

THE PORN PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

Last week Lord Longford and members of his commission on pornography added to the gaiety of nations when they sampled the night life of Copenhagen. They also succeeded in upstaging Mary Whitehouse, another celebrated defender of righteousness, who was on a visit to West Germany and the Vatican. After Lord Longford gallantly faced the ordeal of traipsing around sex shows and bookshops in the interests of our moral wellbeing, it is perhaps ungrateful to enquire why the self-appointed chairman of a private committee was met at the airport by a representative of the British Embassy. And it would be interesting to know by whose authority Customs officials waived regulations and allowed the noble peer to retain pornographic books he had obtained in Denmark. Whilst accepting that Lord Longford intends to use the books for research purposes, we greatly doubt if the authorities would have been so accommodating if it had been representatives of the National Council for Civil Liberties or the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society who were in possession of such publications.

Decline in Interest

It is virtually certain that Lord Longford's efforts will be self-defeating, for one thing that has clearly emerged from the welter of reports resulting from his visit to Copenhagen is that the Danes have taken the liberation of pornography very much in their stride. Since porn became legal there has been a marked decline in sales. It is estimated that 90 per cent of the customers are tourists or postal applicants from countries where restrictions still apply. The decision to relax the law was not taken lightly, and a parliamentary committee considered a wide range of evidence before recommending a change.

A former Crown prosecutor and Conservative Member of Parliament who was chairman of the Pornography Committee, said that after four years of freedom the committee had not changed its views. He also claimed that by abolishing restrictions the Government had discouraged young people from buying pornography. Now that it was freely available the young had lost interest and the majority of porn-buyers are in the 25-45 age group. Only a small proportion of these are regular buyers.

The headmaster of a Copenhagen grammar school said that pupil's interest in porn had always been slight and had declined even further since the law was changed. When asked what he would do if he found one of the young boys with a book on sex perversion, the headmaster replied: "He is going to need to know that perversions exist, and I cannot think of a better time than when he is naturally curious. We have quite good sex education so these things do not come as a shock".

The experts did not expect the number of serious sex crimes to alter one way or the other when the law was changed. And they have been proved right. However, there has been a marked drop in the number of "nuisance" crimes like indecent exposure and peeping-Tom offences. There has also been a significant increase for minor sexual offences.

The Generation Gap

After visiting several sex shows there seemed to be some disagreement between Lord Longford and his colleagues.

The middle-aged peer said that one of the shows was much more shocking than he had expected: "I left after what seemed to be an eternity, but I believe it was actually only a few minutes". Lord Longford said later that he was disgusted by the shows, and that if he saw many more he would be corrupted. But Gyles Brandreth (23), and Sue Pegden (21), said they were not disgusted, but simply bored, by the sex displays.

Following the accounts of Lord Longford's hard grind (metaphorically speaking) in Copenhagen, Mary Whitehouse's visit to the Vatican was very small beer. She had a ten-minute audience with the Pope who blessed her and commended her campaign against "moral pollution". She had taken copies of *The Little Red Schoolbook* and the prosecuted issue of *OZ* to Rome, but it is not clear if His Holiness deigned to cast his eyes on their profane pages.

Like most Anglican innocents who briefly meet the Pope, or even catch a glimpse of him as he drones interminable platitudes from that balcony, Mary Whitehouse was greatly moved. She later gushed forth her impressions of "this good man" in a radio programme: truly we live in ecumenical times.

Meanwhile, Back in Chadwell Heath . . .

Paul Daniels was a sadder and wiser man. It was announced that the National Youth Protection Movement, which he formed a year ago to shield Britain's innocent teenagers from the horrors of permissiveness, was no more. It was claimed that there had been 1,000 members but apparently only Mr Daniels played an active role in its affairs. He spent over £500 of his own money on the NYPM and organised a demonstration against sex films at the headquarters of Thames Television. He also lectured at the Hornsey College of Art.

Mr Daniels, a former army sergeant, has not been favourably impressed by the "silent majority" who, we are continually being assured, are concerned by permissiveness and declining standards. He told the *Freethinker*: "Most of them are bone lazy. They are armchair critics who rant

SWINBURNE IN RETROSPECT

ERIC GLASGOW

No doubt the time has long passed when some Cambridge Colleges would not permit their undergraduates to choose, as prizes, the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909). Nowadays, radical and unconventional thinking has advanced far beyond Swinburne's avowals of romantic and poetic republicanism, and his fervour for freedom, justice and equality seem to be curiously remote and dated. Even his early poetry from *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) to the first of the series of *Poems and Ballads* (1866), exercises its liberality in a fashion which would scarcely raise any protest today. And in any case its relevance largely ceases as soon as it is separated from its historical context of the struggles for political independence in Greece, Italy, Germany and France.

But even through the impatient rebellion of *Atalanta in Calydon* and of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne had emerged as a voice of freedom, contemptuous of authority, revelling in all the natural sorts of beauty, and hostile towards Establishments everywhere. It was an infectious and explosive doctrine, for most of nineteenth century Europe; and its occurrence and pervasive influence both suggest that the reputed isolation and insularity of Victorian England were less absolute or effective than is often thought. Swinburne's poetry constantly reached out into Europe and expressed, in forms of great eloquence and some durability, the concern of the English literary and liberal imagination for everything that existed or was happening on the Continent.

Dashed Hopes

Those were the preparatory years for Swinburne. The crux probably came in 1871 with the collapse of the Second Empire in France, and the ruthless suppression of the Paris Commune by Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877). It was as Victor Hugo said, the "Terrible Year", and a time to try the tempers and the equanimity of English enthusiasts for freedom and renewal. Swinburne was likely to be greatly affected by its dashed hopes, and his anguish could well be more than most. His permanent attributes included, of course, a close knowledge of France and its language, the friendship of Victor Hugo, and a distrust of force and repression, which had been passed on to him by another English poet, W. S. Landor (1775-1864). Nor was it at all likely that his rising republicanism would be assuaged by the events of 1871, or by his protracted association with the Italian patriot, Mazzini.

He contrived to sublimate his impotence to affect the issue in France, both during and after the German invasion, by expressing in fluent and literary terms what was virtually the ultimate apogee of his belief in the republican ideal. Of course, that was not very likely to increase his rating amongst the respectable and orthodox folk in England, but it did promote Swinburne's lyrical propensities, and it also permitted a heightened scope for his gifts of poetry and insight. For those reasons, it is still possible to read with profit and appreciation Swinburne's volume of 1871 *Songs Before Sunrise*. It was a resourceful book dedicated to Joseph Mazzini. It had seven cover illustrations from designs by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Some of its rich and varied contents had been previously published between 1867 and 1869 in the *Fortnightly Review*, *Lippincott's Magazine* and elsewhere. An Italian translation, of a portion of it, came out from Florence in 1890. The best of our present editions, however, is probably that which is contained in the second volume of the standard collected set of *The Poems of*

Algernon Charles Swinburne. It brings out Swinburne's fervour for the republican cause, which he extends throughout the world: to France, Italy, the USA and Greece, in the *Insurrection in Candia* (poem of January, 1867).

All of it is remarkably brilliant, vivid literature which is good to read a century later. In its style and enthusiasm for words and the splendours of literary prowess, it is still very nineteenth-century. Nevertheless *Songs Before Sunrise*, with all their eloquence for the hopes and rights of the oppressed everywhere, still represent quite potent material which should not be overlooked on the centenary of their first publication. Despite all Swinburne's hues and dimensions—drawn from France, Italy, or even more Mediterranean setting—*Songs Before Sunrise* have also their very English elements. Perhaps, indeed, it is their very immaturity, impetuous confidence and lack of the equation between theory and practice, which gives *Songs before Sunrise* their enduring appeal. Despite its shortcomings, it emerges as a worthy example of English literature, and as a good expression of the basic generousities of the English spirit.

Vision for all Mankind

Songs before Sunrise were full of promise and hope for the future—even in their title which pointed to "the final struggle for Italian freedom", as well as to the less portentous tragedy of France. The book has an enduring merit, despite its exuberance of language and tone, "it includes much of Swinburne's best work" (*Cambridge History of English Literature*). It is pleasant to discover how little it has lost the lustre of its first confidence and enthusiasm of 1871.

Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise* continue to exude future hopes and expectations, and their words have retained a sufficient eloquence for them to be able to suggest the same faith and promise and, despite the long postponements in some parts of the world, of the arrival of the sort of "sunrise" which our Victorian poet looked for and desired. His vision for all mankind has been well ensured by this volume of 1871. We still need to think in terms of justice, opportunity, and fulfilment for humanity everywhere. Science and planning increasingly make it practicable, rescue it from the realms of dreams and fantasy; but the poet's vision introduced it to us in the first place.

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OF LEMMINGS OR MEN

ROBERT ARDREY

Robert Ardrey is the author of "The Social Contract", "African Genesis" and "The Territorial Imperative". This article is based on a speech he delivered at the Family Planning Association's conference "New Frontiers of Birth Control" in the Royal Festival Hall, London, July 1971.

Self-regulation of animal numbers has been one of the more dramatic revelations made by students of animal behaviour in recent decades. Animal populations do not build up their numbers to that point where they encounter the veto of exhausted food supply. A remarkable repertory of built-in mechanisms, behavioural or physiological, compel the normal species to keep the numbers of its young well within the carrying capacity of its habitat.

One does not think of the elephant as a probable pamphleteer for contraception. But in recent years, in the Murchison Falls area of Western Uganda, something like a laboratory-in-the-wild has come about. Divided by the broad, crocodile-haunted Victoria Nile, two distinct populations have built up on its north and south sides, each numbering seven or eight thousand. Food is abundant but the South Bank's restricted space has produced far more severe conditions of overcrowding than the North's. And here the elephant is reducing his numbers. Normal spacing of calves is four years. On the South Bank it has risen to nine. The onset of female fertility occurs usually at 11 or 12 years. Here it has risen to 18.

The elephant remains a mystery. Do females fail to come into heat? Is there copulation without fertilisation? If she becomes pregnant, does she spontaneously abort? We do not know. Yet in contrast, the lion's means of population control are quite observable, quite simple—neglect of the young.

In the lion's behavioural pattern of dominance, the cubs eat last. And so when lean times come and game is scarce, only the hardier of the cubs survive. Mortality in the first year is normally 50 per cent. And lion populations remain of stable number.

Stress Kills

From immense numbers of Australian magpies, only 25 per cent succeed in establishing territories, and only these successfully breed. Yet territorial behaviour is but one means of limitation. In an English woodland if the numbers of great tits double, the next season egg clutch size will be reduced by two. In an Iowa marshland if muskrat numbers rise too high, then the mother muskrat produces fewer embryos, or reabsorbs them.

Perhaps the most spectacular of recent discoveries is known as the Bruce effect, after its English discoverer. A common house mouse normally sees only her sire, who keeps intruders out of their territory. If she is mounted by a strange male within four days after conception, she aborts. If she merely sees him—if she merely smells his recent presence—she aborts. And this is what happens when there are too many mice.

Examples of the self-regulation of animal numbers may be presented without end. But of course there are examples of less sensible species, like lemmings and men. For centuries the lemming's suicide by mass drowning has been

reported in the literature. The common explanation—in perfect accord with Malthusian doctrine—was food shortage. But in more recent decades came precise observations of a disturbing nature. The migrations could occur in seasons of exceptional abundance. It was not food shortage. Only in the 1960s did one get the full spookiness of the lemming; 1963 was a famous lemming year in Sweden. The tiny, five-ounce rodents poured out of the abundant northland to consign themselves to their watery fate. All were the young of the year. In one large sample all were sexually mature yet not a female was pregnant.

The snowshoe hare in Canada, too, goes through immense population build-ups—lacking like the lemming physiological or behavioural controls—then suffers about every ten years population crashes. They drop dead by the million; no epidemics, no famines can explain it. Convulsions contain them, and that is that. Stress kills.

The lemming has no choice; but man has. We have our humane cultural substitutes for biological instincts which the suddenly expanded brain has rendered dim and indecisive. We have contraception and secure abortion. But man cannot deceive himself as is so normally his way. If our most treasured democratic institutions are to be preserved—and with all their faults, we know of none better—then birth control must be compulsory. As one man, poor or rich, cannot be granted the privilege of more than one vote; as one man, of whatever status, cannot be granted the privilege of driving through a red light at 70 miles an hour; as one man cannot be sent to prison for a crime for which another man is free: so one human being cannot be granted the privilege to burden society with other than a fair share of young.

Compulsory Population Restriction

I do not accept the approach of eugenics. I do not believe that we shall produce our Abraham Lincolns or our Albert Einsteins by favouring the rich against the poor, the high IQs against the mentally retarded. I trust the evolutionary process to implicitly, far more implicitly than I trust the judgment of men as to what qualities are of genetic advantage. But that trust rests on the randomness of a fair game. And such fairness cannot be achieved if some players are allotted more chips than others.

We shall come, though perhaps not for a generation, to an acceptance of compulsory population restriction and to means by which it may be enforced. And in the meantime we may amuse ourselves with considerations of the lemming's way, that only alternative to the self-regulation of numbers. We shall see automobile accidents as a most excellent consequence of population density, particularly in its elimination of members of the young breeding group. We shall come to take a brand new view of homosexuality, a most dependable means of reducing breeding numbers, and of suicide itself, in highest praiseworthiness among the young. We shall take a new view of drugs, especially the killers like heroin. We shall recognise that pornography has its virtues, satisfying with voyeurism what otherwise might find its outlet in copulation. Above all, we shall take all taxes off alcohol, that enemy of the night's entertainments.

It is the lemming's way. Perhaps, in the meantime, we shall discover man's.

FREETHINKER

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

The *Freethinker* can be ordered through any newsagent, or obtained by postal subscription from G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.55; 6 months, £1.30; 3 months, 65p; USA and Canada: 12 months, \$6.25; 6 months, \$3.13.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses. London: Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2; *Freethinker* office, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. Glasgow: Clyde Books, 292 High Street. Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road (near Brighton Station).

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Minority Rights Group's latest report—on the Southern Sudan and Eritrea—just out, price 30p from MRG, 36 Craven Street, London, WC2.

EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, Telephone: 642 8796.

To make matters worse, not only is the Northern Ireland situation about principles, it is about the most heady and volatile mixture of principles one can imagine. Foremost is religion. I have heard it said, by those who claim to know the situation, that religion is not a factor in the troubles. It's a mighty coincidence, then, that the warring parties cleave cleanly on religious lines! Of course, it is a matter of religion, which is a principle as blood-soaked as they come.

—*The Inquirer (The Unitarian and Free Christian Weekly).*

NEWS

NO SOLUTION TO VIOLENCE

"The police haven't got a monopoly of concern about the increase in violent crime", a spokesman for the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders told the *Freethinker* last weekend. Jimmy Gordon, information officer of NACRO, said the Association was worried by the way in which "violent language and increased emotion about the treatment of violent criminals was spreading over into the treatment of the bulk of people who are in prison. They are often petty criminals with social problems, and should not have been in prison in the first place".

Mr Gordon went on to say it was "absolute nonsense to paint a picture of prison being a holiday camp. The ghastly squalor and overcrowding, and the strain on prison staff, often result in men leaving prison in a much more damaged state than when they went in. The violent criminal has to be kept out of harm's way, but there is no point in just locking him up and subjecting him to treatment which will make him even more embittered".

The murder of a Blackpool police superintendent has been exploited to the full by sections of the police, politicians and Fleet Street. One-sided radio and television "discussions" were arranged in which all the stops were pulled out by the participants. Policemen's widows were pleading for the return of capital punishment; one of them claimed that policemen were being killed every few months. In fact, 14 have been killed during the last ten years. These killings were tragic affairs, and the extreme reactions of the victims' relatives are understandable. But it is rather unpleasant when they are used by reactionary and repressive elements in order to bring back barbaric forms of punishment.

Two Scotland Yard officers were interviewed by *The Times*, and if their views are widely accepted in police circles then it is time for all who value justice and civil liberty to strongly oppose giving further powers to the police. In the United States the police have wide powers; they have used their power to kill, maim and frame their victims. Corruption, dishonesty and other forms of criminal behaviour are widespread. Rather than preventing crime, American police have turned the country into a bedlam of violence and repression. But for the existence of "watch-dog" organisations in Britain we, too, could find ourselves in a similar situation.

There have been stirring pleas for the restoration of good relations between the police and the public. Assuming that such relations were ever all that good, which is very doubtful, perhaps it would be useful to enquire why they have deteriorated in the last 20 years.

It is continually being said that the police are always at a disadvantage. But are they? A policeman's word is invariably believed in court; if a suspect leaves a police station bruised and bleeding the police explanation that "fell down" will be accepted; if a young person claims that drugs have been planted on him he will be advised to get his hair cut and the police will be complimented on doing a difficult job. Minorities are harassed, and when one of them is goaded into taking a swipe at a policeman there are howls from the "flog 'em, hang 'em" brigade.

S AND NOTES

The police have traditionally resisted law reforms. Most of them opposed the abolition of the death penalty, but the names of Derek Bentley and Timothy Evans should be constant reminders of the fact that if the death penalty is brought back, men may be judicially done to death for revenge or in error.

It would be beneficial to everyone if the police concentrated on combatting real crime and spent less time raiding bookshops, publishers' premises and offices of the "underground" Press. And there would be fewer deaths if police officers sometimes acted in a less foolhardy manner when confronted with a knife or a gun.

MHG REPORT ON SOVIET MINORITIES

The extraordinary and little-known story of the Russians' treatment of their Crimean Tatar and Volga German minorities is documented by Ann Sheehy in the latest report published by the Minority Rights Group, the independent research and information Trust, whose previous reports have included investigations of minority situations in Ireland, Japan and Africa.

This is the fiftieth anniversary of Lenin's grant to the Tatars of their autonomous republic, which was revoked by Stalin and has never been restored since. Until General Grigorenko and some other Russians courageously took up their cause and publicly campaigned for the restoration of the Crimean Tatar's rights, little was heard about the plight of the Tatars, who lack the vociferous and well-organised foreign lobby which the Soviet Jews have.

During the Second World War Stalin deported en bloc to central Asia seven Soviet nationalities (totalling some one and a half million people) either to prevent, or as a punishment for, alleged wholesale collaboration with the Germans—although many of them had fought with distinction in the Russian army and with the partisans. Khrushchev in his famous secret speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 included these deportations in his catalogue of Stalin's crimes. In 1957 Soviet decrees were passed reconstituting the autonomous territories of five of the seven nationalities but for the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans however there was, and has been, no such restitution.

Despite harassment and prosecutions, the Crimean Tatars, who now number about 300,000, have never ceased to campaign for the equality of rights with the other nations of the USSR which Lenin had granted them. While protesting their loyalty and communism, they claim that the manner in which they were deported—at bayonet-point, with only a few minutes' warning, and crowded in cattle-trucks to Uzbekistan (near Afghanistan)—came close to genocide. Certainly many thousands of them died during and after the journey.

The surviving Volga Germans (who had been sent beyond the Urals) were eventually "politically rehabilitated" in 1964, and the Crimean Tatars in September, 1967. But neither group has been allowed what they principally want: repatriation to their homes and the restoration of their national autonomy. In 1968 and 1969 Tatar families

who tried to return to their homeland in the Crimea were evicted, imprisoned and expelled.

In May 1969 General Grigorenko, who was about to appear for the defence in a trial of some Tatars in Tashkent, was arrested and confined in a psychiatric institution. But the Tatars are undeterred and still continuing to petition the Soviet leaders, to demonstrate, and to use every peaceful means open to them to ask for the cultural and other rights to which they are entitled under article 123 of the Constitution of the USSR.

This latest Minority Rights Group report is entitled *The Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans: Soviet Treatment of two National Minorities*, and is available from the MRG office, 36 Craven Street, London, WC2 (30p plus 5p postage).

PUBLIC DEBATE :

THAT MAN NEEDS GOD

Proposed by

Sir DAVID RENTON, QC, MP

Opposed by

DAVID TRIBE

Former president of the National Secular Society; author of *100 Years of Freethought*, President Charles Bradlaugh, MP, etc.

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(Continued from front page)

about bringing back hanging and conscription. I have been shocked most of all at the way in which the churches have boycotted my efforts. This was simply because I am not a churchgoer, and once expressed my belief that many churchgoers will pray for you on Sunday and rob you on Monday".

He invited the National Viewers and Listeners Association to sponsor a demonstration, but Mrs Mary Whitehouse replied that most of the members were church people and would not wish to participate in such a demonstration on Sunday.

Mr Daniels continued: "With an army and police background my views probably belong to the past. Indeed I am beginning to wonder if the thousands of British people who have become permissive may be right. Perhaps it's time for me to get a share of the permissive society. Certainly I enjoy the friendship and happy-go-lucky attitude I have encountered amongst the more tolerant and permissive people.

"I do not regret losing the money which I spent on the National Youth Protection Movement. It has given me an opportunity to meet people with all kinds of views, and I am the richer for that experience".

BOOKS

ORIGINS OF ASTROLOGY

by Jack Lindsay. Muller, £4.00.

It is no great age since Astronomers Royal were required to make astrological predictions as part of their job. Even the great Kepler cast horoscopes, though with tongue in cheek. For millennia astronomy and astrology were inseparable, the latter dominating the thought and structure of the greater part of the civilised world. *Origins of Astrology* is a massive study of the political and social effects of divination from its beginnings in Babylonia to the rise of Christianity in the third century. Jack Lindsay's erudition is profound, but this is not the forbidding book one might have expected; his conversational style makes easy and enjoyable reading. Attention to detail can be gauged from the fact that Egypt, said to have contributed little to astrology, has some 80 pages devoted to it. Discussion is rational throughout save for one minor lapse. Oddly for a Marxist, the Star of Bethlehem and the Adoration of the Magi are treated as historical facts, just when Christians are ready to give them up as poetical embellishments to the gospel story.

Practically all observers of sky-phenomena in the ancient world shared a concept of the divine nature of the heavenly bodies. Star patterns were early likened to animals and other earthly objects, whose characteristics were automatically transferred to their astral counterparts, and thence to those born when the latter were rising. Babylonia went further than any other civilisation in building up a coherent omen-system. This, Mr Lindsay suggests, was due to a fine balance between stability and instability in that area. Vulnerability to attack led to periodic disasters, with new starts made under new dynasties. At the same time there was a large and stable body of priests, able to build up records of astronomical data over centuries and constantly striving to foresee danger-points by means of assumed correspondences between heavenly and earthly activities.

Greek mathematical astronomy was not autonomous; much had been gathered from Babylonia via religious cults active in the Aegean. The horoscope, a Babylonian invention, was taken over and greatly developed by the Greeks, though the philosophers were more interested in cosmological speculations. Plato in particular was greatly influenced by the accumulated star-lore. His development, traced by the author, shows a growing insistence on astronomy proper coupled with star-worship; divination he seems to have held in contempt. Astrology, however, was deeply interwoven with popular religion, and the rise of rationalism among the philosophers and playwrights led to a series of heresy trials, sparked off by pressure from astrologers who saw a threat to their prestige and livelihood.

Astrology reached the height of its power in Rome, where it had been introduced by slaves and war-captives from the East. Astrologers attained positions of considerable political influence, though always liable to sudden falls from grace, for a successful prediction of death or disaster could result in a charge of using magic to bring it about. The crime of "literary treason" was introduced about 8 AD, making it an offence to prophesy death. There were those who might be stimulated to make the prediction come true, a danger keenly felt by the rulers. Though sensitive to inquiries into their own futures, some emperors

FREETHINKER

were not adverse to using astrology to sift out possible rivals. Domitian took horoscopes of the foremost Romans, and as a result executed not a few who had no aspirations to power. Elagabal kept soothsayers of every kind about him, and made them all perform daily sacrifices. Children were killed so that their entrails might be inspected for omens. These precautions did not save him; his excesses were such that he was killed by his own guards.

Christians, resenting the power of the Roman State, rejected as a matter of course the astrology so closely bound in with it. They held that Jesus had destroyed the stars' power over mankind, though the astrological imagery in Revelation shows that old habits of thought were not easily shed.

Astrology has had some hard things said about it. Yet Mr Lindsay reminds us, it was not simply a misapplication of astronomy. It was linked with the impulses and needs driving men to study the stars, and astronomy could not have developed without it. It was embedded in a complex system of ideas about the relationship of man with the cosmos, without which we should have had no human culture at all.

Illustrated by nearly a hundred line drawings, presumably by the author, *Origins of Astrology* could well become the standard reference work on its subject.

R. J. CONDON

THE ENTHUSIASTS: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN AND KATHERINE BRUCE GLASIER

by Laurence Thompson. Gollancz, £3.

To even the most ardent student of politics the name of John Bruce Glasier will be at best only faintly recognisable today. And yet Glasier and his wife did, perhaps, more than most to build up the Labour movement in the latter decades of the last century and the early years of the present one.

As Laurence Thompson tells us in what is, therefore, a most timely and long overdue book, Glasier was growing up in Scotland when Ramsey MacDonald and Keir Hardie, who like him were illegitimate, were also children. His father was a militant atheist (Glasier lost his religious faith and ambition to be a Calvinist minister when he read biology in his adolescence), and although the story of his childhood is somewhat sparse Mr Thompson has been aided by his subject's diary to create a very full record of his intellectually formative years.

As both a socialist and a poet it is not surprising that his early devotion was toward Shelley and Byron. Early in life Glasier suffered unemployment—he was an apprentice architectural draughtsman—and became active in politics. As he later admitted the turning point of his life and philosophy was his meeting with William Morris. Thirty-five years later he wrote of the occasion: "A glow seemed to be about him, such as we see lighting up the faces in a room when a beautiful child comes in. . . . There was in his eyes, especially when in repose, that penetrating, far-away, impenetrable gaze that seems to be fixed on something beyond that at which it is directly looking, so

REVIEWS

characteristic of the King of the Forest". On Morris' death, Glasier wrote: "To our starved souls he seemed almost as a god, one who created all things anew to our eyes". Morris' influence was a lasting one: Glasiers' socialism remained ethical and emotional—and was no less valid for being so—and, while less of a poet than Morris, who urged him to write prose rather than poetry for his *Commonweal*, as a designer he was exceptionally gifted, as the example reproduced show. Unlike Morris, politics, rather than the arts dominated his activities, and as secretary of the Glasgow branch of Morris' Socialist League, he showed the enthusiasm, energy and dedication which he displayed all through his life, and particularly when he edited the Independent Labour Party's *Labour Leader*.

This is also the story of Katherine Bruce Glasier, who married Glasier when she was 26 and he 34. Her's was a middle-class background, and, while she was unconventional product of Cambridge, and a Fabian, she was High Anglican and he agnostic. The author knew her and writes: "I found her the most completely and unself-consciously happy human being I have ever encountered". She survived Glasier by 30 years when, in 1950, she died at the age of 82.

The classics mistress and the agnostic poet and politician threw themselves into the turmoil of socialist activity. They were incessant lecturers and speakers and no small part of their time was spent healing the factional squabbles which threatened to rend asunder the Left. They were highly impractical, even unworldly. Glasier showed a complete disregard for money, and assumed his unselfishness in others.

Much new light is shed upon the origins of the ILP, and the election of the 29 Labour members in 1906. The Glasiers' lives became bound up with the struggles between Hardie and MacDonald, the attempts to maintain two Labour daily newspapers and relationship between the Labour Party and the Great International. There are fewer more moving or interesting parts of the book than the description of the effect of the Great War upon this attractive couple.

Their contribution to the Labour movement, apart from their tremendous organisational and administrative work, was their passionate idealism and anti-Marxism. But they were never distracted from personal joys and happiness, and Mr Thompson says that Katherine's contentment derived largely from "the love, tolerance and self-abnegation of her husband".

TERRY PHILPOT

THEATRE

GOOD LADS AT HEART. Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre, London.

THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY. Shaw Theatre, London.

Plays for a National Youth Theatre should ideally have a large cast, bags of action and an episodic plot. In this way inexperienced actors can learn the mechanics of their craft by having things to do but little or nothing to say. Older hands are given big but no dramatically intensive roles that might founder in amateur hands, and everyone can experience something of the creative process through genuine participation and improvisation.

This year the NYT is running (for very limited seasons) two plays simultaneously, one modern, one Elizabethan. Strangely—or, perhaps, not so strangely—they have quite a lot in common apart from the characteristics just outlined. Today we are recapturing something of the liveliness the theatre had when its practitioners were "rogues and vagabonds" rather than "literary men", though this of course could bring its own hazards in the form of exploitation or shapelessness. Both Peter Terson (*Good Lads at Heart*) and Thomas Dekker (*The Shoemaker's Holiday*) have their patrons (the Arts Council or the Earl of Nottingham), their overseers (Michael Croft or Philip Henslowe) and actors who are given considerable latitude in rewriting their own lines. For a long time *The Shoemaker's Holiday, Or The Gentle Craft*, which was published anonymously in 1600, at the beginning of which it was performed before Elizabeth I, was attributed to Dr Barton Holyday; while Peter Terson, who first made his and the NYT's name with *Zigger Zagger* in 1967, says—with, no doubt, some modest hyperbole—"I feel a bit guilty about writing this programme note because the kids in the cast did most of the writing of the play". Whatever their origins, both plays give ample scope for songs, charades and horseplay, revel in bawdy dialogue, and to the dramatic purist go on rather too long. Both have elements of the comedy of manners, though *Good Lads at Heart*, set in an approved school (since 1969 euphemistically called a "community home"), has a more challenging, interesting and convincing theme. The Elizabethan play gives the conventional nod in the direction of royalty, referring to the King of England. His words to the heroine, "Yet I believe I shall not marry you", rather suggest a later tribute to the homosexual James I, but appear in the original edition and, with tennis, presumably have Henry VIII in mind. But the satire against the pretensions of the *bourgeoisie* and the foppishness of the *petite aristocratie* loses some of its point by coming adrift in time. *Good Lads* strikes a good balance between the attempt philanthropic attempt of drama teachers to give their delinquent charges insight into their situation and encouragement to act out the essential folly of the drugs scene and big crime, and the accepted wisdom of the senior staff who know how fragile is the stability they have built up among these disturbed youngsters over many months.

The plays are directed with great imagination and control by David Weston (*Shoemaker*), Michael Croft and Barrie Rutter (*Lads*). Blank verse with many rhyming couplets is a challenge for young amateurs, but they cope bravely enough; though the artisans, who don't have this hazard, are rather more convincing. George Irving and Sarah Brown as the shoemaker and his dame just the right period gusto. Everyone was so true to character in the *Lads* that it would be invidious to single out individuals save to say that Jeffrey Baggott, Anthony Conaboy and Stevan Andrews coped well with the longest and most demanding roles.

DAVID TRIBE

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LETTERS

A Sort of Gurgling Protest

For several years past your editorial staff, in common with the metropolitan Left intellectuals, have lambasted we poor, ill-educated provincials with sex education "bull" in such malodorous plenitude, that I think it is time someone, somewhere, raised some sort of gurgling protest.

Your reactions to current events in this field have become as predictable as tomorrow's tides. On learning of the result of the OZ trial, immediately there arose in my mind a vision of what your comments would be. Sure enough, the 7 August issue proved, regrettably, that my vision was 100 per cent accurate. There it is, overt suggestions of misdirection by the Judge, and, inferentially, that the jurors (with one possible exception?) were a set of brainless nincompoops. It is well known in Left circles, of course, that jurors are specially selected for this reason. This takes no account of the fact that I believe Richard Neville to be on record as saying that they had a fair trial.

Sex education, yes, please, and there are many devoted teachers endeavouring to treat this subject on a good rational basis, but where do you draw a line? Seemingly nowhere. The ironic thing is that most of the "all out, nothing barred" sex education maniacs are also Marxists of one shade or the other, knowing full well that no Communist country would tolerate for one moment the dissemination of anything akin to the OZ publications.

I hope I have been a freethinker for many years. On this matter, I think you have long forfeited any claim to the title. Please prove to me indisputably that this movement has made one child one whit the happier than were children of 50 years ago. An increase in the number of 12-year-old children becoming mothers and the incidence of VD among teenagers is a deplorable answer.

H. W. DAY.

What the Stars Foretell

How dare F. A. Ridley attempt to extract the urine from the noble art of reading the stars. He must thank his lucky stars that I am not near enough to thrash him within an inch of my life.

I was born in January. That is to say I am a Capricorn. This means that my mum and dad climbed under a gooseberry bush to avoid an April shower. And they passed the time helping to increase the slum population of good old London Town.

Take my forecast at time of writing. I should not ask for a wage increase at work or change my job. Patience will pay off. Since I won't get an increase or be able to get another job one can see the wisdom of the stars. Ridley is obviously a Virgo: "Be careful when crossing the road: a rich widow may ask for help: if you take any chances you may be in trouble".

Millions of British people are helped daily by the forecasts. How else can the factory worker make like actions from the time he is taken on to the 65-star birthday he is given a brass watch? It is only by the hopes of the day the midwife opened a dustbin lid that foretold the wonders of his past. I mean, that hope: "You are going to have a lot of money: beware of false friends: a loved one will knock at your door".

It did not happen—so what. Can FAR expect perfection?

There was once a chap I knew who won half a million on the football pools. "Was it forecasted by the stars?" I asked excitedly.

"Oh yus, me old woman's book 'ad it in."

"And when were you born?"

"January . . ."

Mr Ridley, please be silent.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

Inspiration

I'm glad to see that secularists are at last beginning to clean up W. Stewart Ross ("Saladin"). Perhaps the efforts of Nigel Sinnott and London Young Humanists (*Freethinker*, 28 August) which began at his grave will inspire others to clear away some of the Bradlaugh inspired muck which has been allowed to cover his character.

J. STEWART ROSS.

The Paranormal

Of course Michael Gray is right when he complains (*Freethinker*, 21 August) about my refusal to acknowledge the possibility of the paranormal. That was as wrong as denying the potential reality of fairies, for which there is at least some of Mr Gray's "experience . . . genuine or not". It must also be allowed that pigs might one day evolve wings. But seriously, can there be any point in continuing the experiments in ESP and the like which have been going on for nearly a century with not a single affirmative established? Must we say nothing which might discourage academics from wasting their careers?

There is, I agree, much in the world that we do not understand. But the paranormal hardly comes into that category, since simple explanations have been found for all of its alleged manifestations. We do not need to postulate an "extra sense".

What Mr Gray is pleased to call my sneers and prejudices in fact reflect the views of the author of *Seers, Psychics and ESP*, to whom any further remarks of this kind should be addressed. For my part, I commend Milbourne Christopher for using his experience and common sense to expose the paranormal for the humbug it is.

R. J. CONDON.

ESP

Michael Gray, in his letter criticising R. J. Condon for an apparent "eagerness to disbelieve", implies that it is "quite reasonable to believe "that ESP may be one day proved fact". In which event, ESP would presumably lose its "paranormality" and become "believable" in the normal sense of being an established scientific "fact". There is, therefore, objective validity in Mr Condon's general prediction that "there never will be evidence in favour of the paranormal"; the point being that there cannot be "evidence" in favour of the paranormal—there can only be "evidence" against it.

CHARLES BYASS.

Too Much Sex

I know that any journal has, to some extent, study its readers, but it seems that the *Freethinker* leans too much that way. Preoccupations with hair, cut long or short, Sunday openings and closings, normal sex, sexual deviations, and so on, are not going to solve the world's present problems. The young today are losing themselves in irrelevancies and futilities, and in many respects are the dupes of the very influences they think they are fighting against. For example, "making love not war" is simply playing Napoleon's game. When his attention was called to heavy losses after a battle, he simply replied that "one night of his soldiers in Paris would remedy that". The fault is not in sex, or sexual intercourse—it is simply that to throw two young people together is to invite procreation—which, in the present state of the world, is the real evil of sex. One can point in vain to the Pill. Insensate personal pride in offspring is as strong and rife as it ever was, and parents who violently condemn certain attitudes of other people applaud those same attitudes when shown by their own children.

R. READER.

No Persecution

I take exception to the article "The Reckoning in Ulster: Religious Hatred Inflames the Province" (*Freethinker*, 21 August). Are the views expressed in this article (unsigned, so presumably written by the editor) also the views of the Editorial Board? If not, a disclaimer should be published.

In my view the grass roots trouble in Ulster is segregated schools which suits the Catholic Church in its policy of indoctrination. It is wrong to suggest that the trouble in Ulster is one of repression of the Catholic minority. The Catholic Church has thrived on persecution, and if none exists it will be created in fancy if not in fact.

Republican leaders are quoted as saying: "If Ireland should become united the religious and civil liberties would be guaranteed". Catholics will promise anything to achieve their ends. I remember how a meeting of Dublin freethinkers was broken up by a gang of thugs. I also recollect Cabinet Ministers in Eire saying "we must do what the bishops tell us". This was when Noel Browne's bill to introduce a Health Service was tossed out by the Dail.

To suggest that Ian Paisley—a man who has never thrown a bomb, shot a soldier or intimidated citizens—is at the root of all the trouble is nonsense. The issue is clear. Is it to be the rule of law or the rule of the gun. As a freethinker I take my stand with the law and against the gunman.

JOHN BUCHANAN.