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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

What is Freethought?

I HAVE been asked a question, which is common. It is also a good question, and that is not always common. Finally, a good question leads to thinking, and that is worth something in a world where sounds often do duty for sense. The question interested me, and I hope it will interest others.

The question is: "What do you mean by 'Freethought' and in what sense is there 'Freethought' that is not open to other questions?"

Both questions are pertinent, and worthy of attention, but we must go a little way round to make the answer quite clear. In the first place, it must be admitted that the word "free" as applied to a scientific statement is quite out of order. In science a thing is what it does, and the business of science is to note the "doings" of force, and express it in terms of natural "law." To discuss whether natural forces are free or unfree is, from a scientific point of view, equal to discussing the colour of a smell, or the smell of a sound. But this does not imply that Freethought is meaningless. Quite the contrary. Applied to opinion, "free" has exactly the same significance as it has in relation to such expressions as "a free man," or "a free people." We mean in all cases the absence of external and unessential restraint. "Freethought" has nothing in itself as to the origin of thought, or the laws of thought, all it says is, that there are conditions under which thinking is conditioned to a foregone conclusion, and there are others where the mind is allowed to operate in accordance with conditions determined wholly by its own nature. "Freethought" is then that form of thought which proceeds along lines of its own essential character.

Now, it is specially suggestive that, as a mere matter of history, the first active manifestations of Freethought should have occurred in connection with religion. It was inevitable that this should be so, for there is no other object in which authority plays so large a part as it does in religion. Even in the earliest times there is no special impulse towards intolerance in secular matters. These are made the subject of discussion among the most primitive societies, and in all discussion, different opinion is assumed. Ways and means are all topics of discussion among primitive peoples, so long as the subjects discussed are free from the direct control of the gods. But where the will of the gods is concerned, discussion becomes an impertinence. And when we have the will of the gods, it is laid down that the question of the god is the greatest power.

Thus, from the beginning there are two different tendencies at work. In secular affairs there is the tendency to discussion, to a give and take attitude of mind, and a disposition to settle opinion in accordance with ascertainable facts, but in religious matters there is an intolerance which results from fear of offending the

gods. Even to-day there is a great difference between our discussion of secular and religious affairs. It is, however, a significant fact, that the first form of democratic government occurred with freethinking, sceptical Greece. But in both Rome and Greece, the measure of toleration of differences in opinion was greater than has ever existed in this country. In Rome, to the very end of the pagan rule, there was no legislation against opinion, as such. The holders of certain opinions might find themselves occasionally in an uncomfortable position, but it had to be upon grounds other than what was afterwards known as heresy. In the pre-Christian times, there was no direct opposition to differences of religious belief. Readers of Lea's works, in which no inaccuracies have been discovered, will find evidence of the wide evil that came with the full power of Christianity, and readers will appreciate what we have said. Under ancient Greece and Rome the development of opinion, for and against religion, was permitted freely. The gods were satirised in poems, in plays, and in philosophies. Whatever prosecution existed, as Professor Bury has said, was never organised. There was no powerful Church with the civil State ready to hand, to torture and murder in the name of God. We have to-day succeeded in regaining some of the freedom possessed by Greece and Rome, but if we think what the intellectual life was, and allowed for what might have been, one gets some notion of the evils of Christian practice.

When the Christian Church assumed control of the Western world, it was fashioned for the sole purpose of rooting out obnoxious opinions. Nothing would have more astonished a citizen of old Rome than to have revisited the earth a thousand years later, to have seen men and women condemned to death for expressing doubts concerning things which in his own day, educated men and women were laughing at. It would have seemed to him that the world had gone insane. So it had, and the name of the mania was Christianity.

Which ever way man turned, with whatever subject they were concerned, the Church blocked the way. Protestant or Catholic made little difference. At most the Protestants substituted a dead Book for a living Church. Protestants for the first time in Europe made a profession of Christianity a part of the law of the Secular State. Hitherto, there had been no law in Europe compelling a profession of Christianity. The State assisted the Church but the Church was no part of the State. Protestantism in itself gave no promise of toleration. In the name of religion, Protestants opposed the physics of Newton even as Catholics had opposed the physics of Galileo.

It became inevitable that Freethought should take on a definitely anti-religious form. In the Christian Church, Europe had, for the first time, an organisation with the avowed intention of dictating, not merely what Man should say, but also what they should not think. No greater tyranny than was set up by the Church in the days of the early and Middle Ages, has ever existed.

The killing of heretics became the most solemn of duties. When the desire for progress took a purely social form there was the same lesson; for while the Roman Catholic insisted upon obedience to the Church, the Protestant was hardly less insistent on the duty of obedience to a state which embodied the Church. The old force of religion was brought to bear to induce contentment with the existing state of things rather than to the creation of improvements.

It is not, therefore, surprising that, having regard to what has been said, "Freethought" has come to have a very definite connotation in relation to religious belief. It is also true, that the sense of "Freethought," as being definitely anti-religious, has grown up slowly, but as Deism gave place to Atheism, the anti-religious quality became more definitely established. The value of "Freethought" lies in the assertion that when tested by reason all religious beliefs break down hopelessly.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE PHYSICAL FEATURES AND INDUSTRIES OF ENGLAND

SITUATED on the fringe of the European mainland, our island possesses many advantages. Twenty-one miles distant from the French coast at the Straits of Dover, with the Norfolk sea shore only 225 miles from Holland and Norway; merely 250 miles distance from North-Eastern Scotland, the Continent is easily accessible. In the distant past, our ice-free oceans were readily crossed by roving invaders, but as the centuries sped on these waters formed a natural obstacle to foreign intrusion. Thus England was enabled to develop at least a modicum of religious and political liberty, while Continental peoples were engaged in ever recurrent border warfare.

The narrow seas which isolate us from our neighbours are shallow, and were the waters to fall 120 feet only Great Britain would become reunited to the Continent. This, however, is not detrimental, for their fisheries are among the finest in the world and, as the eminent geographer, Professor Herbertson, points out, "the height of the tidal wave over the continental shelf is much increased. Twice a day the water rises 20 feet, 30 feet, or even 40 feet, in estuaries round the coast. The rising tide carries shipping inland, the ebbing tide carries it out. Round the coast men become expert fishermen and sailors, imbued with the strong spirit of adventure." Moreover, with the great discoveries of the fifteenth century, Britain's position on the outskirts of Western Europe, with a clear Atlantic outlook to the New World, provided her with mercantile and naval advantages of primary importance.

England's hills and dales have little changed within historical times, although many modifications have been made in her surroundings. Forests have been felled, and the wolf, wild cat, deer and other denizens of the ancient woodlands have disappeared, the fox and badger alone surviving. Marshes and fens have been drained and cultivated. When the Danes ravaged our island 1,000 years ago, they sailed up the then wide Lea, while old-time ports are now inland cities. Then, with the Industrial Revolution and the use of coal for fuel for furnaces and export abroad, the once smiling Midland landscape has been transformed into the smoky Black Country of to-day.

From the English Channel, the easiest entrance into the heart of the country is through the Itchin estuary

at Southampton, our leading Peninsular and South American port and now competing with Liverpool for trading with the United States. It was by way of Southampton Water that the Saxons landed and founded their Wessex Kingdom. To the north, gaps in the chalk downs became the seats of towns and villages of which the most important were the cathedral cities of Salisbury and Winchester, the latter for a time the capital of England.

But the city destined to eclipse all others both in magnitude and fame was that which grew up on the banks of the Thames. From the east the estuary and valley of this river lead directly into the centre of our island. Favoured by the tides, "one coming round the north of Great Britain, reinforced by another coming from the Straits of Dover, are exceptionally strong and high, and easily float large ships in. London has therefore been well situated for foreign trade. It faces the Rhine delta, a fact which was of great importance in the early middle ages when Flanders was one of the great commercial countries of Europe and when Venetian fleets traded between the Mediterranean and the Baltic. London was built at the lowest point where the tidal river could be bridged. . . . Westminster, now joined to London, was built where the undredged river could be forded at low tide."

The Kennet flows into the Thames at Reading, while Oxford is the river's most celebrated centre in its upper reaches. The Thames rises in the Cotswold Hills near Cheltenham, adjoining succulent pastures feeding flocks of sheep whose fleeces formed the foundation of the famous woollen industry of Stroud and many smaller towns.

Both east and west of the City of Spire there is easy communication. The Ouse, Nen and other streams flow to the Wash through marshes that long prevented travel. This region, which still retains its earlier name—the Fens—is now well drained and cultivated. In days long past, clusters of dwellings were erected on islands standing amid the swamps which were successfully defended against invaders, Ely for instance, is still termed the Isle of Ely and was once the retreat of Hereward the Wake when he defied the Norman ruler. To-day, the most prominent centres on the margins of the Fens are Peterborough, Bedford and Cambridge.

In East Anglia, with its drier climate and excellent soil, some of the heaviest crops in England are harvested. The coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk are indented with many estuaries which open towards the Rhine and other rivers, and it was through these openings that the Angles invaded these counties, while southwards the Saxons settled in Essex. Harwich, an old Danish settlement, is the chief packet station in this district. With their bracing climate, the East Anglians are conspicuously energetic and enterprising, and Norwich was for centuries a leading manufacturing centre.

The Midlands are now great hives of industry in addition to the possession of many thousand acres of highly productive soil. Rising near the Welland, which itself runs towards the Wash, the Warwick Avon flows in the opposite direction to the Severn valley through the Vale of Evesham, which contains some of the most fertile land in Europe. Rugby is not only famous for its school; it is also a considerable centre for roads and railways. The north-western district of the Midlands possesses a splendid coal field which furnishes fuel to the very varied and extensive industries of Birmingham and its neighbouring towns, as well as the world-famous pottery manufacturers of Staffordshire.

That majestic stream, the Severn, rises in the Welsh Highlands and runs in an easterly direction to Shrews-

bury, but from then frequently changes its course until it reaches Gloucester at the head of its estuary, through which the Severn railway tunnel passes from England into Wales. But the Wye, the Severn's tributary, is the most beautiful of our streams which, in its winding course, leaves a permanent impression of the picturesque. As its name implies, Chester was an ancient Roman city, and has preserved its importance ever since. The county of Cheshire is noted for its dairy farming and other agricultural activities. Its neighbour, Lancashire, has long been celebrated for its cotton, but for centuries it remained a poor and thinly peopled district. Later, at least until 1918, Lancashire became perhaps the most opulent and crowded county in Britain. Cotton, chemical, mining and engineering industries are her chief avocations, and Manchester is still the greatest cotton market in the world.

Leicester, Coventry, Nottingham and Derby have long been important commercial and industrial cities in the region east of the Pennine Range. Hull and Gainsborough are considerable ports on the North Sea, while the extensive ridings of Yorkshire have witnessed several invasions of Danes and Norsemen and, like Northumberland and Durham, its living inhabitants preserve a pronounced strain of Scandinavian ancestry. Yorkshire remains the chief centre of the woollen industry and Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield are famous names. Also, the Yorkshire coalfield appears the most extensive in England, while Sheffield has long been celebrated for its iron and steel products. Nor must Middlesbrough be forgotten, as a centre of ship construction and the capital of the industrial region of the Lower Tees. But space forbids reference to other outstanding agricultural and industrial centres, with their special productions, so long celebrated both at home and abroad.

T. F. PALMER.

ENVIRONMENT

WE always gradually change along with our changing surroundings. In tropical zones human growth is retained but development accelerated, in arctic zones it is the reverse (with a greater amount of iron in the body used up—owing to harder conditions of life.) "Nordic" Man, therefore, is brighter than, say, the Mediterranean type.

The distinction between white men as Jews and "Aryans" is pure nonsense and a political discrimination only, hatched for sinister ends. Science has nothing whatsoever to do with such inventions made to order in a Fascist State. When in the Jews certain characteristics are more pronouncedly predominant, it is owing to centuries of persecution which led to inbreeding with accent on certain features.

The idea that our diet can make up for our behaviour is another primitive superstition. Hitler, for example, was a vegetarian, but for all that nobody would vouch for his gentle manners. What animals feed on is a matter of what they can obtain. When during the Ice Ages Primitive Man was unable to find sufficient vegetable food, his body slowly changed and became adapted to meat, and nowadays Man is an "All-Eater." In New Zealand, a species of parrot, *Kea*—herbivorous at first as all parrots—in the course of a certain food shortage developed the habit of tearing up sheep.

This proves that the conditions under which a being has to live are a stronger incentive than inheritance. True, a poor grain of seed, if given all care (tending, soil,

light, etc.), can only yield a rather sound but mediocre crop; whereas the finest of seed, if neglected, owing to its lesser resistance, may not even yield a crop at all. Why, then, have people the knack of considering nothing else but inheritance?

This purely mechanical explanation enables Society to excuse its own lack of care for the majority of its members. In general, children are never bad; if they are, there must be something wrong with their parents (treatment, behaviour at home and reactions towards other people, etc.). In the same way, Society at large is responsible for its crooks and criminals. Instead of putting them to death, their "social parents" ought to be punished, this means. Society has degenerated and must be changed. In the vicious trend of conditions senile disorders spring up and must be remedied. There is no remedy in putting the visible ulcers into jail, but to cure the sore at its social roots.

A socialist must never generalise, such as Jews are this or that—Germany will always be such and such . . . ! Communities are apt to show a general trend of behaviour, it is true, but individually the members even of this respective community differ. The Steel Magnates and the Smallholders, the Junkers and the miners, despite a common class outlook, are not mass products but human individuals. And as for the Jews, there is an old saying: "Every country has the Jews it deserves." He who finds faults in them has better blame himself first, since persecution, social injustice and insecurity were the causes of these faults. A growing tree, if deprived of proper light is bound to twist its way in order to live.

The "Jewish" way of behaviour generally springs from an inbred inferiority complex that wants over-compensating. This renders the Jews apt to become the fanatics in every movement, left or right. But it is foolish to generalise that all Jews are either millionaires or Communists. This is the way of obscurant or ill-educated people and the Fascists play on this mental laziness of the masses. A socialist must never be mentally lazy, but remember that our Society is class-ridden and that, therefore, in every member, Jew or Gentile, there is only one thing that matters: his class position and, consequently, his class outlook.

PERCY G. ROY.

CHARITY

"PORTER! Porter! . . . What is the matter with this hospital? Surely there must be someone to attend to visitors? . . . Ah, young man, are you a porter? Oh, you're a doctor, are you? I must say you look very young. You must be the same age as my curate. Well, I don't suppose you'll mind giving this to someone in charge. I have my parish to attend to, you know. I can't wait around here all day. . . . What? Haven't you got eyes, man. Good heavens, no! I didn't pick this up. This is a perfectly good shoe. It certainly isn't something one of your patients dropped. Really, you make me feel it isn't worth the trouble to give a present to this hospital. My stupid housekeeper lost the other shoe. You know what servants are, nowadays. . . . Now look here, I simply can't waste any more time. Just take this shoe to matron and tell her it's a present from the vicar. Surely you must have some poor man here with only one leg."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

LEADERS

I.

WHAT strange names have been bestowed upon those who arrogated to themselves power and dominion. Some were not satisfied with earthly eminence, but assumed deific postures.

"Like gods they lived;
As men they died."

King takes us back to he who expanded beyond chieftainship of a tribe in war and the chase. Etymologists tell us it derives from cunning. This is explained as not foxlike but cleverer. Nevertheless, it has not always followed that superiority of one man in body or mind was beneficent of intent or beneficial to his subjects.

Enough absolute monarchs have lived and their proceedings recorded for us to realise power is one of the greatest human intoxicants, from which men had better abstain, but few are capable of doing so. Were a single motive sought for causing the millenniums of mankind's martyrdom, lust for power would be arguable as one of the most potent.

Different languages had various terms for king; Pharaoh, Shah, Nizam, Sultan, none of which dynasts was any more admirable than European kings.

Sings Keats:—

"I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
I saw their starved lips in the gloom
With horrid warning gaped wide."

When kingship swelled in ambition to exercise authority over many countries and peoples it coined the term imperator, one who gives orders, popularly emperor, with variants Czar and Kaiser from Caesar.

Such withheld domination defeated its own purpose, for the size of the empire and the numbers of its differing peoples necessitated delegation of power, however reluctant the emperor was to concede it. Sometimes subordinates would wrest power from him, or get it by politic or diplomatic means, trading on the emperor's weakness or distance, or confusion and changes caused by his death.

Thus arose such titles as viceroy, governor, mandarin, representatives of imperial autocracy exercising it mostly for their own benefit.

Early in the development of governments people realised the need for checks upon despotism, something more workable and lasting than assassination or revolution, both of which too often are followed by heavier tyranny. Tyrant was one of the forceful and appropriate words the thinking Greeks left us.

So the Romans had consuls with limited periods of office.

"He, his three years of heroship expired,
Returns indignant to the slighted plow."

Presidency of a republic has been a favoured experiment to reduce domineering of subjects by kings, also eliminating possibility of bad monarchs being succeeded by worse heirs.

Republican government has worked with degrees of success, better than most other forms, always with danger of a president trying to make himself permanent. Many constitutional forms have been devised to prevent this. Switzerland achieves it by keeping presidential power small, leaving government to elected representatives.

The list of lesser tyrants is lengthy. They go far back in history, useful material for fiction writers. As power

and wealth are synonymous they were rich in the source of wealth—land. Many derived their titles of address therefrom.

II.

Prince, a chief, was next remove below king, often used for king's heir and sons. Prince of Wales in England is a notable example. Duke may be regarded nearly as variant of king or prince, being a reigning sub-monarch titled from his dukedom.

Regally conferred hereditary titles step down from dukes in the order marquis or marquess, earl; count has disappeared from Britain in favour of earl, though the feminine is still countess; viscount, baron, the last usually now designated by the more general term, lord. Earl derives from Anglo-Saxon; the others are Norman French, as Saxon shire became county.

Knights were non-hereditary, but for money James I created hereditary knighthoods, baronets.

Great rulers had ministers and viziers to carry out their edicts. Voting democracy has not abolished such, but made them prominent members of the majority party in parliament, with prime minister or premier at their head. In Britain, Norman kings appointed lord lieutenant and sheriffs of counties, retained mainly now as decorative offices.

Popular governments tend to develop greater complexities of administration than despotisms. This involves a hierarchy of civil servants, secretaries, clerks, supervisors, inspectors, directors, executives, managers, organisers and innumerable other directive individuals, repeated *in petto* throughout municipal and county government.

This does not take into account the fraternity of tax-collecting and financial experts, the vast intricacies of the law, or the numerous grades of army, navy and air force officers, or the constabulary and teachers.

The communist form seems to take to itself all paraphernalia of other governments, adding thereto commissars for further guiding and schooling the masses, and secret police to spy on them.

Oliver Cromwell assumed the title of protector instead of king. Modern dictators fancy a variety of disguising pseudonyms, as fuhrer in Germany, caudillo in Spain, duce in Italy, the latter old duke returned.

Problems of leadership continue to exercise the minds of those in authority, especially for tutoring the younger generations to go the way of the old and not break into original courses. So as well as teachers there must be hosts of scoutmasters, youth leaders and innumerable other persons devoting themselves to controlling juvenile exuberance.

On the philosophical side we have masters and seers, prophets and initiates, as well as the huge organisations of religious bodies. More spectacular and dramatic are those forms of leadership outstanding as gangsters, pirates and other modes of bullying, to which leadership is so nearly related as to be barely distinguishable from it.

Frequently rebels and revolutionaries become themselves most oppressive tyrants when they attain power against which they revolted.

Perhaps the writers of the South Wales colliers' pamphlet "The Miners' Next Step" came nearest the ideal when they pronounced emphatically "We don't want leaders. We're all going to be pushers instead."

A. R. WILLIAMS.

How many unjust and improper things are authorised by custom.—TERENCE.

GETTING THINGS RIGHT

IN his article ("The Freethinker," August 8), Mr. Broom accuses me of trailing the delusive red-herring, that is, literally, of trying to divert attention from his thesis, "The necessity of Sin," to other and irrelevant matters. The full scope of his accusation is that I have, as yet, completely failed to show that sin is unnecessary; that I have introduced subjects not pertinent to the main issue, and have refuted beliefs which he does not hold. A heavy indictment to be sure. Let us see whether a brief review of the controversy will substantiate its several charges. I hope to show that they arise from his own confusion of mind induced by trying to demonstrate the truth of a proposition fundamentally opposed to his theistic beliefs, and that the effort has led him to adopt a method of disputation even more "fishy."

I will deal first with what, according to Mr. Broom, is the head and front of my offending: failure to show that sin is unnecessary.

In my article of March 28, I say "Evil and good are merely different modes or aspects of the forces or agencies of nature, and, as such, are necessary conditions of life. We cannot have the one without the possibility of the other. . . . Viewing the question thus, we, as rationalists, can readily understand how necessary a part evil must play in every production of art or literature that would present a true picture of life."

What more does Mr. Broom want? Does he expect me to deal with all the rigmarole of instance and illustration with which he bolsters up his case? It seems to be a part of his method to ignore my previous statements and to assume that I am opposed to the plainest facts. For example, he asks in his latest article: "How can Mr. Yates deny that the statement, 'Mr. A. is a good man,' would have no sense if we did not also have experience of Mr. B. who is a bad man?" But I do not deny it; and I cannot conceive how anyone else could deny it, seeing that it is only by their different qualities or characteristics that we are able to distinguish between them. It is a condition of existence that everything has its correlative or complementary opposite. If there were no bad, there could be no good, no heat, no cold, no dry, no moist. All this I either expressly state or imply in my article referred to. What, then, is Mr. Broom's point in persistently drumming on so obvious a truth? He seems to think that he is enunciating an outrageous novelty in ethics which everybody must regard with amazement and horror. On Christians, and other believers in "God's goodness", it may, very properly, have this effect. To the Atheist, it is a commonplace fact of life.

And now for Mr. Broom's imputation of irrelevancy. He says that, instead of answering his original argument for the necessity of sin, I substitute as entirely different question, "What is the origin of moral evil?" Because I think I can answer it better. At the close of his first article he asks: "Why did God, who is supposed to be all-powerful, construct an inferior universe in which virtue and vice are inseparable, when He could have constructed a superior one in which they were not?" All that Mr. Broom can say in answer to his own question is that "It is unanswerable, though it may be used legitimately as an argument against the perfection of God," which only shows the mental fog in which most theists are content to view what they choose to call the "problem of evil." If evil is a necessity, is it not a palpable contradiction to postulate an all-powerful beneficent God as the author of it? And, if this be

admitted, what purpose is served by substituting as a God a Being who is neither one nor the other? Now, I maintain that my statement giving the scientific interpretation is a direct answer to his question, and therefore, relevant.

I now come to the third item of accusation—that I refute beliefs which he does not hold. In the latter part of his original article, Mr. Broom refers to the clergy of the Christian Churches as "my fellow ministers", thus implying that he is one of them. When I point out that his argument, in that character, is irreconcilable with Christian doctrine, he escapes the difficulty by confessing that, though a clergyman, he is not a Christian. Thus, it is only after I have refuted the "belief" that I am told he does not hold it. Again, in supporting his assertion that "the fact of sin is itself an immutable divine law," he quotes Isaiah xlv, 7, that God "forms the light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil." When I show the absurdity of supposing that a God of wisdom, power and goodness could make sin a law, and further, point out the contradiction involved in the fact of his having made laws prohibiting and punishing sin, he exclaims, "I do wish Mr. Yates would refrain from telling me what I believe," and he adds, "Though I quote from Isaiah with approval, it does not follow that I believe in all, or even most, of the reputed actions of that somewhat unpleasant character, the God of the Old Testament." It seems that Mr. Broom estimates "The Ancient of Days" according as his acts affect his argument. As the Creator of evil he is to be accepted as divine; as the author of the Decalogue, he is to be repudiated as "an unpleasant character," and this for no other reason than that the one act supports and the other opposes Mr. Broom's proposition. If this is not shuffling, it is somewhat akin to it. I might quote other examples of Mr. Broom's protean tactics, but the foregoing may suffice.

And now to sum up. As I have shown, the Atheist is not concerned to deny the necessity of evil, because his conception of nature takes full account of it as a condition of life. But such is not the case with Mr. Broom. As a professed believer in "The Almighty," he is both logically and theologically bound to deny and denounce it. Why he should devote himself to establishing a truth so subversive of his religious belief is not clear. All he has done so far is to demonstrate (somewhat diffusely) the fact that his thesis and his theism simply won't fit. Perhaps he may be induced to explain his position.

A. YATES.

IDOL WORSHIP

For five years, two statues of the Virgin have been carried about France thousands of miles, and the "Universe" has computed that now 15,000,000 people have pledged their lives to the "Immaculate Heart of Mary." We do not doubt for a moment that ignorant and illiterate people in millions still grovel before a statue, but the words "Immaculate Heart of Mary" are just empty twaddle with no meaning whatever. The clever people in the Roman Church know this as well as we do, but it is necessary to keep up the delusion that the Church is gaining ground everywhere—whereas the truth is that Roman Catholicism is fighting for its life with a desperation never known before in its history. One has only to read the despairing whines of its bishops everywhere to realise how hard religion is being hit by science and reason.

ACID DROPS

Bishop Walker has made it known that he is not satisfied with the present condition of religion in this country. He says that there is too much of Attlee, Churchill, and so on, and too little of God. We appreciate the attitude of Bishop Walker, but he should consider that Attlee and Churchill have *tried* to do something, whereas God seems to have done nothing, except to claim credit for doing things that have been done by human beings. Our Bishop is shocked that men and women will not praise God. All we can say is that people are getting wiser, and of necessity the gods lose ground.

But what will our bishop do if he carries out his threat of giving up his church and parades villages to induce the people to praise God? Of course villagers will turn out to see the bishop, but does he really think that villagers are more foolish than townmen? If so he has made a great mistake. Townsmen may be *sharper* with their tongues than villagers, but their intelligence is as strong as others. Consciously or unconsciously, there is a good display of sense in small centres, and the bishop will find that worn-out doctrines of religion are dying in villages as in cities. Bishop Walker is insulting villagers.

At Seattle (U.S.A.) recently, in the Supreme Court, was a case in which a woman contested her mother's will on the ground that her mother had married "outside the Hebrew race." The judge, shortly but properly, dismissed the case on the ground that there was "no such thing as a Hebrew race." We were pleased to see this, because all our life we have been declaring that there is no Hebrew race, no Christian race, or any other race. Such language as a man "comes from a gambling race," or a "religious race," is sheer carelessness or ignorance, or both. There were believers in the Jewish religion several centuries ago in China, before Christianity was heard of. What became of their "race?" We have a string of monarchs, etc., made up from French, German, Welsh, etc., but somehow they develop into the British "race." That word should be stopped in schools.

We are all anxious as to whether we shall get enough corn and other foods, but something has happened—or has not happened. We have the Church of England, which is the chief of a large sect, and with each of these Churches there are printed prayers to God to give us food, clothing, etc. And nothing has been done on either side. God has done nothing to control water and wind, and men and women go along just uninterested as to whether they call God's attention to what we need, or to remind Him that he has done nothing at all to make the lot of humans comfortable. God's representatives should take the matter up. A god that does nothing soon becomes nothing.

The Bishop of Southwell says that "the supreme need of the Western world is to bring back the knowledge of the true God." We are not sure of it, and it strikes us that a god should show us that he is one who has the capacity to do something. In a few years we have had to face some very nasty situations. What most people would like to know, is just what has any god done in the direction of doing something. The bishop says that "the rights of Man depends on his status in the sight of God." That is not the case. It is on the quality of

Man that God manages to exist. And it is now getting clear that the historic gods are of no use to the wide awake Man.

At Maseru, Basutoland, Africa, some of the natives have been getting into trouble with the Chief Justice, for twelve of them were sentenced to death for carrying out some of the laws of the Christian Bible. These men thought what they saw in the Bible, that witches should be put to death, they never thought that the Bible did not mean what it said. There are, in fact, large numbers of people in England who believed that there are plenty of "evil spirits" who are in being. And in any case the natives are carrying out the real religion on which Christianity is built. It is simply not decent to first permit English preachers to tell the natives that they must not kill "God's creations" and then execute them for doing as the Bible directs.

"Do the wicked go to hell?" is a question asked of "Mentor" in the "Church of England Newspaper." The answer is the mass of verbiage that one can expect to such a leading question. "Mentor" flounders and squirms, until one could almost feel sorry for him. How much simpler is a Roman Catholic's position, whose hell is still a real fire, where unfortunate asbestos-like souls burn for ever without being consumed, and where there is a grandstand seat for the saints to witness the torment of the damned. (Rev. xiv, 5, 10-11.)

Like the contortionist Bishops of Lambeth, Protestants realise that the old barbaric ideas are an anachronism in a modern age, but wish to retain them, for they know that the "threat of hell is a hangman's whip."

What a wonderful chance to test the efficacy of a Catholic and a Protestant blessing. Bishop McCormack, of Hexham, blessed the cargo ship "Irish Pine," which was launched at Newcastle. This should give the "Irish Pine" an advantage over other ships that have only had a bottle of champagne or—in these days of utility—cider broken over the bows. We are sure that the ship will weather any storm, will never have an accident, will always have a full cargo. That is, if her captain is capable and the shipwrights know their job and the agents are good business men. And we are charged with being Pagans.

The "Communist Party cannot remain neutral towards religion, and must conduct anti-religious propaganda because every religion is opposed to science." Stalin's dictum is quoted by the "Catholic Herald," which adds that we can expect a "revival of another anti-God campaign." The "Herald" will no doubt be able to get some inside information as to how the campaign is likely to be conducted from their latest illustrious convert, the Quisling, Douglas Hyde, late news editor of the "Daily Worker," who recently spoke at a Roman Catholic Summer School on the "Aims, methods and organisation of the Communist Party."

If and when the anti-God campaign starts we can expect another avalanche of those harrowing tales of persecution with which we were regaled some years ago, and at which the "Herald" is so adept. Its readers' hearts will be wrung by tales of priests and nuns being tortured and murdered. By the way, if the Soviet is to initiate an anti-religious drive, what can we make of the contention that religion was banned in Russia?

THE FREETHINKER

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Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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SUGAR PLUMS

The boost Atheism got over the radio in America last year has led to awful trouble, for the Christian community is still wrangling about it. Led by Charles Smith, who is the President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, as well as the editor of the "Truth Seeker," Atheists are demanding as much time on the radio to air their views as Christians; and Washington's radio controllers "wish they had never heard about it," according to the "Daily Mail." The controllers admit that Atheists have their rights as well as Christians, but Christians are in such a stew about the success of the Scott broadcast that they are appealing to Congress to stop further addresses. The interesting thing to note is that "ex-controller Clifford Durr," who admitted the Atheists' right to broadcast, "is a devout church-goer." Perhaps Mr. Durr sees clearly that nothing will or can stop the advancement of Atheism.

The Roman Catholic censors in Eire have banned Graham Greene's novel "The Heart of the Matter," while Fr. Martindale has praised it up almost as a work of genius. The Eire censors say the book is "indecent," and we need not be, therefore, surprised that it is a best seller in the U.S.A. Bishop Browne feels that the book condones sexual "sin" and "there is also a painful want of reticence about things which modesty teaches should not be mentioned." Sex is like a red flag to a bull to these priests, due, of course, to their religious inhibitions—no wonder they cannot think straight when an author deals frankly and courageously with sex problems, even if he is silly enough to be a Roman Catholic.

The Bradford Branch N.S.S., after a successful season in the open, commences its indoor work in The Mechanics' Institute to-day (September 19). Mr. J. T. Brighton will be the speaker and his lecture on "Miracles and Medicine" will begin at 6-30 p.m. Mr. Brighton is a very popular speaker, he has tact, good humour and plenty of experience on his side, and he should provide an interesting and an instructive evening. Religious doubters should be induced to attend.

In the I.L.P. Rooms, St. James Street, Halifax, the local N.S.S. branch has arranged a lecture on "The Meaning of Freethought" to begin at 6-30 p.m. to-day (September 19). We were not informed of the name of the speaker.

A Catholic "documentary" film is being made—and no doubt it will cheer the hearts of all the Church's sheep. Real live Bishops are taking part in the reproduction of Catholic services, and, of course, the film has the blessing of Bishop Ellis of Nottingham. Bishop Ellis of Nottingham "has agreed to pontificate for one of the scenes."

We mention Lourdes again—though it deserves a rest—but we note 60,000 people attended the 75th French National Pilgrimage, and that is a huge number. And how many miracles did the Virgin vouchsafe to such a congregation? As far as we have read, none at all. The "medical" controls are no longer as lax as in those glamorous days when Lourdes could cure stone-blind men, replace missing limbs, make incurable cripples win races, and so on. People now ask for medical evidence, and by medical evidence is meant just that. Moreover, the hundreds of thousands of sick people every year who are not cured, are not particularly good advertisements for one of the biggest frauds ever perpetuated in history.

A NEW ANTHOLOGY FOR FREETHINKERS

HERE at last is an Anthology* which should give immense joy to all lovers of Freethought. Compiled by William Kent, F.S.A. (so well known to our readers), it represents a splendid selection from some 170 authors, many of the excerpts taking over half a page. It is happily dedicated to a sterling supporter of the "Freethinker"—Mr. A. D. Corrick.

A glance at the index will make everybody with a spark of literature in the blood hasten to sample Mr. Kent's discriminating choice, and he has helped us by massing the extracts under appropriate headings.

What, for example, can be said about Heaven? It is one of the most used and abused words in religious literature, and few things can be so oppressively boring as when some mediocre priest starts telling us all he knows about that delectable Paradise. Mr. Kent quotes Jonathan Swift, Edward Gibbon, Rupert Brooke and John Galsworthy, and those of us who know his love of literature, and his remarkable memory for so many of the finest passages in great books and poetry, are not surprised. Those who do not know the passages should be grateful to see what a genius like Swift says about Heaven, to learn the exquisite irony of Gibbon—an irony which infuriated his Christian readers—and to read the more modern "dig" at the "many mansions" there by Galsworthy, who surely was not a Christian in any sense of the term.

Hell is the twin brother of Heaven, and Mr. Kent recalls for us what the great Spurgeon says about a place he never ceased to talk about—that infinite lake of eternal fire to which, to his tremendous satisfaction, Spurgeon always consigned the unbelieving heretics. Then, how many people remember Bertrand Russell's solemn discussion on Christ's moral character, the "one very serious defect" in which was that "He believed in Hell". Some of us think that there were other

* "Lift Up Your Heads" by William Kent, F.S.A. Pioneer Press. Paper, 3s. 6d.; cloth, 5s.

defects—but those Christians who have long since given up Hell as a "place", and insist that it was a "state of mind", hate to be reminded that "our Lord" was completely mistaken.

The headings under which Mr. Kent has put his selections are arranged in alphabetical order, and the reader can go at once to a chosen subject like Agnosticism or Credulity or Priestcraft with the sure knowledge that he will read something particularly apt and entertaining. Here, for instance, we have a delightful cutting from the "News Chronicle", under the heading "Churchill-Christ", probably quite unknown to the majority of people, yet surely worth preserving:—

"Mr. Stanley Holmes, Simonite candidate at Jarrow, sent this telegram to Mr. Churchill yesterday: 'Tyneside would like to touch the hem of your garment on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of next week.'"—"News Chronicle", June, 1945.

"O touch the hem of His garment
And thou, too, shalt be free,
His grace and power through every hour
Will give new life to thee."—Sankey Hymn (sung by the Editor of this book at Wheatsheaf Hall, South Lambeth., 1899-1904).

Christians have never been able to explain why the Lord allowed the "miserable" life of Thomas Paine to be spared when he was due to be guillotined with so many of his comrades during the French Revolution; it has always caused them intense annoyance. In the same way, "Lift Up Your Heads" will exasperate them for it was only by a fluke that Mr. Kent's notebook, labelled "Rationalism," and full of quotations, escaped destruction when his house was bombed during the war, and 3,000 books and a large number of notebooks dealing with many other subjects were destroyed. We are the gainers, for such an Anthology as this is packed with so many good things which otherwise would have been more or less lost that the reader will have difficulty in putting the volume down.

Many of our favourite authors are quoted, of course—like Chapman Cohen (who has always been quotable, by the way) who is represented by many fine extracts, as well as Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Foote, McCabe, J. M. Robertson and a host of Freethought stalwarts. But in addition, we get excerpts from writers like Mencken, Richard Jefferies, Somerset Maugham, T. L. Peacock, Mark Rutherford, Dean Inge, and even Tennyson, Samuel Pepys and Napoleon Bonaparte. They are all quoted for some apt or striking illustration, for something wise or witty—often for something deliciously silly.

I particularly like this quotation from Neville Cardus as a delightful comment on cricket and Christianity:—

"A boy known to the writer used to pray at nights in the summer for a century by Tyldesley. And so anxious was he about his hero that he would offer up his prayer in terms explicit: 'Please let J. T. Tyldesley make a century (100) for the Lancashire County Cricket Club to-morrow, August 6 (Bank Holiday), 1902.' You see, he wished Providence to be under no misapprehension about the time and the occasion on which the century from Tyldesley was desired; every assistance was given in order that beneficence might not be displaced, that a mix-up might not get the Heavenly guidance somehow bestowed on George Hirst instead."

It must have been a very disappointed boy to see Tyldesley clean bowled by Haigh for 24.

Needless to add that the majority of Mr. Kent's quotations strike a much more serious note. But he has cleverly given us a mixed bag including poetry, of course. I can fancy no more interesting compilation on our bookshelves than "Lift Up Your Heads"; and it is also one of those books which almost ask to be given away as a present. It is excellently printed in good and clear type, and, as prices go these days, remarkably cheap. It should have a wide circulation.

H. CUTNER.

THE AMSTERDAM CONFERENCE

IN 1682, that worthy exterminator of witches in the New World, Cotton Mather, wrote: "There is now at sea a ship called the *Welcome*, which has on board a hundred or more of the heretics and malignants called Quakers, with W. Penn, who is the chief scamp, at the head of them. The general court has accordingly given secret orders to waylay the said *Welcome* slyly, as near the Cape of Cod as may be, and make captive the said Penn and his ungodly crew, so that the Lord may be glorified, and not mocked on the soil of this new country with the heathen worship of these people. Much spoil can be made by selling the whole lot to the Barbados, where slaves fetch good prices in rum and sugar; and we shall not only do the Lord a great service by punishing the wicked, but we shall make great good for his ministers and people. Yours in the bowels of Christ," etc. This shows that Billy Sunday's dictum, "The service of the Lord is a payable proposition," was certainly believed in the past, provided, of course, you were the servant approved by the state powers, and not a heretic. As J. Middleton Murray once wrote, "the Church knows its place, which is that of a good wife to the state. Like a good wife, it never advises and never criticises, and when there is a row it stands up for its husband." It is true that in our time the State is the dominant partner in the alliance, but in an earlier period, before nationalist heresies disturbed the equilibrium of Europe, the Holy Catholic Church claimed to dominate the State. Though she has not surrendered her claim she has altered her feminine wiles and prefers to work as unobtrusively as possible. As she has never wavered in her belief in her own exalted station as the institution of the Living God, she has always refused joint work with heretical and schismatical churches and faiths. Hence, she and the Greek Orthodox are the only two Christian bodies of any great importance not to be represented at the Amsterdam Conference of the Churches.

Christianity grew up among the oppressed slaves of Rome. It was an opiate to alleviate their misery. It also offered them vicarious revenge for in the future life they would have the satisfaction of watching their oppressors and enemies writhing in eternal fire. Probably the nearest to that mentality to-day is to be found in Jehovah's Witnesses, who, too, are expecting the end of the world very very soon, and likewise are sure that only the Witnesses will be saved.

When, after the conversion of Constantine, the alliance between Church and State was made, Church dignitaries had their reward (no doubt as a rehearsal for the more eternal reward in the hereafter) on this earth, and the destruction of the world with its last Judgment was indefinitely postponed. The doctrine of Hell, as an eternal Concentration Camp, was used to uphold the civil power, which in turn received its legal power from Mother Church. Legal support for the Pope's claim to appoint

rulers in the West, was found in the so-called Donation of Constantine, by which the first Christian emperor bestowed on the Pope the old Rome and all its Western territories. It was not till 1439, that his document was first rejected as a forgery. The Catholic Church as it had evolved just prior to the Renaissance was then a system of supernatural ideologies to uphold law and order in a feudal society. Its hierarchal organisations of angels, archangels, pomps, and powers, was modelled on feudal hierarchal society in which every one had a set and fixed place. The breakdown of feudalism and the development of absolute monarchies and nationalism, developed national churches. Later, the rising bourgeoisie required an ideology that sanctified thrift, work, individualism and abstentiousness. Calvinism supplied that and it flourished in the more industrialised parts of Europe. But industrialisation, and its need for science as a handmaid to navigation, manufacture, etc., brought more and more of the universe under rational control and predictability. And Malinowski and other anthropologists have pointed out magic and religion are brought in to give confidence only where technique and rational control cannot be applied. Hence from Renaissance times the sphere of supernatural interference has been consistently narrowing. As Bertrand Russell once remarked, "The superstition of sailors is in inverse relation to the size of their vessels." The merchant then found, that from the great Taskmaster, God became the Senior Partner, and gradually the Sleeping Partner. Dante, for instance, never dared to portray God himself. Milton, however, depicts a somewhat garrulous God, described by one critic "as virtually the sort of man, aged and retired from business, to which Newton and Deism were about to reduce him. This is the real meaning of Paradise Lost. The loss of Eden was a great opportunity for Man, but officially it was a tragedy. Adam is humanly sad to renounce the life of the leisure class, but he leaves the Garden of Eden like a man with a job to do and a scarcely concealed impatience to be about it." And ever since then, God has taken on more and more the aspect of the Father of the Firm, living in retirement, treated with the awe due to patriarchial age, but the contempt reserved for out-of-date institutions. This retirement of Deity would have been accelerated were it not for the great wealth and therefore endowment of safe careers, and the hold on educational institutions he still maintains. Even the organisation built around Johanna Southcott's endeavour to give birth to a new Saviour a century ago, is still in control of something near a hundred thousand pounds. Hence Billy Sunday's dictum, as the Oxford Group Movement knows well, still holds true. But the servants of the Lord do not believe with the intensity of belief, or fanaticism of the Cotton Mathers, or the people of the sixteenth century and earlier. Only in Ireland, parts of Spain and Italy, where industrialism has not entered in and the faithful have had little contact with heretics does the old intensity of belief remain. Once the declension from an infallible universal Church with the keys to heaven and hell had set in, there was no means of arresting oneself on the slippery slope. As Erasmus Darwin remarked, "Unitarianism is a feather bed for falling Christians," and the Bishop Barnes's and the other Modernists cannot ultimately stop their fall.

There is a legend that the Buddha in one of his incarnations saw a lean and hungry tiger, too old to catch its prey. Such was his benevolence that he threw himself in front of it and allowed it to devour him. In doing so he ascended in the ladder of merit closer to sainthood. Presumably the tiger, for having devoured a holy man,

went down the scale. Hence it is an open question whether the Buddha's action was not egocentric rather than disinterested.

Now the delegates attending the Amsterdam Conference are fully aware that they are confronting a tiger both young and virile; and, further, that it knows the Church is old and decrepit. It, of course, is the social revolution that is sweeping the world. Unable to oppose it, but not desiring to be eaten up, Christianity is making spasmodic attempts to compromise with it; that the two may be bedfellows—even if very uneasy ones. Dr. R. Niebuhr, of the New York Theological Seminary proposed that the Council should endorse the views of the late Dr. Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, that Communism was a Christian heresy and Fascism and Nazism were anti-Christian paganism. The delegate from Czechoslovakia, a few days previously, was reported to have expressed views somewhat similar. Some other speakers put forward pious platitudes as to our duties to the coloured races, etc. Karl Barth seems to have been the only one who remembered that the Deity is a God of wrath, and that their interests should be primarily directed to the next world. That, at least, is what I gathered from the scanty reports to be found in our national dailies. In fact, judging from the space allotted to it, the Conference is much less important than a juicy murder or even a cricket match. And the Press is a fairly reliable index of public interest.

When the Church was a power, it maintained its hold by offering on terms, insurance from celestial fire and the clutches of the devil. With relegation to the back-ground of Hell, fire and the devil, the Church became more a social and welfare institution. As one of the characters in one of Conrad's novels defined himself as "Catholique, Gentlehomme and Americain," so Maurras and L'Action Française were more Royalist than Christian Catholic; so the Church becoming modernistic, i.e., losing faith in its dogmas, is doing what the individual clergyman losing faith often does, forgetting its intellectual dilemmas in social service. Action is an excellent safeguard against introspection. But, like the sailor who used magic—Christian or otherwise—to give him confidence in a rough sea, and who, gaining more and more control over the elements, used less and less of magic so the production of a bright new world will mean less and less call for supernatural aid.

The Catholic Church, wise with the wisdom of age, sees that as a totalitarian religion it can only be bedfellow with a totalitarian state. Hence its alliance with Mussolini, and its obedient servants, Dolfuss, Franco and Salazar. It knows that once it compromises with what it designates as liberalism and freedom of thought and heresy, it is lost. But it is only in the backward parts of Europe that it still holds its people. It was not an accident that, according to the Press, the brigands of Sardinia came out of their hiding places to vote for the Church party in the last elections in Italy.

The Greek Orthodox Church, the other notable absentee, has a history of subservience, or in Murray's metaphor, of being the docile wife. Its support of Czarist reactionary inefficiency was so notorious that its leaders went into exile with those Grand Dukes who were fortunate enough to be able to do so. That remnant still lives in impoverished exile; and no doubt its outlook is too tied to the past to be able to understand, let alone agree with, the representatives at the Amsterdam Conference. A younger and equally docile Church has grown up since the revolution, but that, too, knowing what it is expected to say, would be of little interest to the Conference. And it would be too dangerous for an

ecclesiast from Greece to voice any independent opinion. As Trotsky once remarked, "The national gods are tied to the national cannon."

To sum up, the Conference received scant notice from the Press, because that fairly shrewd judge of public opinion considered it of little importance in the modern world. What has been reported shows obvious signs of a political and social leftward drift, as a substitute for discussing dogma. It shows a strong desire to compromise with the time, but if it does so it will be eaten up by events. It will have to compromise itself into nullity.

The parties that stood out of it, the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches, by refusing to compromise as far as power is concerned, stand a bigger chance of temporary survival, but only in the backward parts of the earth; and only as long as they can make the clock stand still. Once the light of reason is applied to the supernatural, to faith and revelation, scepticism sets in. Conversely, if you are going to preach a divinely-revealed infallible Church, then the very presence of heretics or doubters dampens the belief of the faithful. The average English Catholic, for instance, does not believe with the naive intensity of its Irish neighbour; for the former is living among sceptics, while with the latter, the sceptic is the exception that proves the rule. And that is why Catholicism cannot tolerate what is designated liberalism in politics and belief and morals.

J. S. BARWELL.

MARXISM ONCE MORE

WHEN I wrote my original article about Mr. Archibald Robertson's book, I did not intend that it should lead to any sort of lengthy controversy. Even now I feel that we are tending to argue round and round the point. But I cannot allow Mr. Robertson to "get away with" the suggestion that I am a mere tool of some unspecified group of war-mongers. I think, perhaps, that our long-suffering readers deserve to be told what is my political position. Mr. Robertson's is obvious enough—it is the strictest party-line Communism. My own is less easy to define, but I think that I might describe it as philosophic Anarchism, of the type represented at its best to-day by Herbert Read or Alex Comfort. I know that the mention of Anarchism as a political philosophy is apt to lead to superior sniffs from the Tories and the Communists alike; but, even though its advocate may be laying himself open to the snipers on both sides, he has at least the thought that he is standing for the fundamental freedoms in a way which few orthodox politicians, who mouth the word "liberty" so easily, can claim to do.

So much by way of preliminary. It is, I think, enough to destroy Mr. Robertson's suggestion that I should have looked differently at his book if I had read it when written, some two years ago. I have never swallowed the nostrums of Stalinist Communism, any more than I have those of Roman Catholicism. I have, in other words, never been prepared to hand over my intellect to the safe keeping of any authoritative body; and if the clumsy diplomacy of both sides of the so-called iron curtain leads us into the third great war I shall, at least, have no responsibility for it, though I shall probably be one of the first casualties, as soon as the London area is atom-bombed. I know, as I said above, that both Mr. Robertson and myself are tending to argue around the point in this discussion on causality. Therefore it would be as well if I tried to define what is the difference between us. Mr. Robertson, as far as I am able to

understand his version of dialectical materialism, holds that events are to some extent caused, but that man is able to alter them in some undefined way by his own actions. Presumably, in Mr. Robertson's view, man is able to alter the course of history, by acting on the right side (i.e., the Soviet side) in whatever political, economic, or military situation may arise. On the other hand, I presume he does not hold that physical, chemical, or biological events are uncaused, or partly caused, or whatever phrase he would use for political events. I totally fail to understand why we should say that scientific laws of a causal type hold good in physics and chemistry, but not in psychology or sociology. It may be (indeed it is so) that we do not yet possess the full knowledge of the laws of psychology and sociology which we do of physics and chemistry; but that is a matter of the extent of our knowledge, not of the nature of it. I wish that Mr. Robertson would explain in what part of natural knowledge he holds that strict determinism applies, and in what part his slight version of indeterminism is true. As I said in my original article, it is possible to make out a case for the strictest determinism; it is possible to make out an only slightly less convincing case for incausality (if that is the word). But to take up Mr. Robertson's attitude seemed to me when I read his book, and still seems to me now that I have re-read it, to be making the worst of both worlds. Mr. Robertson is an extremely intelligent man, and is as clear in his writing as anyone can be when discussing these matters of high philosophy. I wrote originally because I wondered why it was that he could possibly take up an attitude which seemed to me to be completely irrational. And the only reason which occurred to me was that he was, as every Communist Party member must be, a docile follower of the party line. That was my original diagnosis, and I still think that it is, by and large, correct. I hold that for anyone who wishes to be free in his thought, it is extremely dangerous to hand over one's reason to an authoritarian body. I hold that this is equally true of the R.C. Church and of any and every political party. Mr. Robertson may complain that this tends to play into the hands of the war-mongers; but the Communist and the Tory seem to me to be the people who play into the hands of the war-mongers, as the present situation in Berlin shows, since Mr. Bevin is, in his foreign policy, indistinguishable from a Tory, and Mr. Molotov is certainly a Communist. The trouble of the present situation as I view it is that what the Americans say about Russia and what the Russians say about America is equally true. This, of course, will not be admitted by a Tory or a Communist; it will be seen only by an Anarchist.

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE ROOTS OF BRITISH HYPOCRISY

DUE to insular conceit, the bourgeoisie in this country developed puritanism and hypocrisy that rendered religion a taboo.

In France the materialism of the Encyclopedists was the torch of war that the merchant bourgeois brandished against absolute monarchy. Yet, when the French Revolution threatened to fulfil its aims, they grew afraid lest the "mob," after having borne the brunt of the fight, would participate in the fruits of victory. For the protection of their own claims, they enaciated the movement by counter-terror and intrigues. They have, however, to this day, remained so much scared by their own revolution that the bourgeois classes still go on slandering and abusing the upheaval.

When in 1830 a representative of the working class became a member of the French Government, this was the signal for the middle classes in Germany and elsewhere to swing the steering wheel round. Terrified of the new claimants on freedom, the proletariat, they only half-heartedly and undecidedly went through their revolution, availing themselves of the first opportunity to come to terms with their gentry. This trend was accelerated by the events of 1848, when the bourgeoisie fled into the folds of the Church for protection. Religion was the last resort to pacify and soothe the storm that was brewing.

Insular England was saved from revolution: the gentry and the other feudal remnants could keep a stronger hold on the reins of Government whilst utilising the industrial revolution. They turned colonial trade and industry into their main source of profit and laughed up their sleeves. How desperately their confrères on the continent had to struggle in order to reinstate Church as a protective dam. They, in Britain, had seen to it that religion never lost its sway. Secular materialism had paved the way for revolution on the continent, but in this country it could be prevented. Tradition in this country, due to insular protection and remoteness, could be preserved and has, so far, worked as a brake on progress.

With the "splendid isolation" gone, British bigotry is also on the wane.

What is left to the big—and particularly the petty—bourgeoisie in their predicament? Seeing their protective wall—religion—crumbling and gradually giving way, they raise the anti-communist hue and cry. When God leaves us, the Red Devil must be invented in his stead.

You have, of course, heard of the big "cop" who said to the little man: "Scram, you red-hot Communist." And when the little man protested that he was an anti-Communist, the "cop" shouted: "I don't care a damn what sort of Communist you are—scram!"

The fear of death and damnation had worked for thousands of years to protect rulers in power. It does not work in this "enlightened" century of ours, but millions of people are easily taken in with the "Red Scare," the modern version of heaven and hell.

TOM HILL.

CORRESPONDENCE

EDGAR ALLAN POE ONCE MORE

Sir,—So Mr. Cutner's "contemporary evidence" on Poe, who died in 1849, turns out to be the ninth edition of the "Encyclopedia Britannica," which was published in 1875! The fact is, of course, that it is difficult to find contemporary evidence. The closest of all is that of Griswold, who was so much Poe's enemy that he overstated the facts. But since Mr. Cutner has brought the "Britannica" into this discussion, perhaps I may be permitted to quote a few lines from the fourteenth edition (1929), when the position of Poe had become more stabilised. This is by Prof. Charles Centre of the Sorbonne:—

"He was afflicted with a strange susceptibility to the effects of liquor, combined with an attraction towards it which he did not always resist successfully. It was this defect (or hereditary flaw) that, in a large measure, made it impossible for him to remain literary editor, in Richmond, Philadelphia, or New York, of magazines which he had raised to prosperity; that later discouraged J. R. Lowell from taking him as a contributor to the "Pioneer"; that disqualified him for a clerkship in a government office at Washington. He made worthy efforts to abstain . . . after he had married Virginia Clemm (1836), but relapsed when his child-wife fell dangerously ill in 1841."

Mr. Cutner's defence of Poe, whose writings I admire every whit as much as does Mr. Cutner himself, seems to me to be akin to those of Dickens-lovers who dislike to hear the truth about Dickens' unfortunate matrimonial adventure, or of admirers of Wordsworth who hated to be informed that Wordsworth had an illegitimate child.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

MARXISM

Sir,—I have read Mr. Roys' article "Non-Political or Anti-Political," and I see no reason to believe that it can have much appeal to those who have a Freethought or Rationalist outlook.

Mr. Roy, in his endeavour to harness the forces of Freethought to the Marxian interest, has deserted that which is the fundamental principle of Freethought, namely, the use of reason.

In his article he produces what is obviously the Marxist materialist conception of history, one of the main planks of Marxist teaching and is also one of the main planks of one of the two political divisions into which the world is roughly divided. Thus, when at a later stage in his article Mr. Roy advocates "utter scepticism" rather than "Truth Seeking" towards political parties, he is in reality advocating "utter scepticism" towards a party whose ideology contains the materialist conception of history. How does this fit in with his obvious belief in the truth of this conception.

I suggest that the best method of Freethought approach is based upon that which Mr. Roy appears to despise, namely, "Truth Seeking." If we want to discover the causes of social change, we must objectively examine the evidence available and thereupon base our judgment as to its truth. The same sort of approach, a rational approach, is required to find out the truth about anything—even political parties. To substitute, as Mr. Roy does "a sense of balance" and "utter scepticism" for inquiry is escapism and naivety of the most obvious sort.—Yours, etc.,

R. H. BROWN.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY (Highbury Corner); 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: MESSRS. E. C. SAPHIN, JAMES HART, G. WOOD, E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "World Citizenship," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWRIE and J. HUMPHREY.

Great Harwood (Centre).—Saturday, September 18, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Leyland.—Sunday, 2-15 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Preston Market.—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

Worsthorne.—Friday, September 17, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Miracles and Medicine," Mr. J. T. BRIGTON (Vice-President N.S.S.).

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (I.L.P. Rooms, St. James Street).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A lecture—"The Meaning of Freethought."

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