

The Freethinker

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ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS which divide the thinking public in the mid-20th century is the problem of capital punishment. Ought the murderer to pay the same price as his victim? Is the old Biblical adage, "A life for a life," the famous *Lex Talionis*, still a valid conception in 20th century society as applied to the criminal law? The knotty problem about which so much has actually been, and still can be said, receives different answers in different quarters

and nations. On the whole, though I have not the precise materials at my disposal for the purpose of a statistical inquiry, it would be probably true to state that more nations have now abolished capital punishment than have retained it, at least amongst the more advanced and civilised—perhaps it would be more precise to say less uncivilised—nations of the present epoch. Even in this country, in which so far, despite all the efforts of the abolitionists, the death penalty is still retained, substantial progress has been made in recent years towards its eventual abolition. For whereas from time immemorial, the death sentence has invariably followed *every* conviction for murder in the English criminal courts, nowadays a quite illogical distinction has been introduced by which convenient—shall we say?—legal fiction, the act of homicide is now divided into two quite arbitrary categories, capital murder and just plain, ordinary murder, of which artificially distinguished categories only the first named nowadays leads to the gallows. This curious distinction, the fruit of an uneasy political and legal compromise, appears to bear no relation whatsoever to the gravity of the particular murder involved, *e.g.*, murder by poison even when deliberately administered over a long period and presumably producing the most atrocious suffering, is not a capital murder, and does not accordingly lead to the gallows; whereas killing in the course of a robbery, which is nearly always unpremeditated and usually instantaneous, is! The Homicide Act of 1957, for which the present Government was responsible, appears to be a monumental legal contribution to what is sometimes termed the peculiarly "English genius" for illogical compromise. However, such is the present state of the law as it stands. But was it not Dickens, through the mouth of the immortal Mr. Bumble, who propounded the historic dictum that "the law is a ass"?

The Case of Ronald Marwood

After a period marked by the lull in this particular controversy which followed the passing of the Homicide Bill, the question of capital punishment has been again revived in a particularly sharp and dramatic form by the recent execution in Pentonville Prison, London, of Ronald Marwood for the murder of a policeman in a stabbing affray in North London last December. A last attempt at reprieve signed by 150 M.P.s having failed, the execution of Marwood in Pentonville was preceded by vicious and threatening riots both amongst the inmates of the prison and amongst a large crowd in the adjacent

Caledonian Road. These grim accompaniments of the gallows were graphically described in the *Sunday Pictorial* by an actual participant inside Pentonville, who was released the following day on the expiration of his sentence, and vividly described the ghoulis atmosphere of the prison on the night before the execution. The actual crime for which Marwood was executed seems to have been brought home to the accused with convincing exacti-

tude and it does not appear that in this case any mistake in fact, or in the identity of the killer was made, such as, for example, seems to have characterised unmistakably the shocking and now notorious Evans case in West London a few years back. The policeman,

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Marwood Case

By F. A. RIDLEY

P.C. Summers, was undoubtedly stabbed to death in a street brawl in Holloway Road, North London, on a dark night last December; nor does there appear to be any reasonable doubt that Marwood was the killer. (His only excuse, if one can call it such, was that he was under the influence of drink, which itself raises some nice legal and ethical points.) One rather sinister fact which appears to have bulked largely in the minds of the rioters who howled imprecations at the police prior to Marwood's execution was that his victim had been a policeman in uniform. Marwood was actually the first person to be executed under that particular section of the Homicide Act which makes it capital murder to kill a policeman in the execution of his duties; no doubt the reasoning behind such a clause being the obvious one that it is the duty of the State to protect its officials whilst carrying out the often dangerous duties with which it has entrusted them. At the same time, it appears to be indisputable that there is a widespread suspicion in the mind of the general public that the killing of a policeman is regarded as a far greater crime by the authorities than is the killing of an ordinary non-official person. And this undoubtedly unhealthy suspicion appeared, a few years ago, to have had some foundation in the notorious Bentley case, when Derek Bentley, who admittedly had not taken any *direct* part in the killing of the policeman, was subsequently hanged for a crime which he did not actually commit, whilst the actual killer, Craig, who was too young to be hanged, got off with a life sentence which, in English (unlike the more logical French) law, means that he will get out eventually after a period of years. I do not think that there is any doubt that this case—which appears at least on any view that ignores legal technicalities, to have verged on judicial murder—explains many of the more sensational incidents in the recent Marwood case.

Are the Dark Ages still with Us?

The Marwood case has indubitably given a fresh and probably powerful stimulus to the whole question of capital punishment—"to be, or not to be"? Most people are more easily stirred by concrete events than by more general abstract considerations of a reflective nature; and we can

perhaps relevantly add that this applies forcibly in England since the English have a probably well-justified reputation for preferring empirical facts to abstract ideologies. Perhaps the most revealing comment made on this unhappy affair was made by a Scandinavian journalist who was present at the street riot outside Pentonville Prison and was reported by the *Manchester Guardian* as saying that to him and to his compatriots the whole business represented merely a surviving relic of the Dark Ages. Certainly the *Lex Talionis*—"an eye for an eye," etc.—upon which judicial homicide is based, is derived ultimately from such ages of darkness. (The fact that they were mostly "Ages of Faith" as well should not increase their authority in the eyes of the readers of this journal.) The hoary legend still periodically trotted out by the current defenders of capital punishment that the death sentence is a necessary deterrent for the protection of society against potential assassins, has been disproved long ago by the homicidal statistics of the numerous lands, including many both west and east of the Iron Curtain, wherein capital punishment has long been, as our Scandinavian visitor remarked of the scenes at Marwood's execution, merely a relic of the Dark Ages. (The present

alleged and often cited wave of violence is most probably the inevitable aftermath of the chaotic war period. In any case, it cannot be cited as an argument for capital punishment since this is still in existence here, but has signally failed to produce its alleged "deterrent" effect.) And so it is the ghoulish features attendant on hangings; the ironical unlimited rations for his last breakfast to a man probably too sick to eat anything at all; the warders rushing into the condemned cell in stockinged feet to drag the victim to the execution shed; a victim who is, as the *Sunday Pictorial* informed us, heavily drugged and, as a result, "walked calmly to the scaffold." The hypocritical prayers which accompany the final scene on the gallows; is there anything civilised or ethical in such a procedure? Not to mention the ghastly mental tortures of anticipation endured for weeks on end between sentence and execution. We think that this deplorable case may eventually prove to have been of some permanent benefit if it leads to a further, and, we hope, this time a finally successful campaign to put an end to such disgraceful scenes reminiscent of the scenes habitually enacted at Tyburn Tree in the "good old days," which disgraced the streets of London on the morning of May 8th, 1959.

Science Front

By G. H. TAYLOR

PSYCHOLOGY

Much study is at present being done in what has come to be known as Subception, which is an unconscious form of perception. It has an important bearing on the psychology of propaganda, particularly in relation to advertisement susceptibility and to political brain-washing. We do not become aware of all we see or hear. That is to say, it is possible to receive sense impressions without paying attention to them. Nevertheless, they are subconsciously noticed. A typical experiment was when an advertisement for ice cream was flashed on the screen in a New York cinema for such a tiny period that no one could become aware of the intrusion. Yet the sales of ice cream immediately rose significantly above normal.

BIOCHEMISTRY

Every advance in our knowledge of the living cell confirms the materialist case. No basic factor over and above chemical change is required to explain phenomena of this class. The energy coming from the sun, either directly or in stored-up form, is the father of all life. Human assistance comes in time, of course, but this is from a being, man, who is himself the product of previous forms of life. Chlorophyll (the green colouring matter in plants) uses part of the daily intake of sunlight to change water and carbon dioxide gas into compounds of carbon, which can interact with nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus inside the plant, and so build up plant tissue. At animal level, no supernatural factor is required. Instead of getting their food-energy directly from the sun, they get it through their internal combustion of the plant substances they eat. Nor can they build up their own organic compounds of carbon, nitrogen and sulphur except from similar complex substances already formed by plants. It will be obvious that with the evolution of carnivorous animals they are really getting the same things second-hand.

PHYSICS

This discovery of electrons in 1897 by J. J. Thomson, and the subsequent atom-splitting by Rutherford and his co-workers in this field, showed that atoms, instead of being irreducible stable structures, were like houses con-

taining furniture. Electrons and protons were the first pieces of furniture to be discovered, but since then the atom has given up many more of its secrets. A tabulation of the atom family as at present known would appear somewhat as follows: (1) the Electron, with a (standard) mass of one, and a negative charge. (2) the Proton, the nucleus of the atom of hydrogen, round which the electrons revolve: positive charge and a mass approximately 1,837 times that of the electron. (3) the Neutron, with a mass of 1,839 and no charge (hence the name). (4) the Positron, the positive counterpart of the electron (*i.e.* mass 1). (5) the Antiproton, the negative counterpart of the proton. (6) the Antineutron, the "mirror" counterpart of the neutron. (7) the Neutrino, without charge or mass. Until recently hypothetical, its existence is now thought to be confirmed. Its hypothetical use was to explain beta-decay, a type of radioactive breakdown. Its usual origin is the spontaneous breakdown of a free neutron (one not part of an atom). (8) the Photon, a quantum of light—which on analysis comes not in a "steady" beam but in "drops." No charge or mass. (9) Mesons is a collective name for quite a series of particles. First found in cosmic rays, they can now be made artificially in the laboratory but are short-lived, whether natural or made. Among the Mesons are (a) Pions, of which there are three types: positively charged, negatively charged and neutral; with a mass of 273 for the first two and somewhat less for the neutral; (b) Muons have as yet yielded two types only, positive and negative. The former breaks up into a positron and two neutrinos, the latter into an electron and two neutrinos. There are also mesons much heavier than these. (10) Hyperons (same three types) with greater masses, have also been produced artificially.

—NEXT WEEK—

W. H. HUDSON'S VISION OF EARTH

By G. I. BENNETT

To Be or Not to Be?

By COLIN MCCALL

KENNETH TYNAN is, in my view, the best theatrical critic in England. Or rather, he was, and will be, for he is at present in America as guest critic to *The New Yorker*. He is the best, not because of his style, though this is lively and often brilliant, but because he judges the theatre by its relation to life. In his years with *The Observer*, to which he will return next year, Mr. Tynan made his impact in London; now he has, in a few short months, shattered what Mr. Alistair Cooke has called the "expensive sentimentality, fashion-plate reassurance, and . . . fad for Oriental pathos" of Broadway's playgoers.

Yet damning though he has been to what he regards as a "world of woozy song," Mr. Tynan is ever appreciative of sincerity and honest endeavour. If a play has humanity, he recognises it, however inept may be the expression. And this, surely is the right way round. We may admire dramatic construction—the dramatist's technique—but to treat this aspect of a play as all important is to fall into the besetting fault of æstheticism. Dramatic, like literary, critics, continually do this: erecting, as it were, a cultural fence inside which only the initiated are allowed to go. As far as I can ascertain, the password would seem to be "Ionesco."

For me, as for Mr. Tynan, the natural reaction of the ordinary playgoer, on hearing of a new play, is the primary one. It is, quite simply, "What is it about?" And it is the subject of Pearl S. Buck's "A Desert Incident" that concerned Mr. Tynan in his theatrical column in *The New Yorker* on April 4th. "It would be awfully easy," he said, "to write a flip, sardonic review" of this play "which opened last week at the Golden Theatre and succumbed after seven performances." Mrs. Buck "botched" things, "partly out of inexperience (this was her first work for the theatre)" and partly because, with one or two exceptions, her cast was "frankly amateurish." Yet, added Mr. Tynan, "she chose the most important subject in the world, and though she handled it vaguely and emotionally, she came down on the side of life. . . ."

The subject was, of course, nuclear war and its prevention, "postponing for as long as possible the extinction of that unique biped, man." And Mr. Tynan contrasts Mrs. Buck's "clumsy" effort on behalf of common sense and humanity with that of "a tall, smiling young man, happily married and extraordinarily well read, who has risen in a very short time to one of the highest executive posts in American journalism." Mrs. Buck is an extremist, arguing that Western scientists "should decide, unilaterally, to withhold from their governments any information that might be used to prosecute a war." But the executive journalist represented a far more dangerous extreme.

Mr. Tynan spoke to him about the radioactive fallout in the northern United States, which is heavier than anywhere else on earth, and expressed some alarm at a complacent comment in *The New York Herald Tribune* (March 22nd) that: "There appears to be no immediate cause for worry, however, as experts appear to be agreed that the chance of any individual getting a deadly dose of Strontium 90 is only about one in 500,000." There are about eighty million people in the northern states, which means that 160 of them may soon be dying every year from Strontium 90: quite an "immediate cause for worry," one would think.

What did the smiling young man think? Apparently he had got past worrying. "My wife and children know what to expect," he told Mr. Tynan, "and they've accepted it.

I've told them that there'll probably be an exchange of hydrogen bombs before the end of June, and I've explained to them that it will probably mean the death of all of us." He and his friends believed that diplomatic approaches to the summit were useless, that thermonuclear war was "not only imminent but necessary."

How many people share this view? It is impossible to say. Maybe only a few, but—as Mr. Tynan remarked—"even a few would be enough to . . . make this our farewell summer." Why do they hold such a view? This again is hard to answer, but there seems to be a common line of argument: common, that is, to Mr. Tynan's dinner companion (for, like the condemned murderer, the journalist ate a hearty meal!) and to people I have argued with over here.

What is so special about the human race? they ask. Other species have come and gone; why not man? And they may add with the Archbishop of Canterbury that perhaps it is God's will that man should annihilate himself. Some express a certain sadness that other animals would suffer obliteration too, but they find consolation that minute forms of life might survive and develop. And perhaps, eventually, a new and greater species than man might evolve.

With this terrible, placid acceptance of inevitability—either God's or "history's"—goes a criminally irresponsible extension of Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death." Mr. Tynan's acquaintance "believed the concept of human liberty to be more valuable than the human beings who invented it. To preserve the freedom of mankind, he was ready to sacrifice mankind itself." Henry's was a noble challenge, because it was a personal one. He himself was ready to die in defence of liberty. All right. Splendid, perhaps. But Henry wasn't condemning the whole world to die with him.

There's the difference. If the "tall, smiling young man" hears the noble call and can't resist it, he has a way out and, so far as I am concerned, he is entitled to take it. But I have no wish to accompany him. Nor has Mr. Tynan. Nor have millions of people in all countries, East, West and neutral. What is more, this American has no God- or historically-given right to take us with him. For us there is no divine destruction plan; no inevitability of history. Man can avoid nuclear war, and most men want to. Be damned to defences of Christendom and Christian values. We want no more crusades. Let Dulles retire with his brinkmanship which nearly made the earth a hell and might still do so. British statesmanship has shown some sanity of late; let us hope that Kenneth Tynan has as much effect on American diplomacy as he has had on American drama.

SIDELIGHT ON SPORT

Grand old man of motor-racing Earl Howe will miss tomorrow's Silverstone meeting for the first time since the war because of what he calls a "catastrophic coincidence." His youngest daughter, 14-year-old Lady Sarah Curzon, is being confirmed at Penn Village Church, near their Buckinghamshire home. "I tried my best to get the Bishop of Oxford to change the date, but unfortunately it was impossible," said Lord Howe today.

—London Evening News (1/5/59).

This Believing World

According to the "Daily Mail," 40 or more M.P.s are now faced with "a clash of loyalties." Are they true to religion or to politics? And all this due to the fact that there is now an all-party agreement that religious schools are going to get a subsidy of 75% instead of 50% from the Government. Of course, this is what Roman Catholics in particular have been clamouring for for years; and naturally their brothers in Christ, the Nonconformists, are very angry. So it is not surprising that the Free Church Federal Council told the group of Nonconformists in Parliament in effect: "Your religion comes first, whatever your political allegiances."

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When asked about this, Dr. Vine, the secretary of the F.C.F.C., said, "A man's Church and religion comes first. This is the duty of a Free Churchman. We have a long line of martyrs to prove it." So here we are once again back at the old religious squabbles, when the fair and proper thing to do is for all M.P.s to plump once for all for Secular Education, and let all the religionists who want their particular creed to be taught to their children pay for it out of their pockets. As it is, it looks as if Christians who loathe somebody else's Christianity and Freethinkers whose oppose all religions will have to pay for teaching something they all oppose. It is fantastic.

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Blackpool recently was overjoyed when its council rejected for the sixth time an application for an extended Sunday cinema opening—at least, that is what Mr. J. R. Chambers, of the Lord's Day Observance Society thinks, and he ought to know. He said that the rejection "was a very good smack in the eye for the cinema trade, thank God," and he added that "it was pitiful to see the feeble efforts the local churches" put up against the cinemas' attempt to gain an earlier Sunday opening. Fortunately, the L.D.O.S. was there "to warn people of the awful peril" of desecrating the Sabbath Day. Scottish and Lancashire Sabbatarianism are enough to rouse the laughter of even Church people.

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The managing director of one of the largest advertising agencies in England said recently, according to the *Irish Independent*, that "rarely has so little been spent with greater discretion and effectiveness in British advertising" than in "spreading the Faith by correspondence." He was referring to the success of Catholic advertising by radio and TV, but particularly through advertisements in the daily press. Up to 1954 no country in Europe had done this; but in America, the Knights of Columbus had done so since 1847 with such success that in five years over one million people had asked for information, and 133,000 had enrolled for instruction.

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So far, in England 117,000 people have responded to the Catholic Enquiry Centre advertisements, and its directors are hoping that this will be the beginning of the conversion of this country to the Faith. Nothing, of course, is hinted at in the article that in all probability the Roman Church is losing as many members as it converts—perhaps even more. But in any case, it does appear that the only people who get "converted" to any religion, but particularly to the Roman brand of Christianity, are intensely religious in the first place. No one else could fall for the credulous nonsense that appears in the advertisements and in the courses of "instruction."

The story of how a British soldier became a Sikh was given prominence in *The People* some weeks ago, and it is extremely interesting as a study in religious psychology. It appears that he became "disillusioned" with the Christian faith because his romance with a girl was broken. "I became bitter about Christians and Christianity," he said. Thus, it was *not* because he studied his religion and found it wanting or untrue, but because of a love affair. So he joined the Sikhs, wears a turban and a beard, and follows Piara Singh instead of Jesus Christ—that is, he has simply exchanged one absurdity for another. And the girl? Well, of course, she still sticks to Jesus.

Quiz

1. When and where did the term "birth control" first appear?
2. Can brown-eyed parents give birth to a blue-eyed offspring?
3. Who were the authors of these Thinkers' Library books? (a) *The Evidence for the Supernatural*, (b) *Life's Unfolding*, (c) *Do What You Will*.
4. What is Walpurgis Night?
5. When a Dalai Lama dies, what is supposed to happen to his "spirit"?
6. Which three English kings, since 1066, have abdicated?

(Answers on page 167)

Review

I recently obtained a black market copy of the B.M.A. pamphlet "Getting Married", the price of which has now doubled (2s.). I thought it a useful and well produced booklet containing no less than 35 articles concerning every aspect of marriage from the sublime to the menial.

I read of course the condemned articles, and I certainly cannot see what all the fuss was about; all this information has been available for years in expensive publications, and so it seems that the booklet was priced too cheaply, better not let the common people know too much.

In asking Dr. Chesser, Dr. Winifred De Kok and Roger Pilkington to write their respective articles, the B.M.A. certainly knew what they were doing, the views of these people were well known, and in asking them to contribute B.M.A. obviously did not regard them as immoral, and neither will any informed, healthy minded person.

Mr. Pilkington's article "Marrying with a baby on the way" is a genuine attempt to help unfortunate couples who find themselves in this predicament, as apparently *one in every eight do*. Mr. Pilkington does not defend the situation, but tries to give useful advice, and in my opinion succeeds. I can only conclude that certain religious people do not want these unfortunates to obtain advice from anyone but themselves. What qualifications *have they* to advise anyone but an intimate knowledge of Jewish and early Christian mythology?

Dr. Winifred De Kok says that a happy marriage depends more on love and warmth than it does on obedience. How does she know? Dr. De Kok has been married for over 30 years and says "My children have brought me infinite happiness, now they in turn are happily married, and my grandchildren are filling my cup to overflowing." I should say that Dr. De Kok is eminently suited to advise on marriage, far more so than any celibate priesthood, or narrow-minded fundamentalists.

Dr. Chesser poses the question "Is chastity outdated? and answers it in the negative. His much criticised sentence about pre-marital experience being more than ordinarily pleasant is quoted out of context; speaking of sex in marriage in the preceding sentence he says "It can far transcend mere genital excitement and orgasm. It may, for all too brief a moment unite us with the cosmos itself," after which "more than ordinarily pleasant" seems very tame indeed.

I am sorry that such a responsible body as the B.M.A. should be panicked in this way by a handful of fanatics. Having issued their pamphlet they should have stuck to their guns, and thus retained the respect of all right thinking, and informed persons.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

THE FREETHINKER

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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 welcome during normal office hours.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 6.30 p.m.

INDOOR

Aberdeen Humanist Group (Saltire Room, Provost Ross House, The Shiprow).—Friday, May 29th, 7.30 p.m.: Mrs. E. M. GRAHAM, "The Humanism of George Eliot."

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, May 24th, 6.45 p.m.: W. A. MILLARD, "Dark Waters."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 24th, 11 a.m.: Miss J. G. HALL, LL.M., "Public Law and Private Morals."

Notes and News

As we intimated some weeks ago, the Humanist Council (comprising the Ethical Union, Rationalist Press Association, South Place Ethical Society and the National Secular Society) and the English Section of the World Union of Freethinkers are combining at 7 p.m. on Sunday, June 7th, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine, which occurred on June 8th, 1809. South Place Ethical Society have kindly loaned the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, and the Chairman will be Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers. The speakers, in order, will be: Dr. Carl Bode (Cultural Attaché to the U.S. Embassy), on Paine and America; Mr. Dennis Phombeah (Tanganyikan Joint Secretary of the Committee of African Organisations), on Paine's Relevance to Emergent Peoples Today; Mr. Michael Foot (Editor of *Tribune* and well-known TV broadcaster) on *Rights of Man*; and Dr. Ronald Fletcher (Bedford College, University of London), on *The Age of Reason*. The N.S.S. President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, will propose the vote of thanks, which will be seconded by Mr. Christopher Brunel, whose father, Adrian Brunel, did so much for Paine's memory. We hope that London readers will turn up in force for this Paine Memorial Meeting and make it worthy of the great Citizen of the World we are honouring.

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THOMAS PAINE figures, too, in a copy of *The Black Dwarf*, a London weekly publication edited, printed and pub-

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £196 4s. 6d.; A. Harvey, 10s.; E.M. (South Africa), £3; A. L. Jones (S. Rhodesia), £2; W.H.D., 2s. 6d. —Total to date, May 15th, 1959, £201 17s.

lished by T. J. Wooler, No. 16, Vol. II, dated Wednesday, April 22nd, 1818, which has been kindly given to the National Secular Society by Mr. Graham Cornes. The correspondence column contains a letter from Paine's great friend, Clio Rickman, pointing out a "peculiarly forcible and striking" omission from Joel Barlow's poem *Columbia*, celebrating worthies of the American Revolution. Yes. Barlow left out all mention of Paine. And as Barlow had a long friendship with Paine, Rickman says the only possible reason for the omission was "that Thomas Paine was so unpopular in America, on account of his theological writings, that mention of him would have hindered the sale of the work." Rickman goes on to suggest twenty-one lines "to be placed at the close of the 425th line, in the fifth book," "to remedy this omission." The lines are of some interest and we shall reprint them in this 150th anniversary year of Thomas Paine's death.

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MR. H. CRAPPER, a member of the Nottingham Branch of the National Secular Society, spoke strongly against religious instruction as an examination subject in schools at a meeting of the West Nottinghamshire Education Executive at Mansfield on April 23rd. He particularly opposed the teaching that ethics belonged to any particular religion. It should be taught, he said, as coming from "the accumulated experiences of man throughout his history." While parents had the right to withdraw their children from religious instruction, Mr. Crapper added, very few did so because there was a fear of putting those children into a kind of isolation which might have a bad effect upon them. We congratulate Mr. Crapper on his splendid stand, and the *Nottingham Guardian Journal* for a very full report (24/4/59). We wish we could add congratulations to other Executive members but, as the *Guardian Journal* had it, "No one spoke in his support."

Thomas Paine said—

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of all governments to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith.

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The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is reason. I have never used any other and I trust I never shall.

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Certain I am that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

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I had rather record a thousand errors on the side of mercy than be obliged to tell one act of severe justice.

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Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.

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To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead.

Report on Malta

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

A MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND presents a splendid arena in which the R.C. Church can impose its commands upon simple, gullible people. Few Maltese leave their island and, cut off from the external world, they fall easy victims to clerical domination.

Happily, however, owing to radio and air transport, the people are not so isolated as they used to be—and there are many signs of improvement.

I first visited Malta in 1913 as a Midshipman, and have returned there quite frequently—including 1958 and 1959. It is pleasant to be able to report considerable reductions of clerical domination in recent years. However, the Church pokes its nose into as many aspects of life as it can, and it still retains considerable power.

1. No film can be exhibited unless it has been "vetted" by the clerics.

2. Church influence is noticeable in the Press. The newspapers print regularly smear-statements about the alleged religious persecutions behind the Iron Curtain, together with uncomplimentary articles about the Russians and Chinese. These articles are usually done by anonymous writers under such names as "Diplomatic representative," "Historian," etc. One article by "University Professor" painted the notorious Yugo-Slav traitor, Archbishop Stepinac, as being an injured innocent! It is easy to understand the effect which this uncontradicted stream of lies makes upon the simple Maltese.

3. Not a week passes without the newspapers publishing pictures advertising the activities of the clerics. It may be at a church service for animals (showing cats, dogs, mice, birds and bowls of goldfish being blessed); or the priests are shown in gorgeous robes (costing hundreds of pounds), parading with an ornamented box stated to contain the arm-bone of St. Paul, who was wrecked on the island.

A new piece of hospital apparatus was recently presented by Canada, and the Archbishop was portrayed "doing his stuff"—blessing the thing.

The harbour is being enlarged, and the Governor and Dockyard officials were present when the new pile-driving machines were put on display. After the Governor had spoken, up jumped the inevitable bishop to "bless" the machinery. Without batting an eyelid, His Excellency listened to the farce. ("Our diplomats are wonderful!") And then—the episcopal green-light having been given—the Governor drove in the first pile.

All these episodes are calculated to build up the prestige of the clerics.

Despite all these pieces of showmanship, the Church in Malta (as elsewhere) is not at all happy. The Archbishop's Lenten message for 1959 was full of lamentations about the increase in Godlessness and the spread of Materialism (which is the R.C. name for progress, education and worldly enjoyment). It deplored the lack of volunteers to become theological students and nuns; for the first time in Malta's history, these are in very short supply. Young people are beginning to see through the follies of an unnatural life, and the days have gone by when a career in the Church was a main attraction.

This lack of enthusiasm for priestcraft is in striking contrast to what I noticed only thirty years ago. In those days there were so many priests that the irreverent naval personnel evolved a pastime called "priest-game." Our

football ground was two miles out from Valletta, and transit was by a slow horse-cab, whose tedious journey was eased by the excitements of the game. It was a competition between the two passengers as to which of the two could spot the largest number of clerics from his particular side of the cab. Points were awarded for the type of cleric: the black-coated parish priests were as common as dogs, and were only worth one point; the rarer, brown-robed Franciscans counted two points each. Scarcest of all were the black and white Dominicans ("maggies"), who scored three points each. It was an exciting game of "ups and downs." The sailor on the right-hand side might notice three black parish priests (worth three points) and follow this up with a Franciscan, making the score 5—0. The chap on the left might then notice two Dominicans, who made it 5—6. The score see-sawed up and down during the two miles, which very quickly passed. The loser paid for the cab fare.

But priest-game is not played today because of the rarity of the clerics. This scarcity (which exists in all parts of the world) is one of today's headaches at the Vatican. Serious consideration is being given to a scheme for "married deacons," who will deputise at such occasions as baptisms. This question has been referred by Pope John XXIII to the forthcoming Ecumenical Council. (See *Sunday Express*, April 5th, 1959.) Incidentally, the unnatural state of compulsory celibacy is a topic upon which fervent Romanists often become eloquent. Any intelligent person can easily debunk them: remind them that their great hero, Saint Peter, was married! (If they start quibbling, refer them to Chapter VIII of St. Matthew, where there is a reference to Peter's wife.)

Another eyesore which has disappeared from the Malta scene is the spectacle of boy monks and girl nuns. Thirty years ago, a newcomer to Malta used to be surprised to see little boys and girls of ten dressed as miniature Franciscans and miniature nuns. The reason was that, until recently, the priests were able to prevail upon simple parents to "give their children to the Church"—upon such pretences as improving the parents' chances in the "next world," or for "bringing honour to the family," etc. The poor little victims of this wicked habit had no say in the matter, and, from their earliest days, they were clothed as monks and nuns and were dedicated to an unnatural life. This barbarous custom seems to have died out.

The population of Malta has now reached the alarming figure of 3,000 per square mile, but, of course, the "Holy Church forbids birth control—and now a major problem has arisen. In 1881 the population numbered 150,000; today it is double. Malta has always had a high birth-rate, but a correspondingly high death-rate has kept the situation balanced, until recently. Only thirty years ago goats used to be led along the street to be milked on the doorstep; their udders trailed in the dust and caused "Malta fever" by contamination. Today bottled cow milk is available and the goats (like priest-game) are relics of the past. Modern improvements have reduced the death-rate, but the birth-rate still continues at its high level.

The problem is "Where to send the superfluous Maltese?"

(To be concluded)

Freethought Congress 1959

THE PROGRAMME has now been prepared for the 33rd Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, to be held at the Free University of Brussels from September 4th to 8th this year. The President of Honour will be (Earl) Bertrand Russell, with Major-General Dr. G. Brock Chisholm (Canada) and Sir R. Paranjpye (India), Vice-Presidents, and a Committee of Honour from Australia, Belgium, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and U.S.A.

On Friday, September 4th, there will be meetings of the Executive and General Committees, a business meeting for delegates of affiliated societies and, at 8 p.m., *Vin d'Honneur* offered by the Belgian Freethought Federation, when the Rector of the Free University, Philosopher Dr. Henri Janne, will welcome visitors.

Saturday will open with regional reports and then, morning and afternoon sessions will be devoted to discussion of "The Schools and Freedom of Thought," with an interval for the placing of a wreath on the monument of the University's founder, Theodore Verhaegen. In the evening, a public meeting will deal with "The Need of Freethinking in the Light of Modern Science."

On Sunday, September 6th, we have the Ferrer Demonstration, consisting of a march to the memorial to the Spanish Freethought martyr born 100 years ago, and speeches by delegates. In the afternoon, another public meeting has been arranged.

The final session of the Congress will take place on Monday, September 7th, with the tabling of resolutions and elections. In the afternoon there will be a tour of Brussels and, at night, a dinner. On Tuesday a coach excursion to Ghent and Bruges will be organised.

The President of the Congress will be Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner. And although there can be no certainty about the speakers, it is expected that they will include Lucie de Brouckère (daughter of the Belgian Liberal statesman, Louis de Brouckère, and Professor of Chemistry at Brussels), Dr. Brock Chisholm (first Director of the World Health Organisation), Dr. J. V. Duhig (Australia) and well known to FREETHINKER readers, Professor Finnochiaro-Aprile (Italian jurist and President of the Giordano Bruno Society), Maître Jean Gremling (jurist, M.P., Benelux representative for the Duchy of Luxemburg, Resistance leader and President of Luxemburg Freethought Society), Georges Homès (Professor of Physics at Brussels), Ernest Kahane (Professor of Biochemistry at Montpellier and Secretary of the French Union Rationaliste), Henri Laugier (Professor of Biology at the Sorbonne and former Assistant General Secretary of U.N.O.), P. Nowell-Smith (Professor of Philosophy at Leicester), J. M. Romein (Professor of Social History at Amsterdam), Dr. J. Sinrob Ramirez (Division General of the Mexican Medical Service, and an Aztec), and Senator Dr. Jeanne Vandervelde (widow of the Belgian Socialist statesman, Emile Vandervelde, and herself a psychiatrist).

THEATRE

The Cenci

That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pinician gate.

So, RATHER STARTLINGLY with these words by Cardinal Camillo, begins *The Cenci*, Shelley's poetic tragedy which came under the Lord Chamberlain's ban and was not publicly performed until 1922. Now it may be seen again at the Old Vic Theatre, London, where, despite some

unenthusiastic reviews, it was gratifyingly well attended when I saw it, and received a terrific ovation.

In my opinion the applause was well deserved. It is, as might be expected, splendidly staged and acted and, indeed, it is Shelley rather than the players who has come in for most criticism. Of course he is not Shakespeare—though there are many Shakespearean echoes—but *The Cenci* is mostly fine stuff, occasionally superb.

The Count, who dominates the first half of the play, is a figure of terrible evil. "I am what your theologians call Hardened," he tells the Cardinal, and he delightedly interrupts a banquet to announce the deaths of two of his sons, which he regards as a favour of Providence. He is played by Hugh Griffith with a splendid, snorting devilry. His daughter, Beatrice, dominates the second half, magnificently and beautifully. In this role, Barbara Jefford gives one of the most eloquent performances I have seen for a long time. It is she who plans the murder of her father after a vain petition for help to the Pope and after the incestuous attack upon her. Ironically, after the murder, the Papal Legate arrives announcing that the Count "must answer charges of the gravest import." Instead it is Beatrice, her brother and her gentle stepmother, with their accomplices, who are arraigned before the judges and found guilty.

Camillo—the same Cardinal who announced that Pope Clement VIII demanded a third of the Count's lands to overlook a devilish murder—announces that the same Pope is "stern; not to be moved or bent," when urged to forgive the parricide. As for another (innocent) brother pleading for Beatrice's life before the pontiff:

A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

The Cenci, as several critics have reminded us, is not Shakespeare. But it is very fine Shelley. It is Shelley deploring the Church which excused crime when bribed to do so, yet withheld mercy when it was surely justified. It is Shelley—the poet of righteous indignation, if ever there was one—condemning cruelty and expressing pathos in his own fine blank verse. And it is the Old Vic Company speaking his language exquisitely. The beautiful Miss Jefford and the demonic Mr. Griffith are admirably supported, and it will probably be many years before we have a chance of seeing *The Cenci* again. Lovers of Shelley and lovers of the theatre should not miss this rare occasion.

C.McC.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. I know of nothing to pre-date Margaret Sanger's publication of *The Woman Rebel* in 1914.
2. Yes. In this case both parents would be carrying for blue. That is, they would be brown/blue, the result being brown eyes, with blue as a masked feature. If both transmitted their recessive characteristic, blue, the offspring would be blue/blue, and this would happen in one out of four pairings on the average. Since brown-eyed parents would both carry blue in, statistically, every fourth mating, brown-eyed couples would be expected to have a blue-eyed child once in every sixteen occasions.
3. (a) Dr. Ivor Tuckett, (b) Sir Charles Sherrington, (c) Aldous Huxley.
4. April 30th-May 1st; in medieval tradition witches and other evil beings had extra powers to roam and work their malice.
5. It is supposed to take lodgment in a new-born child, who is discovered by a royal search and acknowledged as the new Dalai Lama.
6. Richard II (1399), James II (1688) and Edward VIII (1936).
G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

GRANTS FOR SCHOOLS

It seems fairly clear that the Tory chiefs propose to increase the grants to denominational schools from 50% to 75%. This is tantamount to handing over the nation's schools to the Roman and Anglican Churches. And that, surely, is something all we secularists can unite in fighting.

I have written to our Conservative Association asking for assurances that my fears are unfounded. I added that if this was not forthcoming I would not vote for their candidate at the next election. It is significant that no reply has been received.

Will you suggest a similar course of action to your other Conservative readers? It would be salutary for the Party to vacate the Government benches until its leaders regain their senses. We must do all we can, and more, to guard the children from clerical clutches.

W. E. HUXLEY.

QUALIFIED SUPPORT

Having been a regular reader of your paper for the last three years I feel that I ought to write and tell you that I share THE FREETHINKER'S views on religion but disagree most strongly as regards politics.

I am a member of the National Labour Party, an extreme right wing organisation which supports, amongst other things, apartheid. As a member of the N.L.P., I could not, therefore, uphold all the aims of the National Secular Society; but I state uncompromisingly that I am a freethinker in the truest sense of the word. It was freethinking—listening to and reading all shades of opinion—which made me realise that the spate of left-wing/liberal-democratic propaganda against South Africa is but a smoke-screen erected by those who are so bemused by woolly-minded pink "humanitarianism" that reality causes them to wear mental blinkers.

K. UNDERHILL.

OBITUARY

It is with deepest regret that the Leicester Secular Society announces the death of Mrs. E. M. Cliff, who passed away on Tuesday, May 3rd, at the age of 77 years. Mrs. Cliff was one of our most enthusiastic members, she and her husband being elected Hon. Life Members of the L.S.S. only last November, after 55 years in the Society.

To her husband, Frederick, and her daughters, Gwen and Margaret, we tender our deepest sympathy.

C.H.H.

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Organised by
The Humanist Council and the World Union of Freethinkers

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1

SUNDAY, JUNE 7th, 7 p.m.

(Paine died June 8th, 1809)

DR. CARL BODE
(Cultural Attaché, U.S. Embassy)

DENNIS PHOMBEAH
(Secretary, Committee of
African Organisations)

DR. RONALD FLETCHER
(Bedford College, University of
London)

MICHAEL FOOT
(Editor, "Tribune")

F. A. RIDLEY (President N.S.S.) and CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

Chairman: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER (President, World
Union of Freethinkers)

All welcome

All welcome

All welcome

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6TH, 1959.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Alexander, Barker, Corstorphine, Ebury, Hornbrook, Johnson, Moore, Plume, Taylor, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Arthur and Gordon. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Bradford, Dagenham, Kingston, North London, Nottingham, Wales and Western and Worthing Branches, which, with individual members, made 20 in all. Ghana Rationalist Group Conference report and R.P.A. Conference plans were given. Secular Education League report was also received. The Secretary gave details of letters to H. E. Gurden, M.P., from Birmingham Branch and himself. Various items of other correspondence were dealt with and arrangements for Thomas Paine Memorial Meeting were given. An encouraging report from Fyzabad (West Indies) Branch was received with appreciation, and Belfast Group affiliation was approved. Conference matters were discussed and arrangements explained. Possibility of Saturday evening meetings at Hyde Park was announced. Printing of several FREETHINKER articles in leaflet form was approved.

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