

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXV—No. 5

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IN the good old days when the clerics could put any kind of ragged arguments before their mentally ragged clients, only two in every three could read; and less than 100 years ago there were heroic struggles with the little band of bold thinkers over Infidel death-beds. There are still preachers who make their congregations shudder over the spectacle of Voltaire shrieking for a priest, and Thomas Paine, the "dirty little atheist"—as a president of the United States called him—writhing as he caught a distant sight of the flames. What it was supposed to prove I do not know. The real death of an Infidel is best illustrated by the passing of a famous British radical leader and haughty Freethinker, Labouchere, of 70 or 80 years ago. As he lay drowsily awaiting the end, the lamp flickered. "Flames?" he asked, glancing down the room. "No, not yet!" And he lay back quietly to rest a little longer.

It has occurred to me that my readers would like to know how a Secularist really feels when he comes within sight of the Pearly or any other gates, and as I found myself some three weeks ago floating peacefully down the Valley of the Shadow in a ward of a London hospital, I am fairly well qualified to tell them.

Naturally, 1954 is not 1854. My friend Judge Wilson, the leading authority on Thomas Carlyle, has a story, in one of his most genial works, of a scientist friend who died one day and appeared at his bedside the following night. At the Central Reception Office, the angel had sourly given him his number, 59,853,206,957, or something of the kind, and he had gone down the electric elevator. At the bottom, a neat and polite waiter—though he still had cloven feet—received him and took him in a fast automobile to a distant settlement, where he lodged him in a cool, sunny room.

"Now, sir," asked the waiter, "can I do anything further for you before I leave you for the night? What about a jug of iced water?"

"Well, no," replied the new arrival. "That is what puzzles me. I had expected something very different."

"It used to be different," said the attendant, "but you see, sir, they have been sending down a lot of these scientific gents lately and there have been great improvements in the place."

I was musing on this when, at the turn of the Valley, I seemed to catch a whiff of sulphur and I turned back and decided to linger a little longer. I am much chastened and sobered, but ready for the fray once more, and while the memory is fresh let me set down my impression of a few days in No Man's Land. What is the frame of mind of the Freethinker when he is nearing the end?

I may say that one of his chief feelings is of the massive frivolity of the common life of man, and religion is one of the most frivolous of them all. I have enjoyed life as much as any. I have learned half a century ago, and found it the same with no less a person than Herbert Spencer, the typical "black intellectual," that man's chief business in the world is to enjoy himself, whether it be at billiards or base-

ball, mathematics or music. We work so that we may play. No aim, end, purpose is imposed upon us when we first become conscious of our powers. And the lament of a few literary men and philosophers that they see no end or purpose is as vain as the contention of the theologian that the Freethinker must be haunted by a feeling of the emptiness of life. The Race chooses its purpose, and in the fullness of time, when the illusions of religion, royalism, and spurious ethical ideas are over, it will choose as its overwhelming purpose and pursue with its resources the idea which the pioneers of our movement set up—the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

And when war and the too great inequality in the distribution of wealth are suppressed, it will be a wonderful life. Only a few weeks ago a Spanish noble spent \$300,000 in a day on a party for his daughter. Poverty is now worse than ever in Spain, and there were thousands of poor people in Madrid living on two or three dollars a week listening hungrily to the strains of music from the Duke's palace who could have been lifted from their hell and bitter poverty for months by that sum. Yet Holy Church agrees with this. Dukes are generous to the Church; the poor are not.

But war! How many of us realise the real hell and horror that we may very well be bringing upon the Race if we maintain warfare while science provides the weapons that it does? Let me ask you to reflect on two items that floated to my bedside in that bleak ward and that illustrate what I mean by the frivolity of the world sounding so cheap in the ears of the sick Freethinker. One I take from our southern colleagues, the Freethinkers of Texas. It takes these startling facts from the *International Review of Diplomatic and Political Science* (Geneva). Up to 1946 the Second World War cost three times as much as the first. The money could have provided: a \$36,000 house, \$12,000 worth of furniture, and a \$60,000 cash present for every family in the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, the Soviet Union, and Belgium. In addition, every city of over 200,000 inhabitants could have been given a cash donation of \$75,000,000 for libraries, \$75,000,000 for schools, \$75,000,000 for hospitals. Doesn't that make your mouth water? With that money we could have transformed the face of the planet.

And now the second fact is infinitely more terrible than this waste of wealth. We often hear that civilisation is threatened by the destruction of our cities. We now get a solemn warning from one of the highest authorities in the world that it will certainly be destroyed, whether our cities can be protected or not, if there is a bomb war. The whole world will be uninhabitable if more than a few thousand atomic bombs are ever exploded in it, Professor Edgar Adrian, 64-year-old Nobel Prize winner, warned the British Association in Oxford only three weeks ago. And this would happen whether the bombs hit their targets or not.

Every atomic explosion, he explains, poisons the

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

A Sick Man Looks on Life

—By the late Joseph McCabe—

atmosphere with dangerous radioactivity which persists for centuries. The strength of this radioactivity increases measurably with each explosion. Perhaps only one thousand H-bombs would have to be detonated for air, earth, and water to become dangerous to human life.

Professor Adrian, who is this year's president of the British Association, based his frightening disclosure on the figures worked out by atomic scientists.

About two tons of a radioactive by-product called Carbon 14 are freed when a hydrogen bomb explodes. This substance takes 5,000 years to lose even half of its dangerous rays, and it is only a few years since our most brilliant

astronomers promised us that man will enjoy this earth for another ten thousand million years.

Do not talk to me of the action of a God in such a universe. Do not talk to me about immortal souls and heavens. Do not talk to me about that jumble of ancient stories which is called Christianity. We shall gain enormously when we rule out the whole of this preposterous nonsense from the administration of our planet.

[We are indebted to *Progressive World* for the reprinting of this article. It was probably McCabe's last published article prior to his death, though he had actually commenced an article for *The Freethinker*, which he had to abandon through failing sight.]

Joseph McCabe—A Tribute

By G. H. TAYLOR

WHEN history books are written as they should be, they will be a record of the social, scientific and cultural development of mankind rather than a catalogue of the doings of nonentities. In the eighteenth century the name of Paine, and in the nineteenth that of Bradlaugh, will then stand out as the names of two of the greatest men that ever lived. The life of McCabe was less spectacular. Not for him the highlights of the struggle, but the grey of the study and the recesses of the British Museum. He takes his place in the story of the twentieth century as the most brilliant populariser of scientific, and other advanced, thought and discovery. His pen traversed a range probably unequalled by any contemporary, and for 58 years, since coming out of the monastery, he poured out the fruits of his research in articles, lectures and books, the latter totalling (including his little Blue Books) nearly 250.

One thing only will militate against his speedy recognition; he was a militant Freethinker, Atheist and Materialist, and never failed to say so. These he remained to the end. It was therefore entirely fitting that his funeral should be a secular one conducted by his old friend Mr. F. A. Hornibrook of the N.S.S. and *The Freethinker*.

My last visit to Joseph McCabe was a week before he died. I found the same brave mind, active and alert as ever, hampered only by a disabled body. He made a movement towards shaking hands, which I completed; then he proceeded to converse most interestingly for nearly two hours. Once or twice I asked if he preferred to sleep. "No," he replied, "I shall sleep soon enough." Physically he was extremely weak—too weak to light his pipe, and he had difficulties in articulation. His speech could not keep pace with his brain. "The mouth won't do its work," he complained. He spoke of his acquaintance with Foote, at whose request he wrote four *Freethinker* articles in 1899; he spoke with pessimism of the future of man if atomic energy were not quickly converted to permanent humanitarian purposes; he spoke of the difficulty of getting his latest book, *Crime and Religion*, to the Luxemburg Congress; he spoke of the series of six books exposing Catholicism which he had projected and of which this was the first. He spoke of the decadence of organised Rationalism; of the philosophy of Bergson, of his experiences in Australia; and of his appreciation of the visits of Mr. Hornibrook, retailing some anecdote with a zest surprising in view of his condition, and with what, in health, would have been a hearty laugh. The priest had been turned away, and it was Hornibrook the Atheist who had brought, in the closing weeks, advice, companionship and laughter to the dying giant.

He spoke, too, of an article which he had commenced

for *The Freethinker*, and which he had abandoned through failing sight. I inquired as to his exact birthplace. McCabe was not, as is sometimes assumed, a Mancunian, but was born in what he calls, in *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, "the sleepy little town of Macclesfield." The locating of his birthplace held an additional interest for me, as Macclesfield is my home town which I re-visit frequently. It is certain that he was born in the same road as, and not far from, the Catholic church with which his family were associated, and it was in this Catholic quarter that he spent his first years.

The Catholics apparently never lost sight of him even to the last months. "Perhaps they still think they can have me," he remarked with some amusement.

That he died an Atheist no-one will dispute. The old Christian game of lying about dying infidels seems to be abandoned. It doesn't pay. In any case there would be his housekeeper to confront. It is said "No man is a hero to his valet." One might add, "except McCabe." Miss Newton, as much an Atheist as McCabe himself, has earned the thanks of all Freethinkers by her loyalty for many, many years through thick and thin, and he never had a more staunch supporter.

Everything on his writing desk was in exact position for resumption of work, just as he left it, with six pages to finish of the third book of the six. Near his desk is a bust of Haeckel, while pictures of many great thinkers of the nineteenth century adorn the walls.

The coming years will see many estimates of McCabe's work for the enlightenment of mankind, and I will not here embark upon that mighty subject. The Roman church never received a more telling blow, on the intellectual plane, than from his pen, but if a grand selection from all his work were ever assembled in several volumes it would comprise the most comprehensive armoury of fact and argument in freethought literature.

Does man survive death? McCabe survives—in libraries and on bookshelves and in the lives of those who have contacted his work and his thought, and who now carry with them the indelible influences that can never be lost.

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—NEXT WEEK—

ATHEISM ON THE AIR

By H. DAY, G. H. TAYLOR, P. V. MORRIS

The Isle of Saints

By F. A. RIDLEY

I HAVE alluded before to the association of Freethinking intellectuals in Paris known as the Cercle Ernest Renan headed by Professor Alfaric. Professor Alfaric himself is a frequent contributor to the publications issued by this scholarly association. However, outside speakers are also invited to the reunions of the circle, and their lectures also appear in the printed bulletins periodically issued by that body. One such discourse delivered on November 6th last, and subsequently printed, is of sufficient interest to Freethinkers in the British Isles to justify a résumé of its contents.

For, on the above date, the Cercle Ernest Renan was addressed by Mrs. MacSwiney, widow of a famous character in Irish history, the Nationalist Mayor of Cork, who in 1920 died voluntarily on "hunger-strike" in a British prison. This was during the bitter struggle for Irish independence, then at its height. However, though the bearer of a famous name in Irish political history, Mrs. MacSwiney, with a wholly admirable restraint, steered clear of controversial political issues, past and present, and concentrated substantially on the present situation in Ireland, and, of necessity, upon the thinly-veiled clerical dictatorship, which to-day, prevails in the "Isle of Saints."

In a brief but, illuminating précis of Irish history, which Mrs. MacSwiney prefixed to her lecture on the present state of Ireland, the fact was duly noted that it was Pope Adrian IV—the solitary English Pope—who in 1155, presented Ireland, which did not belong to him, to Henry II, then King of England, as a feudal vassal of the Papacy. This surely constitutes an ironic commentary on Ireland's subsequent history, when modern Irish Catholicism has benefited so largely from the Irish struggles against England. However, as our speaker indicated, it was not until the Sixteenth Century, the precise era of the Reformation, that England really took seriously in hand the conquest of Ireland. Elizabeth I, Strafford, and, in particular, Cromwell and William III, celebrated by present-day Orange-lodges—took the leading part in this bloody business, which constitutes one of the darkest chapters in modern political history.

Ireland was traditionally converted by the famous St. Patrick about 400 A.D., and originally professed a form of Christianity dominated by monks, and independent of, and even hostile to, Rome. Even when converted by Rome during the Middle Ages, the piety of the "Isle of Saints" does not appear to have been remarkable. In his fascinating study, "A Spanish Account of the Armada" the English historian, J. A. Froude, describes the Irish in 1588 as little more than naked savages. Whilst, as for their Catholic piety, the ill-fated Spanish crews of the "Invincible Armada," who had the misfortune to be wrecked on the Irish coast, were by the Irish knocked on the heads in hundreds. This, too, despite their status of Catholic crusaders, specially blessed by the Pope! It was the fact that the Reformation was associated with English Imperialism, rather than any innate piety, which explains the modern attachment of Ireland to the Church of Rome.

Ireland was officially united with England in 1800. Until then, an exclusively Protestant parliament had sat in Dublin. As Mrs. MacSwiney points out, in the main, the Catholic Church "sat on the fence," and did not participate in the Nationalist struggles in Irish history, that occupied the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nor, at first, did Irish Nationalism rely overmuch on the Church. Daniel O'Connell declared that he "took his religion from Rome, but his politics from his country." His ablest successor,

Parnell, was a Protestant, who maintained his ascendancy over his predominantly Catholic party until the Irish Hierarchy used the O'Shea scandal to get rid of him. Even in 1916, the Catholic Church took no part in the armed insurrection in Dublin in that year.

Since 1922, Ireland has been officially separated from England, and is now an independent republic. Despite its previous lack of enthusiasm for the cause of independence, the change has proved a godsend to the Vatican and to the Irish Hierarchy. For Robert Ingersoll has proved a true prophet, "Home Rule means Rome Rule." In form, Ireland is a democratic republic, with full religious liberty, whilst the Roman Catholic Church is not even officially "established." In practice, however, political parties may come and go but it is the Catholic Church which effectively rules Ireland. This fact emerges only too clearly from Mrs. MacSwiney's most illuminating narrative.

Whilst, as already indicated, the Roman Catholic Church is still not the State Church of the Republic of Eire, it has, in fact, "established" itself unofficially in many ways. In particular, through the control of education, now almost entirely in the hands of the clergy—an Irish Catholic cannot, to-day, attend even the Protestant universities, for example Trinity College, without a special dispensation from his ecclesiastical overseers. With this mediaeval control of education, goes an equally mediaeval censorship of literature, actually exercised by the Catholic Hierarchy. It is scarcely surprising under such circumstances to hear that most of the leading Irish writers are on the Index of Prohibited Books, and have to get their books printed abroad. Such well-known writers as James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, all fall under the ban of the lynx-eyed ecclesiastical censors. Irish culture is insular and backward, thanks to this mediaeval clerical supervision. Nor are politics in a better shape: politicians of all parties are equally scared by the menaces of the Irish Hierarchy, which really rules, whatever party is normally in power. Mrs. MacSwiney records that the leaders of Irish Trade Unionism recently put their institution under the patronage of the Virgin! Special postage stamps celebrate the "Marian Year," and commemorate Cardinal Newman, who though an Englishman, lived and worked in Ireland.

However, the high-water mark of clerical domination over Irish politics was marked by the notorious case of Dr. Browne, a Catholic, but progressive Minister of Health, who was forced to resign by the Irish Hierarchy, on account of some clauses in his Health policy, which were held to be contrary to "Catholic morals." One could probably state that next to Franco Spain, present-day Ireland (Eire) is the most priest-ridden land in the Christian world.

Since the "Potato Famine" in the "Hungry Forties," there has been a world-wide emigration of Irish Catholics. This has greatly extended the world power of Rome. In America (and on a smaller scale in Australia), Irish Catholicism is, our author indicates, a potent political force. Perhaps the most notorious Irishman in world politics nowadays, is the Wisconsin (U.S.A.) Senator, Joseph McCarthy, of Irish descent on both sides and a Knight of the Catholic Order of Columbus, an organisation which exists primarily to combat the enemies of the Church, in particular, Freemasons and Communists. In fact, "Catholic Action" in Anglo-Saxon lands may really bear the trade-mark "made in Ireland."

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

It is only fair to record that the Bishop of Coventry apologised to the four million readers of the *Daily Express* for calling Mrs. Knight "a bossy female"—an apology which will be received with ill grace by many other Christians, all the same. The Bishop said that the phrase was "un-Christian," but this is a matter of opinion. In ours, it was emphatically Christian. Look at the way Christians attacked Thomas Paine, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, with lies and libels of the foulest kind, all of which were in true Christian vein. We can congratulate the Bishop of Coventry for being sorry, but he certainly acted like a Christian in the first place.

The debate between Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Morton, a missionary's wife, was a very tame affair. Mrs. Morton, who spoke first—and last—and twice as fast as her opponent, began by hastily throwing overboard "dogmatic" Christianity without of course telling us what it was. As far as we understood her, it had very little to do with the Fundamentalist Christianity she believes in, which was getting God or Jesus or both into our lives; though how this was done or what happened when it was done if it could be done was not even vaguely hinted at. Mrs. Knight appeared to be rather confused at Mrs. Morton's flow of words and could only claim that children didn't know whether they had God or Jesus or both or not in their lives, and that it didn't matter one way or t'other.

It was, of course, a most unsatisfactory debate and meant nothing whatever in the ultimate. But it gave great satisfaction to the two Tories and the two Socialists in the discussion on TV—"In the News." All four gentlemen, Messrs. Walter Elliot, Richard Law, Herbert Morrison, and Hector McNeil, expressed some kind of abhorrence at Mrs. Knight's lectures, and said that the discussion should have taken place *before* the lectures as it was absolutely imperative for both sides to be heard. As if the hundreds of B.B.C. regular religious broadcasts never presented the orthodox point of view! The "In the News" TV performance was pitiful.

Although many of America's Presidents and scientists were at least unbelievers or sceptics if not actual Atheists, this is generally carefully hidden as far as possible. Edison, for example, is constantly quoted as a believer when in fact he was a thorough sceptic; while Jefferson, Lincoln, Franklin and Thomas Paine, were certainly not Christians, though they may have had a vague idea that somewhere there was a shadowy deity, responsible for "nature." But it is good to see that even in American newspapers letters and articles to this effect sometimes get in. Fundamentalists do not always have their way.

Here in England, backed up by the Roman Church, any attack on Darwin in our newspapers is often gladly admitted—though we find that in lists of England's great men he would be most certainly included. Darwin and Darwinism are Sir Arnold Lunn's *bêtes noires*. Whenever he can get into a newspaper he triumphantly produces "evidence" that Evolution is a fraud and a sham—though he knows perfectly well that his Church dare not "dogmatically" state that Evolution is absolutely false, and that man was literally created out of dust by the Jewish God Jehovah-Elohim in the year 4004 B.C. Fortunately for Science, people like Lunn are looked upon as relics of a pre-scientific age.

Most Christians including, we believe, all our Bishops, fight shy of "Second Advents" and the "Coming End of

the World" theories. Both have had definite dates very often, and nothing whatever happened; but we are pleased to report that the many Flying Saucers seen in the U.S.A. convinced a Dr. C. A. Laughead that at last the End of the World would come last December 21. As a consequence he resigned from his hospital, and waited for the moment when he would join the other thousands of fully-believing Christians in being mopped up to Heaven.

In the American newspaper which gives this thrilling news, nothing is said about the failure again of God's plan to End the World, and what Dr. Laughead now thinks about it. But just before he resigned, his superior in the hospital, Dr. Hannah, admitted that what Dr. Laughead was most concerned about was "getting his pay immediately for the balance of the month," a wise piece of foresight from every point of view—except that of Jesus who distinctly ordered his followers "to take no thought for the morrow." But where money is concerned, whoever heard of a Christian following Jesus in this way!

Joseph McCabe (1867-1955)

A friend me wrote, "Joseph McCabe has died,"
The last, said he, of giants of Freethought;
That is a fact which cannot be denied;
His many books show what that giant wrought.
I think of other giants, yesterday,
Of Bradlaugh, Foote and Cohen; first, of him,
Orator, senator and fighter grim;
Then Foote, the martyr for his love of truth,
And lover of the bards; and Cohen, in his youth,
A Rupert of Debate, who carved his way
By philosophic thought, down to our day.

These great men early joined in our great cause,
McCabe came later, but soon won applause
By information from our enemy,
The Roman Church, enshrined in memory
And poured forth in his most disabling books.
These form the most enduring monument
Of one whose life was on this message spent.
Yes, they were giants; colossal, one and all;
Great liberators from Religion's thrall;
We need no sextant and no astrolabe
To gauge the height o'ertopping of McCabe.

B. S.

The sick do not ask if the hand that smoothes their pillow is pure, nor the dying care if the lips that touch their brow have known the kiss of sin.—OSCAR WILDE.

Wisdom comes with winters.—OSCAR WILDE.

(Concluded from page 35)

Mrs. MacSwiney must have added considerably to the knowledge of her French audience. It seems a pity that her late husband did not remain alive to combat a worse enemy than the English. Here, we will merely add one further reflection to those so ably expounded by Mrs. MacSwiney; the power of the Church in Ireland is indicated not only by its obvious political influence and economic power, it is illustrated most of all by the *psychological* fact that the Catholic Church has not yet needed any *miraculous* assistance in Ireland! On the day that St. Patrick finds it necessary to reappear in "The Isle of Saints," on that day Irish Freethinkers can "lift up their heads for their redemption draweth nigh!"

THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

We regret that the Kingsway Hall meeting reported in our last week's issue appeared as a letter. It was, of course, a report.

EVELYN BELCHAMBERS.—Thanks for suggestion re Annual Reunion instead of Dinner.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, February 6, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street), Sunday, February 6, 7 p.m.: E. TAYLOR, "The Spread of Ideas."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, February 6, 6-45 p.m.; E. V. TEMPEST, "Changing Man—the Achievements and Challenge of Socialist Society."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 8, 7 p.m.: F. A. NORMAN, O.B.E., "The Coloured Immigrant in Britain To-day."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, February 11, 7-15 p.m.; Miss N. BRAHAM, "The Clothes Conscious Woman."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 6, 6-30 p.m.: P. SANSON (Anarchist Movement), "From Free Thought to Free Action."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, February 6, 2-30 p.m.: RABBI J. POSEN, B.A., "The State of Israel."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 6, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "National Character and Social Discipline."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, February 6, 7-15 p.m.: G. SCHAEFFER, "Can We Live With Russia?"

Notes and News

Most people were probably expecting a debate between Mrs. Knight and her Christian opponent on the occasion of the third broadcast. What they in fact got was a recorded talk, the Christian given not only first word and last, but most of those in between. Mrs. Knight took whatever points were going, and may have paved the way for more humanist broadcasts by others in the future.

For the first time in the history of *The Freethinker* its front page article next week is written by a Christian minister, the Rev. John L. Broom, M.A., on "The Censorship of Literature." The Editorial Committee confidently await the verdict of readers on this bold step. Older readers may remind us that Joseph Symes and J. T. Lloyd appeared at times on the front page, but this happened, of course, after their conversion to Atheism.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £761 4s. 8d.; Virgil McClain, U.S.A., £1; E. Drabble, £1; Sylvia Winckworth, 10s.; Mrs. N. Rutherford, 10s.; S.F., 3s. 3d.; Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Partington, 10s.; K. Lidaks, 12s.; Mrs. Elizabeth Collins, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. I. M. Symington (in memory of Basil Stanley Dixon), 5s.; Robert Stewart, 10s.; Helm Spencer, 14s.; In memory of William Ingram, £2; F. Slater, 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d. Total to date, £769 15s. 5d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

CHAPMAN COHEN MEMORIAL FUND

"A drop of ink," said Byron, "may make millions think." To-day the great newspapers are nothing but commercial speculations. "The glorious free press" of Britain is one of the greatest impositions of the age. It exists to pervert and corrupt the public mind, as far as possible, in favour of certain financial interests which are never openly stated. It is the obedient, humble, maid-of-all-work of the advertisers, from quack remedies to world-wide syndicates. The only really free press in this country consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. Freethought in this country is represented in the popular press by *The Freethinker*. And a wider circulation for this journal is the best antidote to the wilful misrepresentation of the commercial (and sensational) press. Let each reader subscribe whenever he can to the Memorial Fund, and also obtain a fresh reader, and so contribute to what George Meredith finely called the best of causes.—MIMNERMUS II.

Among the letters which have been appearing in the popular Press in support of Mrs. Knight's broadcasts was the following in the *Telegraph* (January 17):—

SIR,—Let us hope that there will be many more broadcast talks as uninhibited and stimulating as Mrs. Knight's. Nobody can deny the truth of her premise that the ordinary man and woman's attitude to religion is that they do not know what they believe.

Nor can it be said that the churches have lacked opportunities to make their doctrines known. The theologians having failed to gain acceptance, surely it is time for competent exponents of secularism, rationalism and humanism to be invited to place alternative views before the public for serious consideration.

The hide-bound may rage against this, but how else can ordinary people be helped to arrive at sound conclusions?

Yours faithfully,

P. VICTOR MORRIS,

Secretary, National Secular Society, London, W.C.1.

Readers will, we are sure, join us in congratulating the General Secretary on his success with this skilfully devised letter, which "gate-crashed" between letters from Lord Vansittart and Dorothy L. Sayers, a sure sign of its need.

Miss Evelyn Belchambers, having removed to 14, Kidmore Road, Caversham, Reading, would like to hear from fellow Freethinkers and N.S.S. members in that area, especially those with literary and artistic tastes.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor. Price 4s.; postage 3d.

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.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

Miracles of Healing

By H. CUTNER

IN *Psychology, Religion and Healing* (Hodder and Stoughton, 25s. net) Dr. Leslie Weatherhead has written an excellent book describing in great detail most of the "unorthodox" methods of healing—Christian Science, Mesmerism, Psycho-Analysis, Healing Missions, Lourdes, etc., and no doubt all these have produced some cures. So have to my own knowledge patent medicines as well as the much diluted homœopathic remedies, herbal concoctions, and physical culture. So has even the touch of a King. No one need be surprised at unorthodox cures. They do take place, but the proportion has always been very small.

I am, however, not concerned so much with any of the methods described so fully by Dr. Weatherhead, as by what he has to say about the "miracles of healing" performed by Jesus. Naturally, he believes in the lot exactly as described in the Gospels—as a Christian minister he could do little else. But of what earthly use is the example of Jesus in any way whatever? All he did was through "divine" power; that is, according to Dr. Weatherhead, Jesus was a God, or was God, and all Gods can perform miracles. No human being can perform a miracle, and certainly not a genuine miracle—of healing. Of what use then is it to tell us what Jesus did?

Dr. Weatherhead is quite aware of this, so he manages to find in the description of the healing powers of Jesus methods which we would do well to follow. For example, Jesus, we are told, cured a blind man with spittle and dust. Nobody who has ever lived—except Jesus, of course—has ever restored the sight of a really blind man in this way; so Dr. Weatherhead tells us of a ceremony indulged in by an African tribe, the Elgonyi, who, "if they have spittle on their hands" believe that it "contains the personal manna, the force that cures, conjures and sustains life." I am quite sure that this is right, but what it has to do with the miracle of curing a blind man by Jesus is beyond my comprehension. For let us be clear on one point—Jesus did not really cure the blind man with spittle and dust, but by a divine miracle proving that he was a God, or God Almighty himself.

Moreover, Dr. Weatherhead is at precious pains to show "the respect the patient pays to Jesus" in the case of blind Bartimæus. This poor chap showed his respect by "putting on his coat first." This nonsense makes me wonder whether Dr. Weatherhead believes that Jesus would have refused to cure the man if he had not put on his coat first? Have we also to show our respect in the same way to our healers though we very well know we shall *not* be cured by a miracle?

Of course, Dr. Weatherhead notices that in the description of blind Bartimæus "there are discrepancies." It is a pity that he did not deal with them instead of showing his Fundamentalist belief so crudely. No one knows, for instance, how many men there were waiting to be cured. Mark says there was one only, and so does Luke. But Matthew says that there were two. Even the Divine Power which can produce a Miracle at will can't make one man into two—or can it? Luke says that the miracle occurred when Jesus "was come nigh into Jericho." Matthew, as "they separated from Jericho"; but Mark plumps for "as he went out of Jericho." Perhaps as all things are possible with God, it means exactly the same whether you come *into* a place or *go from* it. In truth, Mark agrees with Luke and disagrees with Matthew as to the number of men, and agrees with Matthew and disagrees with Luke as to when it occurred.

Naturally Jesus cured by "touch." As Dr. Weatherhead notes, so have some of our Kings. When the Archbishop

of Canterbury anoints a King or Queen by rubbing oil on his or her chest, he changes a human being not only into crowned Royalty but into a semi-God or a semi-Goddess. Perhaps the Duke of Windsor, who always showed some commonsense on those occasions when he tried to forget he was heir to a throne, shirked this oily business, and was glad to get out of it. In any case, there are records that our Kings and Queens were always "touching" sick people but God alone knows how many were cured. Even Dr. Weatherhead gives a reference to Boswell to show that "Johnson's little son was 'touched' by Queen Anne in 1712, but without avail." Perhaps the Archbishop, who anointed Queen Anne, failed in his job; or, perhaps, in spite of the oil, the Queen was not changed into a Goddess. But what has all this to do with Jesus "touching"? Simply that, as Jesus was God Almighty, his touch never failed: in the case of royalty, there may—alas—be some doubt about the Divine part. (Incidentally, Dr. Weatherhead is quite wrong and confused about Johnson's son—the great doctor was born in 1709.)

Needless to add that Dr. Weatherhead nearly always refers to Luke as "the doctor." The idea in this is to give his readers the impression that Luke really was a doctor, a "physician" in our sense, one who has passed through university and hospital, trained as our own medical men have been trained. Of course, there is not a scrap of evidence whatever to tell us who was "Luke." Nobody knows; but he is always referred to as a "medical man"; or, as a change, an artist because there is a legend that he painted the Virgin Mary. The evidence for this simply does not exist, but as Dr. Weatherhead believes in the miracles of Jesus, he is ready to believe anything. I wondered why we were not told that Luke was the greatest physician that ever lived except Jesus who was the first and the greatest.

In describing the miracle of chasing devils into swine, Dr. Weatherhead points out how carefully Jesus prepared for this "complicated technique." I think that there are some things sillier in the Gospels than this outrageous rubbish but not many. It is, in fact, hopeless drivel. The Gospels cannot even agree whether it should be "Gerasine" or "Gardarene" or "Gergesenes." It is supposed to have taken place *before* Matthew was called according to Matthew, but *after* Matthew was called according to Luke. Matthew says that there were two "possessed" with devils, while Mark and Luke say there was only one; and the Devil actually called himself "Legion"—a Roman word in a Hebrew or Aramaic country. As there were 2,000 pigs and each got a devil, the "demoniac" must have had 2,000 devils in him. And it is this idiotic story which is solemnly discussed by the all-believing Dr. Weatherhead!

It would be possible to deal with each "healing" miracle recorded in the Gospels and believed in with such perfect faith by Dr. Weatherhead, but there are limits to one's patience. All I can say that as I do not believe that Jesus Christ ever lived, he could never have performed any miracles. And therefore any discussion as to whether the Church, following Jesus, can also perform miracles of healing, is really beside the point.

There is no need for me to discuss here how disease can be cured for that is a very big question. Most people, including myself, are prepared to leave it to our trained medical men who have scientific advantages which supersede all miracles. And I am quite sure that Dr. Weatherhead himself, when he is ill, will call in his own doctor and leave the "laying on of hands" to the mugs who believe in it.

Britain's Colour Problem

By BAYARD SIMMONS

MR. COLIN McCALL'S article (January 14, 1955) on the Colour Problem in Britain is a welcome plea for a humane and civilised treatment of a problem that is now urgent. I think there are few in our Secularist movement who lend support to racialist and nationalist ideologies, nor do I believe there can be many Freethinkers who would deny that this problem is acute and growing. I have noticed that Mr. McCall has used the words "artificial rather than natural" in connection with this problem, and that towards the end of his article he devotes some consideration to its biological aspects. I have no quarrel with his conclusions, but he, perhaps wisely, did not develop the theme of this problem's artificiality so far as our country is concerned. I would crave a small part in *The Freethinker's* crowded columns to stress how *artificial* is this immigration.

I wonder how many people realise that what we are witnessing is not only artificial but also unique. There has, as far as I remember or have read, never before been an invasion of the Old World from the Western Hemisphere (apart from American and Canadian troops in two world wars), or mass immigration into Europe from the New World. Putting aside all question of desirability, I must again insist on this uniqueness. I do so because this factor should lead us to the answer of this question: why this immigration should occur at all, and at this time? The opposite to artificial is *natural*, and in Nature the unique is—by definition—extremely rare. In other words, the rare event, the event contrary to the general flow of events, will be found to have an artificial origin.

Now I do not want to claim too much for my contention. There are some natural factors in this problem. There is the now almost natural phenomenon of swift sea and air travel; there are shifts of populations to follow large-scale industrial production. Trade routes can be so altered as to cause the rapid decline of erstwhile flourishing seaports—witness the decline of the Venetian Republic. Why, then, do Jamaicans and other peasants of Britain's Caribbean islands seek to leave their homeland, with its almost ideal climate, for the fogs and frosts of our chilly isles? The answer can be put in one word—poverty. The whole of Britain's Caribbean possessions have been vividly, and, as I think, truthfully, described as One Vast Slum.

What is there to support so sweeping an accusation? Here are a few points for consideration by an earnest investigator. (1) These colonies are among the oldest of Britain's former empire, founded when the world was still largely an agricultural community. (2) There is little mineral wealth in these islands (apart from some petroleum), and mineral wealth is a *sine qua non* in our twentieth century. (3) Citrus fruit and bananas and cane-sugar are a poor basis upon which to build community wealth, consequently wages in these islands are very low, and, by this token, poverty is widespread. (4) The development, artificially, by government subsidy in Great Britain of the sugar-beet growing and beet-sugar refining in the last thirty years had rendered impossible competition by West Indian (superior, I fancy) cane-sugar. This has naturally led to many representations, by deputation or otherwise, to the Home Governments for some adjustment to meet West Indian difficulties, but, so far, with only minor or negative response by the Westminster governments. (5) This is another, and very important, point: a peasant and overwhelmingly negro, or coloured, population is, as the Malthusian may point out, a fecund population. I cannot deal with these matters in a brief article, but I think that any solution of this problem must

consider all these points, and there are probably many other factors.

Finally, I wish to emphasise that the sins of omission and commission on the part of Authority that have brought our country this difficult problem cannot be laid *entirely* on present governments in England and the West Indies. For thirty years, or more, this storm has been blowing up; the acuteness has only come in the last couple of years. I am convinced (with reason, but in the nature of thing, with no *direct* evidence) that the present acute stage can, and should, be laid fairly and squarely on the shoulders of that government which is headed by the two Knights of the Garter. I have no evidence of what has happened, but I can imagine, and I have a right to imagine and to speak my mind. My guess is that a worried and adamant Treasury has definitely refused "to come across" financially, but has decided that policy and humanity requires that this reservoir of cheap, and unorganised, labour might be better occupied in working here than starving in their own pleasant islands. Imagination, gift of poets, artists and suchlike, may lead to far-fetched conclusions, and "lead us up the garden." On the other hand well-based imagination not infrequently may be right. In any case, this problem will require plenty of imagination if it is to be settled with humanity and intelligence.

Branch Bulletin—Manchester

A good meeting was addressed by Mr. T. M. Mosley, of Nottingham, who took for his title "Freethought, Freewill and Determinism." Mr. Mosley was clear and logical in expounding his views and dealt with many facets of his subject. To-day, he said, the three buttresses of superstition were God, freewill and immortality, but the Christian Church had been much troubled by the second of these. The problem of "Freedom or predestination" had been debated by theologians through the centuries; in fact, no other problem had been debated more.

On January 30 we welcomed Mr. F. J. Corina, of Bradford, the well-known Freethought propagandist and author of *We are Sixteen*, an adolescent's introduction to sex. Mr. Corina has always striven for topicality in his lectures and the title he chose for this occasion—"From Savagery to Spaceships"—shows that he intends to keep abreast, if not ahead, of the times.

The February meeting will take place on the 20th, and not on the 27th, so that those members who wish to do so may attend the N.S.S. Annual Dinner in London on Saturday, February 26. The Annual Dinner is always a friendly affair and provides an ideal opportunity for meeting members from other parts of the country and exchanging ideas. On Sunday, February 20, we shall be renewing acquaintance with an old friend in Mr. George Whitehead, who was formerly travelling propagandist of the Society. Older members will know Mr. Whitehead well: newer ones should not miss this opportunity of getting to know him.—(Extracted from the January Bulletin of the Manchester Branch N.S.S.)

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Reactions in Australia on Mrs. Knight's Lecture

In view of the fact that Mrs. Margaret Knight (whose husband is an Australian) is contemplating a lecturing tour of Australia, some of the reactions of Australian Church dignitaries are worth noting. According to the *Sun Herald*:

The Australasian President of the Methodist Church, the Rev. R. B. Lew, said that if Mrs. Knight visited Australia the Methodist Church "wouldn't take Mrs. Knight's views seriously enough to make an issue of them because there is such a weight of evidence against them."

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Hobart, Dr. E. V. Tweedy: "It is bewildering to find that people in influential positions such as Mrs. Knight can speak in the way she did. After all, in the most backward countries where the Christian influence has penetrated to the people, Christ is a reality and His teaching is accepted as the way of life."

In Brisbane the President of the Queensland Methodist Conference, the Rev. G. E. Holland, said:—

"A person who doesn't believe in God is unnatural.

"This woman psychologist is to be pitied, but what could the B.B.C. have been thinking about to put her on the air?"

The Bishop-Coadjutor of Sydney and the Bishop of Tasmania made comments somewhat less ignorant, and the former did not object to the broadcasts being made.

Correspondence

THE MARGARET KNIGHT BROADCASTS

It is interesting to note how, after their first shock and their display of Christian intolerance, our Christian friends try now to dismiss the whole affair as unimportant, old-fashioned. . . . It certainly looks as if they are afraid that Mrs. Knight's views have found an echo in many people who have already stopped taking their inspiration in religion and are looking for another guide.

I think this will be most beneficial to Freethinking, and we can feel optimistic, as secular ideas are gaining ground slowly but surely.

JEAN TOUDIC.

HYBRIDS

In the excellent article by Colin McCall, he refers to crosses between white and coloured people as "Hybrids." I think he will agree that the term "Hybrid" as used is biologically wrong. Children born from white and coloured people are not hybrids; they are crosses of the same species.

A hybrid is a cross between two species, and hybrids, as Darwin pointed out, do not reproduce themselves, except on very rare occasions.

You may cross a donkey with a horse, but the foal from them will be sterile.

Biological science classifies man as belonging to the order of "Primates," and is closely related to the gorilla, the chimpanzee and the Ourang-Outang. Man, therefore, could cross with any of the apes, and the offspring would not be hybrids and sterile. And indeed, judging by the present mental state, especially of Fundamentalists, a cross between man and the gorilla would perhaps result through this infusion of new blood, in introducing a race mentally, morally, physically and certainly less bloodthirsty than the jabbering idiots that thousands upon thousands of years of inbreeding has brought about.—Yours, etc.,

PAUL VARNEY.

STALIN AND ORWELL

Re "This Believing World" (January 7), it is stated that the Hitler-Stalin combination nearly won the war. Have we so soon forgotten that Stalin, after trying so hard and so many times to come to an agreement with ourselves and France, was driven into a "marriage of convenience" with Hitler. Why was Russia not included in the "Munich" conference? This surely would have prevented the war, but the leaders of the West seemed determined to get Hitler to move East. What vast numbers of the German army and air force were grounded on the Polish-Russian border during this so-called pact? Had it been a pact, as is stated, to win the war, then these German forces would have been freed to attack the West.

Again, from my reading, Orwell (same article) was never in the widest sense a socialist. He was a disgruntled Tory who had tried and failed to get among the "top strata" of society, and in revenge he tried to frighten this society with horror tales of a triumphant socialism.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES H. GRUNDY.

RUSSIA AND RELIGION

Soviet Russia is a god-fearing country, for there is a special brand of Christianity called the People's Church, or Holy Orthodox Soviet Church. Russia has a State-organised and State-controlled Church and a Soviet Orthodox Patriarch appointed from the Kremlin, and politically trained and tested Orthodox Soviet clergy. We can't blame the Soviet clergy for working for the Soviet Government, because in every country the clergy must co-operate with the government.

We may ask:—

1. Why the Holy Orthodox Soviet Church was not recognised by the Head of the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Constantinople?

2. Why Soviet Orthodox clergymen abroad (not many of them seen) are watched like Soviet spies and agents?

3. Why the Yugoslav Orthodox clergy in exile were not allowed to pray for Marshal Tito?

4. Why the Holy Orthodox Soviet Church of Bulgaria co-operated with the N.K.W.D. and helped to expel other brands of Christianity under a pretext of espionage?

5. Why the Soviet Government started in its satellites something which may become the Soviet Catholic Church, a brand of Christianity not yet recognised by the Vatican.—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDAKS.

Points from Letters

I cannot help wondering what a half-hour talk from the Free-thought point of view would effect if this ten minute talk can cause such a furore.—J. P. TUCK.

Faith is not a matter of seeing but of believing, not only a question of the intellect but of the will. "Believing where we cannot prove," says Tennyson: but believing reasonably and on firm authority.—Fr. G. M. PARIS.

The scientists of old were generally very poor people, but the scientists of to-day become very wealthy, and the real love of science for science's sake has vanished.—PAUL VARNEY.

There must be many who would be willing to support the fight against religious domination but who do not necessarily uphold all the social and economic reforms envisaged in your Practical Objects. The abolition of punishment for crime, and the complete economic equality of the sexes, to take two examples, are vexed questions requiring specialist knowledge before a sound opinion can be arrived at, and there appears to be no reason why the N.S.S. should take one side or the other.—E.T.

True, there is no Architect of Creation, but it does not follow that life has no fountain head. Nothing is so marvellous as the fact that man has developed from the slimy sea to a creature of reason, foresight and will.—ALVIN MCELVAIN.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that I report the death of Mr. F. Bruce, at the comparatively early age of 51 years.

Mr. Bruce was for many years Auditor of the South London Branch of the National Secular Society. He was one of our staunchest members and always attended both indoor and outdoor meetings of the Society. I have lost a very great personal and family friend, and he will be very much missed by the South London Branch. A bachelor, he served for some years with the Royal Air Force, and for 20 years was on the staff of the London County Council.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his surviving relatives and in particular to his widowed mother, with whom Mr. Bruce lived.

E. W. SHAW,

President, South London Branch, National Secular Society.

Mr. Thomas Pollock Rutherford, of Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire, one of the oldest members of the Manchester Branch, died on January 21, 1955, at the age of 86. Despite the handicap of a weak heart, Mr. Rutherford had always shown a remarkably keen interest in branch affairs. The cremation took place on Thursday, January 27, 1955, at Manchester Crematorium, where a secular service was conducted by Mrs. M. McCall, at the express wish of the deceased.

Our sincere sympathies are extended to Mrs. Rutherford, son and daughter.

H.M.R.