

The Freethinker

Volume LXXIX—No. 23

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THE FORTHCOMING WORLD CONGRESS at Brussels in September, the 33rd International Congress in the annals of the World Union, has a tragic, but appropriate theme; it will specially commemorate the centenary of the birth, and the half-century of the martyrdom, of the Spanish Freethinker and educational pioneer of secular knowledge, Francisco Ferrer. In 1909 this courageous heretic was judicially murdered by the Spanish Reaction in Church and State.

the worthy successors of Torquemada and the congruous predecessors of General Franco and his present clerical allies. The historic adage of that peculiar Christian, Tertullian, that "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" has, alas, a far wider application than its original author intended. The blood of the martyrs has watered the long and dramatic struggles of the human race towards ultimate intellectual freedom and political democracy and, since Ferrer was shot in Barcelona by the henchmen of the Jesuits and of their secular allies, a "noble army of martyrs" for mental and social progress have whitened Europe with their bleaching bones; not least Ferrer's own so martyred land, Spain itself.

Spanish Democracy

The social and intellectual upheavals of the 19th and (early) 20th century radicalism did not pass Spain by, even though they are at present still frustrated there by the present medieval regime of that peculiar "Democrat" (and "favourite son" of the late Pacelli), General Francisco Franco—who has certainly not got anything in common with Francisco Ferrer except his first name! (We do not imagine that there are likely to be any Ferrer memorial celebrations in the land of his birth and martyrdom.) However, though in the majority of cases the Spanish military and clerical reaction—which at present rules the entire Iberian Peninsula in an unholy alliance officially contracted at the Vatican—has proved too strong, reflecting the material backwardness of the country, for the latent Spanish democratic and anti-clerical forces; yet these, too, have never given up the struggle and have, on at least three occasions even lighted their unfortunately "brief candles" to illumine the dark depths of Spanish history: in the national uprising against Napoleon at the beginning of the 19th century, in the brief episode of the first Spanish Republic in the 1870s, and most recently in the also short-lived second Spanish Republic—1931-39—eventually bloodily liquidated by Franco and his Fascist German and Italian backers. All these democratic and anti-clerical regimes did eventually succeed in temporarily coming to power in the Holy Land of the Inquisition and the Jesuits; where Torquemada and Loyola had free-thinking, socialist and even anarchist successors—Ferrer described himself as an anarchist though not one of the fashionable bomb-throwing type. (One must add, if only in fairness to the anarchists of the present day that they now assert that they cannot get any bombs to throw since the State has

virtually established a monopoly in this field!)

Bradlaugh and the First Spanish Republic

Of such successive democratic and anti-clerical experiments in Spain, perhaps the short-lived but intensely dramatic First Spanish Republic was the most interesting, as it was certainly the most radical in its social and political experiments; it came into being on February 11th, 1873, and was overthrown in the typically Spanish manner that

we have seen repeated in our own day by a military *pronunciamento* by the army on October 29th, 1875, when the Bourbon monarchy was again restored to the Spanish throne. The Spanish Republic was constituted on a federal basis and its short

— VIEWS and OPINIONS — Charles Bradlaugh and Spain — By F. A. RIDLEY —

existence was marred by many fantastic and Utopian experiments—e.g., the old port of Cartagena seceded from the Federation and promptly declared war on the German Empire, then the greatest military power in the world. (As later occurred in the case of its more recent republican successor, its final downfall was largely due to its own divisions.) But this brief experiment of a Republican regime in the land of the traditional absolute monarchy of the "most Catholic" kings aroused great interest outside Spain, not least in England, where a vigorous and vociferous republican movement existed just then. Its sequel was a meeting in Birmingham Town Hall on May 11th, 1873, where an English Republican Congress of 54 delegates and attended by some 4,500 enthusiastic Republican sympathisers, decided to send a delegation to congratulate Spain on throwing off the yoke of Throne and Altar simultaneously. As its delegate to the Spanish Republic, the Birmingham Conference sent no less a person than Charles Bradlaugh, both the chief English Republican and Freethinker of his day, not yet M.P. for Northampton, but already the Founder and first President of the National Secular Society. At this time—it seems a long way off now—not only was there a strong and active Republican fringe to the Liberal Party, but English Republicanism was then frankly anti-clerical and even anti-Christian! Had not its founder, "Tom" Paine, been the bugbear both of political and religious conservatism with his *Age of Reason* and his *Rights of Man*? And had not that other founder of English Republicanism, Richard Carlile, gone on record with the optimistic hope that he should "see the day and witness the deed when an English senate should disown the divinity of the Christian religion"? (But this, we must relevantly add, was long before the advent of the BBC.)

Bradlaugh in Spain

Charles Bradlaugh had every sympathy with the Spanish Republic—had he not denounced the English (or rather, imported German) Royal Family as "small breast-starred wanderers"? His journey to the faction-ridden Spain of 1873 was not without interest or excitement and he narrowly escaped capture by bands of Carlist (Royalist and Catholic) fanatics, who were just then waging an embittered guerilla war against the "godless" Liberals and

their secular Republic, the very first of its kind in Spain's long history. However, Bradlaugh arrived safely in Madrid and duly conveyed to the Spanish Republicans the ardent well-wishes of their English brethren who, no doubt, hoped equally ardently that Victoria of England would follow the Spanish Bourbons into an equally appropriate exile. (Neither Bradlaugh nor his Birmingham backers had evidently learned the political lesson that English Conservatism, precisely because it is less extreme and knows how to give way when the occasion arises, is actually far stronger than are the more intransigent regimes of lands like France—or Spain—which habitually rush from one extreme to another.) However, though his optimistic expectations were eventually to prove to be unjustified, his immediate mission met with recognition and success. The Spanish papers devoted paragraphs to the eminent English Republican leader in whom they probably saw the first President of the future English Republic—whom they variously described as "Senor Branglong" and "Don Carlos Bradlaw." Republican

leaders staged banquets in his honour, and he was received (though unofficially, since certainly he did not bear the good wishes of Queen Victoria or Mr. Gladstone!) by the President of the Spanish Republic, the great orator, Don Emilio Castellar. Altogether, Bradlaugh and his backers could regard his fraternal message of republican solidarity between England and Spain as a success. For the "prudent god" of the Roman poet (Horace) who alone knows the Future had not revealed either to Bradlaugh or to his optimistic Spanish hosts, the coming horrors of the century of Ferrer and of Franco; it is a far cry from the Republic Spain of 1873 to the Vatican-dominated Spain of today. We doubt whether 4,500 convinced English Republicans could be assembled today, whether in Birmingham Town Hall or anywhere else. Whilst Bradlaugh's "breast-bastarded (royal) wanderers" appear to be sitting a lot firmer in their seats than when the great English Republican set out for Spain, or later in the '70s wrote his famous *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, that high watermark to date, of English Republicanism.

THEATRE

The World of Paul Slickey

By COLIN MCCALL

I SUSPECTED AS MUCH. From those reports of first night booing outbursts and the general excitement, it seemed hard to accept the critics' verdicts. For the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Star* and the *Evening Standard*, *The World of Paul Slickey*, at the Palace Theatre, London, was successively "dull," "extraordinarily dull," "incredibly dull" and "incredibly naïve and dull." As John Osborne remarked, his musical got "the worst notices since Judas Iscariot." But if so dull, why the outbursts?

The answer is that *Slickey* is far from dull—and far from naïve. In fact, it is enormously witty. What, then, about *The Times* allegation that Mr. Osborne "tries to score off trivial people"? This, too, is wrong. Mr. Osborne shows how trivial the lives of the "top people" can be, but it is these lives—and particularly their trivialities—that receive so much prominence in the Press: in the paper that specially caters for them as much as in its poor relations in Fleet Street. Gillian's coming out is regarded as important; Mummy *did* show her courage "when we gave away India." But Mr. Osborne allows somebody to make a paper hat out of *The Times*, and that's going beyond a joke!

Is the H-bomb trivial? Or capital punishment? Hardly. And the song, "Bring back the Axe," is a little masterpiece. (Another of the best numbers, "I want to hear about beautiful things," is also sung by Miss Janet Hamilton-Smith.) Many of the subjects are, it is true, trivial in themselves, but that is precisely Mr. Osborne's reason for introducing them: "organised triviality" is, in his view—and he is surely not alone in this—the outstanding feature of the popular Press. Among the slogans of the *Daily Racket*, for which Slickey writes his gossip column, are: "Is it true? Never mind. Is it honest? Who cares? Is it news? You bet!" And, "It's not what you say we resent: it's your right to say it." Among its special features, the *Daily Racket* presents: "How to throw up at a dull party"; "Lady Mortlake announces 'Human beings are my hobby'"; and "Mother of pop-singer, Terry Maroon, tells all about her boy."

But Mr. Osborne's mortal sin was to satirise Roman Catholicism in the figure of Father Evilgreene. Priests, and

especially Mr. Graham Greene's agents of Providence, are sacrosanct in the critical world. And for the faithful, Father Evilgreene's jiving in biretta and the fancy dress of his tribe is no doubt unforgivable. For me it is unforgettable.

In short, John Osborne has put more ideas into *The World of Paul Slickey* than you will find in a dozen other musicals, and he has generally presented them with wit and originality. They may not all come off—that would be too much to expect—but most of them do. The cast shows verve and intelligence. Dennis Lotis as Slickey, Adrienne Corri as his wife, Maureen Quinney as his mistress, Jack Watling as her husband, Marie Löhr as Lady Mortlake, and Janet Hamilton-Smith as Mrs. Giltedge-Whyte, perhaps deserve special mention, but I am painfully aware that I leave out many others that I shouldn't. The dancing is, I should think, good.

Dull, then, is the last word I would use to describe *The World of Paul Slickey*. I found it stimulating. But I have special tastes: I am not a devotee of *The Times* or the tabloids.

PETER'S PENCE

"No, ALICE, NO! You cannot go out early; you know the headmistress has forbidden that, and just for a party, it's impossible," I replied to a child in my class in the Catholic school, Bow, London.

"But, Miss," pleaded Alice, "this aint a' ordinary party. it's a funeral party, and ther aint 'alf going to be a lovely coffin with brass 'andles and nails, and 'am and cake . . ."

"Gosh! Alice, it would be a pity to miss all that! Tell your mother to wait for you tomorrow, behind the pillar-box, and I'll let you slip out."

The mother came to thank me: "You are a white woman, Miss Flanagan, and I aint a Catholic, but if ever that poor pope of yours wants a penny, send along to me."

N.F.

DECEIVERS EVER

COLONEL DAVID STRANGWAYS, whose wartime job was deceiving the Germans, was ordained in the Church of England yesterday.—*Daily Express* (16/3/59).
First them; now us.

Report on Malta

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

(Concluded from page 166)

THE PROBLEM is "Where to send the superfluous Maltese?" They are not generally popular as immigrants, but Australia accepts a fair number. This is encouraged by the Australian Roman Catholics, who are glad to increase the papist population by any methods. In 1948 an Australian cardinal dedicated his country "to the immaculate heart of Mary"—and this sort of attitude enables the Maltese to seep into the southern continent. As soon as Maltese get abroad, they often display the lack of stability and integrity which is the inevitable result of their narrow Church training—and which causes so much crime and delinquency. In Australia, a dreadful murder occurred in 1958, committed by a Maltese. This criminal saw a decent Australian man and wife out on a walk, and killed the husband and then disabled the wife, who had to have an arm amputated as a result. The Maltese injured a policeman who had come to the scene. Arising out of this, it was found that the villain had had a criminal record in Malta—and, as such, he should not have been allowed entry to Australia. The one-armed widow is now suing the Government for £20,000 damages for neglect.

GENERAL.—The British taxpayer contributes about £6,000,000 a year to balance Malta's budget; and more will be expected of us if "Integration with Britain" comes about. Integration includes the granting to hordes of Maltese the same high rates of social benefits which we receive in Britain. In return, the Maltese would contribute literally nothing at all—because there is very little wealth in the rocky island except what is held by the Church. We are expected to foot the bill.

Politics in 1959 are in a confused state owing to the unpredictable attitude of the local leaders; their main idea seems to be the extraction from Britain of the maximum amount of money, while making themselves a nuisance. The Constitution is at present in suspense.

During the war not all the Maltese were as patriotic as they have been represented to have been. Prior to the war there was a strong pro-Italian party (supported by the Church), who favoured Mussolini. When the war started hundreds of these (including many members of Catholic Action, naturally supporting the pro-Axis policy of the late Pius XII) became so objectionable that they had to be interned for security reasons. They were herded together in the centre of the island, where they could do as little mischief as possible, and, with tragic irony, an Italian plane dropped a bomb on them, killing quite a number. The survivors were expatriated to Kenya "for the duration."

I had occasion to write from Malta to the late Doctor Marie Stopes (well known for her anti-Vatican views). She recommended me to address correspondence to her with an assumed name because letters in her real name were liable to interception by Romanists.

In 1958 I met Mr. Rouncefield, the Merchant Navy sailor whose sad case got some publicity. He had been married to a Maltese girl in a London register office, and the pair were happy enough until they unluckily returned to Malta. Then the priests got busy and told the young wife that her wedding was illegal and that she was living in sin—turning every bit of clerical pressure upon a simple young person. As a result, a happy marriage broke up, thus adding another misdeed to the unpleasant record of the R.C. Church.

The Rouncefield tragedy is only one of the many such episodes which occur under Romanism. I experienced another last year. When I was in Malta in 1925 I had met a charming pair of girls who were sisters; they were British but had lived mostly in Malta—and they were Roman Catholics; several times we used to have friendly discussions about the merits and demerits of Romanism.

I will call the sisters Mary and Valerie. In 1958 I revisited Malta and consulted a phone-book to see if they had survived the war. I found that Mary was still in Malta, and we had a happy meeting; tactfully, I did not mention religion. She explained that Valerie had got married and had returned to England, and didn't seem inclined to return to Malta. Mary was pained at this and could not understand the reason. She gave me Valerie's address in England, so, in due course, I went to see her. Once again, remembering our previous arguments, I made no mention of religion and we discussed other things. Suddenly she surprised me by saying, "Thirty years ago you were absolutely correct in condemning the R.C. Church." It was pleasant for me to hear this—and she went on to say that she had come to realise the falsities of Romanism; and today she didn't believe in any religion—but thought the Quakers were the best type of people. Then I told her that Mary in Malta was hoping for a visit from her, and Valerie replied, "If I returned I should be expected to go to church—and that is something I will never do again."

That episode, plus the Rouncefield case, exemplifies the amount of domestic unhappiness which the R.C. Church so often brings to its unlucky followers.

Lourdes

I, "Medicate," who wrote the criticism on the C.T.S. pamphlet *Lourdes*, am very grateful to Dr. N. C. Hypher for pointing out certain slight ambiguities in my wording, but I am certainly not grateful to him for stating that I am "grossly ignorant of practical medicine and surgery"! As a matter of fact, I am a male nurse, having practised in hospitals for quite a few years since taking and passing my final examination.

I refuse to reveal my name, address, or number on the register, but I can assure this fairly obviously Roman Catholic doctor that I have a little experience of medicine and surgery. Unfortunately it is not practicable for me to demonstrate my ability to an R.C. doctor. However, I'm very pleased that Mr. Colin McCall was able to defend (very well, too) my assertions. I would, however, like to ask Dr. Hypher a simple question: "How long over three weeks, without proper treatment, could a T.B. peritonitis case last?" Certainly one could not live with the disease for six years as stated in the *Lourdes* pamphlet.

I had influenza and pneumonia once, and was on a Roman Catholic doctor's panel at the time. He failed to find anything wrong with me and prescribed Codein tablets for my chest pains and difficulty in breathing properly. Also "as a tonic" he prescribed Mist. Ferri. Strych. I had the misfortune to collapse within 48 hours and was near death, although I had had to carry on working up to the morning of my collapse. Luckily, a very able Protestant lady doctor and my nursing colleagues came to my rescue and I finished my cure with just a chronic infection of my affected lung through the gross incompetence of this R.C. doctor! I had previously consulted him re my obesity and after his "advice" and treatment for four months, I had lost precisely five pounds, leaving me weighing 16 stone 2lb. He gave it all up with the offhand remark, "God made you like this and you will have to remain like this!!" However, I changed to a doctor who is an agnostic and after four months' treatment and advice I lost 12lb. I continued to lose weight until now I'm a mere 13 stone 5lb., still steadily getting slimmer, and feeling much better. Now, too, my chest condition is improving steadily. "MEDICATE."

This Believing World

Really it is enough to make every brass hat and general at the War Office explode with anger. Here is an army padre, the Rev. R. Bravington, now utterly *against* that most honourable pious function—Church Parade—which was once absolutely compulsory. Woe to any man who tried to dodge it! Mr. Bravington is to be congratulated on speaking his mind so courageously, for he is against “compulsory” religion. It was “seeing rows of resentful young men at my Padre’s Hour which did that,” he said. *News Chronicle*, which reports the tragedy, asked the War Office what it thought. And the answer—“No comment”—is exactly what we could expect. Mr. Bravington will not, we are sure, be given the job again or indeed any job from brass hats.

★

One of the numerous gentlemen who are so regularly brought for us to admire on TV was a Mr. Harry Cowley, and no doubt he fully deserved the honour. But he made a special point of telling us that while he had no religion whatever, he believed completely in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and followed the Saviour absolutely. This is one of the religious mysteries we poor simple-minded infidels cannot grasp; and we only mention it as a sample of the way the radio and TV can get religion over to their audience every time. You can say you have no religion, but under no circumstances are you allowed to throw overboard the Christian religion. The wrath of 8,000,000 viewers and listeners would rise and overwhelm the BBC and the ITV in one fell swoop.

★

And this brings us to a letter which recently appeared in the *Sunday Times* which, thank God, is now always on the side of the angels. It is from a Mr. W. B. Grant, on “Religion’s Revival,” a subject he declared “of great importance.” It appears you can only have a religious revival “in God’s time, not man’s.” In fact, it is the work “of the Holy Spirit.” Mr. Grant is certain that there is now evidence that “God is laying it upon the hearts of more and more Christians to pray for revival.”

★

We quite believe it. More and more Christians have always prayed throughout the ages for religious revivals, for somehow or other the ordinary man appears to have always wanted to “backslide.” Hence the millions of books, pamphlets, and sermons—to say nothing of religious music and pictures—constantly being turned out imploring us to accept Christ, and go to church, and pay our tithes, and trust in the Lord, and pray unceasingly, and read our Bibles, and sing hymns. You must be christened in church, get married there, and arrange the priest or parson to bury you. Yet with all this, and it has been going on for many centuries, Christians are harassed and implored to pray more and more and still more—otherwise God might fail in capturing you! Enough to make the Holy Spirit burst in anger.

★

The United States has just discovered a terrific tragedy, in each one out of three homes there they have no Bible!! Yet no book ever published has had the publicity given everywhere to God’s Precious Word. In fact, during 1958 the American Bible Society distributed nearly 9,200,000 copies which, we are told, is a “peacetime” record. Obviously, far more were distributed during wartime—when, if the truth were told, a Bible’s thin paper admirably served as cigarette paper.

We frankly admit that the Bible has had a huge circulation—but who reads it? Do even parsons, except for a few special passages in which Jesus figures as a kind of super-Sunday-school teacher? There are, of course, some excellent stories very well told in the Old Testament, but who now reads the “lamentations” of Jeremiah, or the “ravings” of Ezekiel? But it is a pity that modern Bibles are of such small format. The dear old large Family Bibles, strong and thick, always made admirable stands for teapots or for brass plant pots.

Malthusianism

MR. GRUBIAK’S “reply” to my criticisms of his article was exactly what I expected. He originally said that “all over the world” people were told *not* to grow food, and were sternly reprimanded when they did so—so naturally I asked him for his authorities. Instead of giving them to me, I am told that “many cotton mills have been closed down recently,” as well as “thirty-eight subsidiary factories in Scotland”; and if I doubt his figures for surplus wheat. I can write to the “appropriate” authorities. I am quite sure that there is plenty of surplus wheat in some parts of the world—just as there was Brazilian coffee. But what I want to know is: will all this surplus wheat continue to be surplus—that is, after it has been properly distributed where there is a shortage, will there *always* be a “surplus”?

In the meantime, Mr. Grubiak has thrown overboard his “all over the world” nonsense, and admits that in “the East” it is “another story.” There, “birth control is a necessity for family life everywhere”—which is, of course, the contention of Malthusians—though we can give scientific reasons for our contention. At the moment, the East is increasing at the rate at least of 100,000 every day—probably more. Between them, India and China have 1,000 millions of people, and there must come a time when they will not accept the standard of living which prevails among them now—they will want a little more than a handful of wheat or rice a day, washed down with some river water. Mr. Grubiak can think only in terms of “surplus” wheat, but he hasn’t an idea how to send it to the “over-populated” areas or what else to give them. If he thinks that the surplus food areas are going to lower their standard of living to provide for the hordes of Hindus and Chinese who are flooding the world, he must think again.

On TV recently was an interview with Dr. Chisholm, who was Director-General of the World Health Organisation (1940-44), and he had no doubt whatever what the danger of over-population meant. In his book, *Can the People Learn?* he says that the facts about world population taken from the Population Commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations give “a true and terrifying picture of the calamitous rate of increase in numbers of people in the world”—which all the Grubiaks in the world cannot answer. The leading scientific authorities in the world are with Dr. Chisholm, and all Mr. Grubiak can do is to bring forward a Communist professor, and a Roman Catholic priest or two. He can have them.

H.C.

—NEXT WEEK—

NEW APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

By The REV. J. L. BROOM, M.A.

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.

TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601

Hon. Editorial Committee:

F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

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.; half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. (In U.S.A.: 13 weeks, \$1.15; 26 weeks, \$2.25; 52 weeks, \$4.50.)

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 welcome during normal office hours.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

S. W. BROOKS.—Please supply Mr. Cutner with examples of what you mean taken from his articles.

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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, June 7th, 6.45 p.m.: C. W. MARSHALL.

"Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Insurrection."

Glasgow (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, June 7th, 7 p.m.: GUY ALDRED, "Thomas Paine—Citizen of the World."

National Council for Civil Liberties (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, June 12th, 7.30 p.m.: Speakers: ALBERT EVANS, M.P., NIGEL NICHOLSON, M.P., Rev. A. D. BELDEN, Rev. W. JENNER, A. R. TYRRELL. Chairman: MALCOLM B. PURDIE.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 7th, 7 p.m.: Thomas Paine Memorial Meeting. Chairman: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER. Speakers: Dr. C. BODE, MICHAEL FOOT, D. PHOMBEAH and Dr. R. FLETCHER.

Notes and News

GLASGOW, like London, will honour the 150th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine. A meeting is to be held in the Central Halls, Bath Street, on Sunday, June 7th, 7 p.m.—at precisely the same time as the London demonstration in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. In Glasgow, Mr. Guy Aldred will be the principal speaker, and his subject is "Thomas Paine: Citizen of the World." The meeting has the full support of the Glasgow Secular Society and it is hoped that Scottish Freethinkers will turn up in force. We also hope that their London colleagues will likewise fill the Conway Hall.

★

No recent hanging has caused so much comment, stirred so much emotion, prompted so much opposition as that of Ronald Marwood. Opposition on varied grounds, from different quarters, but not to be ignored. That is why it is right that the National Council for Civil Liberties (to which the National Secular Society is affiliated) should have organised a meeting to discuss two important questions: "Was there doubt in the Marwood case?" and

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £203 7s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; Slough Humanist, 7s.; F.S.B.L., £20.—Total to date, May 29th, 1959, £223 16s. 6d.

"Should Capital Punishment be ended?" This will take place in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, on Friday, June 12th, at 7.30 p.m., under the chairmanship of Malcolm B. Purdie. The speakers will be Albert Evans, M.P., Nigel Nicholson, M.P., the Rev. A. D. Belden, the Rev. William Jenner, and A. R. Tyrrell. We hope London readers will support this meeting. The National Council for Civil Liberties has also issued a duplicated leaflet on *Anti-Semitism and Colour-Bar: A Warning*. Details of the Council are obtainable from its offices, 293 New King's Road, London, S.W.6.

★

AND now, a final reminder to Midlanders, of Leicester Secular Society's dance in aid of the local Spastic Society, on Saturday, June 6th, from 7.30 to 11.30 p.m., in the De Montfort Hall. Tickets, 3s., from the Secular Hall; at the door, 3s. 6d.

★

WE learn from the *Funeral Service Journal* (March 14th, 1959) that a law opening Roman Catholic cemeteries for the burial of heretics and unbelievers has been passed by an overwhelming majority by the Polish Parliament, the only opposition coming from seven Catholic deputies. Henceforth, cemeteries that have been reserved solely for Catholics must "accept all the local dead, no matter what their former faith or attitude towards religion, if there is no local municipal cemetery."

Thomas Paine Exhibition

AN APPROPRIATELY INTERNATIONAL GROUP assembled in the Marx Memorial Library, London, on Saturday, May 30th, for the opening of the Thomas Paine Exhibition—the Rationalist Press Association, South Place Ethical Society and National Secular Society being represented by Mrs. G. C. Dowman, Mr. P. G. Dowman and Mr. Colin McCall respectively.

The Library, assisted by Mr. Christopher Brunel, has arranged an enormously interesting collection of items, comprising what Mr. Dowman called "a real slice of history." And what a slice! A slice of vital, living history that it behoves all London Freethinkers to see. There is Paine in the American Revolution; Citizen Thomas Paine in France; His life in London and Lewes; Books and Pamphlets of all kinds; Pottery of the French Republic; and numerous commemorative coins. There is a good deal about Carlile, Cobbett, Rickman, and there are samples of anti-Paine literature and cartoons. We see, too, notes of previous Paine exhibitions and even a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* strip cartoon (1953), with a reference to Paine. Last, but not by any means least, is an enlargement of a personally-written letter of support from novelist Eden Phillpotts, apologising for his bad writing due to blindness.

The Exhibition will remain open until June 13th, Tuesdays to Fridays from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The address is Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1.

We are pleased to note, too, that the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, has arranged a display of Paine's books for the week beginning June 8th, the 150th anniversary of the death of our great Citizen of the World.

W. H. Hudson's Vision of Earth

By G. I. BENNETT
(Concluded from page 171)

IN *A Traveller in Little Things*, speaking of what he lacked, the "faith and hope of re-union with our lost," Hudson says, "They were like us, beings of flesh and blood, or we should never have loved them. If we cannot grasp their hands their continued existence is nothing to us." And he describes as "erroneous" the idea that "our earthly happiness comes from elsewhere—some region outside our planet . . ."

It is to his credit that Mr. Hamilton—a Christian (and, I suspect, a Catholic)—makes full and fair avowal of Hudson's unbelief. And he does so without the gloss of one writer I have read—a clergyman—that Hudson was, it is true, an agnostic, but he didn't profess to know and kept an open mind on the subject—that he was at heart a truly spiritual-minded man who "stood awed in the presence of Infinite Mystery"! Mr. Hamilton writes: "Although for years he had clung to the vague form of Christianity he had learned very inadequately in his childhood, he gradually abandoned it; and when, towards the end of his life, he wrote *The Book of a Naturalist* . . . all orthodox belief had gone." "As the saint loves man in God, so Hudson loved man in nature," he says a couple of pages further on; and elsewhere he notes that, for Hudson, "nature was a beautiful, impersonal mother who took little thought for her children." But though he states Hudson's attitude fully enough, his own fundamental opposition to that attitude leads him to attempt, within the purview of his subject, to justify theism. In my view, he rather overdoes it, and it leads him, I think, to a false conclusion about Hudson. That would be my only criticism of an otherwise admirable book.

It is true, as Mr. Hamilton points out, that Hudson accepted nature as the ultimate value, with its corollary that "an intense and spiritualised life of the senses is the highest to which man can attain." But this vision of the earth, he continues, "needs to be completed in the vision of the living God—and it was here that Hudson failed." He goes on: "Any ultimate value less than God contains, as less than God, that privation of being which is the origin of sin and despair; and unless the vision of nature as the ultimate value is informed by an intuition that takes it beyond its limitations, the naturalist may easily fall a prey to the oppressive element of suffering."

Mr. Hamilton makes several references to Thomas Hardy, and it is probably of him especially that he is thinking when he writes that the atheist-pessimist's conception of tragedy "derives from the rejection of God who, though not consciously believed to exist, still gives the standard of lost perfection. Such men cannot accept the universe simply as unexplained brute fact; nor do they seem to realise that the lost standard of perfection with which they contrast the evil futility of the world tacitly implies the God whom they reject. They see that there ought to be ultimate justice but refuse to accept the only ground for justice."

About this idea of justice, and its implications as Mr. Hamilton sees them, there is more to follow; but we have arrived at a convenient place for comment.

Morality and belief in God are obviously linked in our biographer's mind. He has the notion that belief in God is belief in the existence of goodness: hence his remark that those whose ultimate value is less than God suffer

from a limitation of outlook and personality ("privation of being"), of which hopelessness and sinfulness are concomitants. Then he goes on to speak of those in whom there is this "privation of being" becoming prey to the "oppressive element of suffering." They (or the more sensitive ones, at least), thinks Mr. Hamilton, cry out against the evil and wrong in the world; and yet, if only they could know it, there *is* a redress for evil and wrong. All seems dark and hopeless to them because theirs is an incomplete vision.

Now in the first place, while their philosophy does not encourage freethinkers to take a rose-tinted view of life, I do not believe they are nearly so gloomy as Mr. Hamilton apparently thinks. In the second place, I do not believe that representative freethinkers quail at accepting the universe as they find it, however unpalatable in some respects. And even where they are pained and saddened by what they see in others and in the world about them, I think they usually resign themselves philosophically to that which they cannot alter, revealing the quiet dignity of honest men and women who prefer to look hard facts in the face to seeking refuge in pleasant, comforting delusion. In the third place, there is no question of a standard of "lost perfection" for them, because they know that perfection does not exist, and that, although we may as idealists conceive of perfection, that by no means implies that a perfect state or a Perfect Being exists, or has ever existed.

So let us proceed.

Says Mr. Hamilton, "The believer in personal immortality is often criticised for what is called his selfish desire for survival; but the criticism is superficial." Why? Because "belief in immortality derives from the sense of justice; and I find it difficult to imagine the state of mind of one who can affirm that the hideous life of a man tortured and murdered in a concentration camp in the flower of his youth, and the easy life of a cultured hedonist who dies at a ripe old age, are each final and complete. Hudson saw the force of such arguments. He doubted and suffered . . . But he never solved the problem, and from time to time it passed across his mind like a dark cloud." "At the deepest levels of his intuition," we are told, "he saw that if the individual does not survive our sense of justice is a mockery, and the world at best a terrifying riddle."

Well, after all my reading of Hudson's writings I must acknowledge that I do not know where he gives even a hint to justify this last statement, and I should have thought it better sums up Mr. Hamilton's than W. H. Hudson's feeling. True enough, Hudson "doubted and suffered," but I believe he *did* accept the world as he found it, never articulating about our sense of justice being a mockery because all the evidence is that we live in a heartless, indifferent universe that holds out no hope of a future existence to make amends for life's inequalities and human sufferings here and now.

Of course, no thoughtfully sensitive man or woman without religious faith can see justice in the world. It does not exist. And while we ourselves must never be guilty of perpetrating injustice, and must reduce it as far as lies within our power, *beyond that* what more can we do than be quietly stoical, quietly heroic, in face of it?

I know no alternative.

Mr. Hamilton ends his biography with a tribute to Hudson as an inimitable writer who has an inspiring message both for those who walk by faith and those who walk by their own light. But just before this, the falsest note of the book is struck, I think, in his assertion that, though Hudson's devotion to nature integrated his outlook, "the rectitude of his life came from Christianity. He found no basis in nature for the kind of ethics he professed, and like so many agnostics of his age, he accepted, ready-made, the ethical system of Christianity." "He lived an exceptionally full and happy life"; but had he accepted Christianity he would, thinks our biographer, "have lived even more fully and his vision have shone more brightly . . ."

If W. H. Hudson were living today to read those lines I wonder what he would say? That an inherently good man or woman may live independently of the Christian moral code, and has no need of the Christian or of any supernatural faith to maintain the highest principles of

virtue and humanity, is something that theists cannot understand.

As for Mr. Hamilton's second point—that Hudson's acceptance of Christianity would have added to the fullness of his life and vision—well, I just do not think this is true. If he is saying that the nature-writer's aversion to dying was such that he would, had he been able, have eagerly grasped at Christianity with its central pillar of life eternal in a sphere beyond ours, then I believe him to be wrong. The life that Hudson wanted was the earth life—no other—and in the assurance of that alone would he have been supremely joyful. And yet, as things were, his cup of happiness was a very full one, despite the slenderness of his financial means, and it derived from his immense zest for life, life, and still more life. He was, as Mr. Samuel J. Looker in the *Worthing Cavalcade Tribute to W. H. Hudson* says, "a grand old pagan with a very primitive and natural side to his love of the open air"; and it was as a pagan, free and unashamed, that he lived out his days.

Sabbatarians' Day

By C. H. HAMMERSLEY

"*British Sunday Observance Laws.*" The Acts of Parliament explained. By Richard Higbed, L.D.O.S., 55 Fleet Street. E.C.4. Price 1s.

TOWARDS THE END of 1958 a glossy and well-produced pamphlet appeared under the auspices of the L.D.O.S. entitled *British Sunday Observance Laws*, by R. J. Higbed. This pamphlet covers in simple language the Acts of 1625, 1627 and 1780, and is a useful guide as to what can be done on Sundays, as well as what cannot. There is an amusing contradiction in the foreword, which is written as one might expect, by the successor of "Misery Martin," Mr. H. J. W. Legerton. He says, "The *Stuart Book of Sports* encouraged sport after worship on Sundays, but the people (through Parliament) would have none of it, because it conflicted with the fourth commandment . . ." In the very next sentence he quotes the Act of 1625, which says, ". . . the keeping of the Lord's Day is a principal part of the true service of God, which in very many places of this realm hath been and now is profaned and neglected by a disorderly sort of people . . ." So it seems that there were many of our ancestors in 1625 who were just as sick of the Lord's day as are the majority of their descendants today.

The Act of 1780, was "An Act for preventing certain abuses and profanations on the Lord's Day." The abuses and profanations which are subsequently described in the preamble were that certain places of amusement were open on the evening of the Lord's Day, under the pretext of enquiring into religious doctrines and explaining texts of the Holy Scriptures.

The passing of this Act, mainly through the efforts of the then Bishop of London, Dr. Beilby Porteous, put a stop to this kind of thing. It is poetic justice that the spiritual descendants of Dr. Porteous were unable to put on a show for the benefit of Coventry Cathedral, mainly due to the 1780 Act which states ". . . that every . . . place which is opened for public entertainment—and to which the public are admitted for money . . . or by ticket . . . shall be deemed a disorderly house." Rather than turn the ruins of Coventry Cathedral into a "disorderly house," the present Bishop had to beat a disorderly retreat.

In 1932, the Sunday Observance Act was modified to allow cinematograph performances, musical entertainments and entertainments "of whatever nature at places author-

ised by virtue of Royal Charter," which includes Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres, and the Royal Albert Hall.

Due to the efforts of certain religious pressure groups, many local councils do not take advantage of their rights to open Sunday cinemas. These groups (who are always fundamentalists) are very active, and attend town meetings in force and write letters to councillors and members of watch committees. A few weeks ago, the Leicester watch committee received no less than a *thousand* letters from mainly religious bodies, protesting against a proposal to open cinemas at 4 p.m. instead of 6 p.m. In a subsequent "free vote" in the council chamber, the sabbatarians won by two votes. It is up to Freethinkers to help to defeat religious reaction, by doing likewise; writing to the Press, and bombarding the councillors and watch committees with letters, or even postcards, to attend public meetings and so on. One must always remember that the general public are apathetic and that all reforms, both progressive and retrogressive, are initiated by individualists and small groups.

Other places allowed to open on Sundays, and also to make a charge for admission are museums, exhibitions of sculpture, waxworks, art galleries, zoological and botanical gardens, aquaria, debates and lectures.

In Scotland it is still illegal to open a shop on Sundays for the sale of merchandise (Acts of 1579 and 1661). However, the "Wec Frees" ignore these Acts, and open their shops regardless; indeed, toleration of this breach of law is so widespread that it is unlikely that any prosecution will be initiated, unless, as Mr. Higbed remarks, "public opinion can be aroused." In Northern Ireland a similar situation obtains, and the L.D.O.S. hope to "educate public opinion" in due course.

In Wales, however, where gloom is the order of the day, the Sunday laws have been a "complete success," though I doubt the veracity of the writer's statement that these laws are "in harmony with the feelings and sentiments of the Welsh people." The one exception in Wales is, of course, the working men's clubs, which have been allowed since 1902.

Sunday trading laws are a thorn in the flesh to small shopkeepers and other citizens alike. However, the list

of commodities which can be bought on Sundays is far too long to be quoted here in full. One can, of course, purchase the "demon drink," also milk (in bottles only), meals, tripe, fresh fruit and vegetables, sweets, medicines, motor accessories, requisites for sports or games, at any place where they are carried on, books and stationery (from railway and other bookstalls), photographic materials, and fodder for horses and donkeys, etc.

In holiday resorts, one may buy *almost* anything, but here local authorities may order shops not to open more than eighteen Sundays in any year. It is interesting to note also that mobile shops are not affected by Sunday Acts; in July, 1958, the case against a man who was accused of selling a packet of tea from a shop on wheels was dismissed by the magistrates at Woodbridge (Suffolk).

The booklet concludes with accounts of recent attempts at revision of Sabbatarian laws, the latest by Mr. Denis Howell, M.P. for All Saints', Birmingham, in March, 1958. At the detriment of contributing 1s. to the L.D.O.S. funds, the writer finds this treatise a useful guide to the subject.

CORRESPONDENCE

CATHOLICISM IN ACTION

May I use the medium of your excellent and enlightened paper to impress upon its readers the true nature of the present threat from the Roman Catholic minority to all who do not belong to its "Fold"?

One has only to look around one's home area, for instance, to see the growth of the influence of this power-seeking religious organisation. In East Sheen and Richmond, to quote an example, within recent years a large school has sprung up and what used to be a very inconspicuously housed parish church has blossomed into a very modern edifice and "clubhouse," both of which have been provided for by both Roman Catholics and "heretics."

In short, the Roman Catholics have not deviated from their original goal of complete domination, and are achieving quite a measure of success. The sane and practical thinking of the Freethinker is needed all the more. In a conflict between Rome and Reason, Rome at present is gaining some ground and the implications for Freethinkers are obvious.

MICHAEL W. GRAY.

THE FREETHINKER FOR 1958
BOUND VOLUME 27/6. Postage 2/-. *Limited number only*
PIONEER PRESS, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1

"LOUD MUSIC FAR OFF" Essays by JOHN O'HARE
Brilliant and Stimulating 2/9 post free
I.L.P. BOOKSHOP . 6 ENDSLEIGH STREET . W.C.1

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW
By ROBERT S. W. POLLARD. Price 2/6, post 6d.
PIONEER PRESS . 41 GRAY'S INN ROAD . LONDON . W.C.1

THOMAS PAINE MEMORIAL MEETING

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)

MICHAEL FOOT
(Editor, "Tribune")

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

DENNIS PHOMBEAH
(Secretary, Committee of African Organisations)

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

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

In all branches of society we have the extremist element who will go to any length to further the cause in which they believe, and it is into this category I would place Mr. E. G. Macfarlane (THE FREETHINKER, May 8th), who, it appears, is prepared to go all the way regardless. To me, this is a rather selfish attitude and one which in many instances, could be responsible for much unhappiness. Admittedly, at the beginning of my son's schooling I had some misgivings about him attending religious instruction, but now I feel quite confident I can cope with the situation. My method is to gradually counteract rather than be abruptly forceful.

Our way of life is so entwined and centred with and around religion that to ignore it is a practical impossibility, and no matter how hard we try to keep our children from it, they are surely bound to come to grips with it sooner or later. In my limited experience I have found that suppression tends either to stimulate an interest, create a demand or cause a revolt. We were informed in a recent issue of THE FREETHINKER that Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* has been banned in South Africa. I should be very much surprised if, because of this action, the demand for this booklet has not risen tremendously.

D. PENKETH.

CATHOLIC IMPERIALISM & WORLD FREEDOM

By AVRO MANHATTAN

Second Edition

AN IMPORTANT COMPREHENSIVE BOOK ON CATHOLICISM IRREFUTABLE FACTUAL EVIDENCE about Vatican political directives to Catholics; about the Catholic denial that the people have any rights; about political Catholicism in England and the U.S.A.; about Vatican diplomacy and international espionage; and hundreds of other vital items.

INVALUABLE for private and public discussions, writings to newspapers, etc. Fully documented and indexed.

528 printed pages, paper cover.

PRICE: 20/- (postage 1/3). \$3.75 (postage 15c.)

PIONEER PRESS . 41 GRAY'S INN ROAD . LONDON . W.C.1

IS SPIRITUALISM TRUE? By C. E. Ratcliffe.

Price 1/-; postage 2d.

(Proceeds to THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund)

THE WORLD MENACE OF CATHOLIC ACTION.

By A. Stewart. Price 1/-; postage 2d.

ROBERT TAYLOR—THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN.

By H. Cutner. Price 1/6; postage 4d.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H.

Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

THE PAPACY IN POLITICS TODAY. By Joseph

McCabe. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP. By

H. Cutner. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

FREEDOM'S FOE—THE VATICAN. By Adrian

Pigott. A collection of Danger Signals for those who value liberty. 128 pages. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan.

3rd Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

Price 21/-; postage 1/3

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. By Chapman Cohen.

Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound.

Price 7/6 each series; postage 7d. each.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT.

By Chapman Cohen.

Price 3/- (specially reduced price); postage 5d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition). By

Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 7d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE. 18 of Chapman

Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one

Volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker.

Price 5/6; postage 8d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner.

Price 1/3; postage 4d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with

40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen.

Cloth 4/-; postage 7d.

HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.

British Christianity critically examined. By C. G. L.

Du Cann. Price 1/-; postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition). By G. W.

Footo and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 6d.

A CHRONOLOGY OF BRITISH SECULARISM.

By G. H. Taylor. Price 1/-; post 2d.