

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

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Vol. LXVIII.—No. 45

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL  
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Me and My Gods

It is a peculiarity of religious arguments that when placed in certain conditions one point will frequently cancel the other. Thus it is not unusual to find Christians taking the present condition of Christian nations, when compared with more ancient times, as proof of the purifying character of their creed, and, at the same time, they will lament the unquestioned and unquestionable spread of unbelief. But if disbelief has resulted in a visible deterioration of social life, the superiority of the present over past society is non-existent. If there is no such decline, but, on the contrary, a continued improvement, unbelief is, on the face of it, not inimical to progress, and the force of the argument for Christianity disappears.

In the same way, when it is a question of the validity of a belief in a future life, the Christian dwells upon the imperfections of the present life as affording a strong presumption in favour of another. When it is a question of the existence of God, and the Atheist uses the imperfections of the world as making against the belief in God, these imperfections are declared to be disguised blessings, and the "plan of creation" beyond criticism. The fact that he has destroyed one of his arguments for a future life in so defending his belief in the Deity, never seems to dawn upon him for a moment.

Of course, strictly speaking, what is called the moral argument for theism has no logical value insofar as the mere existence of God is concerned. Those who say that if there be a God he must act in such and such a manner, confuse a mere question of fact with their own moral ideals. If there is a God, what he is like and how he acts ought to be a question of simple observation. There is nothing in the nature of the idea of God to prevent one conceiving him as wholly good. Although moral ideals play their part in determining the development of deities, they have nothing whatever to do with their origin. With early religions there is no indication whatever that men are led to worship them out of admiration for their moral qualities. The keynote of primitive worship is not love, but fear. Indeed, the more malevolent the primitive gods are conceived to be, the greater the probability of service to them is minimised. Some deities will naturally be looked at with more kindly feelings than others, but, in the main, the gods are taken as troublesome, but undeniable facts. They act as they will, and man must make the best of the situation as he finds it.

Primitive gods are magnified men, but they are not perfected men. The moralisation of the gods belongs to a later stage of human evolution, and is consequent on social growth, not precedent to it. This point was very well put some years ago by Dr. Justrow; in his "Study of Religion," he said:—

"The various rites practised by primitive society to ward off evils, or to secure the protection of

dreaded powers of spirits, are based primarily upon logical considerations. If a certain stone is regarded as sacred, it is probably because it is associated with misfortune or some unusual piece of good luck. Someone, after sitting on the stone, may have died, or on sleeping on it, may have had a remarkable vision. Taking, again, so common a belief among the people as the influence for good or evil exerted by the dead upon the living, and the numerous practices to which it gives rise—it will be difficult to discover in these beliefs and ceremonies the faintest suggestion of any ethical influence. It is not the good, but the powerful spirits that are invoked, an appeal to them is not made by showing them examples of kindness, justice, or noble deeds, but by bribes, flattery, and threats."

Yet while moral ideas have nothing to do with gods they have much to say concerning their influence on social life. I do not think, for instance, that any developed mind to-day would repeat St. Paul's teaching that we are but as clay in the hands of the potter, and the potter is justified in breaking or making us as he feels inclined. The general belief to-day is that ethical results should be settled by the decision of Man. In fact that has to be done in every case. Scientifically it is not God who decides the movements of Man, it is Man who decides the movements of gods.

It is the clash of observed primitive belief that gives birth to the hosts of apologies that strive to justify the ways of God to Man. The pity is that preachers and hearers seldom realise that these apologies are in themselves condemnations. A God whose methods need so much explaining must needs become the subject of suspicion. A God whose claims to worship rest upon the moral order of the universe should at least have made that order plain enough for one of average intelligence to understand. Justice is not so difficult, and a sense of fair play is tolerably strong even with children.

Christian preachers are never tired of asserting that the universe has a moral governor, although always shrinking from this government being tested by any accepted moral standard. How does the government of God stand the test? Let anyone put to himself the question, would I act as God is presumed to act if I possessed the power and wisdom he is believed to possess? And there will be but one answer. Hardly anyone would, and the proof of this is that hardly anyone does. Of course, such a test is blasphemy, but blasphemy is only a religious description of things the religious man does not care for. The test is really suggested by the theist himself. It is not the Atheist who desires to apply moral standards to the universe. Such tasks to him are ridiculously out of place. It is the theist who insists that the workings of the universe disclose a "moral" plan. The Atheist simply takes him at his word and judges the world by the test suggested, and then exhibits the result. If the world really has a moral governor we are fully warranted in asking for evidence.

It is useless replying that we cannot see far enough, and what appears to our limited view to be evil may, to a larger and more comprehensive gaze, turn out to be unalloyed good. Our judgment of the world, whatever its form, must be based upon this same limited survey, and if its condemnation is to be dismissed as untrustworthy, its approval may be equally lacking in validity. If a larger view be taken, it might turn apparent evil into ultimate evil. The chances on both sides are equal, and we must make up our mind either to trust or distrust our human judgment, such as it is. And to bring in the possibility of a future life where all things may be made clear, is to surrender to the Atheist outright. For it is a tacit admission that this world does not provide the evidence it is supposed to furnish.

The test applied by the Atheist is not an unreasonable one, it is, indeed, the only one consistent with a due sense of intellectual rectitude. The Atheist is told that the world furnishes evidence of a plan, and that this plan indicates moral rule. The Atheist examines the world, and while he finds much goodness, he also finds everywhere suffering, injustice and misery. This is the case in both the animal and the human worlds. Neither goodness or badness are rewarded as we would have them rewarded. Diseases flourish, and knowledge necessary to overcome them is of slow growth. Disasters by sea and land overwhelm the imagination with the intensity of their horror. People are born into the world pre-ordained by the combined influence of heredity and environment to a drunkard's, a criminal's, or a suicide's grave.

Would supreme power, with only average decency of life tolerate such a state of being for an instance? The conduct of most people provides ready answer to the question. The very people who argue that "providence" has "infinite wisdom," arranged things on the most beneficent plan, are found trying to bring about a different state of things. Those who attempt to justify the existence of natural laws whereby children suffer from inherited weaknesses, are found doing what they can to check their ills. All human culture and civilisation is, from one point of view, an attempt to correct the order established by Deity. Man's inhumanity to man may make countless thousands mourn, but man's humanity towards his fellow-man should cause the "Father of all" to blush for his conduct towards his children.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE PAPACY AND THE DARK AGES

*"It has sometimes been said that Christianity brought civilisation to medieval Europe, but it would be truer to say that civilisation brought Christianity."*—*"The First Europe,"* C. DELISLE BURNS.

"The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned on the grave thereof." This definition of the great English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, remains today the classical definition of the Papacy. But a "ghost" cannot by definition function whilst its original survives. In this last respect, the Papacy lived up to its ghost-like character. For it only began to flourish as its original, the secular Roman Empire of the Cæsars began to decline, that is, in Western Europe. For in the East, where the "Lower" (Byzantine) Roman Empire continued down to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Papacy could never make any headway.

The Roman Empire in the West began to crumble to pieces in the third century of the Christian era, as the

result of economic exhaustion, servile discontent, and barbarian invasion. Already writing in about A.D. 178 under Marcus Aurelius, the Pagan apologist Celsus had warned the Christians that the Empire was going to pieces, and that it was their duty as patriots to rally to its support. Incidentally, Celsus' Polemic against Christianity, suppressed by the Church after its victory, has been partly preserved in the counter-polemic of the Christian doctor, Origen.

As the Russian historian, M. I. Rostovtsev, has demonstrated in his "Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire," the third century marked the real exit from the stage of history of the old Roman ruling class, and, since the classical culture was a class culture, of the culture itself of antiquity. As a result of this "revolt of the masses," brutalised and steeped in superstition, as the result of inmemorial centuries of servitude, a flood of credulous superstition swept in from the East, and the old Pagan Rationalism embodied in the philosophic schools of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics, disappeared finally in the self-same century. The intellectual "glory that was Greece" preceded the political "grandeur that was Rome," on the way to oblivion.

The new ruling class that was thrown up by the social upheaval of the third century, shared to the full the superstition of the masses from which it sprang. The Roman Emperors of the Decline were men of humble origin, strange to the rational culture of the old ruling class. The greatest of them, Diocletian, was of servile origin, whilst Constantine, "the first Christian" Emperor, was the son of an innkeeper's daughter.

The triumph of the masses was simultaneously the triumph of religion. In a servile social order, where the majority of the men were unpaid labourers, and the women unpaid prostitutes, and such was the much-trumpeted classical civilisation in its relation to the servile masses—this was inevitable.

The third century marked the end of classical rationalism, the fourth, the beginning of medieval superstition. For this century witnessed the religious conflict between the two chief oriental religions of the day, Christianity and Mithraism (Sun worship). The conflict remained for long undecided before the bigoted Spanish Emperor, Theodosius (378-95), the first really Christian Emperor (Constantine was a political opportunist rather than a zealous believer) ensured the definite triumph of Christianity and, concurrently, introduced persecution as a permanent feature into the European life of the next 1,200 years.\*

The Church of Rome and its bishops rose in the world along with Christianity itself. Already by the second half of the fourth century, the Pagan historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, comments on both the splendour and the corruption of the Roman bishops' entourage, and armed riots in the streets of Rome accompanied the elections to this important and lucrative office.

But the Roman bishop had still a very limited authority even in the Roman Empire. At the epoch-marking Council of Nicaea (325) which marked both the victory of Christianity and the definition of the Trinitarian Dogma, the Roman bishop was not officially represented, and the decrees of the Council were not, apparently, submitted for his endorsement..

However, the final victory of Christianity, the essential prerequisite for the subsequent dazzling fortunes of the Papacy, led to a fresh development in the status of the Bishops of Rome. For in A.D. 378, the Roman Emperor

\* I have traced this momentous religious revolution in my book "Julian the Apostate and the Rise of Christianity."—Watts.

Gratian issued an Imperial decree constituting the Bishop of Rome and his successors officially as Patriarchs of the West, henceforth, all the bishops of the Western Empire (roughly, Western Europe and North Africa) were subordinated to the Roman See. A landmark in the historic evolution of the Papacy. "The birthday of the Papacy," as the learned historian of Catholic dogma Joseph Turnel has described it.

History was on the side of the newly-christened Papacy, for the fifth century witnessed the final dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West, and a new and much more considerable historical role thereafter devolved upon the Papacy. In A.D. 452, Pope Leo, perhaps the first "Pope" in a recognisable modern sense of the word, effectively stood between Rome and the fury of the Hunnish invader, Attila, "the scourge of God." In the succeeding centuries between the final collapse of the Roman Empire (A.D. 476) and the Papal creation of the Holy Roman Empire (A.D. 800), the leadership of what was left of Western civilisation devolved on the Papacy.

During those centuries which constitute the "Dark Age," properly so-called—400-800—when the Nordic and Teutonic barbarians finally overran Western Europe and North Africa, it was the Bishop of Rome, rather than the distant Emperor at Constantinople, who was the effective leader of what had once been the Roman world. The Popes—as we now begin to call them—came before the northern barbarians as the representatives of a culture, that of the vanished world of antiquity, of the "mighty men of old."

Whatever culture survived in the huge slum that was the Europe of the Dark Ages, survived in and through the Church, which preserved whatever was left both of the administration and of the culture of the vanished Empire. It is true that some Freethinkers have rashly denied the social services rendered by the Church to the Europe of the Dark Ages. But this is to make a miracle of the expansion of Christianity.†

The "ghost of the Roman Empire" was now replacing its original. Between the sixth and eighth centuries the Papacy—for the institution of the Universal Bishopric—is now emerging from the mists of its pre-history—launched its ecclesiastical cohorts of monks to a reconquest of Europe as effective as, and far more lasting than, its earlier conquest by the Roman legions had been. Between A.D. 500 and 800 the barbarian conquerors of secular Rome were converted by ecclesiastical Rome. Ancient "Europe" was being succeeded by medieval "Christendom."

A character in a modern drama is made to observe "Money is made in the dark." So, also, was the Papacy! In the darkness of the Dark Ages. The Bishop of Rome went into the Dark Ages a Roman official; he emerged from them as the actual spiritual and cultural ruler of the West. Rome now only required a physical sword to become its temporal ruler as well.

This sword, this political instrument, the Popes acquired in the late eighth century when they called in the military aid of the Franks, the most powerful of the German conquerors of Rome. The immediate cause of this "marriage of convenience," the first of many such which Papal Rome has contracted during the course of its long career, was to resist the newly-arisen rival religion of Mohammed, and also fresh swarms of barbaric invaders from the North and East of Europe. The outward and visible sign of the alliance was

witnessed at Rome on Christmas Day, 800, when the Pope crowned Charles (Charlemagne) King of the Franks, as "Roman Emperor."

This last event marked the beginning of the "Holy" Roman Empire, the political instrument of the Papacy for the creation of a Christian Europe. It marked in reality the beginning of the Middle Ages, the classic era, the Golden Age of the Papacy, to which it still looks back with nostalgic regret, to the epoch of its totalitarian rule.

F. A. RIDLEY.

## THERE WAS ONCE . . .

**A DREAMER.** Every day his brothers kicked him and cried, "You good-for-nothing lazy dog! Why don't you get busy like us instead of idling your life away wandering in the woodlands, gazing up at the stars, and watching the birds and the flowers?"

The Dreamer would reply, "That which gives a man Happiness is not a waste of time."

After their hard daily toil, the brothers came home at night completely exhausted, and they cursed and swore at each other bitterly. In the course of time they grew old and very rich—and at last they died.

One day, the Dreamer, looking down upon their graves, enquired, "Have you found Happiness yet, O my brothers?"

And the Dead answered, "Yes. For the first time!"

**A MISSIONARY.** In a far-off land he addressed the cannibals, saying, "Behold, the Light is in me! Yea, verily, I have come to you that it may be in you also."

And it came to pass that it was so—because the cannibals devoured the Missionary!

**A TRADESMAN.** "Honesty is the best policy!" he shouted from the house-top. But under his breath he added, "if you want to become bankrupt!"

**A TRAMP.** Careless and free he roamed the Highway of Life. Rich men passed him by in their motor-cars, choking him with their dust. But he only smiled. They would be dust themselves one day for tramps like him to tread upon.

W. H. WOOD.

## TO MY SON

When I am very old, my lad,  
And you are in your prime,  
I hope you'll tell them that your dad  
Did good work in his time.

When you are asked to bow, my lad,  
Before some specious throne,  
I hope you'll disobey their fad  
And show your mind's your own.

And when they call on God, my lad,  
To make you bend the knee,  
Just tell them that they make you mad,  
And curse their mystery.

J. R.

† "The First Europe."—C. Delisle Burns.

‡ The Benedictine Order, founded by a Roman aristocrat, was the most effective of these missionary cohorts.

## ACID DROPS

Though the civil laws of most countries have definite ones on marriage, the relapses from Romanism, the "apostate" Catholics, and the children of mixed marriages, have brought a number of problems with them, and the Pope has decided to alter the Church's marriage laws to include them. Hitherto, they were exempt from the Church's "law"—which incidentally ignored the civil law—but now they are all roped in. Even the children of mixed marriages who have never been baptised at all, or even baptised in the "heretic" Church, will in future be considered as full members of the Roman Church. This means in practice that if ever they marry, it will not be considered a marriage at all unless performed by a priest. We wonder now what the State—any State—has to say at this impudent ruling of a foreign crowd of priests, and what the people mostly concerned think of it?

All sorts of confident assurances that Christian England will be "converted"—that is, change her Protestant Christianity to Roman Catholicism—are being made, and each way of doing it is hailed as a sure winner. The latest comes from Archbishop Roberts, S.J., who told his delighted audience, "I am convinced that the key to the conversion of England is held by the Catholic girl." Whether they believed this or not—and only a fool can believe it—the fact remains that one of the biggest headaches Catholic girls have to face, is the way so many Catholic young men seek partners in Protestant girls, and ridicule the fulminations of celibate priests against mixed marriages. If the marriage turns out a failure, it is religion that is mostly to blame. But Archbishop Roberts, who comes from Bombay, may have many other headaches to contend with before a Roman Catholic England is achieved—only he is too ignorant to know it.

While Archbishop Roberts has found out that the Catholic girl can easily convert England, Fr. A. Andrew is more than heartbroken "at the little or no prospect of our country coming back into the Catholic Church at present, and one is led almost to despair." In fact, "according to figures we have been looking into, it would seem that the number of those lost by leakage is not even balanced by the number of converts." It seems to have taken Father Andrew a long time to learn this, for it has long been known outside the Church. In any case he appears to fool himself quite easily. He thinks that there are several millions of people who love to hear Catholic broadcasts, and several other millions who are not hostile to religion, and all that is required is a terrific onslaught on them by a Catholic Evidence Guild speaker. But why does not Father Andrew himself "have a go" with a *representative* Freethinker?

As one of the main planks of religion is for parents to have a "quiverful," sorrowing Catholic parents in particular are now asking how they can raise a family—even a little one—if they cannot find houses to live in? Pathetic letters appear in religious journals complaining of the implacable hostility of owners and landlords to children, yet these people are in general not only religious but Catholics. There is, of course, no reply, the only answer being the time-honoured one of birth-control—a deadly sin in the eyes of every bachelor priest. "We want as many children as God sends us," writes one would-be father, "but our biggest worry is lest we should have a second before we have found a house; we know what a handicap one baby is." Alas, even the blessed Virgin can't help here; or can she?

It is not only the Protestant Churches which are crying out for "vocations." Many Catholic institutions are under-staffed, and find the greatest difficulty in getting new recruits. Young men and women, even if Catholics, want to have a "good time," and are fed up with the prohibitions, the grovellings, and the fear imposed upon them by Holy rules and regulations. They never get a call from God to be priests or nuns—or even teachers or nurses for the love of the Pope—at least, unless there is good money in it. And they are always ready to cheer the other people who will submit to anything as long as it comes from the Church. Unfortunately there are too few of them.

How quickly are the Roman Catholics ready to claim religious freedom as their right—when in a minority. How slowly to grant it when in control. This observation—not new to Freethinkers—is prompted by an article, "Catholic Claims in Palestine" in the "Catholic Herald" in which it is asserted that the task to ensure freedom for Roman Catholics is the responsibility of the United Nations and "must surmount all considerations of a political nature." Freedom of conscience is an ideal to which we can all subscribe, if it is applicable to all on terms of equality. Let Roman Catholicism look to its own history!

Everything is subject to evolution, and Religion is no exception. A trite observation, but how difficult for a Christian to grasp. Even the Catholic Church may yet change its motto of "Forever the Same" to say, "Religion made easy." An example may be noted in that the Diocese of Rouen Catholics may take Holy Communion in the afternoon—the rule of fasting has been relaxed, and a solid meal may be taken at least three hours before Communion. To people who know the procedure of Communion this is indeed a concession, for even a sip of water renders one unfit to receive the body and blood of Jesus. We are not quite sure of the degree of sin, "mortal" or "venial" when accepting Communion after breaking one's fast, but it has to be confessed and penance done for this heinous offence.

It appears to us that the Church is relaxing its solemnity, and in a moment of day-dreaming, we had a fantastic vision of Bishops busily packing up the Host—in plain sealed wrappers—and sending them direct to worshippers' homes with full directions on the wrapper. We even envisaged the time when men and women would have given up the old barbaric idea of swallowing the body and blood of a God. But then we are anticipating by many years the evolution of ideas.

The Lambeth Bishops' Conference message which was read in Anglican churches, bids people to remember that some of the "first believers were slaves owned by non-Christian masters." We would add that many Christian masters also owned slaves, and the followers of the meek and gentle Jesus, when compared with the Pagan slave owners—even allowing for the savage conditions of the times—were immeasurably more cruel than the Pagans, who incidentally did not try to find a moral justification for slavery in a Holy Book.

The latest country to ban religion from schools is Hungary, where "the religious" will still be allowed to teach in Roman Catholic Schools but religion is barred. The "Catholic Times" is perturbed and well it might be, for once allow children to grow up without religion, the odds are that they will not attend church, and the "Catholic Times" knows this.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. Alexander, Pontypool.—Thanks for good wishes.

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

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton will be remembered for his outburst some time ago, when he complained that the "lower deck" did not know the Lord's Prayer. At the time, we suggested that a sailor was quite as deadly whether he knew the Lord's Prayer or not. The religious admiral has again burst forth, and this time seems to have stirred up a hornet's nest, for on the occasion of the Commemoration of the Battle for Britain, he addressed the congregation at Portsmouth Cathedral, complaining that the corporate act of worship in schools is not enough, and that even more religion should be taught in them.

At the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society to-day Mr. R. H. Rosetti will open a discussion on "Will Christianity Save Us?" The Society is a long-established one and attracts large audiences: admission is free and there is an open invitation to all. The proceedings take place in the large lecture theatre of the Technical College, Shakespeare Street, and commence at 2.30 p.m.

"Is Religion of Use?" will be debated in the I.L.P. Hall, Southfield Street, Nelson, Lanes., on Friday evening, November 12th, between the Rev. J. Ward, Vicar of St. Marys, and Mr. J. Clayton. We can promise the Rev. J. Ward a capable opponent in Mr. Clayton, and an interesting evening should result.

On Wednesday, November 10th, at the Streatham Debating Society, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will move a resolution "That there should be no Established Church." The name of the clerical opponent has not come to hand in time for this announcement. The proceedings begin at 7.30 p.m. in the White Lion Restaurant, Streatham, and admission is free.

As long as the weather permits, the Sheffield Branch N.S.S. will continue its open-air meetings at Barker's Pool on Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. The Branch Secretary, Mr. A. Samms, is the principal speaker, and others give their assistance as circumstances permit. Such enthusiasm deserves all the support local Free-thinkers can give.

We are asked to point out that the meetings at the McLeilan Galleries are the only meetings in Glasgow held under the auspices of the Glasgow Secular Society.

## WITCHCRAFT TO-DAY

WITCHCRAFT is usually considered historically, as if a thing of the past. William Seabrook, in his "Witchcraft," deals with modern witches, white and black, London, Paris, the jungle; human vampires on the Riviera; panther-men in Africa and Satanists in Paris; devil-worship in New York; were-wolves in Washington Square. He is not directly concerned with "the attendant dangers — terrors and hatreds engendered" which "frequently lead to crimes and attempted crimes which seldom reach newspapers." He is not concerned with "rabbit hat" spiritualist seance, Coney Island side-show or Indian rope trick.

Owing to the influence of "family tradition," the subject has always been, for him, an "obsession and chimera." A "confirmed disbeliever in the supernatural," he was convinced that witchcraft was "deadly, dangerous and real." He had to reconcile the "delusion of the operator" with the "pragmatic efficiency" in its use. "Delusion as to the nature of power" does not "render the power nil or harmless." All primitives and "more than half the literate white population of the world to-day" believe in it.

Witchcraft is "not demoniac" but "always analysable," understandable "within the bounds of reason." It is "simply the dark reverse side of a familiar coin" in currency in medical psychology and mental therapy. "Suggestion" is the "elemental key" and a "complete definition" is "induced auto-suggestion." The intended victim "must know," he must "fear it," and it can "only operate functionally" on "sentient beings." "If Humpty Dumpty is an egg" it can "not even make him wobble." But if Humpty Dumpty is "sentient, witchcraft can make him fall off the wall."

The case is illustrated in a series of short stories, based on personal experience; anecdotal, well interlarded with newspaper reports, journalistic, literary and scientific items. Concerning Dolls in general, and the Witches Doll and its equivalent, explain the doll as a symbol. Monstrous Doll in Africa was a corpse dressed in a shirt stolen from the victim. This story is a "witch-killing" which contained all the elements. It brings out the technique, the imitative and sympathetic magic, and ways of applying suggestion to the victim.

Ten Cent Store Doll in France, and Doll *de luxe* in London, show the same characteristics. Wooden Doll in a Cave, an Ivory Coast scene, brings in the idea of "fan-shaped destiny" and shows how witchcraft can be countered by suggestion; in this case, the spell was broken by the death of the sorcerer. Our author believes the victim recovered "because he *knew*" he would get well.

Sawdust Doll in Brambles, a scene in France, deals with a victim who was "matter-of-fact and unimaginative," devoid of "credulity and superstition," and had "no *conscious* fear." It is an "unpleasant thought" that if there is a "residue of unconscious or subconscious fear," the victim "may succumb *even more quickly*." In this case, he had, at five years of age, believed in "the fairy tales and folk lore of that region, as they do in the Black Forest of Germany." Psychiatry has a "simple name" for this "not uncommon thing." His "stroke" had been the result of a "compulsion neurosis."

Nail-studded Doll in Toulon tells how he, himself, used witchcraft; with the idea of fan-shaped destiny he had learned in the jungle; in defence of a friend. He saved her by "tossing the ball back." With someone to help in suggestion, and sending photographs of the doll by

post, his victim was "kept fully informed." Fortunately he says, it stopped short of actual killing.

Concerning vampires and were-wolves in general, and a historical account of the World Champion Lady Vampire of all Time, opens the second part of the book. Vampire, 1932, from Brooklyn, New York, confessed herself to be "of that unholy kin." Afterwards "she never again succumbed to her tragic craving, but within a year she was dead—of pernicious anaemia." The case brings out "physiological maladjustments" and "chemical-organic causes."

Panther-man from the Ivory Coast, a case of hallucination in combination with murder; Lady Hyena with jewelled ear-rings, a real hyena, concerned an ugly ritual murder; but the Caged White Werewolf of the Saraban, a case of jungle madness, was an amicable arrangement between husband and wife. These cases bring out social complications. Werewolf in Washington Square, a more sophisticated case, was a "neurasthenic—addicted to occult escape mechanisms."

The third section of the book opens with a Presentation of an Open Question to which a Negative Answer may not be the Final Word. "The veil of the supernormal cloaks witchcraft, telepathy, clairvoyance, occultism, mystical excursions into past and future" and "shrouds all life in mystery." Religion by faith and philosophy by reason have "neutralised each other." Honest debunkers like Houdini "got negative results." Others like Prof. J. B. Rhine, deal with the subject "cold." But our author goes "the whole hog on it." The "illusion" is a "condition" which can be produced by "deliberate technique and practice."

"Astral Body" on a Boat, is a psychological study, using a mystical technique learned at the Melevi monastery of the Whirling Dervishes. He had no recollection of the seven-hour interval, but he had "done it" in his sleep. Our Modern Cagliostro reviews the "white magic" and "power" of George Gurdjieff, Aleister Crowley and Pierre Bernard. Upton Sinclair's "Mental Radio," and Mary Craig, his wife's telepathy is considered. But he doubts whether pain and fear can be "sent." W. E. Woodward with a Hatpin Driven Through his Jaws, debunks a Mr. Ostraja; "who had studied in India among the fakirs." This "frivolous anecdote" shows that "psychic anaesthesia" is not what "it seems to be."

Justine Dervish Dangling, tells of fantastic experiments tried with that young lady. Best results came with "prolonged fatigue" or "strain of some sort." A dervish method brought a case of what Prof. Rhine calls pre-cognition; the affair of the absurd lion. "It was tremendously exciting, but it gets you nowhere."

Justine in the Mask details experiments testing sensitivity and of how a mask was devised for blanking or lulling all five normal senses, for checking "extra-sensory perception." Four times in more than five years she "slid over" into "pre-cognition." Mostly it was "retro-cognition." It was "always something intrinsically trivial, usually fantastic" or "unexpectedly comic" as with "the absurd lion." It all seems "pure guessing" but the Einstein corollary, with time as a fourth dimension, leaves him faced with mystery in the realm of the supernormal, even doubting the "validity" of his "own doubts."

A lengthy appendix goes into his "obsession" further. In travelling from the tragic to the trivial he has "outgrown his puzzlement," which was "sincere."

H. H. PREECE.

## THE WRATH OF GOD

TULLUS HOSTILIUS is described as the third of the early Roman kings, and the fourth, and one of the last seven. Some regard him as having had no more reality than Jesus Christ had to Mr. J. M. Robertson.

Legend tells how Tullus departed from the peaceful ways of Numa, and aspired to the martial renown of Romulus, but these his predecessors belong most certainly to myth.

Plutarch wrote a life of Numa, of whom he knew as much as Josephus knew of Lot, whose wife is described, relying on ancient records, as having become a pillar of salt.

Numa was, according to legend, a great medicine man, and devoted his long and pacific reign to the establishment of religion among his rude subjects. He was instructed by the nymph, Egeria, in a grove from whence a crystal spring gushed from a dark recess. She honoured him with more substantial marks of affection than religious teaching, when, under the blue Italian sky, both nymph and seer relaxed their austere striving for piety, and listened to the promptings of Venus, the delight of gods and men. Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, was on vacation at the time.

After his affair with the nymph, Numa, in the course of growing aged, gained renown for purity. If we now add this to his other qualities of pre-eminent piety and wisdom, we are led easily to understand his great influence with late generations of Romans, who took his historicity for granted; for everyone admires, even when he cannot recognise, wisdom; and piety was deeply impressed upon Roman youth. As for purity, that is a mysterious thing. It implies an overcoming of the powerful sexual instinct, and that is, of course, difficult. Moreover, although necessary for the continuance of the species, the sexual instinct often occasions a certain degree of disgust. (See, for example, Lucretius, Book IV, on the evils to be found even in lasting and highly prosperous love.) So to conquer it is saintly.

The reputation of the holy Numa in late Roman times was so great that one writer has recently used it as an argument in favour of his reality, which implies that men can never convincingly portray the ideal character in fiction. This implication is contradicted by most national literatures.

Tullus Hostilius is, however, our centre of attention. This man made Alba acknowledge Rome's supremacy in a way wherein three Roman brothers fought with three Alban brothers. Next he warred with the Fidenae and with Veii, and being straightly pressed by the combined host, he vowed temples to Paleness and Panic, who obliged by delivering him. Then, the fight being won, he tore assunder with chariots the king of Alba, utterly destroyed his city, sparing only the temples, and brought the Alban people to Rome, where he gave them the Caelian Hill to dwell on.

Then he warred with the Sabines, and again falling into a predicament, this time in the Wicked Wood, he vowed a yearly festival to Saturn and Opa, and to double the number of the Salii, or the priests of Mamers. Then, when by their aid, he had overcome the Sabines, he performed his vow, and thereby established the feasts Saturnalia and Opalia.

These events have no mark of authenticity, but the festivals superintended by priests need to be given an origin to ensure their continued acceptance by the populace, and the explanation given, being as worthy of belief as that of the various religious ceremonies recorded in

the Holy Bible, passed muster with the Romans, as the Bible did with later peoples.

However, the life of Tullus ended under a cloud, for one day a shower of burning stones fell from heaven upon Mount Alban, and a voice, as of the Alban gods, came forth from the temple on the summit, ordering the Alban people to go back to Alba, to worship there. It has been conjectured by men who hold ancient priests in contempt, that the Sabine Priestly Colleges were deeply offended at the settling of the Alban people at Rome, and used this means to gain their ends.

If such is the explanation, the priests were unsuccessful, for the Albans compromised by merely visiting Alba once a year for a festival of their gods.

The priests, however, had another object: to get rid of Tullus. The burning stones were followed by a pestilence, and the king himself became ill thereof. In an agony of anxiety he discovered on old book of Numa's, setting forth the ritual for propitiating divinities. He accomplished the task he essayed, but, in his haste and ignorance, only with errors and omissions. His prayers and his charms were unheeded by the immortals, and when he would enquire of Jupiter the Thunderer that mighty Lord was wroth, and smote Tullus and his whole house with fire.

Tullus was succeeded by Ancus Marcius, who is said to have been the son of Numa's daughter, the daughter being, we may as well suppose, one of the results of the afternoon religious lessons of Numa in the enchanted grove. Ancus appears to have profited by his predecessor's fate, for he tried to revert to Numa's policy, minus the nymph, of course. Wicked men have accordingly suggested that the story of the lightning finishing off Tullus is a euphemistic account of the latter's execution by the Sabine priests.

These events being legendary, we can with safety believe none of them, not even those which are rational. Nevertheless, they have a background of reality, for we discern there the power of the priest in Roman life, as we discern it through the myth of our Holy Writ.

Rome, in fact, had no history other than that woven with that of the powerful medicine men, and the change from Pagan to Christian divinities was one from a certain group of dominant exploiters of credulity to another group.

There is another lesson in the story of Tullus, but it is only for Roman Catholics and their like. Be careful, friends, to cross yourselves the right way!

J. G. LUPTON.

## OBITUARY

**OLIVER I'ANSON THURSTON, B.Sc., F.I.B.**

With deep sorrow we announce the death of Oliver I'anson Thurston, in his 61st year. His character and his Freethought principles were of the soundest, and remained so until the end. In educational attainments he reached a very high level, which enabled him to discharge the duties of a very important Government office. Quiet in manner and judgement he won the confidence of those around him. The remains were cremated at the City of London Crematorium, London, E., on October 28 where, before a gathering of relatives and friends, his wish for a Secular Service was carried out by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

R. H. R.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

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

### LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, November 9th, 7 p.m.: a lecture.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1).—Monday, November 8th, 7 p.m.: "Reconstructing the Remote Past," 6th lecture: "The Age of Mammals," W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., F.R.S.E.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The American Presidency," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.

Streatham Debating Society (White Lion Restaurant, Streatham).—Wednesday, November 10th, 7-30 p.m.: "That There Should Be No Established Church," Mr. R. H. ROSSETTI, Opener.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Microbes and Beyond," Dr. STARK MURRAY, B.Sc., M.B.

### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

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

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

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Blackpool Debating Society (46, Adelaide Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Materialism," Rev. GEO. FAIRFOOT.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Is Communism Subversive of Western Civilisation?" Mr. E. V. TEMPEST.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Christ's Debt to Man," Mr. GEO. L. COLEBROOK.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Marriage and Divorce Law Reform," Mr. R. S. W. POLLARD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers' Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Seek Peace and Ensurge It," Mr. H. E. GARRETT (D.A.S.C.A. Club).

Nelson (I.L.P. Hall, Southfield Street).—Friday, November 12th, 6-30 p.m.: Debate, "Is Religion of Use?" aff. Rev. J. WARD (Vicar, St. Mary's), neg. Mr. J. CLAYTON, N.S.S.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Will Christianity Save Us?" Mr. R. H. ROSSETTI.

### Third

## C.O.'s REUNION DINNER

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## THE SIGNIFICANT HUMANISM OF TWO GREAT ENGLISH AUTHORS

HUMANITY at last begins to emerge from long ages of ignorance and false beliefs about itself into an age of increasing factual knowledge and understanding. Theological superstitions, born in ignorance, evaporate in knowledge. To-day humanism begins to become the final supreme intellectual focus of humanity.

It seems to me very significant that two of England's greatest authors in our time should be humanists: John Cowper Powys and Francis Brett Young.

John Cowper Powys' greatness is well recognised to-day. A writer in Pryn's Hopkins' "Freedom" journal in California calls him "one of the greatest English men-of-letters." Ernest Carr writes in "The Literary Guide" that he "holds to-day a position unique in our literature." And have you read the wonderful tribute which America's greatest philosopher, Will Durant, pays in his chapter on Powys in his book "Great Men of Literature" subtitled "Adventures In Genius"?

John Cowper Powys gives us a fine example of his humanism when he writes in "A Philosophy of Solitude" that "We can live happily without knowing whether there is a God; we can live worthily without knowing whether we survive death. Why torment ourselves any further than by going round and round in this tread-mill circle?" And how like his brother this is, when Lewelyn Powys says: "There is nothing better for us to do than to plot for our own happiness, for the happiness of our companions, for the happiness of the whole human race."

Francis Brett Young is well known to all of us for some of the greatest of his twenty-seven or twenty-eight novels. In both "Portrait of Clare" and in "Jim Redlako", to take two examples, he gives us his humanism in the character of what he calls a "good old rationalist doctor."

"The more humanists we have in this world the better; for we still seem to be in the grip of the diabolists." Thus Francis Brett Young writes me recently from South Africa, and here certainly is his declaration of humanism.

John Cowper Powys certainly possesses this quality. He gives us an outstanding instance of his "human feeling" in his book, "In Defence of Sensuality," with his unusual concern for thousands of his fellow humans with "living, empty, anthropoid bellies." I have read indeed that when he spoke on the public platform he was, because of the sincerity and intensity of his utterances, probably the one most deeply moving personality in either America or England.

Two years ago when an article of mine stressed the vital importance of "human feeling" in the human personality and predicted that psychologists would come to realise this, it was John Cowper Powys who wrote to me: "I am entirely in agreement with you in regard to what you say about human feeling."

No one who has ever read Francis Brett Young's "Portrait of Clare"—"Love is Enough" in America, and one of his own favourites of all his novels—can ever forget the "human feeling" of his truly magnificent portrayal of the precious and thrilling beauty and worth and dignity of the young lives of Clare and Ralph. Here is novel writing at its noblest and grandest!

Yes, humanism is our highest ideal in life. Significantly, two of our very finest authors who also possess rich "human feeling" are humanists.

It certainly promises well indeed for humanism that humanity to-day has raised these two authors and their "human feeling" and their humanism to such a high pinnacle of acceptance and admiration and respect.

GEORGE CAULFIELD.

## "NOT A SPARROW"

### Brief Biography

WITH that half serious attention which dreamers are apt to show towards simple things, picked out here and there from the riot of happenings which crowd the notice of everyone, I have, for five short months, watched the career of a small black and white kitten, born at my house, and buried only this morning. It was one of three, the survivor of an unpleasant but merciful drowning episode I prefer not to remember. I saw it born. Saw the mother's uncanny zeal as she snatched—uninstructed—at the placenta. I watched her at her diligent midwifery, and until the whole of her brood, blind, and with experience only of darkness, were pawing vigorously at her soft fur in their efforts to make the best of her succour. Inherited memory? Primitive instinct? Or an intelligent Life Force? It is hard to say.

Can the blind forces of Natural Selection, showing, as Huxley has reiterated, "no trace whatsoever of design" account for all these facts? It is not difficult to hold in the case of the physical characteristics of domesticated or any other animals, that Natural Selection, operating by process of elimination in favour of the most advantageous mutations, can have made them through the ages what they are, but the inheritance of complicated instincts seems to beg the question. Shaw's intelligent yet totally amoral Life Force is an attractive hypothesis, and seems more able in the last resort to stand the strain. That inherited instincts are transmitted in the genes of the germ plasma is easy to say, but violates all we know of ordinary mechanical and chemical processes, with the possible exception of the behaviour of crystals.

That cats cannot count was the next conclusion. As far as it was possible to see, the one kitten served for the brood, and it grew sleek and fat in proportion to its unequal advantages.

Within a few weeks, presumably again as a result of blind instinct, this tiny little creature had developed a sense of fastidiousness which would be a credit to some human beings, making futile efforts to raise enough ballast from the hard linoleum on which it spent its days to cover the products of its indiscretions in a dark corner? Clearly revolted by what it already felt to be a breach of decency, and anxious to conceal it. Shaw? Huxley? Samuel Butler?

A week ago, with a completely developed personality, and its own particular way of dealing with chair covers, pieces of paper and balls of wool, almost on the verge of all the excitements of a male cat after puberty, and beginning, alas, to lose its youthful beauty, it suddenly fell ill, and died. The prodigal wastage of Nature? An accidental dose of poison? I shall never know.

I buried it in the garden, near its two sisters in the early hours of the morning, when so many of us still lack the poise and confidence which later carries us through the day, and emotions are not always easy to control. How many of our gardens enshrine the poignant little memories, that tend somehow to the endearment of a plot of earth?

J. STURGE-WHITING.