

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 20

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

THE approaching coronation upon June 2 has focussed all eyes upon that bizarre and kaleidoscopic institution, the British Monarchy. At a time when thrones are toppling like houses on fire, and when the fashionable hotels of Europe's pleasure grounds are haunted by the shadows of bygone courts, by ageing "Kings in Exile," the British monarchy remains the centre of a sea of sycophancy, snobbery, and superstition.

The stout old Republicans of last century, Paine, Bradlaugh, Dilke, and Carlile, must turn in their graves at the nauseating cant that fills land, sea, and, above all, the air, in this year of Grace, 1953. Is this orgy of exuberant loyalty the forerunner of a new "Elizabethan" Age, as its protagonists so loudly declaim? Or is it merely that, in society as in nature, the stricken swan sings loudest before it dies? At any rate, whatever the future may hold, it may be of interest at the present hour to consider briefly the historic evolution of the monarchy of Great Britain.

It is customary, nowadays, to make a comparison between what is now alleged to be the dawning "Elizabethan" Age which presumably began in 1952 with the accession of the Second Elizabeth, and the so-called "golden" age of Elizabeth the First, Elizabeth Tudor, and of the great men and movements which conferred lustre upon her name and reign. It is a disturbing and rather melancholy fact that the only audible criticism of this superficial viewpoint comes from north of the Tweed, and centres around the essentially unimportant coincidence that the First Elizabeth was actually the last queen of England who did not, simultaneously, occupy the Scottish Throne also. In actual fact, this is merely a trifling difference. The character of "Elizabethan" England was due to circumstances that were far more profound than the mere coincidence that the First Elizabeth was of Welsh, whilst the Second is of Scottish, descent.

The historic "Elizabethan" Age owes its peculiar glory to the fact that, pre-eminently, it was a pioneering age, an age of origins. Most of the institutions characteristic of modern Imperial Britain began in that age (1558-1603): this applies, alike, to the British Empire, which began then in Ireland, America, and India, simultaneously; to the British Navy, which began effectively with Drake and the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588); to British Capitalism, which, also, began to function effectively with the simultaneous defeat of Spain and the foundation of the East India and Hudson Bay Companies, to trade with the East and the New World, respectively; and, in widely dissimilar spheres, modern English literature took shape with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and modern English science and philosophy began with Bacon and Harvey. Whatever glories and achievements may be reserved for the Age of the Second Elizabeth, they obviously could not be identical with the original Elizabethan pattern, and, except in a purely rhetorical sense, the whole comparison between the two "Elizabethan" Ages obviously falls to the ground.

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### From Elizabeth to Elizabeth

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

In another respect, also, the reign of Elizabeth the First was widely dissimilar from that of Elizabeth the Second. For the First Elizabeth was the last English Monarch to govern as well as to reign; like her Tudor predecessors she was, in deed if not in name, an autocrat, an absolute Monarch who might, on occasions, graciously agree to consult her loyal Parliament, but, normally, felt herself under no legal obligation to do so. Her Stuart successors, James I and Charles I, were weaklings, men of political straw. Whilst, after them, "the Deluge"; the rising forces of Puritanism, Republicanism, and of the infant Capitalism of the City of London, combined to sweep away the absolute

Monarchy, along with the old feudal social order which it embodied in "the Great Rebellion" of 1642-60. That "Bolshevik" Revolution of the 17th century from which modern Britain and its institutions were eventually to emerge. The broom of Cromwell, the English "Bonaparte," swept clean. Henceforth, it is both constitutional law and practice that the monarch "reigns but does not govern," a state of things, we may relevantly add, the very suggestion of which would have sent the passionate Elizabeth Tudor and her terrible father, Henry VIII, into a fit of apoplexy!

Twice since 1660, have English monarchs striven to escape from the gilded cage in which Cromwell's successors, the Whig oligarchy, enclosed them. But, in the (self-styled!) "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the Whigs put paid to the attempt of the Catholic James the Second to restore the pre-revolutionary absolutism of his predecessors. Whilst, in the following century, the attempt of George the Third to coerce America as a preliminary to coercing England into submission to the royal absolutism, failed at the first hurdle, when the English redcoats crumbled before the volleys of the American "Resistance Movement," and before the trenchant arguments of Thomas Paine.

Since the failure of George the Third and of his satellites to reconquer Britain's "First Empire" in America, the history of the British Monarchy has been essentially that of a rubber-stamp, a figurehead at the gilded prow of the ship of state. One can accurately add that, right down to the last decades of the 19th century, it represented a most unpopular figurehead: the obituary notices of the later Hanoverian Kings would, to-day, provoke police intervention if they appeared in, say, our contemporary, *The Daily Worker*!

"To the vast majority of his subjects the late King (William the Fourth) was an object of mingled pity and contempt, the greater the pity, the greater the contempt!" Or this even more trenchant judgment: "If there is in these islands a single man or woman who had a good word to say of the late King (George the Fourth), his or her name has not yet reached us." Both the above "eulogies" of the British Monarchy appeared in the august columns of *The Times*! It will be agreed, we think, that much water has flowed down the Fleet river since the present

pillar of "respectable" society went on record with these subversive comments.

As late as 1838, the then ambassador of Tsarist Russia saluted the coronation of the young Victoria with the melancholy reflection that she was destined to be the last of the long and glorious line of British monarchs. Actually, the Court remained extremely unpopular right up to about 1870. When Charles Bradlaugh proclaimed that the monarchs of the House of Brunswick were "small breast-bstarred wanderers," he adequately and accurately voiced the opinion of most contemporary British Radicals.

From this unhappy state of things the monarchy was delivered by the rise of political Imperialism about 1870. The present British monarchy since about that date is feudal in form but Imperialist in substance. From the date when Disraeli, the effective Founder of the modern British cult of the monarchy, crowned Victoria as Empress of India (1875), down to the present day, the monarchy derives its importance as the titular symbol of the cult of Empire. As such, it has taken a new lease of life. The experienced Tory ruling-class of Great Britain are not such fools as their critics seem sometimes to imagine. Behind the feudal façade and archaic superstition of the Coronation there are solid political and economic facts. The modern monarchy is essentially a middle-class institution. That shrewd and cynical aristocrat, the late Marquis of Salisbury, Tory Premier at the turn of the century, aptly summarised

the change when he delivered his obituary speech after the death of Queen Victoria (1901).

Having declared that he thought he understood both the aristocracy and the proletariat, he went on to say that he had no experience of "the great middle class," but that when he wanted to know what that class was thinking: "I went to Her late Majesty, and she was never wrong. Incidentally, the vast personal fortune of the present dynasty is believed to have been made along lines of strictly business speculations—another bourgeois detail!

What is the Future of the Monarchy? Will the young Elizabeth, unlike the young Victoria, actually be the last of her line? It is difficult to predict, since, as we have elsewhere remarked, "the history of revolutionary change in Britain is the history of reflex actions. All English revolutions effectively *begin* outside England." However, both the contemporary trend of the times and the current decline of the British Empire and its present transition to more democratic forms, augur ill for the future of the British Monarchy. Probably, by 2053, the then President of the "United States of Great Britain," with his umbrella and bowler-hat, will bear little resemblance to the medieval Coronation paraphernalia, Holy Oil, gilded coach, and golden crown, on show on June the 2nd, 1953.

At least, as believers in political, no less than in biological evolution, we may be permitted to hope so.

## Sex and Christian Asceticism

By G. I. BENNETT

A PURITANIC streak runs through much religious thought, but in no religion is it more evident than in the Christian. Now as in its earliest days, the Christian Church equates sex with sin and hardly ever mentions one without implying the other. Nor can this simply be ascribed to its acceptance of the doctrine of the Fall of Man—Adam's carnal surrender to the feminine charms of Eve. Rather is the holding of this doctrine a demonstration of how atavistic and savage in origin is Christian thought about sex.

The Christian attitude has always been that, as sex is in essence of this world, and it is the next that is important, a man should, by abjuring the cravings of the flesh, cut his moorings with this world so as to be prepared for the world to come. Sex is a powerful appeal, not to Heaven, but to the secular life. And, it has been reasoned, in proportion as one gives oneself to the practice of chastity one enjoys communion with God and becomes "spiritual." Upon thinking of this sort was monasticism founded and from it derived its chief inspiration. Particularly in the Roman Catholic Church are chastity and celibacy highly regarded, as everybody knows. The imposition by that Church of celibacy upon its priests and dignitaries has done more than ensure that they should be good servants of God: it has made them good servants of the Church, giving it their undivided time, energy, and loyalty untrammelled by the distractions of wife, family, and home.

It is interesting to trace briefly the source and the evolution of the Christian attitude to sex.

Early man was deeply conscious of the strange power, or mana, that woman exerted over him sexually. He noticed that intercourse with her enfeebled him, albeit temporarily, and that excessive intercourse unmanned him for hunting and fighting. Woman was therefore dangerous and he feared her. Moreover he believed her unclean, largely on account of her periodic losing of blood, which he did not understand. Thus he erected the first sexual taboos, which in one form or another have curiously persisted even to the present day.

This idea of woman's being dangerous and unclean prevailed into and throughout Biblical times, found expression in the Mosaic law, and was to St. Paul a monstrous and nagging obsession. If any man hated women, and saw sex as utterly loathsome and disgusting, that man was St. Paul. He put the simple teachings of Jesus into a theological mould and was in a fundamental sense the founder of Christianity. He, more than any other man, doctrinised his own ascetic contempt of the sexual life and profoundly influenced Christian thinking in this regard.

There was no lack of followers to carry on Paul's thunder against the evils of the flesh. Tertullian was one who, to judge from his utterances, had a nature as tortured and twisted as St. Paul's. Married though he was, he found women repugnant ("the devil's gateway") and sex shameful ("voluptuous disgrace"). St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who in youth had led a life of sexual indulgence, was later to hold not unsimilar views. St. Jerome talked about "axeing the roots of the sterile tree of marriage." And St. Odo of Cluny observed that beauty only lies in the skin. "If we could see beneath the skin," he said. "women would arouse in us nothing but nausea. Their adornments are but blood and mucous and bile. If we refuse to touch dung and phlegm even with the finger-tips, how can we desire to embrace a sack of dung?"

With few exceptions the early Church Fathers lashed the lusts of the flesh, reserving their special venom for women, the fuel of such lusts. The lengths to which some of them were prepared to go to fight down and overcome their sexual nature are astonishing; prolonged withdrawal from the sight of women, severe fasting, and the expedient of standing in casks of cold water, would seem to be the milder measures.

Now if the Christian ascetics, instead of representing chastity as a means of avoiding temporal abomination and hell-fire hereafter, had counselled it purely as a moral discipline (as did pagan philosophers like Epictetus), they would have been on more defensible ground. But the life of rigorous chastity and celibacy that they commended

Friday, May 15, 1953

being formerly allowed only to those who cultivated spiritualised or platonic associations. Thus the sex relationship in marriage finally became a sacred thing, blessed by God and the Church, but outside marriage a subject of shame. This would seem still to be largely the position to-day so far as Christendom is concerned.

But those of us whose minds are free of theological casuistry view the matter in a different light. The marriage ceremony does not make a sexual relationship wholesome and exemplary; nor does the absence of that ceremony make that relationship foul and sinful. Men and women have lived chaste and beautiful lives together without the formality of marriage—George Eliot's union with G. H. Lewis comes to mind. It is true that marriage may be a desirable, even a socially necessary, arrangement from the economic and sociological standpoint. But sacred it is not; and there are circumstances in which a dissolution of marriage is both good sense and common humanity.

## Homage to Bradlaugh

hard as Bradlaugh's election agent, and no doubt contributed much to his success in winning election. We all revered the memory of Charles Bradlaugh, he said, after tea—though, like so many admirers before him, he caused a mild sensation by claiming for Bradlaugh "that he was a Christian without knowing it." But Mr. Adams was right when he insisted that Bradlaugh gave his life for the causes he fought for. And later speakers fully agreed with him. They included Lord Chorley, Mr. Paget, who represents Northampton in Parliament, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, Councillors Lewis and Nutt, Prof. Florence, and a veteran of 92 years of age, Mr. Fullard, of Bedford. All paid their hearty tributes to the memory of Bradlaugh, emphasising his many fine qualities, his humanism and generosity. A mere reference to the speeches, such as this report, can do little justice to the warm, heartfelt appreciation of Bradlaugh's work felt, not only by his Freethought followers, but also by those who still held to the old beliefs and who yet admired the sturdy integrity of the great iconoclast. It was the same story, whether stalwarts like Kirk and Hassell of Leicester, Mosley of Nottingham, Ridley and Bonner of London, or Christians like Mr. Adams and others who spoke—they all shared their admiration for what Charles Bradlaugh had done for humanity in his comparatively short life.

Many photographs of the event were later taken near the statue which, one hopes, will help to commemorate our loyalty and affection for our great leader. And it was with positive regret that we had to leave Northampton, in a blaze of sunshine, with memories only of a perfect day to be long treasured as one of the happiest days it has been our good fortune to enjoy. H. C.

By order of the Exors. of Dr. Norman Haire dec'd.

**“NETTLEDEN LODGE”**  
**ASHRIDGE PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE**  
(under 30 miles from London)  
**16th Century Country Residence**  
**and 46 Acres**  
 4 recep. 8 bed. 3 bath. Cent. heat. Main Electricity.  
 Garages & Stabling. 2 modern Cottages.  
**FOR SALE BY AUCTION OR PRIVATELY**  
 Full particulars from Herring, Son & Daw,  
 12, Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, London, W.1. **Regent 5603**

upon all was clearly absurd, and an accommodation with "man's imperial passion" had to be found somewhere. Marriage was an expedient, which even Paul saw was preferable to fornication for those who could not "contain"; but it was, says Havelock Ellis in his *Sex in Relation to Society*, "merely a concession to human weakness, an indulgence only possible when it was carefully hedged and guarded on every side." If marriage was a licensing of a sexual relationship, that relationship was not to be lightly or too freely gratified. Clement of Alexandria wrote, "To have intercourse except for procreation is contrary to nature." So he and many of the Christian Fathers wished to think.

Only gradually did the Christian Church—though full of approval of those who could maintain a strict continence—come round to the idea that coitus not specifically for procreation could not be considered really evil. Apparently it was then discerned that sex was not, after all, simply lust, but could include love—a state of

It is possible that the Clerk of the Weather "double-crossed" his Almighty Master, for it is hard to believe that that All-Powerful Deity would have arranged for such a perfect day as was enjoyed by the many pilgrims who went to the "shrine" of Charles Bradlaugh on May 3 last. It was perhaps the warmest day of the year so far, and all who went to Northampton by train, coach, bus or private car from London, Leicester, Nottingham and other towns must have thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful excursion through the heart of England's loveliest lanes and villages.

The London coach arrived a few minutes late and we found a crowd awaiting us at the statue headed by the Mayor, wearing his chain of office, Mr. Paget, M.P., a number of Northampton's town councillors and citizens, as well as members of the N.S.S., the R.P.A. and the Leicester Secular Society. There was no gainsaying the enthusiasm which greeted all the speeches delivered on the spot with the splendid statue of Bradlaugh towering above us and, so to speak, overshadowing everything else. The memory of the great man has not been dimmed by time; on the contrary, indeed. His reputation—like that of other great Commoners of England, Thomas Paine—has never stood higher. This was the theme of all the speakers there—they all paid tribute to Bradlaugh's determination, courage and thoroughness.

It must have been a proud moment for Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, Bradlaugh's grandson, who has for so many years carried the flag of Freethought so worthily, as well as for F. A. Ridley, as the President of the National Secular Society, which was founded by Bradlaugh in 1866. But one must not forget the humble soldiers in the Freethought ranks. The followers of other Freethought Societies like that of Leicester, the working men who contributed their pennies to the causes Bradlaugh loved, and perhaps above all, the unknown men of Northampton who voted him into Parliament time after time, though they knew he was an Atheist and many of them were Christians—all, all contributed their bit to help the cause of liberty, freedom and justice.

On behalf of the R.P.A., the N.S.S., and the Leicester Secular Society wreaths were laid at the statue by Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. F. A. Ridley and Mr. G. A. Kirk, and after the speeches the visitors were invited by the Mayor, Mr. Adams, to tea, and needless to say, the tea rooms were packed. It was also a proud moment for His Worship, for his grandfather, Thomas Adams, had worked

5, 1953  
h after  
oth the  
that he  
at that  
ng: "I  
wrong  
present  
strictly  
young  
he last  
e have  
change  
English  
however  
current  
tion to  
of the  
esident  
nbrella  
diagonal  
3, and  
logical  
n pre-  
ession  
is and  
d saw  
n was  
into a  
ie trac-  
e man-  
fe and  
rd.  
under  
ho, as  
d and  
found  
hame-  
op of  
gence,  
alked  
iage.  
ies in  
said.  
The  
If we  
r-tips.  
ashed  
n for  
some  
com-  
raval  
diem-  
e the  
ning  
i and  
noral  
they  
e life  
indee

## This Believing World

**Believers in Faith-healing**, whether through the agency of spooks or the Church will find the latest "miracle" most intriguing. Crippled in her arms and legs for 15 weeks, a girl of fifteen, Freda Pogmore, was carried on a stretcher to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walshingham to pray, and was at once completely cured. Her mother claimed it a miracle, and the priest, Fr. Hulme, is going to lay the matter before "the appropriate authorities." Query—did Our Lady cure the girl, or was it not merely a cure such as repeatedly happens through herbal remedies, patent medicines, osteopathy, and electric belts? Or to put it another way: are not all these cures mostly *within* the patient, and have nothing to do with the "curative" agencies such as spooks, prayers or miracles?

**The Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds** has been letting the cat out of the bag in Sydney. Lecturing to the university students there, he stunned them with the dreadful news that "the overwhelming majority of Englishmen have no religion at all." The *News Chronicle* is even more stunned: "If this is true," it moans, "or even nearly true, it is a sorry state of affairs." But there is one consolation, or rather two. First, it all depends on what is meant by religion; and second, the B.B.C. assures the *News Chronicle* that eighteen million people regularly listen in to the religious broadcasts; while hymn-singing attracts a bigger audience than "Take It From Here." So there you are—things are not so bad, and the deeply religious journal comes to the conclusion that religion is "a deep instinct" and so we all are still very religious.

**The truth is, of course**, that religious people and religious journals are thankful for small mercies. If the deep instinct is so shallow that it cannot induce the pious to go to church or sacrifice even a broadcast, then religion has gone a long way from what it was even fifty years ago. Everybody knows that the atmosphere in a sitting room with people "listening in" is very far from reverent. Nobody is on his knees and, more likely than not, meals washed down with beer or other drinks take place while the parson is droning his interminable drivel. There is about as much "true" religion in all this as there is in a game of darts. No, the Bishop of Leeds is right. The overwhelming majority of Englishmen have no religion at all—thank God!

**We often wonder how many** of the marvellous stories told us by Christian missionaries are true. Of course, some did have dangerous adventures, and some died for their religion. But it is most difficult to test the truth of their narratives. One of the "Undefeated," as the B.B.C. called her, was a servant girl who did pretty badly at school, but who insisted on going to China and help to convert the 500 millions there to Christ. Her name is Gladys Aylward, and her adventures, in bringing the obstinate Chinese to believe her own Fundamentalist stupidities are, to say the least of it, fantastic.

**Most, if not all, the Chinese** who spoke to her appear from her narrative to speak English with the utmost ease; while she herself had not the slightest difficulty in learning at an adult age Chinese, perhaps the most difficult of all languages. She actually understood it better after a year than English! This takes our breath away. It generally takes *twenty years* for a foreigner to get even an elementary knowledge of Chinese. But then, in the case of Miss Aylward, Jesus Christ took a hand. Being God Almighty he, no doubt, knew Chinese perfectly, and naturally taught

his fervent missionary so well that she could even retail English fairy tales perfectly to Chinese villagers. Oh, to be a Christian now!

**Just like new "lives" of Jesus Christ**, so do veritable "portraits" pop up, as well as bona fide descriptions of the Son of God. The latest comes from Canada reporting from Rome that "Jesus Christ was more than six feet tall, long limbed and finely muscled"; though it is more than curious that Jesus is never made to look like a Palestinian Hebrew. He generally looks like or is described as a fair-haired Saxon. It appears that an Italian sculptor has put in 21 years hard study of the white linen cloth Joseph of Arimathea wrapped round Jesus which—of course—still exists in Turin. By wrapping the Holy Relic round "live models," the sculptor was able to find out exactly what Jesus looked like and the world now knows. And we might add the world will continue to swallow all these fairy tales for centuries to come—in spite of science, history, and common sense.

## Theatre

**Airs on a Shoestring** is a new intimate revue directed by Laurier Lister at the Royal Court Theatre.

It consists of a number of mostly inconsequential sketches of high entertainment value, but although their execution is almost impeccable they do not contain the satire and wit of some recent revues. The versatility of the cast is amazing, as is the humour of Moyra Fraser, Betty Marsden, Sally Rogers and Max Adrian. Patricia Lancaster pleases us with her excellent singing.

To summarise separately the numerous turns would take too much space, but let it suffice that this is light entertainment worth seeing. The music by various composers is tuneful, and the production is slick.

**The Seagull**, by Anton Chekhov, has come to the Arts Theatre in the style of comedy, which is how Chekhov intended it to be. But to-day we judge a play by its ending, and one cannot conceal the tragedy of a suicide just before the last curtain.

However, John Fernald—aided by a capable cast—has squeezed out every atom of humour in the play. The result is that we feel that Masha (beautifully played by Jenny Laird) revels in her frustrated love, and are amused that she married Medvedyenko (Richard Warner) whom she did not love. We smile that Peter Nikolayevich Sorin (Fredrick Leister) appears so old and helpless at sixty—a kind of *malade imaginaire*—and that Irina Arkadina is so carefree and self-centred that she cannot see what passes in the mind of her son. This is a brilliant performance by Catherine Lacey, and the son (played with great feeling by Michael Gwynn) is so bored with life and melancholy in his love for Nina Zarechnaya (played with charm by Jane Griffiths) that his life becomes intolerable. John Arnatt gives a fine performance of Dorn, a philosophical and cynical doctor, and Noel Hood gives much character to the rather slender role of Paulina. Boris Trigorin is played by Alan MacNaughtan with a lightness of touch that hardly suggests the villain who caused Nina's downfall, but if we can overlook this the remaining characters under Mr. Fernald's capable production come well within the accepted style of Chekhov.

This, as you may well conclude, is a play of characters more than a plot, which is what we have to expect of Chekhov. And he, we may conclude, having written this as a comedy, has shown us how to take our pleasures miserably.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## To Correspondents

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 11 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); 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 should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

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

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (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.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, May 16, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. W. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday, May 10, 8-30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY and other speakers.

### INDOOR

Bristol Rationalist Group (Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell St.).—Wednesday, May 13, 7-30 p.m.: A Lecture, "It Stands to Reason."

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

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead, two minutes from Wanstead Station).—The fourth Thursday every month at 8 p.m. Open meeting.

## NOTES AND NEWS

Congratulations to Mr. Emrys Hughes, M.P., at a time when pulpit, press, and B.B.C. are combining to stir up mass-hysteria on the subject of the approaching Coronation. Mr. Hughes has produced an admirable pamphlet entitled *The Crown and the Cash*. Our intrepid author is a veteran of the Scottish Labour Movement and a son-in-law of the redoubtable Keir Hardie. In *The Crown and the Cash* [26, Civic St., Glasgow, C.4; 6d.] Mr. Hughes gives many interesting details about the shocking waste of money and of urgently needed building materials on what is, after all, merely a glorified circus. Our author does not demand the abolition of Monarchy as such. Contrarily, he gives the Crown a perhaps not altogether deserved testimonial for political impartiality in recent years, which readers of, say, Mr. Harold Nicholson's biography of the late King George V, might not altogether endorse. But he makes many excellent points regarding the excessive cost of our monarchy as compared with other surviving European monarchies, and he draws attention to the rampant

snobbery and commercialism associated with what is supposed to be a purely patriotic display.

Mr. Hughes makes the effective debating point that the monarchy ought not logically to object to Socialism, since it is one of our oldest nationalised institutions! But, he relevantly adds, it is most illogical of the present government which is always denouncing the extravagance allegedly associated with nationalisation, to pile up expenses on this particular one. The same people, declares Mr. Hughes, who objected to the educational "Festival of Britain" on the ground of expense, are now voting the taxpayer's money recklessly for the Westminster ceremony. We are sure that our readers will appreciate Mr. Hughes's hard-hitting arguments and useful citations. After reading *The Crown and the Cash* we feel like asking the organisers of the June 2 procession:

"Is your journey really necessary?"

Our Liberal contemporary, *The Manchester Guardian*, last week published an interesting account of the Bradlaugh commemoration ceremony, reported elsewhere in this issue of *The Freethinker*. Amongst the organisations represented at the ceremony special mention is made of the National Secular Society of which Bradlaugh was founder and first president. Comments the *Guardian*: "Although it is 63 years since his death, Bradlaugh is still a legend to the Northampton people whose grandparents with such obstinate loyalty re-elected him again and again." Our contemporary reminds us of the pioneer role of Bradlaugh in the formation of Co-operative Building Societies designed to enable his working-class supporters to buy their own homes. This, what the *Guardian* calls the "practical, if not beautiful, reminder of Bradlaugh," may also usefully remind us that the great Radical was not the fanatical Individualist that he is sometimes represented as being in current political propaganda.

This week a band of intrepid mountaineers will again attempt the conquest of the world's highest peak, Mount Everest. We wish them luck! Modern Everest, like ancient Olympus, is a sacred abode of the gods. When the explorers reach the top they will find nothing except space. Another superstition will have been exploded. The gods will have been chased out of yet another hide-out.

## When Heart Grows Black

When heart grows black with passion  
And eye untrue with lust,  
Turn I in soldier fashion  
And take the road I must.  
Bear I away to stillness  
The sins not all my own;  
If life be but an illness  
'Tis best to ail alone.  
If life be but an error  
Who knows the certain cure?  
Still holds the dark in terror  
The shadows that endure.  
Far better ditch and hedgerow  
And morning sharp and red,  
Than living shapes that borrow  
Their living from the dead.  
For me the weed and nettle  
That cloy not as the rose;  
For me the bravest metal  
To bear against my foes.

JOHN O'HARE.

# Robert Taylor

The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844) By H. CUTNER

(Continued from page 152)

LECTURES were arranged for and delivered in a small theatre; but these soon attracted the attention of the religious bigots in Dublin as the discourses became more and more Deistical. So outrageous became the attacks egged on by gangs of theological students that the theatre was eventually almost wrecked, and Taylor himself in danger of his life. His friends felt that Dublin was hopeless for any Society of "Universal Benevolence" and thought he might better try to establish it in London. A subscription was raised and he returned to the capital in the summer of 1824.

On November 24, he held the first meeting of the Christian Evidence Society "under the principles of the Association of Universal Benevolence" for free inquiry and fair discussion. It will come as a surprise to many people to learn that it was Robert Taylor who was responsible for the title, "The Christian Evidence Society," as there is still in existence a Society with the same name but not the same object. Taylor's object in founding his was a vastly different one from that of the present Society. He wished to show what the evidence for Christianity was really worth, and as a matter of fact devoted the next ten years of his life to proving that there was no evidence whatever for the supernatural claims made for their religion by Christians. We shall go more fully into this when dealing in detail with his literary work.

The Christian Evidence Society commenced its work at the Globe Tavern in Fleet Street, the usual procedure being a reading from some standard Christian author like Paley, Leslie, Doddridge, and others, an "oration" by Taylor in which he dealt with and criticised the reading followed by a discussion in which members of the audience were invited to join. Taylor delivered ninety-five orations, and the meetings were very well supported—so well, indeed, that it was decided to make them a regular Sunday series. In the spring of 1826 a "chapel" was obtained in the Founder's Hall, and so successful was the "service" that a move was made into better quarters in Salter's Hall, Cannon Street. Thirty-eight discourses were here delivered; they will be found reprinted in the *Lion* published later by Richard Carlile.

This interpid Freethinker, writer and publisher deserves a volume to himself. He had already become notorious as a fervent disciple of a free press; no one more than he, in fact, had striven to achieve its accomplishment, and he suffered many years imprisonment in his set defiance of authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that later he and Robert Taylor should join forces, although this did not take place till 1828. Carlile will be referred to more when we come to that year.

It need hardly be said that the popularity of Taylor's discourses, added to the fact that he was making "heretics" by the score, was not at all to the liking of the authorities. It is true that they had all they could cope with in Richard Carlile; but Taylor was spreading the gospel of infidelity by word of mouth and doing almost, if not quite, as much damage to Christianity as Richard Carlile was doing by his numerous and widely circulated publications. The Aldermen of the City of London, backed by the Mayor, decided it was time to stop the all-successful ex-clergyman; and under their charge he was at last arrested for "blasphemy" early in 1827. He was, almost at the same time, sued for £100 on a note which

had got into the hands of a Quaker banker named Wright as a result of Taylor being swindled out of £300 years before. Mr. Wright, with good Christian charity—for he well knew that the "debtor" was quite guiltless, and had been actually himself a victim—kept him in prison for a few months; but Taylor was released eventually by the Insolvent Debtor's Court. He was then tried for blasphemy. A verbatim account of the Trial was published by Carlile in 1828 and is still worth reading. It proves that the authorities were quite wide-awake to the fact that in their prisoner there was not just a common illiterate "blasphemer" but an extremely able scholar who, on that account, was all the more dangerous.

The trial of Robert Taylor took place on October 24, 1827, at the Guildhall Court of King's Bench, before Lord Chief Justice Tenterden. It may be remarked that, as far as it was possible, Lord Tenterden acted with fairness in a trial which was evidently to his distaste and which was not exactly in his line. He was actually a great authority on marine and mercantile law.

The case attracted a very great deal of attention and the court was crowded, arousing, we are told, eager curiosity in the number present of "well-dressed and youthful females." This is how the reporter describes the prisoner:—

"His appearance attracted all eyes: he was arrayed in the flowing gown of a clergyman; his neat clerical hat was conspicuously borne in his hand, an eyeglass depended from his neck, and the little finger of either hand was ornamented with a sumptuous ring; his hair was arranged in the most fashionable style; and a pair of light kid gloves completed the elegant decorations of his person."

Taylor obviously did not believe in being dressed as if he were a miserable specimen of a "blasphemer," the kind of "unhappy man" that people were told to expect in an infidel. The rings and the eyeglass must have come rather as a shock, as well as the rather contemptuous smile borne by Taylor, brought out so well in the portrait drawn by W. Hunt.

To make quite sure of their case, and to report the exact words used by Taylor in his "blasphemous" discourses, one of the aldermen had sent a beadle to the meetings, and he was called as a witness after the speech for the prosecution had been made by the Attorney General. This speech followed the usual lines—the horror caused by treating religion "with levity and contempt," the plea that if Christianity had to be assailed it should be "only by sober discussion and legitimate reasoning," the fact that he himself was all for "toleration" and "serious arguments" on both sides and, finally, that he would not sully his mouth with the words used by the defendant, "the words of mockery which he [the prisoner] has introduced into his addresses, assailing both the forms and the personages which are most revered and sacred amongst us."

As for the beadle, whose name was Collins, he was made to read out the blasphemous statements attributed to Taylor. Here are a few of the shocking specimens:—

"There was no authority for the title page of the New Testament.

St. Paul has denied the miracles of Christ. His ghost appeared to 500 at once, but they were asleep.

Christ rose again, but it is according to the Scriptures.

The wonder-working God—that is the name which the Deists never uses but with awe!

(Continued on page 159)

# J. W. Hauer's "Germanic Faith"—3

By ARTHUR WILD

HAUER'S Faith is really a work of art and attempting an analysis one fears that one dissects a poem—a romantic poem, not one of an age of reason—instead of being ravished and captured by it as those thousands of young people were who adhered to this Faith.

Hauer is very much influenced by his stay in India, where he worked as a teacher-missionary from 1907 to 1911, and by his studies of Indian thought. He is especially a great admirer of the Bhagavad-Gita. The general plan, such as his teaching about the last reality which is never really found, his method of metaphysical self-vision, his pan-en-theism, much of his ethics, are no doubt due more to the influence of Indian than to that of any pre-Christian or other non-Christian European thought. Old Teutonic and German sources are responsible for many examples of moral behaviour and for most other quotations. Also Hauer's philosophy of history is a European creation. The Indians—like thinkers of the classical Europe—see the events in this world "sub specie aeternitatis." Therefore they do not ascribe any philosophical value to history and did not create any philosophy of it like the Christian and modern European thinkers did. The general spirit of Germany in the last decades before 1933 and immediately after Hitler's revolution with its theosophy and anthropology, its nationalism, neo-paganism and racialism is the third main influence.

The Bhagavad-Gita had been admired in Germany long before Hauer. In 1823 W. von Schlegel published an edition with translation into Latin. Herder, W. von Humboldt, Hegel, Schopenhauer (Indian ideas occur not only in Schopenhauer's philosophy, but also in thinkers who were under his influence) studied it. Count H. Keyserling praised it and various theosophists have used it as a holy book. Therefore the ground for Hauer's original interpretation and synthesis with European thought and for his creating a mass movement adhering to it was not quite unprepared.

Much more general in Germany and elsewhere in Europe is the revival and glorification of own national past. In the Renaissance Europe discovered its Graeco-Roman past. In the Romantic period culminating in the beginning of the 19th century the Rationalist French discovered their Catholic, the Catholic Czechs their Protestant and the Rationalist and Christian Germans their glorious pagan past. Some German Romantic poets became indeed almost converted to a kind of paganism, though they landed later safely in another religion which had flourished in the past—Roman Catholicism. Goethe's paganism had been essentially Greek, the religion of the Romantics contained monotheistic and pantheistic, Christian and pagan elements, combined with mythologies, superstitions and folklore of all times and nations. F. von Schlegel wanted even to found a new religion whose Paul he intended to be. Novalis's role being that of Christ, the philosopher. Arndt calls for a unified national religion, Fichte for an enthusiastic history of the Germans which would become really their new Bible. (Also other leading thinkers of this epoch—Hegel, Schelling and Schleiermacher—pre-shadow many an idea found in Hauer's Faith.) The admiration of the past is reflected even in specialised sciences, e.g., in comparative Indo-Germanic linguistics—a German science par excellence!—and later also in archaeology. For many of these attitudes there are certain objective grounds, but all of them are to a certain degree subjective, evoked by the love of devoted scholars for their study and by the fact that sometimes many generations

have been at work idealising those distant and no doubt very barbaric times. The glorification of the past resulted in many countries even in the forging of old remains and documents.

The second half of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th mark in Germany the flowering of science and in philosophy of the scientific conception of the world and of life. However, science and rationalism do not satisfy the Romanticists of this period who search for other sources of inspiration and faith. How general the flight from empiricism and rationalism is, can be seen even in the evolution of certain individual writers, e.g., of the dramatist G. Hauptmann, who exchanges his naturalism of the 'eighties for a kind of mysticism and symbolism. Many of these irrationalists find their inspiration in nationalism, pan-Germanism and paganism traceable to the Romantic period of the beginning of the 19th century. The composer R. Wagner and his son-in-law H. S. Chamberlain add the idea of race based on the traditional prejudice and on the teaching of Gobineau. The orientalist Paul de Lagarde, known for his anti-semitism, calls for a German legal system and a German faith instead of the foreign ones adopted in the last centuries. Nietzsche creates his ethics of Superman. Also these attitudes are, of course, reflected in specialised sciences, e.g., in anthropology and folk psychology.

The Christian orthodoxy goes on struggling for survival, but there are also attempts at more or less radical reforms. A very strong influence upon Hauer, whilst Hauer was still a Christian, was the so-called "liberal theology" of A. von Harnack who tried to reconcile Lutheranism with modern ideas. A comparable movement among the Catholics was the Modernist movement. A. Bonus wanted to Germanise Christianity.

In the 20th century the adherents of neo-pagan ideologies begin to form organisations. L. Fahrenkrog's "Germanic Faith Community" (Germanische Glaubensgemeinschaft) was founded in 1908. There followed several more, particularly after the First Great War. Among the leaders of these movements let us mention Erich and Mathilde Ludendorff. During Hitler's era there existed, apart from the traditional Churches and various less important groups, two movements: the "German Christians" (Deutsche Christen) wanting radically to Germanise (Protestant) Christianity, to whom Hauer originally offered unsuccessfully.  
(Continued on page 160)

## Robert Taylor (Continued from page 158)

I should like to know who was the eye-witness between the devil and Christ when he spent his holidays in the wilderness.

The pigs were the first martyrs for Christ.

Did the devil drown the pigs, or did the pigs drown the devil?

Christianity is a wicked and mischievous fable, and they know it to be so."

For this kind of mild criticism of their faith Christians had put men and women to torture and death in preceding ages, and in Taylor's time they were given years in prison—"horrible dungeons," he himself called them. Actually, he must have been allowed some kind of liberty, as he—and Carlile—managed to get through quite a deal of literary work in confinement. Imprisonment meant for them loss of liberty and the hardship that entails; but it was not the kind suffered by criminals which, in those days, was very severe and would not now be tolerated.

(To be continued)

(Continued from page 159)

fully his collaboration, and the "Germanic Faith Movement." The programme for a unified National Reich Church published in 1942 was not put into practice. Hauer's Deputy in the movement was Count E. zu Reventlow. The Breslau Professor E. Bergmann formed a religion resembling in certain respects that of Hauer. The youth leader and poet Baldur von Schirach and certain other prominent National Socialists were also associated with these tendencies. The Bible of many National Socialists, A. Rosenberg's "Myth of the Twentieth Century" (Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts), with its anti-semitism, attacks on Slavs and many other nations, tried to show how to Aryanise radically Christianity. Also Hitler himself disagreed more or less with Christianity in its present form, his party standing for "positive Christianity." On the whole, however, he was much less explicit about religious matters in his "My Struggle" (Mein Kampf) and in his public speeches than A. Rosenberg was in his Myth. The lack of criticism of certain Romantics and the innocent forgeries of others were, in this era, much surpassed by what is usually called political propaganda.

Despite his statements concerning the leading idea of our time which we must accept (i.e., the idea of race), Hauer seems to have been really honest in his views—a great difference from many a German Christian.

The scornful abuse, characterising so many authors of this era, is absent from Hauer's diction. His passages concerning toleration contrast very clearly with the German policy of those years. Though he does not speak on the whole about other religions as worse or lower than his own, his racial theory of religion certainly contributed to the racial hatred sweeping Germany.

Eleven years before he founded his organisation, Hauer wrote that there are three factors bringing about any new spiritual movement: the need of the epoch, the spiritual inheritance of the past and a strong personality who experiences or at least understands enough the need of the time. Whether we mean by the strong personality Hauer or Hitler, we must say that the understanding of the needs, wishes and reactions of other nations and races was missing (to a different degree and in different spheres, of course) though they caught remarkably well with the spirit of a strong section of their own nation.

## Correspondence

### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—I thank Edwin Crouch for pointing out, in my article on dialectics, the looseness of the phrase "dialectical not mechanistic"; I should have said "Nature is essentially dialectical not mechanistic." In nature there are no unchangeable things; all are in process of change. Fundamentally, nature is a complex of processes. It was in this sense I compared the two conceptions.

It is quite correct to state that mechanistic interpretation is more limited than that of dialectics, and I agree that many phenomena can be explained mechanically, and a knowledge of mechanics is extremely useful. Nevertheless, the limitations of mechanics are found when we try to apply this system universally. It would be difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of action at a distance, with no intervening medium, between two bodies from a mechanical point of view. Motion cannot be expressed mechanically, although every movement is a movement of matter, but movement of matter is change in general and includes many aspects of change.

In essence nature is dialectical and includes mechanical motion. For example, Newton showed the orbital motion of a planet to be the resultant of two forces, one causing the planet to fall towards the sun, and the other causing the planet to fly away from the sun. The resolution of these two forces showed the direction of the motion of the planet. This can be simply demonstrated mechanically, but mechanics cannot explain the contradiction of the planet flying away from the sun and at the same time falling

towards it. Even the simple change of place cannot be expressed within the limits of mechanistic theory; yet the continuous assertion and the simultaneous solution of this contradiction is precisely what motion is.

Edwin Crouch agrees with me regarding the necessity of dialectics in social processes, that is why I have not selected any illustrations here. I also approve of his illustration of the use of mathematics in acquiring a better understanding. I should add to this, however, for his consideration; algebra was limited when it came to expressing continuous change. The calculus was invented and used for this purpose, but it deals with continuity, and cannot be used to show the contradiction between the continuous and the discrete. It cannot deal with the discrete.

Where the interruption occurs, that is the change from quantity to quality, is known as the dialectical leap. The emergence of the new from the change of quantity into quality is not continuous and only within quantitative limits can mathematics be applied. While it is a grand thing to know the power of our tools, it is of tremendous importance to know their limitations.

I am afraid it would take up too much space to deal with the mechanical account of thinking; I may have taken up too much space as it is. I am pleased that my contribution has attracted some notice, and I shall try to deal with thinking in an article in the near future.—Yours, etc.,

JIM GRAHAM.

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF HUNGER

SIR,—I am not altogether astonished at Mr. McHattie's outburst—but I hold to every word I wrote in my articles. Whatever meaning Mr. McHattie gives to the word "production," he himself meant "food" production, and nothing else. He was writing about the "production" of pins or radio sets or motor cars, but about food. "The effort to make everybody on the face of the earth productive," means exactly what I said.—Yours, etc.,

H. CURNER.

SIR,—Mr. Bayard Simmons quotes Malthus in your issue of January 25. The population increase is likened to a mathematical progression—1, 2, 4, 8, 16., and the food supply to a geometrical progression. This is not a theory but a fact.

The world population progression is geometrical. It doubles itself every generation. It has only been held back from succeeding in this in all history by war, famine, disease, and hatred. Disease has been greatly mitigated by Science and Medicine. Hence war, famine, war and hatred remain to check world population! It is not civilisation but bestial barbarism, and universal contraception is the only answer.

The world food supply cannot be doubled every generation in perpetuity. No Scientist has ever made such a claim. Can anyone even show that world food supply can increase in a mathematical ratio? If it can and we introduce time and amount then we shall have: first year, one ton; two years, two tons; three years, three tons; four years, four tons; five years, five tons. That is, in five years, five times the amount! This has never been so, and never will be so in perpetuity.

It is, therefore, plain that famine and disease and war eliminating or reduced, world population will increase far faster than food supply and go on doing so in perpetuity. Therefore, universal contraception must take the place of the check of famine, disease and war, if we are to ever obtain a better civilisation. That the population check can be effected by total abstinence, "safe period" etc., is a superstitious fairy tale of the Religionist, the superstitious person, and the so-called Moralist. Neither will it be any effective check to confine contraception to the married in a world or society where only a few are given the material means whereby they can marry.

Neither can the force of Evolution, nor the powers of Nature be denied, defied, or mocked by Man, his Governments, his Political or Economic Systems, or his gods—or even his Science.—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHREYS.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

NOW READY

THE FREETHINKER

VOL. 72

Bound green cloth, lettered gold PRICE 24/- Postage 1/-

BLANKENBERGE (Belgian Coast).—Hotel Astoria. Seven days £7 10s. inclusive; English spoken; special terms for parties.