

# The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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A FORMER reigning monarch, ex-King Farouk of Egypt, is credited with the prediction that, by the end of the present century, only five kings will be left: respectively, the King of Hearts, the King of Clubs, the King of Spades, the King of Diamonds and—last, but presumably, not least—the King of England. Whether the ex-Pharaoh-turned-playboy ever made the remark attributed to him, we have no means of knowing. In any case, his own subsequent career has assisted to confirm his alleged prophecy!

If, however, we are to judge from the present orgy of publicity accorded to this week's ceremony of the Coronation of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Elizabeth the Second, the British Monarchy has still a long future before it. Even if and when we make full allowance for the largely artificial character of the State-sponsored publicity which attends the forthcoming ceremony, it seems clear that the Monarchy is, in general, popular and respected. Its abolition does not form part of the current programme of any, at present, politically significant political party. Both the old Liberal Republicanism of Bradlaugh and Dilke, which flourished so strongly in the last century, and the Socialist Republicanism of Keir Hardie and of the pioneers of the Labour Movement, have virtually disappeared. Republicanism, whether Liberal or Socialist, is, to-day, confined to a few small groups and hardly reaches, let alone influences, the general public. To all appearance, the British Sovereign is "monarch of all she surveys, and of her right there is none to dispute." The British Crown appears to be completely secure on the head of its present wearer and, at least, of her present successors.

However, as George Bernard Shaw once made one of his characters remark, "You never can tell." Appearances are, proverbially, deceptive! As we indicated recently in this column, the historic evolution of the British Monarchy has been a chequered and a stormy one. It would be against all reasonable probability to assume that, in its future, unlike its past, the present dynasty will prove immune to evolutionary, perhaps to revolutionary, change. Was Oliver Cromwell the last, as well as the first, of his kind? May not a new age witness another "Bradlaugh" and another *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*?

Be the above as it may, what we witness to-day, and shall, in particular, observe on June the Second in the actual coronation ceremony, is a monarchy in an obvious state of transition, which, at present, combines forms and institutions that are seemingly incompatible. On the one hand, the Monarchy daily professes to be ever more democratic, and to represent ever-wider layers of society and ever-broader strata of the population. Whereas the coronations of the early Hanoverian monarchs, up to and including that of Victoria (1838), were purely aristocratic affairs, in the Coronation procession of Elizabeth the Second there will be overseas statesmen who represent

—with mixed feelings, we may imagine!—some of the most democratic communities in the world, without feudal past, or hereditary aristocracy or established Church, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand; not to mention the new Asiatic democracies which have passed from Empire to Commonwealth since the end of the Second World War.

Despite which concessions to our Age of Democracy (with a capital "D"! ) when our overseas democrats actually get into the "sacred precincts" of the Abbey, they will find themselves transported back across the centuries to the Feudal Age of Edward the Confessor, the

alleged founder of Westminster Abbey, and of his Norman successors: to, simultaneously, a prehistoric age of religious theocracy and to a feudal age of aristocratic medievalism. Every age, from that of the Pharaohs to that of universal suffrage, will be jumbled together in the Abbey on the afternoon of June 2, 1953!

Whether the institution of Hereditary Monarchy itself is, under any imaginable circumstances, compatible with any fully and genuinely democratic regime, may well be doubted. The only kind of really democratic Monarchy that can be suggested as other than a contradiction in terms is that amusing caricature of elective Monarchy portrayed by the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton in his highly original satire, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, where the name of the prospective monarch is democratically drawn out of a hat, so as to give every citizen an equal chance. We rather fancy, however, that this method of selection, even though it may seem the logical corollary to a regime based on universal suffrage, would, at present, hardly be popular with what the late Sir Stafford Cripps once described in an unguarded—and unofficial!—moment as "the Buckingham Palace gang." It would certainly present a problem to the Earl Marshal and would, presumably, put the College of Heralds right out of business!

Failing such an extreme and Gilbertian—or rather, Chestertonian—solution, the least, we submit, that any intelligently progressive British citizen can demand of the Monarchy to-day is that it sheds all its feudal and ecclesiastical medievalism, and sends all its feudal flunkies about their business, and proceeds to substitute for the backwoods peers, whose ancestors "came over with the Conqueror," more representative members of a community, most of whose ancestors were here long before the landing of that unprincipled freebooter. It might, also, be a good move, as was recently unsuccessfully suggested in Parliament, to include some representative industrial workers in what is now mainly a military procession. Modern Britain, over which the Queen is called upon to reign, is an industrial, not a feudal community, and the productive workers are at least as useful as M.P.s, and a good deal more useful than most Peers. None of the above

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### Is Her Journey Really Necessary?

— By F. A. RIDLEY —



changes would, incidentally, involve any change in our present Constitution.

If the present role in the Coronation ceremonial of the "Lords Temporal" is medieval, that of their ecclesiastical colleagues, the "Lords Spiritual," is (literally) prehistoric. In the first place, it is, of course, entirely unrepresentative and undemocratic that these representatives of what recent statistics indicate is a dwindling Christian minority in England herself, and which is, of course, an infinitesimal minority in the whole represented "Commonwealth and Empire," should take any part in the ceremony which is denied to the other, actually more numerous, Hindu and Muslim creeds in the Empire. Why not have all religions equally represented in the Abbey? Or, still better, why have any of them in what is, after all, a political, a secular function?

Above, we suggested that Hindu Brahmins and Muslim Mullahs might be admitted to the Coronation ceremony. However, the actual anointing of Her Majesty with Holy Oil, now performed by His Grace of Canterbury, and which forms, we are told, the heart of the ceremony, could best be reserved for some bonafide witchcraft specialists from "Darkest Africa" specially imported into "Darkest England" for the purpose. Why not import a few "Mau Mau" experts for the ceremony? For the anointing

business belongs to an order of ideas so primitive that it is astonishing how it could have survived into the 20th century, and in the land which gave birth to Darwin, Spencer and Frazer; fundamentally, it belongs to the same order of ideas that induces a cannibal to absorb the "virtue" of his dead enemy by eating him; or which confers Divine Right to rule on an African chief only when he sits on the golden stool which contains the spirit of the tribe.

We are sure that African professionals would do this particular job much better than our amateur Christian necromancers, who may mix up the appropriate rites and make rain instead, to the disadvantage of the record crowd assembled to witness the Royal circus! Incidentally, it would be interesting to know the real thoughts of the very modern young man, the Duke of Edinburgh, whilst his wife is being transformed into a goddess—the real and original meaning of the rite of anointing with the Holy Oil. In which land will witchcraft go first, Africa or England? Let us hope that this weird survival of pre-history in our midst will prove the last of its kind, and that the new ruler of Britain, whether King, Queen or President, will discard all this mumbo-jumbo and will adapt himself, or herself, to the democratic and secular requirements of the democratic and secular age.

## Robert Taylor

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

(Continued from page 166)

TAYLOR at first refused to enter into any recognizances, but Carlile and one other friend went bail for him; in addition, a subscription was raised so as, we are told in the *Memoir* prefixed to the *Devil's Pulpit*, "to leave nothing that was desirable unprovided." Also, Taylor "never had the least disagreement with Mr. Orridge, the keeper, or with any other person, during his confinement in Oakham Gaol." This was very fortunate, as he immediately set to work to write the *Syntagma* and *Diegesis*. These two works run to nearly 600 pages, between them, of closely written matter—and reasoning. A critical estimate will be attempted later, but here it may be as well to point out that the *Syntagma* was a reply to one of the most coarse-mouthed attacks on a Freethinker ever made. The *Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society* was a short leaflet, and to this the Rev. John Pye Smith wrote *An Answer*.

This Smith was a well-known controversialist who had published a few theological works of the kind that one can pick up at a penny each, secondhand, and which in these days are quite valueless as far as their matter is concerned. No theological writer is more dead than Pye Smith, but in his day he achieved a certain notoriety, and he was obviously commissioned by the Society for Promoting Christian Instruction to "go for" Taylor in his most Christian manner. He managed to get more foul abuse in his thirty-six pages than most similar kind of controversialists could get in a thousand. The *Syntagma* stung him to the quick, and he quickly wrote *A Rejoinder* and a preface dealing with the *Diegesis*. In all this work his one object was to shower as much mud, odium, obloquy and defamation as he could; and, of course, he was delighted all the more at one or two trifling mistakes which such works as Taylor's were bound to have, written, as they were, in prison. The point to note here is that while Taylor's position as a Biblical critic is almost unassailable, the position taken up by Pye Smith is only

held by the narrowest and stupidest Fundamentalist and would even be treated with contempt by modern Church scholars.

In February, with the publication of the *Diegesis*, Taylor's imprisonment came to an end, and under the wing, as it were, of Richard Carlile, he once again "officiated" in a large room in Fleet Street, and at the Universalists' Chapel in Finsbury Square, "preparing to an infidel mission through the north of England with Mr. Carlile."

The full account of this mission will be found in the four volumes of the *Lion* which Carlile commenced to publish in 1827 and which, in addition, contain some extremely interesting letters, articles and reviews, written in Oakham Gaol by Taylor. For the social historian, the *Lion* should prove invaluable, as the accounts of the place visited by the two "infidel" missionaries contain valuable details of what life was in our provinces over 100 years ago.

The *Lion* is full of all sorts of other articles, especially on controversial subjects—such as Malthusianism, for example—and many letters were also published in it from people who showed an almost pathetic devotion to Robert Taylor and his cause and who were most anxious to subscribe towards the testimonial which Carlile was raising for the prisoner.

Taylor himself, one can see from his letters from prison, was cut to the soul by his unjust incarceration. He addressed several petitions to the authorities for his release, but without avail. In passing, it may be said that when he came up for judgment it was not Lord Tenterden who passed sentence, but Mr. Justice Bailley, who seems to have been an earlier edition of Justice North. For a Roman Catholic judge who later sentenced G. W. Foot for "blasphemy." He constantly interrupted Taylor's speech for the defence—which was read, by the way; and he made the sentence as severe as he could. Lord Tenterden appears to have been a most unwilling assistant to the scene. The full account will be found in the *Lion*.



Carlile allowed Taylor a free hand in his letters from prison, and racy reading they make. It is a great pity that a public could never now, perhaps, be found for them if reprinted. The "infidel mission" commenced on May 24, 1829, at Cambridge, and many towns were visited. Rooms were often difficult to obtain, and many attempts to prevent the lectures being given were made by priests and parsons, and often also by the pious mayors of the towns visited. Needless to say, Taylor's challenge to debate Christianity was often contemptuously refused, particularly by clergymen; but some discussions did take place. The local Press gave more than one fair account of the missionaries — such as that, for instance, in the *Bolton Chronicle* for August 1, 1829; but, of course, there were many dishonourable exceptions.

Just as a sample of what Taylor thought of the Manchester of 1829, the following few lines will prove of interest:—

Manchester is not civilized. It is in as rude and barbarous state (its few and impotent scientific institutions excepted) as dishonourable to human nature, as miserable to human life, as it could possibly have been at any period when it had been at all.

Among the towns visited were Nottingham, Leeds,

Bradford, Ashton-under-Lyne and Liverpool; here, we are told—

the mission was crowned with success and glory, by the Rev. Mr. Thom stepping forward to accept the challenge of the missionaries. Here Christianity, as it is in common practice, was completely put to trial and as completely failed. The Mayor (Robinson) blustered forth his magisterial authority and hunted the engagement for a theatre from place to place, and when the fine room of the shipwrights was at last secured, the Rev. Mr. Thom, after one night's attempt, refused all further invitation to keep his ground. A Unitarian printer of the name of Wright made a similar attempt, and came on twice, but to little purpose. . . . From Liverpool the mission proceeded to Wigan, Blackburn, Bury, Hyde, and to Huddersfield in Yorkshire, having profitably spent some days in Stockport. . . . At Huddersfield a powerful effect was produced, and, after four months' absence from London, and the approach of winter, a return was made to town.

Carlile and Taylor intended to spend every summer in a similar mission, but the taking of the Rotunda in May, 1830, in Blackfriars Road, and the success of the lectures — published later in the *Devil's Pulpit* — caused them to change their plans; particularly when Carlile was arrested and imprisoned on January 10, 1831, to be followed later by the arrest on a charge of blasphemy again of Taylor himself on July 4 in the same year. (*To be continued*)

## For Peace Comes Dropping Slow—I

By A. R. WILLIAMS

SAID the young-old man, "I'm not the Wandering Jew but a friendless Englishman doomed to roam alone with few listeners, outlawed by my opinions, exile of my ideas.

I commit the unforgiveable crime; talk about Peace. True one may do so freely without interruption in any country on conditions. These are one must premise the population of the country in which one speaks and its government are in favour of peace.

That they keep armies, navies, air forces, armament works, secret police and spy systems because of their devotion to Peace. They have to make all those preparations, costing annually a large proportion of national income so as to preserve Peace.

Each country regards Peace as the highest good, but all its neighbours take the opposite view, prepared to attack it at least excuse or sign of weakness. That one hears in every country through which one wanders, as I've done.

So the inverted pyramid of war preparations goes on piling up till it gets top-heavy and collapses on its architects. They then proceed each to blame every other, and unwarned by the catastrophe start to expand armaments again.

It's madness and wickedness, but useless to tell them so. All they reply is: We must defend ourselves. A few of us answer that disarmament must start. Where better than at home?

Then trouble starts. One must tell one's fellow-countrymen there're lovers of Peace and workers for Peace in other nations. One is frankly disbelieved. Next come accusations of disloyalty, unpatriotism, of trying to help other governments to overcome one's own.

Subversive influences are suspected to have been at work to make one agent of foreign powers, or one's openly charged with being in the pay of one's country's enemies. That happens in any and every country where Peace advocates speak.

Always there's some country of which to be afraid. It's surprising in what a state of fear bellicose minded people live. Though they talk defiantly of their country's enemies almost in the same breath they warn us to be on our guard

against machinations which are taking shape against the safety of our land, whichever that may be.

Amazing what full and detailed knowledge warmongers have of secret plans and intentions of other powers. They see danger in every action of alien governments, though our own may make the same moves without criticism.

One may support official Peace propaganda, speak in favour of the United Nations, or join the chorus of pious platitudes put up by churches. Propose something real and basic and drastic and one gets different treatment. Insist on disarmament, on Peace lovers meeting others of like mind in different countries and one starts a spate of abuse and hatred.

Yet the United Nations consists of politicians, diplomats, officials, rulers; all people who're concerned to keep things as they are; in short, who take war as inevitable if certain rules are broken or definite moves misplaced."

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"We who want Peace wholly and work for it without reservations do not regard it as a game or a gamble. To us ordinary people it's a matter of life or death, with emphasis on increasing possibility and indeed likelihood of the latter.

So we think common people entitled to discuss Peace, also have chief say in making it and keeping it. They must be approached, though difficulties of doing so are big. That many are Communist controlled, infected or dictated to—or supposed to be—cannot be avoided.

That numbers of States are Communist ruled makes it necessary to have Communists in consultation. We cannot have world Peace without Communist participation. Ultimate appeal is not to any political, religious or other specified viewpoint, but to common humanity.

War's the enemy of the human race, so all people must be moved to extirpate the evil thing. Therefore those of us who're pacifists face unpopularity and persecution and at her perils and troubles to carry the message of the need for Peace to all persons.

Where we can get we speak. We cry aloud in towns as well as in the wilderness. If possible in schools and

(Continued on page 172)



## This Believing World

On the B.B.C. Third Programme, the other evening, there was a "discussion" on "Creation" between two distinguished Aberdeen professors, one a Christian and one not a Christian. Leaving aside the way they both appeared to mumble their words so as often to be unintelligible, and the hearty guffaw the non-Christian emitted whenever he agreed with his "opponent," one cannot help wondering what it was all about. The idea presumably was to discuss the "Creation myth" in Genesis which is the term used in the *Radio Times*; but, as far as it was possible to follow the "discussion," the Christian professor no more believed in Genesis than the non-Christian professor. Surely, if a thoroughly believing Christian gives up the "Creation myth," he is bound to give up the Fall of Man—and if that is true, what becomes of Jesus as the "Saviour" of mankind? What did he save mankind from? Needless to add, neither professor dealt with this at all, for, of course, Jesus and John and Paul had to be saved at all costs.

It is naturally quite understandable that two professors belonging to the same university are most unlikely to disagree on the air, especially on Christianity. What would Prof. Flew's students think of him if he unequivocally threw overboard God's Holy Religion? Moreover, very few professors have the courage to say outright that Christianity is nothing but a rehash of Pagan myths which modern science, and particularly the science of anthropology, has thoroughly exploded. It is astonishing how frightened are our non-Christian professors—how hopelessly timid they are when confronted by a Christian professor who always speaks as if he must be absolutely right and his opponent absolutely, or, poor chap, mistakenly wrong. If the people who listen in to the Third Programme can stand this kind of "discussion" they can stand anything.

As our readers will have noticed, newspapers consider it much more than a "scoop" if they can give us the story of a "convert" to Christianity from the ranks of film stars or cricketers. Why a film star or cricketer outside his or her profession should be more intelligent than anybody else, is something we cannot understand. The latest example is a cricketer called Sheppard who, like C. T. Studd, also a famous cricketer who got religion very badly, has found God and is going to join the Church. So what? Mr. Sheppard has found out that there is a "great renaissance of personal Christianity." This is a bit vague, but no doubt what is meant is that, like himself, other people are finding "God." Well, it would prove interesting to see how Mr. Sheppard, aided by God, would come out in a debate with a competent Freethinker. We fancy his score would be a duck.

Talking to a group of business men—most of them "executives"—the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed surprise that more of them had not given up big business for Christ's sake and joined the Church. All sorts of people had done so—generals, admirals, film stars, writers, artists, and so on, but never big business men. He went on to admit that as a body they did not appear to believe too much in Christianity, the ethics appealing to them but not its ritual. They are now beginning to see that you cannot separate Christian ethics from Christian ritual and so he invited them to come into the Church.

There ought to have been a rush there and then but the report that reached us seemed sadly to admit that men earning happily "big business" incomes were most unwilling to live on a curate's egg and salary while Arch-

bishops enjoyed their thousands a year. Even the prospect of joining forces with Christ did not appear very alluring especially if one had to follow that bit about having nowhere to lay one's head. But fancy an Archbishop actually believing that big business men will throw up everything—motor-cars, holidays abroad, princely incomes, wife, home, and children, to teach God's Precious Word—most of which, by the way, is not believed even by Archbishops—in some God-forsaken slum or village. It's fantastic.

## Theatre

**The Apple Cart** by George Bernard Shaw is the present revival of Tennent Productions Ltd. at the Theatre Royal Haymarket.

When the play was first produced Hannen Swaffer wrote of it as having nothing new to say and being years behind the times. Yet, in some ways, history seems to be taking shape on lines predicted by Shaw. The play has Shaw's usual unconventional construction which makes it awkward to produce, and Michael MacOwan (who directed) has overcome the difficulties of coping with an interlude which has nothing to do with the action of the play. To give us these twenty minutes there are intervals occupying thirty-five minutes, presumably for changes of scene.

It is too long ago to compare the performances of Cedric Hardwicke and Edith Evans of the original production with Noël Coward and Margaret Leighton in the present production, but Mr. Coward certainly gives King Magnus a calm dignity and is mentally a match for the Prime Minister and his cabinet. He does not seem relaxed in the interlude, with Margaret Leighton as his plaything, whereas she gives the scene a sparkle without which it would fall flat. George Rose amused us as the easily-flattered Boanerges, Jennifer Wright made all she could of Princess Alice, and Laurence Naismith succeeded as a ranting prime minister. Margaret Rawlings plays the Power Mistress in a performance that cannot go wrong. Cecil Truener does not completely convince as the American ambassador.

Loudoun Sainthill's settings bear no stamp of futuristic style.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

## For Peace Comes Dropping Slow—I

(Continued from page 171)

churches, in colleges and camps, in meetings and conferences, at societies and clubs and associations, within any organisation where a voice can be raised we raise it.

At times Members of Parliament, lecturers, scientists, preachers, authors, artists; all manner of people who get public attention speak for Peace. There should be more of them. No art or philosophy or any nobleness of thought gains by war, so those whose lives are devoted to promoting civilisation should be courageous enough to say words. Peace is needed on behalf of the peaceful arts.

That's not enough. We want the masses of people who're the chief sufferers by war, who provide soldiers to be killed and endure privations not only to know how good Peace is, but to bestir themselves to speak and move and act for Peace.

Because pious or ethical hopes, aspirations and utterances are insufficient. They influence militarists and warmongers very little.

Ultimate need and aim and end is world revolution, by force, that cure would be worse than the disease, but worldwide individual and co-operative and ultimately total refusal of the earth's population to take part in war, to ostracise it, so wars and their possibility cease for ever.



# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

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. 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, May 31, 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.  
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, May 30, 7 p.m.: MESSRS. T. W. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.  
West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: MESSRS. O'NEILL, CLEAVER and WOOD.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, May 31, 7 p.m.: E. W. SHAW (M.R.San.I.). "The Roman Church and Sanitary Science."  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 31: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "Time."

## NOTES AND NEWS

Readers who attended the Brussels International Free-thought Congress last September and afterwards spent a few days at the Hotel Astoria, Blankenberge, bore away very pleasant memories. M. Marliere, the proprietor, is a good Freethinker and anyone reading these lines would be sure of a warm welcome at the Astoria and a most enjoyable holiday.

### Hot Peace

What think you, reader, of the new Hot Peace?  
I hope peace comes; all need it, I am sure;  
Even this latest form of "golden fleece"  
Is better than continuous Cold War.

B. S.

## Edgar A. Poe

By JOHN O'HARE

SOME men's lives are always October. In the easy phrase, these men are the Romantics—men who either become flagrant as murderers or add depth to literature. All great literature comes out of the mind's unease; and what more uneasy than October when the elements mass to destroy finally summer's multitudinous labours. Wind dangerous drives through the seams of safety, and the stricken leaves scattering under the moon whisper insistently. To some that whisper is a warning to buy an overcoat; to others, a few others, it is inspiration, the arbiter of an unshareable impulse. There was a man born in Boston, America, one hundred and forty-four years ago who always heard the dead leaves whirling under an October night sky; was always aware of the unspeakable silence between the revolving worlds; always saw the grains on the limitless shores of man's bewilderment. The smudged outline of Edgar A. Poe (he used the hated "Allan" only once) is known to most people. Therefrom

usually emerges a baleful ingrate or a drink-sodden poet wailing ever for a lost love. The legend started by Griswold and mitigated and endowed with bright lights by amiable men shocked by the reverend one's spleen, has endured with little variation for the more than century since Poe's miserable end in Baltimore. Maculate or immaculate, diabolic or angelic: this counterfeit presentment of one individual goes on. The falsity began with the simple circumstance that Poe had no peer in his day and environment. None of Poe's acquaintances was large enough to see the man's essential *difference*—and to understand the reason for it and to proclaim it. If a man is different from his fellows, society will always find a tag for him to make itself comfortable. The unclassified disturbs, therefore a label safely catalogues. Lacking the contemporaries wise enough to destroy that label, the false description passes on to the next generation. And bad names last longer than good, for humanity will not be denied its brilliant scoundrels. The universal agreement at least seems to be that Poe's life was a tragedy. But what is meant by that?

Man's tragedy is that he is a comedian *malgre lui*. All the dignity of the world topples against the realisation that he is a creature composed mostly of water, who is compelled to stuff himself through a hole in his face in order to animate temporarily his inevitable dust. But it is only when man realises the human comedy in all its tragic completeness that he has understanding. Solemnity was ever the mark of the superficial, or of a baby taking its first step. A Cervantes, a Shakespeare, will laugh because they have excelled mere knowledge and have infinite understanding of the comedians of whom they themselves are a part; a dogmatist—man limited by his own self-excellence—will frown at the imputation of the comic in himself; a Poe will smile wryly at a truth to him bitter. For Poe did not want men to be thus. He wanted them to be *civilised*—that is, to have all the erudition and culture of the ages, and to wear their learning like a flower, not clank it around like a bag of tools. He wanted ideal men. What did he get? He got early 19th century America.

That enormous maladjustment has never been properly observed. Not even a Byron domiciled in a provincial suburb, or a Johnson anywhere away from Temple Bar, could have been more misfitted than was Poe in the land of the dollar, the covered wagon, and the rough, whooping animalism of the young republic. In every instinct he belonged to old civilisations, to ancient backgrounds. The parochial enthusiasms of New England, New York, and Philadelphia, were not for him, for there are no parishes in a royal mind. The States in Poe's day took their culture secondhand from England, and secondhand articles mostly hold the defects and not the qualities of their first owners. The native literary world was a swarm of poetasters and writers of small, imitative talent. The very few native-born writers of stature, mainly because of geography and Poe's indigence, were beyond the Raven's ken. Of necessity he lived in the ephemeral world of magazines and newspapers; and to look through the files of those journals in which Poe so hardly earned his bread, is to wonder at Poe's courage. He was first, foremost, and all the time, a man of letters, one of the very rare instances of a moneyless man existing solely by his pen. It is simple enough for a spewer of letters to exist comfortably; in any age it has been difficult for a man of letters to exist by letters alone. And when one considers that Poe's was a rare talent, rightly to be fostered in tranquility, and that that talent had to be forced, against its possessor's nature, to compete with imbecilic nonentities in order to procure food and shelter, indictments and appraisals by literary riff-raff lose much of their point.



To a mind contemplative and profound, and a highly nervous temperament, was added the care of a young, doomed, and greatly loved wife. This combination meant but one thing—poverty, that foulest of Christian virtues. Fiction to contrary, poverty is the greatest enemy of the artist, and poverty never released Poe. While he covered the long rolls of paper with his tales, and Virginia coughed her lungs away, his mind was ever racked with the need for a dollar—a few cents. Milk, bread, candles, rent, medicine, danced through the *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. A man can endure sorrow better than he thinks, but there is always a moment when the spirit rebels. A glass of wine is often a gesture of defiance; but to Poe, with his constitution, it was a fatal act. A thimbleful of alcohol intoxicated him: therefore he was a drunkard, while sober men drank fifty times his amount. As for his malice, his arrogance, his balefulness, what were they but his honesty as a critic demolishing the pretensions of would-be literary giants. A great man will not mind being called a fool, because he is aware he has foolishness; but prick the bladder of a fool and hatred oozes out, thick and black and lasting. Poe pricked so many bladders with his acid-dipped nib, so many gilded volumes were exposed by him as trumpety, that the air was loud against him. Villain! traducer! squeaked the rats behind the arras as the greatest literary figure of their day did his honest task amid distresses almost insuperable.

No, Poe was not a drunkard nor was he a villain. His

## Holy Ghost on Interest

By TOM HILL

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. vi, 21.)

IT had not always been so. When in 1606 Pope Paul V found it necessary to have a banking-house of his own, his "Bank of the Holy Ghost" was not allowed to levy interest; on the contrary, those who deposited monies with the *Banco di Spirito Santo* were charged for the keep of their deposit.

Influenced by the classic moralists, the early Fathers regarded all interest as usury and, therefore, as a kind of highway robbery and exploitation of other people's distress. This proposition, however, the Church gradually abandoned with regard to very temporal and materialist considerations.

From early time the clergy at least was forbidden, under penalty, to take interest; such a thing, said Leo, was lamentable in the case of any Christian, but particularly reprehensive in clergymen. However, it became more and more evident that business could not thrive without the incentive of interest. Capital became scarce and lending the monopoly of a few (mainly Jews and others exempt from the Canon Law). The Church found that the laws of economics were stronger than hers. Being one of the largest holders of property and monies in the world, the clerics were driven, as stewards of this material wealth, to find ways and means of investment. Resulting from a notable judgment of the Lateran Council of 1515, by which it was allowed to levy a "moderate interest" (say 5 per cent.) to cover working expenses only (i.e., not with a view to making a profit), the first breach was laid in the wall preceding the general collapse of the ban on interest.

In 1830, the Congregation of the Holy Office, with the approval of Pius VIII, allowed further inroads to aid a Church built on the large profits made by traffic in Indulgences, the levying of Peter's Pence (the lion's share coming from the U.S.A.) and sundry commercial enterprises. Since 1917 even the laws restraining the clergy from taking interest have been entirely obsolete.

tragedy was that he had no money. Had he had money his personal reputation might have been as respectable as Longfellow's. But his error lay in being poor and honest—honest in his literary evaluations. Such honesty may be the best policy, but it is not the best insurance for social success; and when success is measured by the accumulation of banknotes, poverty is worse than leprosy. Time has wiped out inexorably all the tinsel of those long-gone American *literati*. Poe remains. No writer with so small a volume of published work has influenced literature as widely as he. Of a certainty Sherlock Holmes stemmed from the Chevalier Auguste Dupin, and Poe's shade can be seen in writers as diverse as R.L.S. and W. W. Jacobs.

Poe was a man always on the boundary. He walked where night and day stop still in immortal twilight. The loneliest of human experiences he put down on paper indisputably. Most of us fear to dwell on the mysterious beyond sleep and falling earth, be we as brave as Spartacus in the thunder of the debate. We shun our ultimate *aloneness*, therefore we blow bugles with our fellows. But we are not always with our fellows. . . . And where we stop short, and turn back to the comfort of our unassailable materialism, Poe went on, calling to us as he would. His voice carries back over the wildernesses we deny, and we listen. We go on listening. Perhaps because we are dimly aware that there might be a flaw somewhere in our sureness, and that in a world of chameleon supposition romance may be the only absolute fact.

As a result of the Concordat with Mussolini, the Bank of the Holy Ghost—turned mortgage bank for greater property since 1874—was licensed to undertake normal banking transactions; Senators and aristocrats flocked to its Board of Directors, and the Holy Ghost Bank was accepted into the *Federazione Bancaria Italiana*. It is closely connected with the Morgan Trust.

In Europe, the Vatican is the greatest capitalist whose wealth is three times that of the funds of the Bank of England. This immense wealth, the backbone of the Italian economy, is administered by the Holy Congregation of the Possession of the Holy See, under the personal control of the Vicar of that part of the Holy Ghost who is recorded as having complained that he had nowhere to lay his head. (Matt. viii, 20.)

"I know that God has given us the use of goods but only as far as is necessary; and he has determined that the use be common. It is absurd and disgraceful for one to live magnificently and luxuriously when so many are hungry." (Clement of Alexandria, 150-215.)

The December issue of *United Nations World* stated that the Vatican treasures amount to "several million dollars in the form of gold bullion." *Osservatore Romano* hurriedly called this "false and calumnious assertions" and whenever similar statements appear locally, or in the Church, in the face of starvation and unemployment, called upon to give something for the relief of the sufferings of their flock, all the parish sheets cry out: Do not allow yourself to be cheated by the look of our jewellers—it's all fake! There are no golden vessels, they are plated, and the poverty of Holy Church is so great that she even lacks the means for the most fundamental pastoral office.

Not only has the Vatican hundreds of millions of dollars worth of gold blocks stored in bank vaults in the United States; throughout the world, including Germany and



# Correspondence

## "EUTHANASIA"

SIR,—The correspondence in recent issues of *The Freethinker* advocating euthanasia for the senile is far too "naive" to meet the social problem of the aged or their victims!

I can visualise the closing down of the life of an aged person who is a drag on a daughter; a daughter whose living comes from part-time service to a rich hypochondriac, and so the bumping-off process protects the wealthy, unless there is a law that all in a certain condition must cease to exist. Then both of the above will be bumped off. But at the instigation of whom?

Malthus is dragged into the discussion at least by implication. There is no proof that subsistence is inadequate, apart of course from man's behaviour to subsistence.

It does not follow that each time food supplies are doubled the population must double. And if it did follow, then one might as well pack up bothering, because fools and imbeciles won't use contraceptives, and so the progeny from increased subsistence will be prolific in imbecility, whilst the sane will soon cease to matter or perhaps exist!

As to subsistence, the U.S.A. will not permit goods to enter which our workers can provide more cheaply than theirs. There is an outcry against cheap umbrellas brought here from China and so on, and so it is not the available subsistence, *per se*, that is the issue, but man's behaviour towards it. The above is a few of a million examples.

I think we—*world wide we*—should produce for use, and if Malthus then holds the trump card, well that's just too bad, isn't it? —Yours, etc., CHAS. E. BERRY.

P.S.—I'm not entirely opposed to contraceptives but I do not blame lack of natural subsistence.—C. E. B.

## PAUL AND JESUS

SIR,—Whether there are really any "simple" teachings of Jesus or whether Paul's "attack" on women is really "a monstrous and nagging obsession" is surely a matter of opinion. But what is not a matter of opinion is the fact (not referred to by Mr. G. J. Bennett) that Paul did in the end allow marriage; while Jesus very complacently allowed a vile mutilation "for the kingdom of heaven's sake"—a mutilation which would make marriage impossible and, if universally followed, exterminate the human race.—Yours, etc., H. CUTNER.

## CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY

SIR,—For a good number of years I have observed when in conversation with Christians on religion subjects how little they know regarding the history of Christianity. Although millions attend church and chapel every Sunday the Bible is a sealed book to them. They trust to what the preachers say and are led like sheep. If asked to read a book on Freethought or *The Freethinker* they give you a look of disdain as if you were a criminal. The N.S.S. has been before the public for 86 years and with such opposition as Christians have meted out to representative Freethinkers with sneers, gibes, lies, calumny and blackguardism it is really wonderful that it has existed so long. In the great army of progress Freethought has produced some brilliant soldiers that any cause might be proud, ever fighting for Freedom, Liberty and Free Speech. To quote only a few of those warriors brings back to me memories of bygone days. Thomas Paine, Richard Carlile, Henry Hetherington, George Jacob Holyoake, Charles Bradlaugh, Charles Watts, G. W. Foote, Arthur B. Moss, John M. Robertson and Chapman Cohen. All men of merit, upright, honest and trustworthy. I have just finished reading "Christianity and Mythology" by J. M. Robertson and I advise every young Freethinker to obtain it from their Free Library or possess a copy from Watts & Co., Johnson's Court, London, E.C.4. Freethought lecturers in this splendid book will find all they need regarding the Christian Superstition and how it was borrowed from other nations such as India and Egypt. It shows the story of Jesus and the Apostles as mythical and apart from the New Testament story there is no direct evidence that Jesus or the 12 Apostles ever lived. The first great book that shook the Christian world was Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason" written upwards of 160 years ago, which shattered the shield and shivered the lance of the Christian religion. But this masterpiece, "Christianity and Mythology," goes to the root of Christianity and shows that the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of its "Saviour" of 2,000 years ago is not a *New Religion* and its miracles, such as raising the dead, the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, and all the teaching and sayings attributed to Jesus are copied from Pagan religions that existed hundreds of years before Jesus was born in a stable and cradled in a manger.

To all students of the Christian religion whether Christian or Freethinker they should read, mark and digest this great book. There is not a dull page in it and it may aptly be said it is as accurate as Colenso and as fascinating as a novel.—Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH CLOSE.

Japan, they hold untold investments in the great monopoly industries and the annual income (about 6-7,000,000,000 lire) which they draw from, and salt away in, the United States runs into tens of millions. Alongside the Bank of the Holy Ghost and similar institutions which look after the mundane interests of the princes of the Roman Church, the Holy See possesses large properties in Italy and other countries. Through trusted agents the top dignitaries of the Catholic Church control entire branches of Italy's national economy; behind some of the large stock companies stand high-placed representatives of the Papal Court, men known for their active support of fascism—Cerutti, Battistelli, Castellani, Soccorsi, Torlonia and Nogara. Bernardino Nogara, one of the richest men in Italy, who holds the official post of Vatican financial expert, who personally controls the General Company of Public and Agricultural Works, whose assets have risen to billions of lire after the fascist adventures in Ethiopia and Albania, is one of the Jesuit intermediaries. These are the Vatican's Black Guard whose strength lies above all in their wealth as well as in the espionage network in which they have enmeshed the world.

"How far, O ye rich, do you extend your senseless avarice? . . . The earth was made for all, rich and poor alike. Why do ye rich claim it as your exclusive right? . . . The Pagans hold earth as property. They do blaspheme God." (St. Ambrose.)

The Vatican has shares in every branch of industry: mining, food, engineering, building, chemicals, textiles, electrical equipment, railways, municipal transport and so on. The Catholic Church is also a large landowner, its affiliates control approximately 250,000 hectares of land. Suffice it to say that 15 representatives of the top Vatican aristocracy—Ricasoli, Torlonia, Pavenelli, Chigi, Colonna, etc.—have 500,000 hectares between them.

(To be concluded)

## VINTAGE VIRTUES

Let Courage but a phantom be,  
And Honour but a wispy wraith;  
Each human virtue hard to see,  
If we but keep our Cath'lic Faith.

Let Charity be water-thin,  
For common kindness do not pant;  
Put human goodness in the bin,  
To keep Hope truly Protestant.

We are the shop for branded stuff,  
We rise above Humanity;  
Kind hearts are simply not enough,  
We offer (labelled) Charity.

We're split in sundry severed sects,  
(Each couple lives like Cain and Abel);  
And every virtue some will vex—  
Unless it bears the vintage label.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

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## CHARLES BRADLAUGH

SIR,—I was very interested to read of the Commemorative Ceremony at Northampton in honour of Charles Bradlaugh. It is good to know that his memory is still honoured there, and that the M.P. for Northampton and the Mayor of the City were proud to associate themselves with the Freethinkers who organised the ceremony.

I have a memory of Mr. Bradlaugh of no importance to anyone but myself, but it may perhaps have a little interest to readers. In the '80s I, a farmer's son and working on the farm, was in my teens. I had been fond of reading from childhood, beginning with fairy tales, going on to penny dreadfuls, Jules Verne, Proctor's astronomical books, and so in the late '80s I came to *The Freethinker*, *The National Reformer* and *The Agnostic Journal* (yes, we had three weeklies then). You may wonder how I found time for all this reading, but I used to do a lot of driving (farm carts, milk, hay, etc.) and, like "Jude the Obscure," I held the reins in one hand and a paper or book in the other.

One of my journeys was to the St. John's Wood district where I left churns of milk at various dairies. One was in Circus Road, St. John's Wood. It was at the corner of a turning in Circus Road, and on the opposite corner was what I called to myself, a piano shop, being stocked with pianos, music stools and musical adjuncts generally.

Well, sometime in '89 or '90 some correspondence between Mr. Bradlaugh and another was printed in *The National Reformer*, and addresses were printed at the heads of the letters, and to my great surprise Mr. Bradlaugh's was headed 21, Circus Road, St. John's Wood. So I thought, to-morrow I will find out where 21 is, and (yes, you are quite right) it was the piano shop. I had seen a grey-headed gentleman seated at a desk or table many times but of course had no idea who he was. I saw him many times after and always intended to go to the Hall of Science and hear him lecture, but never did. It was difficult getting up to town, and farmers' boys start the day very early. He died in January, 1891.

I have always regretted not having definitely made up my mind to go, and sticking to it, but of course I did not anticipate his dying so soon.—Yours, etc.,

A. W. DAVIS.

P.S.—That part of Circus Road was bombed out of existence. The piano shop and the dairy are both gone. The basement of the piano shop is exposed to the sky. I think Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner says somewhere that the family used to have their meals in the basement.

## HELL FIRE

SIR,—I wish to commend your excellent leader in the May 5, 1953, issue of *The Freethinker*, and to observe that simple justice demands that the law and its penalties should be clearly known and understood. The disputes among Christians as to whether there is torment or not violates this elementary principle and puts Divine justice well below human.

Again, British penology is in aim remedial and reformatory; once more God fails!

Since there is no knowledge of fate or conditions after death, Hell Fire can serve no useful purpose but is only senseless brutality and sadism. My retort to those Christians who say that Hell is only figurative is: how do you know? As this doctrine is confined to the New Testament, we have to exclude Jewish Jehovah and put the blame on Christian Trinity.

Hitler could only torture to the extent of human life, but an Eternal Torturer would be the most brutal ruffian the world has ever known.—Yours, etc.,

J. R. DUNCANSON.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF HUNGER

SIR,—Mr. Cutner now says "I hold to every word I wrote in my articles," but he now substitutes the word "production" for "productive," lifting it out of its context to suit his argument and giving it an arbitrary meaning, as I am sure he knows quite as well as I do (although I cannot make him admit it) that de Castro used the word *productive* in the generally accepted sense of the word and not as Mr. Cutner tries to make out. But even so, if we are "productive" and our business consists, let us say, in the "production" of Mr. Cutner's *pins* or *radio sets* or *motor cars*, no doubt we shall be able to exchange them and get food. Perhaps Mr. Cutner will now be able from this to understand what de Castro meant by people being made "productive."

Mr. Cutner, I know, is a past master in twisting and turning words and making them mean just what he says that they mean, as one of Lewis Carroll's characters claimed to do. It is very difficult to know at times where Mr. Cutner's facts end and where his versatile imagination comes into play, which I consider most unfortunate in the circumstances.

In both his articles on this book he has used his subtle style to twist and turn what Lord Boyd Orr says in the Foreword, as well as the *few parts he selects* from de Castro. In every instance (I am sorry to say) I find he has perverted the real meaning of the writers. It appears he cannot admit that Malthus has been proved to be

wrong over and over again, but he still stands, as we would say, in "his mother—drunk or sober." In this particular instance it seems Mr. Cutner's prejudice has outgrown his power of reasoning. From what I know of him, he is not a man to mistake his imagination for understanding of a subject.

The following are extracts from "Geography of Hunger" (p. 23): "Malthus's theory lacked a scientific basis. His first error was to consider the growth of population as an independent variable isolated from other social phenomena, whereas in fact such increase is strictly dependent on political and economic factors. Further, history itself has completely disproved the predictions of Malthus. For a time after the publication of his theories the growth of the population seemed to confirm his predictions, but before the end of the last century the increase had lost its impetus. Fertility began to decline in various countries, and side by side with the spectre of overpopulation appeared that of underpopulation."

"The central doctrine of Malthus 'was thus completely contradicted by historical evolution,' says the well known demographer, Imre Ferenczi. Dr. W. R. Aykroyd, director of the Division of Nutrition of the F.A.O., wrote in 1937 that 'Now in western civilisation the spectre raised by Malthus has been laid.' Yet 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 a world depopulated by famine."

In conclusion, I refrain from saying more, although I have only touched on the subject, as I doubt if I would be granted space.—Yours, etc.,

A. W. I. McHATIE.

## DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—In reply to Mr. H. Cutner, I know of no sources of knowledge open to me and not open to him. I should say there is none. Dialectical Materialism is not a dogma, but a guide, and open to all who care to study it.

In an answer to E. Crouch, I have already stated that a knowledge of mechanism is extremely useful in the solution of many problems, especially in the external relationship and interaction of the components involved. There are, however, many problems which have not been answered satisfactorily from a mechanistic interpretation. Dialectic thinking is no esoteric secret, but something that can be applied by anyone whether expert or only beginning to take an interest in philosophy.

As my short introduction has aroused some interest I hope to have another article soon, and I should welcome any criticism Mr. Cutner cares to make.—Yours, etc.,

JIM GRATHAM.

## THE FINAL CHILDREN

SIR,—I hope you will allow space in your columns for what seems to me to be an all important and living issue, namely, the case of the Finaly children. I may add that although I am a Freethinker myself my parents are of Jewish origin; however I know that your readers will not allow this to prejudice my case. You are doubtless aware that M. and Mme Finaly, the father and mother of these unfortunate children, were exterminated by the Nazis for the crime of being Jews and that their children were saved from a similar fate by a Catholic woman; that they were taken into a Convent in the tender years of infancy. You will agree doubtless that this was very humane. I do not dispute it. Yet the fact remains that after the war they were claimed by an Aunt who promised to look after them. There can be no doubt that this would have been the wish of the parents, and it is shown by the fact that the children had been subjected to the curious rite of circumcision. Yet when they were claimed some time in 1946 the Catholic clergy refused to return them. They were transferred to another institution where at an advanced age of, I believe, four and six years respectively they were considered old enough to be baptised without the consent of kin or kin. Subsequently a French Court ordered that they be handed over to their rightful guardians. In point of fact this order was ignored on the doubtful grounds that these children having been baptised (in a manner of which even the Vatican claims to disapprove) must be brought up as Catholics. They have been smuggled across the borders to a Monastery in the Cleric-Fascist State of Spain from which there is little or no hope of their return.

I, Sir, do not labour under the illusion that these children will be any the better for being brought up as Jews save for the fact that they will not be forced or maintained in the Monastery. But I submit that no civilised society should tolerate action which amounts virtually to the kidnapping and unavoidable religious indoctrination of defenceless children whose rights are recognised to-day to be just as valid as those of adults. Surely something must be done to remedy so appalling an injustice. If only by printing this letter you will bring some light to bear on this very dark subject. Whilst if there is hope of action our paper and society could appeal for funds to help in this tragic situation or at least print a full pamphlet on the topic where we could expose to the nation the ugliness and brutality of this clerical outrage.—Yours, etc.,

R. LESLIE DUNN.