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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

On Kidnapping

ORIGINALLY "Kidnapping" had no connection with the stealing of children. There is no special origin of the meaning of the term, although it is generally connected with the stealing of children. "Kid" has an animal significance, and also, by some "magic" it becomes the equivalent of a child. We will leave that as it stands. It is certain that in the fifteenth century it had no reference to a child when it became the vogue. But it was recognised in the sixteenth century, when the adventuring sailors went abroad, "Kidnapping" then had a definite meaning. The method of securing coloured men for slavery was then developing. The slave trade had commenced—a trade where the material was stolen and the holders became rich. For the trade, youngish people were of greatest use. So, with "the help of God," His children grew wealthy and the "Kidnapping" referred to the capture of young slaves.

So things went on for some considerable time, and the shape of things altered. As the British raiders brought "Kidnapping" into being, the same use of "Kidnapping"—say about the first quarter of the nineteenth century—introduced a new "Kidnapping." It became more and more certain that if the Churches were to keep the people they must breed them. It was of no use for the Churches to wait for followers until they became of age. It was plain that the boys and the girls must be captured before they could resist. The parsons became as so many "Kidnappers." It was plain. The only chance of securing children was "Kidnapping." The clergy knew what they were after. The old term "Kidnapping" had the same name, and in one sense, both stood for the same thing. For as the Christian sailors were after black humans, the priests were after white ones. The black was the slave for the good Christians, the boys and girls would always see the Church was their home. There actually was a Church just out of London that was called "the children's Church," but it seems to have died out.

Still, it was a sharp trick. Those who have read those two charming books by Karl Groos on the subjects "Man" and "The Play of Animals" will appreciate better how the churches strived hard to capture the young. It is quite certain that if children are not subjected to their heads being filled with religion, they will be very slow in attending Church. The whole hope of the Churches depends on this kind of "Kidnapping." The tricks are numerous, the moral damage great. One day a body of learned men will sit down to count the injury to the world by that practice of "Christian Kidnapping."

There is a complete philosophy of religion locked up in this religious "Kidnapping." And there is a philosophy of civilisation embodied in the lot of those who are fortunate enough to escape the priestly net. To begin with, as I have already noted, the phenomenon is a modern one. If you turn back to the golden age of religion you do not find any special attention paid to children. Of course, children as such, must always have appealed to men and women of sensitive natures, and even the toughest will have a soft spot where the "kiddies" are concerned. Nature does its work too thoroughly for this not to be so. But there is no special attention paid to them as religious subjects. There are imitation ceremonies among all primitive peoples, and we have this continued with the confirmation of the Christian Church; but this belongs to early truth, not to the earlier age. You do not find Christians—until quite modern times—clamouring for an atmosphere in which children shall be educated, nor do you find priests and parsons paying any special attention to the religious education of children. The reason for that is obvious. The home life is saturated with religion, social and domestic, and the priest is more powerful than the parents. Outside the home it is the same. The mental atmosphere that prevails suggests no doubt as to the truth of religion. There is no need for the priest to guard the young against the infection of anti-Christian teaching. Society itself acts as a religious guard. The child is delivered over to the priest with no mental prepossessions against his teaching. At that stage the difficulty is not how to keep people religious, but how to get them to be non-religious.

It is a change in the quality of the social environment that introduces religious "Kidnapping." The development of a saner and sounder knowledge of the world sets up a line of cleavage between inherited religion and contemporary life. Hitherto the influence of social life had tended to confirm religious teaching. From the Renaissance onward it cuts directly across it. The cosmical teachings of the Church are undermined by developing geographical and astronomical knowledge. Chemistry and physics deprecate the belief in magic. Closer attention to social phenomenon lifts morals out of the control of religious organisations. A knowledge of the religions of the world destroys the idea that there is anything peculiar or specially valuable, about Christian doctrines. For centuries the Church had managed to so control the environment as to prevent a change that seriously threatened its dominance But for more than three hundred years a substantial change in the environment that involved and seriously weakened the power of the Christian Church. To-day the positions have been mainly reversed. We are not asked so frequently to adapt our social demands to our social leanings. Modern life largely makes for the weakening of religion of any

kind—and the clergy know that and feel the change. Religion becomes more and more an artificiality that is fading away.

It is not difficult to find proofs of what has been said. It is a common complaint with all churches that when their members move into new districts they often cease to attend Church, and sometimes drop their religion altogether. In other ages people took with them their religion as they took their household goods. It was part of their life and could not be shaken off with a change of habitat. The Church did not have to hunt for the man, the man sought the Church. To-day the religionist is often much like a ticket-of-leave man—he will report himself only so long as he feels sure he will be discovered. There is, again, the complaint that the desire for Sunday travel, for games, for amusement is robbing people of the Church-going habit. There is no reason to doubt this being the case, but it is only another way of emphasising the fact that religion is being pushed into the background, and no longer dominates people as it once did. The growth of the spirit of toleration in religion is only one more illustration of the same truth. Never in the whole history of the world has a people who believed their religion to be of first-rate importance been tolerant of unbelief. It is only when it is accepted as a settled fact that whether a man believes in a God or not is of small consequence at the side of the question whether he discharges his duty as a citizen that toleration begins to show itself. Toleration in religion is only another name for indifference.

The upshot of all this is that the clergy have been driven to the realisation of the truth that if they are to maintain anything of a hold on the adult they must secure a grip on the child. Otherwise they will be powerless against the cumulative influences of an environment that is increasingly anti-religious. In no subject other than religion is there a frantic haste to cram a child; in no other subject is there so much talk of the necessity for a correct atmosphere. In every direction except religion, instruction waits on the growing capacity of the child; in religion it must forestall it. I have never known, and doubt if anyone else has, of a single individual who has managed to escape religious instruction in his youth, and who has become religious after reaching maturity. Clients must be bred for the Church or chapel if they are to be obtained. That is the plain truth of the situation. The fight of the churches for the children is a fight for clients and for revenue. Of course, this is putting the matter very brutally, and it is quite possible that large numbers of the clergy deceive themselves by the language they use quite as much as they do other people. And it may well happen that the operation of this particular phase or self-interest is disguised from the majority by the professed concern for the future of the child; the need for a healthy sense of citizenship, etc. And that in spite of the now generally admitted fact that a good character, sound morality, and a healthy sense of citizenship exist apart from any religious belief whatsoever.

The secularisation of the schools is, after all, only one phase of the progressive secularisation of life, and it is against that the clergy are really fighting. Religion, says one school of anthropologists, springs from the collective life of primitive peoples, and expresses their social ideals. That certainly expresses a truth, if it is not the whole truth. It is clear that in all primitive communities belief in the supernatural so saturates life that all institutions and customs are coloured by it. It thus happens that the established beliefs are enforced by the existing social life. But with the belief in the supernatural there is no real growth, there is only a process of retreat in the face of advancing knowledge. With every change in man's knowledge of the world and in his conception of social duty there is a corresponding reaction on his religious beliefs. But, again, all knowledge is in the one direction. It is away from the supernatural. The medicine man, the priest, the parson, is thus everywhere up against the same problem—how to retain the belief in primitive superstitions in an environment to which they are thoroughly ill-adapted. It is to create an artificial environment that there is in civilised societies so sharp a line of demarcation between the secular and the profane, between the spiritual and the material. The retention of old forms of dress, obsolete turns of speech, old customs, etc., in religious ceremonies are all so many instances of this. The fight for the child is another. It is a move to give the mind of the child an initial bent before the modern environment has seized it. The secularisation of life is going on everywhere around us. The move for the secularisation of the schools is only a special example of a general movement. The secularisation of the home must follow. It will mean that religion will have to depend upon an appeal to the adult intelligence. And its chance of success in that direction is not likely to fill any Freethinker with serious misgivings.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ATHENS IN THE DAYS OF PERICLES

ANCIENT Athens attained her pinnacle of splendour under the administration of Pericles. If, in preceding generations, Athena's city's constitution seemed settled by Cleistenes, and later modified after the conflict at Marathon, it became even more democratic with the advent of Pericles. This great statesman had two enlightened teachers: Damon of Oa and the philosopher, Anaxagoras, whose scientific materialism completely emancipated Pericles from the theological superstitions of the multitude whom it was his office to govern and guide. To these preceptors, Pericles owed his mental independence, but his political principles and his very remarkable gift of clear and persuasive oratory, so indispensable to his success, were entirely his own; a man of abstemious habits, he shunned all convivial gatherings and strictly retained his dignity and reserve.

The Council of Areopagus was a relic of the past. A staunchly conservative body composed of archons, it was chosen from the most opulent classes in Athens. This plutocratic institution became a permanent menace to the claims of the people. The way for their removal had been prepared by the prosecution of several Areopagites for corruption and fraud. Every political influence exercised by this antique Council was swept away; its power of prying into the private affairs of ordinary citizens was ended. But this body retained its right to try murder cases and to share in the care of the sacred olive trees of the goddess Athena, and to assist in the supervision of the treasury of the Eleusian deities.

Still, the Council lost much of its authority. As Professor Bury notes in his standard "History of Greece": "The functions which it lost passed to the Council of 500, the Assembly, and the popular law courts. All impeachments for crime which threatened the public weal were henceforth brought before the Council of the Assembly; and henceforward the

people tried in their own courts, officials who had failed to give a satisfactory account of their administration."

Again, election superseded nomination from a selected number of candidates. Indeed, on the new Council all citizens now became eligible for public appointments, thus sharing in the conduct of public policy.

Under a system so democratic, it is obvious that it could not function without remuneration, for the more penurious citizens could not, without payment, devote their time to the service of the State. In truth, the introduction of monetary payment was an outstanding feature in the reforms of Pericles and made the constitution fully democratic.

This reform increased Pericles' popularity and he anticipated modern practice by making adequate provision for the democratically elected judges, who adjudicated in the law courts. But justice, then as now, was not always obtained. For in ancient Athens, litigants had no legal assistance in court and were compelled to urge their own suits. All kinds of irrelevant contentions were admitted which led to confusion and misunderstanding. "The judges," it seems, "heard each party interpreting the law in his own sense, but they had themselves no knowledge of the law, and, therefore, however impartial they strove to be, their decision was unduly influenced by the dexterity of an eloquent pleader . . . And there was no appeal from their judgment."

The Greek taxation methods are also noteworthy as the wealthy paid taxes from which indigent citizens were exempt. For sacred observances, these burdens were exceptionally heavy, but the *choregos*, as the bearers of these burdens were termed, were animated by a spirit of rivalry to excel each other in lavish displays. Bury concludes that: "The State's endowment of religion turned out to be an endowment of brilliant genius; and the rich men who were called upon to spend their time and money in furnishing the dancers did service to the great masters of tragedy and comedy, and thereby served the whole world."

Commercial rivalry, coupled with desire that has dominated every important dominion in world history for the acquisition of other people's territory, led to the Peloponnesian War in which Athens was ultimately defeated and her inveterate foe, Sparta, became the predominant power in the Grecian archipelago.

Pericles was an Imperialist who earnestly desired to build up an Athenian Empire to which the independent and allied Hellenic city states must bow and render tribute. There was, however, a peace party in Athens, although Pericles by his eloquent appeals to the populace, was enabled to pursue his aggressive policy, even when Thucydides, the eminent historian opposed him.

Among the various devices Pericles adopted to strengthen the central city of the State was his system of emigration. The colonies he established in several parts of Greece served as safeguards against insurrection in the cities of the subject allies, while providing for the redundant Athenian population. Pericles personally supervised the founding of the first of these colonies in Thrace. "Lands were bought from the allied countries in the peninsula, and 1,000 Athenian citizens, chiefly of the poor and unemployed, were allotted farms and assigned to the several cities. The payment for the land was made in the shape of a reduction of the tribute."

If Pericles had succeeded in his lofty ambition to unite the Hellenic world the ultimate overthrow of Athens might have been avoided, but the task proved impossible. And, even after Alexander the Great had incorporated the whole Greek world, his Empire crumbled to pieces after his death. In fact, the Greek-speaking peoples never realised the necessity for combination against an external enemy, a tragic lesson which modern states still find difficulty in learning.

One of the supreme achievements of Pericles' administration was the restoration and adornment of the temples and other artistic erections defaced and ruined by the Persians when they invaded Greece.

These restorations and embellishments were regarded by the Athenians not only as a religious duty, but as a thanksgiving to the gods of Olympus for their aid when the Persian invasion was repelled. Again, remembering that Athens owed her predominance to the favour of her divinities, it was deemed essential that she must discharge her pious duty on a lavish scale. Pericles, although himself a Freethinker, bowed to the desires of the people.

The colossal statue of Athena shapen in bronze was one of the wonders of antiquity. An uncompleted temple was finished on a new plan. "The goddess," avers Bury, "stood in her dwelling, majestic and smiling, the immense figure arrayed in a golden robe, a helmet on her head, her right hand holding a golden Victory, and her left resting on her shield . . . It was wrought by the Athenian sculptor of genius who has given his name to the plastic art of the Periclean age, Pheidias, the son of Charmides." Pheidias was already celebrated as the sculptor of another superb statue of Athena in which she appears as her people's benefactor, while her delineation on the Parthenon is more like that of a ruling queen. As Bury notes: "Both these creations have perished, but copies have been preserved from which we can frame some far-off idea of the sculptor's work."

Many other magnificent structures with their costly adornments arose, but their appalling expense aroused an outcry from Pericles' foes. Thucydides led the opposition and accused Pericles not only with wasting public money on his religious erections which ought to have been reserved for military purposes, but of misappropriating the funds of Confederated States for Athenian purposes alone. But Pericles contended that the small sums exacted from the allies for his restorations and improvements added to the glory of Greece as a whole. Moreover, as the main defence of the Confederacy rested on Athens, the allies had little cause for complaint.

Thucydides, however, determined to test popular opinion, but the vote was against him, and he was therefore ostracised. But if Pericles was usually the multitude's idol he had many influential enemies, and an easy way of making him unpopular was to charge him with impiety. His intimate friend Protagoras was the first who "distinguished the parts of speech and founded the science of grammar for Europe." But this philosopher also wrote a work in which he affirmed his scepticism. The sale of this book was forbidden and every copy discovered was publicly destroyed. Anaxagoras had suffered previously as Socrates was to suffer later. As we have seen, Pericles' orthodoxy was judged by the company he kept. For in Athens, as elsewhere, freethought was restricted to the thoughtful educated few. As Bury pertinently notes: "When we admire the spread of knowledge and reasoning in the fifth century B.C., we must remember that the mass of citizens was not reached by the new light; they were still sunk in ignorance, suspicious and jealous of the training which could be got only by sons of the comparatively well-to-do, or those who were exceptionally intellectual."

T. F. PALMER.

BOYS OF THE Y.M.C.A.

I.

"WHERE is now that merry party?" asks a poet, singing a lugubrious answer

"Their bones are scattered far and wide,
By field and mount and sea."

No such melancholy fate has yet befallen the Boys. They are all alive though dispersed, in the language of the seaman's prayer passing upon their lawful occasions soberer now in mind and body, married or otherwise settled down, still ready to smile at Y.M.C.A. Hostel memories, which I collect before they are forgotten.

The dea was an excellent one. As following the 1939-45 World War the aftermath of the 1914-18 European War was a housing shortage, resulting in lodgings, apartments or any sort of accommodation being scarce and dear, as well as often of dubious quality.

So a dozen to 20 of us, for there was much coming and going, were glad of hospitality at reasonable charges of the Y.M.C.A. Hostel. Many stayed a year or more.

It should have been a success. Had the management concentrated on the business side it would have been. Unfortunately the Warden was weak, 'pious and goody, easily shocked, always slightly so, yet trying to be tolerant of and amused at our antics. He inspired no respect, had little control over the irresponsible noisy crowd which gathered in the lounge. His influence being so small he was almost entirely ignored.

His wife was a fairly capable housekeeper but always uncertain in her attitude towards the Boys, conciliatory but not genial, unable to be free and homely, yet preserving no dignity.

With the domestic staff present the Warden and his wife said prayers every morning. Their sitting-room door was left ajar in hope that some of us might be tempted to join. Once did one do so, involuntarily. He was a slip of a fellow. We seized him and seated him in the baby's perambulator. Propelled along the hall and aimed at the door it pushed open the latter, arriving with a bump in the midst of the prayer meeting, little Tich falling upon the floor. Attempts at protest by the Warden and his wife were extinguished by wild laughter.

Wild we were. Calls up and down the long dining table for the teapot sometimes ended in a man throwing it. Caught it would be, but with considerable spilling of contents or damage to crockery.

II

She was a bad cook, even as cooks go: could be said of more than one we had: and as cooks go she went. The worst reached the nadir of being incapable of boiling water properly. When food got beyond the grumbling stage we adjourned of evening to a town restaurant and fed expensively after stimulating our appetites with beer.

For we were ample and generous drinkers, liking to talk about it, urging each other on to bibulous feats. My first Sunday morning in the hostel: fresh from a country town and bearing appearances of simplicity which I cultivated, it being fun to see sophisticated townees undeceived: I was invited to drink at a local pub about 200 yards distant.

After rounds of beer I ordered whisky. When this was getting several men nicely inflamed I changed to gin, which completed the trick. We went back holding each other up. I saw one man go upstairs on all-fours, another drooped somnolently over the hall seat. Drinking merely sharpens my appetite, so I went in and enjoyed a good dinner.

An attempt to drink in every pub between the hostel and Birmingham, about six miles, had to be abandoned by the walkers because of lack of time to finish.

Sunday mornings were notable for their sporting atmosphere. Coming down late to breakfast in negligee we opened our Sunday papers. Soon the air was loud with comparisons and arguments over football and other teams and their respective merits, likewise those of horses, with much eager wagering.

That lasted till the Nap school retired to its secton of the lounge, a few others preferring Solo Whist, with a little Bridge by devotees. Interspersed were the click of billiard balls and staccato utterances of the language peculiar to that game. Occasionally the Warden hid the balls, but they were soon found again and in use.

Three billiard balls rotated in a large brass bowl made a surprising amount of noise, not unlike an underground train approaching. We liked breaking into uproar, sometimes merely din, at others singing, our choice in songs being similar to our stories, bawdy.

Much of this was retrieved from the previous war, as our frequently chanted appropriate

"We are Fred Karno's army,"

Next three lines were filled ad lib at the singers' discretion, all joining lustily in the chorus.

"And when we get to Berlin,
The Kaiser he will say;
Ach! Ach! Mein Gott!
What a bloody fine lot
Are the boys of the Y.M.C.A."

to the tune "Aurelia" of the hymn "The Church's One Foundation."

III.

The hostel building was substantial, fairly modern, well-equipped and furnished and decorated. After I had shared a bedroom with three other men for a month I managed to secure a single bedroom. It was distempered pale green with a brown dado. Along the border of the latter a former occupant had pasted, tiptoe or seated or reclining, cut-out pictures of dancing girls, bathing belles and ladies in underclothing and other exiguous attire. The job had been well done, taseful decoration for a bachelor's bedroom.

Girls were one of our main interests and topics of conversation. When we went to dances and other social functions we compared experiences on our return. This was done without reserve, not only the girls' looks and figures and styles, dress, speech and deportment, but more their sex appeal, and what responses they made to sex approaches.

The hostel windows overlooking busy crossroads we spent much time at the windows, quizzing passers-by and discussing their peculiarities. More than one acquaintance was struck thereby, among many means of getting female companionship. Our supreme effort that way was to bring in some girls late at night and entertain them, but no cajolery or persuasion could make them stay the night.

When we went out in groups we were rowdy and arrogant, tarring each other on and standing by each other in trouble, often seeking such. Thus half-a-dozen of us in the front stalls of the local theatre, making our own noisy humour at the expense of a bad performance, were threatened with ejection by an attendant. This moved us to louder laughter, for each was bigger than he.

Among our diverse occupations were three school-teachers, two sanitary inspectors and two chemists, one of the latter a hospital V.D. dispenser. When we seven felt in the mood to put the others off their food we would at meal-times discuss the more horrific and morbid aspects of those three professions, and could effectually sicken the listeners, they vainly attempting to silence us.

By trying to bring religious and moral pressure upon the hostel residents instead of attracting them with good food, warmth, comfort and freedom, the Y.M.C.A. authorities drove away the minimum number of boarders necessary to make the house a financial success, and the place had to be closed.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

THE pretentions of many of the clergy that marriages in church have some special validity, and that the Prayer Book service has legal sanctions of its own, have been upset by the recent decision of the House of Lords in the case of Baxter v. Baxter. A lower court had granted a Petition of Nullity in an undefended case in which the husband alleged that the wife made the use of contraceptive precautions a condition of intercourse. The King's Proctor intervened and carried the case to the House of Lords, where the judgment of the court was set aside.

Compare the decision of the highest legal tribunal in the land, "that it is no longer a fundamental purpose of matrimony to procreate children," with the words of the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer, which assert the direct contrary, and it is clear that the State has taken one more step in freeing itself from the religious prejudices that have been such a bar to progress in the history of the country.

If an unfortunate couple, fundamentally at variance on a matter of the greatest importance in their marriage, still find themselves legally tied, that is because the State has not gone all the way in disowning religious ideas of marriage. The teaching that marriage is indissoluble "till death do us part" is wholly religious, depending on the belief that it is a joining together by God. The law must not undo God's work, according to His spokesmen in the churches. In spite of this, however, the law has, very slowly, found it necessary to do so in a number of glaring cases of hardship constantly occurring. It is, of course, very blasphemous of the law to show up the faultiness of the Lord's joinery in this way, but most Christians are humane enough to recognise that it has to be done, and there is little said against the reliefs now available. It is against any extension of the grounds for divorce that they set their faces, and our legislators are now, as ever, more concerned about the votes of the orthodox than the hardships of marital misfits.

One of the results of the recent House of Lords decision has been a spate of letters in the press on "The Purpose of Marriage." I have not seen one amongst them which treats marriage as an institution that has had a variety of purposes according to varying social conditions. Whatever the purpose alleged, the writers of the letters treat it as something ordained. Cardinal Griffin, for example, said that marriage was "ordained by God for the procreation of children and the relief of concupiscence." I have previously had occasion to draw attention to the nastiness of mind of this Catholic Archbishop, and I again do so. Why does "The Times" consider it necessary to waste space on printing his views as if they were a serious contribution to the subject?

What a fog the word "purpose" can create when used in the abstract! The purpose of the universe, the purpose of life, the purpose of marriage, all involve arguing in a circle until one gets down to the simple question, "Who does the purposing?" Once this has been answered the rest is easy. But how rarely it is even asked!

The purposes for which people have married are fairly obvious; for companionship and love, for economic security and to have a family. The latter, by the way, is something much deeper and more comprehensive than is described by the prayer-book phrase "the procreation of children." Ordinary human nature can usually be relied on for a higher conception of things than the theologian inspired from on high. The State, it seems to me, is not concerned with the purpose of marriage, but only with the legal regulation of the married status in the interests of social harmony. Lastly there is God's purpose, but our only guides to what this is are the Churches, and since they show a great deal of disagreement on the question, it is best left out of account.

Two sensible people contemplating marriage will frankly and fully discuss their ideas in advance. If such a course had been taken by the couple involved in the Baxter v. Baxter case, it would have prevented a hard case which, as the law stands, cannot now be cured. Why do so many young people enter upon marriage with so little thought? Why is the law so hard on those whose marriages are failures? A part of the answer to both questions is that the whole subject of marriage has for long ages been cluttered up with irrelevant religious considerations, which surround it with ignorance and prejudice. Get rid of these, and minds will be better informed, judgments will be fairer and humanity will be more in evidence.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

SALUTATION

Salute the Man who dared to pit
Against John Bull his Irish wit—
And made a paying game of it.
His pen, a two-edged sword that smote
And rent the Lion's overcoat—
Revealing underneath—a goat!
Convention's hide he flayed alive
And caused much buzzing in the Hive
Of Politics, where Old Drones thrive.
Of shoddy laws he bared the threads
Till judges tore their gowns to shreds
And wigs sat cock-eyed on their heads.
Religion, too, escaped him not;
The cozy income Churches got
From shambled slums: he shamed the lot.
Big-Business and the Self-Made Man
Were truly trounced in plot and plan
Till *Prostitution* brought the ban
Of State on Mrs. Warren—yet
The Author did quite well, you bet,
On her immoral earnings net!
So did the Master Mind make good
By shocking all the neighbourhood—
And giving people Thought for food.
A vegetarian to boot,
He did not care an owl's hoot
But lived on cabbage-leaf and root.
As Social Menace Number One
He threw the Russian Bear a bun
And said a naughty word, for fun!
His works, wherever trails are trod
(And Black Girls go in search of God!)
Are known from Klondike to Cape Cod.
London and Broadway—all the World
Has seen the Shavian flag unfurled
And dodged those darts so deftly hurled.
Thus by perversity's strange trick
Humanity is led to lick
The hand that heaves the hardest brick!
Acclaimed by Commissars and Kings
His fame shall soar on eagles' wings
Until Time's pendulum last swings—
And one weak voice beyond the grave
Cries peevishly—"Base poltroon! Knave!
How now shall I my 'bacon' save?"
His genius—no need to stress;
His Life-Force—may it ne'er grow less—
Immortal—Ageless—G.B.S.

W. H. WOOD.

ACID DROPS

The "Belfast News Letter" informs the world that "It is probably true to say that most religious bodies in the civilised and semi-civilised world are steadily getting more numerous." Of course that is not true. The truth is that there is not a civilised part of the world which is in contact with developed peoples that is not losing believers in religion. England, the U.S.A., France, even Italy, are losing Christians in large numbers. Even the B.B.C., which not very long ago was expressing determination not to permit any adverse criticism of religion, has eventually permitted very timidly some criticism of religion. We doubt whether any body of decent-minded Christians would deny the truth of what we have said. Historic Christianity is dying rapidly. How long a makeshift of religion will continue in civilised centres remains to be seen.

Then the "Belfast News Letter" lets the cat out of the bag. For after thinking over the matter we get the final statement that "Militant Atheism is the only effective rival in the world of Christianity," and that, on the face of it, is a confession of the growth of anti-Christian developments. Atheism does not develop in a twinkling of an eye, it is the end of a process, and once accepted it cannot be removed. And for one man or woman who reaches the development of complete Atheism there are a large number who hold themselves aloof from religious forms. The timid confession "I do not say there is no God, I only say I do not know," that child-like confession is steadily giving way to "I do not believe in the existence of any God." We know how the belief in gods developed, and we know the conditions in which they die.

A medical correspondent writes to us from South Africa, apropos a case of insanity which is common amongst natives. He says:—

> "The number of those that go mad is remarkable, but not at all surprising. Our asylums for coloured people are well occupied, and the majority of the inmates are mission natives. Many others become not insane exactly, but excited and become Insurrectionaries. One of these latter was some time ago removed from one station to another where he was haranguing a tranful of natives concerning a mission he had received from God. At the same time, clad in cassocks, were two men who had come from Taungs beyond Kimberley, who were arrested for shouting and yelling calculated to stir up the natives against the white people."

There may be more in the matter than is contained in the description. "Insanity" may be another name for natives who are not obedient enough to the Whites. Or is it such cases of ill-balanced brains that God chooses to use as messengers. God appears to have a great liking for half-insane people. In Chapman Cohen's "Religion and Sex" there will be found a number of cases obviously of the kind just mentioned.

Probably the best examples of semi-insane cases of religious developments were found in the early days of Wesleyanism. Wesley, of course, declared he was under the power of God, and some of the outbursts at his meetings are as fine examples of disordered mental conditions that one can get. People shrieked and raved until they fell on the floor unconscious. Women tore up the ground and raved till they fell completely unconscious. Wesley declared that "He generally observed more or less of these outward symptoms as the beginning of the work of God." In the history of the Christian religion abnormal states of mind, running right up to insanity, have done much to establish firmly the Christian religion.

How little has been done by religious pressure may be expressed by a few bitter words. Take, for example, the beautiful "Story of My Heart," by the freethinking Richard Jefferies. He was thinking what the world was and what it might be. He says:—

> "That twelve thousand years should have elapsed, and the human race—able to reason and to think, and easily capable of combination in immense armies for its own destruction—should still live from hand to mouth like cattle and sheep. . . . In twelve thousand written years the world has not yet built itself a House, nor filled a granary, nor organised itself for its own comfort. It is so marvellous I cannot express the wonder with which it fills me. . . . Why do people die of starvation, or lead a miserable existence on the verge of it? Why have millions upon millions to toil from morning to evening just to gain a mere crust of bread? Because of the absolute lack of organisation by which such labour should produce its effect, the absolute lack of distribution, the absolute lack even of the very idea that such things are possible. Nay, even to mention such things, to say that they are possible, is criminal with many. Madness could hardly go farther.

No greater indictment of our much-praised greatness and power was ever made than that. It was said by a great man, too sensitive for the rough world in which he found himself.

We have no blame for the Editor of the "Church Times" expressing his disgust over the case of a little girl who was so neglected by her parents that she had to snatch food from the fowls. The Editor asks:—

> "Are English people losing their humanity? Is the virtue of gentleness disappearing, that essential Christian quality? . . . When the life of the family decays—that human institution which the Christian Church has preserved." Etc., etc.

We would point out that kindness to children did not begin yesterday. Adequate kindness to the young really did exist before the supposed guide to Christians came along. Kindness to children began in the animal world, man merely advanced it. It makes one smile to find a responsible editor writing as though kindness was derived from some religious system.

The Editor of "The Church Times" has forgotten. The worst time for children was when religion was strong, when the Christian religion dominated the life of man. When the factory life was created, and children were collected like wild animals—when little boys and girls were working in filthy places, fed like cattle and were driven to factories in the cattle trucks. When little boys of seven crawled up chimneys. And this was not done before religion had grown. We feel certain that the Editor knows as well as we do the five volumes written by the Hammonds, and he will also know that alongside the treatment of the children in the factories, religious prayers were never forgotten. And if our Editor does not know "The Town Labourer," etc., we suggest that he turns to vol. I of "London Labour and the London Poor," by Henry Mayhew, published in 1851. He will get therein a sketch of London life that almost beggars description. The world is better to-day, but it is strange that the world should be getting better as the Christian religion is declining.

It may be that there is such a rush for the Bible that booksellers are able to sell them at much reduced terms, or it may be the call is not very strong. At any rate a New York department is now offering Bibles at 28s. instead of 42s. We should not be long deciding the cause for the lower figure.

The Bishop of Birmingham, notorious for having "cut" out a deal of the Bible as being unreliable, says that the attacks on his writings are "irritable stupidity." We agree with him. But he also is a source of irritation, having thrown away so much, and then hanging on to the other Christian specialities that are just as foolish as those rejected. And, in our opinion, there is no doubt that the Bishop, having got so far as he did, his retaining the position of a Christian Bishop has made his position ridiculous. Whenever possible truth should be allowed to run freely. Dr. Barnes evidently believes in letting it go in thin slices.

Mr. Thomas F. Green, Headmaster of Bootham School, Yorkshire, says, "The majority of my boys between 17 and 18 are Agnostics. The same can be said for the undergraduate world as a whole. They think of God as being like Father Christmas—to be believed in when one is young." Given honesty on the part of all teachers most of them would repeat Mr. Green's confession. We Freethinkers have not worked for nothing.

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SUGAR PLUMS

At first we thought the whole thing was a joke. Mark, we do not call it a display of wit; that belongs to a higher order of mankind. We are thinking of the roar of laughter when a bag of flour is broken over a man's head. And if it were broken over and over again there would be wave after wave of laughter. But then we discovered that it was not a joke, it was written seriously, and was actually intended for the whole of the population, and also to be brought before the House of Commons by Mr. Hector Hughes, M.P. for Aberdeen. It is an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill. Here is the amendment:—

> "Every person who with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction thereof liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding five years or to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds, or to both such imprisonment and fine."

We doubt whether that amendment will ever come to life, and we hardly think that Mr. Hughes believes it will. We note also following the usual standing ignorance by talking about "anti-semitism" as though "semitism" stands as the equivalent Jew or Judaism. If he will look the matter up he will see that Judaism has no more significance to one religion than it has to others. Religion stands by itself, and whether it is Christianity, Judaism, or any other creed, white, yellow or black, that religion stands untouched as a religion, and altered for the better when its character is weakened. And an educated man, particularly a lawyer, should know that it is from nationality, not from religious beliefs that the law studies things. We will not go further because we might be taking him into a foreign land. We would merely impress upon him the fact that "Semitism" is a "group" name, but it has no direct attachment to religion. Finally, if Parliament was foolish enough to pass that amendment, and every time one sees a fantastic crowd of priests dressed with some of the raiment of ancient Egypt, we are afraid we should laugh, where Mr. Hughes would have us look as if we had just left one of the comic pictures of a country fair. Of course, there is a possibility that Mr. Hughes has not said just what he intended to say. In that case we excuse him. We are all poor creatures—but we need not make one another more foolish than we are.

With the opening of this year a great many people began to calculate to what extent the kind of weather we have had during the past year had affected all sorts of plants and how they had grown or faded, etc. We learn that cornfields and orchards and other things fade or grow, etc. Now this is a very serious thing, since all things come from God. We suggest, therefore, that as things for good or bad are expressions of God's wish, some steps should be taken to give praise to God in proportion to the good state of the weather. And finally, a definite objection should be made to God in his plan of punishing people who have done no harm.

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND SCIENCE

II

AS I have already shown, the chief point Mr. G. N. M. Tyrrell makes in his two books, "Science and Psychical Phenomena," and "The Personality of Man," is the rigid scientific method he follows, and the impossibility of fooling the really scientific investigator when it comes to inquiring into mediums. You and I, dear reader, would be children in the hands of an unscrupulous spiritualist: he would laugh at our tests and controls; but people like Mr. Tyrrell are far too wide-awake to be taken in by fraud. At least, it seems to me that that is the implication in the greater part of his two books.

You will find much the same in the spiritualistic works of Mr. Harry Price to whom, in any case, I give the credit of writing in a most entertaining way. I must add also that he is an investigator of a quite different calibre from Mr. Tyrrell. He gaily admits fraud and imposture, and in his book, "Search for Truth" (Collins, 1942) will be found a record of his experiences not only with the most brazen impostors but with many others—like the brothers Schneider—whom he insists give perfectly genuine psychic phenomena.

Both Mr. Price and Mr. Tyrrell admit that fraud plays a big part in *physical* phenomena, but while Mr. Tyrrell believes in "survival," however the word is defined, Mr. Price seems rather to believe that "spirits" only rarely have a hand in psychic happenings—that is, the spirits of people who once lived on earth, and are now living more or less happily in "Summerland." What causes certain phenomena, he does not know, and leaves it at that. One thing I have noticed in "Search for Truth." Mr. Price has devoted almost a lifetime in studying psychic phenomena, and it would be a marvel if he did not know how a good deal of the "phenomena" is produced. In addition, there are a large number of books published which give the "spiritual" fraud away in detail, and show to those who wish to embark upon a psychic career how easy it is. Yet it does seem to me that often in the account of his experiences Mr. Price accepts as genuine phenomena many things simply because he does not know how they are done. It is as if all the illusions of Harry Houdini are accepted as tricks because the *modus operandi* is known—except one; how that is done we do not know and cannot find out, and, therefore, Houdini must be "psychic." The late Sir A. C. Doyle was quite unable to understand how Houdini managed to walk through a brick wall; he, therefore, was quite certain that the illusionist "de-materialised" himself, got through the wall that way, and then re-materialised himself when he was on the other side. I expect Mr. Price would have hesitated to call Houdini psychic on the strength of this illusion, but I am fairly certain if Mr. Tyrrell had been called upon to investigate Houdini he would have unhesitantly plumped for, if not survival, something very rare in genuine psychic phenomena. Incidentally, he does not mention either Doyle or Houdini in his two books. For his case, they are both dangerous.

Let me give an example of what Mr. Tyrrell would call scientific investigation. It is a case of a "Poltergeist"—and I may as well add here that Mr. Price is prepared to believe wholeheartedly in Poltergeists.

On page 209 of the "Personality of Man" will be found an account of the experiences of an Austrian member of the Society for Psychical Research, named Mr. Wienstadt. It seems that this "reliable observer" (as he is called) went to see a blacksmith who complained that "tools, bits of iron, screws, his pipe, and so on, were flung about the place." These things kept hitting him and one of his two apprentices. Petroleum lamps and window panes were broken, and Mr. Wienstadt himself was hit on the head, though he admits he never saw "any of the objects actually fly." A piece of iron even "must have jumped" from his hat otherwise "it could not have fallen

on to the ground." There are more details and the "reliable observer" claims that he "was not careless in his observations."

The sequel is most illuminating. It appears that the two apprentices were caught by the police throwing things about, and they admitted that they were responsible for the "psychic" phenomena; after being sent away, nothing further happened.

It is true that one of the boys then saw Mr. Wienstadt and claimed he "had never done anything wrong"—which reminds me of one of the Fox sisters, many years after they had fooled whole communities with their "rapping" spirits, confessed they themselves did the rappings. For this confession she was paid by a newspaper—and then she took back her confession and denied it was true.

Mr. Tyrrell's comment is delightful—"the fact that boys are present when things are thrown about of course raises suspicion" and proves how both he and Mr. Wienstadt were rigorously scientific in this case.

Now I do not for a moment declare that there is nothing in Poltergeistism—I do not know, and have had no experience; but it does seem to me that this phenomenon should have been supported by something just a little stronger. Mr. Tyrrell does of course give other cases—they seem very weak to me—and in his book Mr. Price gives some very strong ones. But I am always concerned in these accounts with the ability of the average observer to detail *exactly* what happened. For example, I saw the famous illusionist, Dante, the other day put a woman in a coffin and get two men to saw the coffin in halves. We saw the head and feet of the "victim" outside the coffin all the time—even in the two halves. I can give a very clear account of what I *saw*—but is what I saw actually what happened? Of course not.

The late S. J. Davey, at first taken in by the slate writing phenomena of Slade and Eglington, thought it was all genuine. Later he tried his hand at the same game and under a different name took in everybody—or almost everybody—including Alfred Russel Wallace, by producing the most astounding "phenomena." Frank Podmore, the famous secretary of the S.P.R., got his brother and other people to write him accounts of what they saw, and the reader should analyse what they wrote and compare their accounts with what actually happened. Davey fooled the observers with the greatest ease—just as Houdini used to do—and the way the "investigators" managed to miss vital "effects" is quite amusing. I see no reason to believe that before the phenomena of Davey, Mr. Tyrrell would have been any different or better, in spite of his claim to rigorous scientific investigation. And I am quite ready to confess that I would be as easily fooled in spite of the fact that I have studied magical literature—and the occult—for over forty years.

The real question—which even Mr. Price has not yet clearly answered—is still "survival." Do we live on when we die or not? There may be such things as telepathy or precognition or even psychometry; there may be people who do extraordinary things in automatic writing not easily explained, if explained at all; there may be trance mediums and crystal gazers, and people who say that they can see through a lead casket. It is difficult to get at the actual truth for the simple reason that one is biased so much one way or another. But is there "survival?"

I marked dozens of passages in Mr. Tyrrell's two books about various happenings which are by no means in accord with the accounts of other scientific investigators—like Frank Podmore, for instance—for they differ in dozens of instances. The way Mr. Tyrrell leaves out vital points, or just glosses them over, compels my admiration but not my trust in his restatement. Any reader who has the time should compare Mr. Tyrrell and Podmore, let us say, on Mrs. Piper, and then read what Mr. McCabe or Walter Mann in their books on Spiritualism have to say on the same points. That Mr. Tyrrell does not like the searching examination into Spiritualistic claims made by Mr. McCabe about 25 years ago or his account of psychical research is understandable, but it would require far more science than Mr. Tyrrell possesses to prove him wrong.

All I have got from "The Personality of Man," if the evidence is accurately stated (and in that I am far from being in any way convinced), is that with some people there are abnormal happenings of the mind just as doctors have strange cases of abnormal happenings of the body. It may be that a Mrs. Piper can, in a trance state, tell us something about ourselves which in her normal state she could not possibly know. I am not convinced by the evidence myself, but I am ready to admit that we do not know yet all that there may be known about the mind—whatever that is—and what it may or can do. I may even be convinced that a Yogi can sleep in a grave for six months or that one dream out of ten millions may come true. If there is a "purpose" in all this I have yet to see it; but I am quite certain that they do not prove survival.

Mr. Tyrrell prefers to deal with "psychical research" rather than with "spiritualism." I don't blame him. But so far nothing has proved the existence of an individual as the same individual after death, either in a "Summerland" or on the "Edge of the Etheric"; nor anything so far written which disproves "mechanical" Materialism.

H. CUTNER.

A PLEA FOR THE MINOR CLASSICS

IN these post-war days we are seeing an almost unprecedented boom in the publication and reading of the great classics of the English language. The well-known series of classics—The World's Classics and Everyman's Library—are gradually being reprinted, and many publishers apart from the Oxford University Press and Messrs. Dent are including in their lists a goodly proportion of books which have stood the test of time.

This is as it should be. The works of Dickens and Thackeray, Thomas Hardy and William Blake, Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen (to take a few apparently incongruous names) are part of the great heritage of English literature, and they should be within the reach of the ordinary reader.

But there is another type of writer, who may be called a minor classic or a near-classic. Sometimes, by some fortunate blend of circumstances, such a writer sees a revival. Typical of those who have been revived in recent years is Trollope, who is still found dull and prosy by many readers, but who is nevertheless widely read. Yet there are many whose works rarely appear. Now and then one or two books by these people come out in the Penguin series; now and then another publisher resurrects something from their output—as an enterprising firm recently reissued an almost forgotten novel by George Gissing, with a stimulating introduction by Mr. William Plomer.

But there are many who seem to be unaccountably neglected. There may in some cases be copyright reasons for their thus languishing in the "out-of-print" lists of the publishers, but I do not think that this can be the main reason, since many of them are now "out of copyright." Why, for instance, do we never see anything of Wilkie Collins, except "The Moonstone" or "The Woman in White"? Admittedly those two books tower above everything else that Collins wrote; but there is a very good novel of his called "No Name," which I recently picked up for a shilling on a second-hand bookstall; and if that is eminently readable (which it certainly is) there is a good chance that other novels by Wilkie Collins would stand reprinting to-day.

Or (to take quite a different case) what has happened to the works of G. K. Chesterton? Some of the brilliant detective stories he wrote, featuring Father Brown, the strange little Catholic priest, have been reprinted in recent years, but what about "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," "The Flying Inn," and all the other fantastic comedies with which Chesterton

enlivened the literary world through many years? Where shall be found a publisher who will give them to us again in a durable edition?

In a different vein of fantasy is M. P. Shiel, whose amazing novel, "The Purple Cloud," is still remembered by a regular coterie of readers. Shiel is in one respect more fortunate than some of the near-classics: Victor Gollancz is publishing some time in 1948 "The Selected Short Stories of M. P. Shiel," edited by the author's literary executor, Mr. John Gawsworth. But who will put on the market a new edition of "The Purple Cloud" (recently reissued in America, by the way), or of "Prince Zaleski," or "The Lord of the Sea"?

An old friend of Shiel and a contemporary (recently deceased) is Arthur Machen. His greatest claim to literary immortality rests in his two volumes of rambling autobiography, "Far-Off Things," and "Things Near and Far." These were published long ago by Martin Secker, and have long been out of print. The time is surely ripe to give them anew to a fresh generation of readers.

Another unaccountably neglected author; whose work would be widely appreciated I am sure, if it were easily obtainable, is Maurice Drake. He wrote thrillers with a sea background. He was, in fact, a kind of blend of Conrad and Edgar Wallace. His "WO2" and "The Salving of a Derelict," and "The Ocean Sleuth" are books which I have read and re-read and re-read again. There is something about them which is strangely satisfying. Yet I would hazard a guess that they were out of print even before Hitler's bombers destroyed the immense stocks of books held in London's Paternoster Row.

And then there are Stanley Weyman, Seton Merriman, Maurice Hewlett, Richard le Gallienne, F. Anstey, Meade Falkner . . . their name is legion, the authors whose work charmed when it first appeared, and, given the opportunity, would charm again.

For the most part these men do not tower over the figures of their compeers as do the books of the very greatest writers. But they did valuable and important jobs, and it is a great pity that the present stringencies in the publishing world apparently prevents them from having a chance to reappear. I am not, needless to say, advocating that publishers should cease from using most of their paper to produce either new works or the finest specimens of English prose of poetry by the accepted masters. But I think (and I am hopeful that most readers will agree with me) that there are moments when we do not wish to scale the ultimate heights with the greatest writers, but only desire the lesser satisfaction of sharing the ideas of a man who had something to say and who knew how to say it.

The writers I have chosen are merely those whose work happens to have come within my own limited range of reading. I know that other readers would suggest other writers. But the actual examples chosen do not affect the cogency of the argument, which is, in brief, that there is room in the great edifice of English letters for many figures lesser than the very greatest.

JOHN ROWLAND.

MEMORIES OF THE VICTORIAN SABBATH

IT is one of the perpetual regrets of humanity at large to-day that the all-too-fleeting week-ends are never considered long enough by half, for the purpose of engaging in the ever fascinating pursuit of enjoyment that besets it.

In these unsettled days where time flies at ever increasing pace, our week-end leisure evaporates as fast as the dew in the warmth of a hot summer morning, and workaday Monday arrives only too soon to herald the commencement of yet another week's "grind" for the sole purpose of extracting wages for cruel work done, and (if health permits) another week-end of leisure wherein to spend them.

Yet, things have not always been so, as the following observations will show. The events and scenes of the tyrannically staged sabbaths of yesterday still continue to torment and plague the memories of many of our surviving generations who in their youth, frequently had no other option but to obey the severe and strict orders imposed upon them by their pious-minded betters.

I have extracted these observations from a very entertaining and interesting book of reminiscences written and published in 1933 by a charming and well-known Victorian man of pedigree, who had sense enough to realise and tacitly admit that the abomination of the sanctimonious sabbath as an exclusive institution of the established Church had begun to change and so eventually disappear for ever.

"In his later years Lord Grenville was so hopelessly crippled with gout that he spent most of his time among his books, putting together bad Latin elegiacs, writing copious commentaries (happily unpublished) on Homer, and finally, (for he was a deeply religious man) devoting himself to that most difficult of all forms of composition, the writing of English prayers. Two of these came down to my family, one for the morning, of which I remember only parts, the other for Sunday evening, of which I could write down every word. They are characteristic of the man, scholarly, polished, showing intimate acquaintance with the English Bible, and prayer-book and evincing a fine sense of cadence, but florid and pompous, and suggesting just a touch of condescension. The final sentence, leading up to the Lord's Prayer, qualified that Prayer with two approving epithets such as might come from a fastidious but kindly critic.

"My father, when he was not too sleepy, used to read the sonorous periods most beautifully; but I am afraid that for us boys that Sunday evening prayer was always an occasion for unbridled mirth. Possibly it was the lack of simplicity which unconsciously jarred upon us; possibly my father's occasional ill-suppressed yawns seemed irresistibly ludicrous; chiefly, I think, we were exhilarated by the thought that Sunday was at last over. For my father inclined to Evangelical opinions; and Sunday was a heavy joyless day. From a very early age we were throughout our boyhood driven to church twice, and the services were very dreary. The rector, being old and infirm, took no active part in them, though his velvet skull-cap and old fashioned swallow-tailed coat, served in some measure as a distraction. His curates, of whom I remember two, one tall with mutton-chop whiskers, the other very short with a black "Newgate fringe," were both alike, wooden and dull, with untuneful voices and unattractive address. It was a despairing moment when the curate disappeared into the vestry and re-emerged in a black gown which pre-signified a monotonous sermon of at least half an hour. Morning service lasted regularly for three-quarters of an hour. After we went to Harrow we boys appropriated the front row of our gallery from which the boy at the end overlooked the preacher in the pulpit, and when the last page of the sermon was reached the watchman at the corner used to signal the joyful tidings to the rest. Once a strange preacher, a friend in human shape, went back over his pages, through some strange device of his own, and the signal was given 15 minutes too early. Once the Bishop of Exeter—later Archbishop Temple—occupied the pulpit, and not only preached extempore (in itself an outrage) but prolonged his discourse for 40 minutes. The only redeeming feature in this (to us) unpardonable performance was that there was a strong touch of Devon dialect in his speech.

"Another service followed in the afternoon, of like dreariness with that of the morning. The shadow of my great-grandmother, Hester Grenville, still hung over the church, for her reign had been long and austere. She would stand at the door as the village girls came out, and bid them take off such coloured ribbon or other adornments as they had put

on, lest they should imperil their salvation. In a like spirit she discountenanced evening services as affording facilities for flirtation in the failing light, and this prejudice prevailed until far into my own life-time. Thus in the short days of our winter holidays three hours or more of every Sunday were spent at church. It is true that certain changes were gradually introduced. An organ, a lumpy, ill-balanced instrument, took the place of the old asthmatic harmonium. The schoolmaster, who had begun life as a chorister in Exeter Cathedral, with infinite pains trained the choir to sing a terrible choral service, once known as Jackson in F. A new rector, in other ways an excellent man, made one reform for which I never forgave him, sweeping away the old hymn-books and the old tunes and substituting for it the collection called Ancient and Modern, five-sixths of which is trash. Why is it, by the way, that so many people consider themselves capable of writing a hymn, which is one of the most difficult of compositions? Finally, the whole church was restored and practically rebuilt. The galleries were swept away, and the structure was remodelled according to the prevailing fashion, though with every precaution against even a shade of ritualism. Those were the days when scores of good Jacobean churches and much beautiful Jacobean decoration were swept away by ignorant divines who had neither knowledge nor taste but had succumbed to the general mania for what they called the Gothic. No such destruction took place in our church. There was nothing to destroy. But my memory still clings fondly to the plain unpretending whitewash, the upright pews painted to imitate wood, and to the 'three-decker' upon which I used to look down from our gallery. Above all do I recall the vision of the schoolmaster poking up some village schoolboy who, more blessed than his fellows, had fallen asleep during the sermon. But, unlike the sacristan of a church where we worshipped at Sevenoaks, he did not carry a cane nor use it at intervals throughout divine service. Yet what I endured in the name of religion must have been a trifle to the trials undergone by children of older generations."

(Sir John W. Fortescue, "Author and Curator," 1933.)

E.H.S.

A QUESTION OF TOLERATION

IN that erudite and very interesting quarterly, the "Hibbert Journal" (whose founder-editor, Dr. L. P. Jacks, it is to be noted with regret, is retiring after his many years' devoted labour) for October, 1947, appeared an article entitled "Pseudo Religions and Reconversion," by E. La Mothe Stowell. It was the work of an Anglican Churchman who is distressed by current drifts from religion. The article is full of idealism, allowing for its peculiar standpoint: which seems to agree with that of two modern Roman Pontiffs (Leo XIII and Pius XI), who said: "Every civilised society must have a ruling authority, and this authority, no less than the society itself, has its source in nature, and has, consequently, God for its author. Hence it follows that all public power must proceed from God"; and: "Those who maintain that civil society and the State are not subject to God and to his law, natural and divine, teach a doctrine which is manifestly impious and contrary to reason."

The author of the "Hibbert" article, though not quoting these words, definitely holds a similar point of view, and thinks that society must be based on theological belief. He is depressed by the neglect of this principle in these sceptical times.

After reading the article, one feels inclined to agree that for a healthy social community at least some form of philosophy is necessary. To restrict government—as a number of nineteenth century thinkers tried to do—merely to keeping the peace and administering indispensable services—is impracticable. Is the community, for example, to deal with education? If not, then the people will grow up barbarous. If yes, then some kind of philosophy must permeate the educational system. Furthermore, there are innumerable departments of social life in which ethical problems arise—crime and punishment; the treatment of the insane; relations of husbands and wives; literature and art; peace and war as controlled by political policy; relations with foreign powers in general. The author of the "Hibbert" article thinks that the basis of civil society must be a belief in the eternal and divine; that is, in a personal God and a supernatural revelation. It is therefore no wonder that he is depressed by so many prevailing tendencies which are so opposed to that ideal. The logical difficulty of his theory seems to be (or one of its difficulties) that there is no agreed belief as to what "God" is, or what "revelation" is the true one. Unless there is such agreement, how can society be based on such belief? That difficulty is a main reason why "the great subcontinent" of Asia is divided between "India" and "Pakistan": Hinduism sees religion so very differently from the way in which it is seen by Islam, that the two races cannot endure to be under one government. A similar fact confronts us elsewhere—for example, a great cause of the differences between Russia and "the West" is that Communist "dialectical materialism" implies a radically different world-philosophy from that of the Christianity which—however much of it may be neglected these days—is at the basis of Europe's traditions. In short, it will be hard to put into practice the "Hibbert" writer's ideal of "society based on religion."

My main purpose in these comments, however, is to examine one very curious remark in the article; this:—"No one can wish to see the Church identified with one political party, but every Christian must wish to see her openly challenge practices and policies which threaten the Christian ethos, and [? must] question the propriety of avowed sceptics and agnostics participating in the government of the country or the education of its youth. A man insensitive to spiritual realities cannot be coerced into belief, but his claim to direct the political affairs of a Christian community is no better than that of a man who is tone deaf to conduct an orchestra."

One must ask, in response to this statement, first of all what is meant by "insensitive to spiritual realities"? Does it mean "one who is unaware that belief in such realities (or supposed realities) has had, and has, a great part in human life"? If that is the meaning of the statement, then of course every intelligent person must be aware of that great influence; and so no intelligent person can be "tone deaf." If, however, the statement means, "one who does not himself experience such realities," then of course a great deal depends on how the "realities" are defined. We all have ideals, aspirations, a sense of something higher than mere everyday events. It really comes to this: Is that idealism "supernatural" or not? It is strange to call anyone "tone deaf" because he may not accept a "supernatural" explanation of things!

The dangerous nature of the "Hibbert" author's statement is in its suggestion that "sceptics and agnostics" should be excluded from political or educational activity. Here we have a definite proposal of intoleration and of penalties for opinions. Why?—because, to quote the author's words, ours is "a Christian community." But—*is* it? We hear incessant complaints, from clergy and others, that our nation is "becoming pagan." Thirty years ago there was an interesting case in the law courts. The cause, Bowman *versus* the Secular Society, had been carried, on appeal, to the House of Lords, and, by a majority decision of four to one, it was laid down: "Is the maxim that Christianity is part of the law of England true; and, if so, in what sense . . . ? The phrase, 'Christianity is part of the law of England,' is really not law; it is rhetoric" (Law Reports, 1917. Appeal Cases 406, 452, 464. Compare Holdsworth, "History of English Law," vol. 8, pp. 403, 420).

Professor G. M. Trevelyan, in his recent "English Social

History" (London, 1946; p. 515), write thus of our present law of marriage: "Another grievance was removed by the Marriage Act of 1836 . . . The Act established civil officers called Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages . . . Religious marriage in the Church of England was left as before, *on condition that the parson sent to the civil registrar a duplicate of the entry of marriage made in the Vestry*" (italics mine). In short, marriage, ceased to be regarded legally as Christian, and became secular. This also has been decided at law: "Russell versus Russell" (1924)—Appeal Cases, 746—when it was declared that the legalisation of divorce had placed "the sanctity of marriage" (that is, the "Christian" basis) "in the limbo of lost causes and forgotten loyalties."

It seems fairly clear, then, that, though England retains many religious traditions and institutions, it is no longer true that the country is legally or corporately "Christian." At best, it is "mixed."

That being so (and even if we put aside abstract questions of pure justice), how can full freedom be denied to "sceptics and agnostics" to take their parts in political and educational work? They do, in fact, take such parts, and have so done during many years. Should John Morley have been barred? Or John M. Robertson?—the one-time secretary of militant Atheist Charles Bradlaugh, and himself not only definitely an Atheist, but also the most prominent exponent of the theory that Jesus was a myth: but who nevertheless was an excellent Minister under H. H. Asquith.

In our community bans and bars for religious, anti-religious or non-religious opinion are impracticable even could they be regarded as just.

We come eventually to the contrast which, many years ago, so impressed John Henry (afterwards Cardinal) Newman. In his "*Apologia pro Vita Sua*" (see "Everyman's Library," complete edition, pp. 186 and 219) he wrote: "I came to the conclusion that there was no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity, and that a perfectly consistent mind, under those circumstances in which it finds itself here below, must embrace either the one or the other"; and: "In these latter days, in like manner, outside the Catholic Church things are tending, with far greater rapidity than in that old time from the circumstances of the age, to Atheism in one shape or other. What a scene, what a prospect, does the whole of Europe present at this day!—and not only Europe, but every government and every civilisation through the world, which is under the influence of the European mind!" How much more emphatically would he say this in 1947 than in 1864?

The truth is that the sixteenth century Reformation, by abandoning (where it was successful) belief in an infallible Church, set up—though its leaders did not so desire—the domination of private judgment. Were it possible to return to the old "Catholic culture," we might again adopt bans and bars against "heretics"—but, as it is, a non-Catholic system must logically allow freedom of opinion.

J. W. POYNTER.

OBITUARY

HAROLD GREEN

On Saturday, January 17, the remains of Harold Green were cremated at the Nottingham Crematorium. His membership of the National Secular Society covered many years in connection with the Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester Branches. He was also a constant reader of "The Freethinker," was keenly interested in the Movement and never missed an opportunity for helping in his own way. Before an assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read at the crematorium by Mr. T. M. Mosley, of Nottingham. R. H. R.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 3, 7 p.m.: "Group Psychology in Industry," J. A. BROWNE, M.B., Ch.B.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Revolution of 1848," Mr. JOSEPH MCCABE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Criminal Justice," Mr. ROGER PAGE (Prison Reform Council).

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Annual General Meeting (members only).

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "America, the Moving Frontier," Miss MARJORIE SMITH, M.A.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m. "Palestine and the Jewish State," Mr. M. LOUVISH, M.A.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Boars Head Hotel, Southgate).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Recent Visits to Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia," Mr. E. V. TEMPEST.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Education—Its Cause and Cure," Mr. HAROLD BELLCHAMBERS, B.A.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Colour Bar," Dr. JOSEPH MITCHELL, B.Sc., Ph.D. (League of Coloured Peoples).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool 1).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Growth of Political Intolerance," Mr. W. HAMLING (Liverpool).

Nelson I.L.P. (Co-operative Hall, Southfield St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The Catholic Attitude to Social Questions," Rev. R. KILLEEN.

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