

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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A GREAT DEAL is being said in these days about the poor clergy. *Reynolds News* had a full-page article recently along these lines and it is just as well that Freethinkers should be made acquainted with the actual facts. A vicar or rector varies in his *minimum* stipend in different parts of the country. It may be £550 p.a. or it may be £600 p.a.

On top of this he will get a free house, rates and the like. His telephone, stationery and expenses will no doubt be paid. Some livings are worth up to £1,000 p.a. and a few are worth more. It is therefore not too bad in terms of wages in these days, especially as he cannot be deprived of the job save for heresy or misconduct. A

curate will be paid far less, somewhere about £430 p.a. upwards, and again a free house is often included as well as expenses. There is no regularity of preferment and the time taken for the curate to graduate into a living (unless he be a "diocesan pet") is "in the lap of the gods"!

The big men are paid far more. In some cases, it is difficult to get at the truth of the actual net salaries which they receive. Not only manse and vicarages but bishops' private houses and the like get their rates paid and get an allowance on their rating. So that most of them seem likewise to get free lodgings. We are unable to find out how expenses and lodging allowances work in these exalted circles. The Archbishop of Canterbury gets £7,500 p.a. and his lodgings. Not a bad wage-rate for the job even in these days! Far from provoking Dr. Fisher to strike action, it has led him of late to rebuke people who discuss their remuneration!

Luxury Flat!

We turned with some curiosity to find out the wages of the elderly and devout one, knowing that he gets a flat at Fulham Palace. To our astonishment, we found that he gets no less than £100 a week. A comment is permissible. From time to time we have discussed the qualifications and activities of the Bishop of London in *THE FREETHINKER*. We must ask our readers to form their own judgment as to whether the elderly and devout one aforesaid would be capable of earning a wage of £100 a week anywhere outside the Church. Indeed, we suspect that several people, if they were suddenly forced to earn their living by their abilities in some purely secular capacity would find themselves round at their local Social Welfare Committee asking in no time for national assistance allowances!

We do not comment on the so-called free churches. On the whole, stipends and wages there seem much lower. But there are a few plums. "They run all but one receiveth the prize"!

The Big Boys

There are several comments to be made. Church employment is none too good. Only a few months ago, a writer in *Tribune* and in the *Daily Worker* raised the question of union organisation in the various firms of church suppliers and suggested that wage-rates were low on the whole. We have heard nothing about overtime in wages or 100%

union organisation within the industry. There is also a vast gap between the wages of the curate, to whose down-trodden state Sydney Smith called attention in a famous essay, and those of the big boys who are managing the business and who confine their activities to the back-room. In view of what we heard recently about overdrafts and difficulties in keeping the organisation going, we certainly

question the large size of the remuneration paid to the big boys aforesaid.

Help the Poor Clergy!

It might be said that these matters are merely the concern of church people. But is this so? From time to time, we all get appeals asking us to help the poor

clergy. We would call full attention to the financial remunerations within the industry and to its many inequalities. Many vicars get, of course, a basic wage of well over the minimum, and some run up as high as well over £1,000 p.a., plus expenses, whilst some back-room boys can afford expensive West End clubs on their wage. Nor do we say anything at this stage about the number of limpets from the laity who manage to do well out of church affairs. Diocesan solicitors, legal advisers and the like wax fat upon the fees which they rope in and some of them have a good time in setting people by the ears, doing the bullying of the local bishop for him, and drawing a nice little bill in fees at the end.

Away with Stipends!

Our general comment is that the whole thing is a sheer scandal. The day of disestablishment and disendowment is long overdue. There ought to be a Royal Commission set up on the Church to deal with its many and obvious abuses in administration and remuneration. Its very construction causes it to act as a force within the social order which is not only reactionary but which poisons the moral atmosphere. These points should all be considered before we worry too much about the depressed financial state of the "birds of pray." In his book, *Profits of Religion*, Upton Sinclair called attention many years ago to the pickings to be made. Times have changed and the pickings may not be so easy or varied, but we have said enough to suggest that the general state of affairs is much the same in principle. Indeed, we suggest that the laity might well consider that all of these people are professed disciples of the Son of Man who had not where to lay his head and that their £100 per week or £7,500 per year scarcely suggest wage rates commensurate with the financial background of the aforesaid Son of Man! We have a practical suggestion to make. Anybody who desires religious ministrations is free to have them in a democratic society upon a voluntary basis. Let the stipends be done away with from his Grace of Canterbury downwards and let these people work for their living, as did Paul the tentmaker! They could then conduct their religious ministrations in their spare time. With much heralding, the French Church set up its "priest-workman" business on this basis. Unfortunately, the world proved too strong for some of the priest-workmen and it had to be closed down quickly. Some of these things should be considered before pitying the poor clergy.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The Lord's Labourers

By ANDREW PEARSE

Really Low Down

By COLIN McCALL

THE SECULARIST, being by definition concerned with this world and its improvement, must learn something of its worst aspects; whilst welcoming improvements in the human condition, he must combat tendencies to degrade it, physically or mentally. He needs, therefore, to be fairly conversant with the four great publicity media of our time — press, cinema, radio and television — and he should challenge every move to lower their standards. Too much can be made, and possibly has been made, of the influence of “horror comics” on the child and of the “yellow press” on the adult. All boys devour “bloods” at one time or another, and none of us is averse to an occasional bit of scandal. This seems natural enough and not unduly harmful; indeed, it probably provides an outlet for human emotions that might otherwise have worse effects. Still, whilst it is difficult to determine whether the popular press gives the public “what it wants” or what it (the press) wants the public to have, there is no doubt that the press (and the other media mentioned) could help to raise the public taste, without converting us into a nation of “eggheads.”

It is, however, the seamy side that concerns us here. I have received a magazine from America, entitled *The Lowdown*, which purports to give “the facts they dare not tell you.” The cover, suitably illustrated, carries such headlines as “The TV Star’s Filthy Letters.” “How Vice Squad jailed —” (I prefer not to reprint the names). “What Wine does to Women,” and “Bared: the Pic — will pay \$10,000 to get back.”

My objection to these articles is not puritanical; I think on the contrary that there is a puritanical strain in them. If the magazine were frankly sexy it would be much less objectionable. Instead, it adopts the sanctimonious attitude of a crusader against vice. The last article mentioned above, for instance, begins: “I have been asked not to write this story. I am told that I have the power, in the palm of my hand, to ruin a budding career. Well, I have questioned myself and my conscience and I find that I have a duty as a reporter to set down the truth.” That sounds suspiciously hypocritical to me!

And in an appropriately illustrated article on “The Strip Scenes You Never See!”, starting “It’s a little hard to see why American men are so crazy about film stars. After all, what *do* they know about them and their bodies?”; continuing with such descriptions as “When it was shown in Europe, there was the boy, who has met girl, in several scenes that not only denote that boy has met girl, but that he really has”; and with questions like “Who wouldn’t go to see — with her guards down?” — after all this ludicrous stuff, it is quite a surprise to reach the conclusion: “Perhaps the United Nations should institute an international film-censorship office. America has lots of work to do in the cess-pools of Europe — and the films may be a good beginning.”

Well, there are cess-pools in all countries, and *The Lowdown* seems to have a sensitive nose when it comes to finding them. Once they are found, though, the olfactory sensitivity departs and the muckraking begins; it revels in spreading the smell. In some cases it is rather ridiculous and, I should think, harmless; in others, it is difficult not to detect maliciousness. I know nothing about a certain American (slightly coloured) singer, but I cannot see that the allegations in “Why the South hates —” can serve any useful purpose. It seems that a previous issue of this salubrious magazine obtained “secret court documents about the adultery” of the wife of a public figure. “Unfor-

tunately we can’t reveal our sources,” writes the Editor, in reply to a correspondent, “but thanks for asking anyway.” Apparently not all cess-pools are to be disturbed; some are profitable!

Perhaps my own indignation is most aroused by an article on Miss Josephine Baker (in this instance there seems no point in withholding the name). I do not profess to know much about this famous artiste, but what I do know, I like; and I have a particularly pleasant memory of one of her generous, and quite spontaneous actions. Her *Folies Bergere* acts are, of course, legendary, and they were often frankly sexy. But to say that “She flaunted her body like a Jezebel and she mouthed her suggestive singing like a woman possessed,” is to speak as a puritan, and a puritan who is possibly thirsting after forbidden fruits. The puritanical streak shows itself again the insulting remark: “In the Bible, her counterparts have been generously called dancing girls. Salome, who caused the death of John the Baptist, may be one.”

Miss Baker’s criticisms of American democracy are dismissed as a “joke.” Yet — as so often happens — what the writer asks us to treat as a joke, is treated with great seriousness by himself. In fact, he is grossly rude, referring to “a kind of senile development. . . . She is aging and tired and silly.” Miss Baker, who is 49, is said to be “pushing for a halo.”

Then we learn of the unpardonable heresy that Miss Baker has committed. “She has not only ordered statues put up to herself, but THESE statues are like those you see in SHRINES.” (The capitals are in the original.) “There is one statue, for example, that shows La Baker, the former near-nude dancer, looking saintly in a hood and wraps. Point by point, there is no difference between this particular statue and any one you may see in a church or in a shrine dedicated to a religious person who has wrought great deeds on behalf of mankind.” The writer concludes: “There is something more than sacrilegious about all of this. It is more than indecent and it is an insult to people of a great faith. Josephine Baker: Get off your pedestal and get down on your knees!”

The particular statue, it should be said, represents Miss Baker with arms outspread over the little children of various nations who form her adopted family. It is, I think, rather better than those in a good many churches, and it is in the grounds of her own estate. It is perhaps a little ostentatious but, then, Josephine Baker has spent her life in show business. I would say that she has enriched show business and, from what I know about her adopted family and her attitude towards children, I would say that she has enriched at least some people’s lives. When I last saw her on the stage — a few years ago — she seemed as vital as ever. It is in the worst possible taste, as well as untrue, to write about “her aging decay.”

But then, as you will have gathered, taste is not a conspicuous feature of *The Lowdown*. On the same page as the last quotation is an advertisement asking if you are afraid. Can it be that “Faith-Hope” is missing from your life? “Then you need our Genuine Rhodium Plated Holy Cross, to look at . . . think of . . . and pray to. Comes in a stunning blue velvet box, and is full of first quality simulated diamonds.” You can wear it close to you; it has the Lord’s Prayer in the centre; and free with each one you get a copy of “one of the smallest Bibles in the World.” So, “Don’t be afraid to believe in it and you will bless the day that you bought it.” If you do, you will probably bless the day that you bought *The Lowdown*, too.

REVIEW

The Background of Astronomy

By F. A. RIDLEY

[*The Background of Astronomy*, by Henry C. King. C. A. Watts and Co. Ltd. 18s.]

THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY as an exact science may be said to have begun on that memorable evening in the year 1609 when the Italian astronomer, Galileo, first turned his newly-discovered telescope upon the skies. For the past three and a half centuries, modern astronomy, building upon Galileo's initial telescopic discoveries, has been steadily expanding its empire into undreamed-of recesses of remote space. As and when viewed as an exact science based upon direct mechanical observation, astronomy takes its place with the other sciences as the most sublime and not, despite the enormous distances with which it has to deal, the least accurate example of the tree of universal knowledge. However, whilst *scientific* astronomy only really dates from Galileo's discovery of the telescope, the, as it were, rudiments of astronomic science go back far beyond that for several thousand years, since the priestly astronomers of Egypt and Chaldea made their first observations of the skies by the banks of the Nile and the Tigris. In our own day the optimistic protagonists of inter-planetary travel divide the evolution of astronomy into three consecutive phases: speculative, that is pre-telescopic astronomy, which perhaps began in ancient Egypt, or Chaldea, and ended with Galileo's epoch-making discovery of the telescope; modern telescopic astronomy, which extends from the early 17th century to our own day, and the still future phase of rocket-propulsion and of direct inter-planetary contacts.

The first of the above three phases, what may, perhaps, be termed the pre-history of astronomy, forms the specific subject-matter of a comprehensive and immensely learned book which has just been issued by Messrs. Watts. In about 240 pages Dr. King compresses the relevant facts about the evolution of astronomy from the days of the Pharaohs down to the contemporaries of Galileo, such as Giordano Bruno, Tycho Brahe and Kepler. The high water mark of this long and, from a modern scientific standpoint, very mixed, era, was represented by the brilliant, though sometimes wildly inaccurate, speculations of some ancient Greek and, to a lesser extent, medieval Arab or Persian astronomers. Whilst the Greeks, in particular, shed most of the religious myths and astrological delusions of their oriental predecessors, they were severely limited by the lack of accurate instruments with which to put their often dazzling theories to precise empirical proof. (Some historians of astronomy claim that the most accurate observations made prior to Galileo were those of the obscure Mayas of Yucatan in Central America.) Leonardo da Vinci's penetrating judgment that Greek astronomy, like Greek science in general, could never prove its deductions for lack of precise tools, is evident again and again in the course of Dr. King's learned summary. Aristarchus of Samos (third century B.C.) actually postulated the heliocentric theory eighteen centuries before Copernicus — who seems to have started from the speculations of his ancient predecessor — but he could never *prove* his discovery and, in the absence of empirical proof, mankind continued to prefer the common sense solution and to see the sun rise in the east and sink in the west! Similarly, Aristotle was familiar with the experimental method and drew correct deductions from the occultation of Mars by the moon; yet in final analysis, Aristotelian astronomy was subordinate to metaphysical speculations, and by asserting the "incor-

ruptible" nature of the stars, virtually denied any living evolution to the universe.

We are particularly glad to note how effectively the author "debunks" Aristotle's grossly inflated reputation; by the end of the Middle Ages, via the medium of his Muslim and Christian disciples, Aristotle had practically succeeded in strangling genuine scientific observation. In the hands of scholastic astronomers and philosophers, Aristotelianism had become a closed system in which "there are no problems to be solved, but only authorities to be consulted."

Astronomy did not come into the world as a mature and autonomous science but emerged by the banks of the Nile and the Tigris as the humble handmaid of religion and auxiliary of astrology. The priests of Egypt or Mesopotamia were the first civilised class, said Aristotle. They employed much of their leisure in divining the will of the gods and in unravelling from the stars the tangled skein of human destiny. In the course of these celestial preoccupations the first strictly astronomical observations were made, but, then and for long after, the credulous masses and many hardly less credulous observers of the heavens were far more interested in "what the stars foretell" to human beings than in the impersonal grandeur of the starry vault above their heads. Some of the great names in pre-Galilean astronomy — Ptolemy of Alexandria, for example (second century) — were equally celebrated as astrologers.

It is interesting to note that Christianity fell foul of astronomy much more readily than of its dubious step-sister, astrology. St. Ambrose of Milan, a Doctor of the Church, declared that study of the earth's motions availed nothing for human salvation. True enough! But theology generally tolerated astrology except in such cases as that of the hapless Florentine astrologer who cast the horoscope of Jesus Christ and rashly included the tragedy of Calvary, upon which the Church promptly burned him alive — a martyr, if not to science, at least to the principle of Determinism! However, astrology had its cash value in a credulous age, even to *bona fide* astronomers like the great Kepler, who practised both the science of astronomy and the "royal" art of astrology. Dr. King comments: "As Kepler neatly put it: 'God provides for every animal his means of sustenance — for astronomers he has provided astrology.'"

In the evolution of astronomy, as in that of human civilisation in general, there has been an alternate oscillation between East and West. Astronomy was born in the East but later moved west to Greece, where the classical Greeks established the rudiments of a science out of a chaos of oriental speculation. In the Middle Ages, Greek science passed to the Arab-Persian civilisation set up under the Muslim Khalifs, with its capital at Baghdad. Several of the Abbassid Khalifs were lax Muslims, one being actually known as the "Khalif of the Unbelievers." The Arabs cultivated astronomy and many stars bear Arabic names (Aldebaran, Algol, Betelgeuze, etc.). As late as the 15th century, Ulugh Bey, successor of the terrible Tamerlane, built the most advanced observatory known in the capital, Samarkand. With the Renaissance, the West again took the lead in astronomical research, which culminated in the heliocentric theory of Copernicus which, however, was not finally proved until the invention of the telescope. As Dr.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

A shudder of horror must have shaken the BBC's Disc Recorder Director when he was given Petula Clark's song "The Sky" to broadcast. Good God, "The Sky"! The song has had a great success abroad, but here in our super-religious country, the BBC moaned, "The use of the word 'sky' is a veiled reference offensive to religious feelings." And therefore, as the *News Chronicle* says, "The sky? That is the limit." How heavenly it must be to think always so nobly of religious feelings!

★

The final article on "Immortality" in *The Sunday Times* was given to that distinguished scientist, Prof. Andrade, and no one can fail to recognise his contempt for those who imagine that science in any way bolsters up the out-dated nonsense of religious beliefs. What can science, which measures and weighs and experiments, have in common with theological and philosophical abstractions for which there is literally no proof? Prof. Andrade's article puts up a great case for science against immortality, and will anger no doubt many thousands of all-believing readers. But they could never answer him.

★

With shame we record it, but the Bishop of Jarrow did not succeed in exorcising the ghost we mentioned last week haunting a house in Sunderland. The spook came back with a vengeance, and started to touch a sleeper's legs. "It was terrifying," said one of the spook's victims. The house used to be inhabited by a Spiritualist, but her daughter insists that her mother "was never a resentful person." And now what? A spot of bell, book, and candle might do the trick, or perhaps the Bishop will recite the Lord's Prayer again. Even singing a hymn might be helpful.

★

How right the Rev. J. H. Hornby, the vicar of St. Paul's Church, Bow, is when he points out that 90% of the average congregation is composed of women! Why? Well, isn't it because the clergy are *men*? So he suggests that if there were women clergy, "men would come to church in their hundreds" and, not like bad, naughty wolves, "just to whistle." A clerical Sabrina or a Marilyn Monroe would certainly bring them in, but not for Christ's sake. So would a number of our dancing girls. But has Mr. Hornby ever thought how difficult it would be to concentrate on sacred subjects given a lovely lady parson?

★

The believers in Flying Saucers are very angry at the House of Commons. And they have reason to be. According to *Psychic News*, two of the people who saw some recently over Lancashire "are sensible and sane people," and how can they possibly be mistaken? A question anyway was asked in the House, and the answer was that these absolutely authenticated flying saucers came from a laundry and were nothing but two small hydrogen-filled balloons illuminated by a flashlight bulb. But will this stop people believing in these marvellous travellers from Space? Not on your life. Similar witnesses have believed in Jesus flying to Heaven — and surely that has been thoroughly authenticated?

★

Archbishop Ritter of St. Louis (U.S.A.), who recently made a tour of Catholic Bolivia, stated on his return: "South America is lost to the Church unless we send more missionaries there." He was deeply shocked to find that La Paz, with 400,000 population, has only 30 priests and many Bolivians have lost the habit of regular Mass. Some pastorates have been vacant for over a century and in one

parish, out of 20,000 Catholics only 200 attended Christmas Midnight Mass.

★

Bishop Wand began a book review in the *Sunday Times* of March 10th with the following words: "Whether it is possible to prove by logical demonstration that God exists may be doubted. In spite of some affirmative opinion, most moderns would agree that it cannot be done, at any rate if you begin with a clean slate." This difficulty does not appear to disconcert the good Bishop's compatriots. Each morning on the BBC, for example, they sanctimoniously interpret to us what this deity wishes of us on just about every subject under the sun. They are even willing to provide a personal introduction to a being whose existence "most moderns would agree" cannot be proved. There must be a lot of "ancients" left among the clergy.

QUIZ

1. Which English monarchs were known as (a) Rufus, (b) Beauclerc, (c) Cœur de Lion, (d) Longshanks, (e) Madcap Hal, (f) Bluff King Hal, (g) Virgin Queen, (h) the Merry Monarch, (i) Farmer George, (j) Silly Billy?
2. In 1349 the playing of football was legally forbidden. Why?
3. Which sort of electric charge does the proton carry?
4. Who was the first UNO Secretary?
5. What momentous feat coincided with the present Queen's Coronation?
6. "Kiss me, Hardy." What is the alternative version of Nelson's last words?

(Answers on page 120)

ANY OFFERS?

"SALE: VIRGINS"—10% Reduction."

—Notice outside Catholic repository.

THE BACKGROUND OF ASTRONOMY

(Concluded from page 115)

King shows, Copernican astronomy got a rough reception from the Protestant reformers, but was not condemned by Rome until long after its author's death. Actually, it owed its later reputation as heretical, not so much to the astronomers themselves, as to the philosopher, Giordano Bruno, who drew conclusions inimical to Christian orthodoxy from assertion of the plurality and inhabitability of stellar worlds. Dr. King draws attention to the interesting fact that Bruno, who had lived in exile in England, may have derived this idea from an early English Copernican, Thomas Digges, who wrote a treatise on the plurality of worlds. The Dane, Tycho Brahe, was the last representative of the old, mainly deductive astronomy, before Galileo put the heliocentric system on a firm footing and astronomy itself on a new basis as an inductive science based on direct observation.

We are grateful to Dr. King for his masterly sketch of what may perhaps be termed the pre-history of astronomy. His admirable summary, supplemented by an exhaustive bibliography, ought to be in every public library and in as many private libraries as its price permits.

—NEXT WEEK—

WHY BE MILITANT?

By G. I. BENNETT

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

All Articles and Correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or 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.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

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.

F. BURKE.—We do not know of any female campanologists; they would certainly be a rarity.

W. E. HOLT.—Judaism is rigidly suppressed in Saudi Arabia, which is little more than a medieval feudal state.

CURIOS.—We shall hope to provide some of the information you seek in a forthcoming "Facts for Freethinkers."

HENRY COOKE.—(1) Freemasonry made its public appearance in England in the early 18th century and quickly spread to the Continent. (2) The first Papal Bull condemning Freemasonry was issued by Pope Clement XII in 1738.

H. BAGNALL.—Anything in the Bible, no matter how ridiculous, can always be explained by simply changing the meaning of the words, just as Swedenborg said the "anger of the Lord" really means the "clemency and mercy" of the Lord!

W.N.Y.—Ingersoll offered 1,000 dollars to anyone who could prove Paine recanted. This stopped the lie which was then being circulated by the *New York Observer*.

R. WALLACE.—We understand Billy Graham is to go into another business soon.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON, and SHEPPARD.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: W. CRONAN.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH, CORSAIR and FINKEL.

Sundays, 7.15 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, and SMITH.

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) — Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR and EBURY.

INDOOR

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, April 14th, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Christians — Awake!"

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, April 14th, 7 p.m.: A. BOOSEY, "Christianity and the Universe."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 14th, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, M.A., "Immortality."

M.A., "Immortality."

John Pym, foremost British parliamentarian in the 17th century, warned the English people of his time as follows: "The Roman Church presses first for a toleration, from thence to an equality, from an equality to a superiority, and from a superiority to an extirpation of all contrary religion."

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £208 4s. 8d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; J. Barrowman, 10s.; Wm. Scarlett, 5s.; R. Reader, 5s.; A. W. Harris, 5s.; Mrs. A. Vallance, £1; Mr. I. Newman (South Africa), £1 10s.—Total to date, April 5th, 1957, £212 0s. 8d.

Notes and News

Two of Edinburgh's regular Secularist speakers have recently been missing from the Mound. Mr. Victor Murray has been ill and Mr. N. S. ("Paddy") Slemen has suffered the loss of an eye through accident. Though only just out of hospital, Paddy is taking this terrible blow bravely and he hopes to be back on the rostrum before long. We trust that he and Mr. Murray will soon be fit enough to join the N.S.S. Branch Secretary, Mr. William Cronan, who is carrying on alone in the meantime. Scottish Freethought owes a debt of gratitude to this staunch and cheerful trio — cheerful even in such adverse circumstances.

★

WILL readers in the Burton-upon-Trent area of Staffordshire who are interested in the formation of a branch of the National Secular Society, please write to Mr. David E. Griffiths, 4 Kent Road, Slapenhill, Burton-upon-Trent? Mr. Griffiths already has the nucleus of a branch but would welcome all the support he can get.

★

WE are pleased to report that the St. Marylebone Borough Council has decided that parsonages and vicarages cannot be excused rating. We hope other councils will reach the same decision, and we once more impress upon readers the importance of writing to their local authority without delay urging the rejection of clerical appeals for relief.

★

A SERVICEMAN stationed in Cyprus tells us that he is billeted near Kykko Monastery, the chief centre of religion on the island. The Greek Orthodox religion is the only one the monks know anything about, but they have shown considerable interest in our young reader's Freethought ideas. Though he doesn't expect to convert any of them, he enjoys the discussions (carried on through an interpreter) and a number of his comrades have now become interested. It is among them that the ideas may bear fruit.

★

IN Jamestown, North Dakota, some irreligious baseballers were playing within cheering earshot of the local church on a Sunday. The vicar, true to tradition, complained that the impious sportsmen were disturbing the service. Shocking to report, the irreverent baseballers pointed out that by State Law they were within their legal rights, as the match was being played over 500 feet from the House of God. Thus caught at first base, the poor clergyman had to continue with his National Stealth Service, complete with the disturbing knowledge that, sometimes, God's Holy Law comes second to State Law.

★

ALL sport is forbidden on the Sabbath in the neighbouring state of South Dakota. Alabama allows cinemas, golf and tennis on Sundays, but only in places with over 60,000 inhabitants. Peculiarly enough in towns with only 59,000 occupants, none of the citizens cares for these things. In Utah boxing is forbidden but baseball is allowed. One final piece of lunacy — South Carolina allows the ungodly Sunday golf, but forbids golf lessons to be given. The (already) moral degenerates are permitted to indulge their vice, but, naturally, are not allowed to instruct potential candidates for purgatory. A necessary safeguard for Carolinian morals!

The Two Contemporaries—5

By H. CUTNER

AS I POINTED OUT earlier in these articles, Chapman Cohen came into the Freethought movement after doing his own thinking — though it must be confessed that some of his thinking was really founded on Bishop Berkeley's Idealism. Of course, he never went so far as Berkeley, who, after all, was bent on smashing what he called Materialism (mostly based on Locke's "substratum") and infallibly proving the existence of God. As Hume noted at once, some at least of Berkeley's arguments were unanswerable, but "they carry no conviction."

Berkeley was determined to make "Mind" the one reality, but he wrote before the theory of evolution smashed Idealism into little pieces.

For one who knew the principles of evolution, I can only call it amazing that Chapman Cohen did not see this. Obviously, this world of ours was once something like a gaseous ball on which no life or mind could possibly exist. Only when the conditions made it possible, did life emerge on earth, and even then it must have taken many millions of years for what we call "mind" to evolve. Whatever play with words an Idealist may indulge in, the fact remains that what is called "matter" must have come *before* "mind." In the many years I knew him and discussed these problems with him, I never managed to get Chapman Cohen to face this fact. It was one of his blind spots.

Another was his treatment of Bradlaugh's philosophy, which he could not, as an Idealist (or part-Idealist) accept. In his FREETHINKER article written on the occasion of Bradlaugh's centenary — in 1933 — he said that

The only criticism that can successfully be passed on Bradlaugh's statement of his own Atheism lies in his adoption of the Spinozistic "One existence with infinite modes." . . . To say, therefore, you believe in "infinite modes" (phenomena) and to say that you believe in existence which is the sum of these modes is to say the same thing over again. . . . (Bradlaugh) did not realise that this "one existence" with infinite phenomenal "modes" was really the ghost of a God that had been permitted to intrude into philosophy.

Unfortunately, Chapman Cohen never gave "chapter and verse" for his quotation from Bradlaugh — and the reader can rest assured that that formidable debater never said or wrote anything so silly — on the contrary indeed, Bradlaugh always made his position very clear and defined all his words. In his *Plea for Atheism* will be found what he meant by the words he used to maintain it:

By Atheism, I mean the affirmation of one existence, of which existence I know only mode; each mode being distinguished in thought by its qualities. . . . By "existence" I mean the totality of phenomena and all that has been, is, or may be necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon. By "mode" I mean each cognised condition (phenomenon or aggregation of phenomenon). By "quality" I mean that characteristic or each of those characteristics, by which in thought I distinguish that which I think.

In Bradlaugh's *Doubts in Dialogue*, in the one entitled "A Theist and a Monist," he says in answer to the question whether "matter by itself is adequate to account for the phenomena of the world" —

The words "matter by itself" are to me confusing. I only use the word "matter" as equivalent of "existence." I cannot think "existence" plus something which is not existence. . . .

The truth is that Chapman Cohen had very little patience with any "philosophy" which was not based, at least partly, on Berkeley and, of course, he never had the patience to read Bradlaugh properly. His mistake was pointed out to him but it was of no avail.

So strong a hold had Berkeley on him that he resolutely refused to read any book on *practical* science, that is, on

experimental science. Had he done this, he would never have penned the following — and it was a position he held as long as he could write:

So far as the Materialist is concerned, "matter" as a substantive fact, may be annihilated. We may say with Berkeley that it is a figment of the imagination. As a matter of fact, the atom was never more than a working scientific conception; it is as much an hypothesis as is the ether; and if a better working conception is to be found, no one need to be alarmed or raise an objection. Ultimately mind and matter are equally abstractions. We have one class of phenomena — mental states — that give us the abstraction "mind." We have another class of phenomena — chemical, electrical, gravitative, etc. — which give us the abstraction "matter." This is really the base truth of the subject, and its due application might have saved much paper and ink. (THE FREETHINKER, December 1st, 1912.)

When Chapman Cohen wrote *Materialism Restated* in 1927, quite a deal was known about "matter," *not* as an "abstraction," but as something real; and to make his Idealism square with this, he was forced to say that Materialism "is not dependent upon 'matter' at all." This is quite true, of course, but not as he envisaged it — that "matter" was an "abstraction." And he found it so hard to write what he really meant that he had to admit, "to put the right meaning of 'matter' in such a way as shall be crystal-clear to the non-philosophical reader" is "not easy." So anxious was he not to dismiss Berkeley — as both science and evolution had dismissed him — that again (page 49) he had to "commence with the plain and simple statement that 'matter' is no more than an hypothesis." He even told us that "to discuss what a world outside consciousness is like is sheer waste of time." (Page 53.)

That Chapman Cohen had not changed in the least by 1935 any reader looking through the volume for that year could find out for himself. Again he insisted that "Science persists in treating them (electrons) as conceptions which may help to explain observed phenomena." (February 17th.) And it was here that Mr. G. H. Taylor, who has made science, and particularly modern science, his "speciality" (among many other rejoinders) came back with "You must now believe that a conception can be weighed. Besides having mass and size, an electron has weight and a proton is approximately 1,845 times as heavy as it." (March 3rd.) And all Chapman Cohen could answer to this crushing repudiation of atoms, electrons, etc., being mere "abstractions" or "conceptions" was that it would be a proper answer "if we assume a proton to exist." (March 3rd.)

When the atom bombs were dropped on Japan in 1945, he was not then able to enter into any scientific argument. It would have meant anyway for him the death of his own Idealism which he had held so tenaciously for over 60 years. Where he really scored was in pointing out that whatever was discovered about "matter," so long as science admitted the absence of "Vitalism," so long it was "materialistic." And, of course, it is materialism and mechanical materialism which is now the basis of all scientific discoveries.

Just as Chapman Cohen found himself in a welter of controversy over materialism, so Joseph McCabe found that his own settled belief in a real man Jesus led him into many discussions on that debatable problem. He found it difficult to shake off the teachings of the Church — just as his contemporary could never dispense with Berkeley. Neither ever changed his opinion. But it can be said for McCabe that he never ceased writing on all sorts of sub-

jects — art, culture in general, politics, and he even wrote a “slashing” autobiography — *Eighty Years a Rebel*. During and after World War II he must have added hundreds of titles to the “little Blue Books” of Haldeman-Julius in the U.S.A. Even if some of these are considered “pot-boilers,” they are remarkable for the wealth of knowledge and opinion he has poured into them, and they can all be read with profit. If it had not been for his uncompromising Freethought, and the fact that he was an ex-priest of the Roman Church, he could have had many books on important questions of the day published by “respectable” publishers.

McCabe was able vigorously to write almost to his last days, and it is a great pity that his racy pen had not been pressed into the service of THE FREETHINKER except just before he died.

Both contemporaries made Freethought their life work and both have left an imperishable name in its history. Neither, being human, was infallible, and the careers of both were strongly influenced by what they had learnt or had been taught in their youth.

We who inherit their work (and, of course, the work of those other great Freethinkers who came before them) have much to be thankful for. We shall never see religion die in a night, so to speak; but can anyone doubt that it is now disintegrating, slowly but surely?

And to that great work few have delivered more notable contributions than the Two Contemporaries.

A Lingerin Lie

By PAUL VARNEY

I HAVE JUST READ a recently published book by W. J. Edwards, a retired coal miner of Aberdare and an ex-student of Ruskin College, Oxford, which was founded many years ago by a wealthy American. The book is excellently written and very informative of the conditions prevailing in South Wales in the past. However, there is one chapter of the book which is a travesty of truth, dealing with the Welsh Religious Revival of 1905. Mr. Edwards, who was very young at the time, and came from a religious home, in a period of gross Christian lying in the press, states the following:

“Convinced Atheists of long standing stood up in the local chapels to confess to the congregations that through Evan Roberts, they had refound the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I was at this time a member of the local branch of the N.S.S., and can assure the readers of this book that such a thing never occurred. The fact is that all the branches of the National Secular Society in the South Wales Valleys increased their membership three and four fold.

During and just after the debauch G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen, J. T. Lloyd, and many others bravely faced maddened religious mobs, and successfully addressed the largest audiences that had been seen in Aberdare and the Valleys, since the days of Charles Bradlaugh.

It is wrong for Mr. Edwards to say that any Atheist was converted by the blathering of the fanatic Roberts. What happened was this. Any drunken and ignorant wretch who had given up beating his wife, beating his children, and temporarily given up drinking beer, through the effect of the revival upon his brain, would come along as a convert to the Lord Jesus Christ, and, of course, the preachers and the press would work this for all they were worth, giving out the lie that another Atheist had been converted. In those days, the pulpit, the press, etc., were quite as wicked as the BBC and the press is today in propagating the lie that an ignorant Syrian peasant of nearly two thousand

years ago, who practised certain eastern tricks and taught witchcraft, was the son of a virgin, begotten by a ghost, and was the original creator of animal, mineral and vegetable. Chapman Cohen, at one of his meetings, stated that “This revival will have much more effect in promoting the population than it will in promoting morality.”

A few months afterwards, Cohen’s prediction materialised, when the stipendiary at one court remarked on the alarming increase in the number of court orders he had to make in cases of illegitimacy. When the revival petered out, Evan Roberts had lost a lot of weight, and a wealthy widow at Leicester took him under her wing and for a time he lived in luxury. Then, the next thing reported by the press was that Mr. Roberts had been turned out by the lady, and he had removed himself to another house, where for seven days he was reported enclosed in a room with six virgins (doubtful) in silent prayer and meditation. Later, returning to Wales, he lived on the remains of his holy racket, and died some time ago at his lodgings at Cardiff.

There is no doubt that if he had had business ability of a Billy Sunday or a Billy Graham, he would have become a very wealthy man, for the right material was there, and still is, but not to such a great extent. Roberts did well for the coal owners, and through concentrating the miners’ minds on the joys of the world to come, they became so apathetic that the South Wales Miners’ Federation was nearly empty of assets.

Roberts might have gained a Knighthood had it not been for the little episodes at Leicester, when the press and the pulpit dropped him like a hot brick.

Historically, religion and sex have always travelled hand in hand, and without a control of the sex impulse, or a method of preventing publicity, the making of vast wealth breaks down. Nevertheless, although Evan Roberts emancipated himself from the dark and dreary coal pit, and although he died a lonely death, forgotten and unsung by those who used him for a short time, the limelight had given the idea of what it feels like to live like a rajah.

For Newcomers

EASTER

EASTER is only a Christian festival by adoption; it is thoroughly pagan in origin. The Last Supper, Crucifixion of the Saviour, his descent into the underworld and subsequent resurrection, all pre-date Christianity. Many of the “saviours” rose after three days at a date near the spring equinox.

Easter Day is the Sunday following the full moon after the spring equinox. This year, full moon is the coming Sunday (14th) and Easter Sunday the 21st. How, then, can a historical event be commemorated by a movable date? The Battle of Waterloo took place on June 18th, 1815. There is no question of the date fluctuating each year according to the phases of the moon. It remains June 18th. The Crucifixion and Resurrection of “Jesus Christ” were not events in history, however. They are allegorical.

Much changed and edited, the Gospels are, in foundation, the story of the Sun-God and his struggle with the forces of darkness. Whether the Saviour was Jesus or Mithra or Bacchus or Serapis depends on time and place.

To say that the Easter (pagan Eostre) story is true when it is told of “Jesus Christ” (the very name means Saviour-Messiah) and *not* true when applied to the others, is a hopeless piece of Christian ignorance or Christian bigotry.

G.H.T.

To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason is like administering medicine to the dead.—THOMAS PAINE.

CHAPMAN COHEN - JOSEPH McCABE MEMORIAL MEETING

THE above was held at the Holborn Hall, London, on Thursday, April 4th, the second of what the organisers, the Central London N.S.S. Branch, hope will become an annual event. The chair was taken by the Secretary, Mr. Alexander, and the speakers were Mr. F. A. Ridley, Mr. Will Griffiths, M.P., Mr. F. Haskell and Mr. Hector Hawton.

Mr. Ridley, after some interesting comparisons between Chapman Cohen and Joseph McCabe, deplored that with the coming of radio, TV and mass circulation newspapers, mass propaganda was now at the service of reaction, leaving small progressive movements "fighting tanks with tomahawks." The way was now open to the possible establishment of a completely totalitarian régime. Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Haskell cited individual cases of victimisation in the respective fields in which they are engaged, the former as an active member of the Committee for the Limitation of Secret Police Powers, and the latter as secretary of the Council for Civil Liberties. Mr. Hawton saw "a certain naïveté among the early Rationalists, who assumed that men necessarily wanted freedom." Today we find we have to take account of the fact that many, less developed mentally, are afraid of freedom, and still prefer the parent substitute, such as a political despotism or an authoritarian Church. It would be a bad thing for governments to decide that man could be moulded to any requirements by mechanical propaganda.
G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

N.S.S. AND POLITICS

Mr. H. H. Hick, in your March 22nd issue, raises an important matter. An organisation like our N.S.S. should in no way be politically partisan—but is it in fact? Mr. Hick's allegation of political bias prompted me to refer to the Principles and Immediate Practical Objects as set out in the membership booklet, and I see nothing therein from which I would withhold my support. Mr. Hick won't, I am sure, take exception to these; and, since the spirit underlying them is liberal and humanitarian, perhaps he would even add to them? What evidence is there that the N.S.S. as such is politically partisan? Your correspondent will perhaps tell us so that we may have an opportunity to consider it. I am well aware that communist minorities are usually vociferous, and I must agree that it is unfortunate that such people should, often for tendentious reasons, call themselves Freethinkers. But Mr. Hick would not, I take it, term Republicanism political bias, since many of us who have no political party sympathies whatever are Republicans.
G. I. BENNETT.

I do not want to prolong this discussion, particularly as Justin's *Historical Analogy* vindicates the N.S.S. Executive Committee's actions: so long as we follow the *principles* of Bradlaugh I do not think we shall go far wrong. Permit me, though, a brief reply to Mr. Field, who says I give my case away by admitting I have been volleyed and thundered from Right and Left, and who is worried lest members reduce their subscriptions. In fact, my main critics, Mr. Huxley and Mr. Varney, are not members of the N.S.S., so there is no danger of them "cutting down their subscriptions." No member of the Society has indicated his intention of doing so.
COLIN MCCALL.

DIVORCE

It is strange that Mr. Du Cann's description of the "purpose" of marriage does not even mention what might be regarded, from a biological point of view, as a major result, namely, the providing of suitable conditions for the production and rearing of the next generation. (I am not, of course, implying any reflection on the obvious desirability of affection between husband and wife, or on the need for reasonable divorce provisions.) Opinion seems to regard a family home, even if not a very good one, as better for children than an institution (though I think these are tending to be in small units, where possible).
G. W. CLARK.

Re Mr. Du Cann's article "In Praise of Divorce," divorce is a fact as soon as the affinity which binds ceases to do so, but it has come to mean the public registration of a fact which must be proved to be already in being. It is also sanctioned to again celebrate a marriage ceremony.

Real marriage and divorce are independent of law. But the *public ceremony* of marriage and the official registration of divorce are so dependent. The Church's opposition to divorce lines up with its attitude to all social reforms which could become detrimental to the interests of that small section of the community which the Church serves.
C. V. SYMES.

ROYALISM

The issue between Republicanism and Royalism today is dead, and no useful purpose is served by trying to revive it. It was one thing to be a Republican in Bradlaugh's day, or even in Robertson's. Europe was stiff with monarchs and presidents were few. Today Republics are plentiful, and if they have any advantage over monarchies, except on paper, it would be interesting to learn where the advantage lies. They are no cheaper, certainly more corrupt, and few presidents would amount to anything on a horse.

I suggest that Freethinkers worth the name should interest themselves rather in the abolishing of the Lord Chamberlain than of the Queen, or even, if I may drag in the question of Capital Punishment of the hangman.
W. E. NICHOLSON.

FOOLS AND THEIR MONEY

Can anyone beat the pious nonsense that appears every morning in the personal column of the *Telegraph*, costing at least 20s. to 30s.?

This appeared recently: "God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect." II Sam. XII 33.

In the same book we are told that Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. I Sam. XV 23. Would the *Telegraph* print that?
F. C. ASHDOWN.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. (a) William II, (b) Henry I, (c) Richard I, (d) Edward I, (e) Henry V, (f) Henry VIII, (g) Elizabeth I, (h) Charles II, (i) George III, (j) William IV.
2. It distracted young men from archery needed to ensure a supply of men for war.
3. Positive.
4. Trygve Lie.
5. Ascent of Mount Everest.
6. "Kismet, Hardy."
G.H.T.

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