believers on peril of eternal damnation.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

REQUIEM

Life is but a journey taken
On a road that all must tread;
Some are bruised and some are shaken;
Some are driven, some are led.

Man is born to struggle grimly,
Darkest Ignorance his foe;
Though he lights the path but dimly,
Yet more plainly will it show.

We are part of Nature's forces,
Nothing more and nothing less.
None can know it's hidden sources,
Nor the future may we guess.

Foolish myth shall never bind us,
Nor belief in pagan lore;
Superstition shall not bind us—
Reason is the Open Door.

From the elements that made us—
To the elements returned;
Satisfied that Life has paid us
In the knowledge we have learned.

Shed no tears of bitter sorrow,
Not in sadness need we part;
Look towards a new Tomorrow
Bravely—not with aching heart.

No regrets and no dull mourning;
Not in anguish bow your head.
Darkness passes with the dawning—
Grieving cannot help the dead.

Know in peace we are but resting,
Freed from mortal pain and strife;
Our's the gain but your's the festing—
Your's to battle on through Life.

Let no doleful words be spoken,
Nor your pleasures cease, we pray;
When Life's prison bonds are broken
Would you bid the captive stay?

Linger not with thoughts distressing;
All farewells are better brief.
Inward calm is more impressing
Than mere outward show of grief.

Though this earthly tie we sever,
May this knowledge soothe your pain—
Ev'ry loved one shall for ever
In Sweet Memory remain.

W. H. WOOD.

OBITUARY

HENRY SPENCE.

The Freethought movement has lost a veteran fighter by the death of Henry Spence, which took place during his midday meal on September 30, in his 81st year. Joining the N.S.S. in 1886, he played an active and interested part in Freethought until his death.

Readers of "The Freethinker" will recall his contributions to its columns, which were always scholarly and clear, with a definite objective. Much of his activity was given to the West Ham Branch N.S.S., where for some time he acted as its secretary, often lectured from its platform, and won the warm-hearted esteem of his fellow members for his loyalty and service to the cause. As one of the old hands, he knew what it meant to work hard for Freethought, to face the difficulties involved, and to pay for the privilege. He loved a fight, and when once he had his teeth into an argument, or an opponent, he held on. Strong and independent in mind and character, he spoke and wrote neither to please nor displease, but to state something he felt to be true and reasonable and needed saying. He never hid his opinions and faced what petty-minded Christians intrigued, but gained many worthy friends among those who admired manliness. His devotion to Freethought never slackened, and his admiration for Mr. Chapman Cohen was intense. He never missed his weekly copy of the paper, and right up till his death his regular salutation to the family circle on Thursday mornings was "Where's my 'Freethinker'?"

On the educational side, he matriculated at the Edinburgh University, took the degree of Bachelor of Science at the Birkbeck College in the University of London, and was also a Bachelor of Arts. From 1890 to 1906 he was secretary of the Natural History Society. He held the Ravenscroft Scholarship and was a member of the Board of the London University. For forty years he was a teacher in West Ham, and on retiring he went into business in Huntingdon, where he died.

He leaves one son, married, and a sister. His remains were interred in Huntingdon Cemetery on October 3, where before an assembly of relatives, friends and neighbours a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

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.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 22, 7 p.m. Debate: "Is Jesus a Myth?" Aff., Mr. H. CUTNER. Neg., Mr. A. D. HOWELL SMITH, B.A.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—11 a.m.: "The Revolt of the Masses," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, 12, Gt. Newport St., W.C.1).—6-30 p.m.: "The Colour Bar," Dr. MITCHELL.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—7-30 p.m.: A lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—6-30 p.m.: "Sex Education for Adults," Mr. A. C. DITTON.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—6-30 p.m.: "Rome, Russia and Secularism," Mr. JOSEPH McCABE.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—7 p.m.: "The Menace of Religion To-day," Mr. COLIN McCALL.

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