

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

VOL. XLVIII.—No. 10

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1928

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Canon Streeter's Discovery.—The Editor</i> - - -	129
<i>George Meredith's Centenary.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	131
<i>Sudden Death.—Bayard Simmons</i> - - -	132
<i>Holy Taboo: The Life Shield of Superstitions.—Keridon</i>	132
<i>The Character of God.—E. J. Lamel</i> - - -	134
<i>The late John T. Lloyd.—Arthur B. Moss</i> - - -	138
<i>A Plea for Criticism.—Harold Scudder</i> - - -	138
<i>In Defence of the Press.—Ronald H. S. Standfast</i> -	139
<i>Mediocracy: The Ravings of a Thirdrate Mind.—Ethel Brée</i> - - -	140
<i>The Gates of Altitude.—William Repton</i> - - -	140

*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

Canon Streeter's Discovery.

ONCE upon a time, a very long time ago, the unbeliever was an object of dread. He had to be suppressed for fear of what the tribal Joss might do to the rest of the people if he were permitted to live. But experience penetrates the thickest head, in time, and it began to be observed that if men left the unbeliever alone, nothing very serious happened. So the priest had to find another reason for the discouragement of unorthodoxy. It was discovered that the unbeliever might not be an evil thinker, but he was an evil liver. He was not so much the conductor of divine malignity as he was a source of moral infection. And for a time that worked. But the race of the undevout went on increasing, and acquaintance with them made the theory of moral contamination lose some of its attractiveness. It was observed that unbelievers were not usually worse than other people, and sometimes it happened they were even better than believers. So it became established that a man might disbelieve in all the gods, and save for that mental kink, could remain just a normal individual.

This put the religious apologist in a rather difficult position. He could understand the wicked Freethinker; he could even admire him. It was the only kind of Freethinker that *ought* to exist. Preachers had told their congregations the crimes that every Freethinker ought to commit. Good, robust religious liars had written tracts detailing the crimes Freethinkers had committed; and every Freethinker who lived up to the character that had been carved out for him was helpful to the Church. But the one who was not worse than the Christian, who might, it was whispered, be as good, or even better than many a Christian, what the devil was the Christian apologist to do with him? It was disturbing. A Freethinker of that kind really ought not to exist. It was an affront to the clergy, an outrage on religion, an indictment of the providential government of the world. The best brains in the Christian Church had drawn up an elaborate guide to the devil for the use

of the unbelieving, and the unbeliever obstinately refused to be guided by it. From the Christian point of view the unbeliever was some good so long as he was bad; but he was wholly bad so soon as he became good.

* * *

Our Moral Bankruptcy.

Then a way out was found. It was true the Freethinker was not so bad as he ought to be, but there was an explanation. He came, usually, from a Christian ancestry; and he had a Christian environment. And the good influence of the two, the constant sight of the goodness presented in the lives of his Christian neighbours, their truthfulness, their charity, their gentleness could not but affect him. Society might stand a certain number of Freethinkers, so long as the number of Christians was sufficiently great to overcome their influence, just as a moderate dose of poison might be endured by an organism in a state of robust health.

This, put very plainly, is the theory recently adopted by Canon Streeter, one of the acclaimed *thinkers* in the Church; although I remember meeting with the argument among Christian Evidence lecturers over thirty years ago. He has discovered that we are heading for moral bankruptcy, because we are living on our moral capital—that is, the moral force engendered by Christianity. And he concludes that if the number of non-Christians goes on increasing we shall be morally broke. Here is the state of affairs visualized by a Christian "thinker," as given in the February issue of *Nash's Magazine* :—

The modern world is living on the stock of moral principle, moral ideals and moral energy, which has slowly been accumulated by our forefathers since the Reformation. The moral impetus of such actual good living, or practical reform, as we see about us results from two things. First, the series of religious movements which have occurred at intervals during the last 400 years. Secondly, of movements, less clearly and openly associated with religion, such as the struggle for political liberty, the fight for democracy, and the humanitarian movement. These have entered deeply into the consciousness of the race. By these creative movements of the past there has been produced a kind of moral *momentum* which is to-day carrying along the great majority without their needing to exert any special thought, or any effort, of a moral kind. The majority of people keep more or less straight because to do so has become the accepted and accustomed thing in the circles in which they have been brought up.

There is just a little relief to this dark situation. "None of the Christian Churches are quite dead, while widespread activities like the Christian Students' Movement, or the Boy Scout Movement are very much alive." It is good to learn that Civilization may be saved by the Christian Students and the Boy Scouts, although we do not know what Billy Sunday

and the Bishop of London, and the Froth Blowers have done to escape at least honourable mention. Still, history bristles with strange happenings. Rome was once saved by the cackling of geese, Balaam received enlightenment from an ass, and it may be that civilization may be retrieved by the intellectual dill water of the Christian Students, and unbelief crushed beneath the scantily khaki-clad limbs of the Boy Scouts. And there are always the Girl Guides and the Salvation Army to act as a last line of reserves.

* * *

A New View of History.

Scientists profess their inability to give us an exact figure for the age of the earth. Others are equally chary of saying just at what date the process we call civilization began. In other directions authorities are shy of giving dates for origins of any kind. It is, therefore, the more refreshing to find a man like Canon Streeter giving us a date for the beginning of the world's stock of moral principles, moral ideals, and the source of our moral energy. These all date from the Reformation, less than 400 years ago. All other discoveries sink into insignificance at the side of that one. For moral principles and moral ideals cover so much. They cover man's respect for truth, for justice, his devotion to his friends, his country, to the race, and so on through a lengthy series of human qualities. So that of two things, one. Either there occurred at some date in the fifteenth century a complete and clean break between what men respected and what they aimed at prior to that date, and what they respected and aimed at afterwards, or there were no moral principles, no moral ideals, no stock of moral energy before the Reformation. I do not know which thesis Canon Streeter would champion, although after reading his article I am prepared to find him, like Habbakuk, capable of everything. And as such a complete break as the second consideration would involve is quite inconceivable—for human affairs do not break in that clean decisive manner—one is driven back on the other theory, namely, that morality is a creature of the Protestant Reformation. And I really do not know how to even begin to discuss that. For I had got it into my head that thousands of years before the Reformation was heard of, every one of the moral qualities we profess was accepted. I seem to have read commands to be truthful, to be just, to be pure, to be industrious, to be generous, etc., in the surviving records of Egypt, Assyria, China, India, Rome, and Greece. And I thought, mind I say thought, that one would be able to trace the perpetuation of these ideals down through the ages, and making themselves felt through all the economic, political, and religious changes the world has seen. It is very puzzling. One gives up one horn of Canon Streeter's dilemma, only to find the other so extremely absurd, that one flies back to the rejected one. We can only say of the statement that Canon Streeter wrote this article, what the old lady said when she heard of the story of Christ's crucifixion: "Let us hope it isn't true." Perhaps Canon Streeter lent his name to the Bishop of London, who is its real author.

* * *

What is Morality?

Canon Streeter throws quite a new light on the nature of morals. Personally I had always been under the impression, perhaps I ought to call it delusion, that morality stood to the social structure much as the laws of physiology do to the individual organism. In the one case the laws of physiology express the conditions under which the organism may continue to exist. There is, of course, a certain

elasticity in these conditions; they may vary within certain limits, but generally they have to be observed if an organism is to live. So in morals we are dealing with the conditions that make group life possible. Here also there are possible certain variations, but if the necessary limits are not generally observed the social structure disintegrates. Society can no more exist with all its members ignoring the claims of one another, or ignoring all duties to one another, than an individual can continue to exist after developing a liking for prussic acid as an article of daily diet. A society without morality, even in pre-Reformation times, is quite unthinkable—except to Canon Streeter. A change in the prevailing conditions, economic, political, intellectual, may involve some modification in the prevailing ideas as to the relative value of certain actions, but in all humility I venture to suggest that change in the prevailing conception of the ethical value of particular actions is not quite the same thing as an absence of morality. Change is not annihilation, except of the recognizably outworn or useless. It is, more often than not, improvement. I could have followed Canon Streeter if he had said that the Reformation involved changes in our ideas of what exactly constituted morality. But, saying what he does say, it looks suspiciously like nonsense.

* * *

Ready for the Worst.

I have no space to note the other confusions into which the Canon falls, save in the very briefest manner. He protests against those who say that life is meaningless, and without value. He is not a pessimist. But then he is not a pessimist because he believes there is a God, and life is made worth something on account of "illumination from the Divine." But that sounds like pessimism only once removed, even if it is entitled to the "once." Life by itself, in his opinion, *would* justify pessimism. Human affection, human relations, by themselves are of no value whatever. It is only when God is brought in that they become at all worthy. If that is not pessimism, what is? The unbeliever says, I believe that man is able to save himself, that human relations are of such a kind that they afford the seed-plot of all that we think admirable, and society can go on developing in virtue of its inherent capacities. Oh, says the Canon, you are a pessimist. Life is quite worthless unless something comes in from without and saves it. That view, I admit, is quite Christian; and it belongs to a Christianity which antedates the Reformation. It has been a constant tenet of Christianity that the rags of "mere morality" are not sufficient. It is by the grace of God only that man can be saved. Really, it looks as though even Canon Streeter's ideals go back farther than the fifteenth century.

But the God that Canon Streeter believes in is, he says, not the god that "I pictured in my childhood." I expect not. It is not the God that the Reformation gave him. That God was killed by the Freethinking and the humanitarianism—which, Dean Inge lately reminded Christians, owed nothing whatever to religion, but grew up in spite of its opposition—of the last hundred years. But he says that a condition of moral revival is religious revival; which, being interpreted, I take to mean there is no hope for the race unless the parson is well in the picture. In that case I am afraid the race is doomed. For, short of a catastrophe, the reign of the parson looks as though it will grow steadily weaker, and the figure of God continue its process of attenuation till it vanishes into thin air. But, if I may borrow the Canon's phrase, "I am not, therefore, a pessimist."

I think human nature will survive the loss. The regard for truth may continue to exist in the absence of the religion that made "lying for the greater glory of God" an outstanding virtue. Kindness may continue without the religion that invented the Inquisition; and human fellowship in the absence of a creed which taught man the utter hopelessness of any effort on his part so long as he refused to believe in some of the most nonsensical doctrines that were ever evolved out of the cauldron of human fear, ignorance, and brutality. We may, of course, have to revise our scale of values, and in that scale it is possible that both the parson and his creed will occupy a very low place indeed. Hence the lamentations of the Canon.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

George Meredith's Centenary.

"A rarer spirit never

Did steer humanity."—*Shakespeare.*

He rose like the loosed fountain's utmost leap;
He played the star at span of heaven right o'er
Men's heads."—*George Meredith.*

THE hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Meredith has just been celebrated, and it is only fitting that the event should not pass without comment in the only weekly paper in this country devoted exclusively to Freethought. For Meredith was a thorough Freethinker, and he never dissembled his love for "the best of causes," as he so aptly described the evangel of Liberty.

George Meredith has been dead nearly twenty years, and, as is only natural, his reputation has suffered some eclipse. Such fluctuations are inevitable, and, in his case, it is but the prelude to an enduring fame. This is not to say that our grandchildren will read collected editions of Meredith's works; but that the finest flowers of his rare genius have become incontestably a living part of the literature of his native country.

It may be admitted that Meredith is not an easy author to read, but neither is Shakespeare, nor Milton, nor Wordsworth. His mind was too fertile for the average reader. But it is impossible to read him without broadening the mind and extending the mental vision. And, again, like Shakespeare, Meredith is never obscure in dealing with matters of real human interest. There is, for example, no finer love story in the English language than *The Ordeal of Richard Feveril*, and even Arnold Bennett, a rare critic and a master craftsman himself, has admitted the charm and fragrance of the book which, in his own case, has survived over forty years of a literary life. There was more than a suggestion of Shakespeare in Meredith's rare genius. There is one character in "Richard Feveril" that is not unworthy to be compared to the nurse of Juliet. Nor is this all, for Meredith's gallery of women characters are the finest portraits of the "concrete unknowable" contributed to literature since the creator of "Rosalind," "Beatrice," and "Ophelia" dropped the pen at the meridian of his achievement. Meredith, like Shakespeare, thought nobly of women, and they who have now won the dignity he claimed for them ought never to forget the debt they owe to their champion.

As for *The Egoist*, its praises have been chanted by many writers, from James Thomson to Henley. Robert Louis Stevenson was almost lyrical in his appreciation. But it was always true of Meredith that "his most powerful partisans are those of his own household, journalists, poets, and novelists."

Meredith himself always considered that his best work was done in verse, and who shall say him nay? "Love in the valley" is "a thing of beauty and a

joy for ever," whilst "Modern Love" is rich in memorable lines that are already heirlooms of the English language.

Meredith had a hard struggle for recognition in those stodgy, far-off Victorian days. Think! "The Ordeal" was written before Charles Darwin had launched *The Origin of Species* and turned the thoughts of men, "bounded in nutshells," to far horizons. Although "The Ordeal" was an admitted masterpiece, it was nearly twenty years before it ran into a second edition. The parsons were then strong in the land, and they laid heavy hands on the circulating libraries in those prim puritanical days. The indifference of the reading public not only hurt Meredith, but kept him a poor man. It was only after forty years' honest work that he had his long-deferred reward, but he was then an old man and somewhat aloof from praise and blame.

This neglect is the usual fate of pioneers. Vast salaries are paid to those who amuse the public, but those who try to make the public think are left to starve. It was knowledge of this unpleasant truth that made Meredith, usually the most reserved of men, so courteous to George Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*. The correspondence between these two pioneers, extending over many years, is more than usually significant. It not only places Meredith's Freethought above suspicion, but shows that the great poet saw from the watch-tower of song something of the grim realities of the battle below for the uplifting of the race. When Foote was imprisoned for blasphemy, Meredith not only wrote to him but sent him a copy of his poems with a touching personal inscription. It was well and happily done, for Freethought leaders have more than their share of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

At Meredith's death, the then Dean of Westminster refused the great poet and novelist burial in the Abbey. This bigotry saved Meredith from the fate of Thomas Hardy, which has been described as being as appropriate as "Gibbon's burial at the Holy Sepulchre with Voltaire as one of the pallbearers." Meredith rests, as he would have wished, by his beloved second wife, at Dorking, the epitaph above his grave from "Vittoria": "Life is but a little holding lent to do a mighty labour." The labour in Meredith's case was not wasted. His first claim on us is, indeed, his rare genius, but his noblest achievement was the recognition of the ideals of Liberty in a darkened world which, in his own phrase, "has not yet rounded Cape Turk." MIMNERMUS.

Thoughts Before Swimming.

"The sky will still be blue when we are gone."

Sainte-Beuve.

DEAR Bayard when you swim the Styx alone,
And when the debt to life is duly paid.
Let one last thought for many things atone
For time mis-spent and noble deeds essayed,
For lonely quest and compromise with none—
"The sky will still be blue when we are gone."

Hera's white arms will still appear on high,
Mimosa bloom, and wine-dark seas make song,
And youth will take the prow—and youth-like sigh
That sixty-minute hours are far too long;
But take this thought—I give no more than one,
"The sky will still be blue when we are gone."

When we are gone, fresh faces will appear,
New friends be made, and new songs fill the air,
Those left will reap what we have sown each year,
And maybe all will speak each other fair;
But if the Sun on us his last has shone,
"The sky will still be blue when we are gone."

TRISTRAM.

Sudden Death.

IN the Litany of the Church of England is a supplication to the good Lord to deliver us from battle, murder, and sudden death. Judged by results, it cannot be said that the good Lord has been particularly influenced by this appeal. Never were battles on a larger scale. As for murder—well, ask Chicago about that, with its average of one murder a day. Sudden death still occurs and happens to the highest in the land. One such took place the other day. Field-Marshal Lord Haig, having survived the greatest war in all history, passes from our midst with almost the suddenness of a convicted murderer. No, judged by results, we repeat, that clause in the Litany is a washout.

Now, it cannot be said that any of these requests to the good Lord is entirely unreasonable. It is perhaps strange that one professing, as the Christian does, that this world is a Vale of Tears; who sings, "Oh Paradise, oh Paradise, I long to be at rest," should boggle at going at the earliest possible moment and in the quickest way. But then logic is not the Christian's strong point. The desire to live is natural, and the natural man triumphs here, as on so many other occasions, over the Christian. But over and beyond that is that sense of uncertainty that the Christian feels as to his ultimate destination when he has passed that bourne from which, *pace* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, no traveller returns. For this uncertainty the Christian's own Church is responsible.

As a newly-built ship cannot be committed to the deep without ceremony, so the Church cannot let a soul depart this world without heading it in the right direction. In the Roman Catholic Church these ceremonies are numerous and of considerable length. Mr. A. Fortescue, in his *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (quite a useful handbook, by the bye) says that "if there is time, a dying man will receive the Sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction." Then follows several pages describing these rites. Among them it is interesting to read that the priest "washes the forefinger and thumb of the right hand in the water there provided, and gives the ablution to the sick man to drink." Slops for the dying is certainly quaint.

To those with any knowledge of the power of suggestion the whole business is repugnant. When a person dies under such conditions one cannot help feeling that there is something of the spirit expressed in the vulgar conundrum, "Did she fall, or was she shoved?" We hold no brief for the Christian Scientists, but it must be said that in their treatment of the sick and dying their practice is on the side of modern psychology.

Indeed, the whole of civilized opinion is turning in disgust from the ghoulish practices of the Church. Sudden death is often recognized for what it is, a blessing, if inevitable. A shortened life is generally deplorable, but a full life rounded by sudden sleep is devoutly to be wished. It was my mournful privilege and duty a few days ago to follow to the grave-side one near and dear. It was not death that distressed so much as the slow and long decline, through two or three years, of intellect and faculties. "Let me not live when my flame lacks oil." Shakespeare here, as usual, beautifully expresses the heartfelt prayer of the intelligent.

At the moment, as we all know, there is something of a conflict between the Commons of England and the Church of England. It is therefore of particular interest to record the references made to Earl Haig's death by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Oppo-

sition and others in the House. All recorded their sense of the nation's loss, but none expressed their sorrow at the manner of his going. Let us quote the *Times* report.

"And, Sir," said Mr. Baldwin, "in his death, how happy! No failing of his powers, mental or physical, but called away in the plenitude of his strength." The Prime Minister then proceeded to quote the well-known lines of Milton beginning "Nothing is here for tears," and remarked that there never could be a truer instance of these lines.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald took up this point with these words: "To-day we bow at the passage of one who, but little beyond the prime of his life, has been suddenly removed by death—a very happy way, as the Prime Minister has said." This opinion was also echoed by Major Cohen, the honorary treasurer of the British Legion and their spokesman in the House. "It has been said," remarked Major Cohen, "that the death of Lord Haig, so far as he was concerned, was happy. It was."

A great argument for the Romish practice of the Reservation of the Sacrament is accident, in other words, sudden death. As the foregoing has shown, the leaders of the Commons and the nation think it is a happy end. Such an end precludes all sacramental hocus-pocus. Will our medieval Church leaders, engaged, as they say, in modernizing the Prayer Book, consider the significance of this interesting debate?

BAVARD SIMMONS.

Holy Taboo: The Life Shield of Superstitions.

(Concluded from page 116.)

WE now come to Act II. of the long-drawn tragic drama of Christism. The same incompatibles that inspired the internicine feuds of the first three centuries still permeated the new Cult's Creed, but the Trinity dogma despite its explosive elements had been established as an eternal verity by a "majority vote" at the Council of Nicæa in 325—a kind of wooden hoop to keep the irreconcilables together while the steel band of holy taboo was being forged.

Athanasius could thus well afford to give up pouring his malicious torrents of defamatory vituperation upon the head Arius (being that he was now in exile); and devote himself to formulating the famous, or more correctly, infamous creed that bears his name. All that was now necessary to secure the ground won, was to get that creed duly embalmed with the vaneer of sanctity and get it properly instilled into the youthful mind of, say, three generations as God's own message to mankind and all would be safe. A religious dogma owes its persistent fixity to the *guise* under which it is insinuated into the plastic mind of youth. It is communicated as "*God's Word*." This creates a "conviction of certitude" altogether unique.

To the devotee of every cult ever cherished by man, its deity is necessarily the embodiment of all knowledge and truth. To doubt or deny what God has spoken is therefore unthinkable, be its conflict with the data of experience or the verdict of reason what it may. Besides, was he not omnipotent? Which means that his command of *magic power* was infinite. Did not the Universe leap into existence at the sound of his word? What miracle, therefore, could be ascribed to him as incredible? This fixing potency of the vaneer of sanctity upon ideas implanted in the plastic mind of youth reminds me of the irresistible force with which the band of red-hot

steel embraces the wooden frame of the wheel as cold water is poured over it.

I have compared the sanctity with which a creed is swathed to a veneer, but the metaphor is not quite correct. A veneer is usually true wood, mahogany or walnut. What it hides within is that which is false. In the application of the term to creeds or dogmas the veneer itself is false. Never a jot or tittle of any tenet forming the subject of credal beliefs was ever uttered or otherwise delivered by a god. That man has from times immemorial believed in such deliverances as actual facts, is only proof of the potency of the veneer to create the "conviction of certitude" in respect to any hoary tradition, if laid on at the proper time, *i.e.*, when the mind is impressible and plastic.

But creeds have to do not only with a future life and man's destiny in it, they are concerned with this world as well. They include cosmologies, history, and theories of origin in general. The correctness of creeds in respect to these mundane affairs is not to be tested, as in the case of the Trinity dogma, by submitting it to the axioms of logical consistency, but by applying the principle of *congruity*. Do they or do they not agree with the data of experience and with the verdicts of reason? That is the test. Now, the Christian Creed had a philosophy of nature—a cosmology and a history. For sixteen centuries its cosmology and history formed part of the mental furniture of Christendom as indisputably true. Was this due to the depth of the conviction created by the holy veneer? It was the sole *positive* factor, but there was a negative factor that co-operated with it. For a thousand years crass ignorance covered the earth as "the water covered the sea." So in the absence of knowledge there was no criterion to enable one to apply the principle of congruity. No concrete science existed to relieve the superstitious gloom of the Dark Ages, during which magic and miracle dominated human thought—magic the source of causation and miracle the looked-for effect.

Now, as magic and miracle play no insignificant rôle in the Bible, there was no essential incongruity between creed and common opinion. The Bible opens with a magnificent display of magic—the very Universe leaps into being at the sound of a word—a source of "energy" that remains in great evidence throughout both Testaments.

This period of peace and stagnation was brought to a close by Copernicus. His famous theory ended the second and inaugurated the third act in this great historic tragedy. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the tree of knowledge began to bear fruit in greater abundance; and repeating Adam's epochal transgression many a person was led, without any inducement from his Eve, to eat thereof with the result that his eyes were opened to see the difference, not between good and evil, but between truth and falsity. This awakening made the veneer of sanctity to assume the phase of taboo bristling with menacing terrors. Or if I take the liberty to change the metaphor, and apply it to an earlier period, when the innocent immobile chrysalis of holiness burst its pupa shell it emerged as the Holy Inquisition—a creature armed to the teeth with ferocious, but still "holy" weapons, to wit, prison, dungeon, thumbscrew, rack, boiling-blazing faggots—all holy weapons of the most Holy Inquisition. And as God never interfered with the fiendish atrocities perpetrated in his name he must have approved of them!

At long last the barrage of poison-gas of this holy taboo was penetrated, and the citadel of credal sanctity stormed—the only miracle that ever occurred on

this earth! This brings us to the last or fourth act of the Christian drama.

With a view to saving the citadel whose barrage of holy taboo had signally failed to keep attackers at bay, the "Trimmer" made his debut on the stage.

His object was to try and reanimate the regiment of corpses that now abounded within the Biblical citadel. Though on the authority of the Christian priesthood for scores of generations it was implicitly believed to be "God's Word," yet man had discovered that it was replete with errors and falsities. So the trimmer came forward and volunteered to try *artificial respiration* as a last resort to bring back life to the lifeless bodies. Various methods were adopted according to the nature of the case. One of these, and one for which some measure of success was for some time claimed, was to empty stock Biblical terms and phrases of their obvious and wonted meaning, and refill them with new ones—a veritable case of filling old bottles with new wine—in the hope to show that what God had said was in some sense true after all. For instance, a "day" did not, in Genesis, mean twenty-four hours, but a period of millions of years, and so was in agreement with geology. How simple and convincing! What made the inspired writer call it a "day" and mislead people for two millenniums? God must have felt grateful to these apologists for coming forward to champion his veracity!

Where such re-interpretation was not possible, other methods were availed of, for example, a passage was said to be poetry and not prose; and a book like the Song of Solomon was said to be a prophecy describing the relation of Christ and his Church! Sometimes a more comprehensive method was adopted, when it was argued that the Bible was God's method of gradually revealing himself to mankind, *i.e.*, by means of error and falsity until man himself found out the truth. Pity the trimming art was not in vogue at the time of the Holy Inquisition.

More recently, organic evolution as established by science is said to be merely God's evolutionary method of creation. Why, nothing could be plainer; creation and evolution are, of course, synonymous terms. How blind people must have been not to see that at first. But there, the *scientific* trimmer is a much more skilled artist.

Before, however, I conclude this article, I wish to draw attention to the extraordinary fixity of the convictions created by this holy veneer. I hardly think that that fact can be exemplified more impressively than by reference to the tenet of Divine providence as laid down in the New Testament by Christ himself. He states it in no ambiguous terms, and with no small emphasis, to wit, that the children of men are looked after with the solicitious care of a tender father; that his anxiety for their welfare is so great that he reckons the very hairs of their heads; that even a sparrow does not fall to the ground without his knowing.

That is the Christian tenet as it is more or less consciously assumed by the vast majority of people to-day.

Let us now compare this dogma with the facts of experience.

For 365 days in the year we are regularly supplied with a budget of catastrophies, calamities, and disasters. In fact, the daily papers are, in the main, nothing but a morning table well loaded with dishes of human tragedies, 90 per cent. of which would probably be put down as "acts of God" at a coroner's inquest. Every force in nature participates in this universal holocaust—winds, floods, fires, clouds, rain, rivers, ice, snow, storms, hurricanes,

tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, gravity, sea waves, tides, explosions, lightning, drought, plagues, epidemics, parasites, vermin, poisonous and carnivorous creatures, even darkness can claim its victims. These natural forces are absolutely blind, and take no more notice of human lives and welfare than a gardener does of earthworms, when preparing the soil for his seed. Only a moment's reflection upon the record is necessary to convince anyone of ordinary intelligence that the notion of a divine providence watching over and controlling the destinies of every human being is about the most baseless and chimerical that ever befogged the human mind. During our last so-called summer the hay and corn crops were more or less ruined by perpetual rain. In Australia Divine providence chose drought as its weapon of devastation; so millions of sheep died of starvation and thirst; a slaughter-house death would be humane in comparison. It is only natural that the clergy should be anxious to keep up the superstition on account of the annihilating effect its denial would have upon the credence to be put on the words of the Founder of their cult.

The man in the street is not necessarily so unreflective and purblind as the persistence of this superstition would seem to indicate. The root of the mischief is the attitude of the Press. In the interest of organized religion with its enormous wealth, it everywhere adopts a policy and practice of silence and boycott to keep the faculty of reflection asleep—a piece of truly Jesuitical wisdom; for should the mass-mind ever awake and reflect, the silly superstition would vanish as night before day.

KERIDON.

The Character of God.

THE *Liverpool Post and Mercury* has a regular contributor who deals with "The Church and the World," signing himself "Commentator." Recently (February 11), commenting upon that singularly futile series of publications issued by Ernest Benn Ltd., under the general title of "Affirmations," he quotes Dr. George Adam Smith: "Israel's growth never outran the character of their national God." Considering that God, as described in the Old Testament, this is not saying much for Israel!

The Greeks and the Romans, says "Commentator," only made moral advance by discarding their religion. A true remark. But when the Greek and the Roman religion was replaced by Christianity, there followed a moral degeneration quite as bad as the worst that can be alleged of the older paganism; and the moral advance of Christendom has only been achieved as this religion also is being gradually discarded. These facts are always conveniently ignored by the Christian apologist.

"Commentator" says that the conception of God has not kept pace with moral advance. Another true remark. But it does not seem to occur to him that the conception of God is, in itself, a brake on moral advance; and that, if we could get rid of it altogether, we would progress much faster. Large numbers of people "think of God as capable of doing things which would be dishonourable in man; religion lags behind ethics"—as it has always done in all ages.

Several examples are given of answers by children in elementary schools to questions about God. "If you did wrong, would God punish you? and if so, how?" The following replies are typical of most: "Yes, God would punish me. He might make me have an accident like cutting my finger." "Yes, God would punish me, and if He could not do it Himself, He would get someone else to do it, as for instance, if I wanted to go to the pictures, He might put it into the minds of my parents not to let me go."

These questions, the teaching that prompted them, and the replies, indicate a low level of intelligence indeed;

but it is no more than we may expect considering that the average Christian mentality is on a par with that of the savage.

Where in the world did the children get these ideas from? asks "Commentator." The answer is easy. From the Bible, from the Prayer Book, from almost any work designed for Christian instruction; from the clergy of all sects and kinds, from the Sunday school teachers; from the parents. They are typically Christian ideas. Why should "Commentator," who is presumably a Christian, be surprised? But he says: "One's first thought was that if this was the result of religious teaching in the schools, the sooner we stopped it the better." And so say we. Is it possible that "Commentator" is beginning to think? If so, we would warn him that thinking is dangerous for a Christian. If he goes on doing it along these lines, he will soon cease to be a contributor to the *Liverpool Post*!

He supposes that parents use God as "a bogey to frighten naughty boys and girls with." When was "God" ever anything else but a bogey to frighten, not only children, but grown-up people with infantile minds? They are all doing it, from the Pope and the bishops down to the illiterate Salvationist ranter; using this bogey to scare people into attending their churches and chapels, and, at the same time, to provide them with a livelihood. It is what our American cousins call "graft." There is neither truth nor honesty in it, certainly no kind of morality. The whole of the Christian teaching is a tissue of lies from beginning to end, and morality cannot be based upon falsehood.

"Commentator" seems to object to such texts on bedroom walls as, "Thou God seest me"; to which we may add another, "Christ is the silent witness to all our acts and conversations." This caused me, as a boy, to picture Jesus Christ as a kind of creeping sneak, always spying through keyholes and peeping round corners. It was a perfectly natural consequence of Christian teaching in general. What else can "Commentator" expect than that, if boys and girls begin to think, they should come to regard Christianity with contempt? He says, "the children had never been taught in the schools anything about the character of God at all." How can they be? No one knows anything whatever about the character of God. It is pretty bad if we take the Old Testament delineation, and it is perfectly imbecile if we accept the Christian scheme of "salvation."

"Commentator" considers the ideas of God to which he objects as sheer idolatry, not Christianity. But what is Christianity other than idolatry? The worship of any god whatsoever, whether considered as an impersonal abstraction, or as a personal, divine man, is idolatry. He says, "the main duty of the Christian teacher to-day is to break this pagan image and set up in its place the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Which is no more than replacing one idol by another—if it is another. We would say: "Break the damned image, and set up nothing in its place, unless it be Man in his noblest aspect." Then we may establish a higher standard of morality than that which is vitiated by the god-superstition.

E. J. LAMEL.

An Atheist's Tribute to His Christian Wife.

BY AN OLD FRIEND AND MEMBER OF THE N.S.S.

CLOSED in death those once bright eyes,
Calm at rest my darling lies,
Silent now no living breath,
Calm and silent still in death.

More than half a hundred years
Shared we joy and fears and tears;
Blessings brought to me through life,
Loving kind my darling wife.

She has gone and joy has flown;
Mem'ry dear, and it alone,
Brings her constantly to mind,
Ever loving ever kind.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Blatchford has explained to the world that he has withdrawn from circulation his *God and My Neighbour*. We do not think that the world of scientific thinking will be seriously affected by this decision, but his reason for doing so is quite amusing. He explains that what he meant in his book was "that a Creator who had made us imperfect could not justly blame us for our imperfections," and he now realizes that "*the book was before its time*, and I have withdrawn it from circulation." The italics are ours, and they are too amusing to pass without some comment. If Mr. Blatchford had troubled to make some little acquaintance with historical criticism, with the history of Christianity or with the history of Freethought, he would have known that he is here stating a criticism of theism that is really pre-Christian, and one of the oldest of commonplaces in criticisms of Christianity. There is always a danger when a man, who is really unacquainted with the literature and the history of a subject, discovers an elementary truth and then rushes in with the air of having made a great discovery. Mr. Blatchford's book served its purpose at the time, we dare say; it was sufficiently simple to fall in with the most elementary intelligence, but it was amusing thirty years ago to note Mr. Blatchford giving himself the air of a pioneer; it is still more so to find him declaring that this particular thesis was before its time. The world is really not so mentally bankrupt as the truth of that statement would make it appear.

We mentioned a few weeks ago the S.O.S. which the B.B.C. sent out asking for a number of letters approving the religious services or they would be stopped. One letter received and published in the *Radio Times* is very touching. A West Country doctor says that a patient of his keeps a small public-house, and has a loud-speaker installed in the bar. He found that what his clients liked best was the Sunday evening service. "Many of them came on purpose to hear it, and if the apparatus was out of order on Sunday evening they grumbled exceedingly." Another public-house keeper told him the same story. Now that is very convincing. The sight of men coming to the "pub." on purpose to hear the Church service is a state of affairs none of us dreamed about. We notice that their taste for religion led them, not to the church, but to the "pub." Well, we have noted before that the alliance between drink and the Church has been tolerably close. There seems here, evidence that they both appeal to the same quality of mind.

But the situation is not without its dangers. On the one hand, parsons may be tempted to forsake the Church for the public-house—for where the sheep are, there should the shepherd be also. On the other hand, some of our strong teetotallers may object to the broadcasting of religious services because it leads people to the public-house in order to listen to them. May we suggest that the next places to which the B.B.C. might apply for testimonials are idiot and lunatic asylums. We believe that the inmates of these institutions are all religious, and would greatly appreciate many of the sermons we have listened to. Sometimes we have felt that it must be the inmates of these places who are the preachers.

A writer in a scholastic journal says:—

The principles underlying the League (of Nations) and its work are no sudden manifestation of war disgust after five years of suffering and horror. Rather are they the twentieth century's expression of ideas that have struggled for recognition and realization through centuries of evolution.

Perhaps if the Christian Churches had not so efficiently prevented the expression of ideas, especially Freethought ideas, and notably the ideas of Thomas Paine, the world might not have needed to wait until the twentieth century for a League of Nations.

Of George Meredith a weekly paper says that:—

He lived for some years at the foot of Box Hill, amid scenery that he loved with pagan delight. To the end of life was to him, in the words of A.G.G., "a gallant adventure of the soul." His career was one long victory of the spirit, all sunshine and fresh air.

It would have been quicker to say that Meredith was a Freethinker, and that he felt, thought and lived as a Freethinker.

"Woodbine Willie" speaking:—

The curious notion of the nineteenth century that men are rational creatures, deciding deliberately what is best for us, is psychologically lunatic.

"Willie" knows.

Mrs. Bertrand Russell has been refused permission to speak on "Sex" in Madison (Wisconsin). We have not the remotest idea what the lady intended to say, but we presume as she was not out to tell the Americans a secret about poison gas or how America could lick creation, she is one of the also rans for the platform of the cutest little continent the world has ever known.

The Rev. A. D. Belden pleads for more reality—a real religion in a real Church in a real world. Modern youth, says he, suspects the Church of being fundamentally unreal, almost fantastic in relation to real life. There is, he declares, far too much that is unreal in religion today. If what Mr. Belden says about modern youth is true, modern youth is to be congratulated on its power of discernment. As for the religion of to-day being unreal, it is in this respect little different from the religion of yesterday. We don't see how it could be otherwise, since it is still primarily concerned, not with this world, but with an imaginary other world.

There is no disguising the fact that the ministers of the London Free Churches are becoming anxious concerning the steady drift of the masses from the Churches. Thus commences a report, in a religious weekly, of a Conference of ministers met to discuss the aforesaid drift. Dr. Poole mentioned that a careful investigation in the poorer districts of London showed that only one person in a hundred attended a church. He described this as disheartening. The Rev. Thos. Nightingale said "the situation is enough to break one's heart." He accounted for the "drift" by: lack of simplicity in the Church, class distinctions within the Church, the breaking down of the old notion of Sunday observance, and of Sunday being a sacred day, the slackening of the moral fibre of the nation in business, politics, and home life. All these things had helped to bring religion into contempt. In his mixed diagnosis, Mr. Nightingale appears to have left out the most important factor accounting for the drift; and this is that the people are not interested in religion and don't want it. We fancy the rev. gent. knew this well enough, for he said, "We must find out how to get the goods (religion) delivered."

At the same Conference a Primitive Methodist said that an undeniable fact was that there had been a change in the mentality of the age. That had to be taken into account in discussing the drift. Evidently the change is not for the worse, for he added: "We could no longer appeal to fear to get people into the Church, nor appeal to convention." The Churches, he said, no longer cried: "Come and be saved, or be damned"; instead, they pleaded: "Come and be saved, that you may save someone else!" As the reverend gent. had also said before that, that large numbers of people were not convinced that they needed the Church, there seems very little sense in our good friends looking about them any more for the cause of the drift. The masses think they can get along quite well without religion, and they cannot be scared into thinking they want it. So the parsons will have to bear, with Christian fortitude, the state of things as it is. They cannot hope to win the game now that they have lost their ace of trumps. Brethren, let us mention it to God.

Dr. F. W. Norwood declares :—

We are apt to work upon the assumption that people must go to church in order to become religious. But, as a matter of fact, they go to church because they are religious. Religion created the Church; the Church did not create religion.

There's a big slab of truth in that. People are losing religion; hence, the Church is losing the people. As the Church did not create religion, the inevitable conclusion is—exit the Church! Dr. Norwood is welcome to extract as much consolation as he can from this. In a helpful way, we suggest that the ministers all assemble themselves together and ask the good Lord to fuddle the brains of the people, that the spirit of God may again find an easy entrance.

As a thought for the week, a Sunday school weekly prints :—

It is customary to-day to blame the Churches for most of the things they do, and for all the things that they fail to achieve. If the Churches are not what they ought to be, what have you done to make them better?

Quite a lot, in a small way. Freethought criticism and propaganda have done a good deal towards helping the Churches to become what they ought to be—defunct.

Enter Dr. L. P. Jacks as critic of the Churches. At a meeting of the Modern Churchmen's Union, he suggested that the Churches had not kept pace with the general rise in the standard of truth. That is frank criticism, indeed. What it implies is that far from leading the standard of truth, they have been struggling to keep up with it, and have now been left behind. The fact should occasion no surprise. Truth in the abstract has never received any particular attention from the Churches. They had "The Truth" in the form of certain revelations from God. Why, then, needed they to trouble any further? Fortunately for the advancement of society there have been men with minds unfettered by Christian dogmas; and it is these men who have been responsible for the general rise in the standard of truth.

Dr. Jacks also said that "spiritual gifts" are no longer a monopoly of the Church. And the Church is on a far more promising road when co-operating with a world regarded as its spiritual equal, than when opposing a world regarded as its spiritual inferior. In other words the Church, though divinely inspired, is no better than "the world"—which is a poor sort of testimonial to the value of divine inspiration. Though that perhaps depends on how one looks at it. Maybe one is meant to understand that the Church would be so much worse but for the said inspiration.

A pious scribe is pleased to see that the Middlesex United Committee for Sunday Defence is alive to the need for continuing its campaign against Sunday cinemas. In view of the Middlesex County Council election on March 7, he urges the Committee to stand by certain Councillors who, he declares, are threatened with a loss of their seats for opposing Sunday cinemas. He appeals to Sabbatarians to assist the Committee by canvassing, and by the loan of motor-cars. Conversely, we suggest to all defenders of Sunday liberty that they should do their level best to help get the Sabbatarian Councillors removed, and to put broader-minded persons in their place.

Sir Chas. G. Robertson, Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University, recently suggested that one problem of civilization was not so much the evolution of apes to human beings, but so to control evolution that there was no possibility of beings who now were not apes, reverting to type. To prevent this retrogression, the Vice-Chancellor prescribes sound moral and spiritual training and nurture of the young. What, no doubt, he means by that is merely instruction in the Christian religion. We are not enamoured of his remedy. For it tends strongly to bring about the state of things he wishes to be avoided, inasmuch as it encourages young people to revert to the kind of thinking practised by their Stone Age ancestors. Our prescription is, rationalized moral

training coupled with nurture of the intellectual faculties. Not until such training and such nurture have become universal, will the human race be able to claim that it is controlling human evolution.

Sir Austin Chamberlain is calling an international Conference to discuss the possibility of securing a definite date for Easter. Sir Henry Slesser, the Labour M.P., objects to any alteration of this "sacred" date, because it has been maintained in the Church for so many centuries. Sir Henry might have gone further back than the Christian Church, and appealed to a much wider religious field. For Easter never was, and never could be the date of the death of an historic person. The death of a person is not fixed by the phases of the moon, but seasonal festivals are. It is only Christian stupidity that could go on declaring Easter to commemorate the death of an actual man, and to fix the date of his death at any time within a period of about thirty-five days.

A picture in the daily Press shows a cot presented to Southampton Children's Hospital, and alongside the cot appears the reverend gentleman in full war paint who "dedicated" it. One cannot help wondering what difference the hospital authorities think the dedication will make to the cot. Does the suffering user of a dedicated cot get well more quickly than he or she in an undedicated cot? If the authorities do not believe that is the case, why do they trouble about dedication? In these days of scientific medical treatment, one would imagine that Christian superstitions should have no place in hospitals.

The Northcliffe Press is to establish a chain of evening newspapers in the big provincial towns. The pabulum to be provided is declared to be "bright, enterprising and novel." The motto (not stated) of the organizers is: "Gramophone opinions always on tap."

"The Culture of the Soul," is a heading to an article in a righteous contemporary. From the article we gather that the successful culture of a Christian soul depends very largely upon spreading at the roots of it plenty of guano from the Christian Bible.

Mr. James Douglas is much distressed that Mr. Baldwin should, in the House of Commons, have said, when speaking on the death of Lord Oxford: "Into that darkness and into that silence, we must all go." He says these are sad and despairing words, they leave no room for hope; and Mr. Douglas, as one who writes for Christians, wants plenty of room left for all sorts of idle speculations about death. It does not concern him that, after all, Mr. Baldwin was only saying what is very obvious about death, nor that when one is standing in the presence of death, the least tribute one can pay is that of truthfulness. He does not want truthfulness, what he wants is religion.

So he says that Mr. Baldwin's statement is due to "confusion of thought," he transfers our ignorance of death to that of the dead man. Ye Gods! Mr. Baldwin says that because the man is dead, he is dead. Mr. Douglas says that because he is dead it is wrong to assume that he does not know more than when he was alive. And then he says Mr. Baldwin is confused in his thought! But what Mr. Douglas gives us is not thought. It is mere cerebration, and that is about all. Or if there is any thought about it, it is the thought that it will tickle the ear of the more religiously ignorant of his readers.

"The power of seeing the unseen is as real as seeing the seen." This is the kind of clotted nonsense that passes muster because it is so common. But why not touching the untouchable, smelling the unsmellable, lifting the unliftable, hearing the unheard? One is just as reasonable as the other. It is a pity that Mr. Douglas should be able to sell what ought really to be unsellable.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that a renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—N. Buchanan, 135. 6d.; W. R. Snell, 5s.

A. JACKSON.—Pleased to know that Miss Seed gave so interesting a lecture.

E. SMEDLEY.—Nothing that anyone can say will ever stop Christians claiming great Atheists—after they are dead. Truthfulness and strong Christian belief have never run well together.

M. A. BAIN.—We are sorry, but we do not recall the spiritualistic experiment tried by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Perhaps some of our readers may remember it.

J. ALMOND.—The answer is on the same lines. A teacher may ask what is the religion of the parent, but he has no right to do so. We do not think it is usual for them to put such a question, and a parent would be justified in reminding one who did of the position.

J. SIMM (Auckland).—Received and shall appear. We wish your venture every possible success.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, giving as long notice as possible.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd.," Clerkenwell Branch.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 26) Mr. Cohen is at the City Saloon Hall, Candleriggs, Glasgow. At 11.30 a.m. he will lecture on "Some Implications of Evolution"; and at 6.30 p.m. his subject will be "What Christianity Owes to Civilization."

We continue to receive letters of regret at the death of J. T. Lloyd and expressions of appreciation of his work for Freethought. These are too numerous for printing, and we hope this will be taken as a sufficient and general acknowledgment. The resolutions include one from nearly every Branch of the N.S.S.

A question asked by several may have occurred to others, and for that reason we are answering it here. This is that, as Freethought advocates usually have a very hard struggle to live, has Mr. Lloyd left any dependents? In that case, friends are ready to do what they can to help. Mr. Lloyd has no one who was in any way dependent upon him. He has two sons, we believe, in America, but they are well able to look after themselves. He has no personal liabilities.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti, to-day (Feb. 26), will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7.30. His subject will be "Is the Christian Conception of Man in Harmony with Religion?" Mr. Rosetti made an excellent impression on the occasion of his first visit to Liverpool a few months back, and we have every confidence that it will be confirmed on this occasion. We hope to hear of a full house.

The *Freethinker* appears to be almost the only paper in the country that really cares for freedom of speech, whether the opinion be political, religious, or non-religious, and in any case one would hardly expect a man of the mentality of Sir William Joynson Hicks to have a clear grasp of the principle of intellectual freedom. So we are not surprised to find that in a circular letter to chief constables he calls attention to the disturbances which have taken place at public meetings, and advises them that they should

be ready to entertain applications from responsible persons, of all recognized political parties convening a meeting, for police to be present inside as well as outside—without charge to the promoters.

We have italicized certain words in the above passage because we quite fail to see why "recognized political parties" are alone entitled to adequate police protection or why such protection should be confined to political parties alone. Free speech is not the exclusive right of party, it is a right which belongs to the individual, and every individual should have the same legal right to protection. It is ridiculous to tell a policeman that if the meeting belongs to a recognized political party, he must preserve order, but if it is not a recognized party, or if the meeting belongs to some party other than political, the police may let rowdies do as they please. Really, the right of public meeting is of too great a value to be left in charge of a man such as "Jix." In our opinion, disturbing any meeting is as grave an offence as one can commit against the health of public life. There is an Act already in existence against creating disturbances at public meetings, and we would like to see that enforced whenever necessary.

On Sunday (February 26), Mr. Guy A. Aldred, of Glasgow, will lecture in the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road, under the auspices of the Manchester Branch. His subjects will be: in the afternoon, at 3, "Why Jesus Wept"; in the evening, at 6.30, "Atheism, the Parent of Thought and Freedom; A Challenge to the Churches." This is Mr. Aldred's first visit to Manchester, and we hope the Branch will have excellent meetings. For the benefit of those who find it more convenient to stay on at the hall between the meetings, tea will be provided at a cost of 1s. 3d.

For the last time we remind London Freethinkers of the Social and Dance to take place at Hill's Restaurant, on Saturday, March 3, at 7.30. There will be good musical entertainment in addition to the dancing. The price of tickets is 2s. each, which will include refreshments. The number of tickets is limited, and application should be made as early as possible to the General Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4

We are obliged to those of our readers who have written the B.B.C. complaining of the way in which the wireless is being used in the interests of the churches. The B.B.C. shows itself as adroit as ever in dodging the point at issue, which is the utilizing of a public service in sectarian interests. In one letter, the kind reply is given that all sorts of things are given over the wireless, and those who do not care for the religious service are not bound to listen to it. It seems impossible, where religion is concerned, to make some people understand the meaning of fair play, and this reply is a good example of it. At any rate we do not think the B.B.C. will now be able to make the excuse that they are unaware of the existence of any dissatisfaction connected with their broadcasting of the gospel of the "berlood."

The Late John T. Lloyd.

AN APPRECIATION.

By the death of John Thomas Lloyd the Freethought movement in this country has sustained a great loss. I remember him as he was very soon after he joined our party, and I sat with him for some years on the Executive of the National Secular Society. After I had read his wonderfully interesting pamphlet *From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform* I realized the great sacrifice he had made in the interest of Truth in giving up his position as a popular pastor in the Presbyterian Church in South Africa to join the Freethought Party, here in England. And when I began to know him intimately, I formed a very high opinion of him, not only as a scholar, a thinker, and a critic, but also of his comprehensive grasp of the whole philosophy of Freethought in relation to the various religions of the world, and also of the practical value of Secularism as the philosophy of life.

The splendid series of articles he contributed to the columns of the *Freethinker*, over a period of twenty-five years, afford abundant evidence of the versatility of his literary talents, and of his great critical ability.

He was extremely modest and unassuming. Although a very learned man, he never boasted of his scholarship, nor of his erudition; and in his lectures, as well as in his articles, he spoke and wrote in such plain unmistakable language that every intelligent person could understand him. Consequently he became as popular as a lecturer as he was as a writer and exponent of Freethought principles.

But above all, I honoured and respected him as a man. He carried out in daily life the principles he preached. Towards the end of his career as a lecturer we became very much attached, and I frequently visited him at his house and spent many happy hours with him talking over the past history of our movement and the promise of the future. He liked to hear me talk of the great achievements of Charles Bradlaugh and other Freethought worthies, before he came into the movement.

It was really wonderful how he had cleared his mind of all the old superstitions of his early manhood, and the longer he lived the more he expressed his indignation at intelligent people clinging to such beliefs as gods, devils, ghosts and goblins, as though they were still living in the childhood of the world.

I appreciated very much the fine tribute paid by Mr. Chapman Cohen to the character of Mr. Lloyd in his beautiful oration at the grave of his old friend and colleague. It was well deserved.

The personality of Mr. Lloyd was cast in a noble mould. His thoughts were always of a lofty character, and he never stooped to do a mean action. His one great ambition in life was to be of service to his fellows, and he found his reward in such unselfish service.

The beautiful language of George Eliot is especially appropriate in his case:—

“O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence; live
In pulses stirred to generosity
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues;
So to live, is heaven;
To make undying music in the world.”

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A Plea for Criticism.

THE trial of *Rex v. The New Statesman*, which has recently been held is another indication of the way in which the twentieth century is still dominated by medieval ideas, and throws a sinister light upon the boasted freedom of the country. This trial for contempt of court was nothing more or less than a trial for one's opinion, and is thus parallel to a trial for blasphemy—the court being in the former case erected into the sacrosanct position occupied by religion in the latter case.

What is this contempt of court—as brought out in the trial—but a belief that justice has not been done? If such a belief that a verdict was unjust constitutes contempt of court, what intelligent individual has not been guilty of it? Every appeal case is logically, on this view, an expression of contempt of court, and every time a higher court allows an appeal it expresses contempt of the decision previously given in the lower court. All those hundreds of thousands of people who signed a petition for the reprieve of the Cardiff murderers were guilty of this offence—the offence of having and expressing an opinion contrary to the decision of the court.

It is doubtful whether any body of persons has done so much to bring courts into contempt as the judges themselves. Some of them seem to have considered their office as that of a licensed jester rather than an impartial arbiter, and have given their courts a music-hall atmosphere not likely to promote the best interests of justice or to spare the feelings of the witnesses and others brought before them.

The position of judges requires no strengthening. It is already one of the highest privilege and security in the realm, so high, in fact, that a judge can be removed from his office only by an address from both Houses of Parliament. In the main, judges prove themselves worthy of their privileged and onerous appointments, and an occasional savage summing-up must not blind one to the acuteness and broad justice of the average verdict.

Nevertheless, they are only human beings, and, as such, they are liable to err. When they err they should be subjected to criticism. The doctrine of divine right has gone, and must not be revived. The fact that a man is a judge does not alter the fact that he is a man. No man ever existed who could be trusted with absolute power. All men are the better for having their errors pointed out, and the higher their position the more necessary becomes apposite criticism.

In making that criticism, the position of newspapers and other periodicals is extremely important, and the right of editors to express their judgments is as “sacred” as the right of judges to express theirs; so, indeed, is the right of every individual. There are four requisites for the justification of criticism—the criticism must be sincere, it must be enlightened, it must be disinterested, it must be pro-social, i.e., calculated to produce more benefit by its publication than by its suppression.

The suppression of criticism is always dangerous: it is the method of the despot and the assassin. The promulgation of criticism is nearly always beneficent, for it brings more points of view to bear upon the thing criticized and insures against the risk of self-complacency. Where there is no criticism there is retrogression. Alarming is that state wherein the people are afraid to speak their own minds; they may come to have no minds of their own, servile, brutish, de-humanized. For criticism is of the very quintessence of humanity, and it is this fine sublimate of human endeavour that is endangered by such decisions as that of *Rex v. The New Statesman*.

What good purpose has been served by that prosecution? Was it justifiable to risk public money in such a case? If the effect is to make *The New Statesman* less outspoken, journalism will be so much the poorer, less virile, less progressive. Does not such a decision, in fact, provoke a very real contempt for the court that has so finicking a view of its own dignity?

Respect may be won, it cannot be forced; contempt may be earned, and if so, cannot be prosecuted out of existence. Authorities may by *force majeure* extort

silence, but in the very act of doing so they increase the inward contempt that they vainly strive to destroy. The Galileo may be put to the rack, but the truth remains and will prevail.

The attempt to raise judges beyond criticism is thus doomed to fail, for the mind cannot be fettered; intelligent people will continue to have their own thoughts about judges' decisions. That does not imply that the attempt is harmless. It is always harmful when a person is punished for saying what appears to him the truth. Anything is harmful that prevents the free exchange and interplay of genuine criticism. Such suppression tends to promote undesirable undercurrents, evasions, innuendoes, corruption, cabals, secret societies, and nihilism. The endeavour by artificial means to put judges beyond criticism is bound to bring the whole law into contempt, and foster the notion, still very strong, that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. Thus the criticism would still go on, and with much greater reason, but it would be less overt, more lawless, more menacing to the security of the State. Truly, the only way whereby judges can be beyond criticism is by being beyond criticism; and the safest and surest way of putting them beyond criticism is by removing all obstacles to free criticism. It is an excellent thing for them to know that a dereliction of their duty will be promptly animadverted upon in the Press. In order to secure this desirable condition of affairs the Press must be confident of the law's support for all legitimate comment.

So, if the recent decision against *The New Statesman* does truly represent the state of the present law, then, in the name of free speech, let the law be amended as quickly as possible.

HAROLD SCUDDER.

In Defence of the Press.

I AM probably as thorough-going an Atheist and as vigorous an opponent and critic of Christianity as can be found, but, as an English journalist, and one who is proud of his calling and of the English Press of to-day, I feel I must take up the cudgels on behalf of that institution to which I have the honour to belong. In a recent embittered attack on the Press, or the "pious press gang," as he called it, "Mimnermus" gave us a rather one-sided and biased picture; I should like to try to balance it up a bit. To state that the free Press of England to-day is a legend is not true. Certainly our newspapers are now commercialized to a greater extent than ever before, which is unfortunately inevitable. But it is foolish to contend, as "Mimnermus" does, that journalists can neither do justice to themselves nor serve the public honestly in a press dominated by advertisers. He seems to overlook the fact that the power of our Press is derived from those same advertisers. The advertisements arising from the modern craze for publicity are the foundations of our National Press; the news is practically charity. One famous and powerful national daily, which is sold at 1d. a copy, costs 1½d. a copy to produce, apart from the revenue brought in by its advertisements. How long would this paper carry on without advertisements? What would be its influence without them? For all papers cannot run endowment funds! So our Press to-day is dependent upon advertisements, which are again dependent upon circulation. How it could be otherwise, goodness only knows. "Mimnermus," however, seems to know!

Journalists write for money, moans "Mimnermus," as though that were a slur upon us "servile" journalists, who probably want, if not meat, as much bread and butter (with occasionally a little jam) as "Mimnermus." Why on earth shouldn't they? Of course, journalists write for money. Writing is their bread and butter, their life. But to imply that because they are paid what they earn they do not work and write justly and conscientiously, or do not serve the public honestly, is absurd. Suppose one were to suggest to "Mimnermus" that he worked at his trade or profession (whatever it may be, if any) for no remuneration. Suppose one were to suggest that because "Mimnermus" was paid for doing his job, he did not do that job conscientiously or

truthfully, or in accordance with the ideals of his profession. What would he say? It can safely be left to the imagination!

I agree that some sections of the Press are in a conspiracy against Freethought, and this I heartily condemn. Freethought does not get a fair show in the papers, which are mostly run on Christian lines. But we must not overlook the fact that Christians, or at least religionists of all sorts and shapes, are still in a great majority in this country, and that we of the Freethought Movement are still only a small minority. And the majority calls the tune. The minority must conform until it has sufficient power to enforce its claims, even if those claims be wise and just, and intended to replace a bad and unwise and unjust system. Freethinkers are not so numerous as many of us would like, or at times try to make out, and until we are sufficiently powerful to "build a new Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land" (!) established claims and traditions must prevail.

Undoubtedly, also, without the need for resorting to extravagance in language, some of our editors are very pious and Christian in outlook and action. They possess the average Christian virtues and vices, but the majority are good men who are as convinced of the right and truth of their position and actions as "Mimnermus" is of his. Their work exhibits glaring inconsistencies and human traits and weaknesses, but on the whole they are a decent, although Christian, set of men who conscientiously try to do their duty as they see it. It is only natural they should not all conform to "Mimnermus's" ideas and ideals. Perhaps, indeed, it is better! And to abuse them as "Mimnermus" does shows only an abysmal ignorance, a twisted reasoning, and a biased mind.

In point of contents our Press is a true reflexion of the public mind. Demand creates supply in journalism as elsewhere. "Mimnermus" jibs at the newspapers for their long reports of sordid murder and police and divorce court cases as contrasted with their usual silence on Freethought. One has only to observe the immense crowds of people that struggle into our courts to actually hear these cases with the comparative few who take the trouble to attend Freethought lectures, one has only to compare the huge three millions odd net sale of the *News of the World* with that of the *Freethinker* to realize that in this respect our Press is a true reflexion of the public mind of the moment. That that mind is diseased is unfortunate and something to be deplored—and remedied. If the object be ugly, the mirror—in this case the Press—cannot return a beautiful reflexion. With regard to the scarcity of news of catastrophies and occurrences abroad, and the plentitude of the domestic lives of royal persons and others, here again the papers are true to life. It is an indisputable fact, verifiable by observation every day, that people in this country unfortunately do take more interest in their royal family and their leading lights than in the existence or death of people they have never seen, living in countries hundreds of miles away. The recent appalling scenes at the wedding of the Duchess of York's brother showed all too plainly that the Press does not err in the publicity it gives these matters. Other proofs abound in every-day life. And the "ecstasies of admiration" to which the Press was moved "at the sight of a fat Royal baby sucking its thumb, and blinking at the stupidity of the working class," was not the monopoly of our "lick-spittle, sycophantic," everything-that-is-bad profession, but again a reflexion, or perhaps a branch, of the same ecstasies one found the general public moved to at some sight.

Much more could be said, but space and time are valuable (even in an uncommercialized Press), and I must leave the field. The Press of England to-day, I repeat in departing, is free and is a true reflexion of the mind of the public it serves. Until that mind is cleansed and purged and made respectable and worthy, the Press will continue to throw back its terrible, tantalizing reflexion. And here I can agree and join forces with "Mimnermus" in striving the utmost to hasten that day when we shall have cured the English public mind of the diseases

which it now harbours, and make it a mind of which we can all be proud. One of the greatest of these diseases is Christianity, and this must be our chief objective, as it will be our chief opponent. But, thank goodness, our work is bearing fruit. The shackles of Christianity are steadily, if slowly, dropping off owing to the hard knocks given them by the hammer of Freethought. Soon will come the day when Freethought will come into its own, and Christianity will take its rightful place in Fairyland. When that glorious day comes, the Press, with little alteration in general policy, will certainly be much more acceptable to "Minnermus" and to us all.

RONALD H. S. STANFAS.

MEDIOCRACY:

The Ravings of a Thirddrate Mind.

PROLOGUE:

The following are a series of monologues inflicted upon Mary, the wife of Joseph the Carpenter, by Rachel, the wife of Isaac, their nearest neighbour. They are pieces of Rachel's mind concerning the doings of Jesus, Mary's eldest son. The author challenges any psychologist or student of human nature to prove that they are not authentic.

MONOLOGUE No. 3.

CONCERNING AN AMUSING OUTING.

MARY, my dear, you'll never guess where we have been, Isaac and I. Isaac came to me and said, "It's a long time since we've taken a jaunt together, so stick on your best togs and let's run down to the Jordan and take a squint at this new prophet everybody's talking about." You know the man I mean, John the son of Zacharias, some sort of cousin of yours isn't he? Well I never!

I can't say much for his taste in dress, I wouldn't have been seen dead in the old camel hair rags he was wearing, still, perhaps he has a mind above such things as clothes; what he really wants is a wife to look after his things and keep him in order. Oh, and they say he only eats locusts and wild honey, though I must admit he seems to thrive on them.

He certainly did roast his audience, it was really quite exciting. Called them vipers, a generation of vipers, which may have been true, but wasn't over and above polite, and some of them didn't half like it I can tell you. He talked a lot of nonsense about people who have two coats giving away one, but as I said to Isaac, "It sounds very nice and ideal and all that kind of thing, but it wouldn't work. What you've got to remember is that we are living in a practical World." He didn't half tell off the soldiers, which was a jolly good thing, for the way they do behave is something dreadful. As for not exacting more than that which is appointed you, what's the sense in saying a thing like that? As Isaac said to me, "If you *can* exact anything, it is appointed to you, isn't it?" which sounds reasonable to me.

That was all there was to his speech, as far as I could see, though he did talk a lot of silly high-falutin poetical sort of stuff about trees and Abraham and fruit and shoe latches, but what he thought he was saying is more than I can tell. Yes, that young man certainly has got the gift of the gab, but his tongue will get him into trouble if he don't look out.

MONOLOGUE No. 4.

CONCERNING A GENEROUS OFFER.

WELL, Mary, that was an extraordinary thing, wasn't it? Oh yes, you know perfectly well what I'm talking about—the wedding last night, and the wine. How do you account for it?

I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it myself, and even now I don't believe it, though I did look at the jars and see them filled to the brim with water (I knew there would not be enough wine to go round, they're the meanest people in Galilee), and afterwards I tasted the stuff myself, and it was wine. What I want to know is how the thing was done.

I talked it over with Isaac, and he agrees with me that there must have been a trick somewhere, though for the life of me I can't see where.

Now just exactly what does Jesus expect to get out of it? It stands to reason he must have had some motive. Tell me, Mary, do you think he might have hit upon some process for turning water into wine; I don't believe myself that he has, but still, I talked it over with Isaac, and he seems to think that there might be money in it. Not much money, of course, but every little helps, doesn't it? What do you think he would sell the formula for?

I know Isaac is prepared to be generous, seeing we're neighbours, and he is always willing to give a neighbour a helping hand. The most generous man alive is my Isaac, it's a wonder he hasn't brought us all to ruin with his openhandedness. Only you've got to remember he would be taking a big risk, as he couldn't be sure of the thing always working, and there would be all the expense of fitting up a plant, to say nothing of advertising—though to be sure, Jesus might lend a hand with that, something on the style of his stunt last night, attend all social functions in the neighbourhood, and later on he might travel around a bit. I think that would be quite a nice idea, he could preach in the synagogues in the morning, and advertise in the evenings. But, of course, Isaac would have to put a considerable portion of his little savings into the scheme to get the thing started, and all the risk would be his, but then he is so very generous, he told me that he would actually be willing to allow Jesus one quarter per cent. of the nett profit. There, isn't that magnificent? And no risk at all of any kind for the young man.

Now Mary, do try to be reasonable for once in your life, at least you might tell him of Isaac's offer and let him decide for himself.

Well, you know best, but I should most certainly not take upon myself the responsibility of refusing such an offer. But do as you think best. I only hope you will not live to regret it, but then you never were a good mother.

I say, Mary, he hasn't closed with anyone else has he? Are you sure he hasn't?

Are you quite sure he hasn't?

Well tell him that if he ever cares to discuss the matter, Isaac will be prepared to meet him half-way, and anyway he had better see Isaac before he closes with anyone else, he would be sure to get better terms between neighbours.

ETHEL BREE.

The Gates of Altitude.

MR ANDREW MILLAR, refuses to be comforted with my counsel, and returns assisted by several friends, almost a column of quotation, a speculation as to how the late George Underwood would have dealt with the matter, some unnecessary comparisons, some little polite stroking of my body with sandpaper, and some irrelevant matter that I will dispose of further on. I wish his onslaught had been more vigorous or more subtle, and that he had left his friends behind him, or brought more.

A friend of his with very sound instinct had returned Leopardi with some unexpected comments, and not too favourable towards your contributor's favourite philosopher, and this brought forth an S.O.S. which I answered, as apparently no one else was interested. Nietzsche was recommended until the patient could get out of the treacle of despair, whereas it appears now, that it ought to have been Jeremy Taylor, or Thomas à Kempis, or a deaf ear. I think the world is a more frightful place than that imagined by Leopardi; that the world is a more frightful place is no objection to it, but something more than the best that Leopardi can give is required in order to face it. There is no disputing about taste, so Mr. Millar must be left with Leopardi, although, if Leopardi is not sufficient, what was the reason for the first article? I must deny that I "slated" Leopardi or his disciple: I accept and swallow all the disagreeable things that he has to say about life, but I do not make them my daily food. I suggest also that the concluding

question of "how far, even in the pages of the *Freethinker*, should we admit for ourselves, or impart to others, our common-sense convictions about life?" should be sent to the *Christian Herald* or the *Church Times*, or the name of this paper be changed. Also, one of my illusions is that I have been writing for the *Freethinker* after reading the question. Also Leopardi had not shed all his illusions, for he writes to a friend after meeting a lady: ". . . has convinced me that there are really in the world pleasures I thought impossible, and that I am still susceptible of lasting illusions." Perhaps Mr. Millar has overlooked this as a student of Leopardi, for he tells me that his Master had none. I will answer Mr. Millar's correspondent in these columns if he will write to the Editor, as the letter was about and not to me, and I will also tell him a lot of things that he has left out. That one sentence of Nietzsche should make someone wonder how far truth may be spoken is my case.

And now to the friendly side of the case; my notes entitled "Simplicities" were "jocose journalese"; this is very weak, and could have been done better—as thus:—

It might have been ycleped, poor worthless bilge,
Or hack-work, or the slimy Southend mud,
Or slosh or sludge, or mire or silt or ooze.
It might have been the refuse and the froth
Of witless scribe, or hare-brained hired buffoon,
Or childish chatter from a younker bold
In everything but thought.

It might have been
Bravado, bounce, or vapour, or the sop
That goes for sense when men see two for one—
Ah, lucky thought—just hint that it is cant.

And so on.

I do not accept the libidinous parson as an authority on criticism, but I will listen with both ears to Addison, Dryden, Sainte-Beuve, Joubert, or Matthew Arnold, and will also be pleased to know at what point in all my notices I have looked for the worst instead of the best. On December 13, 1923, George Underwood died; on November 9, 1924, "Books and Life" as a series was begun. Therefore, there was time for the "mantle" to float to Timbuctoo and back again, as well as places nearer, and I am no wearer of second-hand clothes, so that your contributor must bite harder—I cannot yet feel his teeth.

I implore Mr. Millar to draw his claymore and lay on, regardless of my susceptibilities; it is not necessary if we find a truth worth having. But I am thinking, that James Thompson in his memoir of Leopardi will save us a lot of trouble; he wrote, "Just, humane, liberal, magnanimous, and most loyal, he imagined at first that mankind were altogether good. Betrayed and disabused of his excessive expectations, he concluded at length that they were altogether evil. And only his premature death hindered him from reaching that third and settled disposition of mind by which he would have estimated man as they really are, neither altogether good, nor altogether bad."

WILLIAM REPTON.

The English reader is not only interested in the author's personal views and perceptions, but he would rather have his reading make him grow in positive knowledge of the world of facts. Whereas the German's love for the obscure and the profound often makes a fool of him. More than once I have had to read in Germany such criticisms as the following: "That man cannot be worth much, for we understand him."

Lion Feuchtwanger.

More is got from one book on which the thought settles . . . than from libraries skimmed over by a wandering eye. A cottage flower gives honey to the bee, a king's garden none to the butterfly.—Lord Lytton.

We cannot flatter ourselves that we have understood a truth until it is impossible for us not to shape our lives in accordance with it.—Maeterlinck.

Correspondence.

A COMPANY OF FREETHINKERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The statutory meeting of Macconnell & Mabe, Limited should prove of the greatest interest to Freethinkers. The business which has been taken over by this Company has been in existence for over twelve years. It was developed solely by advertising in the Freethought and Rationalist Press, and has in this way made itself known to Freethinkers for nearly eight years. Started without any capital of consequence, its clients to-day are to be found throughout English-speaking countries and on the Continent. It has shareholders as far apart as Ireland and Burma. It possesses twelve years' experience won in the hardest of schools, and the knowledge thus acquired is behind all its advertising. In addition the Company has one line alone which, if it advertised nothing else, if offered through the usual channels of publicity would increase its turnover a hundredfold.

The Company is owned and controlled by Freethinkers, and the Directorate desire to confine the holdings in the Company to Freethinkers. The question to be decided within the next fortnight is whether enough support from Freethinking investors is forthcoming to permit progress along the lines at present laid down, or whether outsiders are to be invited to take up shares. It would be a pity for this to happen, as the business is sound in every commercial sense. Unfortunately, the question must be decided soon, and if the decision is that outside shareholders must be admitted, there is little doubt that this Company will be lowered to the level of an ordinary commercial undertaking.

FOR MACCONNELL & MABE, LTD.,

DAVID MACCONNELL,
Secretary.

CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS.

SIR,—Really, I'm not a bit peeved because of your indirect reference to my "sublime impudence," having always enjoyed (?) the reputation of being a cheeky feler. One of your readers, however, has invited me to explain in your columns why certain essentials deserve to be dubbed "Christian," which expression I used "for want of a readier term." Well, this dear old country of ours is nominally a Christian country, and some of us look back to, and believe in, the central figure in the tragedy of Calvary, whose virtues (we think) are worthy of annihilation. When those virtues are found in present-day human beings (as occasionally they are) we speak of them as "Christian" or "Christ-like." That is my "explanation," which word I place within quotation marks—to save you trouble!

I now wait to hear the date of my execution.

"WAYFARER."

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. WHITEHEAD'S lecture on "Psycho-Analysis," admirably delivered and wonderfully comprehensive considering the very short time at his disposal, evoked a lively and somewhat heated discussion, in which our Socialist friends figured prominently. It is difficult to understand why the very lucid explanation of this interesting subject should apparently give so much offence and a matter for regret that differences of opinion with the lecturer should be expressed in such a hostile manner. There is something to be said for the repression of our primitive instincts, especially at open meetings. To-night Mr. Rex Roberts and Mr. George Saville are debating "That we live in a Degenerate Age." We hope for a good audience for what will lead to a fine discussion.—K.B.K.

Obituary.

MRS. J. TURNBULL.

GLASGOW has lost one of its oldest Freethinkers in the person of Mrs. J. F. Turnbull, who, at the age of 85, passed away on Saturday, February 11. There was no stronger Freethinker in the country, and none who to the very end of her life was more devoted to the Cause. When we first visited Glasgow, now some thirty-seven years ago, the Turnbull family was always a noteworthy group at the meetings. Mr. Turnbull died many years ago, and one by one her children followed, with the exception of one. It took a strong and courageous character to bear these repeated buffets of fortune, but she took the blows with a fortitude that won the admiration of all who knew her. We visited her several times during the past few years, and always found her interest in affairs keen and intelligent. It did one good to see this old lady of eighty talking of public affairs with a keenness and an intelligent grip of things that many a young one might have envied. She said she was just waiting for her time to come, and she said it with a smile that did one good to see. Glasgow Freethinkers have cause to be proud of Mrs. Turnbull. The funeral took place on February 14, and an address was delivered at the grave-side by Mr. Lancaster. We take this opportunity of paying our respects to the memory of one whom we shall always feel pleased and proud to have known.—C.C.

MR. WILLIAM WICKHAM.

ONE of the old subscribers to the *Freethinker* passed away in the person of William Wickham, of Malvern. He read and enjoyed the paper for many years, and passed it on to others. The *Freethinker* had taught him to face life in a calm, healthful manner, and he fully recognized how much he owed it. His was a fine character, helpful to others, with a delight in the study of science and history. He made many friends. He faced death in the same unruffled manner in which he had fronted life, and when the end came he passed away with the calm of a little child falling to sleep.

SPENCER F. WARNER.

MR. G. LANCASTER.

WE regret to announce that Mr. G. Lancaster, of Hounslow, died suddenly of heart failure on Friday, February 10, at the age of fifty-two. Mr. Lancaster had been a Freethinker for twenty years, and was always keenly interested in the work of the National Secular Society. He was highly esteemed by all who knew him, and his friends are poorer by his death. A Secular Service was read by Mr. G. Whitehead at the cremation on Thursday, February 16, at St. John's, Woking.—M.

MISS MARY ROGERSON.

AN old and ardent Cheshire friend of the *Freethinker* passed away in the person of Miss Mary Rogerson. We only knew the lady from correspondence, but from this we formed a high opinion of both her intelligence and her character. The cremation took place on February 14, at the Manchester Crematorium.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For List of Birth-Control Requisites send 1½d. stamp to:—

J. R. HOLMES, East Hannay, Wantage, Berks.

(Established nearly Forty Years.)

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by the first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"That We Live in a Degenerate Age." *Affir*: Mr. Rex Roberts; *Neg*: Mr. George Saville.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The Phallic Element in Christianity." Lantern Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Free Sunday Lectures, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"A World Religion: Is it possible?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"British Responsibilities in Africa."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Debate between Mr. C. R. Bannister and Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"Is Human Progress a Fallacy?" Thursday, March 1, at 7.30—A lecture.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church): Saturday, at 8.0 (World's End, Chelsea): Wednesday, at 8.0—Messrs. F. Bryant and F. Moister.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture; 3 p.m., Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine; 6.30; Messrs. Jackson and Campbell-Everden. Free-thought lectures every Wednesday and Friday, at 7.30. Various lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. Fred Mann—"Christianity and Dean Inge."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (78a Front Street): 7.15, Mr. V. Wheatley—"The Life and Teachings of Confucius." Chairman: Mr. Jas. Winn.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (City Saloon Hall, Candleriggs): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11.30, "Some Implications of Evolution"; 6.30, "What Christianity owes to Civilization." Questions and Discussion.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Col. C. L'Estrange Malone—"China."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): Guy Aldred (Glasgow)—3.0, "Why Jesus Wept"; 6.30, "Atheism, the Parent of Thought and Freedom: A Challenge to the Churches." Questions and Discussion.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (4 Swilly Road, Plymouth): Tuesday, February 28, at 7.30, Members' Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Meetings held in the Bull Ring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 7 p.m.

THE CAKE GOD

A present-day survival from prehistoric times.

By

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN

Author of "By Thor, Not" "Towards the Answer," etc.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.



Something to Crow Over

YOU have done no business with us yet. Is it because you have thought we are here to take advantage; that our goods and service would stand no chance in any other market? In thinking thus you wrong both yourself and us. You wrong yourself because you are hindered from sharing benefits which others assure us we can confer. You wrong us because the fact is the opposite.

We advertise here because we genuinely believe our name is worthy of this place. For instance, we have one line which, if offered through the ordinary mediums of publicity, would by itself make us famous in a very short while. We will not enter into why we prefer advertising here. We ask you to believe it is not what you think it is. We earnestly ask you to know it is not by comparing our B Serges with any other serges offered by any firm at anywhere near the same prices. Anything we advertise will vindicate our good name, but serges are the most worn and the best known of all cloths. If we can excel in serges, you will not hesitate to trust us in other things. Do not condemn us unheard; call our witnesses to give you their evidence to-day.

Send a postcard to-day for any of the following patterns:

- B to E, suits from 57/-
- F to H, suits from 79/-
- I to M, suits from 105/-
- EBORAC One-quality, suits from 69/-
- B Serges, suits 63/- to 100/-
- LADIES' Book, prices from 44/-

Patterns are sent out on the understanding that they will be returned to us. We pay postages both ways to all inland and North Irish addresses.

MACCONNELL & MABE, Ltd., New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

TWO FREETHINKING BOOKS by C. R. BOYD FREEMAN

BY THOR, NO!

Usual Price 6/- : Special price 3/-
Postage 3d.

TOWARDS THE ANSWER.

Usual price 4/6 : Special price 2/3
Postage 2d.

Proceeds of Sales will be given to the "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

The Secular Society, Ltd.

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1927, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £—free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

YOU WANT ONE.



N.S.S. BADGE.—A single Pansy flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver. This emblem has been the silent means of introducing many kindred spirits. Brooch or Stud Fastening. Price 9d., post free.—From THE GENERAL SECRETARY, N.S.S., 62, Farringdon St., E.C.4.

SOCIAL AND DANCE

(Under the auspices of the National Secular Society)

ON

Saturday, March 3rd, 1928

AT

Hill's Restaurant :: Ludgate Hill

Ticket including Refreshments 2/-

DANCING & MUSICAL SELECTIONS

7.30 to 11 p.m.
Evening Dress Optional

Tickets can be obtained from:

FRED MANN, Secretary,
62, Farringdon Street, E.C.4

MORE BARGAINS IN BOOKS!!

TABOO AND GENETICS

A Study of the Biological, Sociological, and Psychological Foundation of the Family; a Treatise showing the previous Unscientific Treatment of the Sex Problem in Social Relationships.

BY

M. M. KNIGHT, Ph.D.
IVA LOWTHER PETERS, Ph.D. AND
PHYLLIS BLANCHARD, Ph.D.

Published 10s. 6d. PRICE 4s. Postage 5½d.

WITHIN THE ATOM

A popular outline of our present knowledge of physics.

By JOHN MILLS

Published at 6/-. Price 3/-. Postage 4½d.

The Psychology of Social Life

A Materialistic study. An important and suggestive treatise.

By CHARLES PLATT, M.D., Ph.D.

Published at 12/6. Price 4/6. Postage 5½d.

OUR FEAR COMPLEXES

An important psychological study.

By E. H. WILLIAMS & E. B. HOAG

Published at 7/6. Price 3/-. Postage 4½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

A Book with a Purpose.

Critical Aphorisms

COLLECTED BY

J. A. FALLOWS, M.A.

A BOOK of brief pithy sayings, which give in a few lines what so often takes pages to tell. The essence of what virile thinkers of many ages have to say on life, while avoiding sugary commonplaces and stale platitudes. There is material for an essay on every page, and a thought provoker in every paragraph.

Price One Shilling.

Postage 1d. extra.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.