

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 15

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

AMONGST the more pleasing aspects of this so composite world of the 20th century must be counted the wide diffusion of serious literature in cheap reprints. If such genuine literature does not quite equal the mountains of pornographic rubbish and "thrillers" in its diffusion, it does manage to attain quite substantial proportions, and this is all to the good in the making of an educated democracy. Amongst the cheap editions of more serious literature a high place is taken in contemporary publication by the excellent Penguin and Pelican series which, between them, have made so many valuable contributions accessible to the general public.

Amongst the more recent volumes re-issued by the Pelican series, is a collection of essays by Bertrand (Earl) Russell, all of which had seen the light in earlier, more expensive editions. The volume in question consists of ten essays, mostly of a rather technical nature. Rather surprisingly, the volume takes its name in chronological fashion from the first of these essays, the semi-technical study of the rational and intuitive aspects of science, entitled by the author, *Mysticism and Logic*. We say, "rather surprisingly," since both this initial essay and all its technical successors are flung into the shade as regards both fame, brilliance and eloquence, by the famous essay, *A Free Man's Worship*, which would have seemed to be the obvious title of these collected essays, but which is obscurely tucked away in the middle of the volume.

Bertrand Russell does not, of course, need any personal introduction to the readers of a rationalist paper like *The Freethinker*. In an age in which science is so nearly swamped by superficiality and in which ninety per cent., at least, of reputations are faked reputations, Bertrand Russell has achieved a many-sided world-wide fame on merit and on merit alone. Since the passing of Bernard Shaw, he stands, we should imagine, beyond criticism as the greatest and, also, as the most widely recognised intellect in these islands to-day.

Earl Russell had, indeed, aristocratic lineage and an academic background to assist his rise to fame. But the advanced minority opinions which he has consistently advocated, are not precisely of the kind to bring him aristocratic approval. Whilst, as those not dazzled by the parade of academic titles are well aware, real originality is as rare amongst University dons as elsewhere—indeed, perhaps rarer. For what Bernard Shaw once aptly described as "the swindle of examinations," has done its work so well that, despite the fabulous wealth and prestige of Oxford and Cambridge, we very much doubt if there have been half a dozen dons in either University during the past half-century whose names are now remembered by the world at large.

Bertrand Russell is certainly one of them, whatever vicissitudes his fame may subsequently undergo. Apart from an undisputed fame in the field of the higher mathematics, and a perhaps somewhat more equivocal fame in

the domain of philosophical speculation, as sociologist, controversialist, and as man of letters, Bertrand Russell's fame is world-wide and, it would seem, secure, as far as such things can be predicted in advance. He is one of the last of the Victorians and if he does not quite measure up to the greatest—say, to Darwin and Spencer—he could probably hold his own with most of the others in sheer ability. Having, spent his life in studying the nature of reality, Bertrand Russell seems now resolved to end it writing fiction, perhaps the last form of reality.\*

With the one exception already noted, the essays in *Mysticism and Logic* are, it must be confessed, somewhat "heavy going" for the

average Pelican reader, unless he or she is endowed with the gift of omniscience. Indeed, but for the author's remarkable lucidity, most of the matters treated in, say, *mathematics and the metaphysicians, or on the notion of cause*, would, we imagine, be quite unintelligible even to the average educated reader. But there is much to be learned from them all. In the essay which gives the volume before us its title, *Mysticism and Logic*, the relative role of intuition here rather surprisingly described as "mysticism," and of logic in the formation of the philosophical intellect are strikingly described and illustrated in combination in the mental make-up of such giants in the realm of thought as Heraclitus of Ephesus, Spinoza, and Hegel. Incidentally, a dictum in this titular essay would hardly, we think, please Lord Russell's philosophical offspring, the "logical positivists," when the great philosopher goes on record with the judgment that philosophy is a greater thing than either science or religion. But then, perhaps Bertrand Russell regards the "logical positivists" as his illegitimate offspring.

We confess that, mathematics being congenitally a mystery to us—a modern form of hieroglyphics!—we were quite unable to follow most of the subtle reasoning contained in the two no doubt illuminating essays entitled, respectively, *The Study of Mathematics and Mathematics and the Metaphysicians*. We believe the learned author has himself somewhere declared that, "in mathematics, we never know what we are talking about or whether what we are saying is true!" Whilst metaphysics have been concisely defined as "the art of mistaking words for things." But we must refer our mathematical and metaphysical readers to the author's pages in order to explore this enigmatic subject more fully. As one to whom all mathematics represent a book sealed with the proverbial seven seals, we may express our satisfaction on learning here from one of the most eminent of living mathematicians that the venerable Euclid of unhallowed memory, has been, it seems, effectively debunked by two Danish gentlemen named Cantor and Dedekind. More power to their elbows, as our Irish friends say!

\* Lord Russell's first volume of fiction, *Satan in the Suburbs*, was published a few weeks ago.

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### A Free Man's Worship

—By F. A. RIDLEY—



As we noted above, nine out of ten of these re-issued essays are technical or specialised in treatment or subject matter. Their excellence has to be taken largely on trust by the average non-technical reader. However, this certainly does not apply to number three—why not number one in this series, the famous *A Free Man's Worship*, originally written in 1902, at the age of thirty? Though the style may appear to our age of journalistic compression as rather ornate and even, perhaps, as a trifle overwritten, we do not think that it can reasonably be doubted that *A Free Man's Worship* is, simultaneously, one of the most brilliant essays in our language and, quite possibly, the most eloquent assertion of defiant human reason in the face of a cold and hostile universe to be found anywhere in modern literature.

The finest passages in the famous Essay rise to Promethean grandeur. Hardly was Victoria in her tomb

when the grandson of one of her prime ministers flung his defiant concluding challenge in the teeth, alike, of Victorian optimism and of religious orthodoxy.

"Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. . . ." But the whole of this magnificent essay should be read by every freethinker. We predict that it will long survive the author's more ambitious technical studies. Its resounding eloquence is truly extraordinary from a professor of the dry-as-dust sciences of logic and mathematics!

We congratulate *Pelican Books* on this re-issue of some of the most remarkable works of one of the most remarkable intellects of our time.

*Mysticism and Logic* and other essays, by Bertrand Russell: *Pelican Books*, 3s. 6d.

## An Introduction to Dialectical Materialism

By JIM GRAHAM

OF THREE main sources of philosophy: Theology, Idealism and Materialism, the freethinker naturally adheres to materialism as the rational view. There are, however, many sides to each of these bases in philosophy, and it may be of interest to note some of the differences.

### Thinking and Being

The relationship of thinking and being has been one of the most discussed questions in the history of the human race. Theologian and Idealist alike both place thought, or the idea, as being primary to matter, and the material as secondary. On the other hand the materialist puts matter as primary and thinking, or the idea, as the reflection in the minds of men of their material environment. Thinking is regarded as a function of matter organised in a certain fashion and is an attribute of the highest form of matter.

In its historical development, however, materialism has taken different forms such as mechanical materialism, which regards nature as a complicated machine. There is no doubt this outlook worked well in a great many ways and especially in an industrial machine age, but difficulties soon arose because the mode of existence of nature was dialectical, not mechanical. To speak of regarding nature dialectically is to understand a process with its constant changes, external and internal transformations, growth and decadence; things in their becoming and passing away.

Many mechanical analogies quite successful at comparatively low speeds fail completely when applied to high speeds approaching that of light. An interesting story is told of Lord Kelvin, the leading scientist of his day, failing to produce electro-magnetic waves because he could not build a model of the experiment. He rejected Maxwell's equations because he could not visualise them mechanically. Many electrical phenomena are not suitable for demonstration by mechanical analogy.

Another well known instance of the limitations of mechanical materialism, which deals mainly with external action, or simple change of place, was shown by Dr. Johnson's attempt to answer Bishop Berkeley by kicking a stone. This incident was no real answer to the dogmatic idealists.

Strangely enough, however, some of the most effective evidence of dialectical materialism was unwittingly put in the hands of science by theologians and idealists themselves. The example of Kant's theory of the origin of the solar system known as the Nebular Hypothesis is such a case. This hypothesis became one of the most devastating in astronomical history for at a stroke it abolished a creator

from the heavens as being no longer necessary. The solar system was now self-sufficient and its motion inherent in the construction. The famous remark of Laplace to Napoleon arose from a discussion of this theory. Laplace, one of the world's great mathematicians gave Kant's theory mathematical analysis and support and was asked by Napoleon where the creator of the universe appeared in that system. Laplace gave the famous reply: "Sire, we have no need for that hypothesis."

There is little doubt that the most important science of that time was astronomy. A knowledge of this science made the Great Navigations possible. It gave dates for men to prepare for seed time and harvests. From observations of celestial bodies they calculated time and made maps and charts which enabled them to locate any position on land or sea. Materialists were not slow to make use of many of these laws—not imposed on—but taken from nature. The fact that the Nebular Hypothesis is not now generally accepted by astronomers as the origin of the solar system is irrelevant. Sir James Jeans has said, there is scarcely any part of the universe to which it cannot be applied except to the solar system.

### Dialectics: Idealist and Materialist

One reason why Freethinkers should find dialectical materialism interesting is that they are concerned with the search for truth, and it is used by men to try to understand the universe as it is. Motion—external and internal—the mode of existence of matter, and this has been known to dialecticians for thousands of years. Many expressions have come down to us from the past and the words of Heraclitus are well known: "Nothing is; everything is becoming." Another of his sayings was, "You cannot step twice in the same river." They were close reasoners those Greeks, and a rival, Cratylus, said, "You cannot step in the same river even once." Some of the laws of dialectics were also used by Socrates in his famous dialogues.

These are simple illustrations, but dialectics has developed greatly since that time. It is the theory of knowledge which regards all matter in the universe as in motion, with all its connections, interactions, changes coming into being and passing away. The dialectician observes nature as it is, with full regard to the limits imposed on him as being part of the whole.

We have already noted the effect on philosophy of some dialecticians who were idealists, and one of the most important of them was Hegel. Dialectics were revolutionary, and Hegel was born in a revolutionary age. One of his statements, much quoted, he says: "All that is



real is rational, and all that is rational is real." This expression has been used to show him as a reactionary, but this is not altogether true, for in his earlier life he welcomed the triumph of the bourgeoisie, and the fall of monarchies and nobilities was accepted by him because they were no longer rational or real. He regarded the absolute idea as being primary rather than the material conditions of life, being idealist in this respect, and later in life defending the status quo so far as society was concerned and supporting the monarchy and nobility. The fact that a reactionary German Government was his master probably accounted for his lack of enthusiasm in social progress.

The Hegelian school broke up into wings and it was from the left Hegelians that the most devastating criticism of organised religion came. Chief among the leaders of this break from the Hegelian idealism was Ludwig Feuerbach. Orthodox religion and materialist dialectics—on the one side static dogmas, on the other continuous change—were bound to clash. One after another, Feuerbach riddled the religious dogmas, showing on analysis they were only myths, and religion but the fantastic projections of men's own egos. He regarded man objectively and as part of nature itself.

Along the trail broken by Feuerbach came others from the left Hegelian group. They had wider horizons, and they ranged far beyond the frontiers of Feuerbach. Marx showed the weakness of taking the objective approach by itself and pointed out that while primarily material conditions determined men's consciousness, men also reacted on their environment, and in changing this they changed

themselves. He was also careful to point out that religion resides on the earth, not in the sky, and would collapse with the dissolution of the distorted actuality whose theory it presents.

It has been truly said that Marx took certain of the methods of Hegel's system of dialectics, but instead of the absolute idea of Hegel as his base, he took material conditions regarding the idea as the derivative. In many ways his system was the opposite of Hegel's. Hegel's system was standing on its head; Marx set it right side up. It would be equally true to say, therefore, that what Marx took from Hegel chiefly was his departure.

Students of dialectical materialism must keep in mind not only the activity of objective processes, but also their own social activity in their attempts to change their environment for the better. It is well to bear in mind the famous words of Marx: "The philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

Dialectical materialism has its laws and rules which must be learned in order to apply it correctly. Everyone knows, for instance, it is necessary to learn the rules of mathematics before correct results can be obtained in operation. Even the correct manipulation of arithmetic can give misleading results (for example, the working out of averages) unless correctly applied. It is worth while learning some of these rules, for it has been said that this theory of knowledge is the most powerful tool and the sharpest weapon of those who try to change the world for the better. There is no greater study.

## Changes of the Keys to the Doors of "The Man made Laws"

By (Mrs.) MARY BEESLEY

NEXT door to where I was born, a man used to keep his children in suspense for weeks for a hiding with a horse whip, in his stables, for not working hard (a milkman) and when a neighbour reminded him there was a "new law," to punish cruelty to children as well as for animals, he became civilised, and very pious shortly after.

And when an Act of Parliament required parents to send children to school, many parents had no means to pay for education, which was one key to men requiring better wages, and as many children went to school without breakfast, and—naturally—they were physically incapable of learning, was another key to the voice of female teachers and men's voices being heard and noticed by men of all political views, because social reforms belong to every phase of thought—Freethought, politics, etc., which make logic—inquiries that have made the State responsible for children. And naturally, those who are allowed to enter Parliament and preach on the air of the power of their religion, state: "Give the credit for all reforms and good to Christian, duty-bound actions, instead of to civilisation."

Yet, when it was law for every able person to go to church on Sundays, there was not any for animals.

After, it was men apart from any sect, or denomination, who realised it was time they changed the unadopted habit of never changing the family's rules, or political conditions wanting plasticity of a modern family, in which each man as he comes of age, should adopt any career, or politics, that seems the best on the whole—from their own point of view—or studies, made possible by cheaper literature.

The strictness of authority, both of church and home-life, was unfavourable to the growth of affection, or being true to oneself; making a stern world of duty

rather than natural affection of Ingersoll, of U.S.A.

And as the white man became the negro's possessive master, both on rubber plantations ruling, and slaves created, our sent-fruit, rice, foods, which came over cheaper than to-day, as they, like the white man, are becoming more civilised and educated. They, like us, are demanding their rights and naturally will not bend their backs, as in the past, without proper pay. Thus our food is much dearer from abroad, to-day.

As it is civilisation, not sentiment, that is the greatest asset to the rights of man—and happiness. And now the father has ceased to be allowed to slay or sell his children, or make them work as my own parents did (even with good parents) at seven years of age, old laws became weakened: also by workers being able to emigrate, and have intercourse with foreigners have old customs become dislocated and the progress of free speech, or reflection—which tend to make youth more daring—with their own mental thoughts spoken, ancestor-worship, or rules laid down, have vanished gradually.

When moving pictures or cinemas first opened, there was a screen with the king's photo in the middle, and all the names of the countries he ruled over, and I remarked to the manager that such a screen would be a key to open up a war, naturally, of mental attitude in youthful minds, and shortly after, it was seen no more.

For in our Coronation Year, 1953, the Scottish folk are reminding us there was no Queen Elizabeth the First—and others too, for them—which our Queen Elizabeth the Second now reigns over, creating a problem like the Stone in our London Cathedral.

(Concluded on page 116)



## This Believing World

It would prove most interesting to learn from the B.B.C. whether its religious section is now certain that its school broadcasts on "Religion and Philosophy" have made every child into a convinced Christian? Those of the series we listened to were a mixture of twaddle and bosh, particularly the last given by Dr. Farrar which, for sheer incomprehensibility and spinosity, should get the B.B.C. "Oscar" for the year. It is not, of course, Dr. Farrar's fault that he was so unintelligible—that is the fault of a Christianity trying to be "reasonable." You cannot reason into such a religion; only Faith, pure Unadulterated Faith, can make you into a Fundamentalist like Dr. Farrar himself—God bless him! —

The World Council of Churches is in a bit of a fix, for one of its most Christian members, Dr. J. D. Bennett—according to the American journal *Christian Beacon*—has plumped for Christian Socialism or Communism as the infallible cure for all our evils. Religion is absolutely necessary for the risen Christ's sake, and Communism for the sake of world economics. As he says in his book, *Christianity and Communism*: "Communism inherits from the Biblical Faith its passion for social justice" and this makes us wonder which side will first "liquidate" the other the Christian Communists or the Atheistic Communists? But needless to add, *Christian Beacon* itself does not like Dr. Bennett. It asks, "Shall he, the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches destroy America and win a socialist revolution?" It's for the Churches to answer that one.

Another American journal, the *Christian Advocate*, is the official organ of the Methodist Church and it published an article some weeks back by a Methodist parson, "Why I like Roman Catholicism," which might well have come from a true-blue Catholic—say, Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene. The parson, the Rev. A. O. Ackenbom, went into raptures, particularly because when a Roman Catholic "comes to Mass, he comes into the presence of Christ." There is, in fact, no doubt "of this reality." Mr. Ackenbom adds, "How I covet this assurance for many lukewarm Methodists!"

It is usual for Protestants to claim that all this business of the Mass, the Host, and Communion generally, is purely "symbolic." Good Protestants never like being told that they actually eat their God and drink His Living Blood. But there it is as a thoroughly true Christian like Mr. Ackenbom avers—it is not "symbolic." At Mass, you are in the presence of Christ though, it is true, he does not say what happens to the "presence" after you have eaten up Jesus. Still, why should such tiny difficulties worry a Methodist? Accept Jesus anywhere, anyhow, and all shall be forgiven thee—we hope!

As the revisers of the new American Revised Version of the Bible must have guessed, a howling protest all over the States has arisen against some of the new "readings," especially those like the Virgin Birth prophecy in Isaiah which throws overboard the traditional translations and admit the Jews were right in protesting against them. Big meetings have been and are being held against the Version as being "Un-American and un-Christian," and attacking the "modernist," "liberal," and "Unitarian" (Jewish?) influences responsible for "distorting the Word of God."

We are sure that, in this battle for the preservation of the King James's Version, it will win for many years still. "Rationalising" some of the myths and legends in the

Bible will never be popular. They must be believed unquestionably for true Christian Faith requires no Reason. Believe or be damned is the Christian slogan, and any attempt to make a story "reasonable" is silly. The more idiotic it is, the more it should be believed, as Tertullian saw so well! So we add our curses to the Christian ones against any tampering of Holy Writ.

## Theatre

*L'Enfant Prodiges* at the Arts Theatre brings us the delight of Michel Carré's dumb play, mimed to André Wormser's music.

Archie Harradine, who plays Monsieur Pierrot, is very expressive. He has produced not quite flawlessly, and I would have preferred to see more of the soldier in Pierrot's performance towards the end. Yomas Sasburgh, as Pierrot, only just fails to suggest sufficient masculinity. But her performance, as well as Sara Luzita's as the laundress, is well finished.

The good timing of Nancy Weir's piano playing gives the production a finish which makes it worthy of your keenest attention.

*Good Laird* at Boltons Theatre is a farce which—if put into good shape by one or two minor adjustments—could take its place in the West End. It is written by David Rydman.

The story of two Scots from the Outer Hebrides, who come to London to learn the ways of the English and prove to be little more than brawny simpletons, is original and comes over with great hilarity. John Rae and Graham Lines gave these two kilted northerners a spirit like a hurricane blowing through a middle-class suburban family.

Donald Monat's production is well handled, but the end of act two could be made more effective with more rehearsing.

*Macbeth* takes on the form of Donald Wolfitt at the King's Theatre, a part which he can cope with as capably as the many others he is performing in this interesting season. I prefer Rosalind Iden's *Lady Macbeth* to her recent *Portia*.

As a production for a repertory company this play has certain advantages, for it does not demand the subtle acting of most Shakespeare plays. The supporting players are noticeably weak in the fighting scenes, but the effect as a whole—thanks for Mr. Wolfitt—is satisfying.

This play will be repeated at various dates in May and June.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

"THE MAN MADE LAWS"—(Concluded from page 115)

And now, in 1953, with the Press being broader owing to women's entrance into universities and politics, and scientific duties, rational men and women are trying social experiments—trying again and again, like animals clinging to the bars of a cage—with their own efforts, to create understanding and freedom in an age when a man-made world of thought still keeps out noble Freethinkers in the affairs of State, and debars all agnostics from being Mayor, or Mayoress, or giving their mental views on air to the multitudes who listen. Why?

Like wine, the stronger powers of time resent changes of sentiment or man-made laws.

NOW READY

THE FREETHINKER

VOL. 72

Bound green cloth, lettered gold

PRICE 24/- Postage 1/-



# THE FREETHINKER

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

## To Correspondents

Mr. P. TURNER wishes to thank the sender of a small gift to him and would be obliged for the name of the kind sender.  
The FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.  
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.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.  
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY.  
Suehela Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.  
West London Branch N.S.S. — Open Air Meetings commence Sunday, April 12, and every Sunday following at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 12, 8 p.m.: A Debate.

### INDOOR

Bristol Rationalist Group (Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell Street). — Wednesday, April 15, 7-30 p.m.: Lecture, "The Philosophy of Materialism."  
Laleham Forum (Laleham Village Hall, near Staines).—Monday, April 13, 8 p.m.: Debate, "This House is of the opinion that the Christian era is drawing to its close." Proposer, F. A. RIDLEY President, N.S.S.). Opposer, the Rev. C. GARWOOD, of Staines Methodist).

## Secular Miracles

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

I HAVE already suggested in *The Freethinker* that man can create a sufficiency of miracles and that we don't have to "go religious" to find wonders on earth. But now I would like to add a postscript to my article, *In Search of the Miraculous*, for it is scandalous that no section of the community seems interested in our secular miracles. If any dreary old church is falling down, there is an outcry; but who troubles about the world's first skyscrapers which were built by Sussex fishermen? The fact that they are tottering and listing and tumbling seems to be of general unconcern; and the local council, one is told, are simply eager to sweep them away and spread another concrete playground for the robots.

We are all being diminished and diluted in a collective age, and if the miraculous monuments of the past are lost—the monuments which provide the atmosphere of wonder and are not just engineering feats—it will be that much easier for the church to claim "the harrowing up of the soul" as an exclusively religious marvel.

But while you are speculating and elaborating, let me tell you the story of the Sussex skyscrapers. You can check up by going down to see them, for there's an excursion train, although the excursionists don't bother about the grandparents of The Empire State Building. They, of course, are after the concrete swimming baths and chromium piers and the seaside cuties who actually have a mermaid technique with their legs.

To reach the cyclopean towers, one has to walk through the "unfashionable" quarter of the town, away from the cheap flash that could outstare the eyes in a moulting peacock's tail. One has to walk through picturesque streets where, yesterday, there was a menagerie; and a tattered poster still innocently asks the passer-by if he's ever seen a

live monkey. And then if you can get past the fishermen's pubs—and, oh, there is one with a short sturdy bar cat whose tail is in the finest feather—you reach The Strade, the déclassé shingle where the fishermen's boats are drawn up in an aroma of pine, shrimp, creosote, hemp, salt and linseed oil. Grandmother ventured here with her neat little bucket to gather seaweed to press in an album engraved with a tender warning: "Call Them Not Weeds, They Are Flowers Of The Sea." But grandmothers had a romantic picture of "the seaside," and the modern trippers have another and they don't come to the beach where the giant sentry boxes begin.

The towers, then, are so thin and tall that, alone, they could not resist the battering of winter gales, and so they cling together in clusters. One may walk among these pointed shapes and shadows and know a disturbing strangeness: one may appropriate and control the material which is ascribed to the mystic's world. Surrealistically, the towers remind us that we only think our dreams less "real" than our hours "awake" because we have not learnt to participate in our dreams. Here we may participate. They call the place Rock-a-Nore.

Well, the colossal coffins were erected at the end of the eighteenth century on piles driven into the foreshore; and to understand why Sussex fishermen built fantasies for "Tackle Boxes" (as the old men call them), one must imagine the scene before the groyne was constructed to reclaim the coast. The valley, between East and West Castle Hill, was crowded with houses, and the fishermen had no room for their "Net Shops" (as the young men call them) unless they built towards the stars. The towers were built upwards to economise in ground space, just as the inspiration of the New York architects was to find accommodation in the clouds. And remember that the famous Flat-Iron Building, the first American skyscraper, was not erected until 1895 by D. H. Burnham and Company.

The fishermen's skyscrapers are divided into three floors: one for herring nets, one for mackerel nets, and one for trawling gear. They were not built to give a big drop of drying space like the towers of fire stations: they were built as skyscrapers. On each floor there is a door which a man keeps open to let in light while he mends his tackle; and there are no windows, except for a few towers that have been converted into dwellings where families have been raised, or for an occasional ground floor which has become a small shop for marine oddments.

But the chapter in the history of wonder barely survives—at Hastings. Yes, I kept that to the end, for the towers are on the hidden edge of this popular resort. But who knows, or cares? I have spoken to hundreds who've spent a happy Hastings holiday and have never seen or heard of the shivering spires. I'm sure the lady who sat next to me on the excursion train would have slapped my face if I'd told her about them. She wore a green hat with one jaunty feather and she looked like Robin Hood; and she came back in the same hat with the feather turned round the other way, and she looked like Nellie Wallace.

Certainly it would be encouraging if the first move to preserve our secular miracles—of which the skyscrapers are but one example—came from Freethinkers who organised protests at Authority's vandalism because they believe that man can prove himself in his own miracles, and because the rest of the world is moved solely by threats to the fabric of churches.

## "The Freethinker" Fund

Previously acknowledged, £63 8s.; W. Forsyth, 6s.; W. Scarlett, 2s.; North London Branch N.S.S., £1 1s.; A. Hancock, 2s. (18th donation). Total: £64 19s.



# "The Geography of Hunger"—I.

By H. CUTNER

AS an out-and-out Malthusian myself, some readers of the enthusiastic reviews of Dr. de Castro's *Geography of Hunger*, by Bayard Simmons, and the Editor in these columns will not be surprised if I decline to share their enthusiasm. Dr. de Castro, who is a Socialist (and for all I know a Roman Catholic), like almost all "left" wingers is a violent opponent of Malthusianism, and his book is supposed to have wiped the followers of Malthus metaphorically off the map. Malthus has been "wiped up" in this way very much as Materialism has been wiped up. Many years ago Shaw Desmond, a complete believer in the most credulous fairy tales Spiritualism can invent, met Chapman Cohen in debate and confidently told him that Materialism was fighting in the last ditch. Well, we are still there—or rather, we have got out of the ditch, and it is the enemy who is retreating to a ditch of superstition, myth and legend. I feel it is somewhat the same with Dr. de Castro.

But before dealing with him a word should be said about the "Foreword" written by Lord Boyd Orr who is one of our foremost authorities on Food Problems and who is, if that were possible, even more enthusiastic about Dr. de Castro than our own writers. Perhaps the reason is that Lord Boyd Orr would prefer to think that God looks after every mouth that enters this vale of tears, and only man is vile enough to see that all are not fed. And though he confidently recommends the *Geography of Hunger* and its arguments—which are specially designed to show that Malthusians are entirely wrong—he, most "unfriendly-like," adds the following:—

Can the earth provide food on a health standard for this increased number (4,000 millions of people)? The author gives well-authenticated facts to show that there is no physical difficulty in doubling or redoubling the world food supply. *If the farmers fail us, the chemist has already shown the way to synthetic food.* (My italics.)

If Lord Boyd Orr had not been one of the world's greatest authorities on the population and food problem we could have ignored this lamentable nonsense. We are assured first that "well-authenticated facts" prove that farmers and food producers can double or redouble the world food supply—that is, there are no "physical difficulties" even if we quadruple the present world population to feeding over 8,000 millions of people. But "if"—what an unkind word this is!—if the farmers do fail us, though we are assured they won't, why then we can always fall back upon "synthetic" food made by the "chemists." Thus, if one of their periodic famines does hit the unfortunate Hindus and millions may die—why, they have only to walk round the corner or even in the same street, and there they will find the chemists doling out inexhaustible supplies of "synthetic" foods. I have read a great deal of twaddle in connection with attacks on Malthus but this seems to out-top everything I have ever read.

If the reader is interested at all in food problems let him get hold of *The English Complaint* by Dr. F. Bicknell, which will tell him something about our modern foods, about "our improved, tinned, preserved, gassed, chemicalised, dyed, diluted, poison-sprayed, poison-fed, over-cooked, extracted, blown-out, bleached, impoverished, sophisticated, dead, deficient food" as the author calls it. Of course, even these are not "synthetic" foods, but if

we can't improve ordinary food, what synthetic foods will be like when the chemist has done his best or worst. I shudder to think. And what about "artificial" fertilisers? We may well be forced to use them—but what is the cost to us in health? Is not cancer on the increase, are not parents trembling at the dread disease which might attack their children—polio? Are we quite sure that the chemicalised food we are forced to eat is not in some ways responsible? Synthetic foods indeed! And this comes from a world expert.

No one denies that if we had a hundred years of peace and every effort was made by practical farmers and agriculturists to deal with world-wide food problems there would be far less starvation in the world than there is to-day; but certainly not if they were constantly interrupted because some of the methods they suggested did not agree with pre-conceived "ideologies." I shall deal with de Castro later, but here it is necessary to emphasise that there is *no* political system which can survive unless the population problem, as formulated by Malthus, is taken into account; they will all fail in the end. And I have read nothing in de Castro which answers that point.

In the first place, I very much doubt whether he has ever read Malthus's famous *Essay*. He bitterly—and in my opinion—stupidly attacks it; but though he gives an extensive bibliography of the books referred to in the first chapter, he does not mention the *Essay*. He makes certain charges against Malthus without giving chapter and verse, and I am fairly certain that he took his attack on Malthus at secondhand. This may be due, of course, to the fact that de Castro wrote in Spanish and there may have been no Spanish translation of the *Essay* available, but I do not accept this excuse. It was his business to give us the exact words of Malthus before "demolishing" him.

He tells us that in England "Malthus's theories were widely accepted" which is quite untrue; and after being "widely accepted," his "theory, long buried in the ruins of his frightening predictions has lately been dug up and used to project new and still more terrifying forecasts, culminating in the prophecy of the end of the world depopulated by famine."

Now the *Essay* is a very big book, and de Castro should have given us chapter and verse for this prophecy. I cannot remember reading it, and in the very comprehensive index to my edition the words "end of the world" and "prophecy" do not occur. But, in discussing famines, Malthus actually points out that "a famine therefore seems to be almost impossible" in America. If a famine is impossible, or nearly impossible, in America, how could Malthus prophesy "the end of the world depopulated by famine"?

Malthus is quite wrong also because, says de Castro, "History itself has completely disproved the predictions of Malthus"—though he utterly fails to prove this; and it would weary the reader to take him up point by point on Malthus. I can only repeat that I have the greatest doubts that he ever read the famous *Essay* and I am sure that what is said about Malthus in the *Geography of Hunger* is so much nonsense.

The theory that de Castro puts in his book is that, far from over-population causing hunger, it is the very opposite—that is, hunger which causes too much population. The biggest populations are in those countries which



supply too little food for them; in the well-fed countries, fertility is not so great and therefore—as far as I understand de Castro—it is hunger which gives us enormous populations. Here are his words (p. 66): "The psychological effect of chronic hunger is to make sex important enough to compensate emotionally for the shrunken nutritional appetite," in fact, "Under normal conditions, it is universally agreed, the instincts toward reproduction

and nutrition compete with each other, and when one retreats, the other advances." That seems clear enough, but de Castro had already forgotten what he said on page 63. For there we find, "In the power for this anguished desire for food, man quickly puts aside his other desires, including those of a sexual nature." Man and animals when hungry, "lose their interest in sex." Could any stupid contradiction be more glaring?

# The Community and the Criminals

By C. H. NORMAN

THE House of Lords on November 18, 1952, held a debate on the Condition of the Prisons, which is almost as depressing to read as the debate recently commented upon asking for the restoration of flogging as a punishment of crime.

The great difficulty about securing proper conditions for the prison population is the indifference of the general public on this subject. Great surprise was expressed in England that the former population accepted so easily, or disregarded, the cruelties committed in the detention camps set up by the Nazi government for all sorts and conditions of people. The same comment has been made about the Russians in connection with the system of arbitrary detention and transportation in that country. Yet, in England, a most remarkable report was published during the war concerning the outrageous treatment of the untried persons detained under Regulation 18 B. Not a single newspaper to which it was sent ever referred to it. The present writer sent it to a number of His Majesty's judges, without eliciting a word of anxiety at the state of things disclosed. Very few people know that such a document exists: but its contents are sufficiently grim to warrant more hesitation in criticising the Germans and Russians on this topic.

The community is brought up on the Old Testament, which contains in Deuteronomy 19, 21, the following atrocious retaliatory principle: "And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." This kind of idea was running through the speeches of many of the noble lords, though they would deny it vigorously. The one truly reasonable speech was by the Scottish peer, Lord Saltoun, who protested against the reckless way in which many people are imprisoned for long periods, owing to the commission of a crime in a momentary lack of self-control. Incidentally, Scotland abolished the punishment of flogging for crimes over ninety years ago.

Another great problem is to convey to people who have never been in prison the degrading atmosphere which surrounds the whole of prison life from the moment the prison is entered till it is left. Yet there are means of information which the House of Lords and the House of Commons would do well to obtain and study. A transcript of the shorthand notes of the trial of the Parkhurst prisoners before Mr. Justice Hilbery at this year's Summer Assizes at Winchester would illuminate the minds of the legislators far more than the facile assurances of Prison Commissioners, governors and their like, though it is fair to say that Dr. Murdoch, the Medical Officer at Wandsworth, declared to a House of Commons Committee that the cellular conditions in that prison were "appalling and disgusting." Then there are two small booklets written by two men of different character, which completely convey the spirit of prison life, namely, "Thoughts on Prison," by the late E. D. Morel, who was "framed" during the 1914-1918 war, and

"Snobbery with Violence," by Count Potocki, which is an account of life in Wormwood Scrubs in 1932, which was much the same as life in that prison in 1916, as the writer can testify. Both those men, in my opinion, were wrongly convicted. That is a point which the noble lords who were concerned that conditions in prison should not be too easy entirely failed to consider, namely, the numbers of persons in any prison on any day who are there owing to a failure of justice on the part of the tribunal which has condemned them.

(To be concluded)

## French Clericalism on the Air

I OFTEN read in *The Freethinker* about the B.B.C. being under the Church's influence. The translation of an article published in the French paper, *Franc Tireur*—a strongly anti-clerical paper—will show your readers that in France, too, where Church and State are supposed to be apart, the Catholic Church has got a good hold on television—"Good day."

Of course, of course, it is absolutely untrue that our good priests have received the order to appropriate the television. A glance at the programmes for Sunday, December 21:—

- 10-20 to 12 o'clock: Religious broadcast—"the better part," film about the "Saint Jean de Dieu" brethren.
  - Children Drawings. Price of the Gospel League.
  - Televised Mass—Sermon by the R. P. Chevignard.
  - "The Life of Jesus," a film by M. Gibaud; and so on.
- So, all Sunday morning—that is the day when everyone can look at the T.V.—our National Television gives us the Mass.

But, as far as we know, there are not only church-goer Catholics among the viewers.

When one has bought a set, one is not yet obliged to give to the salesman the last ticket of confession.

Believers, if they really want to attend mass on Sunday, have just to go to the church in their district.

Why is it that the National Television, which respects (I suppose) the freedom of worship, does not have broadcasts of ceremonies at the Mosque, at the Protestant Chapel, or at the Synagogue?

And why not at the meeting place of a Lodge? And if, for once, the viewers were to prefer on Sunday morning a film on the life of Jesus la Caille?

Do you not find that, with the 819 lines, the clergy has become a little much "Have you seen me?"

JEAN TONDIC.

Translator's remarks:—a Lodge—in France, Freemasons are essentially against the Church and mostly Freethinkers. Jesus la Caille—anyone. The 819 lines—French television broadcasts on 819 lines.

**SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.** By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s.; postage 1½d.

**THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS.** By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.



## Correspondence

### FOR ESPERANTO

SIR.—Esperantists are, needless to say, fully aware that during the course of time various other projects for an international language have been presented to the world—although very few have progressed beyond the dictionary and text-book stage.

Therefore; the advice of your correspondent Mr. Hoey that Esperantists should read the *Loom of Language* by Prof. Friederick Bodmer, appears to be rather superfluous although, incidentally, a copy of this interesting work does have a place on my bookshelves.

Personally, I feel that Bodmer's expressed dissatisfaction with Esperanto is, to say the least, unfair—insofar as he makes no reference at all to Esperanto's good points, which far outweigh any unfavourable ones. In any case, Esperantists, being ordinary men and women, are not seeking philological perfection, as was the academic author of the book, but a practical means of communication with the peoples of the world, and in Esperanto one finds not merely theory—but *practice*.—Yours, etc.,

BASIL J. EDGECOMBE.

### FAITH HEALING

SIR.—Let me assure Mr. Corrick that I do not for a moment deny that "cures" take place under Mr. Harry Edwards' hands just as they do through the many healers whose names occur in *Psychic News*. Cures also take place at Lourdes, Fatima, and other Christian shrines, as well as at Buddhist and Hindu shrines. I can assure Mr. Corrick also that I know for a fact that cures have taken place through patent medicines (despised by doctors) and at places like Vichy, Bath, and Harrogate through drinking their spring waters. And what about Christian Science? Mrs. Eddy and her friends would not have become millionaires if cures were never forthcoming. Then there are the minute doses of drugs administered by homœopaths which certainly cure; in fact, there is no end to cures—even by the holy magic words sometimes used by priests as commanded in the Bible.

In the *Sunday Graphic* for March 15 last, there was the case of Miss Kerin described. She had been bedridden for five years with a rare disease. The doctors gave her up and were waiting for her death. Then "quite suddenly she sat up," and asked for some food which, not being forthcoming, she prepared herself in the kitchen. She was quite cured—without any faith healing, or even medicine. Perhaps Mr. Corrick will be able to explain why?—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

### OATH OR AFFIRMATION?

SIR.—Listening the other evening, February 10, to the programme "The Younger Generation," that had as its subject "An Action for Defamation of Character Against Mr. Gilbert Harding" for a comment of his about the young people of to-day, I noted with surprise and applause that each witness brought forward to testify was asked to affirm in preference to giving evidence upon oath.

Assuming that the persons asked to take part in the programme were not instructed to tell lies, it would seem that the B.B.C. had sufficient respect for the honesty of its fellow-countrymen as to deem it unnecessary that the Christian deity should be invoked as a preventive to any deliberate inaccuracy of testimony.

Can the B.B.C., I wonder, be of the opinion that the oath is of such little consequence to people to-day that it is not the most likely procedure for the ascertainment of truth?

Are we at last witnessing the conversion of our National(?) Broadcasting Company to the outlook of Freethought?

I suggest, sir, you watch carefully this most progressive and direct snub to the established religion.—Yours, etc.,

RAYMOND AKSED.

### PRACTICAL RATIONALISM

SIR.—I thoroughly support the letter by E. Belchambers in February 8 issue of *The Freethinker* with regard to Rationalists showing some willingness to do practical work instead of leaving the Christian to get the praise for it.

I, myself, as a Secularist am training to become a male nurse in a mental hospital. I am 18½ and I have decided to do useful, practical work in preference to doing National Service and training for destructive purposes.

I consider mental nursing a typical example of practical work—tending to "the mentally afflicted."

No longer is nursing an occupation for religious nuns and monks as a charitable act to God (although the three years' training and the routine remain one of monastic life), but truly a "Rationalist occupation" with practical results.

I am thoroughly "in love" with nursing. I would not change

the work for anything—because I am satisfied that it can be, and is, a practical job of an "unbeliever" who wishes to help others.—Yours, etc.,

DAVID SHAMPE.

### THE BENTLEY CASE

SIR.—I should like to thank Mr. C. H. Norman for his criticism of the Bentley case in *The Freethinker* (February 15). There is another aspect of the "legalised" decision of the Home Secretary about which I should like Mr. Norman's opinion, viz.: "Should another decision of any jury be made to recommend any prisoner to mercy? Is any Home Secretary to be allowed to possess the despotic power to over-ride a jury's recommendation?" At present any Home Secretary possesses more power than any other body or person to over-ride any jury or perhaps millions of signatories in favour of reprieves. I think it is time, pending the abolition of capital punishment, that such important decisions should be taken away from any Home Secretary.

The Home Secretary should still retain the power to recommend a reprieve even when there is no recommendation to mercy from a jury, but I don't agree that he should have the power to over-ride any jury's recommendation.—Yours, etc.,

E. C. ROUND.

### A FREETHOUGHT BADGE

SIR.—The idea of a suitable badge with the initials "World's Union of Freethinkers," has been in my mind lately. For instance, visitors to this or any other country, could recognise each other. I don't know if such a badge is in existence.—Yours, etc.,

J. O'CONNOR.

### THE BRIGHTON CASE

SIR.—Mr. Newton is correct in saying there were three persons concerned in the Brighton case, but my recollection is that one of them had been reprieved, and the incident I referred to concerned the other two. My authority for my statement was that the incident of the interview at night between Sir Joynson Hicks and King George V was recorded in the Press at the time, and a notice appeared in the Court Circular of the *London Gazette* or *London Gazette* mentioning that the Home Secretary had been given an audience by the King on that night.

The rest of Mr. Newton's letter is merely his expression of opinion, so I need not occupy space on that.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

### MARXISM ON THE AIR

SIR.—Referring to the paragraph in your "Notes and News" of March 27, the question of the missing broadcast of March 3 is curious and interesting one. Your paragraphist asks: "Can it be that the B.B.C. cannot find anyone acquainted with Marxism?" As a matter of fact, Professors H. Levy and B. Farrington, two convinced Marxists, actually handed in the script of their proposed talk the week before the broadcast was to be given. The question to be asked, therefore, seems to be: Can it be that the B.B.C. found their arguments so unanswerable that no one could be found to put up an opposition? Or were they afraid that the public might so find them? Or what? And who is it behind the scenes who decides what is good for the public to hear, and what is not?

How many of the public who "listen in" will be "taken in" by the spate of myth and legend, with musical accompaniment which will be poured over the air during this pre-Easter week? Would suggest that, instead of, or as well as, letters to *The Freethinker*, letters of protest should pour into Broadcasting House by all those who object to this kind of intellectual strait waistcoat.—Yours, etc.,

G. MATSON.

## Heine and Hegel

Heine in his *Confessions*, mockingly, tells us how: "On a beautiful starlight night, Hegel stood with me at an open window. I, being a young man of twenty-two, and having just eaten and drunk coffee, naturally spoke with enthusiasm of the stars, called them abodes of the blest. But the master muttered to self, 'The stars! Hm! hm! the stars are only a brilliant eruption on the firmament.'" "What!" cried I: "then there is no blissful spot above, where virtue is rewarded after death?" But he, glancing at me with his dim eyes, remarked, sneeringly, "So you want your pourboire (a tip) because you have supported your sick mother and not poisoned your brother?"

1,000 envelopes, 6 x 3½, manilla 13s., white 16s. 9d.; ream quality duplicating paper, 10s. 10d.; typing paper, 10s. 3d. — WARRINGTON, 7, Newton Avenue, London, N.10.