

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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WHEN the Jesuit Order was dissolved by Pope Clement the 13th in 1773, and declared to be "abolished, abrogated, and extinguished for ever," a decree demanded and promptly put into effect by all the Catholic States in Europe, Frederick "The Great," then King of Prussia, made this historic pronouncement:—

"My 'most Christian' brother, the King of France, has expelled the Jesuits; my 'most Catholic' brother, the King of Spain, has expelled the Jesuits; my 'most Faithful' brother, the King of Portugal, has expelled the Jesuits; only His Atheistical Majesty, the King of Prussia, continues to defend them." Actually, the position was

even worse than was stated by the former friend of Voltaire; for there was another contemporary monarch, who befriended and protected the outlawed Jesuits; none other than the famous Empress Catherine the Second of Russia, who was not only a convinced atheist and, like Frederick, the friend and correspondent of the French "Philosophes" (Freethinkers), but was, in addition, "The Messalina of the North," a nymphomaniac whose sexual morals defied description. To such a sorry pass had the once mighty "Company of Jesus" been reduced for protectors!

However, better times were in store for the Holy Fathers. The French Revolution, republican and anti-clerical, broke out and extended its ravages over Europe, and the Pope needed the expert assistance of the Jesuits to combat the new danger. In August, 1814, after the (First) Abdication of Napoleon, the Jesuits were reinstated, and, henceforth became, as they still remain, the "brains-trust" of the Roman Catholic Church and the militant vanguard of the reaction in every land and sphere.

"What," asked the great French anti-clerical historian, Jules Michelet, "are the Jesuits? Ask the man-in-the-street, the first passer-by, and he will reply: 'The Counter-revolution!'"

In the present, the 20th century, the Jesuit Order fully lives up to its 19th century designation as the genius of counter-revolution. It backs French conservatism in its efforts to abolish the Secular State foreshadowed by Voltaire, and actually introduced by the Great Revolution; in Austria, it was behind Dollfuss, and is behind Franco to-day in Spain. Perhaps, however, its most brilliant victory in the 20th century world, has been achieved in Portugal, that "most Faithful" son of Holy Church, to which Frederick of Prussia referred in the 18th century. For Portugal, to-day, is a clerical paradise, under the dictatorship of Prime Minister Dr. Salazar, a pupil of the Jesuits and himself a former professor at the clerically-controlled University of Coimbra. Under the astute rule of Dr. Salazar, who is a past-master of the political intrigues in which his Church and, in particular, the Order which educated him, have traditionally excelled, Portugal has regained her status as the "most Faithful" son of "Holy Church"; and has, indeed, been, so to speak, officially

recognised by Heaven in that capacity. For amongst the "invisible imports" which add both to the profit and to the prestige of the present Salazar regime in Portugal, is none other than the Blessed Virgin, "The Mother of God" herself, who, as all the world knows—or does it?—appeared in person, in true Biblical fashion, to three young Portuguese shepherds who were watching their flocks near the hamlet of Fatima in The Year of Grace, 1917.

However, the original miracle was before the days of the present Salazar regime, though, no doubt, the Fatima cult is one of the most valuable assets of Dr. Salazar's regime, indeed, without the prestige of Fatima to boost its spiritual

and political wares, we doubt if the Catholic Church would have been able to have effectively regained its mediæval authority over Portugal. For Portugal has not always been the "most Faithful" Son of the Church. In the 18th century, as we have seen, both the Iberian nations, Spain and Portugal, expelled the Jesuits from their then dominions in both Europe and Latin America.

Actually, it was this Decree which put an end to the famous Jesuit "Republic" in Paraguay, that clerical Utopia of modern Catholic sociology. However, then, the Pope himself had shown them the way!

In more modern times, Portugal felt the insidious effects of anti-clericalism, first introduced into the Iberian Peninsula by the French soldiers of Napoleon during the Peninsular War (1807-1813). In 1910, an anti-clerical and Liberal revolution overthrew the Royal House of Braganza, the tool of the clerical regime, and installed a "Masonic" Republic which broke the political power of the Church, introduced secular education on the French model, and confiscated much of the vast property which the Church, as in Eire, had accumulated since the Middle Ages. For a few years, Portugal appeared to have definitely quitted the Middle Ages.

However, as in a good many other lands in modern times, the pace of progress in a still mediæval Portugal was too fast for its primitive social and cultural milieu. The country, perhaps the poorest in Europe, was still predominantly agrarian, with a still priest-ridden peasantry sunk in ignorance and superstition; both the essentially progressive and modern classes, the "middle" class and the industrial proletariat were conspicuous by their absence throughout the bulk of the country. Outside Lisbon and Oporto modern education was virtually unknown. Under such primitive conditions, a modern democratic and secular regime can hardly endure for long: for modern democracy is a very advanced social regime, and secular education presupposes an already existing cultural level which does not arise spontaneously out of still mediæval conditions of life, such as are still those of contemporary Portugal. In Portugal, the clerical counter-revolution had everything in its favour.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Land of Fatima

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

In 1917, the Holy Virgin Herself effectively inaugurated the Portuguese Counter-Revolution by her six successive appearances at the remote, now, thanks to Her, world-famous hamlet of Fatima, when the sun itself indicated its violent disapproval of the anti-clerical "masonic" Republic of Portugal by setting at naught the science upon which that regime was based, and by defying the "Law" of gravitation in a wild scamper round the sky. The effect of this "combined operation" upon Portuguese politics was soon self-evident; a combination of the reactionary classes in Portuguese society, of the Army, the feudal landlords, and, last but not least, the Church, overthrew the weak Liberal republic. They did not then, it is true, restore the "most Faithful" Kings of Portugal—perhaps out of deference to British sentiment, since Portugal is traditionally "Britain's oldest ally" since the 14th century, as part of the British doctrine of "The Balance of Power" against her then Atlantic rivals, Spain and France. However, for the past quarter of a century a clerical militarist-fascist regime, a "corporate State," has existed in Portugal, under the nominal Presidency of a succession of military figure-heads, but under the effective and efficient dictatorship of Dr. Antonio Salazar, the Jesuit-trained nominee of the Church, first as Finance Minister and, for the past twenty years, as Prime Minister and *de facto* Dictator. [The present "Corporate" constitution dates from 1933.]

The present Salazar regime in Portugal is somewhat similar to the regimes of Dollfuss in Austria, Franco in contemporary Spain, and Peron in the present-day Argentine. It appears, however, to be more completely under clerical influence than any of its contemporary "Corporate" regimes. Indeed, to-day, Catholic sociologists all over the world point to the "Christian" State of Salazar's Portugal as the model of Catholic sociology in practice; even more so than De Valera's Eire, since Protestant heresy does not, according to the statements of Protestant missionaries, have at all an easy time in Salazar's Portugal. Naturally it goes without saying, that every trace of the formerly dominant "heresies" of Liberalism, Freemasonry and Freethought, have completely vanished, whilst their surviving exponents are cooling their heels in African concentration camps. Education is now entirely a clerical monopoly: the result of this priestly education is to be seen in children who *see* the Virgin Mary; in amateur—very amateur!—astronomers who *see* the sun careering round the Heavens; and in an entire nation which accepts the (literally!) childish swindle of Fatima, and which has turned the scene of a childish prank—or hallucination?—into a

national cult, and which erects a splendid temple to its Virgin Goddess in the midst of Oriental conditions of starvation and of the poorest peasantry in Europe: to be sure, however, starvation is a potent stimulus to supernatural visions, as the example of many mediæval saints exists to prove. Needless to add, the actual promoters of the visions, the clerical hierarchy and their political Fascist counterparts do not live in the bug-ridden hamlets of Fatima, but in the palaces and luxury hotels of Lisbon and fashionable Estoril, where they *see* the Virgin by proxy?

From the angle of politics, though a member of the "Atlantic Community" for "the defence of Democracy against Dictatorship," the Salazar regime is no more a fitting representative of Democracy than is its Spanish counterpart, the still excluded Spain of Franco. All political parties, except that of Salazar, are illegal and whilst a Presidential election was permitted a few years ago, it was soon made impossible by police interference, and all who had declared themselves in favour of the anti-government candidate were promptly arrested and sent to concentration camps! Incidentally, the political police in this peculiar "Democracy" were trained by Nazi specialists from the Gestapo; one of whom, we believe, later on, became commander of the world-infamous Dachau, and was duly hanged for "war crimes"—a fitting successor to the late and unlamented Holy Inquisition which formerly flourished as vigorously under the "most Faithful" Kings of Portugal, as under their Royal brothers, the "most Catholic" Kings of Spain.

Present-day Portugal, the Portugal of Salazar and of the Jesuits, is a clerical paradise, an anachronism in present-day Western world. Along with Franco Spain, it represents a semi-mediæval regime which dates from the "Ages of Faith" and of the "ancient Regime" before the French Revolution. In such traditional peasant communities the Catholic Church is on its own chosen ground, and it is only in such places that one *sees* the Blessed Virgin nowadays. If she were to appear at and to, say, a Freethought congress in an advanced centre of civilisation, instead of at Lourdes and Fatima, where immemorial ages of blind superstition have, one may say, made her appearances inevitable, that, indeed, could pass muster as an authentic miracle! In the current Portugal of Fatima and the Jesuits, it merely indicates how deeply blind credulous "Faith" is implanted in the human mentality, and how long the Dark Ages can survive in oases of superstition even in an age of Science and in the 20th century.

A Philosophy of Poetry—2

(Concluded from page 258)

THE poet is ill fitted to construct an ethical system, a philosophy, an ideology or a *Weltanschauung*. The poet, as such, knows no biology, no psychology, no economics or science of any sort. If we are to take our beliefs from the poet, to whom shall we listen? To Omar's happy resignation? Or to Browning's "God's in His Heaven"? Arnold knew some biology and wrote *Rugby Chapel*; Browning knew none and wrote *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

Right and wrong, truth and error, good and bad—these are realms for others to explore. The world of the poet is make-believe.

All poetry is dope; if it is bad poetry it is poison. And let me make it perfectly clear that I exclude verse-making from all I have said. The versifier, as distinct from the poet, may tread any ground he likes. Verse-making has its place (A. P. Herbert, etc.) and has no doubt been

successful and worthwhile in several directions: it does not come anywhere within the scope of my criticism.

I reach a theory of poetry along the following route:

- (1) The phenomena of the external world are made objects by being perceived by men.
- (2) They are analysed, indexed and catalogued by the scientist.
- (3) They are orientated by the philosopher.
- (4) They are decorated by the poet.

Let the poet make beautiful representations, even caricatures; yes, even myths, out of his experiences (subjective as well as objective). No one shall demand exactitude. No one shall demand that all poets concur. No one shall apply any utilitarian test whatever. Let every poet run his finger along the pattern that appeals to him and which his imagination re-creates.

By "decorating" the object I do not mean making it pretty or more tolerable or more satisfactory on ethical

standards. I mean making it more of what it already is. A dewdrop may become a "starry diadem," the word "an arrow shot from the earth's bow at larksong and falling in a stillborn sunrise"; but if an object is appalling it should be made so in the poem: if macabre, the poet should catch that quality. Poetry, that is, should be appropriately decorative, not unrelatedly decorative. "Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack" is valid poetry in that it catches the filthiness of the object.

The beauty of the poem should, in fact, surpass that of the object. It should give us new eyes, new ears, new noses, for the object: new feelings towards, new reactions to, the experience. One can never see the dew with the same eyes again, after reading Keats' lines on it. Our experience of all frosty nights is enriched when we have read his stanza beginning

"St. Agnes' Eve! Ah, bitter chill it was,
The owl, for all his feathers was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling thro' the frozen grass
And silent was the flock in woolly fold."

The meteorologist and physicist will tell us all we want to know about a sunset. The poet, as such, knows nothing about it; he paints what he feels:—

"Parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest till 'tis gone, and all is grey."
(Byron)

The poet therefore decorates the experience; he does not pay dull homage to it. He owes homage only to beauty, which is "its own excuse for being." There are thousands of donkeys in existence but none so droll as de la Mare's *Nicholas Nye*. No real tiger can quite compare with Blake's

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night."

No drunkard is so engaging as Burns' *Tam o' Shanter*. The song of the nightingale pleases the ear for a time, but as immortalised in the *Ode to a Nightingale* it is "a joy for ever."

The original experience from which the poem has sprung may, in point of fact, be particularly revolting. It would anger us to see a Red Indian kill a deer, yet the description of such in *Hiawatha* does not make us loathe Red Indians and pity the deer; it makes us admire the description in relation to the situation it posits, because it is an appropriate and aesthetically satisfying representation of it.

The poet therefore wrings out of a natural experience all the latent beauty of the event, hidden to all but the poet. Fidelity to the original experience, in the fashion of the scientist, reduces the element of make-believe and is fatal. The object, in this case, tends to remain tied to category above, the category of phenomena being merely sensed objects. The poet's highest task is to make myths out of objects. Science has debunked the fanciful myths of mankind, eating into them with facts and figures. Long live the poet, then, who can restore them in the land of make-believe, who can carve out of the matter-of-fact world a biased construction, an image, a latent myth. Let him play Phoenix to the ashes of reality.

Let him consider the facts coldly; let him wince at the sight; let him suffer as all poets have suffered. Then let him take the facts by the scruff of the neck and wring his design out of them, infused with beauty. If the poet could do this to the world,

"Would he not shatter it to bits and then
Re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire?"

The poet shall collect up all the fairies and demons discarded by science and redundant in philosophy, and house them in his land of make-believe. He shall not be restricted by the criteria of Right and Truth. He may see a pixie in the foliage, but if someone laughs his sprite will turn into a ball of thistle-down, and a fairy dies each time his pen turns to propaganda. Wordsworth dipped into morals and politics and emerged pulpiter. Browning dipped into theology and produced arguments in rhyme which are the mere vomit of poetry and, as arguments, obsolete before he penned them. Neither Bible, nor code, nor yardstick, shall the poet bring to his objects; he shall bring a light. It is for him to adorn and embellish, not to sermonise. An ode out of a Grecian urn is better than a "sermon out of a stone," and such a sermon is usually as barren as its object. It is not for the poet to put platitudes into rhyme.

The poet has his justification only when his treatment is superior to what could have been done in prose. Otherwise it was not worth doing; it was not worth the restriction to rhyme and metre. Nothing has been gained by the special discipline. Such discipline must have a purpose, and the purpose is to make words and phrases carry a richer content, to make them convey more by reason of cadence, diction, vowel changes, rhythmic punctuation; in brief, by word music. Otherwise, if the poem resolves itself into prose then the poet is an impostor. (This, of course, need not prevent him from becoming Poet Laureate). Finally, the poet's theme is distinct from his subject matter: the latter, as we have seen, may be trivial or revolting; by his theme I mean what the poet carves out of it.

The proper function of poetry is to create myths.

Theatre

"Anastasia" at the St. James's Theatre is a play by Marcelle Maurette and which has been adapted by Guy Bolton. It revives memories of the ill-fated Romanoffs who were shot at Ekaterinburg in 1917. There have been persistent rumours that the Grand Duchess Anastasia—then sixteen—had survived and escaped from Russia, and these started a chain of stories and conjectures as to what happened to her. Impostors and masqueraders have tried their best to deceive, but have failed, yet what if one of them were Anastasia. And what if Anastasia decided that she did not wish to be a ghost of the past but would prefer to remain Anna Broun and find her own life.

Inevitably Anastasia has become the focal point of authors, as in this play which expresses the author's idea of what might have happened. Therefore, it is fantasy and best judged divorced from history. Technically its weakness lies in the author depending on the audience knowing some of the facts, and thus emotionally her success is almost assured. Mary Kerridge, in the part of the girl, does not disappoint us. She gives a strong and dignified performance conveying sentimental restraint, and her scene with the Dowager Empress—which is to establish whether she is genuine—is a moving one. Helen Hays gives a mature performance as the Dowager Empress, bringing to the part a refinement of bearing that could not easily be found in another actress.

These ghosts of the past—the few who survived—dwell in an atmosphere to which they can never return. The author's message is not far removed from that contained in *The Cherry Orchard*, and Chekhov could write a better play.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

This Believing World

Apart from the ordinary chaos resulting from the strikes in France, what ought to have happened to the all-believing pilgrims on their way to Lourdes? Most of them were just as badly stranded as an infidel excursionist—though many of these pilgrims belong to the halt, the maimed, and the blind. How is it that the Virgin herself never organised proper conveyances for the sick people? Here was a heavenly chance to show Lourdes as a "holy" shrine managed from Heaven, and to prove that all scoffers like Zola were completely wrong—and yet the chance was not taken. It makes one think, as "doubting" Thomas said to Jesus—or was it the other way about?

Once again we are reminded of that fine Christian teaching, "He doeth all things well," when we read the harrowing descriptions of the havoc wrought by earthquakes in the Greek islands. The survivors appear to be even too stunned to pray. Still, this is quite unfair to God Almighty who, after all, did send supplies and help through the various navies in the vicinity. Without the Lord's help, nothing would have been sent, of course. And in any case, we must never blame God for earthquakes. Everybody knows that earthquakes are sent merely as a punishment for the wicked. No sin, no earthquakes. It's as simple as that.

A very religious organisation called the Gideons, whose object is "to win men and women for Jesus Christ," has so far placed more than 3,000,000 Bibles into hotels in America outside New York, and in three years has given a special edition of 4,000,000 to school children. Our own hope is that people in hotels and school children will read the Holy Book for there is nothing like an acquaintance with God's Word so powerful for making infidels. Most Christians and Bible believers simply don't know the Bible and very rarely read it. This can easily be tested—ask a thorough believer to give you the special message Haggai, Nahum, or Obadiah has for a thirsting world?

We ourselves often get Bible believers writing to us with sorrow and pity at our infidel unbelief, and claiming they can answer any Bible question posed by ignorant Atheists. Out of the 89,563 questions we could put them, we selected about twenty comparatively easy ones, and asked an enthusiastic whole-hearted believer to give us his answers. Alas, all he could say was, "I don't know!" and adding, "I don't care neither." Of course not. The man who really knows his Bible as well as its history—as far as that can be traced—becomes almost automatically an Atheist.

There must be hundreds of well read priests and clergymen whose belief is no more than ours just because they do know the Bible. What about Liberal Christians? That parsons cannot leave the Church is a tragedy for them—but what could they do even in our own Welfare State? Starve?

We were pleased to see that the American politician, E. H. Rees, who was trying to introduce an "Anti-Blasphemy Bill" into Congress, has been obliged to withdraw it. He found it, we are told, "impossible to define the word 'blasphemy'" to express his own "intent." He really aimed the Bill at Atheists and was "shocked" to learn that even religious leaders were against him. As a good Christian himself, Mr. Rees found it hard to believe that there actually were some Christians who disliked bigotry and intolerance. The only reason we can think of

for these Christians is that, either they do not believe and cannot say so, or that for once they put their humanity before their religion.

The Canvasser

By LESLIE HANGER

THE other day God received a call from St. Peter at the gate, informing him that a man was without demanding to see him on urgent business.

"His name," said St. Peter looking at the card in his hand, "is Mr. J. B. Hatts of England."

"Probably come to offer me a seat in Westminster Abbey for the Coronation," surmised the Almighty. "These English think they own me—however, show him up."

It transpired that Mr. J. B. Hatts had nothing whatever to do with the Coronation. "I have come," he said, "to interest you in the International Humanist and Ethical Union."

"I beg your pardon," queried God, "I did not quite catch—"

Mr. Hatts repeated himself clearly and distinctly. "Oh, some new religious sect, Christian I presume?" God sighed. Almost every day some such sect was being formed and they all came to him, full of their own importance, demanding his patronage.

"No, not Christian," continued Mr. Hatts, "and I would venture to say more deserving of your attention for that very reason."

"Indeed," murmured God politely, but bored. "The era of strife and crisis in which the world flounders, has produced on the one hand a Christian who admits that your continued existence is repugnant to reason. On the other hand a number of humanists have lost the optimism of a quick materialist victory. I feel that co-operation between these points of view would be extremely fruitful, and were you to apply for membership of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, such co-operation might be achieved."

In an irritable tone God replied, "My dear good sir, are you asking me to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds? I assure you that if I join any association, it is as perpetual President with full powers of veto. Kierkegaard may think me absurd and Brunner a scandal, but if you want to know what the great mass of the people think of me, go to church on Sundays and listen to the parson in the pulpit and watch the congregation lapping up his words. That is what counts. An age of strife and crisis among men is always a time of prosperity for me. Men lose their self-confidence and turn to me in fear."

"I own that many men still cling to you," said Mr. Hatts, "that is the more reason why you should move with the times. If progress—"

God cut him short with a wave of the hand. "Progress means nothing to me. With me the more things change, the more they are the same. Now if you have a fancy to found a new religion, as so many have, I have no objection to becoming its President. Subject to my usual conditions, of course. Beyond that I really cannot help you." With that God summoned an attendant angel and bade him show Mr. J. B. Hatts the way out.

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THE FREETHINKER

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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 30, 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, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields, a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, August 30, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

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

J. CLAYTON'S Engagements.—Friday, August 28, 7-45 p.m., Clitheroe (Moor Lane); Saturday, August 29, 6 p.m., Enfield; Sunday, August 30, 3 p.m., Blackburn Market; and at Accrington, the Boulevard, 8 p.m., Debate with the Rev. Mr. Enderby.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, August 30, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. M. ALEXANDER, "Freemasonry, Politics, and Christianity."

NOTES AND NEWS

Many happy returns to our former Editor! *The Freethinker* conveys its warmest greetings to Mr. Chapman Cohen who, on Tuesday, September 1, celebrates his 85th birthday. Whilst the infirmities natural to old age prevent Mr. Cohen nowadays from taking any active part in the work of the Freethought Movement, we can be sure that in so far as his health permits he still follows with unabated interest the movement to which his entire life and rare intellectual and oratorical talents were exclusively devoted. As is, we assume, already known to our readers, Mr. Cohen was the second editor of *The Freethinker* and the third President of the National Secular Society from 1915 to 1950, respectively, 1951 and 1950. He succeeded the late G. W. Foote in both capacities. Prior to succeeding to the editorship of this journal he had been a regular contributor since 1897 and Foote's right-hand man in his last years as editor. Mr. Cohen spoke continuously on N.S.S. platforms from 1890. He started as an open-air speaker in Victoria Park, East London, but was, perhaps, more famous as a debater than for any other form of the spoken word.

To praise Chapman Cohen in the columns of *The Freethinker* would, indeed, be "taking coals to Newcastle," as the familiar proverb runs! An original philosophic thinker, an exponent of the secularist mental outlook of unrivalled lucidity, a brilliant lecturer, and a deadly

debater, the name of Chapman Cohen was world-famous in Freethought circles and is likely, if we may anticipate the judgment of history in respect of one who is still alive, to secure for him a permanent place amongst the great Freethinkers of modern times. In the literary field, apart from his innumerable articles in *The Freethinker*, he has given us a small library of booklets and pamphlets, all alike distinguished by wit, lucidity and, what was, perhaps, the pre-eminent literary characteristic of Mr. Cohen, his unrivalled ability to express in the simplest words the most profound problems that confront human thought. "Comparisons are," proverbially, "odious," but Mr. Cohen certainly ranks very high amongst the major exponents of modern Rationalism. Who, for example, is ever likely to forget his devastating logic with which he overwhelmed a whole series of famous Christian opponents on the public platform? It is an ironic commentary on the age in which we live that this great man ends his days without any publicity or official recognition such as is so freely bestowed upon ecclesiastical and other nonentities without a fraction of his ability.

Like his great predecessors, Bradlaugh and Foote, Mr. Cohen is a man of the people and owed nothing to academic education. As that eminent Rationalist the late John A. Hobson once remarked in the hearing of the present writer, it is notable how few men of original genius have owed anything to the formal academic routine of official education. Certainly this axiom applies to nearly all the great Freethinkers of modern times: Thomas Paine, Robert Owen, Charles Bradlaugh, John A. Robertson, Herbert Spencer, G. W. Foote, Bernard Shaw, Chapman Cohen, all these men of original genius escaped the influence of formal education, and were, probably, none the worse for that! Originality does not thrive on copybooks.

On behalf of both *The Freethinker* which he edited for so long and so ably, and on behalf of the National Secular Society, which he led for so long and so wisely, the Editor of *The Freethinker* conveys to his illustrious predecessor the warmest good wishes for his 85th birthday. It is an honour, of which we are deeply sensible, to succeed such an intellectual giant. May he long enjoy a green old age. And so say all of us!

Among the "best-sellers" of our Freethought Movement, ever since 1888, has been our *Bible Handbook* which, preceded by its masterly preface by G. W. Foote, has now gone through nine editions. A tenth edition is now on sale, with a Foreword by the present Editor of *The Freethinker*, at 4s. plus postage 3d.

The enterprising secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S., Mr. J. Barrowman, has arranged a debate on Spiritualism for October 4 with one of the best known Spiritualists in the Movement, Mr. J. B. McIndoe. The Freethought case will be in the hands of Mr. H. Cutner whose visit to Glasgow for the debate will be his first. We hope this "advance" notice will enable Glasgow readers to turn up in force—and, if possible, bring their Spiritualist and Christian friends. It is many years since Mr. Cutner met one of the "stalwarts" of Spiritualism, Mr. M. Barbanel, and he is delighted to meet another.

On September 12 and 13 the Executive Committee of The World Union of Freethinkers is meeting in Brussels to arrange details for the 1954 World Congress to be held in Luxemburg. Mr. F. A. Ridley will represent the N.S.S. and hopes to read a paper at the Luxemburg Congress.

Robert Taylor

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

(Concluded from page 270)

THERE is an interesting note in which Taylor points out that he quotes from "the great and wonderfully curious work, entrusted to the revision of TALASIPHON, called the *Anacalypsis*, by the late Godfrey Higgins, Esq.—printed, but not published." It may be added here that the *Anacalypsis* was published in two large volumes; but so damning was its indictment of the supernatural origin of Christianity that Higgins' pious son bought up and destroyed all the copies he could procure. The original edition is almost impossible to obtain, but a new one published some few years ago could be bought for £9 9s. One is obliged to pay heavily for such information as is contained in the *Anacalypsis*.

The knowledge and keen analysis of Bible stupidities—unless seen through the medium of allegory—which forms the basis of the *Devil's Pulpit* are just as evident, nay, more so, in the lectures delivered in 1833. It is a pity that they are not reprinted as a sequel to that work which in reality they are. Is Taylor not absolutely right here:—

This story of Adam and Eve . . . in the language of the great Frenchman, Dupuis, "La nature de la premiere aventure determine necessairement celle de la seconde, Point de peche point de reparation, point de coupable, point de reparateur!" Was there never a talking serpent—then there never was any crucified saviour! Was the scene in the garden of Eden a mere fable—then the scene in the garden of Gethsemane must be a fable also. And this is a point which can never be too much insisted on. It should never be lost sight of. The story of Adam and Eve is not a branch, nor a limb, of Christianity, which might be cut off and leave the stock surviving, but it is the heart and the life itself: and where that is not, no part of Christianity remains.

But it is in the explanation of all sorts of out-of-way Biblical stories, myths, legends, allegories, and words, which proves how Taylor worked at his lectures, aiming to find in them the real origin of religion. And beside all this, constantly does he show by analogy and illustration his contempt for, and defiance of, Christianity. A lecture like "The Fish: An Astronomico-Theological Discourse" is worth, from almost every point of view, millions of sermons by even the most modern bishops.

The great truth is that THERE NEVER WAS BUT ONE RELIGION IN THE WORLD! And the great lie is, the pretence to make a distinction where there never was a difference. Paganism, Judaism, Deism, Christianity, and all other *isms* are but one and the self-same *ism*, being each or any of them, as chance or different degrees of ingenuity have prevailed, either more or less cleverly constructed poems, or tissues of fiction, thrown over the face of universal nature, whose allegorical genius speaks in that inscription on the statue of that Saitic Isis: "I am all that is, that hath been, or that shall be, and no man hath lifted my veil." . . . Alike in India, in Egypt, in Greece, in Italy, from the Ganges to the Nile, from the Nile to the Thames, the religious language and the religious ideas of "all people that on earth do dwell" have through the same eras of time, borne the same sort of references, used the same sort of ceremonies, and made play about the same eternal conceit of fish, fishermen, fish ponds . . . the Chaldaic Oannes, the Indian Vishnu, the Egyptian Bacchus, the Uranian Venus, the Philistine Dagon, the Grecian Neptune, the Christian Jesus, are all of them ichthyomorphic deities, mermaids, fish-fags, ladies of the lake, all of them gudgeons themselves or baits to catch gudgeons! And hence . . . there can be no going to Heaven but only in the way that a fish could go there—by water—no salvation but by baptism. . . .

Taylor's lecture, however, should be read in its entirety as it covers a vast ground and is full of wit—real wit that is, the kind which is so universally disliked by the pious, the kind that pokes fun at the religious absurdities which,

believed in literally by Christians and their like, can only be justified on grounds of faith, for reason—and humour—would implacably reject them. No better explanation, in any case, can be given than that by Taylor in this lecture on Jesus the "fisher" of men, or a "fish" himself, or of the fact noted by the famous Dom Calmet that, among the primitive Christians, the figure of a fish was adopted as a sign of Christianity.

It is a matter of great regret that the *Philalethian* should have so suddenly ceased without—as far as the present writer has investigated the problem—a reason, except the one already advanced. It is possible that he did finish his "Life and Opinions" and that the manuscript was among his effects when he died at Tours.

Enough has, however, been said in these pages about the remarkable work which was published, and which stands almost alone in Freethought literature, not merely for its grasp of the essential problems connected with the documentary evidence for the origins of Christianity, but for the very valuable suggestions as to its allegorical meanings from the solar-myth point of view. While it is true that Taylor influenced or was read by many later writers—like Judge Strange—he cannot be said to have left any real disciples after him. It required a very considerable grasp of mythology in general, and the solar-myth theory in particular, to speak or write upon it with the confidence which Taylor shows in every line of his writings. It is not an easy subject to master, for it presupposes a considerable knowledge of ancient and modern languages as well as comparative religions. Perhaps also the more modern investigations into the origin of religions cover a wider field than that envisaged by Taylor; and therefore some of his work might be dubbed out of date.

Robert Taylor stood almost a lonely figure in the ranks of Freethought over one hundred years ago. It is to be hoped that, as in the case of Thomas Paine, posterity will yet honour him as a brave and unconquerable soldier in the fight for Freedom of Thought.

Korea

By P. C. KING

NOW the fighting has ceased in Korea it would seem a fair assumption that it will not be resumed, at least, on the international scale. If any other prediction might be ventured it is that any real peace settlement is remote and Korean unity still more problematical.

And what has been achieved by this bloody struggle apart from the killing or maiming of 2,300,000 human beings and a devastation that not even Germany has known. From the United Nations standpoint it can hardly be described as a military victory. True, they have shown the ability, by force of arms if necessary, to resist aggression by the Communists, an advance on the old League of Nations, who in the Italo-Abyssinian contest were unable to carry into effect even a policy of sanctions. On the other hand, the Asiatic may comfort himself that he has shown his capacity to stand up to the Caucasian and his ally. Further, the effect on the development of the Chinese army has been remarkable. They started in the war with little in the way of armaments beyond light weapons, such as machine guns, trench mortars and hand-grenades, like, with a few borrowed tanks and planes. But in the three years they have learned a great deal and, in the west-

(Continued on next page)

Unholy Matrimony

By BISSET LOVELOCK

RARELY has any attempted legislation caused such commotion in ecclesiastical circles as the various proposals to amend the Marriage Laws, and rarely has the Bible been banged and banded about with quite such ferocity by the actions of the Church as during the parliamentary debates attendant upon this question. In 1949, a Bill by Lord Mancroft intended to legalise marriage with a divorced wife's sister, was strangled in its infancy by episcopal assassins much to the joy of the pious prelates and pompous pundits of protestantism.

The whole of the opposition's arguments were, as Viscount Simon pointed out at the time, curiously reminiscent of those levelled against the deceased wife's sisters Bills a hundred years before: clerical arguments, it would seem, change little with the passage of time.

For forty-odd years, since 1907 to be precise, Englishmen have been privileged to marry their deceased wives' sisters, should they be qualified to do so, without the offspring of the union being labelled illegitimate, and they themselves being ostracised from the society of the "godly"; yet perhaps few of the people who have availed themselves of this altered state of affairs, and even fewer who haven't, remember the bitter struggle between church and State that led up to it.

From first to last, the bulwarks of the opposition to sister-in-law marriages Bills was the Bible, the arguments being round controversial texts in Leviticus, notably Chapter 18, verse 18, which said: "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime." Plain as this statement may seem to people of normal intelligence, the Christian opposition nevertheless furnished learned Professors of Hebrew who were willing to argue that "in her lifetime" applied to the sister and not the wife, an interpretation that would render the whole verse rather pointless, as even the Patriarchs were hardly likely to become possessed of a burning desire to uncover the nakedness of a corpse. Nevertheless, the Churches' appeal to scholasticism inspired the Earl of Dalhousie, who was then the leader of the reformers, to write to the Professors of Greek and Hebrew in all the Universities in Europe, as well as numerous philologists of doubtful authority, asking for their interpretation of the disputed texts, the only sensible reply came from Professor Blackie of Edinburgh University, who wrote: "It is not Greek but common sense that is required for the interpretation of the passage you mention." He then went on to opine that common sense was not one of the qualities peculiar to theologians, and so the battle raged in press and pulpit. In 1849 Mr. Gladstone assured the House of Commons that if marriage with a deceased wife's sister were permitted the "most horrible form of incest" would ensue; in 1850, Richard Sheil waxed piously sentimental and painted lurid pictures of the wholesale seduction of saintly sisters-in-law, Richard Cobden was of the opinion that Mr. Sheil's mind, like his argument, was foul and calumnious.

By 1883, the Bill, at the instigation of the Duke of Marlborough, was thrown out of the House of Lords for the thirteenth time and the breath of Christian charity wafted through the House of Commons inspired various members to utter slanderous statements about the Chief Rabbi, who was of the opinion that sister-in-law marriages were "proper and even laudable"; the Church of Rome, which would smile upon such union, providing the price was right, and all nations that legalised this unhaloed state. The bench of Bishops in the House of Lords despite

the opposition of the Queen and the Royal Dukes, were still determined to cling to the jealously guarded privilege of bastardising other people's children, and the various organs of the established and dissenting Churches continued to pour forth abuse upon the heads of the reformers.

The opinions of the *Christian Million* were decidedly un-Christian as were the epithets applied by the *Family Churchman* to the Prince of Wales and the Royal Dukes, whilst the *Church Review* was of the opinion that only the gallant efforts of our Noble Bishops prevented the legalisation of incest, which Bishops, according to *The Freethinker*, were "as obstinate a set of avaricious hypocrites as the world has ever produced," than which no truer words had as then been spoken.

Despite the opposition of the Archbishop of Canterbury, sixteen Bishops, and the Catholic Duke of Norfolk, the deceased wife's sisters Bill at last reached the statute book sullied only by the concession that allowed the clergy to refuse to solemnise sister-in-law marriages.

The clergy, however, went one step further, refusing not only the marriage rites, but also communion and burial rites, generally making themselves a great comfort and happiness to their Bishops, until one Mr. Banister, an eminent churchman, who had married his deceased wife's sister, and been refused communion, sued, at the risk of his immortal soul, the offending clergyman, and won the day.

To-day, the various acts are consolidated in the Marriage Act of 1949, an act that leaves a lot to be desired. The fight to divest the Marriage Laws of their Mid-Victorian trappings still goes on, and now as in the past *The Freethinker* is in the fore.

KOREA from previous page

of *The Observer's* correspondent, "China must now be rated as a great military power"! The Western Powers necessarily cannot point to any such profit. Again quoting *The Observer*, R.O.K., "The South Korean armed forces cannot ensure the defence of their territory without the armed assistance of the United Nations. It is because he knows this that Syngman Rhee has adopted an attitude so inconvenient and so irritating to the Western Powers. He perceives that when the U.N. forces finally withdraw, they will be withdrawn a long way, whereas the Chinese, like the poor, will be always with him, just over the border. He senses that such a situation can only deteriorate, so far as his interests are concerned, and that if the country cannot now be forcibly united under his rule, it is likely sooner or later to be forcibly united under that of his political enemies.

The Korean struggle may appear to be of no direct interest to this journal, yet there are lessons in it for the freethinker. On neither side do the aims and ideals of rationalism have any place. The lack of policy on the part of the Western Powers is only too painfully evident; to restore the *status quo*, the oppression and corruption of the vernial Rhee administrators, the absentee landlord and moneylender is a mockery of the cause of Democracy. Yet, for 25,000 prisoners to resist all persuasion to return to their homeland and to be ready to face the dreary prospect of exile, is no advertisement for Communist rule. If, on the one hand, the United Nations would courageously put through a radical policy of agrarian and social reform, and on the other hand the Communists would accompany their reforms with freedom of thought and speech, there might be some possibility of peace and unity in Korea.

Ascension or Assumption?

I.—“Jesus ascended to Heaven from a room in Jerusalem.” (Mark xvi, 19.)

II.—“Jesus ascended to Heaven from a mountain in Bethany, during the same evening as his resurrection.” (Luke, xxiv, 50.)

III.—“Jesus was seen walking around Jerusalem, forty days after his resurrection, talking with Disciples [Acts, I, 3] then again went up.”

Sunday School teachers should think on these things, as Notes of Lessons, especially as the brothers of Jesus said “he is beside himself,” which in Hebrew means “thou fool.”

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

Correspondence

MONARCHY AND NATION?

SIR,—“Mr. Paul Varney” is, seemingly, terrified at Trade Unions pressing for two million pounds a day more than the “Nation” earns.

The above sum is ten pence per day, per capita, on a population of 50 million.

Remove the waste and the parasites, in an anarchic society of factions with weapons of death. Abolish the wars and the wage system, and let humans co-operate and then what is ten pence a day? If all this cannot be—then what?

He says more money than the “Nation” earns—“some of it,” he means! A Freethinker should, at least, think scientifically, and not confuse what is by the individual, with global expressions like “Nation,” “We” and “Our,” when only one or some, is the correct premise.—Yours, etc.,

CHAS. E. BERRY.

P.S.—We hear talk of “our” investments, and “England” becomes 11 men at cricket or one multi-millionaire winning a yacht trophy—C.E.B.

BELLOC AND CHESTERTON

SIR,—Mr. Paul Varney has excelled himself in writing nonsense about these writers. They had a perfect right to propagate their Romanism—just as Foote and Bradlaugh had a right to propagate their Atheism. And it is a fact that the Socialists, Wells and Shaw, made ten times more money—mostly from the “bourgeoisie.”—Yours, etc.,

J. R. R.

WHO WON THE KOREAN WAR?

SIR,—May I point out a rather misleading statement in your front page article, “Peace Breaks Out” (Friday, August 14). You state that China was able “to fight on equal terms, and to hold the industrially advanced West at bay, unconquered, for three years.”

In the first place, the terms were never equal. The Communists had overwhelming superiority in manpower which was barely matched by our greater fire power and superior equipment. Furthermore, we had no safe sanctuary behind the lines for resting and reforming armies, building and operating airfields, etc., free from attack, as the enemy had in Manchuria.

Secondly, China did not hold the “West” at bay at all, in any military sense. Surely, the case was quite the reverse! R.O.K. and U.S. forces, aided by mere token forces from other Western powers, held the Chinese hordes at bay for over two years, and indeed could have utterly smashed China had they not been handicapped by high policy. The only sense in which China “held us at bay” was a political one. We allowed China and her supporters to drag the truce talks on for two years while our highly mechanised armies bogged down into a war of attrition, fought in trenches reminiscent of the 1914-18 war. Even then, General James Van Fleet complained that any action larger than a patrol by the forces under his command had to be previously approved by Washington. That the war dragged on for over three years was due to this sort of policy rather than to any military prowess of China.

Finally, sir, you say that your columns are open to suggestions for ensuring peace, so may I be permitted to put forward this simple one? A fully armed alliance between the United States of America and the British Empire with military installations at strategic points all over the world. Who would dare to challenge such a power?—Yours, etc.,

R. D. MARRIOTT.

[Our correspondent's opening statement begs the question. The fact is that “The United Nations”—in effect, mainly America—in a three years war were unable to drive the Chinese out of Korea and ended in a stalemate. One might also relevantly add that the Chinese numerical superiority was only just balanced by Western industrial and technical superiority. This would not have happened 50 years ago.—EDITOR.]

EUGENICS AND WAR

SIR,—The inclusion in “Views and Opinions” (August 14 issue) of comments on war was eminently suited to the Freethinker's cause.

Religion and war are ulterior and mundane correlatives of a natural scheme of *extortion* which permeates the flux and interplay of all life. Each is a manifestation of the inherent trait which in human relations is termed selfishness and in biology is termed the self-preservation instinct. One need not search widely for the origin of the force; evolutionary laws have rendered it prominent because of the increased chances of survival which it gives its possessors. Such a complex, and, therefore, well tried, organism as man must necessarily evince in no small degree the qualities of the instinct which has carried him to his present status. Doubtless it is to this inevitable circumstance that the “evils” which pollute mankind are to be imputed.

The religious and the self-seeker are equally blameless victims of the cosmopolitan “Will” apprehended, by Schopenhauer and placed on an organic basis by Darwin. The vast majority of mankind are, of course, subject to both self-interest tendencies, but, in view of the dependence of faith in immortality upon belief in the supernatural, and of the increasing difficulty which the alert mind has in adhering to such belief, the religious motive is slowly succumbing to the more tangible prospects offered by an attitude of social materialism, and it is, therefore, this latter which would appear to constitute the real and final danger to the ideal world-state.

War as we know it is an advanced phase of human friction having its evolution by way of the disputes between individual families, tribes, nations, and similar groups. There is an obvious analogy to this sequence in the species which develops into a genus, a family, an order, a class, and, finally, a phylum. But whereas biological evolution proceeds by means of annihilation, the growth of social and political bodies is compassed rather by a process of assimilation. Hope of a complete integration of civilisation is, therefore, not likely to prove vain. As to the identity of the active and passive moieties, knowledge of these can hardly discomfort posterity any more than a reading of the relative successes of the Jutes and the Angles brings such feelings to the modern Englishman.

The acceptance of the foregoing cannot alone give compass to the altruist, however. For the development of larger and fewer warring groups with the progress of history does not dispel the enmities of the smaller groups; it merely overshadows them, and in our remote Utopia we shall presumably be plagued by the same insidious instinct which has militated against our well-being since the birth of civilisation. And, furthermore, unless one has faith in some “*élan vital*” which will bear man upward with the mere lapse of time, the probability of the instinct's persistence must be faced. But a unified humanity is the eugenist's dream: artificial selection will effectually dispose of the unfortunate curse which nature has of necessity laid upon us.—Yours, etc.,

D. G. HOLLIDAY.

OUR DIVINE MONARCH

SIR,—May I make a brief addition to the facts presented in Mr. Harry Warhurst's interesting letter.

What most struck me about the Coronation Ceremony, and what I deem the acme of strangeness, as depicted in the “The Queen is Crowned”, were the last words. I quote: “*Save the Queen! May she live for ever.*” For ever?

So the young lady becomes a goddess, with the god-like attribute of *immortality*!

I now await her canonisation, or has that already been effected by the Holy Oil?—Yours, etc.,

VALERIE WHITE.