

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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THE recent death of Dr. W. R. Inge, formerly Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, can hardly be said to mark an epoch, since, at the advanced age of ninety-three, the old gentleman had been an extinct volcano for some years past. However, there is a certain sense in which the death of Dr. Inge may be said to mark, at least, the end of an era: for Dr. Inge may, we think, be regarded as the last of the "Victorian" clerics; the last great churchman who had valid claims to be regarded by his countrymen as something more than a mere ecclesiastical dignitary, to be decently interred, and quickly forgotten as soon as his successor was appointed.

Dr. W. R. Inge was born in 1860, when the Victorian era was at its height. He was essentially an "eminent Victorian" and, in character as well as intellect, represented the Church and class into which he was born.

A High Tory

In politics he was a High Tory: a Tory of a type that is, to-day, virtually extinct except, perhaps, amongst some aged "backwoodsmen" in the Carlton Club and elsewhere whom, in our present age of Democracy (with a capital D!) the official Tory Party is careful to keep out of sight. Inge was, apparently, up to the end of his long life, a bitter opponent not only of Socialism and Communism, but even of the social reforms culminating in the present-day "Welfare State."

The political and economic outlook of Dr. Inge have been, in our opinion, aptly described as analogous to those of a cultivated Roman slave owner. We seem to recall that Inge himself once remarked in a, presumably, unguarded moment, that had he been a Roman Emperor he, too, would have persecuted the Christians. (As it was, he would, we imagine, have endorsed the authoritarian pronouncement of the old Anglican bishop: "What have the people to do with the laws except to obey them?" Inge was no "Christian Socialist." His pungent remark that the clergy only discovered the virtues of Democracy *after* the people got the vote remains as a permanent criticism of that political belief, or pose, of the "leftist" clergy.

The Last Great Churchman

Lord Macaulay, we recall, once remarked that if all that Voltaire had written had been his often narrow-minded criticisms of Shakespeare, Milton and other literary giants, posterity would long since have forgotten him. Similarly, we may say that if all that Dr. Inge had written had been his querulous and often frankly silly complaints about modern social progress, he, too, would fall into the oblivion which, to-day, so speedily and surely embraces the countless ecclesiastical nonentities whose fame expires simultaneously with their obituary notices on the B.B.C. If we do not anticipate this so speedy oblivion for Dr. Inge, that was because he had more substantial claims upon the

respect both of his contemporaries and of posterity. For Dr. Inge was, probably, the last of the great Churchmen who survived from the pre-Darwinian era, when the profession of Christianity was still compatible with profound intellectual ability and scholarship of the highest order. To-day we are so used to ecclesiastical nonentities, and to the torrents of mediocre balderdash that they pour out in the Press and over the air, that we often forget that time was when the Christian Church could boast of great men; they have not always, as now, in the decay of Christianity, had to rely on demagogues of the type now exemplified by the ineffable Billy Graham. Hooker, Berkeley, Butler, Church,

Milman, Mansel, these were great Churchmen, great men. Dr. Inge was of their company: the last, in all probability, of a great breed. The now seemingly obvious fact that the Christian Churches can no longer produce men of such calibre affords one of the most striking contemporary proofs of the current decay of Christianity.

The Decline of Anglicanism

The reasons for this current decay, as far, at least, as it concerns Anglicanism, are actually concisely summarised in the career and opinions of the late Dean of St. Paul's. For the often intellectual, but always exclusive social class which provided for centuries the higher clergy of the Anglican Church, and to which the Dean belonged, depended for its very existence on an aristocratic state of society which began to decline with the advent of Gladstonian Radicalism and which the present century has scattered to the four winds of heaven by means of slumps, death-duties and super-tax. With the old leisure-class have gone the often learned clerics whom that class supplied to the State Church: the scholarly cleric is now a thing of the past. The old Victorian divines would turn in their graves if they could hear the rubbish that their illiterate successors now turn out galore on the B.B.C. and in the Sunday Press!

Was Inge a Christian?

A relevant question, but a hard one to answer! In the precise sense of the acceptance of Christian Dogma, he was definitely not. In fact, he seems to have believed very little, if anything at all. Near the close of his long life he told a visiting reporter that he knew nothing about the after-life, and that he was no nearer to solving "the riddle of the Universe" than when he had set out in his distant youth. For the pretensions of the Church to infallibility, he had nothing but contempt; whilst, as for the Bible, we recall that he once referred scornfully to the *Old Testament* as "the patriotic legends of a tribe of Bedouin," which is hardly the view expressed in *The Thirty-nine Articles* which, as an Anglican cleric, he had solemnly subscribed to at his Ordination! He does seem to have been a convinced Idealist in philosophy but, like many idealists, by no means neglected his own material interests in this vale of tears! He was reported to have driven a hard bargain for his

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The "Gloomy Dean"

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

famous *Evening Standard* articles. Was he a Christian at all? "It all depends," as Dr. Joad was fond of saying, "what one means by Christianity." Many orthodox members even of his own Church did not regard him as one; nor, we imagine, would the early Christians have done. In his own defence Inge would probably have quoted St. Augustine's famous dictum that Christianity existed long before Christ, which is, in a sense, quite true!

Almost a Freethinker

Intellectually, Inge was a man of great parts, a scholar of note, one of the finest prose writers of his day, an acute

critical thinker, perhaps the finest maker of epigrams since that incomparable master of phrase-making, Oscar Wilde. In ethical as well as in theological matters the Dean held unusually advanced views, rarely found amongst even liberal Christians. His was an outstanding personality; he has even been compared with Dr. Johnson. Endowed with an intellect of razor-like quality, had his social environment been different, he might well have become a famous Rationalist thinker. He was a great "character," a great publicist, a great critical thinker, we had almost added, a great Freethinker, but, after all, he *was* the Dean of St. Paul's!

A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 54)

1888. Bradlaugh's affirmation bill carries as the Oaths Act by a majority of 100. "Not many years ago members crowded the lobbies to see Bradlaugh kicked downstairs. Now they throng the benches to hear him," says *Punch*, continuing "Bradlaugh master of the situation. Terrible conviction that he might, had he pleased, have Old Mortality kicked downstairs, or even the Attorney General." Bradlaugh's speeches on Ireland are cheered by the Parnellites, he is known as "the member for India," and his prestige rivals that of Gladstone himself. Foote and Ball prepare their *Bible Handbook*, a little masterpiece of patient research making a ready appeal to the eye.

1889. Bradlaugh's blasphemy bill still fails. On account of ill-health, he foretells his resignation from the N.S.S. presidency; suffering from Bright's disease he goes on a voyage to India. *Radical* ceases. After reviewing a book on Theosophy for W. T. Stead and subsequently meeting Mme. Blavatsky, Mrs. Annie Besant is converted to that religion, and in consequence gradually relaxes her association with secularism; Foote then attacks Theosophy. Having served their purpose, *The Freethinker Bible* sketches, of which some 300 have now appeared, are discontinued. Wheeler produces a *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. The *Agnostic Journal*, edited and owned by Ross, takes the additional name *Secular Review*.

1890. The Freethought Publishing Co. ceases and the Freethought publisher is now Robert Forder in Stonecutter Street. Mrs. Besant resigns from the N.S.S. Vice-Presidency. Bradlaugh resigns, as foretold by him, and G. W. Foote is unanimously acclaimed as the new N.S.S. President. Bradlaugh continues to write and debate, and in his reformist work he is interested at this time in the eight-hour question. Foote is writing open letters to the clergy and attacking the belief in an inspired Bible, and he is engaged in the exposure of Christian lies about dying infidels. The Rev. H. Price Hughes has circulated the story of such a "converted atheist" and Foote tracks the lie down and exposes it in *A Lie in Five Chapters*. Holyoake aids Hughes and attacks Foote from the columns of a religious paper. A. B. Moss continues to match the Bible against scientific discovery, and Robertson writes on over-population. A young man of 22 from Leicester, of Jewish extraction, is lecturing in the parks for the N.S.S.; he has not been converted to freethought, for he is a natural freethinker with no religious upbringing to shake off, and the first freethought lecture he hears is his own; Chapman Cohen is his name.

* * * *

At this change in the secular leadership, as Bradlaugh hands the historic gavel to his successor, Foote, it is opportune to consider the general state of the N.S.S. First, the defection of Mrs. Besant was without consequence. No

one followed her to the oriental way of thought with which she had always had some sympathy. Like Holyoake, she was not averse to all the ceremonies of religion in themselves, such as hymns, prayers, psalms, burial and baptismal rites. When she embraced Theosophy it did not materially affect her basic advocacy of secularism as against organised Christianity. But she never became a materialist, which many of us consider the completion of the secular philosophy and therefore the final adequate justification for secular reform. She soon became, on the death of Mme. Blavatsky, the High Priestess of Theosophy, but could never make it prosper in this country. She was concerned here in a ludicrous attempt to introduce one Krishnamurti as the reincarnation of Christ. Only once did I hear her speak (at Liverpool a year or two before she died) and I must accept it on the authority of others that she was once a great speaker, for on this occasion she was completely flat and colourless. Secularists in 1889 were surprised at her change of outlook but went their way, nevertheless. Foote engaged her in debate on Theosophy.

The factor which might have tended to some disunity was the rapid advance of Socialism but, generally speaking, the secularist who became a Socialist did not therefore leave secularism; he supported both.

The number of N.S.S. branches in 1890 was 62, with four independent secular societies. This decrease in the number of branches from 102 in 1885 is largely superficial, because of amalgamations of local branches. Inside 30 years since 1861 there appear exactly 250 branches, some no doubt of fleeting duration, yet testifying to the spread of the secularist outlook through lectures, publications and petitions. No less than 57 branches existed in London and district, 20 in the south (one in Jersey), 33 in the Midlands, and 115 in the northern counties, with heavy concentrations in Lancashire, the West Riding and Durham: 12 appear in Scotland, four in Ireland and seven in Wales. All these follow the dispersal of population and therefore the disposition of the best libraries and other facilities for self-education. In the matter of direct propaganda London at the peak period had over 100 outdoor meetings a week in the season. The movement was never rich in funds, and Foote, Watts and others lived at times in excessive hardship, while Bradlaugh's heavy commitments were an additional source of worry to him,

(To be continued)

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Brother, Meet the Lord

By MALCOLM STUBBS

SHE was saved; prayed over and made much of that evening. The woman in the bottle-green dress with a frill and whose breath was bad, was joyed at the conversion, and asked Paul if he was saved. He replied he didn't think so. Her face was too near his; her eyes, fanatical, tired, nagged him about the need for a personal Saviour. Paul continued to etch crow's-feet with his finger-nails on the scarlet cover of his Redemption Hymnal, like those at the corners of her eyes.

She crossed her legs, fixed him with her eyes, and imitated badly the holy whisperings of a father Confessor. Nuns, he thought, didn't cross their legs, but he supposed they were quite as devout.

The youth with dark hair stretched his legs in front of him: he wore yellow socks. Now and again, he shouted "Hallelujah" and "Wonderful Jesus" looking hot, enthusiastic and abandoned.

The woman with bad breath was still talking and talking—her slipped-disc, she said had been cured instantaneously. Of course, the doctors marvelled, but she knew what great things were done in the power of the Lord. Paul said something about the cures of Lourdes and Walshingham but she was selfish in her faith.

Turning away from him, she caressed for a moment with her eyes, her chaste, too delicate accessories of bottle-green with little white dots. Then, re-steeled, back to Paul, breathing on him like a priest when he blesses the waters of the font on Holy Saturday. The aching stickyness of her breath made him hate the wall texts, the failure of the dove-grey colour scheme, and their conditioned joy.

She pushed a Redemption Hymnal into his hands, pointing to the hymn piece with her bottle-green finger as though he was incapable of finding the hymn in his own book. The small boy in front clapped his hands at the chorus; his mother looked at him approvingly so he clapped louder, and continued to stare at Paul, who wished she would tweak the boy's ear.

"... the Blood... the Blood." Along they swept. "... the wonder-working Blood, the Blood." The woman in green seemed to be singing louder than the rest; the small boy clapped and clapped, pleased with himself.

The woman in green looked to see if Paul was affected by the way in which they sang about the Blood. He felt confused and stared angrily at the buff clock in a nasty case with a basket of flowers painted on a glass panel. The boy continued to stare and clap.

"What a Saviour He is!" came from the youth in yellow socks. Every now and again, he oiled the chorus with "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"

A steward hurried a cup of water to somebody at the back of the hall and turning heads forgot for a moment all about the Blood, the clapping and the fixed eyes of ecstasy. It was the sort of cup, Paul thought, the woman with the bad breath would put her lips to, thinned by years of pious professions. A stomach gurgled like a fasting priest's: its owner moved in his seat, shuffled his feet and blew his nose.

She passed her Bible to him. Paul, irritated by her possessiveness took it, sat stiffly, following the account of Belshazzar's feast and the Writing on the Wall. The little man on the rostrum whose stiff white collar looked too affected after the crumpled weekday one, grew more and more important as he read. He was patronising—explaining the meaning of every word of more than five syllables. Then he commented on "the Word." "A God forsaken,"

trite. A histrionic pause and "Hallelujah" from the youth in yellow socks.

"Depraved—depraved animals," the pastor continued with emphasis, going on to deprecate the hair styles of the young people. The man at the piano must have been saved because of all his "Hallelujahs" but his hair was long and styled. The pastor's hair was thin.

Some shifted and rearranged themselves, preparing a nonchalant mask for the next personal attack. Only the fat woman who had invited Paul into the hall as he stood outside in the snow seemed unconfused. Others prepared their defence mechanisms.

In spite of all their sky-blue professions of otherworldliness, Paul meditated, they were not going to let you make fools of them for Christ's sake without some little show of resistance.

The pastor sat down. A boy in a cassock came in late, confidently—his cassock had the smell of stale incense. He pushed past Paul to take the spare seat between the woman in bottle-green and himself. Paul knew the boy slightly, and the boy confided that he liked the youth in yellow socks. His familiarity increased: when he whispered loudly other silly things, the glazed eyes of the woman with bad breath betrayed her interest.

Later, the pastor asked the boy why he wore such dresses. It made him feel good—near the Lord. He was pleased with his answer and the pastor accepted it too.

A large-nosed woman in grey prayed then, mouthing everybody else's sins and aspirations. She might have been a Choir Sister, anxious to convince herself that what she was saying was true—that it had some reality. Her words, isolated, existing by themselves fell into disorder; they were as barren and pinched as the light-bulbs of the hall. Well-pleased, she sat down at last: she had had almost the last word.

The pastor, flushed with exultation announced the last chorus, then, almost plaintively said that he would be available after the meeting for anyone who wanted spiritual advice. At this, the woman in bottle-green smiled at Paul—he would have liked to write coarse things on the steamy windows.

Without success she tried to bait him with God: the boy in the cassock was telling the youth in yellow socks of his need. Intimate hands tried to contact Paul's; they tried to entangle him in their religious smiles.

Outside, he was again happy: everything was new in the snow.

Heresy

In defending ourselves we are defending the freedom of every heretic in England. If bigotry succeeds in punishing us it will continue its evil work. Its appetite will be whetted instead of appeased; for all history shows us that it grows by what it feeds on. Every form of heresy will be attacked in turn, until at last the law is rigidly enforced, and all opposition to Christianity, and all dissent from it, is ruthlessly stamped out. Let not the amiable Secularists who purchase toleration at present by flattery of the foe, and nurse the vain fancy that contradictions can long live amicably together, imagine themselves perfectly safe. Their turn may come. The extreme form of heresy bears the first brunt of persecution, but when that is disposed of the next form becomes extreme, and so on till the most moderate form is reached; unless, indeed, it is treated with the indifference of contempt, and allowed to live on because it has no power of spreading itself, and is obviously harmless to the faith of man, woman, or child.—G. W. FOOTE.

This Believing World

Soon all England will be ringing with Billy Graham's millions of converts to Jesus Christ—that is, if everything goes well and the Devil, in the persons of Indifference, Ignorance, and downright Unbelief, does not upset the Divine Plan. Apart from the joy in Heaven when the converts materialise, it is interesting to note that, for bringing so many souls to Christ, a group of American business men have guaranteed Billy 15,000 dollars a year—about £5,000—not a bad little sum for the ability to “preach the Gospel.” What a fine money-maker is the fable of Jesus Christ! No wonder Jesus is considered by many to be easily the greatest business man the world has ever seen.

Look at the huge business his genius for big money has created—magnificent church buildings all over the world, hundreds of thousands of earnest workers, many doing their jobs for fat salaries, others only too pleased to carry on the good work for nix—thus saving the business tons of money—and all inspired with what they are going to get on the IOU of the first organiser Himself in Heaven, or in “Kingdom Come.” The Divine business of working for “nix” does not, of course, appeal to Billy any more than it does to countless priests, parsons, or bishops. But then look at the happiness Christianity gives others to give what they can in hard cash so that Billy can carry on his marvellous campaign! Look how lustily they will sing his hymns and pay for the Holy pleasure of doing so! For raking in the shekels, is there any other business which can equal an-honest-to-goodness Divine Revival?

Our contemporary “*Psychic Realm*” quotes—we are glad to see—Joseph Rinn's masterpiece, *Sixty Years of Psychological Research*, just published here under another title by Messrs. Rider. The quotation is about a doctor in Cincinnati, U.S.A., falling in love with a spirit, and getting married to her. The bride materialised, so did the clergyman, and when the ceremony was over, they both dematerialised. What *Psychic Realm* does not say is that Rinn's book is a slashing *attack* on this kind of twaddle. Perhaps it is as well, for those Spiritualists who read about the incident may buy the book—and then the fat will be in the fire!

The Rev. F. Hambly, M.A., insists that the Bible is the world's best seller in literature. That may be, but when he adds that it is “read as widely as it is owned” he must know that he is talking nonsense. Who reads the Bible? A few divinity students and the clergy and a very small number of laymen are about all. Who among other people know the joys which reading Haggai and Malachi give? Who, even among confirmed Bible readers, could tell us of what earthly use are the ravings or “lamentations” of Jeremiah? But our newspapers will always give publicity to some parson talking rubbish about the Bible and rarely allow any answer.

According to the Rev. W. W. Lee, Religion and Science are fast becoming friends. It is all very simple. Religion can't do without Science and Science can't do without religion. If you do not understand everything in religion, it is because you don't know God. Once you know God you are an expert in religion and, as Mr. Lee laughingly claims, “you know all the answers.” Obviously, if religion and science do not agree, it is because science does not understand “religious poetry” like that inexpressibly true Creation story.

Then take the Miracles of Jesus. One hundred years ago the scientist said miracles were impossible. Does he say so now? With withering contempt, Mr. Lee tells us “No scientist would say that to-day.” In other words, one must infer from this that science now knows that miracles are possible. Look at the radio for proof. All the miracles of Jesus were true because he was God Almighty—and therefore the greatest miracle-monger that ever lived. Thus, concluded Mr. Lee in a sermon at Bolton recently, Religion and Science are fast becoming friends—and we might well find that, if Mr. Lee is right, the Bible will swallow Science out of existence and we would become one happy family. We wonder whether Mr. Lee has grown up?

Continuing his broadcast demonstration to children that God must have made the Universe, Dr. Cockin poured scorn on anybody believing in the Genesis Creation story—nobody with intelligence believes it these days, he said. And he admitted that at one time this earth had no life on it—no consciousness. But this proved that there *must* have been *consciousness outside* the Universe, otherwise how could God have made it? After this brilliant demonstration, the Bishop of Bristol begged children not to ask: “Who made God?” It was most distressing to hear such a question, but nobody should ask that for, of course, no one made God. He was always there. We sincerely hope now that Dr. Cockin will explain the Fall of Man as the Creation story is no longer true. If Adam wasn't created, he couldn't have sinned. Where does Jesus, the Saviour of Mankind, come in?

Salvation starts at Claridges

The Bishop of Barking, Dr. Rowlands Gough, declared “that the Church as a whole is entirely divorced from the great masses of our people,” and he explained his sponsorship of the campaign by American Evangelist, Billy Graham.

“It is an unusual and bold course of action,” said the bishop. “It will interest thousands of people that the Church—by more respected methods—has failed to reach.”

He was speaking at a dinner in honour of Graham.

The dinner was paid for by an anonymous American, but Lord Luke was the official host. “I am interested in anything to do with religion,” he said.

Until last night he had not met his chief guest. Said Graham: “To shake hands with a real lord is an honour and a privilege.”

Nearly 90 people were at the dinner. They included the Bishop of Worcester, the Right Rev. W. W. Cash; the Dowager-Duchess of Rutland; the Earls of Cottenham and Cavan; Viscounts Bridgeman and Newport; Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, Sir Guy Salisbury-Jones; Sir Edward Gurney Boyle, M.P.—The *Evening Standard*, February 26, 1954.

Did the Master ever dine in such exalted company?

Creation

“Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?

I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to his own disgrace.

The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!
Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,
Malignant and implacable! I vow

That not for all Thy power furl'd and unfurl'd,
For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world.”

—JAMES THOMSON.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

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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.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every week-day, 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, noon: L. EBURY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 14, 6-45 p.m.: W. G. K. FORD, M.Sc., "Values."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 16, 7 p.m.: ALIC CRAIG, "The Ideology of T. S. Eliot."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, March 12, 7-15 p.m., Major G. ADCOCK, "Positive Ethics."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 14, 6-30 p.m.: G. SCHAFFER, "The Press from the Inside."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, March 14, 2-30 p.m.: C. P. FORSYTH, J.P., "The Co-operative Movement."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, March 14, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "One Thing is Needful."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 14, 7-15 p.m.: Debate: "Dialectical Materialism—Is it Valid?" T. G. JONES—Yes. W. H. CARLTON—No.

The 48th Annual Dinner of the N.S.S.—27th Feb., 1954

FOR one moment, at the President's request, and before the Dinner, all the guests present stood silently in memory of Chapman Cohen whose recent death had deprived British Freethought of a great leader. And, of course, in his Address, Mr. F. A. Ridley, the Chairman, referred in moving terms to the great work Mr. Cohen had done, not only as one of *The Freethinker's* finest and most lucid writers, but also during his term of office as President of the National Secular Society.

Before this, however, members and friends, many of whom only meet on this one "get-together" day, were happily renewing old memories, and making new friends, and altogether enjoying themselves; for an N.S.S. Dinner was always one of the most enjoyable functions of its yearly programme.

As the guests filed into the reception-room, they were faced by John H. Amshewitz's fine portrait of Chapman Cohen—painted in 1933, showing him at the height of his powers. The portrait was greatly admired.

The dinner itself this year was one of the best—perhaps the best—since the war, beautifully cooked and served; and our Secretary, Mr. P. Victor Morris, must be congratulated on having found the Oxford Street Corner House for this happy occasion.

The guest of the evening was Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann, so well-known to our readers as a witty and accomplished writer and, what is equally as important, as a literary man of fine taste. A practised speaker at the Bar, Mr. Du Cann, added to his laurels—if that were necessary—by his deeply interesting after-dinner speech. It was, of course, Chapman Cohen who "roped" him in as a contributor to *The Freethinker* though, and Mr. Du Cann did not shirk the issue, he was not entirely with us. He could not be considering he still held the Christian Faith, or, at least, what he considered that to be. He felt that of one thing *The Freethinker* could be proud, and that was when the atom bombs were first dropped on to Japan, it was this journal alone in all England which protested. Mr. Du Cann was warmly applauded as he proposed the Toast to the National Secular Society.

It was seconded by one of our most popular "young" members from Manchester, Mr. Colin McCall—though he himself was rather dubious about being called young these days as he had been actively associated with the Society for nearly twenty years. Following was one of the Vice-Presidents of the N.S.S., Mr. Len Ebury, who recalled some of the stalwarts in the Movement of thirty years ago—Rowney, Hyatt, Saphin, and Arthur B. Moss, among others. Both speakers were cordially applauded.

The toast to the guests was effectively proposed by Mrs. Venton, and responded to by Mr. Hector Hawton, the new Editor of the *Literary Guide*, and Secretary of the South Place Ethical Society. He reminded Mr. Du Cann that he also had written against the atom bomb in the *Rationalist Annual*, and mentioned that the R.P.A. was attempting a new approach to Rationalist problems. Like Mr. Du Cann, he received a warm welcome.

This completed the first half of the proceedings, and a quarter of an hour's break enabled guests again to inter-mingle. Flash-light photographs had earlier been taken and were now being examined; and one noted the presence of many members of other societies. Miss Constance Kerr, who is Secretary of the R.P.A., was with us, Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright of the Leicester Secular Society, and Mr. Henry, representing the Ethical Union, among others.

The N.S.S. Dinner Concerts were always a very welcome feature, and the one provided this year was thoroughly enjoyed. Miss May Sansome presided right royally at the piano except when she displayed her equal mastery of the piano accordion with Bobby Bent, whose versatility enabled him to "compère" the show, sing humorous songs and play fantastic instruments. Miss Ida Willis must have tempted all the males present with her "Kiss Me" songs a temptation which had to be resisted at all costs. And with Mr. David Parker, she sang beautifully in a number of charming duets, Mr. Parker later singing solo in splendid voice. Finally, Mr. Jack Crosbie proved a baffling conjuror and a highly accomplished cartoonist caricaturing Mr. Ridley in the Chair, as well as one of the guests in lightning fashion.

A memorable evening with credit due to all who organised it so triumphantly.

H.C.

ROBERT TAYLOR. The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844). By H. Cutner. A detailed account of a remarkable Freethinker and his work. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.

THEISM OR ATHEISM. The Great Alternative. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.

BOOK REVIEW

Seven Years in Tibet

By R. J. JACKSON

HEINRICH HARRER, translated from German by Richard Graves. Rupert Hart Davis, 16s. net., 1953.

Of the many books that have appeared since 1904, when Sir Francis Younghusband (then Col. Younghusband) conducted his daring journey into the Forbidden City, this present fascinating account of the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama, their god king, reveals them in the most modern light. I heard Younghusband at a public meeting in the Queen's Hall some years ago speak of a *present* he received as a parting gift from the then Dalai Lama. It was a small golden figure of *Buddha* and he asked Younghusband always to keep in mind the Buddhist Faith as their most cherished possession. The author of our present study was already a famous Austrian mountaineer and ski-ing champion. He was climbing in the Himalayas when caught by the outbreak of war and interned in India. Three times he tried to escape and finally succeeded by means of almost superhuman exertions in crossing the Himalayas with a single companion and reaching Tibet.

We read here how after desolate marches and all but incredible adventures in country never before traversed by a white man, he reached the Forbidden City of Lhasa, where he was ultimately permitted to stay and earn his living. As a result of his familiar daily acquaintance with the people and his gradually acquired knowledge of the language, he came, in the course of seven years to obtain an understanding of Tibet and the Tibetans in some ways far beyond that previously afforded a Westerner. But more astonishing still, after an introduction to the Dalai Lama, the young god-king, he afterwards became his friend and tutor until the time when the invasion from Communist China drove the Dalai Lama into flight, the author accompanying him into India. He brought many photographs with him which adorn this book, including a colour illustration of the young Dalai Lama receiving the sacred relic from the Indian delegation. I have often written of the Founder of the Indian reform movement afterwards known as Buddhism as a splendid Rationalist. That pioneer Buddhist scholar, Rhys Davids, tells us in his "Early Buddhism" that in the days when the founder lived and taught in India the most perfect freedom, both of thought and expression was recognised not only to Hermits and Wanderers, but to everyone else. "*There had probably never been before, there has certainly seldom been since any time and place at which such absolute liberty of thought prevailed.*" In studying an ecclesiastical development such as Tibetan Lamaism it is essential to remember the background of *primitive* Buddhism. Now just listen to an extract from the present book:—

"The house of the parents of the Dalai Lama was not far away. We soon found ourselves standing before a great gate near which the gatekeeper was already on the look-out for us. When we approached he bowed respectfully. We were led through a large garden full of vegetable plots and clusters of splendid willows till we came to the palace. We were taken up to the first floor: a door was opened and we found ourselves in the presence of the mother of the God-King, to whom we bowed in reverence. She was sitting on a small throne in a large bright room surrounded by servants. She looked the picture of aristocratic dignity. The humble awe which the Tibetans feel for the Holy Mother is something strange to us, but we found the moment a solemn one."

Instead of being "strange" it should have reminded the

author surely of something nearer home? But the Dalai Lama at any rate has a *human* Father: "a dignified elderly man."

It is not possible in this brief review even to summarise the most interesting things in this book. Harrer is a critical writer and speaking of the life of the monks, he records that although they live in strict celibacy, and are forbidden to have anything to do with women: "unfortunately homosexuality is very common." It is even condoned as giving proof that women play no part in the life of those monks who indulge in it. It also often happens that monks fall in love with women and ask for their release so as to be able to marry them and this is granted without difficulty. Harrer liked Tibetan life. There was a wonderful courtesy about Tibetan life which seems to be lacking in the West. "Where in the West is there anything to equal the perfect courtesy of this people? Here no one is made to lose 'face' and aggressiveness is unknown. Even political enemies treat each other with consideration and politeness and greet each other cordially when they meet in the street." After noting many instances of kindness, Harrer says: "It is probable that no other country in the world would welcome two poor fugitives (he had as companion the leader of a German expedition) as Tibet welcomed us."

In any account of Tibet, the *wonderful Potala Palace* must be noted. It dates from Tibet's days of greatness. The Potala, one of the most imposing buildings in the world, was constructed in its present form some three hundred years ago by the fifth Dalai Lama. Previously, we read, there had been on this site a fortress belonging to the kings of Tibet which had been destroyed by the Mongols during one of their invasions. Huge stones were imported there by forced labourers, as in the case of the Great Pyramid of Egypt, to be hewn by skilled masons—who were unassisted by any technical devices—into the gigantic building which rises sheer out of the rocks.

When the fifth Dalai Lama suddenly died there was a danger that the work would never be completed, but the Regent, who could not count on the people's loyalty to himself to finish this formidable work, withheld the news of His Holiness's death. It was first announced that he was seriously ill, and then that he had withdrawn himself from the world for meditation. This deception was continued for ten years until the Palace was finished. When the visitor looks to-day at this unique building we can understand and even excuse the fraud that made its completion possible. We have no space to discuss the *Lhasa Cathedral*, in which there is a gigantic figure of Gautama, as the young prince must be seen to be believed.

Then there is an account of the State Oracle given through a medium in trance. Often the question had to be repeated several time before the medium began to mumble. "I tried to pick out intelligible words, but made nothing of the sounds." And old monk present wrote down the answers. He was the secretary to the late Oracle. When an oracle goes on giving *bad* advice they make short work of the mouthpiece. He is relieved of his office—and Harrer says naively: "This always seemed to me illogical. Did the God speak through the medium, or did he not?" As for Tibetan medicine: "Medical schools are unfortunately opposed to all progress."

What a lot might be done for Tibet if medical and sanitary conditions were improved! Surgery is completely

(Continued at foot of next page)

My One Confession

By VALENTINA MANOUSSO

I WAS about ten years of age when I first realised what a nuisance one's religion can be. The winter term of my school had come to an end; Spring was in the air; the Easter holidays were only a couple of weeks away. The two years I had spent at a French school in Paris were becoming blurred as a dream, and the St. Peterburg's school was no more the bogy of which I had been so terribly frightened. Life was amusing; life was kind; life was an interesting adventure. And then . . . this blow. . . .

At lunch Mother had said in an off-hand, casual way (I still wonder if she were sincere, or had only tried to soften the horrid news): "I am afraid, darling, you will have to go to Confession this Passion Week."

"To Confession? Me? Whatever for?"

Swallowing hard, Mother replied: "People do, you know."

"Servants do . . . Not us!" The gulf between the classes was quite distinct in the mind of a ten-year old "lady." The servants . . . they spat on the floor; they had no use for handkerchiefs . . . and they went to church.

In the Paris school religion took a prominent place. Every morning the little Catholics went to the chapel, a bright, cheerful place where, of course, I was not admitted, being a heretic. The Protestants had some prayers in a class-room—a quiet and respectable assembly. The Russians were a small minority (actually only my two elder sisters and myself, who belonged to the Orthodox Faith). The school authorities had not provided for us any special place of worship. We were supposed to go to the *pensionnat* for foreign ladies, where my mother had a room. Fortunately, the *pensionnat* was in the same building, and we three girls used to go to mother very willingly. To tell the truth, our worship was on the scanty side. My eldest sister murmured in haste the *Pater Noster* and a prayer to glorify the Virgin—both in the Slavonic language, which was just Greek for my little person.

But beside the spiritual food that we were supposed to derive from this short meeting, we got from our generous mother also food for our mortal bodies, in guise of chocolates and biscuits.

This morning meeting to worship our God did not last long. Mother was often sleepy and did not wish to be disturbed at such an early hour as nine. Or, maybe, she was already out, having breakfast, or walking in the nearby Bois de Boulogne. So very soon we were told that mother trusted us, that we knew our prayers, that we were honest little girls, and, in sum, that we could say our prayers in our respective dormitories. We were duly provided with small icons, which we fixed with satin bows to the head of our beds. Anyhow, God was everywhere, and, consequently, one could worship God just as well by looking out

unknown in the country. "Venereal disease is very common in Tibet." The cases are neglected and the doctor is called in when it is too late to do much good.

Yet our author puts up a dubious argument on the *value* of superstition. One day in blazing summer weather, water began to flow from a gargyle on the cathedral. The people of Lhasa were beside themselves with terror. No doubt there were quite natural explanations for this and similar happenings, but, says Harrer, "if the Tibetans lost their superstitiousness they would at the same time lose an asset. One has to remember that if evil portents can demoralise them with fear, *good omens inspire them with strength and confidence.*" And the Dalai Lama was naturally as superstitious as his people.

of the window, preferably on the sky. And that was that: all that till now I knew about religion.

And now, I must go to Confession. . . . I could not believe my ears. "You are joking, Mummy? Why should I go to a priest, whom I don't know, and who does not know me? What have I to say to him?"

"Oh, just say something. . . ." And Mother left the room.

I confess that the prospect of this ritual was an ordeal for me. I was uneasy, and quite miserable. I went to seek sympathy from my eldest sister, who was already sixteen. What was this sudden idea of Mother to turn me out a little bigot? Sister Vera patiently explained to me what was behind Mother's decision. Apparently, the school authorities claimed that each pupil went at least once a year to Holy Communion; and no little soul over seven years of age could receive the blood and the flesh of its god without going to confess his, or her, sins to the priest. After the Confession was over, one would receive a certificate of the due performance of the ritual; and this certificate the pupil had to produce to the school headmistress. And there was no way to avoid the rule.

I slept badly that night, trying always to find the way of avoiding this unpleasant affair. Next day I went to bargain with Mother. "Have I to kneel in front of every member of my family, bow to the floor and whimper, 'Forgive my sins . . . forgive my sins. . . .' And wait for the usual reply: 'God will forgive'?"

Mother decided that I could dispense with this ugly performance. I sincerely hated the gross behaviour of our servants who seemed to take a certain pleasure in performing the humiliating ceremony. Especially my old nurse, who eagerly hit the floor with her forehead, with a nasty thud. I asked her once, was it really necessary to hit the floor so hard. The reply was that the thud might help. God would hear nurse's special bump and perhaps be kinder to her than before. I naturally inquired if God could hear this slight thud all the way from our flat to Heaven. In answer I learned that God can hear everything . . . everything . . . everywhere. . . . I doubted this myself, and wanted some more information. "Everything? Everywhere? Even when I . . . ?" The conversation here took a very private turn, not suitable, I fear, for publication. (To be concluded)

"I still say that Materialism is a myth"

By DOUGLAS V. MORGAN, Inter.B.Sc.(Econ.)(Lond.)
A.I.L.(French), F.R.Econ.S.

WHEN I wrote my article the Editor warned me that I would have replies and how right he is because last week Mr. Cutner made a full-scale attack on me. He used a lot of powder, but did not make ONE bull's eye. Of course I enjoyed his attack and as briefly as possible I will try to answer his charges.

CHARGE 1: That Mr. Morgan uses big words. No, I did not. I only used words which should be known by any student of Philosophy. What is wrong with that?

CHARGE 2: That Mr. Morgan brings in persons to his argument. No, I did not. I only used ONE name, that of Mr. Chapman Cohen, and then only to quote his postulates of Materialism. Is that being personal?

No, it was Mr. Cutner who brought in names when he told me to join the Salvation Army.

And now for my theses:—

POSTULATE 1: That Mr. Cutner has failed to answer my question if Materialism is consistent with Ethics, Logic and aesthetics,

POSTULATE 2: That Mr. Cutner has failed to answer my question of the richness and diversity of mental life.

Can he tell me why there is a difference between, say, a scientist and poet? Between Wordsworth and Einstein? Can Materialism answer? No.

POSTULATE 3: That I cannot define the "mind" precisely because I am an Idealist. That is the whole point. The mind is outside and above our physical senses.

POSTULATE 4: Will Mr. Morgan define Evolution? Yes, of course, I will. Evolution is the struggle of Man towards the goal of Perfection. The GOOD of the Greeks. The ABSOLUTE of Hegel and the PERFECTION of Christ.

Lastly Mr. Cutner wants me to believe in Materialism. I would, but the whole point is he shys at my argument and never gives a direct answer to a direct question. Here is one "choice" question.

Why should one person be entranced by the poems of Keats, the music of Mozart, the paintings of Raphael if we are, as Mr. Cutner says, ALL THE SAME?

If Mr. Cutner can explain to me the diversity of human nature, the richness of mental life, and the presence of Good and Evil in the World I will give in to him.

But remember keep to a reasoned argument and leave out institutions and persons.

If you talk about Christianity keep to the Four Gospels of Christ and NOT the morals of the priesthood. The Church is NOT always Christianity, is it?

Correspondence

MORE FREETHOUGHT

SIR.—Your paper is good on the whole, but please stop telling so much about that guy Jesus and about Freethought history, and start some more Freethinking about the actual problems of the world we live in.—Yours, etc.,

K. G. JANSSON.

Sweden.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION?

SIR.—What should Freethinkers discuss? I would suggest the following:—

1. It is a well-known fact that churchgoing has declined and that a big majority of people nowadays prefer their own fireside, the "local" or some outdoor activity to psalm singing. At the same time membership of the N.S.S. or R.P.A. or other Rationalist and Freethought organisations has not gained by the loss of the Church. Many who have not attended church for years still have their children baptised and married there, and at death prefer burial services by the clergy to funeral services without theology. There are hundreds who understand the arguments presented by Freethinkers, yet who hesitate to join their ranks. How can Freethinkers so present their case that more and more will become "converted"?

2. How many Freethinkers bring up their children in a Freethought atmosphere?

3. How many M.P.s are Freethinkers, and do they make their voice heard; and do Freethinkers endeavour to convert their own M.P.?

4. Is there any way in which a Freethinker can conduct himself (or herself) that people will say proudly or enviously, "He is a Freethinker"? or "Is this Utopic"?

5. Freethinkers have argued for years against religion, superstition and ignorance. What positive philosophy do they present? Is there a definite position on which the various schools of Freethought, Secularism, Atheism and Rationalism can be said to agree?—Yours, etc.,

G. WILLIAMS.

ESPERANTO

SIR.—I have just read the article by G. L. Dickenson on "Why Esperanto?" There are, however, two sides to every story. Like G.L.D., I, too, am a Fellow of the British Esperanto Association, and have not only studied, but used the language for over 40 years.

Because, for me, Esperanto has broken down the language barriers, I have been able to make myself understood in many countries of Europe through which I have travelled. I have made numerous and lasting friendships in these lands, and, in addition to all this, I have been enabled to get a bird's-eye view of the literature of several of these lands by means of Anthologies in Esperanto. Surely this is no mean achievement!

In spite of the opinions of G.L.D., it is quite obvious that Esperanto is a solution to the urgent problem of diversity of language. Moreover, it works!—Yours, etc.,

DAVID KENNEDY.

"DIFFICULTIES"

SIR.—The article headed "Difficulties," by Peter J. Lewis in *The Freethinker* (February 19, 1954), took my mind back to 1946 when, a week or two before Christmas, being periodically possessed by devils, I collapsed on the way to work at 7-20 a.m. and came to my senses shortly before midnight in the local hospital, with severe injuries to the face, including a broken nose. As soon as I could hold conversation my religion was queried—a comforting subject for one who had no idea of his chance of survival. I stated that I had no religion, and was left in peace until a day or two before the 25th, when I was asked again in a manner which suggested that my first answer had been given when I was still in a state of delirium. I reaffirmed that I had no religion, and was not bothered again until the Christmas morning. I was recovering by this time and made an emphatic statement on my position as regards religion. This made no difference as regards my treatment and, considering my position, I had one of the best Christmases of my life. Fair enough—but here comes the snag. A religious service had been arranged for the ward on Christmas Evening, and I had announced my intention of remaining neutral.

In due course the parson turned up to lead the praises to God, but the lady pianist who had promised to accompany the singing failed to appear. An appeal was then made for a patient to take her place, and it turned out that I was the only one there capable of performing the task, so I got out of bed and took a leading part in a Christmas service. I have often wondered since, was this mere chance, or did God purposely create the situation to give me a chance to redeem myself? If the latter, then I fear it was in vain, but I shall always remember the attitude of a fellow patient, who said triumphantly afterwards: "There's no such thing as an Atheist—they all acknowledge their Creator in the end." This was said because I considered it my duty to my fellow patients to provide the harmonic backing without which their praises to their God would have been a little thin in texture. "God works in most mysterious ways His wonders to perform."—Yours, etc.,

(Mr.) E. J. HUGHES.

THE CASE AGAINST MATERIALISM

SIR.—Mr. Cutner's reply to Mr. Douglas V. Morgan is really no reply at all. Having stated, very dogmatically, that this earth was once a gaseous globe without any life, as we understand the term, which may or may not be true, and, in any case, proves in no way whatever that matter preceded mind, nor that there can be no mind without matter, he goes on to illustrate his argument with purely tangible examples of "wetness" and water being "hot" or "cold." Is mind a similar thing demonstrable in the same way? Mind is certainly not bound by the physical senses or the physical body (as witness the remarkable findings of such men as Professor Jung with regard to the Subconscious Mind), which seems to me to make these "examples" of Mr. Cutner's quite irrelevant.

However, as none of us know the exact nature of mind, we shall have to leave the argument where it is, without jumping to unwarrantable and unprovable conclusions about it being solely the product of matter.

I agree with Mr. Cutner that personalities should be kept out of arguments of this kind. Unfortunately, he shows the same fault in criticising Mr. Morgan's use of what he calls "big words," instead of replying to some of the points he raised. Personally, I see no reason why Mr. Morgan should confine himself to words approved by Mr. Cutner, although this sort of red herring is useful for dodging an awkward argument.

Finally, Mr. Cutner asks, Is Idealism making converts? If, by this, he means are there an increasing number of people seeking an explanation to the mysteries of life to whom materialism completely fails to give any sort of an answer, or to throw any real light on the subject, then there are. I am one, and I meet and have known many others.

I would suggest that Mr. Cutner ceases to bother himself about Hume and Berkeley and other Western philosophers, the theories of which were described by one Indian student of these subjects as "suitable for an eight year old," and turns to the East where, in India, for example, the philosophical systems and *Dasanas* are as far removed from the gropings of the West as a university is above an infant's kindergarten. I would further suggest that he begins by studying the work of Rene Guenon, particularly his "Reign of Quantity and Signs of the Times."

In the meantime, Mr. Morgan's arguments remain unanswered and, it would seem, inviolate to the onslaught of Freethinkers.—Yours, etc.,

F. CLIVE-ROSS.