

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIX.—No. 7

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL  
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### "The Royal Martyr"

UPON January 30, 1649, according to our present method of computing time (not then in vogue). Charles I, of England, Scotland and Ireland, King, and "Defender of the Faith," was beheaded upon a scaffold in Whitehall after judicial sentence by a revolutionary court three days earlier. The reasons for this drastic action were briefly these.

In the temporal field the English people were tired of an absolute Monarchy which had outstayed both its time and social utility, and which strove to preserve itself by violence and intrigue. Whilst in that of religion, the then Protestant people of England asserted their inalienable right of "Private Judgment," even against kings, not to mention the fact that they were not at all certain which "Faith" this royal "Defender of the Faith" intended to defend: Canterbury or Rome!

We recall this now somewhat ancient event for the following reason: The tercentenary of the execution of King Charles I was celebrated last week, and a number of our more conservative historians, or, who pass for such, have used this memorable anniversary "to point the moral and adorn the tale"—particularly the latter. According to the somewhat belated wisdom of these luminaries of learning, King Charles was an excellent and much-wronged monarch, even, a premature democrat who died to save his people—from, presumably, themselves. In short, the legend of the "Royal Martyr," that hoary "tale for the Marines," as the French elegantly phrase it, is once again dished up in the Sunday Press for the edification of all and sundry.

We think it opportune to recall in 1949 the now somewhat remote event which made a contemporary European sensation in 1649. For it is a matter of historical fact, beyond any question, that the forcible overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in the mid-seventeenth century, which was effected and symbolised by the judicial execution of Charles I, laid the foundation of all the popular liberties that we enjoy to-day and without the continued existence of which Freethought itself would be a stark impossibility. And the same goes for our other liberties: free speech, free press, free elections, etc., etc.

Incidentally, in this last connection our Sunday Press, which sheds "crocodile tears" over the Royal Martyr, might pause to recall the here relevant fact, that it was not Charles I but John Milton who officially defended the regicidal government in the bar of European opinion, who was the first great champion and the man most responsible for securing the Freedom of the Press.\*

It must not be forgotten that Charles I, intolerant High Anglican, and the father of two Roman Catholic kings, himself not unreasonably suspected of crypto-Romanism, was, and remained for the next century, the

effective symbol of religious as well as of political reaction.

During the Restoration era in particular, "Saint Charles" was a more popular saint in the Anglican Calendar than any other saint whatsoever: or one might truly add, than all the other saints put together. And even down to the present day "Saint Charles" still has his devotees in High Anglican circles.

One might add that the present growing near-Fascist reaction in Church and State, to which the Liberal ideas that have grown up since the Reformation are anathema, still cherish the memory of the "Royal Martyr," as that of the man who attempted to dam the stream of democratic liberties that it so cordially detests. In a Fascist England "Saint Charles" might again come into his own as the atavistic symbol of the blackest political and ecclesiastical reaction.

It only remains to direct a glance at the antecedents of the Whitehall scene, when the head of Charles Stuart fell into the basket. We may add that it did not fall alone: for political absolutism and religious intolerance fell with it, never to resume their ancient sway in Britain.

The English absolute monarchy of which Charles I was the last representative, had been founded by the Tudors at the end of the 15th century after the feudal shambles known by the picturesque but misleading title of "The Wars of the Roses." As an emergency regime, the absolute monarchy had its social utility, it unified and pacified the country, carried through the English Reformation under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and laid the foundations of what was later to become the British Empire in the course of its struggle with Spain. But like all dictatorships, it refused to quit the historic scene when its task was done, and by the time of Charles (1625-1649) it had become not only superfluous, but an active obstacle to further progress in every sphere.

Long before 1642, when the English Revolution started, England was heartily sick of the brutal, inefficient, and socially atavistic rule of King Charles and his Ministers, William Laud, the pro-Romanist intolerant Archbishop of Canterbury, and "Black Tom" Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, who both preceded their royal master to the scaffold.

Incidentally, this medieval regime which sought to rule an England now emerging from the Middle Ages, found worthy representatives in the Stuart Kings, James I (1603-25), "God's silly vassal" as a Scottish Calvinist called the king to his face, and Charles I, whose duplicity was a by-word in Europe.

Such an archaic and tyrannical regime had to be overthrown, and it was overthrown by "force, the midwife of progress" by the English Revolution between 1642 and 1649. The Absolute Monarchy of Charles, the persecuting Church of Laud, and the totalitarian "Star Chamber" of Strafford were, in fact, overthrown so

\* cp. Milton's "Areopagatica"—A plea for unlicensed printing.

completely during those ever-memorable years that even the so-called Restoration could not in reality restore them. Oliver Cromwell and his Ironsides had charged too well for that!

The new England that emerged in 1649, was not only in itself far superior to the medieval England which Charles I and his satellites vainly strove to preserve, but, even more important, contained within itself the germs of still further unlimited progress. There is hardly a progressive movement in modern British history, from the Industrial Revolution to socialism, from Atheism to the grotesquely named "Royal Society" (which actually originated in the era of the Commonwealth) which does not owe its origins to the strong air of the English Commonwealth of the mid-seventeenth century.

As for the "Royal Martyr" himself, the verdict of any impartial history is clear: he was a political tyrant, a religious persecutor and a social anachronism. He brought his deposition on himself by his arbitrary rule accompanied by cold-blooded personal cruelty, and he owed his death to his endless intrigues. His death served the salutary purpose of, in the forceful words of Thomas Carlyle, "teaching Kings that they had a rick in their necks." Anyone who mourns the "Royal Martyr" to-day is a fool, or more likely, a scheming knave who consciously designs to put back the clock of history.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### ON A CHRISTIAN HANGING

RECENTLY a Christian woman, a spinster named Margaret Allen, was hanged by our Christian "authorities" at Manchester. The Home Secretary, also a Christian, decided against a reprieve although no woman had been hanged in England for twelve years.

This horrible relapse into barbarism deserves public attention, especially as our fickle public opinion and our vacillating House of Commons were actually proposing to abolish State hangings altogether a short time ago. Some highly influential pressure groups disliked that idea for various reasons, mostly bad ones; and after some strange divagations during which a number of male murderers were reprieved, the Government has returned to State-murder and, worse, to including women amongst their gallows-fodder.

Even a "wicked Atheist" may shudder at the insatiable pseudo-Christian appetite for bloodshed and hypocrisy. For the wicked Atheist may well think either that there is no case for what is euphemistically called "capital punishment" because it fails to deter murder, and because he may disbelieve in individual free will and believe in determinism; or that there is a case for State-murder as the deterrent answer to private murder. But the wickedest Atheist cannot be so stupid as to think that there is a Christian case for murdering fellow-Christians, either in war or peace—it he knows anything about the Christian religion as explained in the Gospels.

Imagine Jesus Christ deciding to hang anyone! That would be a difficult feat of imagination even for a Christian hangman.

For Jesus Christ—the supreme authority for every Christian and pseudo-Christian—taught in the plainest possible words the doctrines of returning good for evil, of forgiveness even to seventy times seven times. Love and Salvation are the declared aims of Christianity. The duty of a Christian State and of a Christian Home

Secretary to Margaret Allen was, therefore, perfectly plain. It was to love and save her. Instead—as always—the Christian State and the Christian Home Secretary betrayed their Christian Faith as completely as possible and neither the Christian Churches nor the vast mass of professing Christian individuals (except an eccentric, such as a Quaker or an unreasonable fellow like myself) says one word of protest.

What had Margaret Allen done? An evil deed truly. She, a spinster of 43, had robbed and murdered a 70-year old woman. That is quite indefensible—as indefensible as the robberies of the Penitent Thief who died on the cross with Jesus and as the murder of Uriah by King David, both of blessed memory. But for aught that Christians teach to the contrary, Margaret Allen may be in Paradise with the other two at this moment. For she has repented of her crimes. Jesus Christ died to redeem her just as much as he died to redeem the Home Secretary or the Archbishop of Canterbury, who also—can anyone of us doubt it?—need saving from their sins. So no Christian dare, or may, cast even a first little stone at the memory of the hapless Margaret Allen—now she is dead.

Christianity (in its true form) does not teach the hanging of robbers and murderers, or murderesses. It teaches their repentance and redemption and the overcoming of their evil by the application of good. Applying Christian standards to Margaret Allen means her conversion from robbery and murder to a respect for others' property and lives, and her restoration and rehabilitation. This Lost Sheep needed our Good Shepherds of the Christian Churches to seek and to save her. But these Good Shepherds were too busy evil-speaking on such subjects as "Communist Russia," the proneness of English males and females to adulterous intercourse and divorce and similar highly-spiced sensationalism to trouble about this Ewe, strayed from the Fold of law-abiding behaviour. So while the "blind mouths" of the Church, that honest John Milton so fiercely denounced in "Lycidas", neglected their Christian duty, the Christian State gave Margaret Allen a pint of beer, a cigarette, a game of draughts, facilities for writing a last letter, and when she had enjoyed all these, incontinently hanged her according to the rites and ceremonies of the English Christian State as by law established.

A dreadful deed! But so common that we all think nothing of it. To us it is only a newspaper item, one of millions of newspaper items that we swallow to-day and forget tomorrow. Besides you didn't do it, and I didn't do it. We are neither the woman nor the State. It is the responsibility of the Home Secretary, the Judge, the hangman, the Government—or let us say, so that no one gets camed, "the authorities," in case there is a God after all, a God of Vengeance who may not like what we do with this female Cain of his whom he created and whom he permitted to commit robbery and murder. But John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle would, in their old-fashioned Victorian way, declare that each of us is responsible.

Certainly I feel my share of responsibility and that is why I write this article. Neither the God of the Old Testament nor the Jesus Christ of the New ever exempted the State (or any other collection of men) from the plain Commandment "Thou shalt not kill." The State has robbed and murdered millions in the past and intends to rob and murder millions in the future as against Margaret Allen's one victim.

Yet the State must be kept alive while Margaret Allen's crime is answered by her death. Margaret was only "waging war" on her victim after all.

Now we see the truth of that mordant little story of shipwrecked Christian sailors on a raft at last beholding land. Coming close to the land they behold a gallows and a wretched corpse suspended, doubtless "to encourage the others" as Voltaire gibed. "Thank God!" cried one. "Look, it is a Christian country." The poor unfortunates indeed might have fallen into the hands of pagans and heathens who, like Buddhists, hate the infliction of death upon man or animal, in war or peace.

Why do Christians run counter to their God's teaching without a qualm? Why do Christians hang their fellows so cheerfully and often? The hanging of Jesus on the Cross would make men shrink from hanging another human being on the gallows, you might imagine. Perhaps the explanation is that they still believe in the doctrines of free will and punishment. Determinists who disbelieve in free will would say that Margaret Allen was no more responsible for her act than for her breathing or her birth. Hence punishment is absurd and a cruel wrong. That is why moderns argue that criminality is a disease needing cure, not punishment, as Samuel Butler argued so long ago in "Erewhon." And wicked and wrong as hanging is, hanging is a small matter compared with living in everlasting fire in Hell, a diabolical doctrine still part of Church Christianity.

Addison, the essay writer, desiring to be instructive on his death bed, sent for his son-in-law and said to him: "See how a Christian can die." I can only say: "See how Christians can make another die in defiance of the Founder of their Faith." For Christian love, they gave this wretched female a strangling rope, and for Christian salvation they suspended her from a gallows. May she rest in peace in the kinder earth where such love and such salvation can affect her no more and where she and her victim are beyond the infliction of a cruel and premature death!

C. G. L. DU CANN.

### THE ART OF EDEN PHILLPOTTS

THERE are few novelists writing at the present day who can command what I can only call the grand manner. I use that phrase in no mood of sarcasm; I merely mean to suggest that the art of writing a novel on a tragic theme, portraying man fighting for his life or his happiness against difficult circumstances or long odds is an art which the younger generation of novelists seem to have lost. Even those who are thought of as the most promising young men—Mr. Graham Greene, Mr. P. H. Newby—have for the most part at any rate a superficial resemblance to the comparatively slick methods of the film scenario writer.

Almost the only surviving writer who can command the grand manner of pre-war (I mean pre-1914) days is Mr. Eden Phillpotts, and his more recent books have shown him in lighter mood than was usual with his works of years ago. He has written, of course, many books of many types—the famous "Dartmoor Cycle" of novels of Devonshire life, the "Human Boy" series of tales of school life, detective stories of distinction, and so on.

The "Dartmoor Cycle" is quite certainly his greatest achievement in fiction, and the work on which his fame will eventually rest. Here are 20 volumes of fiction which must, I think, be held to make up the most massive

work of our day—a work which, in smaller compass, has some resemblance to Balzac's "Comedie Humaine," and to little else in world literature. I am not, naturally, suggesting that Mr. Phillpotts has quite the breadth and depth of Balzac; his sphere is, naturally, more limited. But actually, while his scope is comparatively narrow in external matters, since all his best work is placed in that part of England which we call Devonshire, his knowledge of human nature is deep. Probably his sane philosophy, which gains space in most of his novels, has something to do with this.

Readers who may not be acquainted with Mr. Phillpotts at his best now have the opportunity of doing so in a fine new edition of one of the best of his Dartmoor novels, "The Virgin in Judgment" (Westaway Books, 6s.). This has an introduction by Mr. L. A. G. Strong, which will be found sympathetic by the majority of Mr. Phillpotts's admirers. Mr. Strong points out that the central theme of the book is "the judgment of an immature girl upon a situation and characters outside the range of her experience." That is indeed a theme on which the practised novelist can, so to speak, bite. After a surfeit of the saccharine novels of later writers, it may seem austere and almost grim; but at the same time it is good to encounter a book which comes to grips with a real problem as it faces real people, and not merely tries to make out a pretence that it is being advanced by superficial realism.

Mr. Phillpotts, indeed, is in the great tradition of the classical English novel. As such he should be admired by those of his contemporaries who can appreciate fine writing which is not in any way forced. Not for him the conscious "purple patch"; not for him the attempt to make the reader sit up and say: "This is brilliant writing!" It is only when one looks back at the end of a book like "The Virgin in Judgment" that one realises what an achievement it is, and what a fine artist we have in Eden Phillpotts.

One point should be added, in fairness to the publishers. This is a book of nearly four hundred pages, well bound and attractively produced. How, in these days of mounting costs, such a volume can be put on the market at six shillings must remain the secret of the publishers. But all that I can say is that lovers of English fiction at its best should jump at the opportunity of getting such a book at such a bargain price. If the book-buying public has any sense, it will not be available for long.

JOHN ROWLAND.

### THERE WAS ONCE . . .

A SCULPTOR. He modelled figures of clay. When he had completed them he amused himself by breaking them one by one.

One day a friend came to him and asked, "Why do you take so much trouble creating all those figures if you intend to break them afterwards?"

And the Sculptor replied, "Surely I am not the first Artist to do that!"

A SAVAGE. Living by Nature's law he was noble, strong and free. His women served him faithfully, and any moral breach was swiftly and efficiently settled by a blow from his club.

Came the missionary—and this son of Nature quickly degenerated into a weak and smug-faced hypocrite. His simple beliefs were shattered and forbidden, his spirit was crushed, and his body became diseased due to the enforced wearing of clothing in a damp climate. As for his morals—he became a liar, thief, and cheat, equally ready to sell either a fowl or his wife for a dollar.

Hail, Civilisation!

W. H. W.

### ACID DROPS

We must, out of our very charity, presume that the Rev. A. Gille is pulling the legs of readers of a Catholic newspaper, when he suggested the following "Motor Driver's Prayer":—

St. Christopher, who for having once carried a very precious burden, the Child Jesus, art now rightly honoured and invoked as the Heavenly Patron and Minister of Transport, kindly deign to bless my car (lorry or bicycle). Guide my hand, foot and eye, watch my brakes and my tyres, steer my wheel. Save me from skids, bursting tyres, blind corners, stray dogs, thoughtless or obstinate foot passengers. Make me courteous to drivers, gentle to policemen, merciful to footpads, watchful at pedestrian crossings and coloured lights, and sober withal, so that I may drive straight and safe, though not before my appointed time, to the Heavenly Garage, where after parking for good my car among the stars, I may bless God's name and my Pilot's guiding hand for ever. Amen.

All that a Catholic motor driver now needs is a Patron Saint to look after his insurance and licence, and another to provide the petrol coupons.

The "Colonel Chinstraps" of Chelmsford may breathe again. It has been decided by the Canterbury Lower House of Convocation, that the wine used at Holy Communion shall be the real McCoy, "pure, fermented grape juice," and the Baptists, who make it a condition of membership that members shall be teetotal, may, if they wish, stick to soft drinks. The Lower House should find it easy to find Biblical authority for their decision, and the Baptists are going to find it just as easy to find Biblical authority for theirs. The great thing about Christianity is that one can find authority for almost anything from the Bible.

The parsons' champion, Mr. Pitt Clark, in the "Daily Graphic," says, we ought to pity the poor parson. "With an M.A. or a D.D., and a £7,000 education (prep., Public School, varsity and Theological College behind him) he gets about the same pay as a good typist." Of course, it is purely a matter of opinion as to which is the most useful to the community, but we could put it to the test. Let the parson come out on strike for better conditions, we are almost certain the resultant cataclysm would be as great as that of a gnat alighting on a pool of water.

The "poor parson" could, of course, suggest that some of the Princes of the Church should give up part of their stipends; just think of the moral effect on the Christian world if the Archbishop of Canterbury gave up 75 per cent. of his stipend to help the poorer clergy. Think also of the self-righteous glow that Cantuar would feel, and the feeling of relief that at last he could preach (without his tongue in his cheek) about the Founder, "who had nowhere to lay his head." We think Mr. Pitt Clark could use his able pen in better causes.

The worlds' philosophers, ancient and modern, have just been wasting their time, spilling oceans of ink, and expounding at great length on the problem of "happiness." The answer is so simple, according to Archbishop Mowll, who, at the preterminal meeting of the Christian Union said, "the secret is to let Christ have complete control." This profundity prompts us to repeat that old story of the parson who observed that the gardener had made a wonderful job of his garden with God's help. The gardener replied, "Maybe, but you ought to have seen it when God had sole control."

At long last, the explanation for which the world has been waiting for, has been made public in "Our Lady of Fatima Magazine." We have always been puzzled why,

on the occasion of the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima, when the sun spun round and hurtled towards the earth, no astronomical observatory recorded the phenomena. The explanation is simple, we have it on the authority of the Bishop of Leiria (Portugal), that "these phenomena were not natural." For once we think that American expression meets the case—"You're telling me!"

Douglas (biter of the hands that fed him) Hyde makes quite a splash in the "Catholic Herald" about his late friends, the Hungarian Communists and the Mindszenty affair. He gives an "eye witness" report of the "packed to the doors" churches of Budapest. We are not sure what this is supposed to prove, and Douglas Hyde, ex-news editor of the "Daily Worker," is not so naive as to expect us to infer from this that there is a revival of religion in Hungary. We would guarantee that Westminster Cathedral would be packed if Cardinal Griffin was arrested—in much the same way that a crowd would gather for any dog fight.

Almost with heavenly trumpets blowing, the "Universe" announces the conversion of a young "triple" murderer in the U.S.A. He killed a man, his wife and daughter, and went to Christ on the scaffold saying "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," and the Act of Contrition. Another thing which will make his entry into Heaven received with divine joy is his conversion of a fellow prisoner who, as a consequence, "is now taking instruction." It is always better to add even a triple murderer to a list of converts than no converts at all.

Not only murderers are welcomed into Catholicism. A Japanese general, Umezū, condemned to life imprisonment for his war crimes—and they must have been pretty awful to merit such a sentence—was converted just before he died of cancer. There's nothing like Roman Catholicism for assuring a safe voyage to heaven, and a warm welcome there from the ministering angels. And we doubt whether even a Pope gets as good a reception as a converted criminal.

Asked a question about the death of the Virgin, the "Universe" says, "Beyond the fact that Our Lady died, nothing is known for certain as to the manner or cause of her death. Pious tradition holds that she died of love for Her divine Son." Well, well. We always thought that there was no doubt whatever of the "Assumption" of the Virgin, that is, the bodily taking of the Virgin from earth to heaven—though the above answer cleverly gets away from any discussion of this "miracle." Catholics must always, like the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton, hide behind the Faith. That is the answer to every inconvenient question.

We quoted a letter recently from the "Church Times" as to the way some of our young soldiers spent Christmas in Germany, and the sequel is most interesting. Quite a number of padres angrily tried to refute it, but others, including laymen, have been obliged to admit its truth. As one of them says—"Not only those of us who were over there as chaplains, but many Christian laymen will remember now with something like horror the conditions in which they had to live." And another—"... it is quite true and without exaggeration at Christmas and New Year, I don't know what the Germans must think of us." The beneficent effects of religion sometimes seem to go helplessly astray.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C.1.  
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. REYNOLDS.—Thanks for cuttings.

F. KING.—We publish articles on merit only and not solely because we agree with them.

G. ARMOUR.—There is usually a Parson on Library Committees, but keep on agitating for the "Freethinker" to be placed in the Reading Room.

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.

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

There seems to be another holy row bubbling up in the Roman Church, the reason being the second marriage of the well-known film actor, Tyrone Power. Mr. Power is a Catholic, but his first marriage was a "civil" one (this means, really, the only legal one in the State) but it was not recognised by Rome. So on his divorce (by the State) he is allowed by the Pope to marry again—with a religious service this time. We suspect that Mr. Power would have been allowed to get married in church even if the State had not granted him a divorce. The only point in the affair that matters is that, so long as a Catholic gives his complete submission to the Vatican and its decrees, he is on the right side of heaven; and the Vatican will always be able to give logical reasons why it is invariably right. But let us be fair. Rome does not allow divorce, and Catholics who have been married by a priest always find it difficult and, in most cases impossible, to get a divorce.

Mr. J. Clayton is a well known and keen Freethought missionary, with Lancashire as his special domain. To-day he lectures in the Chorlton Town Hall for the Manchester Branch N.S.S. His subject, "Christianity and Social Life" is on a topic being widely discussed and it should attract a full house; in addition there is the sincere and friendly personality of the speaker. The lecture begins at 6-30 p.m. and admission is free.

The Brains Trust arranged for the Stratford Town Hall on Thursday evening, February 24, is arousing much interest. On another page of this issue there is a notice giving full details of the proceedings.

## LYSENKO AND SCIENCE

RE Mr. Robert F. Turney's note "Lysenko and Science." I doubt the accuracy of his first sentence. The dispute about the Inheritance of Acquired Characteristics has been in progress since the days of Lamarck; and to become conversant with it requires a much wider reading than has appeared in the popular press. It is a pity some of its Western exponents were not invited to take part in the B.B.C. broadcast. Dr. Hammond, for instance, who is also a Fellow of the Royal Society. Regarding the quotation from Dr. Harland, Dr. Maurice Burton's statement in the "Rationalists Annual," 1949, is pertinent. It says: "We overlook the fact that a high proportion of the outstanding scientific discoveries have been made by men who made no claim to being scientists (and some have never been acknowledged as such)." A study of the "History of Science and Technics" shows this to be true.

Freethinkers should do their own thinking; and to do this data is required, of which Mr. Turney's note is deficient. It would require considerable skill to condense the "pro's and con's" in an article of ten thousand words. But to the immediate purpose I would refer your readers to the "Farmer and Stockbreeder" of December 7, 1948, for comments on the B.B.C. broadcast. In this same number, as well as earlier ones, there are articles and notes showing at least a dissatisfaction with orthodox genetics for a solution of many problems that face the farmer and stockbreeder as well as the horticulturalist.

Dr. Darlington seems to have started the present controversy in the Nineteenth Century Magazine in 1947. Though, perhaps, coming events are foreshadowed in three articles in "Nature" in the Autumn of 1945; so Dr. Darlington's Conway Lecture of 1948, published under the title of "The Conflict of Science and Society" is of interest, especially the first twenty-seven pages, and showing what is happening in the West is no credit to the powers that be, though nothing new to workers in science.

On page 5 as well as on others, his statements support Dr. Burton, as above.

On page 7 he gives what may be the foundations of his own opposition to Michurin and Lysenko.

Regarding Michurin's work, it seems nothing more or less than a continuation of that of the American, Luther Burbank, but whether the explanation for the results obtained suggested by Lysenko is the true one is another matter.

The two things should be kept distinct. P. M. Zhukovsky suggests other explanations in accordance with orthodox genetics especially for the "Vegetative Hybrids." Not being able to read Russian, I am not acquainted with his argument, and none of Lysenko's British opponents have suggested an alternative to Lysenko's, they prefer to concentrate on what I will call the "Vavilov Affair." Vavilov was appointed to his office in 1921 and held it until dismissed in 1940.

I know Vavilov as a botanist who specialised in "Geographical Distribution," and arising from this he propounded a theory as to the geographical areas in which the "Food Grains" originated.

Mr. Harold Peake wrote in 1928: "Vavilov's hypothesis, though it has been received with the respect due to its distinguished author, has not yet received acceptance among British botanists, and has failed to receive the approval of the leading British experts on

grain bearing plants." Archeological evidence is at variance with Vavilov's statements.

To the best of my knowledge up to 1940, Vavilov was still travelling in search of evidence to support his thesis. The subject is of historical interest. But if the spot was found would it add a bushel of wheat to Russian production which was the objective of the foundation of the Lenin Institute of Botany, and the Academy of Agricultural Science over which he presided?

The organisation seemed to be on the lines of the British Research Associations attached to the various industries. If these bodies do not produce results which can be turned into £ s. d. by their members, they close down.

Lysenko had his training under Vavilov, so if it is true he is totally ignorant of Genetics; some of the responsibility lies on Vavilov's doorstep.

It was in 1936 that Lysenko, still working under Vavilov, began to champion the work of Michurin, and it was somewhere about this date that the first notice on "Vernalisation" appeared in "Nature."

Vavilov used all his influence to stop any discussion of Michurin's work, and Lysenko's theories in the Universities, and after Vavilov, Zhukovsky successfully carried on the suppression until 1948. It was in the Autumn of this year that Lysenko was appointed head of the Lenin Institute and Academy.

I submit that a space of eight years from the date of Vavilov's dismissal and six after his death to Lysenko's appointment to Vavilov's position does not justify Mr. Turney's phrase "has apparently ousted."

No one in England seems to have any exact knowledge of the reason of Vavilov's dismissal; but considering the continued campaigning of Zhukovsky against Michurin and Lysenko, it does not seem to me to be related to these. We are similarly ignorant of the cause of his death; but it should be remembered that in 1942 Moscow and Leningrad were under fire, and the latter a beleaguered city, reduced to starvation, and to survive cannibalism was practised.

Mr. Turney has given your readers the title, etc., of the English edition of Lysenko's report to the Academy and considering the very different opinions that have been expressed about it, each should read it for himself.

Concentrate on the facts, especially from pages 22 to 43 inclusive.

I am not denying political bias; we all possess it, even "great world scientists" and "Fellows of the Royal Society."

Is not our political bias—camouflage it as we may—dictated by where we fancy lies our economic interests? Threaten those interests and men will organise mass murder. "Fear is the Ruler."

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

### THE SABBATH

"... how long was it from the serious sunrise to the joyous 'sundown' of an old-fashioned, puritanical, judaical first day of the week, which a pious fraud christened 'the Sabbath'? Was it a fortnight as we now reckon duration, or only a week? (Curious entities, or non-entities, space and time? When you see a meta-physician trying to wash his hands of them and get rid of these accidents, so as to lay his dry, clean palm on the absolute, does it not remind you of the hopeless task of changing the colour of the blackamoor by a similar proceeding? For space is the fluid in which he is washing, and time is the soap which he is using in the process, and he cannot get free from them until he can wash himself in a mental vacuum.)"—"The New Portfolio," by Oliver Wendell Holmes.

## INGERSOLL'S TRIBUTE TO BURNS

Though Scotland boast a thousand names,  
Of patriot, king, and peer,  
The noblest, grandest of them all  
Was loved and cradled here;  
Here lived the gentle peasant prince,  
The loving cottar king,  
Compared with whom the greatest lord  
Is but a titled thing.  
'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,  
A hovel made of clay,  
One door shuts out the snow and storm,  
One window greets the day;  
And yet I stand within this room,  
And hold all thrones in scorn,  
For here beneath this lowly thatch  
Love's sweetest bard was born.  
Within this hallowed hut I feel  
Like one who clasps a shrine,  
When the glad lips at last have touched,  
The something deemed divine;  
And here the world through all the years,  
As long as day returns,  
The tribute of its love and tears  
Will pay to Robert Burns.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MASS APPEAL?

SIR,—It is now some three and a-half years since I became a regular reader of your journal—I look forward to it the same as I do to my "Daily Worker," and more I can't say. I think after this period I am justified to express my opinion in relation to "The Freethinker."

Belief in the supernatural is certainly one of the major diseases the human is heir to. And who fights this pest more than your weekly? As I see it, a certain part of the policy is at fault. It is the same handful of intellectuals who, week after week, compose its pages. How many people know of a Secular Movement? This is where the error lies—it will never take root amongst the masses whilst trying to confine it (I don't say consciously) to the intellectuals. These do not speak the language of the man in the street. Take, for example, the reprint of G. W. Foot's article ("Views and Opinions" in the Christmas week issue). There is the type of article that appeals to the average man. I admit that we also need closely argued articles. These are, however, not in the proportion I would like to see.

I think "The Freethinker" is excellent—only that it does not have a mass appeal—and it is the masses that need to be freed from the chains of supernatural dope, dispensed by the clerics of the various sects, not forgetting the King Pin himself in the Vatican H.Q.—Yours, etc.,

E. R. TEICHERT.

[We certainly have not forgotten the Vatican—surely!  
EDITOR.]

### THE "PARTY LINE."

SIR,—The fact that Charles Bradlaugh had no use for the Socialism of his day is worth remembering, especially as so many contemporary Socialists cannot see why Freethinkers do not toe the party line. Mr. Archibald Robertson, for instance, in his letter on the food/population question, says: "Unless Freethinkers are content to be for ever isolated on a pedestal... they have no option but to take sides in the class struggle," the socialist side being understood.

It does not seem to occur to Mr. Robertson that a Freethinker may have no more faith in, or use for, the Socialist heaven on earth, that good time coming when the reactionary elements are finally liquidated and the last purge made, than he has for the Christian pie in the sky. Freethinkers are not all so simple as to equate "Capitalist" with "Exploiter," and to imagine that once rid of the former the latter no longer exists. Nor does a Freethinker necessarily suppose that education is "like water, that all you have to do is to remove the obstructions, pipe it into every house or community centre, and ignorance will vanish, like dirt."

The "Leftists," of course, would just love it if the Freethinkers started firing their bullets for them, especially as Freethought bullets, accurately aimed, can be as abnoxious to the left as to the right.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. NICHOLSON.

DE SADE.

Sir,—De Sade could, no doubt, be described as a forceful writer, but few, I imagine, would agree with you that he was in any way "fine" or that "his greatness has been too long obscured by his 'sexology'." He was a heartless and incorrigible criminal and the author of perhaps the most obscene and degrading novels ever published. As a thinker he does not seem to have added anything to the brilliant achievements of his "philosophic" predecessors and the article you publish illustrates his pessimistic fatalism. A selection of De Sade's writings published in France last year, should convince any one who has the courage to read it that while this repulsive pervert may still have an interest for medical specialists, he has nothing useful to teach Freethinkers of the twentieth century.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN MURPHY.

[The question as to whether the Marquis de Sade was a fine or a forceful writer is a matter of opinion and Mr. Murphy is entitled to his. All we are concerned with at the moment is the excellent translation by Mr. S. Watson-Taylor of one of the Atheistic writings of de Sade and not at all with arguing whether he was an "incorrigible criminal." If Mr. Murphy can write a better Atheistic exposition than the "Dialogue," these columns are open to him.—Editor.]

EUTHANASIA

Sir,—One evening I, as probably did many other readers of "The Freethinker," turned on the wireless at 7-50 to listen to a discussion on the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia broadcast in the Third Programme.

I hoped to hear the various aspects of so important a problem debated from a strictly humanitarian point of view.

For a quarter of an hour, the pros and cons from a religious and Christian standpoint were talked of.

I now "switched off" in disgust.

My point is that even a question of the permissible termination of intense physical suffering cannot be argued without dragging in, as of primary importance, the view with which religion regards it.—Yours, etc.,

SYDNEY G. LEECH.

AN ACID DROP FROM LUCRETIVS

Sir,—The same questions were asked throughout the centuries as are sometimes put forward to-day. To quote, as an instance, from the issue of "The Freethinker," November 17, in "Acid Drops":—

"Once again the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. A church at Treviso, Italy, collapsed during a storm and five people were killed. Nothing would be easier to understand had the building been a pub, cinema, or a gaming house—but why a church?"

As "acid" dry, humorous query!

Methought I can find in Lucretius a similar observation, search, and in Book II, verses 1,100 to 1,104, the poet asks

Who hath the power to shake the serene spaces of the sky with sound, hurl his lightning, and, how oft to wreck in ruin his own temples."

So Jupiter and Jahoveh are alike, in Italy—and elsewhere. I may as well give the Latin, to glance at, as regards "Why Church?" (for Lucretius goes on to notice the God slays the honourable and innocent," and passes up the crooks and unscrupulous—

"El aedes saus saepe disturbat."

—Yours, etc.,

S. F. LAWS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 15, 7 p.m.: "The Problem of Germany," Mr. H. L. BEALES, M.A.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, February 14, 7 p.m.: "Intuition and Reason." 5th Lecture, "The Role of Intuition in Human Behaviour." MAURICE BURTON, D.Sc.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Seventy Years of Education." Mr. JOSEPH McCABE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Anarchism To-day," RAYMOND UPTON (A.F.B.).

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "The Reality of British Democracy," Mr. W. BARTHOLOMEW, M.A.

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Individual and the State," Mr. W. S. EVANS, M.A., Ph. D.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Lesson of Czecho-Slovakia." Dr. J. W. BRUEGEL.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Christianity and Social Life," Mr. J. CLAYTON (Burnley).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Who Knows," Mr. G. COLEBROOKE.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Democracy and Dictatorship." Mr. W. H. COUSENS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Brains Trust

TOWN HALL, BROADWAY, STRATFORD

Thursday, 24th February

at 7.30 p.m. (Doors open at 7.0 p.m.)

Question Master :

ALDERMAN E. CANNON (West Ham)

REV. V. L. TUCKER HARVEY and ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

REV. D. S. WALLACE HADRILL, M.A., B.D. and R. H. ROSETTI

Subject :

"RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND NON-RELIGIOUS BELIEF"

Questions to be submitted by the Audience

ADMISSION FREE

ASK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY TO SHOW

THE FREETHINKER

Special rates on application

## JOTTINGS

FOR some years I have used a little exercise book in which I jot down any words from any source whatever which amuse or please me. Here are some extracts from my "Jottings."

Schoolboys' howlers have a fascination for very many of us; those bearing on religion should arouse in us a genuine and peculiar merriment which the believer, because of his belief, cannot share. "If King David had one fault, it was a slight tendency to adultery." "The prevailing religion in England is Hypocrisy." We learn from the pens of babes that "to be struck by lightning is an Act of God under suspicious circumstances," and that "Sarah was Abraham's half-wife, or mid-wife, otherwise called columbine." Abraham is a star turn in howlers for—"God tired Abraham"; "Abraham, the prophet, was chiefly noted for his bosom." "Abraham had two wives. One was called Ismael and the other Hagar. He kept one at home and he turned the other into the desert where she became a pillar of salt by day and a pillar of fire by night." Reader, as you chuckle, smile, or laugh, remember that countless thousands of hours are wasted each week in our thousands of schools by teachers pumping crazy rubbish into the unprotected minds of young and older children.

From a biography of Thomas Masaryk come these lines which indicate the scale of unbelief prevailing in high places in Czechoslovakia before the world war:—

O God, to you I call  
(If you exist at all),  
Protect the soul of me  
(If such there be),

—HAVLICEK.

What a pity it is that that prayer is not included in every service in every church throughout the world! But if those words remain unsaid in any church, they do reverberate louder and ever louder in the minds of men the world over—and Freethought marches on.

Can I shock the consciences of all female readers, and make them writhe and blush in shame? Please read what the author of a so-called detective thriller had to say of one of his characters—"She was the type of Atheist who can't leave well alone, but likes to bait the clergy and corrupt the innocent." But really, is there that type of female rampaging around, baiting the poor defenceless clergy and making their lives miserable? Are not the innocent being corrupted by their instruction in religion?

I have no means of discovering the compositor nor the publisher responsible for the joke of the year; nonetheless they are truly to be thanked. "Wednesday, March 25," appears on the sheet of a tear-off calendar (now pasted in my book). Underneath are the words "Annunciation" and "Lady Day"—and beneath appears the joke—"Faults are thick when love is thin"—Old Proverb. The perpetrator, innocent or otherwise reminds us that poor dear Mary slipped up a trifle on that day of days. Love is surely thin when a mere spiritous creature, an angel to boot, is responsible for conception; or was the story of the Roman Centurion in the minds of those responsible for applying that particular proverb to that most holy day?

In my book is a most wonderful article, published by one, Walshaw, of Rothwell Road, Halifax, Yorks, relating "The Amazing Discovery of Noah's Ark." The

discoverer, according to his account, was Mr. Vladimir Roskovitsky, a converted Russian. (From what he was converted we are left in ignorance; from his words it would seem that he had acquired a vast power of lying!) The story commences in the days before the Russian Revolution; Plane No. 7 had been fitted with its new supercharger (in 1917) and was ready for high altitude tests. Strapping on there oxygen cans (still in 1917!) Roskovitsky and his buddy (he writes from U.S.A.) flew up and over Mt. Ararat. They saw a little lake near the summit; and at the overflow end lay grounded the ark with about one-fourth under water. "It would compare very favourably in size to the modern battleships of to-day." There was even a great doorway nearly 20ft. square. Roskovitsky told of his find on landing at the airport; the Captain accompanied him on a second trip, and being convinced that this was Noah's Ark reported the finding to Court. An army expedition reached the Ark, took many photographs and made plans from complete measurements. These were sent to the Czar. The Ark had hundreds of small rooms and some very large rooms with high ceilings and wooden fences, 2ft. thick, "as designed to hold beasts ten times as large as elephants." Other rooms had tiers of cages somewhat like those "one sees to-day at a poultry show. . ."

A few days after the report was sent to the Czar the Government was overthrown and godless Bolshevism took over so that the records were never made public, and probably were destroyed by the Bolsheviks to discredit all religion and belief in the truth of the Bible."

Having given you the gist of the article, there comes to me an awful thought—what if the stupendous news of the "Amazing Discovery" in such a miraculous fashion brings the Editor of "The Freethinker" and all its readers on to their knees? Even if it does not achieve this, the full article if read in duly unctuous tones by a B.B.C. parson might gladden the hearts of many believing listeners, once again assured that (dammit all) the Bible is True.

And speaking of the B.B.C. prompts me to include the qualifications of a Censor in this country as so aptly set out by Conrad in his "Autocracy and War"—1915—"he must have done nothing, expressed nothing, imagined nothing. He must be obscure, insignificant and mediocre—in thought, act, speech and sympathy. He must know nothing of art, of life—and of himself. For if he did he would not dare be what he is."

Now in case I might be accused of writing nonsense let me affirm that I certainly have not written solemnly. As proof let me add a few more "howlers."

"The first book of the Bible is Guinnesses." "The Prodigal Son wasted his life in riotous loving." "A Protestant is a woman who gets her living through an immortal life." "Dieu et mon droit = My God is always right." "Joshua met Ruth in a field but had to walk around her seven times." "And Joseph went with Mary, his exposed wife, to be taxed." "Beersheba was the wife of Sodom and Gomorrah." "Get thee hens, Satan." "When Peter was seen by the servants, he was braying." "Peter warned his hands at a damsel." And—at last—"An Atheist is a man who calves, or anything in the artist line."

So, innocently, is fun poked at religion by our children; and we elders chuckle in ridicule.

D. HENWOOD.