

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIX.—No. 25

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Jesuit Centenary

No storm is so insidious as a perfect calm; and no enemy so dangerous as the absence of all enemies.—
IGNATIUS LOYOLA (1491-1556) Founder and first General of the Company of Jesus.

IN the year of grace 1540 the Church of Rome was in a perilous plight; in almost as dangerous a situation, in fact, as she finds herself to-day, four centuries later. Only then, her enemies came from different quarters. For the Protestant Reformation was in full blast on one side, which threatened to obliterate the Church of Rome; whilst upon the other, the Turkish Empire, the fighting standard bearer of the rival Church of Mohammed "militant here on earth," was just then conquering Europe piecemeal and, in 1540, had already expunged the Balkan Peninsula and Hungary from the map of Christendom and was hammering at the gates of Vienna.

It was in this dark and desperate hour when the Papacy was being simultaneously squeezed to death between the rival creeds of Mohammed and Calvin, that the former Spanish knight, Ignatius of Loyola, founded a new religious order upon strictly military lines to come to the rescue of the Church of Rome in its hour of direst peril. And to the great disgust of conservative Churchmen its founder called his order not, as had always been customary, as for instance, with such previous religious orders as the Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans, after himself, but after the titular founder of the Christian religion.

And so originated perhaps the most amazing institution in the annals of religion; "The Company of Jesus" more usually known as "Jesuits"; an organisation of specially trained ecclesiastical shock-troops, the Black Guards, or the "S.S. Men" of the Vatican; to employ a modern analogy which is impressive, and up to a point, accurate. But only up to a point. For the Nazi regime, secular counter-revolution, lasted precisely twelve years, whereas the Jesuit Company, the ecclesiastical counter-revolution, recently celebrated its fourth centenary, and is still powerful and active virtually all over the world; whilst its activities as (to vary the metaphor) the "Praetorian Guard" of the Papacy have not abated by a single iota.

This last fact was recently demonstrated by a notable centenary to which an article in our respected contemporary the *Manchester Guardian* first drew my attention. The centenary in question was that of the Roman Jesuit paper, the official organ of the Jesuits which was founded as an avowed organ of counter-revolution during the Italian anti-clerical revolution of 1848-9, which forced the then Pope, Pius IX, and the Jesuits themselves to fly from the short-lived Roman Republic set up under the heroic leadership of Mazzini and Garibaldi.

La Civilita Catolica ("Catholic culture") was originally founded in Naples in 1849 by Jesuit exiles. From the start it received, and still retains, the closest cordiality

and active support of the Papacy. To finance it, Pope Pius paid money into Rothschild's Bank in Naples. And the Papacy has continued the support then pledged. The Jesuit organ returned to Rome with its Papal protectors, when the bayonets of "Napoleon the Little" (as Victor Hugo then described the French Dictator, Louis Bonaparte) drowned the Roman Republic in blood and restored the Temporal Power of the Papacy.

In its centenary commemorations, *La Civilita Catolica* boasts of the benevolence of the six successive Popes who have reigned during the last century, and of their "never-failing confidence towards its editorial staff"; and towards the present Pope, who is said to read personally the proofs of every issue, the Jesuit review pledges itself in its centenary issue "to serve his high purposes with unchanged and unchangeable fidelity, following in the footsteps of the past."

In a long historical summary *La Civilita Catolica* reviews the history of the Company of Jesus during the memorable century, 1849-1949, since the review was first founded. It has been a stormy history. For the Jesuits have usually found the truth of that axiom of their founder which I have placed at the head of this article. "A perfect calm" has never suited the spiritual offspring of Loyola, "the absence of all enemies" has actually spelt the death knell of the shock-troops of the Church militant.

For example, it is often forgotten that it was the French Revolution to which the Jesuits owed their present existence. For in 1773, Pope Clement XIV had officially declared the great Spanish Order to be "abolished and abrogated for ever." But when the French Revolution precipitated a new outbreak of anti-clerical revolt, the Papacy soon found that it could not do without its crack corps of counter-revolutionary experts, and the Order was solemnly restored immediately after the downfall of Napoleon in 1814.

La Civilita Catolica was founded, its editors inform us, to combat "anti-clerical Liberalism" which is defined as, not any political party, but as the "Agnosticism and secularism inherited from the French Revolution, the final fruit of the unleashing of Reason by the Protestant Reformation, which was then followed by the still more radical rationalism of the eighteenth century."

After the usual attempt to make "secularism and irreligion" responsible for the horrors of recent years, the Jesuit editors declare, rather surprisingly, that "the secular liberalism of those days is a corpse." However, by all accounts the "corpse" still shows signs of life. We shall look forward with interest to the Holy Fathers' impressions of the International Freethought Congress this autumn.

To resume this jesuitical autobiography, the struggle against "anti-clerical liberalism" was continued in the contemporary struggle against socialism "born from the same stem as liberalism, with a materialistic outlook still more radically hostile to religion." In view of the intense, almost painful respectability of the British

Labour Party where religion is concerned, it is obvious the above description must refer to Marxian and other "extreme" forms of Continental socialism, rather than to the British movement led by those pillars of the Church, Messrs. Attlee, Cripps and Co.

The Jesuit review then passed to a number of other, more technical controversies in which it, and the order which it represents, have actively participated between 1849 and 1949. Amongst these figured prominently the successful efforts of the Jesuits in 1870 to establish Papal Infallibility in "faith and morals" as a Dogma of the Church. It may be noted in passing that without the three centuries' agitation conducted by the Jesuits, it is very unlikely that the Dogma would have gone through in the face of the bitter hostility that it excited. For as its opponents pointed out very aptly, the famous dogma is really anti-Catholic, it puts the "private judgment" of the individual Pope above the collective authority of the Church. But the Jesuits have little respect for logic where utility and their own interests are concerned.

Another ecclesiastical controversy where the Jesuits played the leading role on the reactionary side, was that which led to the condemnation of the movement inside the Church for theological reform known as "Modernism." In the course of a scathing commentary the editors describe this as a "multiform heresy, subtle and persuasive. . . . Modernism the final fruit of the philosophy of immanence and of rationalism, a shapeless mixture of religious sentimentalism and of the teaching of evolutionism," etc., etc.

Freemasonry also receives due attention. The Freemasonry referred to here is the political explicitly anticlerical freemasonry of the Continent, not the harmless Mayfair social slate-club of British Freemasonry, as one can accurately term it.

Our Jesuit editors conclude their century-long survey by remarking that the future Jesuit programmes will result from "past examples and the needs of the present moment."

Evidently the foundation of Ignatius Loyola is not yet on its death-bed. And, incidentally, it would obviously still be somewhat premature to talk about closing down the International Freethought Movement; a happy event which would then, no doubt, be duly recorded amongst the outstanding Jesuit victories of the past century by the second Centenary number of *La Civiltà Cattolica* in the year 2049.

F. A. RIDLEY.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF SHELLEY'S POETRY AND PROSE

THE SHELLEY COMPANION edited by the well-known translator, Mr. H. J. Stenning (Saturn Press, 1948, 9s. 6d.), is preceded by a comprehensive biographical introduction completely free from conventional bias. The great poet's early life and his entrance into University College, Oxford, from which he and his friend Hogg were ignominiously expelled, the one for writing, and the other for circulating Shelley's *Necessity of Atheism*, are recalled.

Shelley was a born image breaker who eagerly read all the advanced publications of his period, but apparently he was more influenced by Godwin's *Political Justice* than by the writings of Paine and the apostles of the French Enlightenment. Vilified by orthodox and conventional scribes for his Freethought, Radicalism and independent social opinions, especially those concerning Christian marriage, Shelley's almost solitary supporter in England was Leigh Hunt, the fearless protagonist of

Liberal principles and able editor and contributor to the *Examiner*.

While in self-exile in Italy, Shelley's passion for sailing on the sea brought his busy life to a tragic close when his little schooner, *The Ariel*, was wrecked in a sudden storm in Spezzia's Bay. Some days later, the corpses of the poet and his companion, Williams, were cast upon the beach near Leghorn and after a month's delay the authorities gave permission to remove the bodies from their shallow graves in the sand and on the 14th and 15th August (1822) in the presence of Trelawny, Byron and Leigh Hunt, the remains were cremated in an iron furnace which had been made at Leghorn. Shelley's heart was not consumed, and in snatching it from the flames Trelawny burnt his hand severely. The heart was given to Leigh Hunt and later became treasured by Mary Godwin, Shelley's second wife. Indeed, Dowden, in his biography of Shelley, states that: "After her death, in a copy of the Pisa edition of *Adonais* at the page which tells how death is swallowed up in immortality, were found under a silken covering the embrowned ashes, now shrunk and withered, which she had secretly treasured."

A vegetarian, total abstainer, non-smoker and a pronounced Rationalist, Shelley perished from too much water in his thirtieth year. While, perhaps, his early aggressive Atheism had been succeeded by a more Pantheistic outlook in his *Prometheus Unbound*, there seems nothing in his maturer writings to justify Robert Browning's conjecture that the poet might eventually have embraced Christian Theism. Nor is there any justification for J. M. Robertson's suggestion that the Christian hymn which Shelley utilises as a chorus in his fragment *Hellas*, signifies any departure from his customary standpoint, for the chorus in question is strictly in accordance with the characters and period depicted in the drama.

Nearly all Shelley's best poetry appears in the anthology under review. *The Cenci*, *Skylark*, *Cloud*, *Adonais*, *Ode to the West Wind*, appear in full, with several other priceless poems including the *Musque of Anarchy*, Shelley's address *To the Men of England*, and the dedication to *Queen Mab*. Then there is Shelley's poignant poem addressed to the Lord Chancellor who had deprived him of the custody of his children because of the poet's unorthodoxy:—

Oh, let a father's curse be on thy soul,
And let a daughter's hope be on thy tomb;
Be both on thy gray head, a leaden cowl
To weigh thee down to thy approaching doom!
I curse thee by a parent's outraged love,
By hopes long cherished and too lately lost,
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove,
By griefs that thy stern nature never crossed.
Yes, the despair that makes a father groan,
And cry, "My children are no longer mine"
The blood within those veins may be mine own,
But—Tyrant—their polluted souls are thine.

Fine examples of the poet's power as a prose writer are furnished in this collection. Two letters from Italy to Peacock, the novelist, contain felicitous references to the ruins of antique Rome, the wonders of Vesuvius and the volcano's environs. The remains of the Forum and Colosseum awakened wonder and astonishment in the beholder. Near these majestic relics of former glory Shelley noted "the arch of Constantine, or rather the arch of Trajan; for the servile and avaricious senate of degraded Rome ordered that the monument of his predecessor should be demolished in order to dedicate one to the Christian reptile, who had crept among the blood

of his murdered family to the supreme power . . . The temples of Jupiter, Concord and Peace, and the Sun and the Moon, and Vesta are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity."

Shelley's essay, *The Relations of the Sexes*, is one that infuriated and scandalised the Puritans and pruders of his and later generations. But most enlightened people will sympathise with his contentions to-day. Then, and for later decades, no divorce was possible in England save by an Act of Parliament. Yet, as the poet averred: "Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their lives in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are . . . The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents: they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence and falsehood."

Lord Ellenborough's sentence on Eaton for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason* occasioned Shelley's impassioned epistle to that legal luminary. In this, he reminded his lordship that he presided over a court which was created to deal with crime, in which justice should prevail. Yet the accused's Deistic convictions were employed for the purpose of prejudicing the minds of the jury and so secure a verdict of guilty. Why these injustices? "The answer," declares Shelley, "which Heathen Athens made to Socrates is the same which Christian England must attempt to silence the advocates of this injured man—'He has questioned established opinions.' Alas, the crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven. Implicit faith and fearless inquiry have in all ages been irreconcilable enemies."

In the *Shelley Companion* the poet's immature essay on Christianity appears. Also, his splendid *Defence of Poetry*, in which he acclaims the singers of songs as the acknowledged legislators of the world.

T. F. PALMER.

DAVIS AND GOLIATH

IN the days when America was fighting for freedom and the French Revolution was looming in the near future a citizen of Philadelphia, U.S.A.—Benjamin Franklin by name—was a well-known figure in the French capital. To-day another American visitor to Paris, also from the "City of Brotherly Love"—Garry Davis, by name—is becoming well-known to the inhabitants of Europe. American by birth, yes, but American citizen, no. By now there is little excuse for any newspaper reader not knowing that Davis has renounced his material American passport in favour of the ideal of world citizenship!

Paris has taken this red headed ex-bomber pilot to her impulsive heart. Since he first hit the headlines by publicly renouncing U.S. citizenship, to his recent mass meeting of 15,000 people in the Velodrome d'Hiver, Davis has provided Paris with one excitement after another. In September he camped outside the Palais de Chaillot, temporary home of the United Nations General Assembly, to draw attention to the idea of World Government. In November, this slim little man in a leather jacket felt impelled to interrupt the futile proceedings of the General Assembly.

He was hustled out before he had time to say more than—

"In the name of the people of the world, who are not represented here . . ."

From another part of the gallery his speech was finished for him, however, by Robert Sarrazac, ex-resistance fighter, "We the people want that peace which only a world government can give us . . . I appeal to you to convene immediately a world constituent assembly which will raise the flag of one government for one world."

All Paris waited to see what would happen next. It was a mass distribution of leaflets, which jammed traffic, produced several arrests and put Davis in the headlines again. The leaflets advertised a meeting at the Salle Pleyel, concert hall seating 2,500 people. When the time for the meeting arrived, police had to be called to handle the crowds. The hall was jam-packed and literally thousands were turned away.

With the telegraphic support of Dr. Einstein and written greetings from Sir John Boyd Orr and a number of British Members of Parliament, Davis was supported on the platform by Albert Camus, Andre Breton, "Vercors" and other prominent French writers.

"My need of peace is the same as yours," he told the cheering audience in his "American" French. "We believe the fatal crisis is approaching. Are we going to wait and hope, until it is too late?"

A week later some 15,000 people went to the Velodrome d'Hiver to hear the reply of Dr. Evatt, President of the United Nations General Assembly, to questions put to him by Davis.

It was reported that the audience booed at Dr. Evatt's statement that it was not the prerogative of the United Nations to make peace, but to maintain it once the Great Powers had made it. Davis had asked that the United Nations should devote time in the current session of the General Assembly to examining the possibility of convening a "World Constituent Assembly" to prepare a world government.

Since then, according to the Paris papers, Davis and his supporters have announced that hope of obtaining the organisation of world peace through the "United Nations" must be abandoned.

What Davis has done is a remarkable achievement for one man with about 20 active supporters and no funds to speak of. But the question arises—where does he go from there?

His own plan, as he outlined it some weeks ago in Paris was that World Citizen Registries should be established in as many cities as possible, with a Central Registry in each country and an International Registration Centre in Paris. "When a significant number of people have registered themselves as World Citizens, thus building a World Citizens Population or Census, their directed, concerted action can create a counter-balance to the present despair and hopelessness," he declared. "One phase of our action," he said, "will be to take part in the election of candidates to the Peoples' Constituent Assembly which is to be held in 1950 to draft a World Constitution."

So far his ideas march with those of the Crusade for World Government in Britain and associated organisations in other countries.

It may be that World Citizen Garry Davis, like so many other public figures, will drop back into obscurity after his spell in the limelight, but all the evidence so far is that his great personal popularity will lead to the building up of solid support for world federation.

JEAN O'DONNELL.

"There are four things I cannot stand: the sight of garlic, bed-bugs, tobacco smoke and the cross."—GORKHE.

COLOUR PREJUDICE

IN "A Bible Defence of Slavery" (1852) by the Rev. Josiah Priest, Mr. Peter Neilsen says that he has been told by a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa that "according to the scriptures, the separation of the white and black races will be continued in Heaven as upon earth—he said nothing about hell—and that those natives who are permitted to enter the heavenly abodes will be separately accommodated in some of the many mansions of which mention is made in the New Testament."

The above extract is taken from a recently published book entitled "Colour Prejudice" by Sir Alan Burns, formerly Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast. Sir Alan has written a most instructive book and reveals himself as a capable and tolerant administrator. In South Africa, as is well known, a "pigmentary aristocracy" prevails. The average housewife there cannot get along without a native "boy" or "girl." As a negro writer puts it:—

"She even thinks that up in Heaven
Her class lies late and snores
While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores."

It is a point too often overlooked that the white races did not introduce slavery into Africa. It had existed there from time immemorial, but the whites "contributed to the system their genius for organisation and multiplied its evils." It is not surprising to learn that "the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, as trustees for sugar estates in the Barbadoes . . . were slave owners, and did not emancipate their slaves until 1834."

It is refreshing to hear from Sir Alan that, "my own view is that in the Gold Coast the relations between Europeans and Africans are better than in any other colony I have known, and I hope that some improvement has been effected in Nigeria by the Lagos Dining Club, of which I was one of the founders. This club consists of an equal number of Africans and Europeans and meets once a month to afford members an opportunity of dining and talking together."

Although the negro has not been scientifically proved inferior to the white in capacity it must, nevertheless, be recognised that neither as a race nor as an individual have his achievements been impressive. Sir Alan says this may be because the barrier of the Sahara Desert and the forbidding African coastline have prevented free intercourse with civilised regions?

"The Russian poet, Pushkin, is frequently claimed as a negro, and did, in fact, have a trace of negro blood: his natural great-grandfather was Hannibal, the negro of Peter the Great. Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Alexander Hamilton . . . also have been claimed as belonging to the race (see "What the Negro Thinks" by R. R. Moton). It has to be admitted that there have been, and are, a number of pure-blooded negroes of outstanding ability and character, but the number is small, and it is claimed that they are no more than exceptions to the general rule; and many of those claimed by negroes as compatriots were certainly much more white than black.

Concerning physical traits "no race has a monopoly of evolutionary end products. With his heavy massive cranium and flat nose, the black man appears to be nearer in his relationship to the higher apes; in the important matter of hair, however, the white man is closer to the ape. The hairy skin of the whites . . . is close in its nature to the hairy coat of the apes: the negro skin

is far less hairy. The thin lips of the whites are similar to the thin lips of the ape."

Impartial observers consider that miscegenation "is undesirable from a sociological point of view and until the coloured peoples attain to a greater social and economic equality a policy of intermarriage is neither desirable nor practicable. There are legal obstacles to miscegenation in several countries, and in this connection it is interesting to learn that in the 14th century in Ireland marriage between an English and an Irish person was declared an act of treason." The modern Russians appear to adhere to that principle.

Colour prejudice is not confined to blacks and whites. The browns and the yellows usually consider themselves "a cut above" the blacks. In South Africa antipathy exists between Indians and Negroes, breaking out occasionally, into murderous rioting. It would require the pen of a Swift to do justice to such foolishness. Sir Alan suggests that colour prejudice may be inveterate and impervious to reason. The writer of this article believes that only harm can come from propaganda aiming at the establishment of equality between blacks and whites in a country like South Africa. We must be realists before anything else. But a beginning can be made, by the whites, towards a civilised solution of the problem by lessening the sense of inferiority on the part of the negro through fair and courteous behaviour, and by encouraging, in return, an emphasis of responsibility and stability of purpose—qualities, at present, lacking in the negro.

The great retrogression which has taken place in civilised norms of thinking all over the world is a warning to reformers to exercise caution and patience. Progress, especially in a matter like colour prejudice, will be slow. The overwhelming majority of whites are still too steeped in passionate prejudice for it to be otherwise.

E. A. McDONALD.

MORE MORMONISM

"Life's Meaning," by A. Mormon. Published by Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, London; 4 pp.

THIS magnificent work is presented to the general public gratis by the commercial travellers for "The-Only-True-God." The object of said epistle is to set one thinking and to guide one's thoughts Mormonwards. Now, what does the pamphlet tell us, or ask us?

The opening query is "Why am I here?" which to most folk is somewhat of a problem. It goes on to enlarge the poser by asking, "Whence did I come? Where shall I go?" The three questions now enlarge the aspect and bring us to the theme, i.e., "Life's Meaning."

Now come the answers, as seen by alien eyes. "Man is Eternal" . . . very profound, but does it mean that man has come from dust and to dust shall return? Not on your life. We are told that "Man was in the beginning with God . . ." It's a funny thing that I was with God in the beginning and know nothing about it, for I am supposed to have a free will, and I am sure that no man with a free will would forget the most important part of his existence. Within the same paragraph is this lovely statement: "This (Mormonism) is not a new doctrine, but one that has been forgotten in the centuries of man-made religions." 'Twould seem that these folk are flogging a dead horse

"Evidence of pre-existence," and what evidence it is. "Every person has the feeling that he has lived in a life before this." Now this is very odd, for here am I,

a fully grown man who has had plenty of time to feel this phenomenon but, alas, I must not be one classed with "every person": perhaps others feel it, but I can't claim this unique experience.

Now we come to a lovely paradox: "Scientists . . . have proved the universe to be eternal, indestructible and everlasting . . ." This sentence, assuming that words mean to Mormons what they are defined as in the Oxford English Dictionary, denies creation, for that which is eternal and everlasting must, by definition, be without either beginning or end. Now, where is there a need, or possibility, for a God within such a scheme?

Comes the statement that "all mankind were begotten spirit children of the Lord" . . . Oscar Wilde told fairy stories also, but his were more plausible. "Fatherlike, our Creator in that long-past day provided for our welfare," and to think that I have known children to die, unknowing of this world. A father that provides like that in modern society ends up behind bars, so I suggest that we take out a writ against this Creator, this "kind and loving" Father. Then the trouble would be in finding him.

"The plan of human salvation was formulated by the Lord." Now why create man in the first place, if indeed he was created? Why need he be saved, if indeed he was in danger of being lost? And lastly, why create men who would eventually suffer the punishment of our "Father," when their only crime was to have been with this kind old boy in the first place? This is too cockeyed to hold water.

"Man comes upon earth because he has earned the right to be born and has accepted the plan of salvation." In this statement is room for much discussion, but two points stand out beyond all others. Firstly, how did he "earn" the right to an opportunity of being eternally punished, for that is surely the fate on the unrepenting sinners, such as myself. Secondly, where does free-agency come into man's life if it is pre-determined that he will be born, for if this is so, then it must be pre-determined, at least nine months previously that coition between two human beings upon this earth shall take place and that it shall result in a passport for the awaiting, and as yet unborn, "intelligence." If this coition is pre-determined, as it must be if the above statement is correct, then man does *not* have free will.

With the next paragraph, we are told that man is so placed upon this earth that his free agency may have the fullest (you will note that this is limited and does not say *absolute*) exercise for expression. What rationalisers these fellows are. First one thing and then another. It makes you wonder if they really know what words mean, if anything, and if not, then what do they themselves mean?

Then we are told in a further reference to our "Loving Father" that he is logical and just. This tends to make one chortle at the thought of this loving papa giving you a sporting chance of being saved or lost when you had no worries, or cares, or dangers during your sojourn with that eternal and perfect being. Of course, your life with a perfect being must also have been perfect, otherwise your imperfection would have been an imperfection within the society of a perfect being, which, of course, would be ridiculous . . . and after all, He is logical.

Yet the mercy of God, which magnifies our smallest righteous endeavours into glorious rewards, will not forget the sinner" (as though a perfect being could, or would, forget anything). Now, we are told that this just being magnifies the smallest righteous deed, which

would seem to imply that the just one ain't so just after all.

So, leaving your head in a whirl at these amazing Mormons, let me but quote you one last paragraph, which really sums it up: "This latter-day life-philosophy is marvellous in its comprehensiveness and completeness, in its power to satisfy the righteous desires of man. Will you investigate it?" Certainly they don't understate when they tell you that it is something to be marvelled at, but to believe that it is all-comprehending and has the power to satisfy the righteous man . . . I wonder!
PETER CROSS.

HOLY BREECHES

PIERRE BAYLE, whose marvellous "Critical Dictionary" is praised by Freethinkers for its extraordinary erudition and cute criticisms, wrote other works, some of which were publicly burnt by the common hangman. But, I refer to Bayle's, "Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres," in which occurs the following amusing piece, now translated into plain English.

According to Saint Nicolo's "Confessions," he was spiritual consoler to Agatha, the wife of Ruggieri a physician. She and the Saint were devoutly amorous and both disclosed their love for each other while absolving many sins.

During these absolutions in the Church of Our Lady, Nicolo sighed and peering at Agatha's face, whispered, "my fair daughter, who can free another, when he himself is bound?" Agatha's quick apprehension soon understood Nicolo's meaning and told the spiritual father, how they could fulfil their desires the next time her husband was called away.

She feigned illness and sent her servant to Nicolo, asking him to come and console her. He entered, and solemnly approaching her bedside, knelt and dismissed the servant from further attentions to the mistress.

The saintly father, alone with the feigning woman, was about to administer spiritual consolation to devout Agatha, when the husband unexpectedly returned home.

Nicolo rushed from the bedroom and hastily tying his spacious cloak around him, hurried back to the sacristy.

The unsuspecting husband came to his wife saying kind words to her, when he observed something under the pillow. He laid hold of what appeared to be strings, and pulling them out discovered a pair of breeches, which caused a fit of consternation; but, Agatha's wits being heightened by her new amour, gently replied without the least blush or hesitation, that she owed an instant cure to the holy relic which Father Nicolo had brought to her. The husband was requested to seek the pious priest and thank him for his devout duties by making a monetary offering.

Nicolo's mind was alert too, and judging from Ruggieri's conversation what Agatha had schemed, he straightway sounded the chapter bell and all the friars assembled. He informed them that a remarkable recovery had been wrought by virtue of "Saint Griffon's" breeches in the house of Ruggieri, the physician. All was in order and headed by an elevated cross, Nicolo lead the procession solemnly and slowly to the physician's home, where the recovered breeches were blessed and wrapped in a perfumed cloth. All returned to Our Lady's Church guarding the sacred relic, which being deposited in the sacristy, became an object of devotion as the miraculous breeches of Saint Griffon.

W. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

ACID DROPS

It was only to be expected that the B.B.C.'s special reporter would give an account of the way in which the Bishop of London's Mission attracted Londoners. It was most interesting to hear a parson in a pub trying to persuade one of its habitués to come to church. This gentleman preferred, he said, to play football—and this was his only argument! He hadn't the slightest idea that the case against Christianity was that it wasn't true—from any point of view. Another parson who came to the microphone detailed with great gusto how many people came to his church as a result of the Mission, and he spoke much as a primitive Fundamentalist would have spoken 1,800 years ago. He seemed to know nothing of what science had done in disintegrating not merely Christianity, but all religion.

But we gathered enough from the B.B.C. report that agrees with our contention that all the Mission accomplished was to persuade Christians to support the Church a little more heartily. As one parson insisted, it only meant one hour in the week; and this appeared to be the sole result of a great deal of hard work and organising and at a cost of many thousands of pounds. The Mission cannot point to the conversion of a single notable unbeliever—if any at all. Only a number of more or less lax Christians have been persuaded to go to church. A whale of an effort to produce a tiny mouse!

Mr. Dudley Barker has some pertinent questions to ask in the *Daily Herald* in regard to the Mission to London. He wants to know: Do the modern publicity devices lead to Heaven—or the Buchman Group, or Aimee Semple Macpherson? Can trust in God be sold like cigarettes or lipstick? When a man sees a plane trace a cross in the sky, does he dash off to church? Is anyone impressed by the triple knock (for the Trinity) on his front door? Must religion shout louder than the rest in the 20th century? He adds, I am only asking questions, not attempting to answer them. If Dudley Barker really wants the answers to all but the last question, the answer is no. To the last the answer is, yes.

The Free Church of Scotland has come into the news not because it has the sole truth from God Almighty, but because it "deprecates and deplores" such visits as that of Princess Margaret to the Pope. Why the Princess should not, in a private capacity, visit whom she pleases is a mystery only good Christians can answer. This kind of intolerance is intolerable. Then Mr. Attlee is severely admonished because he "desecrated" the Sabbath Day by attending a political meeting—when the Free Church knows quite well that Sunday is not the Biblical Sabbath Day, but the day Pagans devoted to the worship of the Sun. Hence its name. We are now solemnly assured that Mr. Attlee is no longer admired by the Free Church of Scotland, a misfortune he no doubt will survive.

Archbishop Godfrey (R.C.) told an audience recently that religion was not dope but dynamite. Well we must admit that it has often exploded very ferociously—its record of killing is formidable, and certainly not equalled by ordinary dynamite. To take one item, thousands of witches were burnt alive, or died in misery and torture after coming into contact with Roman Catholic dynamite—but perhaps the Church is not altogether proud of this record. Then take the religious wars of the Middle Ages

—millions of people died as a result of this particular dynamite. Fortunately, the Church has no longer the power to inflict mankind with it, though its priests continue to whine pathetically that it should still be allowed to blow hell out of everything it opposes.

We are stating nothing new when we say the Public's memory is very short, and that the level of their intelligence is not rated very high by ordinary newspapers. We can think of no other reason for the newspapers' cynical attitude towards their readers when in the same issue two reports of the religious life in Wales are a flat contradiction. One writer maintains that religion is on the increase, whereas the Editorial in the same paper bemoans the fact that in 63 areas (in Wales) there is a decline in Church attendance and in 38 areas there is a marked decline. The Editorial reports the Rev. C. Roberts as saying that the decline is due to "dogs, drink and escapism." The alliteration would have been perfect had he said it was due to "dogs, drink and the Devil" and just about as true. That religion has had its day never seems to enter a parson's head.

The opening of the Church of Scotland Assembly as reported by the *Empire News* reads like a society reporter's description of Ascot. Ministers and Elders are going gay, Scots Guards in uniform of scarlet, gold and blue, Scotland's dressmakers working overtime, and Dukes and Duchesses galore. Presumably a good time was had by all. We are not surprised that Cleries and their pantomimes are regarded by ordinary people with contemptuous smiles; what does surprise us is that intelligent men and women can be parties to such comical antics.

Lord Amwell dropped a veritable religious atom bomb in the House of Lords, the other week. He actually had the temerity to tell the noble Peers, including our fatuous Bishops, that the Holy Places in Jerusalem which they wanted to take from Jewish control "were very doubtful indeed." To say that the Peers were shocked, staggered, outraged, and horrified, is to put it very mildly. Think of the feelings of such noble, pious, and all-believing Christians to be told that there are actually three places where "Christ" is supposed to have been buried. And Lord Amwell bluntly asked, "What is meant by Holy Places?"

Instead of answering, Lord Strabolgi, putting the cause of Christ before everything else, "intervened warmly" by saying, "A Holy Place is made holy by the people who believe in it!" For sheer intellectual power that would take a lot of beating, and it gives point to the cry of some people that the House of Lords should be abolished. Still, it is not only the Holy Places in Palestine which are myths; there is hardly a single thing in Christianity which can be otherwise explained. Not that this matters—there is far too much money bound up with the Church of Christ for it to be given up without a struggle.

The *Daily Express* runs a headline, "The Bishop looks to £1 in your £100." And Dr. H. Wilson, Bishop of Chelmsford, thinks that everyone ought to leave at least one per cent. of their money to the Church. Our correspondent, who sends us the cutting, has written over the headline, "Impudent Devil." We think a better headline would be "It's yer money we're after."

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. GUDGEON, S.A.; "DIGGER," S.A.; W. CUMMINGS; "T.B."; J. ANDERSON.—Thanks for cuttings and suggestions, they will be dealt with.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

The FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning, and the following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).

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. Roseth, giving as long notice as possible.

SUGAR PLUMS

On London, its topography and history. Mr. William Kent has achieved a great reputation, and for those interested he has prepared a leaflet with a full list of his works and their prices which he will be glad to send to all who address him at 71, Union Road, London, S.W.4. His *London for Heretics* is of especial interest to Freethinkers, and many will find his autobiography *The Testament of a Victorian Youth* which recounts his pilgrimage from the Nonconformist Church to Freethought and which gives an excellent sketch of what religion meant to the young people of his day, equally fascinating. Soon to be published is his life of John Burns whom he knew intimately, and whose stormy career—at least up to 1914—has provided him with excellent material for first class biography.

Christianity has never been a success because it has never been tried. It has been dabbled with rather than practised, runs a sentence in the *Hampstead News* Editorial. What a pity we have never kept an account of the number of times this assertion with variations has been made. It is the stock answer to every atheist who challenges Christianity with its failure after 2,000 years of existence, and we will take a level bet that every crusader in the Mission to London will use the phrase. If we are wrong we will offer to send the *Freethinker* every week for a year to any Missioner who can honestly claim not to have used it.

Does it matter that the world is in a mess? Does it matter that people are being killed in all parts of the world? Not really, but what does matter is, should God be eaten on an empty or a full stomach? The *Church of England Newspaper* devotes two columns to the discussion of this intriguing question of whether to fast or not to fast. The writer points out that there is no evidence earlier than the fourth century for the practice of fasting, before communion and points out that an empty "tummy" is "a pathetically inadequate preparation for partaking of the Lord's Supper." Personally, we think an adequate preparation for any supper is an empty stomach, but, good God, could God care less?

AN UNWILLING WITNESS FOR RATIONALISM

(Readers will be interested in the following article written by Mr. Kent in 1937, when Lord Raglan's "The Hero" was first published. Circumstances prevented it appearing then but we think it will prove of great interest now.)

"MOST unwilling witnesses, gentlemen—most unwilling witnesses," said Sergeant Buzfuz of Messrs. Winkle, Tupman, and Snodgrass in the famous trial of Bardell versus Pickwick. Thereby the old hand at the bar sought to impress upon the minds of the jury that the highest degree of truth might be that which was reluctantly extracted. Any reader of this journal who, like the writer, dwells in what Dickens called the valley of the shadow of the law will know the risks of the enthusiastic witness who would fain act the advocate in the box. He is bent on painting the lily of the fairest case, and his energy in enamelling sometimes robs it of its potent purity.

I was reminded of the value of the man who truly, but diffidently, desires to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and yet will take sides neither with plaintiff nor defendant, when I read Lord Raglan's recent book, entitled *The Hero: a Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. The publishers (Messrs. Methuen) had the sagacity to advertise it in the *Literary Guide*, but I doubt if this was done with the approval of the author. Is Lord Raglan also among the Rationalists? it might be asked. I doubt whether his Lordship has any desire to assist Lord Ponsonby, Lord Snell, and the absentee Earl Russell to attempt to leaven the lump of propriety and piety known as the House of Peers. In literature, however, it may please his Lordship to admit a considerable degree of rationalism; from religion apparently it is to be emotionally barred.

You read on in this trenchant, lucid, and most informative essay in mythology with great expectations. Surely, you say to yourself—as his Lordship gives thrust after thrust at this and that canard of literature and history—his keen-edged logical weapon must be turned upon Christian tradition. Oh, no. King Arthur is cavalierly disposed of as, to quote the index, "a mythical character," and has no place to lay his head as an historical figure. Hengist and Horsa, Alfred and the eakes, and Robin Hood are all swept into a mythological compound, and forbidden to masquerade as figures of fact; but Jesus is only once referred to, and that in the superbly safe allusion to the symbolism of the lamb that sometimes represents him in plastic art! Such kid-gloved meety in handling the Christian religion approaches the Gilbertian in a book of this character. Samuel Butler's Montreal museum curator turned the pantless Discobolus towards the wall because his brother did Mr. Spurgeon's printing. Perhaps Lord Raglan is obliged to cover up his religious nakedness because he knows a bishop.

The reader will cry out for rationalistic moralising, but he will cry in vain. In the Preface it is emphasised that "the veracity and verisimilitude of a narrative are no criterion of historicity; that many clever men have believed stories which are now known to be quite untrue; and that the truth of a story is to be judged by evidence alone." We thank his Lordship for those few straight words. It has often been thrust under our noses by Christian Evidence lecturers and others that Isaac Newton, Dr. Johnson, and W. E. Gladstone have accepted the Christian faith. So did Sir Thomas Mallory, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and all the medieval historians accept the stories of Arthur, whom Lord

Raglan hunts out of history with all the fierceness with which Tennyson's hero pursued the Pagans. I wonder if his Lordship had ever lighted upon some equally admirable words from E. A. Freeman, the historian. "I have seen in many books so much of this story of Alfred the Great told as people nowadays think possible—viz., the story of Alfred's charity to the poor man. Now it is quite possible that this may be true, and that the rest is tradition which has grown around it. But we have no evidence that it is so, and we have no right to take a piece of a story by itself in this way. The writers who tell us one part tell us the rest, and if we tell the story at all we should tell the whole story. It is not fair to pick out just as much as we think possible, and to tell that much as if it were certainly true." This has, of course, been done with Arthur and Alfred, and another, who to Lord Raglan must be nameless. That belief in the New Testament Jesus may be as much the faith of Simple Simon never comes within telescopic vision of his Lordship, nor did it of Freeman.

The late J. M. Robertson does not get so much attention as Jesus, from which it may be inferred he receives none at all. Yet we find Sir James Frazer quoted, with his Lordship's approval, as saying: "We shall probably not err in assuming that many myths, which we now know only as myths, had once their counterpart in magic; in other words, that they used to be acted as a means of producing in fact the events which they describe in figurative language. Ceremonies often die out while myths survive, and thus we are led to infer the dead ceremony from the living myth." This is an epitome of Robertson's views of the story of Jesus. Alas, Sir James, while bolder than Lord Raglan, lags a little behind some expectations, and he has never ruthlessly applied his theory to the New Testament. In his chapter on "The Folk Tale" we read: "In the many stories in which the hero ends by ascending the throne and reigning as if to the manner born he is represented as starting life as a pauper, but this is done . . . to explain the fact that, in the typical myth, the hero has to pass through a period of adversity. It is usually found that, though ostensibly the son of a peasant, he is really a prince who in early infancy was either stolen by an enemy or hidden from a tyrant by his friends." Most of us have heard of the prince of the House of David, who was the son of a carpenter and fled to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. I think his Lordship must have heard something of it last Christmas; but perhaps he has a short memory.

The greatest of these staggering omissions is in Chapter XVI, "The Hero." Here his Lordship gives the reader the pattern for all as follows:—

- (1) The hero's mother is a royal virgin;
- (2) His father is a king, and
- (3) Often a near relative of his mother, but
- (4) The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
- (5) He is also reputed to be the son of a god,
- (6) At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
- (7) He is spirited away, and
- (8) Reared by foster-parents in a far country,
- (9) We are told nothing of his childhood, but
- (10) On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his father's kingdom,
- (11) After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast,

- (12) He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
- (13) Becomes king,
- (14) For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
- (15) Prescribes laws, but
- (16) Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
- (17) Is driven from the throne and city, after which
- (18) He meets with a mysterious death,
- (19) Often at the top of a hill,
- (20) His children, if any, do not succeed him,
- (21) His body is not buried, but nevertheless
- (22) He has one or more holy sepulchres.

"Let us now apply this pattern," says Lord Raglan, "to our heroes." We start with Oedipus, who is followed by Theseus, Romulus, Heracles, Perseus, Jason, Bellerophon, Pelops, Aesclepius, Dionysos, Apollo, Zeus, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Watu Gunung, Nyikang, Sigurd or Siegfried, Llew Llawgyffes, Arthur, and Robin Hood. Lord Raglan awards points on the basis of his pattern. Amazing it is, but Jesus is not allowed to be a candidate in the examination. He would score about fifteen points—almost enough for a special distinction.

While a witness, in his own mind, may ostentatiously declare himself aloof from both parties, the astute judge will put him in his right place in judging the case. Most readers of this book will rank Lord Raglan religiously with most of the readers of this journal. He must surely, in the privacy of his own heart, be almost persuaded to reject the historic Jesus. Perhaps some day he will come over the line.

W. KENT

MR. LUPTON AND THE LIFE-FORCE

FIRST of all let me say how sorry I am to hear of Mr. Lupton's illness and to express the hope that he is now fully recovered—thanks to or in spite of the *Life-force* which seems to have troubled him in his delirium.

I, too, have been having my own private fight with a thermometer: that decided to register 105 degrees, but thanks to M. and B., and not D.V., I have managed to survive so far. No doubt my wife's good nursing was the real reason why I could not embark on that Voyage of Discovery which would have settled, for me at any rate, the question that has been causing quite a lot of belly-ache among respectable Rationalists.

Mr. Lupton, quite rightly, denounces me for using the expression "not completely destroyed" in one of my articles—I only hope the shock did not set him back a couple of weeks or more. However, I still contend that there is a difference between a thing that is completely destroyed and a thing that is only partly destroyed.

With reference to Sir Arthur Keith's candle-flame, when I said that it was not completely destroyed I meant to convey that it was only partly destroyed; because, although the *light* of the flame disappeared, the chemical elements of which the flame was composed were merely changed into other chemical forms—hence the flame was not *completely* destroyed.

And now, regarding my use of the term "life-force" I believe I am right in saying that this term was first introduced by Mr. George Bernard Shaw. Anyway, I do not claim to be either its inventor or discoverer. But I definitely dispute Mr. Lupton's assertion that "since life is a function of man, it goes nowhere when it dies." Surely, if life is a *function* of man then Mr. Lupton must also postulate man existing prior to life. I would

much prefer to say that *man was a function of life*; for without the prior existence of life—or life-force—man could not possibly come into being—or function. If the force that is life exists prior to man then there is no reason whatever to assume that it does not continue to exist when man is dead.

I am not aware that a force can ever be destroyed; so if life is a force, as I definitely believe it to be, then I cannot agree that it can be extinguished like the flame of a candle, as Sir Arthur Keith contends.

I certainly do not care two hoots whether the term "life-force" is spelt with capitals or not and I have no intention of explaining *what* the life-force is. If I could do that I would not be sitting here typing this article for readers who are probably not interested in it anyway. No one knows yet what electricity is but who will deny its existence as a very potent force? Why, then, should I be expected to give an analysis of the life-force? So far as I am concerned it is the *force that is life*. Perhaps Mr. Bernard Shaw can supply a better definition.

Because I, in my ignorance, cannot explain, define or account for a thing I do not necessarily have to deny its existence—otherwise I would have to deny the existence of life itself. I cannot explain the universe but I know that it exists.

I cannot help thinking that Atheists are all-obsessed with a dreadful fear that some day somebody is going to produce an argument that will for ever more deprive them of their right to final extinction!

W. H. WOOD

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S MISSION TO LONDON

DR. J. W. C. WAND, Bishop of London, has once again raised the standard of Intolerance and Tyranny, so often borne aloft by that institution in which he is gainfully employed. In the "Evening News" of May 20, he is given the leading column to preach a sermon.

Christianity, he declaims, does not restrict itself to the relation between God and the soul—that is to tell "only half the story"—but is concerned with the whole of our environment. It is concerned with every man and how he spends his every hour, where he works, what he works at, where and how he spends his leisure moments. "It, therefore," in the words of this Bishop, "embraces our whole culture and civilisation." Zhdanov and all the would-be dictators over art and culture in Russia never made quite so extravagant and totalitarian claim as this!

Any doubt one might have that Dr. Wand really meant to go so far as this is dispelled by the latter part of his sermonisings. The Church "has no intention of committing suicide" by contenting itself with mere individual conversions; it is going to make sure, doubly sure, by seeing that the benighted convert gets what the Bishop calls "a suitable environment for the proper development of his character." Was there ever such an all-embracing claim that man is but a thing, a cypher to be the sport of their arbitrary, uncontrolled power? What sort of world is this that these twentieth century Inquisitors would impose on Society? What sort of strait-jacket is this that these black crows have prepared, to rule man's every waking moment, control his every whispered thought in the privacy of his home, to choose his furniture, his pictures and books and to decide his pleasures, making his whole mind a skin drum for these witch-doctors to beat their tattoo of death upon?

As I have observed before, this Church and its prelates

are fundamentally undemocratic and intolerant. Because they do not want to read a certain book, no one else must read it. Because they do not believe in divorce, birth control, marrying one's divorced wife's sister, and so forth, they are not content to practise themselves these precepts but must force everyone else into their mould. The crucifix is their emblem, the emblem of their intent towards humanity! "Art, science and literature must all be impregnated with the spirit of religion" shouts this prelate. This is the end of objective inquiry and the beginning of universal charlatanism. Oh, monstrous cynicism which would call this progress!

If we let this Mission have its way, there would be an end of all progress, of scientific inquiry, of freedom in artistic expression. Since nothing stands still in nature what is arrested can but slide backwards; the ultimate aim of this Mission is a return to the Dark Ages or the epoch of a new Innocent III. The Bishop evidently believes not only in the almightiness of his deity but in the almightiness of his right to dictate man's being from the cradle to the grave, to make it a perpetual twilight of physical and mental slavery to superstition and phantasy.

P. C. KING.

LAST MOMENTS

NOTHING could well be more absurd than to judge a man's life by his manner of leaving it. So much depends upon the nature of the causes which occasion death. When nature is exhausted, the body and mind enfeebled by disease, perhaps racked by physical suffering and distracted by anxiety as to loved ones left behind, it is scarcely the time to judge of the character or conduct of a life. Such a method is as unsafe as it is unfair. Yet there are ministers of religion and others who delight in drawing contrasts between the peaceful death-beds of believers and the agonies of sceptics. The goody-goody press teems with the edifying death-bed triumphs of eminent Christians, from Joseph Addison, who (perhaps after a bracing draught of his favourite brandy) sent for his nephew, Earl Warwick, to see how a Christian could die, to the much-belauded Prince Consort, who left Her Majesty to the tender care of late Mr. Brown after singing "The Rock of Ages." Yet the biggest scoundrels have died as calmly as the most pious Christians. Monsieur Louis Dominique Cartouche, who, as the pious stories go, began life by stealing a pin and became a prince of robbers, endured the torture with the utmost firmness. In the good old days, when executions were as plentiful as blackberries, it was as common for highwaymen to "die game" as it is now for negro murderers to be "jerked to Jesus" after devoutly singing a hymn. Pious Dr. Johnson with all his bigotry, was one of the best-hearted men that ever breathed, yet his dread of death was extreme. Indeed, it might almost be said that the more savage men are the less sensitive are they to death, as well as to physical pain. The firmness with which an American Indian will endure torture is almost incredible. Some instances there are of civilised natures able to rise superior to the most excruciating pains. Balthasar Gerard, the assassin of William of Orange, bore the most horrible tortures not only with bravery, but bravado. Giles Dorey, accused by the Salem Puritans of witchcraft, allowed himself to be slowly crushed to death without uttering one cry. So far from Infidel death-beds being especially horrible, the collection of instances published by Mr. Foote affords proof that the end of eminent Freethinkers has usually been as philosophic as their lives.

Of these some are intensely absorbing, as of the martyrs Bruno, Vanini, and poor Thomas Woolston. The execution of Danton, the death-bed of Mirabeau, the tragic ends of Condorcet and Shelley, are of so thrilling a description that, once read, they are never forgotten. Others, as with Goethe, Byron, Spinoza, Buckle, Clifford, Hobbes, Owen, Mill, etc., take their interest from the men and their work. In some cases an interest attaches from an attempt made at their conversion, as with Diderot and Hugo, or from misrepresentation made by the orthodox, as with Littré, Paine, Voltaire, and Gambetta. Some, like Harriet Martineau, R. Cooper, H. Hetherington, and Austin Holyoake, have secured themselves from his by making a profession of faith when approaching their last moments.

The terrors of death have been much enhanced by the superstitions surrounding it, and by the practice of giving over the dying man to the hands of a ghostly confessor and comforter—a practice which Jean Paul Richter compares to the evacuations demanded from a child ere he is allowed to go to sleep. "Are you not afraid to meet your God?" was once demanded of a desperate sinner in *extremis*. The sinner did not exactly say, with Omar Khayyan, "He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well," but he had heard of easy methods of propitiation, and replied: "No, I am not afraid of God! it's the other fellow I'm afraid of." This anecdote may be apocryphal, but the following one has the authority of Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel*. When dying, the Abbé Terrasson saw his confessor enter his room, and said: "Here is my housekeeper, Madame Luquet. I forget things; confess her. *C'est absolument la même chose.*" The confessor, seeing himself mocked, insisted on the abbé answering for himself. "*Avez-vous été luxurieux?*" asked he. "Madame Luquet, *ai-je été luxurieux?*" said the dying man. "*Un peu,*" replied she. "*Un peu,*" repeated the abbé; and the confessor abruptly departed, leaving the abbé to die, as he had lived, impenitent.

Boureau Deslandes, in his *Réflexions sur les grands Hommes qui sont mort en Plaisantant*, relates many curious stories, and, among others, one from Brantome, of Mdle. Limeuil, maid of honour to Catherine de Medicis. When the moment of her death drew nigh she called for her manservant, named Julien, who played excellently upon the violin. "Julien," she said, "take your violin and play constantly, till you see I am dead, 'the Defeat of the Swiss'." This he did, she accompanying him till she came to the words "All is lost," which, after repeating twice, she turned to those about. "All is lost at this push in good earnest," and so expired.

When Malherbe lay dying, his confessor represented to him the felicities of a future state in the customary low and trite commonplaces. "Hold your tongue," the dying critic interrupted; "your wretched style only makes me out of conceit with them." Scarron told his friends, when weeping around him: "Ah, my good comrades, you will never cry half so much for me as I have made you laugh."

A very good story is told of a Freethinker who had been jockeyed out of some property which he expected from a wealthy relative, and which at the last moment had been secured by two priests for the Church. Upon his own death-bed he sent for the same rapacious pair. As soon as they arrived, expectant of further favours from the family, he bade them sit down, one on either side of the bed, and took no further notice of them. Upon their pestering him as to what he had to communicate, he answered: "Nothing; I simply sent for you that I might die like Jesus—between two thieves."

An incorrigible punster, who was told that in heaven he

might wear a diadem, replied he did not want to die a *dem* bit. This deplorably bad pun so disgusted the parson and the doctor that they left, and the sick man recovered. Another dreadful example was the Freethinker who at his death-bed absolutely prohibited the approach of any of his sceptical friends, but who said they might send as many sky-pilots as they could find. His malady was contagious.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded)

THE TROJAN CANARD

SHEER indignation reigns in the camp of the German Hellenists. With Teutonic obstinacy they believe in the Bible as a Primer of History; and with the same silliness they have believed in the Trojan War as described by that unique authority on antique History, Homer. How could they have any doubts after Herr Schlieman had excavated the remnants of what he considered to be the ruins of Troy? And now Emile Mireaux, a French scholar, dares to write a sacrilegious book (*Les Poèmes homériques*) with the assumption that all this never happened.

We do not mean to review the great wealth of research work done by M. Mireaux; the scope of this article will rather be an assessment of the known historical facts which in themselves explain the problem.

Prior to the invention of writing, tradition—popular sagas, heroic romances, codes of tribal law, etc.—had to be handed down by initiates by word of mouth. If preserved in a poetical form, it was far easier and safer to commit them to memory and in this way they were eventually, recorded by the priests, the first class to use script. Many of these later collections came to be known under the name of this "king" or that "prophet" which does not mean that the discriminatory names were the names of real authors. Individual authorship did not matter then, there were no personal advantages or royalties connected with the writing of even the most pious book. Generally, the authors were unknown when clerical editors recorded the popular or mythical tradition which was least of all concerned with historical truth.

Writing at first was a secret of the priests, everything written was holy and considered with holy awe. With the expansion of the barbarian tribes or clans into peoples, the ancient recordings of mythical genealogies, war songs, law codes, etc., became the respective "Holy Book," the cultural rallying centre. They were not, however, primers of history. They were never intended to be true chronicles and even when something like the recording of historical events started, there did not exist the prerequisites for a reliable recording or checking of facts. Historical Science is a recent accomplishment and even now it is far from being objective truth.

The collection of tribal sagas under the name of "Homer" is no exception. The Dorians and other invading tribes were frankly barbarians who, whilst adopting Mycenaean civilisation, suppressed the older peasant stock of Greece and partly forced them to emigrate. Eastward migration of peoples as well as peaceful trade further diffused the arts of civilisation. Colonies established themselves on Cyprus and on the adjacent coast of Asia.

So far no effective and economic process for producing in bulk iron of good quality had been invented; barbaric cultures were mainly dependent upon tools and weapons of bronze. Their civilisation was conditioned by the high cost of that metal due to the comparative rarity of tin. It was the tribal chieftains called "kings" and their

June 19, 1949

underlings alone who could afford bronze armament and it was, at the same time, these aristocratic "heroes" whose duels decided battles. The mass of the inefficiently armed people did not really matter, and what they produced in labour was time and again taken by the armed "heroes" whose wealth was derived from plunder—robbery and piracy.

In order to provide their smiths with the constituent elements of bronze, the "kings" sent expeditions as far as Britain; however, with tin mainly exported from Asia Minor, traders settled at ports near the Black Sea.

In the Eighth Century B.C. such a colony of tin traders and fugitives from the Greek mainland settled near the site of Troy. This town had several times been destroyed by Asiatic hordes. In those times, peoples were dependent upon geographical coincidences such as the course of waterways, and so they built their settlements at the site of previous habitations. This explains why Schlieman found eight strata of what he believed to be Troy.

The Greek colonists developed their local tradition pretending to have settled at that place long ago as the sequel of a glorious warfare. It is common knowledge that the Romans link their descent with the Trojans—the Christians do with the "Holy Land." Both assumptions are historically unfounded. In the same way the settlers on the river Skanandros faked their higher antiquity in connection with Ajax, a local sun-deity (like Samson) and the god Achilles whose cult extended as far as the Danube delta. Menelaos, according to M. Mireaux, was a sacral name used in sylvane mysteries.

There may arise controversies about details of lesser importance; but the proof has long been overdue that the siege of Troy contains no more grains of truth than the blowing down of the walls of Jericho.

PERCY G. ROY.

A LISBON PROCESSION

ON a recent Sunday, at the Church of Our Lady, there took place the investiture of the statue of Christ On the Way to Calvary, in preparation for the outdoor procession the following Sunday.

At the ceremony were present various members of the Portuguese nobility, eight government ministers, military officers, soldiers, and many more of the faithful.

After the statue had been washed in Holy Water, the Marquess de Torres placed on its shoulders the brocade mantle, embroidered in gold by her fair hands, and presented, according to tradition, by the head of her family.

The statue of Christ was carried to the High Altar where, after special prayers and the singing of the "Misereere" it was exposed for the veneration of the faithful.

Crowds pressed forward to kiss the torn, bleeding knee of Christ, that poor knee on which He had fallen three times. When, however, it was the turn of the nobility to kiss it, a sacristan went to the altar, unscrewed Christ's plaster leg and proceeded to screw a gold one in its place.

"Just a matter of hygiene," explained one of the good priests, as he saw the surprised look on my face. The next Sunday the statue, raised high, was carried through the streets of Lisbon.

Mary, Mother of Jesus, was there in a sky-blue cloak dotted with white shining stars. Mary Magdalene, with her thick, black hair falling loose over her shoulders, weeping copiously; bands of angels carrying on trays huge thorns and nails and even the sponge and gall with

which the wicked Roman soldiers assuaged Christ's thirst; bringing up in the rear were barefooted penitents with ashes on their heads, crying out to God to have mercy on them. Thousands lined the pavements, but I fear they had come just for curiosity, as when the priests came with the collection boxes the majority edged away and when the statue approached a café there was a stampede of men rushing inside to avoid kneeling on the ground as it passed; the flower girls, with their baskets heavily laden with violets to be thrown at the statue went off with but a few bunches sold.

N. F.

CORRESPONDENCE

MUTILATION?

SIR.—After reading Norman Haire's comments on my book "In the Name of Humanity" in the May 22, 1949 issue of the *Freethinker*, I find it difficult to determine whether the gentleman studied medicine to become a doctor, or whether he studied religion to become a rabbi.—Yours, etc.,
JOSEPH LEWIS.

RELIGIOUS CUSTOMERS

SIR.—Picking up the *News Review*, a recent issue, I learnt that the country's chief witch, Dr. Wand, and his advertising agent, F. C. Pritchard, have been out scouting for new customers.

Giving away 60,000 silver crosses; packets of tea would have been more helpful. Distributing 100,000 copies of *See*, meaning when in doubt, see Dr. Wand about it. Further related, that the Church had an income of £3,000,000, with a staff of 41 bishops, 69 assistant bishops, 12,588 vicars, and 5,384 curates. This is a grand total of 18,076 eating their heads off and not sufficient customers to keep them occupied. What a help it would be for our export drive, helping down the mimes.—Yours, etc.,
VICTOR A. WEBB.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath.)—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY. (Highbury Corner) 7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m. Messrs. E. BRYANT, F. WOOD and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

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

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. H. DAY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. WINTER, WHITAKER and BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, BROADY, BILLING.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street (hombcd site) Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. W. PARRY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Market Square).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

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

ASK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY
TO SHOW
THE FREETHINKER
Special rates on application

HISTORICAL AND INFORMATIVE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY

F. A. Ridley

*Author of
"Julian, the Apostate," "The Jesuits," etc.*

A clear exposition of the origins of Roman Catholicism
as a world power and the part it has played in history

In stiff cover, 80 pages

With an appendix of full list of Popes

Price 1/-

Postage 1½d

Specially Selected Essays by
Chapman Cohen

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

In Four Volumes

Each Contains
160 Pages

Single 2, 6
The Four Volumes 10/-

THE AGE OF REASON

By THOMAS PAINE

The book that has survived over a century of abuse
and misrepresentation.

Includes a critical introduction and life by Chapman
Cohen and a reproduction of a commemoration plaque
subscribed by American soldiers in this country.

230 pages! Price, cloth, 3s. Paper, 2s. Postage 3d.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS

*An Anthology for Freethinkers
William Kent, F.S.A.*

... an antidote, as the items collected from writers
major and minor, all have a tonic quality

LITERARY GUIDE

William Kent, depressed by the Morning Radio "Lift
up your Hearts!" comes back pugnaciously with *Lift up
your Heads*

JOHN O'LONDON

This acid collection should be salutary and stimulating
reading for Christians and Non-Christians alike

FORWARD

This seems to me to be excellent reading

MARJORIE BOWEN

400 Quotations from 167 Authors
Fully Indexed and Classified

From all Booksellers

Cloth 5s.

Postage 3d.

Paper 3s. 6d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL

Specially compiled for easy reference. For Freethinkers
and Inquiring Christians

9th edition. 2nd printing. 176 pages.

Price 3s., Cloth only. Postage 2½d.

From all Booksellers or direct from the

PIONEER PRESS