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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### A Plea for Honesty

THERE is a certain copy-book maxim to the effect that honesty is the best policy. In a large and general sense this expresses a truth, but in a large and general sense only.

Given time, truth will triumph over falsehood, honesty over dishonesty, right methods over wrong ones. This must be so, since the operation of the evolutionary process is such that right action and live-preserving action tend to become identical, and the insistent pressure of facts finally breaks down all opposition. But in this process of realisation there occur thousands of cases in which the outward and visible rewards that should accrue to the honest man become the property of the dishonest one. The wicked often wear fine raiment while the virtuous sit in rags. The successful swindler flaunts his victories in the light of day while his deluded victims hide themselves and their miseries from the public gaze. Triumphant rascality, having acquired wealth, retires on its laurels, and ends with a halo of unctuous respectability. In spite of our copy-book maxim, honesty of thought, speech, and action remains about as expensive a luxury as one can purchase.

And one strongly suspects that those who use this maxim have in view only the cheaper, commoner, and least valuable form of honesty and dishonesty. They deprecate strongly the dishonesty of stealing a purse, or non-payment of debts; and with actual material dishonesty their concern seems to stop. But beyond this region of malpractice there lies another of infinitely greater importance to human welfare. The dishonesty of professing beliefs that one knows to be false, the cowardliness of refraining from speaking the truth as one sees it, represent forms of dishonesty far more reprehensible than those practised by the common thief. Let a man steal a watch and his wrongdoing stops substantially with the action. At most the injury is limited to himself and his victim. But he who tampers with truth, who conforms to established beliefs because he wishes to stand well with his fellows, or because he is too mentally lazy to look into things for himself, is exerting an influence on all around him, the evil consequences of which no one can accurately calculate. The very worst forms of vice are not those of which the law takes cognisance. These always have and always will escape legislation. Society may easily protect itself against the thief or the murderer; its greatest danger comes from those who, while not breaking any law, are yet daily and hourly trampling underfoot all those principles on which the higher life of a nation depends.

Fortunately for our maxim, there is an inward satisfaction that comes from honest practice which can be neither bought nor sold. That no one can ultimately injure a man but himself is a saying that contains a truth of which it is

well not to lose sight. But it is well also to remember that it is only the rarer types of humankind that enjoy the supreme felicity of a character which lifts them above the world's rewards and penalties. The average man breaks down—not always at once, but ultimately—beneath the sense of undeserved injury and the weight of social censure. Happiness, said Spinoza, is not the reward of virtue; it is virtue itself. To one of Spinoza's serene detachment of mind the consciousness of being honest to himself was enough. Nothing could take its place, and no material thing could add to its value. But we are not all cast in this heroic mould, and with the mass the knowledge that the world looks coldly on our efforts, even punishes us on that account, results in sourness, cynicism, and demoralisation. And after all, the average character of humanity plays its part in the world's development equally with that of its more brilliant specimens.

From the time of Socrates until our own day it has been so much the custom for the honest man to pay a price for his honesty that people have come to look upon it as quite the proper state of affairs. One authority informs us that it is the lot of minorities to suffer. Another that genius must expect to be misunderstood, and labour in difficulty that others may live in ease. And the people treat the man who stands by his convictions with a kind of contemptuous pity, and an unexpressed admiration for their own superior astuteness in pulling with the tide. The most striking thing to-day, said a Scotch preacher in a recent sermon—a sermon, by the way, considerably above the average in the amount of common sense it contained—"is the remarkable lack of incentive or inspiration, or even recognition, given to the honest man fighting life's battle with back against the wall, toiling uphill in the face of fierce temptation, striving often against fearful odds, to hold the truth towards God and man, and labouring with agony of heart and mind to overcome and rule his passions." This comment was chiefly concerned with the lower aspects of the subject I have touched, but it may be used to illustrate the higher phase. And if this preacher were to carefully study the history of the creed he is championing he would find that it is in no small measure responsible for the evil he deplures. In the aspect dealt with by him his indictment of the attitude of the ordinary Christian is unanswerable. He says:—

"There is not probably a church in all our land where you will fail to get a score of people running to help the drunken man who yields, for one who thinks it worth his while to love and cheer the sober man who overcomes; there is not probably a town within the realm where you will not find a dozen agencies for seeing to the unemployed, dishonest or deserving. I do not know a dozen agencies throughout the land which make it their one aim and end to help and cheer and strengthen the overweighted and the overwrought—those who



labour honestly and cleanly, too much, much too often, alas, with one foot in the grave."

This is perfectly true, and the preacher is warranted in the conclusion, hinted rather than clearly expressed, that the outcome of organised Christian effort is not to decrease the number of the unfit, the helpless, and the undeserving, but to add to their quantity. The sober, industrious, honest man is of no particular value to those Christian organisations that live on their much-advertised slum work, or enlist sympathy by a spectacular display of converted cases. It is the drunkard or the burglar, gloating over his past misdeeds before a thoughtless public, who is of value; the better man must wait until he joins the ranks of the fallen men before he can hope for active expressions of help or sympathy.

Christianity has indeed made for the survival of the unfit, not only in a material sense, but, worse still, in a mental sense. Just as in the one direction its morbid devotion to saving the lost has led to an almost exclusive attention to rescuing a few doubtful specimens from the army of the physically ruined, while completely ignoring the conditions that produce a continuous stream of recruits to this same army, so in another direction its effort has been to breed a lower mental type and put every possible obstacle to man living a clean, healthy, mental existence. Christians have written hundreds of volumes, full of more or less truthful records of their martyrs, but their dwelling upon these records has never had the effect of teaching them to value conscientious convictions when held by others, nor to encourage independence of thinking amongst themselves. There is not in the whole of Christendom a single church that really loves an independent thinker. Conditions are such that nowadays many of the churches are bound to tolerate some degree of independent thinking, and few of them dare to be openly hostile to such; but the principle of childlike faith is still held up as an ideal, and it is this type of character that receives the real homage of religious organisations.

In Great Britain to-day the worst charge that can be brought against a public man is that he is an Atheist. It is not now said as commonly as it used to be said, that the Atheist is a bad man; the offence is simply that he is not a Christian. True, if he keeps his Atheism to himself, and tacitly connives at the perpetuation of a belief which he believes to be fraught with grave danger to the best interests of his race, his offence may be, to some extent, forgiven. As the churches can no longer forcibly suppress the unbeliever, something is gained if they can force him or bribe him into silence. But if he continues to speak out—that is, if he insists on being honest—public life becomes a practical impossibility. There is hardly a constituency in Britain where an active and militant Freethinker would stand a chance of election for Parliament or for any municipal body. The Christian conscience may put up with a Freethinker who keeps his opinions concerning Christian beliefs to himself; what it will not tolerate is one who declines to sacrifice a shred of his mental independence for the sake of power or popularity. Dissimulation or hypocrisy may be tolerated; it is unflinching honesty that is promptly and severely punished.

Yet it is the Freethinker, more than anyone else, who gives to the public clearest and strongest proofs of his mental honesty. Wrong he may be, but it indicates an almost inconceivable degree of stupidity to argue that he is

mentally dishonest. A man who professes belief in Christianity, and who appeals for public support, may be honest. No one can be sure, because no one has any means of forming a certain judgment. But the man who braves public prejudice has given the world an unmistakable proof of his genuineness, and the world, were it wise, would not lightly disregard the pledge.

The whole policy of Christianity, carried out by burning, torturing, imprisoning, boycotting and bribing, just on occasion offered, has resulted in placing a tax upon honesty and a premium upon cowardice, hypocrisy, and an unintellectual conformity. Whether this has been aimed at consciously or not, matters little. The result is the same. And by striving to secure conformity in religious belief it has helped to demoralise the whole of our life. The figure of the mind, as being split up into a number of water-tight compartments, is quite misleading. The brain functions as a whole, and if the qualities of courage and honesty are discouraged in one direction, they are more or less discouraged in all. People who are not encouraged to be honest and independent in religion will not be likely to make any conspicuous display of these qualities in politics or in social life. Mankind in the average will be honest as they will be anything else—if the difficulties in the way are not too formidable. And if we would develop an intellectually honest people, and so pave the way for all forms of honesty, must be done by reducing to impotence a religion that has always treated mental independence as the greatest of crimes.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## SEX RELATIONS IN SAVAGE SOCIETIES

THE late Ernest Crawley dedicated his major work, "The Mystic Rose," to the eminent author of "The Golden Bough" in gratitude and admiration. But when about to undertake the preparation of a second revised edition, he suddenly died, when at the zenith of his mental powers. Thus, Theodore Besterman undertook the task of revision and added extensive evidence and illustrations to the original one volume edition, which was now extended to two.

Whatever weight is to be attached to our author's conclusions concerning the fundamental causes of the remarkable customs he records, his painstaking collection of savage observances and beliefs constitutes an invaluable contribution to anthropological science.

Crawley contended that among lowly peoples, there exists a persistent sense of mystery where sex is concerned. "Woman," he avers, "is one of the last things to be understood by man. Though the complement of man and his partner in health and sickness, poverty and wealth, woman is different from man, and this difference has had the same religious results as have attended other things that man does not understand. The same thing is true of woman's attitude to man." If, when in love, the two sexes are attracted, in normal life segregation and antipathy more or less prevail.

Separation of the sexes is certainly very pronounced among savages. No female is ever allowed to enter the dwelling of a New Zealand chief. In Fiji, it is not deemed decent for a husband to pass the night with his spouse, and sexual relations take place in a secluded part of the forest. In many other regions men are seldom seen in the company of women. If a woman inadvertently passes over him when asleep, the Australian native is seriously alarmed. Howitt notes that "The Kurnai of south-eastern Victoria have separate camps for



men and women." And in New South Wales the aborigines have a special bachelors' encampment, while the Arunta tribes allow no woman to approach the men's camping ground.

In New Guinea, the women sleep apart from their male relatives and spouses, and the men converse and eat their meals in a reception place where no female is permitted to enter. The segregation of the sexes is most pronounced in New Britain, while it is thought insufferable if a Melanesian chief were to enter a house where women were above his head. To avoid the indignity of having women above one's head, Bastian assures us that in Burma "the houses are never built more than one storey." In the Pelew Islands, in Ceram and in Bali, similar customs occur, while in Siam it is "unlucky to pass under a woman's clothes hung out to dry." At Seoul in Korea, a bell was rung twice daily to announce that at certain hours women only were to appear in public and men who disregarded this rule were, until recent decades, severely punished. With the Zulus, men and women seldom associated, while among the East African Bereans "man and wife seldom shared a bed, the reason they give being that if they sleep together the breath of the wife will make the husband weak." At Kaffa, also in East Africa, a public promenade is for male use only, and any woman who trespasses is subjected to three years' imprisonment.

In primitive communities, women are not invariably the downtrodden slaves they were once thought to be. When ill-used by her spouse, the Kafir wife can seek asylum with her father until her husband atones for his ill deeds. And we are asked, "would many European husbands like to be subjected to the usual discipline on such occasions? He is instantly surrounded by the women of the place, who cover him at once with reproaches and blows. Their nails and fists may be used with impunity, for it is the day of female vengeance, and the belaboured delinquent is not allowed to resist. He is not permitted to see his wife, but is sent home with an intimation of what cattle are expected of him, which he must send before he can demand his wife again."

The Kunama wives possess a protector who takes note of a husband's conduct and fines him for any misdemeanour. Among the Beni-Amer people, the women exercise considerable authority and, when a wife complains, neighbouring women intervene. Moreover, as Crawley comments: "It goes without saying that the husband is always in the wrong." The women openly express their scorn for the opposite sex and it is deemed disgusting if a wife shows affection for her husband.

That savage women are not usually submissive may be shown by many examples. Californian Indians have vainly striven to keep their squaws in order. Some Californian tribes formed a secret society whose dramatic performances were designed to overawe the women. "The chief character, disguised as a devil, charges about among the assembled squaws." Other Indians employ dances for the purpose of promoting female obedience to male authority and the natives of Fiji celebrate the day when they overthrew petticoat government, and also deprived women of the secrets of sorcery.

Innumerable are the devices of uncivilised stocks to reduce women to submission to their lords' commands. Still, the women themselves adopt defensive measures, proclaim their grievances and plan reprisals. In some African tribes combinations of this character are much dreaded by the men.

Women are apt to worship and adore female totemic divinities, while men usually supplicate masculine deities. The animal totem of the male natives of south-west Victoria is the bat, which is sedulously protected by the men. The fern owl is sacred to the women and they shield it from injury. We learn that "If a man kills one, they are as much enraged as if it was one of their own children and will strike him with their long poles." In New South Wales again, the men revere the bat, and if a woman killed one, there was pandemonium and women were wounded. On the other hand, when the bird

sacred to the women was injured by men, they were fiercely attacked by the females. Where the emu-wren was the men's sex totem and a quarrel occurred, the women "would kill an emu-wren to spite the men. When they returned to camp with the dead animal, the men attacked them and a fierce fight was the result."

More frequently than otherwise, native women are excluded from sacred services or only admitted as a favour. This ancient custom, as Crawley notes, lingers in an attenuated form to the present day in Europe itself. This is shown by the separation of the sexes during divine service "in many Roman Catholic churches [and in all Jewish Synagogues, except those of the recently inaugurated 'Liberal' movement]. The Arabs of Mecca will not allow women instruction because 'it would bring them too near their masters.' According to some theologians of Islam, they have no place in Paradise. If a Hindu woman touches an image, its divinity is thereby destroyed, and it must be thrown away."

Furthermore, in the Sandwich Islands women were excluded from worship and even their touch polluted offerings to the gods, while in the Marquesas Islands, women suffer death if they intrude on the sacred grounds where festivals take place. In other islands where dogs are sometimes lodged in the temples, women are never admitted at any time. Indeed, in many parts of the savage world, women are firmly excluded from any participation in religious ceremonies, while even in the dances and festivals the sexes are divided.

There is also a sexual restriction of occupation. Men who brave native custom or tradition and undertake the tasks assigned to women are scorned as effeminate. All marketing in Nicaragua was confined to females, and a man who entered the market or even watched the proceedings became liable to a beating. In British Guiana, where culinary matters are the women's province, at a time of emergency men who reluctantly consented to bake bread were derided and jeered at as old cronies.

In New Caledonia all manual labour is performed by women, as a man loses caste if he stoops to drudgery. Male occupations in most lower cultures are fishing, hunting, and warfare. In many primitive tribes, continence must be strictly observed before the warrior or hunter embarks on his expedition. Thus, as Besterman observes with reference to a passage in the first book of Samuel, "the Israelite warrior was not only required to abstain from women, but he was obliged to purify himself before returning to the camp if he had so much as a nocturnal emission. The practice persisted among the Arabs, and was not obsolete in the second century of Islam."

In many savage and barbaric communities, similar customs still prevail, while the dangers that attend sexual intercourse, menstruation and kindred physiological functions are grotesquely exaggerated and misunderstood.

T. F. PALMER.

## MARIA'S ABSOLUTION

### I.

ONE fine spring evening, children were playing on the stretch of waste land at the back of a row of newly-built houses, whose strips of gardens ended at the yet unused ground.

To the fence of one house came a woman, walking quickly. She stood for a moment scanning the groups and scattered youngsters, then raised her voice high and shrill, but carrying far in a long drawn out cry of "Maria! Come here. Come at once. Now!"

The message was repeated, shouted by boys and squealed or shrieked by girls in the form of "Ria! Yer mom wants yeh!"

It reached the ears of a tall thin child who was turning a skipping rope on a clear patch of the waste land. She dropped



her end of the rope and ran, her pale serious face showing increasing anxiety as she dashed round the end of the houses and along the front of them to get to the gate of the one where she lived.

"She's going to cop it," said the girl who took the vacated end of the skipping rope, and laughed. She was a newcomer to the district.

"Naow, she won't," explained somewhat superiorly a girl who lived close by the Laffans. "S'funny, but her mom never hits her."

"All the same, she ran like a scared cat when she heard her mom calling her."

"Well, I'm telling you. Her mother never touches her, but sends her along to Saint Ninian's Church to confess her sins and have 'em forgiven."

"Then what's she afraid of? God—or that the devil'll get her?"

"The priest," said another girl with a grin, quoting her parents' opinion.

Skipping was resumed by these girls, whose normal experience of parental justice was the summary one of an immediate cuff or thump, smack or slap.

Maria Laffan ran so fast she was breathless when she faced her mother in the living-room, able only to gasp out "Yes, mother."

Her face indicated a sense of guilt. Not that she was aware of having done anything wrong, but so often was her mother's strident insistent call for her followed by accusation of some offence, usually trivial, though exaggerated by the woman and couched in language of sweeping denunciation, that Maria was always prepared to hear of some misdemeanor, becoming conscious of wrong-doing before hearing stated what it was.

Relationship of mother and daughter was obvious; both lean and angular, hair dark and straight, faces narrow and strained, the child a little timid, the woman not exactly angry, but more possessively domineering, as if the girl existed only as the instrument of her will.

Slightly querulous, she demanded "Why didn't you wash up before you went out to play?"

"I thought I'd wait and do your tea-things along with mine."

"I don't believe you. That's just an excuse. You thought I'd do the lot while you were out playing and enjoying yourself while I've been hard at work to keep you. I just haven't done them. You'll wash up them all. Before that—"

As the child opened her mouth in protest or further explanation, Mrs. Laffan prevented her speaking by thrusting forward an admonitory finger at the end of her outstretched arm and continuing faster in heightened tones, "You'll go straight now to Saint Ninian's Church and tell Our Mother what a naughty girl you've been and ask her forgiveness. Then come back good and do your work."

## II.

Slowly Maria turned and walked out of the house. That was the usual end when her mother charged her with any fault, as it had been since she was a tiny child. At first her mother had taken her, now she had to go alone, as she did once a week to confess to the priest of Saint Ninian's Church.

This discipline, this method of controlling her, marked out Maria Laffan as different from other children, and she was growing to resent it. Every day she had to go a long way past the big new local Council School to attend a small Roman Catholic School in an old dingy building.

So Maria walked slowly along the street revolving in her mind the different treatment she received from what other children did. Not that her mother was cruel, not excessively severe, perhaps not so strict as some mothers, yet she was oppressive in a form which her daughter felt to be burdensome compared with the parental attitude toward most children.

Because they talked freely among themselves of their elders, not hesitating to recount details of what was done to them by

adults and older brothers and sisters. Now Maria found herself summarising the penalties suffered by girls she played with when they transgressed parental standards and commands. Generally the punishments were prompt and swift, painful while they lasted, but short and leaving no sore memories. In some cases, the recipients were amused when reciting them. In almost proud, as one girl who declared, "Our mom gave me a good hiding last night."

In no such event was there any ill-feeling lingering in the child's consciousness; at least none indicated so. Some had the experience of being laid down across their mother's knees or bent forward when they were naked after undressing at night and spanked. A slap on the bare arm or leg was common, temptingly easy with the short sleeveless frocks they wore. Sending to bed early and various deprivations, as of pocket money, toys, sweets or a meal occurred, but all seemed incidental to the children's lives, casual, intimate and private, and soon ended.

Whereas with herself her offences were made a parade and ceremonial, magnified into sins. She wanted an end of that.

Entering the church, redolent with an odour suggestive of death, Maria Laffan hesitated a moment, accustoming her eyes to the gloom after the spring evening sunshine she had just left. Then she walked up the middle passage and stood again at the chancel steps. No one but herself seemed to be in the building. Sure of that, the girl turned and went to the corner reserved for children. Instead of kneeling bowed and penitent to murmur a recital of her wickedness as she so often had done in the past, Maria stood erect, staring into the imaged Virgin's countenance.

She spoke aloud, in her eagerness almost shouted "You silly looking creature! You're only a stuffed doll with a painted stupid face. I'm not afraid of you any more."

The desire to hurl the Mother Mary from her pedestal was so strong that Maria had to clasp her hands behind her back, tightly intertwining the fingers to keep from such violent action. What a grand crash the nearly lifesize figure would make among the smaller representations of the child Jesus and other statuettes!

Yet the risk of detection and the awful consequences to herself made the act too drastic to be dared, delightful as the gesture of liberation would have been.

So, contenting herself by poking out her tongue as far as she could protrude it, Maria swung round with a laugh and marched out of the Church, her head held high. Now the sunshine seemed brighter, the evening pleasanter as she walked quickly back home, her features indicating the resolute self-possessed satisfaction she felt with this new-found freedom.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

## THE MYSTERY OF DREAMS

It is said that dreams are a state of consciousness during sleep which primitive man thought would enable him to see into the future. This belief has not been supported by the history of dreams.

The internal organs, are not under the control of the sleeper. Only a small part of a dream is intelligent. Suddenly the dream becomes fantastic, and strange to relate, the dreamer is not conscious of his abnormal and grotesque behaviour. If he were why should he not see the folly of his actions?

What transpires is this. While asleep, we find that several sounds and sights are conveyed to the brain which it is incapable of conveying to the normal channels. It would be interesting to know if a photo-micrograph could be taken of the blood stream of a dreamer. Then perhaps we should be able to understand the biological and physical meaning of dreams. In any case, we believe that this phenomenon of the stupidity of the actions of the sleeper is due more or less to the amount of blood flowing



to the brain. The neuro-cerebral apparatus is responsible for our psychic state of sleep. During this sleep the emotions seem to be too fatigued to repeat themselves or carry on rational thinking or have a rational outlook on the surroundings of the dreamer.

True enough flashes of intelligence may appear in a dream, but only for a brief space. Thereafter, the dream goes off the line of rational behaviour though the subject is not conscious of acting in any abnormal way. Certainly when sleeping he has no control over his reason and intelligence. To take a special case, when we dream of the dead, we do not remember that they are no more. What is the cause of this profound mystery? I have never heard the subject discussed by any of the psychological experts who specialise in dreams. To my mind this is the arch mystery of dreams. I have never come across a person who dreamed about the dead and still remembered that they were dead. Personally I have often dreamed of persons who have been dead for years, but I have consistently failed to realise in my dreams that they were gone. Recently I dreamed of a man who was dead these 30 years. I spoke to him and he was well, and only when I awoke was his death known to me. What is the cause of this mystery? Evidently no one can tell. I venture the opinion that dreaming of the dead is the main reason why primitive man believed in a future life. But the mystery is when dreaming of the dead the dreamer does not remember that dead person is no more. What is the cause of this mystery?

Dr. N. MORRISON, F.Z.S. (Scot.).

### ACCORDING TO ST. JOAD

ALAS, the idol of Bloomsbury is no more! Time was, when our short-haired young women and long-haired young men worshipped devoutly at the shrine of one Professor Joad, Doctor of Philosophy and Social Rebel. Goggle-eyed adolescents devoured his books greedily and sat entranced through his lectures—for here was a true Philistine, caring nought for the orthodox and the conventional; a Plato re-born.

But list! Is it the weeping and wailing and gnashing of plastic dentures that we hear—or is it a briefer and less phonious sound? For, lo and behold, the idol has now toppled heavily from its pedestal. Can it be that this Colossus of Learning has become top-heavy—or merely a trifle muzzy?

Anyway, on the eighteenth of January as ever was and without so much as a blush on his cherubic countenance, the good doctor pronounced himself a simple, honest-to-goodness Christian. We read the news ourselves in the "Sunday Dispatch." Said he: "I can believe in God as an active person who created me for certain purposes, who loves me and who is merciful to my sins, who will help me when I am in trouble if I pray to Him and with whom, therefore, I can get in touch."

Such a Confession of Faith is surely worthy of a place in the Common Book of Prayer.

My dear friends, there can be no doubt whatever about Dr. Joad's belief *this* time. No dodging, no dithering. No cheeky parrow-hopping first this side of the wall and then the other. Does this mean that the crumbs have been discovered on one side only? That would make quite good sense wouldn't it? Or would it depend on what we mean by "good sense"?

Although we are unable to cry our eyes out, there will, on the other hand, be great rejoicing in the sheep-fold now that he is lodged safely and snugly inside. A sinner brought to repentance is always so comforting to the Christian mind.

In view of the Doctor's close association with the B.B.C. and "Sunday Dispatch," both highly respectable Christian institutions, we are able to appreciate the difficulty of maintaining his Agnostic outlook; and as both Rationalists and

Christians have long been participating in a tug-of-war with the poor Professor acting as the slightly frayed rope—obviously something had to give!

So we now know that God is a person who loves Dr. Joad; that he and God can get in touch with each other; and that God will forgive him his sins—so long as he keeps on praying! Well, well, every savage prays to his own little god for exactly the same reason—except that when *his* god happens to let him down he does have the good sense to throw it away and carve himself another.

There is, however, just one question we would like to ask the Professor. If, as he states, there must have been a creative mind *before* the universe to create it—then *how* was that creative mind created? Assuming that he can only fall back on the old conjecture that God did not have to be created, then surely, as a logician, he must also concede that the universe did not have to be created either. His argument simply boils down to the primitive superstitious belief that what cannot be explained by Reason must be attributed to some supernatural agency. In short, Dr. Joad is content to believe in all the ghosts and goblins and mystical Unseens of our ignorant ancestors.

If the educated philosophic mind cannot rise above the level of the uncivilised savage mind then, it seems, there is no more to be said; except that we need waste no more time reading books and attending lectures by eminent philosophers.

If, owing to our limited intelligence, we are as yet unable to establish a First Cause and if we cannot accept existence *without* a First Cause, then why not call the whole thing a Mystery—and leave it at that? Why must we try to explain what is inexplicable by inventing some imaginary unseen but all-powerful God? Can Dr. Joad produce any sort of evidence to substantiate the existence of such a being? If he can, then he should do so at once, especially as he has hitherto taken so much trouble to refute the possibility of such a person. Where Archbishops fear to tread perhaps now the learned Professor will rush in and oblige us, one and all. We can hardly wait.

The jovial Joad once chose to goad  
The Christians, good and hearty;  
But now at last, with honours passed,  
He's joined the Godite Party.  
Filled full of Love from up above—  
He sure has pulled a fast one—  
So now we look for his next book  
To contradict the last one!  
To reach his goal, to find his soul—  
How jolly and exciting!  
To watch and pray—for higher pay—  
Else what's the use of writing?  
With sins confessed, whitewashed and blessed,  
And crown so neatly fitting;  
The new St. Joad has found The Road—  
*St. Peter—drop your knitting!*

W. H. WOOD.

### THE LORD'S DAY

Of all the places of England and Wales that I have travelled to, this village of Barnsley doth most strictly observe the Lord's Day, or Sunday, for little children are not permitted to walk or play; and two women who had been at church both before and after Noone, did but walk into the fields for their recreation, and they were put to their choice either to pay sixpence apiece (for prophane walking) or to be laid one hour in the stocks; and the pevish, willfull women (though they were well able enough to pay) to save their money and jest out the matter, lay both by the heels merrily one hour.—"A Short Relation of a Long Journey." John Taylor, 1580-1653.



## ACID DROPS

The Rev. Mr. Robinson, Baptist, says that "what is done in this world is that men and women are defying God." That seems very curious, because people do not defy God, but they may forget to praise God, etc. What is really happening is that there is a growing feeling that gods are mere fancies, and that man can get more for himself and his fellows. It is all very well for clergymen, who are, so to speak, travellers to get worshippers, but look at the facts. It is open to all to see that everything best for life comes from man and not from God. Consider how many millions of people died until the skill of man found a cure for this or that disease. Science knows no help from gods, it does know how the presumed powers of gods held back the science to which we owe so much. The Rev. Mr. Robinson has not got the correct view of things. He says that men and women are defying God. Nothing of the sort. Man, nowadays, is not defying God. He is ignoring him. Man is learning to know himself. And when that is accomplished there is little ground for gods. Man to-day is beginning to understand nature and life, and he has neither room nor time to worship a vacuum.

The Rev. Mr. Robinson appears to be quite serious as to the need for doing something that will make life better than it is. We should have agreed with him in this, but even to-day people are not clear how to obtain peace. No people were ever made better by war, there are degrees of badness, and that is as far as one may get. The retention of Gods—for home or for foreign use—will never give the world lasting peace. The retention of gods by civilised people might be excused on the plea of not knowing better. Two things offer hope for man: the desire to know and the capacity and courage to speak. Of these two, courage is most needed. For it is idle to pretend that nowadays the profession of religion exists with a large body of able and educated men and women. They can only do their best work by throwing overboard a religious profession that is often coined by rogues and used by fools.

The weakening of religion must be very great when leading Churchmen and others have joined together to strengthen the statement of the weakness of Christianity to-day. The only Church that claims the continuous increase of "customers" is the Catholic Church, which claims to have an increasing number of members—or slaves—and with them there is no falling-off. Once a Roman Catholic, always a Roman Catholic. We know some men and women who are now members of the N.S.S., but they are still in the Roman Church. Only "excommunication" can get them out of the Catholic group. And excommunication often ended with either burning alive or lengthy imprisonment. That is what is understood by Roman Catholic honesty. Protestants have their own plans, but they do get nearer the truth than the Roman Catholic.

There is a general agreement on the fact that there is a steady decline in the number of Christians in the different religious bodies. Some of the leaders do what they can to evade the facts, others have enough courage and honesty to state the facts as they really are. In this matter the Methodists take first place. For example. The Rev. James Mackay, writing in the "Christian World", says:—

"For many years the Churches in this country have been fighting a losing battle. They still exercise a great influence in our society, far greater than many people realise, but their influence and their numbers are dwindling. The Archbishops' Report estimates that only between ten and fifteen per cent. of our population is closely linked with a place of worship. . . . Whatever the actual percentage is, we all know that it is dangerously low, and it seems that unless something can be done it will grow rapidly worse. There is a danger level for every congregation."

Now it is certain that what the Methodist leader says honestly, other bodies are afraid to say. The fact is that Christianity, or even religion as a whole, has been losing strength with increasing rapidity. Every leader of religion knows it. But only one here and there will give the world a straightforward statement of the

situation. We come back to the old tale: "You may fool some of the people for ever; but you must not count on fooling all the people for ever."

It is well known that the Roman Church is trying to get some kind of control over the film business. It has made some kind of hold, and it will be noticed that while an ordinary picture of a parson on the stage may look rather foolish, the Catholic priest is nearly always shown as decent and filled with kindness and wisdom. We are not suggesting that we are likely to see a full Roman Catholic set of pictures, and nothing else, but we do suggest to those interested to note the quality of the Roman Catholic priest on the stage and the foolish airs of an ordinary stage clergyman.

The "Daily Mail" says that the Roman Church will be more than careful in consenting to marriages than they have been. We do not know how the Roman priests will manage, but we fancy that if the Church gets too much in the way there will certainly be plenty of trouble. In any case, no Church of any kind in England can dictate who shall or shall not determine a marriage. In England there is only one legal marriage, and that is the non-religious one determined by the Secular State.

There was a time when the English Clergy were able to conduct a marriage. But that led to so many scandals on the part of the clergy that religious marriages were wiped out, and there was created the existing rule under which the appointed Secular official, in a Secular building, conducts the only real marriage in England. Even the King and Queen are compelled to follow the law. Of course, the Clergy try as much as possible to hide the truth, but the plain fact remains. Even the marriage ring as lost its power. It is unnecessary.

Once upon a time it was a common thing to find Christians of quality standing with leading Freethinkers in constant arranged discussions. After a time, however, the shrewder leaders of the Christians began to realise that while the Freethinkers were on the attack, Christians were on the retreat. So debates with Atheists were dropped with the better minded believers. Only now and again does one find a Christian of note ready to fight on the platform. Now we see in the "Shipley Times" that there is a champion who is throwing out "A challenge to Secularists to show how Secularism arose in the 19th century, when the people were living in extreme poverty." This champion adds that the people who tried to better life were not Atheists.

We do not know anything of this new Christian Champion, but he is woefully out of line. In the first place, "Secularism" did not rise in the 19th century. As a matter of historic truth, "Secularism" was introduced by the Christian Church and appeared in the earlier Christian centuries. It was of Christian, not of Freethinking origin. As to the frightful state of men, women and children in the early days of the Machine Age, we offer, with all good will, that he should read the five volumes written by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, and see the extent to which Secularists worked for a better life, and mark out the proportion of Freethinkers who worked to abolish the terrible slavery that was generally supported by good Christians. Of course, there were many Christians who also did good work, but the bulk, certainly the spirit, came from Freethinkers. Definitely created Freethinking bodies of people actually grew from this centre.

We have seen many ridiculous things brought before the people but the most stupid we have come across appeared in a reprint from the U.S.A. It appears there is in the U.S.A. a "Women's Research Guild", and its latest work is to secure the names of women who can be described as the "most wholesome women of 1947." So ridiculous a selection would not have been noticed but the name of our Princess Elizabeth is among the six women, and we take it that she had nothing to do with her inclusion. We are only impressed by the stupidity and narrow-minded character of the members of the "Women's Research Guild." They do not realise that "wholesome" women can be found by the million. They can be found as plentiful among the poor, the very poor, as among the wealthy and the great.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

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## SUGAR PLUMS

After many attacks from the Press, and after many questions in the House of Commons, the B.B.C. arranged—not a direct attack on religion, but a statement from three speakers, who were allowed to say they were not Godists, but they were not permitted to give the reasons why they believed a God to be a myth. Professor Haldane did say he was warned that he must not make any attacks on religion and it may be that other people were warned in the same way. How anyone can justify himself without making an attack on belief in gods, and angels and a religious heaven, is more than we can see. But before this piece of humbug occurred we may safely assume that the speakers were cautioned, directly or indirectly, how they were to behave. What we should like to know is how a man can justify his non-belief of all sorts of religion without making a direct attack on all religion, it is more than we can understand; and for Atheists of the first class quality to submit quietly to this treatment is surprising. We sincerely hope that Freethinkers—real Freethinkers—will insist on fair and honest dealing.

But the twelve speeches are now printed—with the comments made by Professor Haldane on his confession that he was not to make any direct attack on Christianity. Of course, he could have refused to speak on such conditions, but there is such a thing as advertisement. The booklet is issued by The Porcupine Press, price 3s. 6d.

While talking about the Roman Church we may note another book about children and the Church. One of the books for children it publishes has the pretty title, "Hell Open to Christians." It is one of the most brutal things we have ever seen. It used to be sold in England, and, some years ago, we gave away many copies. Some of the papers noted its character, and now they are no longer sold in England. But it is still being sold in Ireland. There the R.C.s are more at home, and this brutal booklet for children can be openly sold. We may give some extracts from it.

We are pleased to report that the Bebington Library Committee have approved the acceptance of the "Freethinker," and we can add yet another to the long list of libraries that display our journal in the reading rooms. We congratulate Bebington Freethinkers on their interest and hope the example will be followed by others all over the country. We suggest that Freethinkers urge their library committees to include the "Freethinker" in their list of periodicals.

Mr. F. A. Ridley will speak on "The Roman Catholic Church in Politics," for the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. today (Sunday) in The Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, at 7 p.m. The subject is one that Mr. Ridley can handle with authority and as a large number of people do not realise the part Rome is playing in world politics, this opportunity for information should not be missed. Admission is free, with some reserved seats at 1s. each.

Our General Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, is having a busy week. He will attend the County Court in Bradford on Thursday, 11th inst., in connection with the court case down for hearing on that date. On the Sunday afternoon he will lecture for the Halifax Branch N.S.S. in the Boar's Head Hotel, and in the evening he will speak for the Bradford Branch N.S.S. in the Mechanics' Institute. On Monday evening in the Grand Hotel, Sheffield, he will speak for the local N.S.S. Branch. Further details appear in the Lecture Notices column of this issue.

## THE QUEER CASE OF D. D. HOME

WHATEVER else people may think of Daniel Dunglass Home, there can be no doubt that he was the most famous of all mediums. The number of books and articles about him must run into hundreds, if not thousands. In Dr. E. J. Dingwall's "Some Human Oddities," he gives no fewer than 66 authors and many articles as his sources for discussing the "phenomena" of Home, and the discussion is by no means ended.

Two famous contemporary writers, Dickens and Browning, disliked Home immensely, and they never disguised that dislike. What Dickens thought about him will be found in his article, "The Martyr Medium," reprinted from "All the Year Round," in his "Miscellaneous Papers." Dickens had no patience whatever with Spiritualism—a fact which sadly disturbed the late Mr. Cumming Walters who was a devoted Dickensian—and who may well be discussing the problem now with both the shades of Dickens and Home in his rapturous Summerland. The review of Home's "Incidents in My Life," gave Dickens the opportunity of a devastating attack on a man whom he considered a charlatan, a humbug, and a fraud.

It is interesting also to recall that Charles Bradlaugh sat with Home—but nothing happened. The spirits were powerless in the face of such a convinced unbeliever—or for other reasons. Home was then unable to do any automatic writing, or perform any of his favourite elongations or levitations, or even play, through spirit influence, his favourite music box.

All the same it must be confessed that many other sitters declared themselves witnesses of the most astounding phenomena, and it is a fact that if what they described really took place, then there can be no doubt about "survival." But anyone who has studied the methods of famous conjurers, and knows the easy way in which the audience can be fooled, will certainly take little notice of Home's witnesses. Mrs. Browning, for example—who, knowing the facts, could trust her judgment? Who could imagine people like William Howitt or Samuel Carter Hall, as sharp-eyed investigators?

Home fattened on many of these famous people—famous no doubt for their excellent writings, but easily the most credulous and the most easily bamboozled victims of a brilliant charlatan. Right throughout the ages one meets with brilliant people, great scientists, writers, and artists, who are ready to throw over every scrap of intellectual sanity once they become bitten by some humbug. It was quite impossible to argue with Sir A. Conan Doyle, or Sir Oliver Lodge, or Sir William Crookes, once each of them had "fallen" to the wiles of spiritualism. Even Mme. Blavatsky managed to rope in a number of genuine "intellectuals"—like G. S. R. Mead, for example.

The father of Bertrand Russell, Viscount Amberley—a Freethinker—(quoted by Dr. Dingwall) wrote in 1874, something



which "might well have been written by any student of the physical phenomena today." He wrote, "Spiritual manifestations are, in fact, like wills-of-the-wisp which elude the pursuer, the more provokingly the more he chases them. He is always told that the most marvellous happened yesterday, or in another room, or under other conditions, or with a circle differently composed, or else the medium was in better health; but to-day in this room, under these conditions, with this circle, they persistently refuse to show themselves."

Not all people then were taken in by Home. Dr. Dingwall mentions Mrs. Home's book, "The Gift of D. D. Home," in which is a letter from a Mrs. Gambier exhibiting "her faith in, and friendship for, the medium." Home used to visit this lady, and hold sittings converting most of the household. However, one of Mrs. Gambier's sons appears to have had a mind of his own for he claimed that "no greater charlatan than D. D. Home ever breathed." He added that the conditions at the sittings were, "ridiculous, transparent fraud, resting merely on Home's word, a hopeless rotten security."

The greatest event in Home's career, or perhaps I ought to say the incident which has caused the most discussion, was his levitation in the presence of a number of members of the aristocracy. Some of us, who have seen many noble lords, and even talked to them, are not too unduly impressed with their superiority over the vulgar or common herd; but there is no doubt that the testimony of Home's aerial flight coming from Lord Dunraven, will, with some people, carry more weight than if the witness had been plain George Juggins.

Be that as it may, Lord Dunraven published an account of what happened in the "Weekly Dispatch," for March 21, 1920, nearly 52 years after it happened (1868), copying out the account he then wrote to his father the same evening as the levitation. Present were as well, the Master of Lyndsay and a Mr. Wynne.

The usual account is that from a room on the third floor of No. 15 Ashley Place, the three gentlemen heard Home throw up a window in the next room, obviously get out, and fly into the room in which they were sitting, for he opened the window and came in. When Lord Dunraven (he was then Lord Adare) saw the first window was open only about a foot, he said to Home that he could not understand how he managed to squeeze through it. Home then proceeded to show how it was done: "He told me," says Lord Dunraven, "to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space, head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again, feet foremost, and we returned to the other room. It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp or rest upon the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in." Most sceptics have always wondered how Lord Dunraven could see anything at all since "it was so dark."

The first difficulty is that Dr. Dingwall declares that in one account written by Lord Dunraven, he says the incident took place on the first floor and not on the third. But in the "Weekly Dispatch" article written in 1920, Lord Dunraven distinctly says it was on the third floor, and he was quoting his own letter to his father. This discrepancy is duly noted by Dr. Dingwall. It is of vital importance, as is the fact that Dr. Dingwall could not "discover any windows (in 15, Ashley Place) like those described by Lord Dunraven." But there is one more point not noticed by Dr. Dingwall—and that is what Lord Dunraven himself said in his "Weekly Dispatch" article. "Such are the facts as narrated at the time," he says. "I make no comment except this. Rigorously speaking, it is incorrect to say, as I think has been said, that we saw Mr. Home wafted from one window to the other." It really is a pity that the noble lord did not make any comment, for if none of the "witnesses" saw the event alleged to have taken place, of what earthly value is their testimony? No one, it appears, saw Home fly out of a window in one room into another window in another

room 90 odd feet above the ground. The one noble aristocrat whose testimony has always been declared absolutely authentic, appears to have insisted that the levitation took place on a third floor in one account and on the first floor in another account; and a modern investigator can find no windows in the house which tally with those described by the eminent lord. And to cap all, we are now told that "rigorously speaking," he never saw the levitation, nor did the other two "witnesses."

One would think that, with this complete exposure, the myth of Home's most considerable spiritualistic feat would join the fairy tales in the "Arabian Nights"—but, alas, that would be expecting too much. Dr. Dingwall calls it still "one of the most troublesome mysteries in the life of D. D. Home" when, surely it is no longer a mystery; and no doubt all our enthusiastic spiritualists will still continue to quote Home as the most authentic proof of levitation known; and being entirely due to spirits, is therefore a knock-out proof of survival.

Whether Dr. Dingwall really believes in Home or not I cannot discover, for he refuses to answer his own question—"Had he in fact powers the nature of which we know little or nothing?" The reader must, as in so many other things, decide for himself.

H. CUTNER.

## THE POSITION OF CULTURE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE latest events in Prague should serve to increase our interest in a speech delivered by Dr. Theodor Bartosek, President of the Freethought League of Czechoslovakia. The following is a digest from "Nová Skutečnost" (New Reality) the Czech Freethinker Monthly.

During the International Freethinker Congress in Rome, in 1904, it was for the first time that we had put forward our claims; since then, the cultural position in our country has rather improved. Aristocratic and propertied prerogatives have been abolished, and the forthcoming Constitution will safeguard that legally, we Atheists, as a body, are put on an equal footing with the religious congregations. So far, one can still be sent to prison for blasphemy, but earlier this was a perilous crime.

When under the reign of the Habsburgs we set to work, we envied progress in such countries as France and the U.S.A. Nowadays, we have outstepped them by far, for in those countries reaction is waging war on everything new and progressive.

Prior to rebuilding, you are bound to demolish, to remove the dust-heap; that we have done so far, what is wanted now is rehabilitation. Before starting with that part of our task, however, we must think again which are our aims, in the fields of Culture, Morals and Society. Our movement has proved not sufficiently pliable to the change of conditions; we have remained satisfied that people did desert the Churches and declared themselves Atheists; yet, this is merely a start. During the times of persecutions, we acted on the offensive; now, with the progress of Freedom, we have grown too cautious and restrained.

And yet, there is still much to do. Church and State have to be divorced; that ought to have been done after the fall of the Monarchy, and it is deplorable that not even to this day this basic demand has materialised. In this, we are the unique and last Slav country where the Church has not been divorced from the State; we are waiting for a propitious moment, but it must find us prepared.

There is still that paragraph 122, lit: D in our Civic Law, saying that he commits a crime who is spreading heresy. In our democratic People's Republic no prosecutor would be silly enough actually to use this obsolete paragraph, so why not put things right at last? Must the Code still lag behind practice? Education in Secular Moral instead of Scripture-teaching has not yet been introduced, therefore the number of children with



out confession is falling. And, last, not least, the "Dead Hand" — the Church Property — has succeeded in evading nationalisation.

Our enemy has not changed, so why have we? Remember that the Pope of today is Pacelli, the former Papal Nuncio to Berlin, who did his best to put Hitler into power. In this country, the Catholic "People's Party" has remained what it used to be: the refuge of reaction. Still, this party has not been disbanded. There are loyal citizens, it is true, who, although Catholics and even members of the People's Party, suffered under the Hitler occupation. This fact gave rise to the conception that our work was not only unnecessary, but rather harmful for disturbing the civic truce.

However, can there be public peace with the Church? There was a time when the Church had the power to make and unmake kings. Within the modern State it has degraded to the position of a parasite with the social task of keeping the oppressed masses docile and in obedience. It is, I daresay, entirely incompatible with the existence of a People's Republic to go on employing such nefarious services. Not so long ago, in certain Catholic schools of Prague, prayers were said for Tiso, the Slovak arch-Quisling. I know of families who reacted upon this provocation by taking their children from those schools.

The Catholic People's Party accepts into their ranks every scoundrel who does not fit into any other Party of our Republic. To this end, the Catholic Party accepts not only non-Catholics, but even Atheists, provided they are Fascists.

We must not allow ourselves to go slack. A new type of society cannot grow without a new type of Man who cannot be persuaded into existence. Mere propaganda will never result in social changes nor can we wait to derive profit from what our opponents have missed, messed up, or where they have blundered. Sometimes this may result in giving us powers by an electoral majority, but such powers never last long, they cannot be stable unless New Man enters the social stage. He cannot be a product of material struggle. A membership card may be a start, yet this in itself does not mean a change.

According to the last census, 800,000 people in Czechoslovakia declared themselves without any religion. However, not all of them have been organised with us. There is another task of ours. Set to work, therefore, in order to attain true Culture and Social Progress.

PERCY G. ROY.

### GREATEST OR LEAST?

They don't return, those moments spent in tortured thought,  
Content and joy they could have known, but human brain  
Has power to think, and thinking knows of greed and hate,  
Of death, of agonising fears . . . So where's the gain?

It raises mighty cities, this great power of man's,  
Because of it he knows delight that beauty brings,  
He loves, rejoices, hopes, and learns to conquer all  
On earth and in the sea and sky. What are these things?

His greatest joys are such that every creature knows:  
To eat, to mate, to sleep, to feel his body warm—  
In these sensations he rejoiced when time began,  
And they'll survive all things that his great mind can form.

The other creatures eat with undisturbed delight,  
And when they mate their brains have no intrusive guest  
To mar their ecstasy. But sovereign man must have  
His thoughts, and though his senses thrill his mind can't rest.

And so he knows, because of this strange power, a few  
Elusive joys for which he pays with anguished hours  
And pleasures spoil. And he most dearly buys whose  
Mind excels . . . Is man the richer to possess these powers?

F. L. MAYELL.

## THE ETHICS OF PROPAGANDISM

### A Little Story

OLD MAN:—"I will tell you (YOUNG MAN) a little story."

"Once upon a time an Infidel was guest in the house of a Christian widow whose little boy was ill and near to death. The Infidel often watched by the bedside and entertained the boy with talk, and he used these opportunities to satisfy a strong longing of his nature—that desire which is in us all to better other people's condition by having them think as we think. He was successful. But the dying boy, in his last moments, reproached him, and said:—

'I believe, and was happy in it; you have taken my belief away, and my comfort. Now I have nothing left, and I die miserable; for the things which you have told me do not take the place of that which I have lost.'

And the mother, also, reproached the Infidel, and said:—

'My child is for ever lost, and my heart is broken. How could you do this cruel thing? We have done you no harm, but only kindness; we made our house your home, you were welcome to all we had, and this is our reward.'

The heart of the Infidel was filled with remorse for what he had done, and he said:—

'It was wrong—I see it now; but I was only trying to do him good. In my view he was in error; it seemed my duty to teach him the truth.'

Then the mother said:—

'I had taught him all his little life what I believed to be the truth, and in his believing faith both of us were happy. Now he is dead—and lost; and I am miserable. Our faith came down to us through centuries of believing ancestors; what right had you, or anyone, to disturb it? Where was your honour, where was your shame?'

YOUNG MAN:—"He was a miscreant, and deserved death."

O.M.:—"He thought so himself, and said so."

Y.M.:—"Ah—you see, *his conscience was awakened!*"

O.M.:—"Yes—his Self-Disapproval was. It *pained* him to see the mother suffer. He was sorry he had done a thing which brought *him* pain. It did not occur to him to think of the mother when he was misteaching the boy, for he was absorbed in providing *pleasure* for himself then. Providing it by satisfying what he believed to be a call of duty."

Y.M.:—"Call it what you please, it is to me a case of *awakened conscience*. That awakened conscience could never get itself into that species of trouble again. A cure like that is a *permanent cure*."

O.M.:—"Pardon—I had not finished the story. We are creatures of *outside influences*—we originate *nothing* within. Whenever we take a new line of thought and drift into a new line of belief and action, the impulse is always suggested from the outside. Remorse so preyed upon the Infidel that it dissolved his harshness towards the boy's religion and made him come to regard it with tolerance, next with kindness, for the boy's sake and the mother's. Finally he found himself examining it. From that moment his progress in his new trend was steady and rapid. He became a believing Christian. And now his remorse for having robbed the dying boy of his faith and his salvation was bitterer than ever. It gave him no rest, no peace. He must have rest and peace—it is the law of our nature. There seemed but one way to get it; he must devote himself to saving imperilled souls. He became a missionary. He landed in a Pagan country, ill and helpless. A native widow took him into her humble home, and nursed him back to convalescence. Then her young boy was taken hopelessly ill, and the grateful missionary helped her tend him. Here was his first opportunity to repair a part of the wrong done to the other boy by doing a precious service for this one by undermining



his foolish faith in his false gods. He was successful. But the dying boy, in his last moments, reproached him, and said:—

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‘It was wrong—I see it now; but I was only trying to do him good. In my view he was in error; it seemed my duty to teach him the truth.’

Then the mother said:—

‘I had taught him all his little life what I believed to be the truth, and in his believing faith both of us were very happy. Now he is dead—and lost; and I am miserable. Our faith came down to us through centuries of believing ancestors; what right had you, or anyone, to disturb it? Where was your honour, where was your shame?’

The missionary’s anguish of remorse and sense of treachery were as bitter and persecuting and unappeasable, now, as they had been in the former case. The story is finished. What is your comment?’

Y.M.:—“The man’s conscience was a fool! It was morbid. It didn’t know right from wrong.”

O.M.:—“I am not sorry to hear you say that. If you grant that one man’s conscience does not know right from wrong, it is an admission that there are others like it. This single admission pulls down the whole doctrine of infallibility of judgment in consciences. Meantime, there is one thing which I ask you to notice.”

Y.M.:—“What is that?”

O.M.:—“That in both cases, the man’s act gave him no spiritual discomfort, and that he was quite satisfied with it and got pleasure out of it. But afterward, when it resulted in *pain to him*, he was sorry. Sorry it had inflicted pain upon the others, *but for no reason under the sun except that their pain gave him pain*. Our consciences take no notice of pain inflicted upon others until it reaches a point where it gives pain to us. In all cases, without exception, we are absolutely indifferent to another person’s pain until his sufferings make us uncomfortable. Many an Infidel would not have been troubled by that Christian mother’s distress. Don’t you believe that?”

Y.M.:—“Yes. You might almost say it of the *average* Infidel, I think.”

O.M.:—“And many a missionary, sternly fortified by his sense of duty, would not have been troubled by the Pagan mother’s distress—Jesuit missionaries in Canada in the early French times, for instance; see episodes quoted by Parkman.”

Y.M.:—“Well, let us adjourn. Where have we arrived?”

O.M.:—“At this. That we (mankind) have ticketed ourselves with a number of qualities to which we have given misleading names. Love, Hate, Charity, Compassion, Avarice, Benevolence, and so on. I mean we attach misleading meanings to the names. They are all forms of self-contentment, self-gratification, but the names so disguise them that they distract our attention from the fact. Also we have smuggled a word into the dictionary which ought not to be there at all—Self-Sacrifice. It describes a thing which does not exist. But worst of all, we ignore and never mention the Sole Impulse which dictates and compels a man’s every act; the imperious necessity of securing his own approval, in every emergency and at all costs. To it we owe all that we are. It is our breath, our heart, our blood. It is our only spur, our whip, our goad, our only impelling power; we have no other. Without it we should be mere inert

images, corpses; no one would do anything, there would be no progress, the world would stand still. We ought to stand reverently uncovered when the name of that stupendous power is uttered.”

Y.M.:—“I am not convinced.”

O.M.:—“You will be when you think.”

MARK TWAIN, “What is Man?”

## THE DEATH OF INGERSOLL

I HAVE before me a clipping from a Kansas newspaper, dated July 21 (1899), which covers almost three columns, and the date line is New York (presumably from a press association), and the headlines say: “Death claims R. G. Ingersoll.” As this is an on-the-spot account, it should settle for all time the question of the “recanting” of Ingersoll, which has been given so much publicity by the churches in the past.

This clipping was recently found in a volume of Ingersoll’s speeches which has just been presented to The Humanist Society of Seattle. It is in an excellent condition of preservation and is a treasure trove.

Many accounts have been published regarding the details of his death and they have been so varied that his admirers are at a loss as to just what to believe. This account is so intimate and revealing in its details, and written before anyone had a chance to manufacture dramatic and visionary details, that it is almost impossible to question its accuracy. It says:—

“Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll died at his home, Walston-on-Hudson, near Dobbs Ferry, to-day. His death was sudden and unexpected and resulted from the heart disease from which he had suffered since 1896. In that year, during the Republican National Convention, he was taken ill and returned home. He never fully recovered from the attack of heart disease and was under the care of physicians constantly.

“For the last three days, Mr. Ingersoll had not been feeling well. Last night he was in better health and spent a portion of the evening playing billiards with Welston H. Brown, his son-in-law, and C. P. Farrell, his brother-in-law and private secretary. He seemed to be in better health and spirits when he retired than he had been in several days. This morning he arose at the usual hour and joined the family at breakfast. He then said that he had spent a bad night, but felt better. He had been suffering from abdominal pains and tightness about the chest. He did not think his condition at all dangerous. After breakfast, he telephoned to Dr. Smith, his physician, who is at Bell Haven, and told him of his experience during the night. Dr. Smith told him, he said, to continue the use of nitro glycerine and that he would see him during the day.

“Colonel Ingersoll spent the morning swinging in a hammock and sitting on the veranda with the members of his family. He was better and had no pain. At 12-30 he started to go upstairs.

### HIS LAST WORDS

“On reaching the head of the stairs, Colonel Ingersoll turned into his wife’s room. While Colonel and Mrs. Ingersoll were there together they discussed what they would have for luncheon and Colonel Ingersoll said he had better not eat much owing to the trouble with his stomach. He seemed in good spirits then. After talking for a few minutes, Colonel Ingersoll crossed the room and sat down in a rocking chair. He leaned his head on his hand, which rested on the back of the chair. Mrs. Ingersoll asked him how he was feeling and he said, ‘Oh, better.’

“Those were his last words. A second after they were uttered he was dead. The only sign noticed by Mrs. Ingersoll was that the whites of his eyes suddenly showed. There was not even a sigh or a groan as death came. Doctors were hastily called but their verdict was that death had come instantly.”



The vicious claim of the clergy that Ingersoll had recanted from his Agnosticism is once again refuted. Of course, it had been denied and exposed hundreds of times, but that seems to have but little effect on the professional liars. The newer generation of preachers have probably never seen these proofs and think that they are justified in maintaining this scurrilous myth. All Freethinkers who read this should make it a point to show it to at least one preacher or priest, and to warn him that if he ever repeats this lie, that he will be exposed for what he is. Just a mendacious liar.

The balance of the three-column article was given over to a comprehensive outline of Ingersoll's life and work, including the oration at his brother's grave.  
Seattle, U.S.A.

LEE L. DODDS.

### TRIBAL TABOO

YOUR contributor, Mr. Percy G. Roy, in his article, "Wedding Customs and Sexual Taboo," raises one or two controversial points. His assertion that the Savage Horde was endogamous is not established. The strict laws regarding mating between persons closely akin, their extreme hatred of incest and the severe punishment meted out to violators of the common law, down to the present day, testifies to exogamy as having been the general rule of the various tribes throughout the world.

The natives of Australia, for example, consummate their marriage in exogamy. Each tribe is separated into two, three, four or more classes. In some districts marriage is forbidden between those who speak the same dialect. Some tribes prohibit marriage of people who bear the same name. In other cases, where the male belongs to his father's tribe, he cannot mate with any woman of the same tribe. Then again, when the man belongs to the class of his mother he is not allowed to marry a woman of the same class, for the woman of the same class is regarded as his sister. The Bible provides us with evidence of these customs having been in vogue amongst the ancient Hebrews. In Genesis xx, 12 (Abraham marries his father's daughter) it is stated, "And yet indeed she is my sister, she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife."

Mr. Roy loses sight of the fact that, in human affairs, the sexual urge predominates. Most of his claims seem to be resolved into one motive; *economic interests*. Even Karl Marx was forced to admit that the production and reproduction of actual life was the most decisive factor in history.

The suggestion put forward by Mr. Roy that baby girls were exposed to death because they represented an economic burden, is without foundation. In countries where women are considered vested property, the baby girls would prove a benefit. Many tribes in Australia still murder the first born, as they are considered weak and feeble. The old Holy Book comes to the rescue again; see Psalms cxxxvi, 2-10; "O give thanks unto the Lord. . . . To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn." Whether the Israelites ever filled that land is beside the point, the purpose of the above quotation is to show that this practice was also known to them.

The loot of the vanquished woman being the prime desire of the conqueror, it naturally follows that the more peaceful tribes killed their female children, thus rendering themselves less subject to attack. This state of affairs helped to bring about polyandry. In countries where polyandry is the rule the people have been found to be much more happy and fortunate than polygamous or monogamous peoples. Nevertheless, polyandry can prevail only if protected by the murder of the newborn girls, and the midwives can be depended upon to see that the system is maintained. Let's see what the old Holy Book says about it: Aye, here it is, Mark xii, 20-22; "Seven brothers had the same wife and they all died happily ever after."  
Those were the days!

J. HUMPHREY.

### OBITUARY

#### JOSEPH ALEXANDER DIAMOND

We regret to have to announce the death of Mr. Joseph Alexander Diamond, which took place suddenly at Gorbals, Glasgow, in a nursing home on February 28th. His association with the Glasgow Branch dates back many years. His courage and outspokenness on secular affairs in the city were well known and appreciated. At his request, the remains were cremated and a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. Hamilton and Mrs. M. Whitefield. To his family we extend our sympathy, and we know that his memory will live. The N.S.S. has lost a friend.

M.I.W.

### LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

#### LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 16, 7 p.m.: "The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs," Mr. W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., F.R.S.E.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Influence of Sea Power on History," Prof. G. W. KERON, M.A., LL.D.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "The Labour Government—Assets and Liabilities," Mr. J. MOXCK.

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "From Jesus to Atom Bombs," Mr. R. H. ROSETTI (Gen. Sec. N.S.S.).

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Debate—"That Russia is a Force for Peace." Aff.: Mr. HARRY McSHANE, C.P. Neg.: Mr. HORACE HENDERSON.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Boar's Head Hotel, Southgate).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "From Jesus to Atom Bombs," Mr. R. H. ROSETTI.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A lecture. Dr. JOSEPH MITCHELL (League of Coloured Peoples).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "A Plea for the Separation of Church and State," Mr. W. PARRY.

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Pilgrim Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Roman Church in Politics," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The World's Need for Liberalism," Mr. G. McPHERSON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Fizwilliam Room, Grand Hotel, Leopold Street).—Monday, March 15, 7-30 p.m.: "Nature, Man, and God," Mr. R. H. ROSETTI.

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