

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXII—No. 45

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

THE accession to the British throne of the young lady whom history will describe as the Second Elizabeth, has given rise both to a burst of what can only be called mystical numerology and, recently, to a rather curious flare-up of the ashes of bygone historical controversies. In the first connection we are assured on all hands that because the reign of the first Elizabeth was "glorious," so, equally, must be that of her namesake, and present successor. Which is, surely, stretching a verbal identity to the point of complete absurdity. In the second, a Roman Catholic bishop, Dr. Cowderoy, of Southwark, has turned over the ashes of the past and has revived the bitter language used by the Papal Chancery in the 16th century about that modern "Jezebel," Queen Elizabeth the First, Elizabeth Tudor, Queen of England and official "Defender of the (Protestant) Faith" against the Spanish Armada and the Catholic counter-Reformation.

Whether Elizabeth the First was really a "great" Queen depends, primarily, on exactly what one means by the too lavishly bestowed epithet, "great." Elizabeth Tudor, like her notorious father, the polygamous Henry the Eighth, was certainly a very talented person. If the present occupant of the British Throne could talk as many languages and possessed as many accomplishments as did her versatile predecessor, she would be something of a prodigy. For the era of the Renaissance was prolific in brilliant women, and Elizabeth Tudor was one of the most brilliant in her contemporary England; only her ill-fated cousin, that "nine-days queen," Lady Jane Grey, was, perhaps, her intellectual superior. Elizabeth Tudor has also another—a more doubtful—claim to pre-eminence: by the universal admission of all the foreign diplomatists at her court, themselves professional liars by the nature of their calling, the Queen of England was the most accomplished liar of her generation. She deceived everyone; she was even reputed habitually to deceive herself! A feminine "Macchiavelli."

Does such a varied assortment of qualities add up to greatness? Again, it is a question of definition. Certainly Elizabeth was a successful monarch: in an age when false steps were easy and often fatal, she made singularly few, and died in her bed, with the English crown firmly on her head and the English State intact. Her long reign (1558-1603) saw the foundations of modern England securely laid. Certainly she was not responsible for the great men and dynamic actions which marked her reign. But, if she did not help, she did not hinder the creation of the new England in what is, perhaps, too flatteringly styled "the Elizabethan Age." As the titular head, as the figurehead of a great age in English history, Elizabeth enjoyed similar luck to the, also titular, head of another great age, that of Victoria. However, there the comparison begins and ends in a personal sense. Whatever estimate historians may eventually decide on with regard to Elizabeth Tudor's political character and achievements.

she far outshone in personality and in intellectual and artistic gifts the worthy but prosaic and essentially mediocre Victoria. Elizabeth Tudor may, or may not, have been a great queen. She was certainly a brilliant woman and a fascinating, if enigmatic, personality.

However, unless one holds the now somewhat archaic "great man—and woman—interpretation of history," so eloquently expounded by Thomas Carlyle and his modern German disciples, we cannot ascribe the character, including whatever glories it may have had, of the "Elizabethan" age primarily to the personal character of the First Elizabeth herself. That stormy era, which corresponded roughly with the second half of the 16th century

was, in many authentic respects, a "great age." It witnessed the foundation of self-conscious English nationalism, the remarkable development of an indigenous English capitalism, the centre of which was the City of London; not to mention the amazing literary and scientific efflorescence represented, respectively, by Shakespeare, Bacon and many only less eminent co-workers. It witnessed the foundation of the "East India Company," which led in time to the Indian Empire; and of the American Colonies, which led in time to the "United States of America": Virginia was named after the "Virgin Queen," Elizabeth. To be sure, the age had, also, its darker aspects. It saw the origins of the African slave trade, so prolific in human misery; not to mention the much-boasted and certainly daring, but morally dubious activities of Sir Francis Drake and his brethren, the maritime freebooters of the West Country, and the "Elizabethan" age concluded, not so gloriously, with the Elizabethan Poor Law (1601), which "nationalised" England's oldest industry, poverty!

A mixed bag! But in contemporary estimation all the above, both Shakespeare and "the East India Company" (1600), were far outweighed by the central fact of the "Elizabethan Age," the religious controversy between Rome and the Protestant Reformation, and the political life-and-death struggle with the Catholic counter-Reformation and with the armed champion of militant Catholicism, the worldwide Spanish Empire, upon which "the sun never set." It was her largely involuntary success in establishing the English Reformation and in frustrating the Spanish invasion, "The Invincible Armada" (1588), which sought to restore the old medieval régime by force, that Elizabeth owes most of her fame in English history, and it is the memory of this major defeat for their creed that causes modern Roman Catholic bishops, as it caused her own contemporary Popes, to denounce Elizabeth as a heretic, a whore and a modern "Jezebel."

Queen Elizabeth the First owes her place in history primarily to the fact that she was the first effective "Defender of the Faith," of the new Protestant Faith. It was a political, not a personal rôle; for it is still

## VIEWS and OPINIONS Elizabeth the First (1533-1603)

By F. A. RIDLEY

uncertain where the Queen's own personal sympathies lay. However, it was this political rôle which drew upon her Papal excommunication, the daggers of Jesuit-trained assassins and, finally, the "Invincible Armada" of the King of Spain. She survived all three, and the Protestant Churches survived with her. The naval importance of the victory over the Armada has, it is true, been much exaggerated by patriotic sentiment, and Elizabeth herself modestly ascribed it to the weather. Few of its contemporaries expected it to succeed. An English follow-up, a counter-attack on Portugal the very next year (1589), which was led by the redoubtable Drake himself, proved

as great a fiasco as the "Invincible Armada" had been. However, whilst primarily a defensive action, the defeat of Spain was decisive in both the political and in the religious spheres; in the former, Queen Elizabeth the First ranks as the founder of modern England, an essentially Protestant power; in the second, the Tudor monarch dealt the Church of Rome a blow from which it has never recovered and which still causes Catholic bishops like Dr. Cowderoy to utter apoplectic curses when they recall the failure of their Elizabethan predecessors to bend the stiff-necked English beneath the yoke of Rome.

## The Judges and the Administration of Justice

By C. H. NORMAN

A STUDY of the speeches in the House of Lords on the subject of the restoration of flogging as a punishment in the administration of criminal justice recalled to the mind the comment made by John Bright on the kind of people who occupy the office of judge in this country: "For two hundred years the judges of England sat on the bench, condemning to the penalty of death every man, woman and child who stole property to the value of five shillings, and during all that time not one judge ever remonstrated against that law." ("Education of Henry Adams," page 191.) The last words, perhaps, do not do justice to Sir Samuel Romilly, who initiated the reforms abolishing the "wholesale death sentence system," as it was described, for one of a more limited scope. It is depressing to find that the only judges (excepting the Lord Chancellor, Lord Simonds) who took part in the debate, the third of its kind, namely, Lord Goddard, the 76-year-old Lord Chief Justice, Lord Oaksey, of Nuremberg fame (or otherwise), Lord Tucker and Lord Asquith, had nothing to offer on the problem of crime facing the country, except more violence in the shape of the re-introduction of flogging. It is worth remembering, too, that the last three named are Law Lords—that is to say, judges occupying places in the final court of appeal.

It is necessary to draw attention to some facts on this unpleasant subject which are not too well known.

The Criminal Justice Act, 1946, was hoped to herald an era of merciful reform and change of approach in the treatment of crime. It was recognised that two wars had resulted in the presence in the community of many men and women whose *morale* had been completely undermined by their experiences during the wars. Unfortunately, the Act has been misconstrued by the judicial body which sits under the terms of the following oath as set out in Section 4 of the Promissory Oaths Act, 1868: "I do swear that I will well and truly serve (the sovereign) in the office of (blank) and I will do Right to all Manner of People after the Laws and Usages of this Realm, without Fear or Favour, Affection or Illwill. So help me God." It would be a good practice if a framed copy of the oath were presented to each judge on his appointment, to stand on his table as a daily reminder of his obligation not to administer justice with "Illwill." The late King George the Fifth thought it wise to have hanging up in his working room a series of principles which he considered should guide him in his work as a ruler. In fifty years' experience in the courts, the only judge that I have ever heard mention the judicial oath was the late Lord Clauson.

It will be remembered that the Conservative Press, during the reign of the Attlee Government, was always indulging in rather ill-natured chaff concerning appoint-

ments which was summarised in the phrase, "jobs for the boys." Certainly Lord Jowitt, the Labour Lord Chancellor, cannot be charged with any special tendency in that direction, as his first important act was the appointment of Lord Goddard (then aged 69), a rabid Conservative, to the high office of Lord Chief Justice of England. One would have thought that 69 was not the age at which a man should be appointed to the second most important office on the Bench, to which Lord Goddard is still clinging at the age of 76 and, apparently, intends to hold on to till 86, judging by his maladroit remarks at the dinner to Sir Travers Humphreys, on that gentleman's retirement, at 84, from a somewhat inglorious career on the Bench which should have ended abruptly with the Rattenbury case. Lord Goddard was duly appointed to carry out the terms of the Criminal Justice Act, which he had been fairly successful in mangling in the House of Lords, compared with its original form when introduced by Lord Templewood in 1939. The Lord Chief Justice is the Statutory President of the Court of Criminal Appeal under the Criminal Appeal Act, 1908. Lord Goddard started the policy of actively using the Court's power of reviewing sentences by increasing sentences in what he and the Court considered proper cases. On the score of economy, he began the practice that, unless the Court made a special order, the Court should only be supplied with transcripts of the proceedings in the Court of first instance consisting of the opening speech for the prosecution, the judge's summing up, and the sentence. This is a practice which may tend completely to defeat the purpose of the Court of Criminal Appeal Act. It has three advantages. It saves public money, it saves the judges the trouble of reading summaries of the evidence in the case, and it expedites the business of the Court. A comparison between the time spent on civil appeals and criminal appeals is interesting. On an average, a civil appeal occupies about three-quarters of a day; on an average, a criminal appeal occupies 15 minutes. In the early part of the year, Lord Goddard presiding, the Court reviewed 57 criminal appeals in three and a half hours, dismissing all but two! The speed of Earl Howe, the motoring and pro-flogging peer, has certainly penetrated into this particular side of the administration of justice! The writer was once present in the Court when three separate appeals from different Assizes, dealing with homo-sexual offences, were dealt with in eight minutes, the sentences under appeal being thirteen years, twelve years and eleven years penal servitude! Incidentally, England is almost the only country in Europe where this type of offence is dealt with in this manner: in most civilised countries it is regarded as a malady requiring

medical attention. Lord Goddard and the Bench generally have the type of mind which approaches these offences as being of a very grave character. The campaign of severity was begun some time before the war, by Mr. Justice Wright, who passed a series of heavy sentences for this offence, at the Leeds Assizes. The policy of severity has completely failed. The offence is rampant to-day in the country, whereas forty years ago only a case appeared here and there at the Assizes.

Returning to the Criminal Justice Act, which was supposed to abolish penal servitude and substitute corrective training as a punishment, what has been the practice of the judges? Sentences are being passed of five to eight years' preventive training on a second offence for trivial burglaries and robberies which were generally punished, in a period not noted for humanity, before the two wars, by sentences of six to twelve months' hard labour. What has been the consequence? There has been recently some addition of violence in what were petty crimes, so that the perpetrators can more easily escape and avoid a conviction and sentence of seven years. It is to be noted, since this procedure has been in force, that the number of criminals brought to justice in such cases has dropped from 65 per cent. to 40 per cent. It is, in fact, the policy of the judicial body which is contributing much towards the existing state of things about which so much complaint is made.

Nor is there any evidence that severity in punishment reduces crime. The resumption of hanging, which the judges succeeded in getting restored, has not reduced the murders; in fact, small though the number is (compared with the more serious slaughter on the roads, which does not seem to interest the judges), murders have slightly increased since the restoration of the death sentence for murder. Two notable instances of the failure of the policy of severity may be drawn from Bristol and Liverpool. Several years ago there was an outbreak of serious crime in these two cities, and Lord Goddard went down specially to handle the situation. Very severe sentences were imposed at both Assize towns. What was achieved by that? Exactly nothing, as the crime in these two cities has been as bad as ever before—if not slightly worse in Liverpool, since the Recorder, the late Mr. Hemmerde, K.C., who was reasonably humane on the Bench, died and was replaced by men of very different quality.

One interesting point about the Goddard campaign for the return of flogging is the way it is handled behind the scenes. Those of the informed public in the Courts observe that, suddenly, the Press begins to give great prominence to what have become known as "the cosh cases." Then one knows the intermediaries of "the old man" have given the hint in the appropriate quarters that he thinks the moment ripe to have "another go" at the repeal of the obnoxious clause in the Criminal Justice Act. Whether this kind of procedure is in conformity with the dignity of the judicial office, and how far sitting judges should initiate public agitation for repeal of Acts of Parliament in this kind of way, may be matters of opinion; but some people may think that the Press might be better employed by printing some details of the road casualties which result in a death roll of over 5,000 per annum and in the permanent maiming of another 8,000 per annum. After all, the number of murders and assaults of a serious character are small compared with these huge totals, which are often the result of what are criminal offences, but which are lightly regarded by so many of the judicial body and the motor trade interests. The punishment of taking away licences to drive would have very salutary results in reducing this aspect of murderous mischance on the roads.

Lord Asquith thought that he had met the argument about flogging ever brutalising people, by pointing out that "practically the whole of the governing class in the first half of the nineteenth century had been brutalised, because they had all been birched by Dr. Keates." Apart from the exaggeration so characteristic of the judicial mind when off the Bench in this statement (one may wonder how many of the real governing class had ever heard of Dr. Keates), there are plenty of references of a very hostile character to the system of beating in public schools, in the records of eminent persons of that time. As for the results of Dr. Keates's efforts on the governing class, one may refer to this famous passage from Mr. Gladstone: "In almost every one, if not every one, of the greatest political controversies of the last fifty years, whether they affected the franchise, whether they affected religion, whether they affected the bad and abominable institution of slavery, these educated classes, these titled classes, have been in the wrong." With that one may leave the noble lords and learned judges to the mercy of oblivion.

## World Union of Freethinkers

Brussels Congress. August 22-27, 1952. "Freethought and Organisation of the New World,"

By A. LORULOT (France) Vice-President.

THIS is the most important and most serious problem which imposes itself to the world. It interests both the individual and the community, it belongs to the economics and to the politics, to the morality and to the philosophy. Society itself never ceases to change. The social institutions are in constant evolution. And the scientific technics which change radically the conditions of life, accelerate and deepen this evolution. Will all these changes respect the actual structure of society? Will the great principles which have survived so many centuries through all the revolutions, remain unchanged? Will democracy remain a more or less liberal and supple formula or become a rigid reality?

Freethought must, I think, work on two different but parallel planes. 1. It is interested in the culture and in the liberation of human thought from every dogma and from every form of tyranny. The new world must bring

a true democracy and the fullest possible individual freedom. Compatible with a harmonious equilibrium, freedom in the community.

Science has always been considered as man's best tool. Aristotle said that slavery would disappear when engines could do the work.

Pope Leo XIII reminds in "Rerum Novarum" that for the Catholic, work is a divine punishment and Christians consider science as satanic. Joseph de Maistre taught that the ignorance which comes from God, surpasses science which comes from Man, but Rationalists trust science. Renan wrote: "To organise scientifically Humanity is the legitimate aim of Modern Science."

During the last 20 years, there has been more technical progress than during the last 2,000 years of Christianity. The slanderers of science curse us and pretend that science

(Continued on page 356)

## Acid Drops

**Under no circumstances** whatever would our tender-hearted L.C.C. hurt or lacerate the easily offended Roman Catholic community. They have banned the French film, "L'Auberge Rouge" ("The Red Inn"), because, says a spokesman for the Board of Film Censors, it is "a very anti-clerical film and poked fun at various religious ceremonies in a way likely to cause offence." We would bet any odds that if the film poked fun at Freethinkers—who are far more numerous in this country than Roman Catholics—the censor would be delighted, and so would Roman Catholics. Any film, in fact, which attacked evolution would be welcomed by our film censors. Is it not true that the head of the Board of Film Censors is a Roman Catholic?

**A retired parson** at the Canterbury Diocesan Conference said that the Church of England should have "some of the guts" of the Roman Catholic Church, and it was obvious that the Archbishop of Canterbury did not like such plain speaking. He said what the parson said was "irrelevant." Another parson said that it was impossible for a working man to get a job in the Church. It is, he claimed, "desperately middle-class." We should have thought that the more intelligent "working classes" would not have wanted to get into the Church, anyway—but there, we live and learn.

**A good Christian faith-healer**—he believed in prayer and the laying-on of hands—was given 15 months' hard for wounding a blind patient with a beer bottle, and another 15 months for swindling. He remembered drinking the beer, but not at all nearly killing the poor woman with the bottle. We think this faith-healer would be a good subject for other faith-healers; though we admit it would require some phenomenal faith on their part to get him out of prison before he has served his sentence. Would even a week of concentrated prayers do it?

**But the Church and parsons generally** are not united on this faith-healing business. The Rev. R. E. Higginson, speaking at the Southport Evangelical Conference recently, thought that "the Church seemed to have lost the gift of healing." And he complained "that it was a strange thing that people without faith were often healed, and those with faith were not." This reminds us of the way in which, in a storm, God's lightning will strike a church or a chapel without compunction, and leave adjacent pubs and billiard saloons severely alone. But then the Lord's ways are always mysterious.

**The Dean of Manchester** wants us to go back immediately to the "faith that has been taught in the Church for the past 500 years"—because the present age "was externally brilliant but morally rotten." But surely belief in the dean's angels, devils, miracles, heaven and hell, need not necessarily make us "externally rotten but morally brilliant?" Five hundred years ago the dean's Church was butchering, mutilating and torturing heretics. Is a repetition of *that* going to make us "morally brilliant"?

**While all credit must be given** to many of the clergy who attack Dr. Malan and his racial laws in South Africa, we should feel a little more confident in their appeal that "all are one in Christ" if some of them, including our deans, canons and bishops, would give us some practical examples. Let them *marry* some of the coloured

ladies, with their ear-rings and nose-rings and leg-bracelets in evidence, to say nothing of feathers and necklaces of such dainties as the teeth of hippopotimi. Is it not rather strange that the stoutest male defenders of mixed marriages invariably fight shy of black-skinned beauties?

**The Football Association** is horrified and staggered that 28,000 men want to play football on a Sunday—God's Holy and Precious Day—and has indignantly told them, "We do not recognise you." The Association wants to close down 2,547 clubs playing in 73 leagues. London has 1,000 clubs, Middlesex 350, and Kent 460, but as Rule 25 prohibits games played on Sundays in the United Kingdom, the ban stands. Yet, like the Pope, the F.A. can give a club which wants to play a special "dispensation." And footballers stand for this stupid interference.

**Why do not the 28,000 footballers** concerned tell the F.A. to go to a warmer climate, and get up their own Association? Or insist that Rule 25, with all its Sabbatarian sympathisers in the Association, should be scrapped? The National Secular Society would help them; but we fancy some of these angry Sunday footballers would prefer to do without Sunday football for ever, rather than be encouraged by the only society in England which has always stood up fair and square against all Sabbatarian laws.

**WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS—Concluded** cannot save the humanity. They accuse science of bringing humanity to suicide and destruction, and atomic research has brought unrest by its application to destruction.

In the "Revue des Deux Mondes," Louis Marlio wrote: "Never has there been before such great and terrible perspectives for civilisation." Aldous Huxley is alarmed and shows that modern science, instead of freeing the individual has principally reinforced the State.

Wells wrote in 1945: "The end of what we call life is near and unavoidable." For tens of centuries Man has known servitude but desires for freedom.

Let us remain confident and hope in science. She is still the great revolutionary, liberator.

First of all we must prevent war. To succeed herein we must fight all the causes of it; and Roman Catholicism is the first of them.

McCabe has shown clearly the harm the Vatican has done to peace.

Over population is another cause of war against which we must fight.

There are also capitalism, imperialism and fascism.

Over-population threatens peace, brings unemployment, and pauperism keeps the working classes in ignorance and servitude.

Etatism is another danger. As a conscientious Free-thinker, I declare: "I don't want capitalism with unscrupulous and heartless pursuit of gain."

Neither do I want equalitarian collectivism which destroys the individual. I don't want barracks full of robots.

It has always been the minority which brought progress. We want dignity for Man, but we require him to learn willing co-operation with his fellows.

I believe the best formula to be free socialism. The makers of the new world don't place their trust in the State, and even less in God. They will do that work themselves. The State shall be only a regulator preserving to everybody the greatest possible freedom with as only limitation the rights of other people and common interest.

# THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.  
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

## To Correspondents

WILL Mr. K. Liddaks and other correspondents kindly note that this is not a political journal and we cannot make a habit of publishing purely political correspondence.

K.R.C.—Yes, we believe that Mr. Archibald Robertson's father was the Bishop of Exeter.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.; (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site), every Sunday, 8 p.m.; (Alexandra Park Gate), every Wednesday, 8 p.m.; (Deansgate Bomb Site), every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

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

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: G. RAMSDEN, "The Black Record of the Church."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 11, 7 p.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The War Swindle."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: H. DOWNS, "Will the Living Theatre Die?"

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "Leonardo da Vinci."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "Is Progress a Myth?"

West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. ("The Stables," 1, Woodford Road, E.11. Five minutes walk from Snaresbrook Station).—Wednesday, November 12, 8 p.m.: P. TURNER, "What the N.S.S. Stands For." This lecture is given at the invitation of Wanstead Toc H.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: JOSEPH McCABE, "Crime, Religion and Secularism."

## Sugar Plums

Elsewhere in this issue we give a brief report of the meeting held last week in Conway Hall on the subject of *Religion in Politics*. It is really hardly necessary to emphasise the importance of this subject at the present time. The primitive superstitions still associated with next year's Coronation ceremonial underline the secularist demand for the separation of Church and State.

Mr. Harry Cleaver, the energetic Secretary of the West London Branch, N.S.S., has, as usual, arranged for a varied and interesting lecture syllabus in the current winter season at The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. Sunday, November 9, should be a red-letter day in the annals of the West London Branch for Mr. Cleaver has been fortunate enough to secure the services of Mr. Joseph McCabe, internationally-known historian, publicist and philosopher, and a leading exponent of Rationalism throughout the past half-century. Mr. McCabe will lecture on "Crime, Religion and Secularism." We are sure that a bumper audience will attend The Laurie Arms to hear Mr. McCabe.

## Report of N.S.S. Meeting at Conway Hall, London, W.C. 1, on October 29th 1952

On Wednesday, October 29, the *National Secular Society* held a very successful meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. The advertised subject of the meeting was *Religion in Politics*. The chair was taken by Mr. P. Victor Morris, General Secretary of the N.S.S., and the speakers were Mr. F. A. Ridley, Mr. J. W. Barker, and Mr. E. W. Shaw. Mr. Len Ebury, originally advertised to speak, was unavoidably absent on account of illness.

In his opening remarks the chairman emphasised how intimately politics impinge on the "Aims and Objects" of the *National Secular Society* and how eager the Churches were to take advantage of the vote-catching propensities of political parties. However, the current role of the N.S.S. is not so much direct political action as the creation of an enlightened public opinion of which politicians of all parties have to take account.

The agreed subject, *Religion in Politics*, was handled in its several connections by the three speakers. Mr. Barker dealt largely with the finances of the Churches and emphasised their historic role throughout the ages as the allies of the exploiters of the poor. Mr. Shaw described the socially reactionary political principles of the Roman Catholic Church and, in particular, its current intrigues in the British Labour Party, whilst Mr. Ridley drew attention to the extensive political privileges still enjoyed by the Established Church in which connection the speaker referred to the Divine character of next year's Coronation Service, and called for the abrogation of the Mediaeval Constitution of Great Britain and for the separation of Church and State.

Many questions were then asked by an obviously interested audience which ranged from the current political role of Freemasonry to a rumour that Queen Victoria was converted to Catholicism on her deathbed! A keen discussion followed, to which the speakers replied briefly.

F. A. R.

## The Cinema

### "Limelight."

At the Odeon, Leicester Square, W.C. 1.

CHARLES CHAPLIN. A short name, but what it means to us all. It is "Charlie" to us all off-screen because we remember that on-screen character the world recognises and adores; as Emil Ludwig, G.B.S. and H. G. Wells (all of them now no longer with us) have said: *He is the best known man in the world*. And Chaplin, for it is rightly "Charles Chaplin" nowadays, deserves his fame, the hero-worship lavished upon him and his unique position not only in the Cinema, which he has done more than any of his fellows to make into a Living Art, but in the world outside that Cinema: that larger world which he has made laugh, cry, wipe its eyes and pause before laughing again. His award has come from the people, the people he knows, from whom he came—and who know him. The magic of the man and the artiste is again on view in London just now and this I must say: Never has his range been greater, his genius more unique. The story of *Limelight* has already been so fully discussed and written about that perhaps it might seem late for yet another view to be printed. But because the story of Music Hall symbolises Charlie's own life and the character of the passe variety artiste utters a philosophy which we can confidently take as being Chaplin's own, there is little doubt that *Limelight* will continue to be written, argued, quarrelled and lectured about not only in the months but in the years to come.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY HANDBOOK. (General Information for Freethinkers.) Price 9d.; postage 1½d.

It is briefly the story of a faded music hall star in the London just prior to the 1914 War. His downhill journey through drink (and perhaps because of his acutely sensitive inner feelings) is interrupted by his meeting with a young dancer who he rescues from suicide, nurses back to a career and inspires to become a great ballerina. The picture glows and dazzles as we observe Chaplin in the character of Calvero fire the imagination of his sick protege; perform a number of "acts," any of which on the "halls" would receive the same rapturous reception as they did at the press showing of the film from a crowded house; launch the dancer upon a grateful Town (and we are indeed as grateful to Mr. Chaplin for Miss Bloom's performance as I feel sure is Miss Bloom herself); return to the depths through drink; make a glorious come-back in one of the most hilarious film sequences I can ever remember seeing (in which he has a superb foil in Buster Keaton) and finally die at the side of the stage during a benefit performance given for him to stage a come-back; a benefit performance staged by his dancing protege now a famous ballerina. As we watch this last shot of the dancer leaving the back wings where she might have seen the dead Calvero and twirl down to the footlights away from the Death which will await her "curtain," we were reminded again of the most potent aspect of Chaplin's character which whether he is playing the Tramp, the Dictator, Verdoux or Calvero always delicately underlines the unexpected.

This "moment" had an entire theatre crying its eyes out. Tough film executives, hard-bitten critics on National newspapers, brassy women and sentimentalists like the present writer, were equally caught up by that same keen

and poignant awareness of Truth that the Little Fellow also showed so courageously in his rescue of the Blind Flowerseller in *City Lights* and his clarion call to the persecuted "Hannah" (his own mother's name) in *The Great Dictator*.

This last moment in *Limelight* is reminiscent of that scene in *The Gold Rush* when *unexpectedly* the bear following the Lone Prospector, who is unconscious of the danger, suddenly branches off in another direction and we, the audience, laugh with relief at the twist given to a comic situation not funny in itself. In the same way the ballerina is unconscious of her tragedy as she dances forward to the audience to illustrate yet again the progressive spirit epitomising youth, talent and a challenge to the fates to be found in all Chaplin's films: remember that brave walk down the road at the end of *Modern Times* when Charlie and the Girl heroically decide to fight the fates undeterred by that white line down the centre of the road—a barrier representing the stumbling block of conventional society. Always it will be noted is there this upsurge, this refreshing optimism which makes the Charlie Chaplin philosophy a glorious one, a pure one, one which the whole world could do with more of; at the moment it is this part of the world particularly which is honouring one of its greatest sons through honouring his latest masterpiece. And through honouring the man behind a great work of art it is honouring itself. "Truth is all I have left," Chaplin makes Calvero say. Never, within my personal recollection, has an artiste succeeded more successfully in employing comedy, as well as tragedy, to find Truth.

PETER COTES.

## SATAN SPEAKS

Hideous shape of towering pride,

Satan cried:

"I the servant am of God,

"Mine his rod.

"He made foolish man of clay

"One fine day.

"But the folk that throng all lands

"Are in my hands.

"Trump of God against his foe

"My lips blow.

"With his feet that waste the wheat

"Go my feet.

"When his thunder shakes the sky

"I rage nigh.

"From his wealth that stirs the deep

"Ill I reap.

"In God's wondrous mineral hoard

"Death I stored.

"O'er the sheen of myriad suns

"My car runs.

"I turn earths to deserts soon,

"Like the moon.

"Bird and beast and creeping thing

"To my arms cling.

"I waft life and I waft death

"With my breath.

"At my nod health must obey

"Foul decay.

"Bodies wrought of flesh and bone

"Are my own.

"When God grants a fruitful womb

"I send doom.

"When cool waters quench desire

"I raise fire.

"When love yearns to find his mate

"I give hate.

"Love would live with joy forever,

"These I sever.

"When a prophet speaks God's word

"Mine is heard.

"When gloom spreads her loathly wings

"My heart sings.

"Man's sweet hopes I breed to kill

"At my will.

"God unsheathes his sword, but after

"Comes my laughter.

"When his temples ring with prayer

"I am there.

"My stout arm's outstretched to save

"For the grave.

"When I choose my hands release

"Dove of peace.

"When I tire of peace war's flood

"Drowns in blood.

"Moulding worlds I would destroy

"Is my joy.

"God my master is and slave,

"Mine his grave.

"If I vanish, ring the knell

"Of heaven and hell."

Satan thus. We shuddering hear,

Gripped with fear.

Does his boastful voice mislead

Hearts that bleed?

Utters one almighty Lord

The cosmic word?

Or has time's strange magic shown

A double throne?

Good and evil both create

The maze of fate.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

# Monism, E. Haeckel's Post-Christian Religion

By ARTHUR WILD

IN 1946 there was renewed in Germany the Society of Monists (Monistenbund) dissolved after Hitler seized power in 1933. The Society has aimed mainly at the scientific and ethical education of its members. It publishes now a duplicated monthly periodical called *Monistische Mitteilungen* and according to a communication of its Secretary, Dr. Ludwig Gross (Munich) is preparing to start a printed paper for a wider public as soon as possible.

The Society of Monists is a product of synthetic thought of Spencerian type. It was founded by Ernst Haeckel in 1906. There are many similarities between Haeckel's Monism and the Positivist Religion founded in Paris by Auguste Comte more than half a century earlier. Both Comte and Haeckel skim from specialised sciences their general results. These happen, moreover, often to be mere hypotheses. The philosophers have to bridge the gaps between the scraps supplied by specialists and to organise them into logical wholes. Unlike the profound thinkers who "like spiders spin webs out of themselves" these philosophers are often accused to be superficial. If they happen to specialise in a science themselves—Comte had a predilection for Mathematics, E. Haeckel was a Professor of Biology, Wilhelm Ostwald, the leading personality of the Monistenbund after Haeckel, was a Professor of Physical Chemistry—they are apt to stress too much the relative importance of their own branch or to transfer its methods, hypotheses and laws into spheres where they do not belong. In spite of these difficulties making the task of the "universal scientists" especially arduous, there have been men who undertook it feeling the need and possibility: (a) to educate a logically thinking individual who has mastered and retained the basic scientific truths so that he puts everything newly acquired in its logically proper place and almost automatically rejects what has been proved to be superstitious; (b) to make this philosophy universal with the help of an appropriate system of education; (c) to base, as far as possible, on this generally acceptable and generally accepted philosophy—or at least to bring into harmony with it—the organisation of society, and the aesthetic and moral education.

These systems, called "religions" by their founders, are highly destructive for Christianity though both Comte and Haeckel stress repeatedly that they want to preserve what was good in it. They disagree, however, in the relative appreciation of Catholicism and Protestantism, the Frenchman preferring the former, the German the latter. Comte refuses any metaphysics, and with it naturally all basic Christian dogmas. Irresistibly stride the six abstract sciences of his hierarchy from the theological, through the metaphysic to the final—positive—stage. Comte's destructive influence upon Christianity is due not so much to his direct criticisms of Christian doctrines—he does not imitate the "incomplete demolishers" of the 18th century—but to the admirable logical harmony of the system of his six abstract sciences (mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology) contained in his basic work, *Course of Positive Philosophy*.

Ernst Haeckel, as a contemporary of the "Kulturkampf," is and has to be militant. He repeats frequently his "ceterum autem censeo" about the existence of a personal God, about the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will, the three postulates of Kantian practical reason.

The personal God of modern theosophy is, in his words, a "gaseous vertebral." He refuses the belief in a personal God, whether based on revelation or arrived at by reasoning *a posteriori*, though the step from the purest, the least anthropomorphic, forms of monotheism to his pantheism does not appear very great to him. Laplace did not need the "hypothesis" of a personal God in Astronomy, Haeckel does not need it in any science. For those who see in God the creator of the world there must arise new questions: "From where does this personal God come? And what was he doing before creating the world? Where did he take the material for it?" Although amphitheism, the belief in two Gods (a good one and an evil one) explains better the presence of evil in the world than monotheism, the belief in a personal Devil has long been given up by educated people. The same will be the fate of the belief in a personal God. The soul is not immortal, being a mere function of the mortal brain, a physiological abstraction just as assimilation of food or generation of new organisms. If the substance of the soul were really gaseous, as many people used to think, it should be possible to liquefy it like other gases and exhibit it in a bottle as "immortal fluid" (*fluidum animae immortale*). Another difficulty is in what stage of their individual development the disembodied souls will spend their eternal life. "There are plenty of men who would gladly sacrifice all the glories of Paradise if it meant the eternal companionship of their 'better half' and their mother-in-law." The human will "has no more freedom than that of the higher animals, from which it differs only in degree. . . . The character of the inclination was determined long ago by *heredity* from parents and ancestors; the determination to each particular act is an instance of *adaptation* to the circumstances of the moment wherein the strongest motive prevails, according to the laws which govern the statics of emotion." Haeckel discusses even the historicity of Jesus, the authenticity of the Gospels, Papal infallibility, the dogma of the immaculate conception, etc. He contrasts the original Christians with the domination of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. His most bitter attacks are aimed at the hypocrisy and moral corruption of Churches and he calls for the separation of the Church from the State.

Comte says that we should destroy only what we replace by something else. And indeed he replaces not only the Christian dogmas by his hierarchy of sciences, but, in his "second life," also the Christian cult by a cult of his own. His methods of worship (e.g., prayer to the subjective image of an idealised woman representing Mankind) imitate partly those of the Roman Catholic Church, partly are invented. A Positivist should pray three times a day, the total duration of his daily prayers being two hours. Comte's cult is certainly not more ridiculous than that of any other religion, but has seemed so to many critics because of its novelty. His ethics are founded on altruism. Mankind is the Supreme Being, the Goddess of his religion. To love one's neighbour as one does oneself is not enough, we must live exclusively for others.

The gradation of altruism is also the last goal of our scientific study and Comte warns against the moral dangers of one-sided specialisation in a single science. Imitating the Middle Ages he separates the temporal power of the decentralised State from the spiritual power of his universal positivist clergy.

(To be continued)

## Theatre

"Hanging Judge." By Raymond Massey. New Theatre.

SIR FRANCIS BRITAIN is a judge whose firm belief it is that British law cannot err, and that capital punishment is the only solution for a man found guilty of murder. With this aim in view he directs juries to find verdicts of guilty.

We learn that the judge has lived a double life, and that he visits his Norfolk house during vacations under an assumed name. Here he employs a maid-cum-mistress, and here, too, his son by a former mistress visits him and commits suicide in his presence. The judge, instead of behaving calmly and calling the police, panics and throws the body down a well.

It is part of the plot of the play that he is discovered, tried and sentenced to death by one of his colleagues. In fact, he is such a firm upholder of the law and its working that he writes a written confession rather than leave any doubt that there has been a miscarriage of justice in his case. Of course, this is not all the plot; it is up to you to see it and discover it for yourself.

In this adaptation from Bruce Hamilton's novel, Raymond Massey shows clearly that he is a man of the theatre. The leading characters come well to life (though some secondary ones are merely types) and the dialogue is excellent. It may be argued, however, that we are not taken direct to the scenes of events, with the exception of the house in Norfolk where the most dramatic scenes are enacted. For the rest, we see a London club, where events are the talk of the judge's legal acquaintances, or we see the jury arguing about the verdict. But what scenes we do see have sufficient brilliance in their writing to make the play attractive.

Under Michael Powell's smart production most of the acting is of a high standard. Godfrey Tearle gives a fine performance as the judge, and I was also attracted particularly by Denis Shaw as a club footman, John Robinson as Sir George Sidney, and Bartlett Mullins, who tried the case of the judge.

For the two and three-quarter hours of this play we may well forget that much that takes place is highly improbable.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

## TWO BARGAINS

WE HAVE PURCHASED the entire stock of F. A. RIDLEY'S masterly work, "SOCIALISM AND RELIGION." The only work in English now in print dealing with this vital question. We can offer this at ONE SHILLING, post 1½d. Order promptly. "One of the best things Ridley has ever written."

We have also a few copies of THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AGAINST THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by AVRO MANHATTAN, 470 pp., published at 5s., now offered at 2s. 6d. (postage 5d.).

### NOW READY

#### PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

Complete Series of 18 bound in ONE VOLUME

Price 5/- Postage 3d.

Chapman Cohen at his most lucid

## Correspondence

### MATERIALISM

SIR,—Thanks for reply in October 26 issue.

I was aware that the quotation about a Materialist having logically to be an Individualist was Dr. Mayer's. I wanted to know if Mr. H. Cutner endorsed it; assuming that he would agree with me that often Collectivists, Socialists and Communists are *logically* Materialists—and Freethinkers. Am I right?—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

### OUR NEW FORMAT

SIR,—As an old subscriber to *The Freethinker*, I would like to thank you and all others concerned for the very great improvement of the paper in the current issue—not so much an improvement as a complete metamorphosis, for it is practically impossible to compare it with its old-time appearance, apart from the fact, or the old adage, that "comparisons are odious." It is now a finished production, which must have exercised the "thinking caps" of those responsible for such a fine result and reflects great credit upon them who have succeeded so well in giving the paper a real touch of dignity. In writing this I feel sure I voice the opinions of all of its readers, and in cordially wishing it increased success in the task of carrying on its good work.—Yours, etc.,

CHARLES A. SWEETMAN.

### THE STRAFFEN CASE

SIR,—It will interest many of your readers to know that in the House of Commons the Home Secretary has announced that the Report of the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment is likely to be presented within the next few months.

There is a possibility that the Royal Commission may have something to recommend with regard to insane murderers, and our barbarous method of execution.

I would like to point out to Mr. C. H. Norman that nothing in *The Freethinker* correspondence warrants him in leading anyone to suppose that I might favour the idea that all insane persons should be put to death. Such a notion is most objectionable. What I said was that if Straffen was returned to Broadmoor he might escape again, and that would be a poor outlook for any children coming across his path.

Mr. Norman appears to believe that persons detained in asylums are not well treated. I have visited most of the mental hospitals (no longer called asylums) in and near London, and am convinced that everything humanely possible is done for the well-being of the patients. Fortunately, many of them enjoy lucid intervals during which they live happy and interesting lives, and many patients recover their sanity. I would advise those people interested in the subject to read "Inside Broadmoor," a revealing book written by John Edward Allen and published this year.—Yours, etc.,

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

### UNITED EUROPE

SIR,—I am afraid that Mr. F. A. Ridley's analysis of the contemporary conception of a United Europe is only too accurate. An idea which, to my mind, could have helped the world a little on the way to peace and prosperity has become a deadly weapon in the armoury of reaction.

The real tragedy lies in the fact that it would seem that the unification of Europe is something of a historical necessity. The economic conditions prevailing in Western Europe, the breakdown and the mutual contradictions of the export programmes, for instance, suggest that at least economic nationalism is dead.

I cannot help thinking that somehow or other democracy is to blame for the perversion of so important an ideal. We are so slow in thinking out long-term plans, and so prone to abstract ideas. The dictator always seems to get the first!—Yours, etc.,

RICHARD KEAN.

### INVENTIONS

SIR,—I had always thought that George Stephenson, not Stevenson, built the engine known as the Rocket and won the prize offered for the best locomotive. Most natives of Northumbria will agree. And as a Freethinker and Cornishman I protest against Mr. Paul Varney's statement that a Richard Trevethic built a locomotive in South Wales. It was the Cornishman Richard Trevithick who did the job. In 1893 I was a student in Exeter Training College, where one of the tutors was Richard Trevithick, a direct descendant, and who was proud to bear the same name as his worthy ancestor.—Yours, etc.,

R. R. PRYNNE.

## Aerial Interception

The Archdeacon of Stafford, the venerable W. A. Parker, has protested to the Air Ministry that military aircraft flew yesterday at such a low altitude over St. Mary's Church that his prayers for world peace were completely inaudible.—*The Daily Mail*.