

# The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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IN the 'seventies of the last century, the Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin, a profound and far-sighted thinker, whose penetrating intuitions often proved more accurate than did those of his more orthodox critics, made the startling prophecy that the next, the twentieth, century would prove to be the era of gigantic world conflicts: the armaments race between the great military powers, which was just then beginning, after the recent Franco-German war of 1870-71, would inevitably, declared Bakunin, end in an era of world conflicts more destructive by far than anything previously experienced by mankind, when once the military Molochs began to devour each other.

In our present year of grace, 1953, the current century has but barely passed its half-way mark. Already, however, the sinister prediction of Bakunin is proved absolutely correct; even if—a bold hypothesis just at present—not another shot is fired in anger until the year A.D. 2000, our century has already fully lived up to its designation as the era, par excellence, of world wars.

We are impelled to the foregoing conclusions by the recent armistice which has put an end, it is to be hoped, permanently, to the war in Korea. Peace, or at least the opportunity for peace, presents itself to that unhappy land, so ironically entitled by its inhabitants and neighbours as "The Land of Morning Calm." It is, actually, much to be feared that the present "calm" in this so unsuitably named land is, "morning," afternoon or evening, the "calm" of death, the peace of desolation. To present-day Korea, far more than to ancient Britain, concerning which the words were originally spoken, is the historic description of the Roman historian, Tacitus, true: "They make a desert and call it peace." For modern war, thanks to scientific "progress," is "total" in character; is, to employ commercial phraseology, "wholesale" as well as "retail."

Actually, it is not so certain as is sometimes assumed, that the "scientific" wars of modern times are statistically more destructive than the less technical wars of less sophisticated ages. The Tartar "hordes" of Jenghis Khan and of the Osmanli Turkish sultans, who boasted that "the grass never grew where their horses' hoofs had trod," and the armies of religious fanatics who hacked each other to death for "the greater glory of God" during the "Thirty Years War" (1618-48), were perhaps even more destructive of life than the conflicts of our own age and century. But military science to-day is far from having exhausted its destructive possibilities, and the atomic age is still only in its belligerent infancy.

That the existence of civilisation must ultimately prove incompatible with the further evolution and recurrence of war is one of the few current assertions upon which there seems to be, just at present, virtually universal agreement. However, the universality of this belief is not, unfortunately, conspicuous in the current statistics for "armament" in the budgets of all, or indeed any, of the

great or medium-sized powers! Being neither a prophet nor the son of one, the present writer does not propose to attempt to propound any universal panacea to "outlaw" war. There have been many such panaceas, ever since the first modern work on "perpetual peace" was written—on the eve of the Napoleonic wars! So far, the sincerity of modern pacifism

has been much more impressive than its visible successes. Whatever view, or views one may hold on the causes of war; whether man is "naturally" a bellicose warmonger, whether he has a "death-complex"—to cite the jargon of the psychologists, our modern specialists in "voodoo," or,

whether, as now seems to be the generally-accepted view, we are to find the cause of successive wars in competitive economic conflicts; the only thing that is quite certain about war, so far, is that Humanity is quite incapable, or so it would seem from past experience, of living without it.

It is apparently true that there are some primitive "stone-age" peoples who are without even a word for war in their limited vocabularies, and to whom, accordingly, the institution of war itself would appear to be unknown. Unfortunately, perhaps, the bulk of mankind has long since quitted the Stone Age, and the pacifist practices of the polar Esquimaux finds few imitators—even if many admirers!—amongst the races of, what it is still rather ironical to describe, as the "civilised" world.

The Korean war itself which has just, or so we may hope, concluded, fully lived up to all that the present century has come to mean by the expression "The horrors of war." Even discounting the unproved charges of "bacteriological" war, and recognising the absence of such expected horrors as atomic bombs and poison gas; the reality was ghastly enough. To the routine monotony of bombing, blasting, and burning, which is, so to speak, the "small change" of modern war, were added such fresh technical horrors as the notorious "napalm." It used to be stated that "the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin." Nowadays, in our more enlightened era, it appears that napalm can accomplish both these feats, hitherto regarded as impossible—or, at least, one gathers so from the horrible description of this particular form of war and its appalling transformation of the human body, given from personal experience by the B.B.C. correspondent in Korea, Mr. René Cutforth, in his now famous report on what he saw in Korea—*Korean Reporter*.

The fact, of course, is, as has already been pointed out often enough, modern "scientific" war has inevitably done away with all the humane restraints and distinctions painfully developed in recent centuries. The time-honoured distinctions between soldier and civilian, between "military objectives," which may be bombed, and civilian property, which may not, has largely gone: with the further evolution of military techniques, what is left of "the laws of war"

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### Peace Breaks Out!

—By F. A. RIDLEY—



drawn up by a more humane—or less technically-advanced—age, appear to be certainly doomed to disappear.

From a political angle, there is much that is new in the Korean war and its present aftermath; though it is rather outside our present scope. The re-emergence of the moribund China of the 19th and early 20th centuries as a great military power able, despite its still pre-industrial civilisation, to fight on equal terms and to hold the industrially-advanced West at bay, unconquered, for three years, is a fact of world-importance, and may well be marked by future historians as a decisive turning-point in world-history. "The Revolt of Asia" is now an indubitable fact, and ought not to be confused with the concurrent rise of Communism of which, indeed, it may be regarded at least as much a cause as an effect. It would appear to mark the proximate end of the world-supremacy of the White

Races? Such speculations, however, would lead us far beyond the scope of a short article such as the present.

Meanwhile, we still live in an age in which war is increasingly, the normal, and peace the exceptional state of affairs. In the meantime, it is peace that "breaks out". The end of the Korean war gives us a breathing space and to the forces of peace, what may well be their last opportunity of preventing a world-catastrophe. Beyond any question, the current struggle for peace represents the most important practical issue in and for our time. *The Freethinker* wishes to pull its weight in this fundamental "war against war," and our columns are always open to any constructive suggestion as to how best to ensure and to retain peace. Meanwhile, the recent Korean War remains a ghastly warning of the alternative. You have been warned, perhaps for the last time?

## A Philosophy of Poetry—1

By G. H. TAYLOR

Poetry is a comforting piece of fiction set to more or less lascivious music—a slap on the back in waltz time—a grand release of longings and repressions to the tune of flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries and the usual strings. . . . On the precise nature of this beautiful balderdash . . . the ideas you will find in it may be divided into two sorts. The first consists of denials of objective facts; the second of denials of subjective facts. Specimen of the first sort:—

"God's in His Heaven,  
All's right with the world."

Specimen of the second:—

"I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul."

It is my contention that all poetry may be resolved into one or the other of these frightful imbecilities—that its essential character lies in the bold flouting of what every reflective adult knows to be the truth.—(H. L. MENCKEN, *Selected Prejudices*.)

MENCKEN here characteristically administers a physic. He does not, however, offer a diet. Is it possible, despite his strictures, to find a worthy mission for the poet?

Such a mission can be found, I believe, by first acknowledging the weight of such criticism. Poetry, he says, boldly flouts what everyone knows to be true. Exactly: and that is why the poet should renounce the pursuit of truth. By his limitations the poet is ill-equipped for the task. The restrictions imposed, for instance, by the need to find rhyme, rhythm and cadence constitute an immediate handicap to the free expression of his ideas. The appropriate word gives way to the one that rhymes; exactitude is displaced by cadence; music drives out logic and sense. The result is ambiguous and emotional phrases, and so the danger of poetry is akin to that of religion. The poet, like the parson, may drug the intellect and deceive the understanding. Like the parson, he may introduce ideas not wholly intelligible and therefore mysterious. Like the parson and the advertiser, he may thus appeal with success to inferior minds. The study of primitive societies shows the popularity among untutored mentalities of forms of words and incantations easily remembered, like advertisers' slogans, irrespective of their sense; a relic, too, of illiterate times before writing and reading became common property, where knowledge had to be cast about orally with the aid of mnemonics. The teaching of John Ball is thus epitomised:

"When Adam delved and Evé span  
Who was then the gentleman?"

A second great factor divorcing poetry from truth is that the poet will often infuse emotional phraseology into his work. Now accuracy and emotion are not good bed-fellows. The scientist, who seeks relationships; and the philosopher, who seeks the truth about them; both rigorously exclude emotion from their judgments. They

prefer yardsticks to hopes; they deal with measurements, not with yearnings. For the scientist the equatorial axis of the earth is 7,926 miles, whether the figure pleases us or not: it is not determined by our emotional reactions at all. The only interest the scientist has in emotion is in finding its chemical counterparts and glandular conditioning in response to external stimuli. For the philosopher, Almighty omnipotence and omnibenevolence simply do not stand together, no matter how many prayers are offered up assuming the contrary. The poet is their polar opposite. He delivers his experiences in language charged with emotional content.

Consider these famous lines from *St. Agnes' Eve*:—

"Full on the casement shone the wintry moon,  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast."

The following de-emotionalised change would completely defeat the poet's object:—

"Right through the window shone the winter moon,  
And caused red marks to come on Gertie's chest."

The poet has only one loyalty. Only to the creation of beauty can he owe fidelity. Here, then, is his mission. Let him seek, not truth, but beauty. For the poet

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty;  
That is all ye know on earth  
And all ye need to know."

These lines of our poet are usually quoted with disapproval, but my view is that, had he lived, Keats would not only have been a great poet, but a great philosopher of poetry. His letters lend support to this view.

The genuine poet has nothing to do with truth, or ethics, or religion, or politics or philosophy. His work is decorative: beauty is his sole aim. When he attempts to moralise he forsakes his art and treads the ground of the ethicist. His highest mission is to decorate a dull world, not to pass judgment on it. If he wishes to compete with the pamphleteer and the essayist he sets himself the extra discipline of finding rhyme and rhythm, and for this we are entitled to expect some compensating excellence of treatment. At best he may produce a pithy satire, but his eyes have been turned on the axe he is grinding. Let him encroach on any of this alien territory and the vehicle Poetry, which was to carry the goddess Beauty, is hired out to press, pulpit and parliament. Any beauty which might subsequently appear would be incidental. Pope is the ready example. Therefore, while I would not claim that no poet has ever criticised his age effectively, I doubt whether it has ever been done poetically.

(To be concluded)



# Memorandum on the Question of Capital Punishment Submitted to the Gowers Committee

By C. H. NORMAN

THIS subject has interested me for many years, particularly since the trial of Rex v. Dickman at the Newcastle Summer Assizes in July, 1910, who was tried for the murder of a man named Nesbit in a train. Dickman was executed for what was an atrocious crime on August 10, 1910, his appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal being dismissed on July 22, 1910. The case has always troubled me and converted me into an opponent of capital punishment. I attended the trial as the acting official shorthand-writer under the Criminal Appeal Act. I took a different view to the jury; I thought the case was not conclusively made out against the accused. Singularly enough, in view of the nature of the crime, five of the jurymen signed the petition for reprieve, which could only be based upon the notion that the evidence was not sufficient against the accused.

It may be asked, why raise the question now? I am doing so partly because of Viscount Templewood's evidence when he was reported as saying there was a possibility of innocent men being executed; partly because of the evidence of Viscount Buckmaster before the Barr Committee on Capital Punishment; but mainly because of the remarkable and disturbing matters concerning the Dickman case which have come to my knowledge over the intervening years, which I will now relate.

The Dickman case is the subject of a book by Sir S. Rowan Hamilton which was published in 1914, based on the transcripts of the shorthand notes of the trial and certain other material. I did not read this book till August, 1939, when, owing to certain passages in the book, I wrote a letter to Sir S. Rowan Hamilton, who had been Chief Justice of Bermuda, who replied as follows in a letter dated October 26, 1939:—

The Cottage, Craijavak, Co. Down.

Sir, — Your interesting letter of August 24 only reached me to-day. Of course, I was not present at the incident you refer to in the Judge's Chambers, but Lowenthal was a fierce prosecutor. All the same, Dickman was justly (convicted?), and it may interest you to know that he was with little doubt the murderer of Mrs. Luard, for he had forged a cheque she had sent him in response to an advertisement in *The Times* (I believe) asking for help; she discovered it and wrote to him and met him outside the general's and her house, and her body was found there. He was absent from Newcastle those exact days. Tindal Atkinson knew of this but, not being absolutely certain, refused to cross-examine Dickman on it. I have seen replicas of cheques. They were shown me by the Public Prosecutor; also see the note on the first page of the preface. He was, I believe, mixed up in that case, but I have forgotten the details.—Yours very truly,

S. ROWAN HAMILTON, Kt.

In 1938 there was published a book entitled *Great Unsolved Crimes*, by various authors. In that book there is an article by ex-Supt. Percy Savage (who was in charge of the investigations) entitled "The Fish Ponds Wood Mystery," which deals with the murder of Mrs. Luard, wife of Major-General Luard, who committed suicide shortly afterwards by putting himself on the railway line. In that article the following passage appears: "It remains an unsolved mystery. All our work was in vain. The

murderer was never caught, as not a scrap of evidence was forthcoming on which we could justify an arrest and, to this day, I frankly admit that I have no idea who the criminal was." This book first came to my notice in February, 1949, whereupon I wrote to Sir Rowan Hamilton reminding him of the previous letters and asking for his observations on this statement of the officer who had conducted the inquiries into the Luard case. On February 22, 1949, I received the following reply from Sir S. Rowan Hamilton:—

Lisieux, Sandycove Road,  
Dunlaoghaire, Co. Dublin,  
February 22, 1949.

Dear Sir,—Thank you for your letter. Superintendent Savage was certainly not at counsels' conference, and so doubtless knew nothing of what passed between them. I am keeping your note, as you are interested in the case, and will send you later a note on the Luard case.—Yours truly,

S. ROWAN HAMILTON, Kt.

I replied pointing out what a disturbing state of facts was revealed, as it was within my knowledge that Lord Coleridge, who tried Dickman, Lord Alverstone, Mr. Justice A. T. Lawrence and Mr. Justice Phillimore, who constituted the Court of Criminal Appeal, were friends of Major-General and Mrs. Luard. (Lord Alverstone made a public statement denouncing in strong language the conduct of certain people who had written anonymous letters to Major-General Luard hinting that he had murdered his wife.) I did not receive any reply to this letter, nor the promised note on the Luard case.

Mr. Winston Churchill, who was the Home Secretary who rejected all representations on behalf of Dickman, was also a friend of Major-General Luard.

So one has the astonishing state of things disclosed that Dickman was tried for the murder of Nesbit by judges who already had formed the view that he was guilty of the murder of the wife of a friend of theirs. If Supt. Savage is to be believed, this was an entirely mistaken view.

I was surprised at the time of the trial at the venom which was displayed towards the prisoner by those in charge of the case. When I was called in to Lord Coleridge's room to read my notes before the verdict was given, on the point of the non-calling of Mrs. Dickman as a witness, I was amazed to find in the judge's room Mr. Lowenthal, junior counsel for the Crown, the police officers in charge of the case, and the solicitor for the prosecution. When I mentioned this in a subsequent interview with Lord Alverstone, he said I must not refer to the matter, in view of my official position.

I did my best at the time within the limits possible. I went to Mr. Burns, the only Cabinet Minister I knew well, and told him my views on the case and the incident in the judge's room; which I also told to Mr. Gardiner, editor of *The Daily News*, who said he could not refer to that, though he permitted me to write in his room a last-day appeal for a reprieve, which appeared in *The Daily News*. Mr. John Burns told me afterwards that he had conveyed my representations to Mr. Churchill, but without avail.



## This Believing World

All cinema fans know what a magnificent character is a Roman Catholic priest on the screen. He loves everybody—even gangsters—is always getting huge sums of money from unbelieving business men for wonderful charity schemes, is strong enough to knock out infidel bullies, loves a drink or a smoke, and is ready to marry any shrinking heroine at a moment's notice—in church. Woe betide Hollywood if any other kind of picture is made of a holy priest. So we can quite understand the wave of horror sweeping across Catholic America when it learnt that a film has been made of the life of Martin Luther—Martin Luther the great Apostate, the ex-priest who married a nun and perhaps even believed in polygamy! Great Beelzebub, what are we coming to if such a screen scandal is allowed!

The Luther film is sponsored by the Lutheran Church, and the producers are proud of its achievement—the film's historical accuracy, and its "objective presentation of a period of history as moulded under God by the soul struggles of a pious monk. That certain individuals of the Roman Church would condemn the film is to be expected." Of course. Only the Roman Church has any right to the magnificent publicity given by the cinema; and, of course, boasting Luther means "a vicious tirade against the Catholic Church." Well, it is about time that any tirade against Roman Catholicism got some publicity for once especially on the screen. And if a resurrected Luther can again do his bit against "Popery"—that is all to the good.

Let Freethinkers never forget that the Roman Catholic Church has never given up its right to put "heretics" to death. Last year, a lady reader of *Progressive World* wrote to Fr. E. M. Gallagher asking whether, if his Church existed in a State, as the U.S.A., would not the Government "punish it if it burned one of its members at the stake." The Father replied, "If one of its members goes wrong it has a right to cut him off, to excommunicate, and if need be burn him at a stake." Similar pronouncements have constantly been made by priests for they are telling the truth. Roman Catholics will always prosecute and kill if they have the power to do so. It is the job of Free-thought to see that they never again get that power.

We note with amusement that once again our contemporary, *Psychic News* (now under a new Editor), refers to the ill-fated airship, the R101, and its unlucky Commander, H. C. Irwin, in connection with Mrs. Garrett. This lady, who sat with the late Harry Price, is claimed by Spiritualists to have been the medium through whom Irwin came back in "spirit" form with a full description of how the R101 was destroyed—though Harry Price himself, and he was there, strenuously denied it. *The Freethinker* did its best to expose the sorry fraud but, like a good old Christian lie, a similar good old Spiritualist one can never be caught up with. Year in and year out, we shall hear of this "incident" as if true, when in reality it was about the biggest fraud that ever came out of Spiritualism.

The famous American aviator, Colonel Lindbergh, who made his name with his remarkable solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927, has been describing it in an American magazine with certain details nobody appears to have known before. It appears he was for the most part, "accompanied by extra-terrestrial navigators" (whatever they are, for we don't know). Lindbergh says that they were "vapour-like shapes speaking with human voices,"

and giving him advice. They were "transparent forms in human outline"—but surely, if this is so, then the flight was not "solo." If there were other "navigators," no matter if one could or could not "see through them"—then Lindbergh's claim to be the first man to cross the Atlantic alone in an aeroplane goes by the board. Who was the next, please?

The B.B.C. gave us a talk by Fr. C. Cary-Elwes the other evening on an "Unofficial Pilgrimage." It appeared that a number of thorough believers—Fundamentalists would describe them best—belonging to some of the numerous sects Christianity is endowed with, made an unofficial pilgrimage to Rome. They all went very reverently to the Christian show places there, all prayed on every possible occasion, all met the Pope who, for some reason or other, avoided talking shop, and finally all went their ways praying for "unity" and, alas, never achieving it. All believed they had the "truth," and all believed the other fellow hadn't. It was a revealing broadcast, proving again how hopelessly the Christian Church is divided. And no wonder!

## Theatre

Carrington, V.C., at the Westminster Theatre, is by Dorothy and Campbell Christie, who wrote *His Excellency*.

Interest in the play lies mainly in giving the public an opportunity of seeing an authentic reproduction of an angle of military life to which there is no access for the ordinary man. The authors have constructed their play reasonably well and have created suspense without foreclosing means, so that we wish to see the play to the end. Its main weaknesses are too long an anti-climax and resorting to types for some of the less important characters. As the acting throughout is of a high standard, this is not troubling some.

Major Carrington, V.C. (sincerely and sympathetically played by Alec Clunes) has misappropriated £125 opened in order to draw attention to excessive arrears in his pay and allowances. The two witnesses who could clear him—one of whom is his wife—fail to do so for entirely different motives involving the plot of the play.

Rachel Gurney's performance of the neurotic and selfish wife of Major Carrington interprets brilliantly a well-written part. This tends to belittle Jenny Laird's steady and honest performance in the only other female part as a W.R.A.C. captain, which is written in such a manner as to give her far less scope. But Miss Laird does it full justice.

Charles Hickman's production is not up to his usual standard.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

## RIGHT TURN

"It was a pouring wet December Saturday night in says a writer in the *Nineteenth Century*, "and a late after-order had been issued altering the hours of divine service on the following day. The battalion orderly sergeant was reading the announcements by the light of a lantern to his shivering audience. 'Dismiss after-order,' he bellowed. 'Hours of divine service to-morrow: Denominations will parade as under: Chu'ch of England, 10-11; Kautholics, 8-15.' The rain beat down relentlessly as he turned over the page in the order book. He observed at a glance that the Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists were all to parade at the same hour, so the rest of the information he imparted in this precise form: 'Fancy religions, ten o'clock. Right turn. Dismiss.'"

WHAT IS RELIGION? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.



# THE FREETHINKER

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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.

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, August 16, 8 p.m.: Messrs. BARKER and MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 2 p.m., at Platt Fields, a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, August 16, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, August 15, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, and other speakers.

CLAYTON'S Lectures: Friday, August 14, 7-30 p.m., Clitheroe; Sunday, August 16, 2-45 p.m., Quaker Bridge, Brierfield; 7 p.m., Blackburn Market; Tuesday, August 18, 7-30 p.m., Colne.

## NOTES AND NEWS

We learn with much interest that our French comrades of the "Federation Nationale des Libres Penseurs de France et de l'Union Francaise" are holding their annual conference at Toulouse from August 14 to 18. We wish them every possible luck. The principal subjects to be discussed at the Toulouse Conference are: "Freethought in its Relation to Women and Youth," and "Freethought in its International Relationships"; both, as we must all agree, subjects of top-ranking importance. It would be, as the proverb goes, "carrying coals to Newcastle" to emphasise here the magnificent services rendered to Freethought by the countrymen of Voltaire, Renan, Volney, and Turmel. To-day, faced with a growing counter-offensive on the part of political Catholicism, which is now working night and day to undermine the Secular constitution of the French State, our French comrades are fighting an up-hill fight to retain the heritage of Voltaire and of the Great Revolution. Our readers will recall the fine article by M. Michaud which we published in *The Freethinker* some months ago. Our French friends are equally interested in what passes on this side of the Channel. The current (August) issue of *La Raison Militante*, the fighting standard-bearer and literary organ of French Freethought, contains a long article on the recent Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, which summarises for the benefit of its readers the articles on the British Monarchy, the Coronation ceremony, and the Established Church, written recently by the Editor of *The Freethinker*. We are happy to add that our French contemporary upholds and endorses our then affirmation of Republican principles

and, it goes without saying, our analysis of the pre-historic Coronation ceremony. We have no doubt that, under the dynamic inspiration of such dominant personalities as M. M. Lorulot and Cotereau, the Toulouse Congress will prove a landmark in the history of French Freethought, and a rallying point in its present epic struggle. Like the National Secular Society, the French Federation is affiliated to the World Union of Freethinkers.

That there is one law for the rich and another for the poor has been the recurring complaint of legal and social reformers throughout the ages. That the Christian Church, despite their affirmation of the equality of all human beings in the sight of God, have always, in practice, recognised a double standard of morality as between rich and poor—and, in sexual matters, between men and women—is also glaringly evident from its whole history. The recent hullabaloo over the memorial service to the late Duke of Westminster, at which the Bishop of Chester was present, is a case in point. As an individual the late Duke does not seem to have been a particularly unfavourable specimen of a not particularly useful class. He spent what he had not earned, and reaped where he had not sown. It is the vice inherent in hereditary wealth, for which it would be absurd to blame the individual beneficiaries of the system. However, His Grace's morals, if aristocratic, certainly fell foul of any clerical interpretation of Christianity. He had been through the Divorce Court several times as the "guilty" party. It is quite certain that, had a poor commoner possessed such a record, his Bishop would not have been present at his memorial service! As that pious Catholic, Christopher Columbus, remarked long ago: "Gold can unlock all gates, even the gate of paradise." The Church, at least, has usually acted upon this assumption!

The Roman Catholic Church is an institution which knows—none better!—when and how to move with the times. That, "outside the Church there is no salvation," was formerly its accepted dogma, can hardly be disputed by anyone familiar with its history. Hell, however, is, nowadays, something of a liability to religious apologists. Accordingly, when an American Jesuit, Rev. Fr. Leonard Feeney, declared that all outside the Church would be damned—the traditional view of the Church—the Pope ordered him to desist, and excommunicated him when he refused to do so. Recently, the Rev. Fr's followers, after an unsuccessful effort to preach their outmoded gospel in the Catholic University of Notre Dame, declared that the University was headed for perdition because it admitted Protestants to its football team! The Pope himself had better be careful!

## One-Sided

When feeding the Lion in den Editorial,  
With stuff neatly bundled and tied;  
Whether high-hatted "Hibbert" or perky "Pictorial"—  
Remember to write "on one side"!  
Don't hide your views, like the dear Delphic Sybil,  
Nor leave lurking, loose-ends untied;  
Keep to the question, don't query or quibble,  
And, remember to keep to one side.  
"P.T.O." is a reference Editors dread,  
(I knew one who broke down and cried);  
Its very appearance puts you in the red—  
And your stuff is soon placed "on one side."  
Now, even our *Freethinker* works by this rule,  
Though she loves neither Tadpole nor Taper;  
So, whate'er be your sophistry, system or school—  
Use both sides of the case—not the paper.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.



# Robert Taylor

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

(Continued from page 255)

IN one of the most famous pictures of all time painted by Botticelli, "The Birth of Venus," we see how the artist knew the symbolism associated with Venus, making her rise out of the sea on a shell, and possibly the "Marine Venus" of Apelles, one of the most celebrated paintings of antiquity, contained similar symbolism. To Venus, Lucretius addressed a hymn in which he extolled her as extending her sway over the wide seas, calling her as well the Queen of Heaven; and Taylor points out that there is very little difference between this hymn (in idea) and the well-known prayer uttered in thousands of Christian churches, "O Holy Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, Queen of Heaven and Lady of the World, Virgin most miraculously fruitful—hail Star of the Sea—Morning Star!"

Now, is Taylor right in identifying the story and the symbolism about Mary with Venus—and, of course, in the main, with the other "fruitful" goddesses?

Is he right in stating that "The Virgin Mary, the Grecian Venus, and the Egyptian Isis, are each of them the same as the Virgin of the Zodiac, [and] is a truth borne out not by one or two but by a thousand analogies"?

Well, in his abridgement of the *Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer deals in his own way with these points. In his chapter on Isis, he shows that the Egyptian goddess is "many-named" and in Greek inscriptions "the myriad-named," which is exactly the meaning of "Poll" or "Polly." The association of Mary with wheat as in the sign of Virgo is exactly the same as the legend which ascribes to Isis the discovery of wheat and barley; and Isis is also identified with Ceres, the goddess of corn. Isis is called the "Lady of Bread" or "Abundance," and her epithet Sochit or Sochet means a "corn-field." From Egypt, insists Taylor, comes the Christian religion. Frazer says:—

We need not wonder then that in a period of decadence . . . the serene figure of Isis with her spiritual calm, her gracious promise of immortality . . . should have roused a rapture of devotion not unlike that which was paid in the Middle Ages to the Virgin Mary. Indeed her stately ritual, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its baptism and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, its jewelled images of the Mother of God, presented many points of similarity to the pomps and ceremonies of Catholicism. The resemblance need not be purely accidental. Ancient Egypt may have contributed its share to the gorgeous symbolism of the Catholic Church as well as to the pale abstractions of her theology. Certainly in art the figure of Isis suckling her infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child that it has sometimes received the adoration of ignorant Christians. And to Isis in her later character of patroness of mariners, the Virgin Mary perhaps owes her beautiful epithet of *Stella Maris*, "Star of the Sea," under which she is adored by tempest-tossed sailors. The attributes of a marine deity may have been bestowed on Isis by the sea-faring Greeks of Alexandria. They are quite foreign to her original character and to the habits of the Egyptians, who had no love of the sea. On this hypothesis Sirius, the bright star of Isis, which on July mornings rises from the glassy waves of the Eastern Mediterranean, a harbinger of haleyon weather to mariners, was the true *Stella Maris*, the "Star of the Sea."

And in this connection with the words *Stella Maris*, Taylor had already pointed out that "the most beautiful hymn of the Roman Catholic service actually bears the title of "Ave Maria Stella—hail, Mary Star"—and he proceeds:—

Bright mother of our Maker, hail,  
Thou Virgin ever blest;  
The ocean's Star by which we sail,  
And gain the port of rest.

The truth is, of course, that in tracking down the Virgin Mary to Isis and Venus in this way Taylor was showing how the story of the goddess was simply the same story, in fundamentals, of all the "Queens of Heaven," or "Mothers of God" of antiquity—a story which was bound to vary according to the country which produced it, and the way the imagination of man worked upon it. He did, in fact, get at the rock-bottom truth of the problem; but believers in Christianity, who knew nothing of the real origins of their religion, never heard of his explanation; and even a number of Rationalists refuse to look at the facts and help to keep Taylor in the place Christians had put him. As the writer of the article on Robert Taylor in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the Rev. Alexander Gordon says:—

[Taylor's] illi arranged writings are of no scientific or original value. So far as they have a consistent purpose, it is to expound Christianity as a scheme of solar myths. His philology is helpless word play."

This kind of criticism is what one must expect from a Christian critic—though it is only fair to state that even from an Agnostic like Sir Leslie Stephen, we cannot expect anything much better when his prejudices are aroused. Stephen's attack on Paine and other Deists was called severely to count by John M. Robertson and Moncure Conway; and in the case of Paine, Stephen had to make the extraordinary admission that he sinned in pure "ignorance." Taylor certainly did his utmost to show that for the origins of Christianity it was necessary to go to the various sun-myths which lay behind almost all religions of pagan antiquity—and in this he is, in the main, right. There are other factors which have to be taken into account, but Taylor was quite alive to many of them, and it is all the more to his credit that without the resources of such scholarship as we have at this day, he was able to show what some of those factors were. Take one of the most remarkable, for instance. One of the theses maintained by John M. Robertson was that a good deal of the gospel story was transcribed from actual stage plays of "religious mysteries." His exact words are:—

The dramatic *origination* of the story of the Christ's Supper, Passion, Betrayal, Trial, and Crucifixion, as it now stands, has yet to be established. The proof, however, I submit, lies, and has always lain, before men's eyes in the actual gospel narrative. . . . Let the reader carefully peruse the series of episodes as they are given in their least sophisticated form, in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. From Matthew xxvi, 17 or 20, it will be noted, the narrative is simply a presentment of a *dramatic action and dialogue*; and the events are huddled one upon another exactly as happens in all drama that is not framed with a special concern for plausibility. . . . As the story stands, Jesus partakes with his disciples of the Passover, an evening meal; and after a brief dialogue they sing a hymn, and proceed in the darkness to the mount of Olives. Not a word is said of what happened or was said on the way: the scene is simply changed to the mount; and there begin a new dialogue and action. . . . What we are reading is the bare transcript of a primitive play, which the writer has not here attempted to insert more than has been shown on the scene. . . . (*Pagan Christs*, page 196-7.)

Robertson had a whole library of authorities to whom to refer, and he puts up a very good case. What does Taylor say, without—it need hardly be mentioned—the hundredth part of the knowledge which has only in the past generation or two come to light, and to which Robertson was able to go? In the lecture on the "Fall of Man" in the *Devil's Pulpit*, he says:—

The whole story of the creation of the world, and the allegorical life, character, death, and resurrection of Christ, was

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# The Verdict of History

By REGINALD READER

IN England, rationalist and believer may be the greatest of friends. The nation is no longer divided into the two camps of those who saved souls with fire, sword, and torture, and those who were only too ready to substitute a rack for the stake. Something has replaced former unquestioning beliefs. In office and factory the topic of a newcomer's religion, or lack of it, is not very interesting. Much more important are his social qualities—whether he pulls his weight, accepts responsibility, is easy to get along with, and so on. In every walk of life men are being judged more by their actions than anything else, and any group of human beings, however blind it may be in some respects, is quick to detect a poseur.

But the militant Christian is still with us. Springing to his feet, he shouts triumphantly: "Yes—and that is why things are going from bad to worse. Materialism has replaced spiritual truths. People are too self-seeking and jaded. Religion has lost its hold. Bring back the Christian faith, fill up the churches, and all will yet be well." Will it? Let us look more closely.

"Materialism" is the desire for good food, good clothes, spacious living conditions, the means to travel, the means to avail oneself of innovations. We agree with the militant Christian. People to-day are insisting on more and more of these things. But why? Because humanity is in the throes of growing up. As recently as 1900 millions lived and died quite unaware of what money could buy. The other side of the fence was utterly unknown to them if, indeed, they realised that there *was* a fence. Any lurking sense of injustice in this world was speedily dissipated by visions of recompense in the next.

To-day these same social strata are jostled on all sides by tangible evidence of what is materially possible. Is it surprising that they aspire to the comfortable and dignified living that full pocketbooks command, or that, childlike and without discernment, those who come suddenly to possess them quickly grow tired of one distraction and hurry on to the next?

Millions, however, do not succeed, and never will succeed. There is not enough for all. Whatever the improvements made in production and distribution, the resources of the earth cannot maintain two thousand million human beings all in even moderate comfort. The ordinary man, wiser than most of the world's leaders, feels rather than reasons about this, and determines not to be left behind in the scramble. Hence the contemporary bear-garden, the bitter, self-seeking struggle for material comfort, so deplored by the militant Christian.

But whose the fault? Surely those who, during the nineteenth century, deliberately provoked the present disproportion between world population and world resources; those who saw immense possibilities for enriching themselves by herding others into factories, and who, realising that the essential condition for success in the venture was

an abundance of cheap labour, encouraged procreation by every means in their power. It may be truthfully asserted—and we do not think even the militant Christian will disagree—that nearly all these culprits were extremely pious. To them, and to the ideas they propagated, we owe the present sorry state of the world—as is to-day being dimly recognised, even in circles of the most orthodox belief.

The nineteenth century is only one instance of later events proving the Christian wrong. All history can be written in terms of struggles between rationalists and believers. It has been said, with perfect truth, that each side has carried its ideals to extremes, inflicting atrocious suffering on its adversaries. But we in England who can look back over four centuries to the days when this island was torn by religious dissension, can see one thing very clearly. Measures that are to-day acknowledged to be progressive by both Christian and Rationalist were, almost without exception, passed or introduced against bitter religious opposition. To take only one example; no Christian to-day considers an hour's cycling in the country on a Sunday morning to be sinful conduct; previous generations of believers, however, considered it a sin to run.

Our reply to the militant Christian must be this: "Seeing that, in the past, believers have so often attacked conduct that has later been recognised, *by believers and rationalists alike*, to be progressive, then it is more than probable that your present ideas are also ill-founded.

"By all means let us make humanity less self-seeking, but let us do it by the rational method of removing the basic causes, not by herding people into churches to aggravate the trouble."

## The Free Church Minister

There is something faintly sinister  
About a Free Church minister—  
He gets such satisfaction from a bell  
Which tolls his congregation straight to hell.  
N.M.M.

## Correspondence

### TWO POINTS

SIR,—(1) Apropos of Mr. Humphris's letter headed "Roman Catholic Infallibility." Jesus is an enigmatic figure, but—if historical—there seems good reason for believing that the essence of his thinking was universal love (however impracticable that may be), from which pacifism naturally follows. But most Christians are neither very loving nor notably pacifist in thought or deed. In this connection Mr. Humphris is probably right when he asserts there has been down the ages an utter perversion of the Galilean's message.

(2) I should like to congratulate you on re-publishing G. W. Foote's article written some 50 years ago. At a time when that high-standard magazine of the Rationalist Movement, *The Literary Guide*, is adopting a sit-on-the-fence—or even mildly approving—attitude to Royalty it is good to read such wholesome common sense. Particularly did I appreciate Foote's references to Marcus Aurelius whom I deeply revere.—Yours, etc.,  
G. I. BENNETT.

SIR,—I am delighted that both of your correspondents with whom I had the temerity to cross swords recently approve my suggestion that Freethinkers should do something to keep children out of the clutches of the clergy. When one considers that your journal after seventy odd years hard fighting against supernaturalism still needs a sustentation fund, whereas the hundreds of periodicals devoted to religion apparently find no difficulty in raising funds, it is obvious that a change of tactics is called for.

I would assure Mrs. Allpress that I do not advocate any fetters for thought. I wish to warn against any understanding with the

Robert Taylor (Continued from page 262)

acted as a play, or holy pantomime, in the ancient mysteries of Mithra and of Bacchus, from which every doctrine which we now call Christian, is entirely derived. . . .

And in the lecture on the "Cup of Salvation" he says:—

So, through the infinite ages, was the harvest home, or gathering in of the last grapes of the vintage, celebrated by pantomimes, and allegorical tragedies, similar to such as our sailors, to this day, perform on shipboard, on passing the line. . . . Allegorical tragedies were the first origins not merely of our theatrical, but of our pulpit performances. . . .

(To be continued)



churches, since they are so adept in forging such fetters and fixing them on the unwary.

The appearance of inverted commas around the word "thinking" in the second paragraph; the use of the word "un-Christian" and the reference to "turning the other cheek" in the postscript make me wonder whether the lady's own thinking is really unfettered.

I confess to being scared at Mr. Howe's advocacy of a creed, liturgy and calendar. Being an Atheist I have always denied the necessity for them. And why should the mythological significance of astronomical occurrences be stressed? Our object should be to debunk myths rather than foster them.

Do we really need to celebrate the equinoxes and solstices? Better leave that to sun worshippers.

I suggest that all the ethics that need to be taught to children is contained in Kingsley's words:

"Just the art of being kind  
Is all this sad world needs."

And shall we Freethinkers, whose main purpose is to fight religion, ourselves claim to be yet another?

Perish the thought.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. HUXLEY.

### THE CHURCH AND THE CORONATION

SIR,—I am sending you a copy of a letter I sent to the *Daily Express* for publication on May 29. When the letter was sent I must confess I believed the odds against it appearing in the columns of the *Express* were very great, so its non-appearance did not come in the nature of a surprise.

My view of the Coronation is that the Archbishop of Canterbury was the most outstanding figure. Here we have a man who claimed he could do what scientists and all other learned men have said could not be done—work miracles. When he anointed the Queen with his "holy oil" did she not take on the form of something other than human? This, without doubt, was the idea at the back of all the Coronation ballyhoo.

For months before the anointing the Press had extolled the virtues of the Queen to such an extent that people everywhere were quite prepared for Sir Winston Churchill's declaration that "the Queen can do no wrong." Whether the Press and the ruling class believe this is irrelevant to the point in question.

Now that God has been brought back in the Constitution of Great Britain, what becomes of our boasted Democracy?

If Sir Winston is right and the Queen had reached a state of sinlessness, what miracle did the anointing with "holy oil" work?

If the Archbishop has got the power to work miracles, why not let him see what he can do with the inmates of Wormwood Scrubs, Strangeways, or Dartmoor? If he can change the nature of those strange beings who have got such a consuming desire to possess the jewels and baubles of our much-loved aristocracy, what a blow will be struck for Christianity and progress.

Then, if he has not run out of "holy oil," why not anoint the Editor of *The Freethinker*?

Yes, I am all for giving the Archbishop a free hand.—Yours, etc.,

HARRY WARHURST.

SIR,—The storm on Whit Monday was a very destructive one. Coronation-dressed cities and towns seem to have caught the full blast of the storm. We read of 'gusts of wind up to 40 miles an hour ripping down the Coronation bunting.'

All this makes very strange reading, seeing that the present Queen has been called by Almighty God to sit upon the throne. One of his representatives, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has said: 'She is called to it by the Lord.' Of course, the vulgar and irreverent will want to know how he has come by his information.

If the Archbishop is right, why does the Lord destroy our hunting and decorations? Is not this the only way we can show our approval and praise for his part in our festivities?

His word—the Holy Bible—tells us he is a jealous God, and that sometimes he gets very angry and changes his mind. But it is to be hoped he is not in one of these moods next week. Anyhow, perhaps the Archbishop will have a further message for us before the great event takes place.—Yours, etc.,

HARRY WARHURST.

### PRE-HISTORY

SIR,—I have been a student of Archæology for over fifty years. It is a fascinating subject, because so much of our authentic knowledge of the past, even of our own country, has been derived by excavation. Take the wonderful Sutton Hoo Collection, for instance, presented to the British Museum in 1939 but only on view to the public in April, 1946, who would have believed that in the fifth and sixth centuries (and probably much earlier) the Kings of East Anglia were able to have locally made gold and jewelled weapons, standards, badges of authority, etc., superior in design and workmanship to the Roman and Etruscan metal work of the same period?

We are so used to the idea that England was peopled by naked savages at the time of Julius Caesar's landing that it is hard to realise that Western Europeans were fully clothed so long ago as 3,000 B.C., but the fact remains that well-preserved graves in Holland and other countries have contained bodies wearing cotton woven underwear belonging, without question, to that period.

We shall know much more of our own past when the date of the cataclysm which separated us from the Continent, and transformed the Bristol Channel, believed by the geologists to have been the former mouth of the Rhine, has been established. It is quite a possibility this country of ours will prove to have been civilised at the time of the Kmers and other past peoples of the East.—Yours, etc.,

R. G. ARNOTT.

### HILAIRE BELLOC

SIR,—Re the reference in *The Freethinker* to the death of Mr. Hilaire Belloc. There is no doubt that he and Mr. G. K. Chesterton were very able men, but personally I would not compare them with the much greater ability of Shaw and Wells.

Whilst Chesterton and Belloc were Materialists (in the money-making sense) as understood by most Christians, Shaw and Wells were materialists in the philosophic sense, as understood by all intelligent people.

Chesterton and Belloc had a ready-made market of millions of Roman Catholics to buy their writings, whilst Shaw and Wells had to laboriously work for years to finally build up by their great labour a demand for their productions that far exceeded and always will exceed the writings of Chesterton and Belloc.

Chesterton and Belloc worked, right from the start, for a market giving them sure sales and profit, but the effect of this was, that as time went on, their art degenerated into a stupid and vulgar defence of beliefs which they must have known were spurious, but which proved very profitable to their Christian conception of materialism.

On the other hand, Shaw and Wells in their early days suffered poverty and great frustration and, indeed, as one friend of Shaw has written, even when Shaw had in his possession the manuscripts of plays of great merit: "plays that since have made fortunes for producers, he was often glad to borrow a few shillings to carry on, but he always paid it back."

Chesterton and Belloc were men of great talent, but in the struggle for existence they took the road of least resistance, the road that leads to "keep things as they are."

They used the language of eulogy, not upon intellectual eminence, but upon a philosophy and a religion that would keep civilisation stagnant with hordes of corpulent priests wagging their fat paunches amongst superstitious and ignorant multitudes as in Spain, Ireland, etc.

Whilst Shaw and Wells worked for international peace, Chesterton and Belloc glorified military achievements and heaped praises on the heads of great conquerors. "Those pests," as Buckle once called them, "that destroy men, and who pass their lives in discovering new ways of slaying their enemies, and in devising new means of aggravating the miseries of the world."

And whilst Shaw and Wells strove to rid men's minds of superstition, Chesterton and Belloc had the merit of enslaving the minds of millions in one of the vilest superstitions that the world has ever known.—Yours, etc.,

PAUL VARNEY.

[Belloc was a brilliant writer but our comparison was in terms of personality rather than of intellectual eminence or of social utility.—EDITOR.]

### THERE ARE NO REPUBLICANS IN HEAVEN

It is significant that Our Divine Lord is King of Kings, not President of Presidents. It is no less significant in this republican age of rabid laicism and mob rule run riot, that the Holy See should have deemed it appropriate to institute the Feast of Christ the King in order to remind our wicked generation of the rights of God.—Hamish Fraser, an ex-communist Convert to Catholicism.

### N.S.S. News

That one-time stalwart of the N.S.S. Hyde Park platform, Mr. E. T. Bryant, is now settled at Trimley, Suffolk, whence comes a letter expressing his and his wife's unflinching interest in the cause he served so actively while in London. Earlier this year he had moved from Folkestone where for a number of years he had lectured on Freethought to local organisations and contributed useful letters to the Press. "Since moving to Trimley I have only addressed one meeting, but I am hoping to get a move on during the winter months," he writes. We wish him success in his endeavours.