

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI—No. 27

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THE VERY FIRST issue of THE FREETHINKER that saw the light contained an obituary notice of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield and twice Tory Prime Minister, who died a few days before the first number of THE FREETHINKER appeared. By a rather curious coincidence the present office of THE FREETHINKER is only a few yards from the house in the adjacent Theobalds Road where Disraeli was born, and where a memorial plaque now commemorates his birthplace.

On the Side of the Angels

Disraeli has been described, accurately or not, as the greatest political genius of 19th century England. He was certainly a remarkable man, a brilliant speaker and writer, and a statesman of outstanding ability. Only his rival Gladstone enjoyed a comparable reputation in British politics of the time. Disraeli, a strong, if adaptable, Conservative in both politics and religion, was no friend of the advanced movements of his day either in the political or the religious spheres. Did he not, on one historic occasion, and in reference to the current evolution controversy, go on record with a famous *bon mot*—a notable example of wit unsupported by knowledge: "Is man an ape or an angel? My lord, I am on the side of the angels."? How far the great debater was sincere, or how far he was speaking with tongue in cheek, we have no means of knowing. On this occasion he was speaking to a clerical audience at a time when it was still broadly true that the C. of E. was the Tory Party at Prayer!

An Historical Paradox

Actually the astonishing career of Benjamin Disraeli was something of an historical paradox, for this famous champion of Conservative and "National" ideas owed his political eminence and his dazzling career to the self-same Liberal and "cosmopolitan" principles which he was never tired of denouncing. For, though nominally a baptised Christian, without which certificate of orthodoxy his entry into Parliament would have had to be postponed from 1837 when he was first elected, to 1858, when adherents of Judaism were first allowed to take their seats, yet Disraeli was the descendant of a long line of both Jewish and cosmopolitan ancestors, a fact quite sufficient to have ruined his career in any continental country governed on the conservative and nationalist principles which he spent his life in advocating. The career of Benjamin Disraeli, the most famous of English Jews, and no one was prouder of his Jewish ancestry than was Disraeli, represents an historical paradox. The dazzling career of this great Conservative statesman and opponent of secularist principles was actually only made possible by the contemporary advance of those same Liberal and Rationalist principles which he spent his life in denouncing.

A Victory for Secularism

The fact is that the recall of the Jews to England, and their

political emancipation, both in England and in most continental countries, constitutes one of the outstanding victories of modern secular principles, and of the rationalist spirit over the immemorial forces of religious superstition and racial arrogance. J. S. Mill once observed that the crucial test by which any civilisation must be judged lay in its treatment of women. One might add with perhaps

equal truth that the treatment accorded to the Jews represents an almost equally valid criterion. For it can hardly be denied that the long Odyssey of the Wandering Jew has been one of the most terrible chapters in the annals of human bigotry, intolerance and of religious and racial antago-

nism. Both the 19th century, which witnessed both the Tsarist "Black Hundred" pogroms and the wholesale perjury associated with the Dreyfus Case, and the 20th, the horrors of which are too recent to need recalling, were far from guiltless in this matter. Yet it is historical fact that the Jews have actually made more progress and acquired more civil and political rights during these two centuries than in any previous century, at least since the Pagan Roman Empire before the Christian Church came on the scene. The 19th century in particular was *par excellence* the century of Jewish emancipation; this fact represented, we repeat, one of the most spectacular, as well as useful, victories of the secular outlook over an immemorial tradition of obscurantism.

A Notable Commemoration

The recent commemoration of the third centenary of the return of the Jews to England has, naturally, attracted its fair share of attention. But one could perhaps hardly expect an officially Christian state and a self-consciously Christian BBC to "point the moral and adorn the tale". It is of course true that Oliver Cromwell, who allowed the Jews to return to these islands (from which a medieval Defender of the Faith had banished them, King Edward I in 1290) a Christian albeit rather heterodox, was emulated by the men of affairs in Victorian times, who, after much parleying and several setbacks, finally admitted the Jews to Parliament in 1858, and also similarly made an at least nominal confession of Christianity. None the less, it is hardly disputable that the real starting point of Jewish emancipation can be traced back to the rise of intellectual and political movements which arose outside the Church and developed in conscious opposition to it, in which respect the French Revolution represents a key date. One might almost say, no freethought movement, no Jewish emancipation! And the Jews have amply repaid the debt! In that respect Disraeli, the Conservative champion of Christian orthodoxy, was in no sense typical. The great thinkers of Jewish antecedents have been far greater men than the spectacular but superficial Disraeli. Spinoza, Marx, Freud and Einstein have not been noted for orthodoxy, either Jewish or Christian. Their epoch-making

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Jewish Emancipation

By F. A. RIDLEY

labours have powerfully reinforced the critical and secular spirit which rescued their ancestors from the Inquisition and from the medieval pogroms instigated by religious bigotry.

The Price of Liberty

Had one asked a Victorian Liberal, one of those, say, who voted for Jewish emancipation, whether the age of medieval persecution could ever return, the probable answer would have been in the negative. The hideous holocausts of the Hitler regime indicate such a judgment as prematurely optimistic. Periodical massacres of the Jews were once universal in all-believing Christian lands—medieval England had its share, e.g. the terrible massacre

of the Jewish ghetto in York on the occasion of the accession of that pious Crusader, Richard the Lion Heart. Admittedly these represent "old unhappy memories". But the gas chambers of Auschwitz which exterminated European Jewry are not at all ancient. The present writer has actually slept in a bed originally installed by one of their victims. Again we are reminded of the old adage, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance". The Jewish problem is a complex one upon which different views can be taken in accordance with one's estimate of Judaism, race, religion or social code. But it is hardly disputable that the emancipation of the Jews is always and everywhere in direct proportion to the weakening of religious and racial bigotry, not only among Christians but equally among Jews!

Report from Spain

By HISPANICUS

WHENEVER a freethinker denounces the Spanish Inquisition, whether in its medieval or its contemporary form, the Catholics through their press and radio facilities are ever ready to raise the banner of hatred. The simple man of my beloved country—and this means 95 per cent. of my countrymen, because they do not read—believes whatever the priest says, for the priest is the only man really free to speak.

THE FREETHINKER recently commented on the incarceration of two sailors here because they refused to kneel in the Mass which they were forced to attend. No one who knows Catholic tactics at close hand, as I do, can doubt the veracity of the report, though details were not available.

I am able, however, to supply details of a more recent case of persecution. Let us begin with names and dates.

The occasion was the Festivity of the Ascension on Thursday, May 31st, 1956, the day of communion of Catholic childhood. The rich children in Spain go to Church in brilliant costumes, while the poor, with their starved bodies and bare feet, are allowed to hang round the Church door. The Church in which the incident took place is named "The Light" in Puerto de la Luz di las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands. The priest was Antonio Mayor. The children, with some parents and teachers, had confessed and received the Sacrament.

Two teachers, however, are not in the Church; they are two freethinking men who never go to the Mass. In their schools fanaticism does *not* reign! The priest knows this, and knows that the best moment has come to deal with them, the moment of supreme fanaticism on this holy day. From the pulpit he says: "My dear children, fathers and mothers. You have favoured God with rich gifts from the children in order to imbue their education with religious passion. You have a great responsibility before God. God will reward or condemn you according to the education you have offered to your children. It is important that parents should know well the teachers of their children, and the character of their schools. Over there are two teachers who do not go to the Church. In their schools they teach two or three answers to the Catechism because the law orders thus, *but they are atheist teachers.*"

The good priest of the Church called *The Light* then descends from his pulpit and in the name of God effectively pronounces the sentence of death on the two teachers. Incited by Antonio Mayor, the parents next day withdrew their children from the school in question. A visit by an Inspector—a Roman Catholic naturally!—is the next step, and the atheist teachers will now come under the laws of the Concordat of 1953. Article 27 of the Concordat, according to Canon 1381 of the canonical laws,

ordains that if the public or private conduct of teachers is noxious for religious reasons, they can be removed.

The alternative now before these teachers is either to go and confess, kneeling before the priest, making an act of public contriteness; or to starve. According to articles of the 1945 Law on Primary Education, Nos. 57 and 101, concurring with articles of the Teachers' Statute of 1947, the gravest fault of a teacher is religious deficiency.

In Spain today are being written some of the darkest pages of our history, and the world outside must be brought to recognise it.

It may be wondered how the two atheist teachers of the Canary Islands had so far escaped persecution. I must explain that in the Canary Islands there is a liberal Bishop (Piñain) who does not believe in imposing religion; he is, perhaps not surprisingly, known as the "Red" Bishop! If he were as fanatical as the priest of *The Light* and other bigoted, despotic priests and friars of the Canary Islands, then over half the teachers of these islands would be instantly removed.

The Catholic hierarchy today is the most rabid enemy of liberty and the greatest peril to the wellbeing of mankind. I ask of all Freethinkers the world over: Consider the Spanish tragedy. The new Spanish Inquisition today is without parallel.

[For obvious reasons we cannot disclose the illustrious name of our contributor. We appeal to Freethought journals in other lands to reprint this article so as to afford the maximum possible publicity.—ED.]

Quiz

WHO SAID IT?

1. The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, to do good is my religion.
2. The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned on the grave thereof.
3. I would rather trust the Rock of Ages than the age of the rocks.
4. I do not agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it.
5. Clericalism! That is the enemy.
6. The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.
7. Do you suppose, Freud, that I am to stand in your shadow all my life?
8. Let us see to it that the floors of the Churches are full, and that it costs the poor man nothing to have prayers said at his grave.

(Answers on page 217)

Maeterlinck and Immortality

By G. I. BENNETT

IN *Immortality*, an essay of 30 pages, Count Maurice Maeterlinck's object was to dispose of the idea of annihilation and to set down his own notions on "life beyond the tomb". Such an undertaking is fraught with peril; but his attempt to carry it through without recourse to a single theological argument or premise is deserving of applause on that score, if on no other. It was an attempt to which he had no doubt given considerable thought; but reading it so many years after its composition, I cannot but feel that here we have a demonstration, standing for all time, that the effort to state a convincing case for the spiritual survival of death is doomed to failure.

Maeterlinck was, as Joseph McCabe described him, an intuitionist, who would have men free themselves so far as possible from what he regarded as the narrow confines of temporal consciousness and experience, in order to embark on bolder, more imaginative thinking. Thus, in the last lines of *Immortality* he pleads that "we stand a much greater chance of lighting upon fragments of truth by imagining the most unimaginable things than by striving to lead the dreams of imagination between the dikes of logic and actual possibilities".

He begins by posing the question whether there is life beyond death and is crisply certain of the answer. "Like all that exists," he says, "we are imperishable. We cannot conceive that anything should be lost in the universe." He continues: "All that is, will be eternally; all is; and there is nothing that is not. Otherwise, we should be driven to believe that our brain has nothing in common with the universe, which it strives to conceive. We should even have to say that it works in the reverse direction to the universe, which is hardly probable, since it is, after all, perhaps but a sort of reflection of the universe."

It is, on consideration, a curious argument which posits that, as the universe is eternal and indestructible, so also in essence must we be—we, the short-lived denizens of a cosmically insignificant planet, whose physical and atmospheric characteristics happen, for part of its geological existence, to favour life as we understand it.

Obviously Maeterlinck entertains no crude belief in physical survival. Yet it is only that sort of survival which would be logically consistent with his identification of ourselves with the universe—for who can seriously contend, still less scientifically demonstrate, that the universe is other than a physical entity? Our essayist, however, has a mystical belief in the immortality of our psyche, our soul, our consciousness, transformed, expanded, attaining to a higher order altogether. He envisages, beyond this world, a state of ineffable spiritual realisation without any of the limitations of vision or view by which earth-life is inevitably bound. He hints at a different *kind* of consciousness.

Some faint glimmering of this, he thinks, is to be found in that which in ourselves occasionally enables us to take a disinterested pleasure in the happiness of others; and is also to be found in the "aimless joys of art, the calm and deep satisfaction into which we are plunged by the contemplation of a beautiful statue, of a perfect building, which does not belong to us, which we shall never see again, which arouses no sensual desire, which can be of no service to us".

Of course, those who contrive to perceive and presume to write about a condition of being that has no counterpart upon earth run into semantic difficulties, for no vocabulary exists to express that which has no place in the common experience of men. This is what Maeterlinck finds himself

up against, and he cannot avoid a seeming self-contradiction when he speaks of the continuance or subsistence of the soul or consciousness in infinity. A thing can only continue (or subsist) if its substance remains basically and recognisably the same. Maeterlinck writes in terms of continuance, but it is not of continuance he is really thinking at all. He may use the word "survival" or, as he does somewhere, "persistence". But it does not help. "Immortality" (the title of his essay), which he employs frequently, is no better. They all suggest continued existence beyond death of some essentially personal part of ourselves.

What Maeterlinck is, in fact, envisioning is not the prospect "eagerly cherished by our blind instincts" of the "more or less integral preservation, through the infinity of time, of our consciousness or our actual ego". That idea is to him so fundamentally narrow and puerile that "of all our possible destinies it would be the only one to be really dreaded, and annihilation pure and simple would be a thousand times preferable". It is a spacious life of the spirit that he conceives, informed by the fairest, freest, and loftiest part of the mind, bereft of the blemishes, pettinesses, and passions of terrestrial life.

Nor is that all. He believes that the memories and mental associations we acquire over the span of our years on earth, which form our individual consciousness and make us what we are, will not accompany us in the expansive and incomparable sphere into which we shall one day enter where, because they concern the finite and temporal, they can have no useful function or purpose. Yet if physical death undoes that knot that holds together the myriad strands of memory, then the fabric and unity of human personality is destroyed. Consequently, it is futile and pointless to discuss personal immortality as though it possessed substantive reality unaffected by the mnemonic quality of man's thoughts and emotions. Yet if we *could* accept the existence of such an after-"life" as Maeterlinck hints at, it would in no sense be a continuation of *our* life and *our* consciousness. From any conceivable point of view it would be a re-birth with no inkling or recollection of any previous existence. Or would it even be that?

There can, within the humanly acceptable sense of the term, be no life without consciousness. But Maeterlinck's mystical endeavour to imagine the unimaginable, to see a world of which we know nothing beyond this, the only world of which we know anything, takes him so far as to ruminate in one place on the possibility of "an after-life without consciousness, or with an enlarged and transformed consciousness, of which that which we possess today can give us no idea". Perhaps, however, he feels the difficulty of his position, and anticipates the opposition to this notion, because he goes on to write—but with regretably no greater illumination—"To say, as we are tempted to do, that an after-life without consciousness is equivalent to annihilation is to settle *a priori* and without reflection that problem of consciousness which is the chief and most obscure of the problems that interest us."

He thinks that our condition is one of "invincible ignorance", and that, this being so, imagination may well serve us better than empirical reason in lifting the veil that conceals ultimate reality from our vision. But his sallies into fields of untrammelled fancy do not encourage us.

Doubtless there is much "in heaven and earth" that is indescribably wonderful of which at present we have not the dimmest awareness, or of which we are perhaps con-

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Everybody must sympathise with the Queen of Holland in her hope that something—anything—may be found to cure her half-blind daughter; but the disclosures of the humbug and piety surrounding her endeavours should do much to prove how little can be got from religion and faith-healing in real cases where even the best medical advice has failed. The religious part is, however, most illuminating. It is called "Het Oude Loo"—that is, the "Old Estate"—and its Messiah is a one-time shipping clerk who believes (according to the *News Chronicle*) "that the only relationship of any importance is what he calls a 'vertical' one, Man to God"; and he considers "horizontal" relationships, those between human beings, a waste of time.

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This Vertical Religion seems to us, however, just as much a waste of time as any Horizontal One—even when sponsored by Christ Jesus. It only makes the number of Christian religions in existence 384 instead of 383, and adds nothing whatever to our hope for Grace in the future, to say nothing of living in the arms of Jesus up in Heaven for ever and ever. And how can any Vertical Religion cure a half-blind child? So far, not even the "absent healing" of that Prince of Healers, Mr. H. Edwards, who has been asked to waft a cure across to Holland, has succeeded. What humbug it all is!

★

And talking about humbug, the "Evening Standard" the other day published a review of *Report on the Vatican* by Bernard Wall, which throws quite a lot of light on the way the Vatican manages to keep up appearances—in other words, where does the Vatican get its cash? Well, half of its income comes from "Peter's Pence" collected in the U.S.A., no doubt from citizens whose ancestors came from Ireland; and the rest from investments which, of course, have to face fluctuations, good or bad, as the case may be. But what emerges from the *Report* is that there is nothing easier than filching money from credulous believers in a religion which promises eternal life in Heaven and can only give death in return.

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Does it pay to advertise religion? Well, the Knights of Columbus, whose activities are sometimes referred to in these columns, claim that in 1954 their advertisements drew 410,000 requests for information about Roman Catholicism, and 40,376 of these enrolled for instruction. Since 1948 the number of enrolments is given as 157,658, though we are not told that these people were already thorough believers in Christianity. No doubt, Christian Science could equal these figures, but what a commentary on the superstition and credulity in the world all this is.

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It is, however, interesting to note that to rope in all these converts or would-be converts, the Knights spent about 3,000,000 dollars which we are sure they will get back as "Peter's Pence" from the happy converts, or from the sale of candles or books; whatever the source, they will certainly get the money back and lots more besides. For religion and cash can never, never be separated.

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The Moral Re-Armament enthusiasts have also many sources of income all based on "religious" motives; and all the leaders of M.R.A. live quite as well as the Pope and his cardinals. They can even put on a fine musical show at the London Hippodrome and give away thousands of tickets—though the unlucky audience has to listen also to a crowd of Asiatic, African, and trade union converts

who all drivell on the wonderful change which came into their lives directly they realised that M.R.A. was easily the greatest event in the history of the world—plus the necessary cash to get it going, of course.

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Once again we must thank the Lord for a wonderful Wee Free victory in the north of Scotland. After running all day on Sundays, thus desecrating the Lord's Day, the Skye ferry service to Stornoway has been obliged to stop, and all Scotland is on its knees in thankful recognition of Almighty God's power in forcing it to cease. And on June 12th last, the Lord was the recipient of a day of thanksgiving for delivering the people of Skye from the terrible menace of desecrating the Sabbath Day. 'Twas indeed a famous victory.

MAETERLINCK AND IMMORTALITY

(Concluded from page 215)

stitutionally incapable of being aware—just as in childhood, says Maeterlinck, "we do not suspect the existence of a whole world of passions, of love's frenzies and sorrows, which excite 'grown-up people'." Our minds, our knowledge, our experience, are poor equipment with which to explore the marvels of phenomena. Indeed, in our efforts to understand the cosmos in its totality it may not be inapt to liken ourselves, as Maeterlinck does, to a race of men born blind, for whom the actual visible world we live in, with its joys of light and colour, would be for ever incomprehensible. "Man placed amid the realities of the universe," he writes, "would be exactly comparable with an ant which, knowing only the narrow pathways, the tiny holes, the approaches and horizons of its ant-heap, should suddenly find itself floating on a straw in the midst of the Atlantic." "What keeps us, and will long still keep us," he says on another page, "from enjoying the treasures of the universe is the hereditary resignation with which we tarry in the gloomy prison of our senses." How necessary, therefore, to "try to snatch from before our eyes the bandage of our earthly life".

His notion is clearly that, in proportion as we eschew reliance upon the senses, we become capable of desecring a larger, more significant reality than that of which we are normally cognisant. For the truth surely is that by our senses alone can we know anything for certain. Our knowledge and understanding of various aspects of existence may be defective, but incontinent dreams and visions tell us nothing of the least value or trustworthiness concerning them. Mysticism, expressed with literary grace, may exercise considerable charm over many minds, but it has never made, nor can ever make, any acceptable contribution to our common fund of knowledge.

Count Maurice Maeterlinck, who died in 1949 in his late eighties, was not a Christian or even a theist, according to Joseph McCabe. He was a man not without scholarship or intellectual power; and if these do not appear to advantage in *Immortality*, that is because he was here writing on something that it would have been better for him, with his eccentric ideas, to have kept off. Nevertheless, his essay is still noteworthy in that it shows—unwittingly but so conclusively—that the untheistic case for a future life is as unconvincing and as untenable as the theistic.

—NEXT WEEK—

CATHOLIC INFLUENCE
ON AMERICAN UNIONS

THE FREETHINKER

41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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.

D. J. GIBSON.—The mythical figure of Christ and his recorded "sayings" can be turned any way to suit taste. It is true that the saying "Blessed are the meek" is attributed to him, but he also said he "came not to bring peace", but a flaming sword, and is depicted as whipping the moneylenders out of the Temple.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.
- Bristol (The Downs).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER (Cardiff).
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
- Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: Various speakers.

INDOOR

- Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, High Street).—Sunday, July 8th, 7 p.m.: NORA BURNET, B.S.C., "A Woman Looks at Humanism".
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 8th, 11 a.m.: L. D. MCINTYRE (President, American Ethical Union), "Liberal Religion in America".

Notes and News

An excellent letter appeared in the *South Wales Echo* of June 14th in which "Freethinker" put the case for Sunday tennis in Cardiff. Two days later the writer was roundly accused of "lifting" his matter straight from the columns of THE FREETHINKER. "I am sorry to see," wrote the plain-tive pen, "that his letter, word for word, comma for comma and stop for stop, is merely an extract from an article entitled 'Y Golofn Gymreig' which appeared in a well-known secular publication on June 1st." The writer was sorry to find "Freethinker" "so lacking in originality that he has been forced to use material that has already been published. However, I may be wrong! Perhaps your correspondent is a clairvoyant!"

The sequel came in the issue of June 21st, when "Freethinker" modestly disclaimed clairvoyance and put forward the alternative explanation that he was the writer of the original article. Good publicity for THE FREETHINKER —

and perhaps a disproof that Mr. Shipper is lacking in originality!

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WE are glad to note that the meetings of the Dagenham Town Forum are regularly attended by the local N.S.S. Branch members, who lose no opportunity of putting the freethought viewpoint before the audiences. In a recent meeting the Branch president, Mr. Warner, received nearly as much space in the report in the *Dagenham Post* as was accorded to the actual opener of the discussion on world peace.

★

A FORMER archdeacon of the Seychelles, according to a report in the *Daily Worker*, has declared that Archimandrite Macheriotis would not have been deported had he been a Roman Catholic. "In the Seychelles," he said, "some of the R.C. priests there, who are non-British subjects, are anti-British and reactionary, and the Colonial Office knows it. But apparently the Government dare not do anything about it, even when one had committed a crime. . . . Yet the Government opposed the return of the Anglican Archdeacon (myself) on the grounds of my 'anti-R.C. attitude'. . . . In practice there seems to be one law for the Roman Catholics and another for those who are not."

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THE Annual Conference of the Ethical Union will again take place at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, and will last over the week-end of September 7th to 9th. The subjects for discussion are "My Impressions of China" (Mr. Pollard), "Youth in Industry", "The Modern Novel", "Management in Industry" and "How to deal with Offenders". Further details are available on request.

Review

Man Makes Himself. By V. GORDON CHILDE. 3rd Edition 1956. Watts. 8s. 6d. net.

PROF. CHILDE'S brilliant popular history of man first appeared 20 years ago and the necessary adjustments in points of detail have been made in the treatment of a subject which, by its nature, does not permit of absolute accuracy.

The author believes in, and carries out, an objective scientific study of the development of mankind from savagery to his present state (whatever that is!), instead of the selective treatment favoured in most schools, in which the palatable doings of a race of people in some particular period are favoured, such as Ancient Greece (or, more precisely, Athens and Sparta), or the "Golden" age of the first Elizabeth. In fact, the whole of British History sinks into a parochial corner as compared with, or included in, the comprehensive history of man over half a million years since he first turned the natural environment to his systematic use. Only thus is it possible to appreciate the gradualness of human development (one fights shy of the word "progress"!), punctuated at intervals by an immense leap forward with some key discovery such as, for example, wheeled vehicles, printing, aqueducts for urban water supply, etc.

This well-known Rationalist gave us a godless, scientific work of first importance and we welcome its third edition. G.H.T.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Thomas Paine. 2. Thomas Hobbes. 3. The prosecutor, Bryan, at the Tennessee "Monkey Trial" of 1925. 4. Voltaire gets the credit, though the source is unknown. 5. Gambetta. 6. The Anglican Dr. Chillingworth. 7. Attributed to Freud's colleague, Adler. 8. Napoleon I. G.H.T.

Scotch Drink

By COLIN McCALL

BURNS may be the poet of Scotland; that he is certainly not the poet of the *Church* of Scotland was made abundantly clear at the General Assembly of that venerable institution in May. Introducing the report of the Church's Temperance Commission on May 29th, the Rev. David C. Mitchell lamented the passing of the Scottish Sabbath. The old calm had, with the advent of motor traction, been sufficiently invaded and impaired, he said, "without the more recent addition of bottle-carrying bus parties, seeking further alcoholic refreshment as so-called bona-fide travellers, as they proceed from hotel to hotel on the Lord's Day, becoming ever more uninhibited, and even, in a few cases, committing sacrilege".

Bottle-carrying bus parties, I am prepared to admit, do not generally represent humanity at its most dignified, but they are, at least, convivial, and—so long as the bus driver remains sober—relatively harmless. The greater menace is the private car owner who drinks and drives. Road deaths and injuries demand more serious concern than either uninhibited (whatever that may mean!) or sacrilegious (equally vague!) behaviour, even if the latter occurred in more than "a few cases". Of course, it is a question of relative values: ostensibly Mr. Mitchell's values are derived from the Ten Commandments, where refraining from taking the Lord's name in vain (inhibitedly or uninhibitedly) and keeping holy the Sabbath Day take precedence over "Thou shalt not kill"; my values, by contrast, are secular. And Mr. Mitchell's lament implies that secular values are ousting religious ones north of the border.

The Scots, like the Welsh (of whom Mr. David Shipper spoke recently in these columns), participate in a general exodus on Sundays to consort with John Barleycorn in unholy violation of the fourth commandment. Unlike the Welsh, however, they do not at present have to cross the border into England; they may drink in their own country towns and villages as "travellers", though only during licensing hours. If they care to book in for a day at a hotel, they are unaffected by these restrictions and may drink from morn till night.

In the (fortunately) unlikely case of Mr. Mitchell having his way, Jock will be deprived on Sundays of the Scotch Drink which Burns defended, poignantly:

Food fills the wame, an' keeps up livin;
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin,
When heavy-dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin;
But oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill screevin,
Wi' rattlin glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labor sair,
At's weary toil,
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

uninhibitedly (?)

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch Drink,
Whether thro' wimpling worms thou jink,
Or, richly brown, ream owre the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie horn,
An' pease an' beans at een or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou King o' grain!

and, sacrilegiously (?):

Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspir'd,
When gaping they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fir'd.

The Church of Scotland's Temperance Commission—the spiritual sons of the Holy Willies—would have condemned Burns—who sought in carousel, refuge from the pains of living—as they now condemn those who seek companionship and relief from the monotony of humdrum existence. But, like Holy Willie, they would have met more than their match in Burns. They might well have been cursed with the glorious gusto of *Scotch Drink* (from which most of these quotations are taken):

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him, inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' Whisky punch
Wi' honest men!

Or been counter-condemned, along with:

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the Whisky stells their prize . . .

while Burns instructed his crony, the Deil:

There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor damn'd drinkers.

Burns testified to the value of whisky as comforter, placator and inspirer, requesting:

Fortune! if thou'll gie me still
Hale brecks, a scone, an' Whisky gill,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak' a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs the best.

Much of his finest poetry is associated with the comradeship of the tavern, but his superb satires are directed at the Kirk and its orthodox ministers. Today, the town Scot's Sunday pilgrimage contrasts favourably with the one described and ridiculed in *The Holy Fair*, when the sweet lass—for whose sake Burns had broken most of the ten commandments—said to the poet:

"My name is Fun—your crony dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that's Hypocrisy.
I'm gaun to Mauchline Holy Fair,
To spend an hour in daffin:
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair,
We will get famous laughin
At them this day."

The Kirk—stronghold of superstition and hypocrisy, and traditionally a fun-hater—is now prepared to allow "daffin" (merriment) on week-days: a concession for which Burns's derision deserves some considerable credit. But the Sabbath remains sacrosanct and Sunday pleasure is still a sin. Yet, let the minister rattle and thump, stamp and jump, even like Moodie of Riccarton, the pews will still be empty and the (country) pubs full. The common sense of Burns has affected his countrymen that far; it has still to permeate their politicians until they recommend the (for Mr. Mitchell) "spiritually retrogressive step" of "the open public-house on the Lord's Day", which will "reduce Scotland to the level of England". Let's have some Scottish levellers!

THE one God of monotheism is no more an actual existence than whiteness or virtue is an actual existence. Whiteness and virtue are general terms, denoting qualities common to many objects and actions. God is also a general term, denoting certain qualities common to the multitude of deities of all ages and climes. We may change the illustration, and say that it is crude supernaturalism refined to the last degree.

N.S.S. and Blood Sports

By G. H. TAYLOR

SOME FIVE MONTHS AGO the Archbishop of Canterbury was asked by the League Against Cruel Sports to define the attitude of the Church towards hunting.

His Grace declined to commit himself, stating that the Established Church had never issued any pronouncement on the subject. Nor did he make any attempt to rectify the omission. His indifference did not surprise us, but it possibly surprised the League, who expressed their disappointment at the Primate's inability to satisfy them. The matter was pursued in our columns, starting with an article by F. A. Ridley, "The Ethics of Hunting", in THE FREETHINKER of March 9th last. Our next issue contained a Press Statement on Blood Sports issued by the National Secular Society, in which, as distinct from the Established Church, we made perfectly clear our own attitude, and, in accordance with the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S., demanded the extension of elementary humanity to defenceless animals. The Statement was circulated as widely as possible, and we received letters of appreciation, including one from the Secretary of the League's branch at Nottingham, in which he wrote: "One interesting thing is that the Archbishop's attitude to hunting is exactly the same as his attitude to atom bombs — one of complete indifference." The Statement also reached various bodies concerned with the abolition of blood sports.

One of these, the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, subsequently appealed to the Queen and Royal Family as well as to the Archbishop. The Society was then subjected to attacks in *The Field*, a magazine for blood sport enthusiasts. The appeals of the N.S.A.C.S. were regarded as *lèse majesté* and an attempt to destroy religion! The bad influence, naturally, was the National Secular Society, an atheist body. According to *The Field* (April 26th):

The nature of the arguments and the identities of the protagonists in this parallel campaign by three organisations is sufficient to raise the question whether they have been infiltrated by some influence which wishes to disrupt wider elements in British Society than hunting alone. Certainly any interest which wished to see discord sown in the community or was inimical to the Church of England, could look on their activities with approval.

The three organisations referred to are the League Against Cruel Sports, the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, and the National Secular Society.

This brought a reply from the Chairman of the N.S.A.C.S. in *The Field* of May 17th. The following are extracts:

We should, indeed, be sorry to think that the Church is so divorced from the life of the community that its officers cannot be expected to make any pronouncement on humanitarian issues which are also, of course, fundamental moral issues. . . .

We have no wish to comment on the private lives of the Royal Family, but we do consider that organised sport is part of their public lives, and I have never noticed any reluctance amongst the sporting journals to publicise generously their part in such activities.

You refer to the National Secular Society; we have no connection whatever with this society, but are naturally gratified to note that its members are opposed to hunting; and it is surely right and proper that secular societies as well as religious bodies should express their views on matters of public interest?

It is surely obvious that Colonel Blimp still lives in *The Field*, with its typically old-type Tory and Church outlook. The "disruption of society" obviously means the sort of society which the hunting community are traditionally asso-

ciated with, and which they wish to preserve (a theme developed fully in the article of Mr. Ridley's I referred to). It is no accident that those who wish to preserve blood sports wish to preserve the Church, while Secularists, to a man, oppose this barbaric pastime with its needless cruelties.

Magic in the East

By VICTOR E. NEUBURG

Oriental Magic. By SAYED IDRIES SHAH. Rider and Co. 25s.

WHETHER one is an occultist or not, one must owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the author of this book. It is the first work in any language to correlate the magical tradition and technique of the West with those of the Middle and Far East. Serious books on magic are rare; since the end of the war, Messrs. Rider have reissued Eliphas Lévi's classic, *The History of Magic*, in Arthur Waite's translation. Some years ago a de luxe edition of an entirely new and revised translation of Paul Christian's *The History and Practice of Magic* was published in two large volumes by the Forge Press. There have been other reissues and new works, but the paucity of serious books on this subject remains.

Oriental Magic is without question a scholarly study, and assembles a great deal of hitherto inaccessible information. It ranges from Jewish magic to that of China and Japan. There is an admirable section on the training of witch doctors, and the chief chapter on "Solomon: King and Magician" is excellent. Chapter 4, which deals with "The Occult in Babylonia", besides being very informative, raises a problem which is fundamental to the study of magic and primitive religion. This is the link between Babylonian and Finnish deities, which is a somewhat unusual instance of the fact that all over the world, magical rites resemble each other, and links between practice and language are everywhere apparent. Whether this is due to migrations, invasions, or cultural borrowings, it is impossible at this stage to say. Sayed Idries Shah raises the problem in his book, and is wise enough not to essay a conjectural answer. The main value of this work lies precisely in the fact that a reading of it gives an awareness of the problems that are to be faced in this branch of anthropology.

There used to be some confusion between magic and religion. It has been increasingly realised that magic is not simply a primitive form of religion. Religion, on the one hand, implies submission to a Creator; magic, on the other, consists of rites intended to compel supernatural forces, whatever they may be, to do the bidding of the magician, wizard or sorcerer. It is too much to claim that magic is considered as a "respectable" branch of academic study even today. Yet it is of considerable importance in the field of anthropology.

The difficulties in the way of a serious study of magic along these lines are very real. As Prof. Butler has recently shown, there is a good deal of humbug connected with it. Current practices amongst primitive people are often survivals of such a remote past that the practitioner himself has no notion of their origins. Initiates, again, are often reluctant to disclose details of magical rites, often magicians are members of an hereditary caste who fear the anger of the spirits or initiates if secrets are revealed.

There is perhaps no better source than magic, its rites and practices, for a study of the primitive mind. In this connection, this is a book of unusual value; it is the finest contribution to occult studies that has appeared for some years. The vast amount of facts nowhere impedes the

clarity of the narrative. There is a useful bibliography and some illuminating notes. The index is comprehensive, and the illustrations are a valuable adjunct to the text. A French anthropologist, Dr. Louis Marin, who writes a Foreword, says: "His book is a serious contribution to knowledge and deserves to find a wide audience of educated readers."

The Rising Generation

VII—JESUS AND EASTER

AS EVERY CHRISTIAN KNOWS, and certainly every child who goes to school, Good Friday is so called because Jesus allowed himself to be crucified so that he could die for all of us, and thus save us from sin and damnation. God sent him specially from Heaven for this purpose, and it grieves many earnest Christians to find Good Friday, instead of being kept as a Holy Day, is now just a *secular* holiday on which people can guzzle and over-eat with hot cross buns and Easter eggs.

But the curious thing is that the piously learned have never been able to say with certainty that Jesus Christ was crucified on a *Friday*. Indeed, they can no more give us the exact *day* on which the sad event took place than they can tell us the year. Matthew, Mark, and Luke clearly show that Jesus celebrated the annual feast called by Jews the Passover *before* he was crucified. John dismisses this almost with scorn. He says the Crucifixion took place *the day before* the Passover—that is, on the Day of *Preparation*. Dozens of books have been written on the problem, which still remains a mystery, and therefore nobody knows. Nobody is sure either whether the day is not a Wednesday—claimed by some as the genuine "Good Friday". And no Christian really knows why the Glorious Day has a different date every year. Easter is a *moveable* Feast.

All the same, the explanation is quite simple. Nearly all religions celebrate the birth (or Resurrection) of Spring. After the long, cold night of Winter, when Nature seems to be asleep or dead, Spring brings with it her awakening—flowers bloom, leaves begin to cover the trees, birds, animals, and man, all are moved by the promise of better and warmer weather. It is a time of rejoicing and, as such, people have always insisted on a festival of some kind. In England, the old Saxon rejoicings in honour of their pagan goddess Oestre or Easter persist, especially as one of her symbols was an egg representing fertility, the productivity of the land and animals brought about by Spring. But the egg is a symbol also used by the Jews in their Passover, which must have been once the same old Nature festival kept by pagan nations.

Thus, whether Jesus was or was not crucified on Good Friday (or on Wednesday or Thursday) the fact remains that Easter is celebrated, as far as possible, as a *secular* holiday, as indeed it always was in the past. H.C.

CORRESPONDENCE

JESUS AND ANTI-SEX

A correspondent states that records show conclusively that Jesus favoured lifelong monogamous union; but was Jesus reported correctly? His Jewish contemporaries were polygamists, and polygamy continued to be a legal Jewish practice in Europe until 1040 A.D. Yet in the whole of the New Testament the question of polygamy is ignored, although Herod the Great had nine wives.

Moreover, Jewish women had no right of divorce (as implied in St. Mark X 12). Did a male Jew compromise a lady all could be made well by marrying the girl, no matter whether the male was already a husband of others or no; and it follows that it was only possible to commit adultery with a woman already someone else's wife or betrothed.

It was solely a question of property.

G.E.P.

JESUS AND ANTI-SEX

S. W. Brooks should know a little of the subject before he dismisses the question "Is not 'our Lord' the greatest anti-sex champion the world has ever seen?" as rubbish.

I seem to remember an occasion when "our Lord" advised his followers to "make of themselves eunuchs". If this does not constitute an anti-sex attitude I would like to know what does.

E. C. TRASK.

A BROADCAST TO SUIT

As the BBC claim all rights in Mr. McCall's recording, we shall never know what he said! What he *didn't* say may well have been the deciding factor! A recording on the following lines would, I am sure, have been welcomed by the religious bigots at the BBC and he could have demanded his own fee.

"Hi 'ave been axed by the BBC to say why Hi ham a Hæthæst. Hi don't believe hin a lot of the rot of the Bible—that God made the world from nothin' or that Jesus Christ 'ad no father. But Hi henvy those who do, 'cos they seem so 'appy. Hi 'ave a great yearning to be like them. Perhaps some day Hi too will find me God."

This, of course, would not be the Colin McCall I have known for 20 years, but Christians would love it!

And finally, he would have to disguise himself to look as revolting as, say, Charles Peace. At present he doesn't even *look* like a scoundrell!

W. COLLINS.

REFORMING CRIMINALS

Charles Macaskie's claim that the Christians are the prime advocates of the Reformation of Criminals is erroneous. How many Bishops have condemned capital punishment? The idea of treating "criminals" as sick persons comes from the scientists. It is, I think, accepted by most disinterested workers in that field.

It is not just a case of putting the "criminals'" interests before those of "decent" people. Our interests cannot be separated from the interests of others. The upholder of C.P. should realise that he might have been, given different *circumstances*, a murderer himself. Christian sin—teachings on sex particularly can make a murderer of almost any person—given the circumstances.

E. F. CROSSWILL.

OBITUARY

EMILY MARY AMOR

We regret to announce the death, at the advanced age of 89, of Emily Mary Amor, of Plymouth. Mrs. Amor was a self-taught woman, a great reader, and a keen Freethinker. Illness, unfortunately, deprived her of her books towards the end of her life, but she died peacefully on June 21st. We express our sympathy to her family.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 4d.

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