

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. XLIX.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1929

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
Einstein and God.—The Editor	321
The Voltaire of Our Day.—Mimmermus	323
The Tactics of the Modern Sophist.—Keridon	324
N.S.S. Conference.—Executive's Annual Report	325
Locke's Essays.—Joseph Bryce	330
"The Realist."—W. Mann	331
Books and Life.—William Repton	332
A Microscope or the Myth.—George Bedborough	333
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

Einstein and God.

THERE is no argument that I approach with so much suspicion as the argument from authority. On questions of fact, authority has its proper place. Here trained and careful observation plays an important part. Authority in matters of opinion are on a different level. Experience shows that educated men, men who have had a scientific training, men of affairs, etc., all may have their opinions decided by their prepossessions, and not by their actual experience. They find in the facts what they hope to find, and the opinions expressed after an assumed study of them, might just as well have been given without any examination at all. To say "Authorities are on my side," when the subject under discussion is a question of opinion, may mean only that established opinion is on "my side." Look back at the history of opinion and you will find that there is not an admittedly erroneous belief that has not been supported by authority. How otherwise could an erroneous opinion ever have been established. A flat earth, demonic possession, witchcraft, with a thousand other discarded beliefs were all established and confirmed by the very highest authority. On the other hand, the scientific opinions which are to-day held as least questionable, were first propounded in the face of authority, and established only when the power of authority in a particular direction was decisively weakened. This love of authority, one may assume, is a consequence of the "herd instinct" in man. Man does not like to live alone, physically. He does not like to stand alone mentally. The average man is happier in the wrong with a crowd, than he is in the right with only one or two companions.

Spinoza's God.

If the theories of Einstein are understood by few,

his name is known to many. It is known that he has done something startling in science, something which in the hands of journalists, although not in the minds of trained scientists, has simply turned established scientific results upside down. In an earlier age Professor Einstein might have been treated as the Church treated Copernicus, and Galileo, or Buffon, or as it would have liked to have treated Darwin. But we live in times when, instead of scientists having to prove that they are in accord with the Church, the Church runs round trying to get a certificate from them in favour of either the character or the existence of God. This has happened with others, and it has now happened with Einstein.

Cardinal O'Connell, of Boston, Mass. warned Catholics against the theory of Relativity as "a befogged speculation producing universal doubt about God and his creation." The Cardinal added that the theory cloaked "a ghastly apparition of Atheism"—one supposes groans and shudders at this ghastly apparition. On this, as Einstein is a Jew, Rabbi Goldstein, wrote Einstein asking him, "Do you believe in God?" To this Einstein replied:—

I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists; not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.

I have no doubt the Cardinal will regard this as a confirmation of the justice of his own remarks, and I agree with him, so far. On the other hand, Rabbi Goldstein, as one who will not have a three-headed God, who is a father with a son the same age as himself, and who is also anxious to retain Einstein as a good Jew—for advertising purposes, discovers that Einstein has provided "a scientific formula for monotheism," and that he "does away with all thought of dualism or pluralism." So the Rabbi is quite satisfied, and no doubt we shall have a great many advertising believers telling the world that one of its great scientists that he believes in deity. Why not? Has he not said that he believes in Spinoza's God, and in these days hard-pressed believers do not care much what the devil one mans when he uses the word "God," it is enough if it is used, and with a capital G. There is an old adage about not looking gift horses in the mouth.

* * *

Pulling the Rabbit's Leg.

The portraits we have seen of Einstein show him to be not destitute of humour, and we fancy he must have felt he was doing a little "leg-pulling" when he gave his answer to Rabbi Goldstein. Asked whether he believed in God, he replies, "I believe in Spinoza's God." Well, what kind of a being is Spinoza's God? Einstein gives as his conception of God, a negative and a positive description. Positively,

he reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists. Negatively, he does not concern himself with the fates and actions of human beings. We will take the negative aspect first. If Einstein's testimony is of any use to anybody, it is certainly of no use to anyone who is religious. God—I accept the word until we come to discuss the positive description—is not concerned with anything that man does, he has no concern with what he is, and does not care a bit what becomes of him. It is obviously no use praying to him; one might as well pray to the Albert Memorial. You can't "commune with him," communion implies reciprocity, and one might as well try to commune with a wooden Scotchman outside an old-fashioned tobacco shop as commune with Spinoza's God. What significance has all the churches, synagogues, mosques, and other gathering places of the religiously afflicted if they are worshipping a God who takes no interest in their fate or their action, and who doesn't even condescend to know what they are praying, or singing, or talking about? Just try and think of anyone worshipping a God of that kind! But the Rabbi is pleased to have Einstein, and the *Referee* discovers in Einstein's message, evidence that on the religious and on the scientific side, "the highest intelligences have now reached the point of mutual understanding and sympathy." Einstein says the god he believes in has nothing to do with man, and doesn't care the proverbial damn what he does or what becomes of him. And the philosophic editor of the *Referee* sees in this that religion and science have come to an understanding, and Atheism is out of court. The poor man doesn't recognize—or pretends not to recognize—that Einstein's confession is a confession of 'practical Atheism.' Will the editor of the *Referee* please explain what is the practical difference between there being no God to bother about man, and there being a God, but one who does not concern himself with the fates and actions of human beings? I feel quite sure he won't. He probably knows that his readers won't expect him to. When Charles the Second was asked to explain the popularity of a not over intelligent preacher, he said, "I suppose that his nonsense suits their nonsense." Every editor has the kind of readers he deserves.

* * *

God or Nature?

Now let me take Einstein's positive statement about God. He believes in Spinoza's God. What is that? I do not want to enter into a lengthy exposition of Spinoza's philosophy, so far as the present purpose is concerned, all that one need say is this. Spinoza's God is definitely not the god of any religious system in the world, and cannot by any honest device be made to do duty for one. There exists, he says, one Substance which we know only through its "modes" or attributes. Of these attributes—not infinite in number, as so many of his commentators have said, but rather in quality, we know two, extension and thought. Every material thing is an example of extension, every mental thing is an example of thought, and the two things, extension and thought, make up our world. To put the same idea in a more modern form, but without altering its essential character, we must, for purposes of thought, assume something as existing. When we come to ask what we know of this existence, we find that we only know it in terms of experience. To one great group of experiences we give the name "material," to another "mental," to another "chemical," to another "biological," these are all phases of existence as we know it, or in Spinoza's term, modes. Of anything beyond this we know nothing, we know existence only as it presents itself

in consciousness. (I have dealt with this aspect of the matter at length in my *Materialism Re-stated*, to which I must refer all who are interested). Spinoza's God does not stand for a person, or for mind, or for will, but simply for an existence which forms the substratum of all human experience. If one cares to call it God, he is as much at liberty to call it what as he is to call it Abracadabra. Only that is not what men mean when they speak about God, and is not what religious men mean when they speak about God to-day. Those who use "God" and mean mere existence, while pretending to a religious audience that they mean the God of religion, are either incredibly stupid or deliberately dishonest. I say that without the slightest reservation. Spinoza's system is fundamentally Atheistic in character. Let anyone apply the simple test of using the term nature or existence where Spinoza uses the term God and he will find it work out equally well.

* * *

Spinoza and Atheism.

God, says Spinoza, acts from the necessity of his own nature, and cannot act differently. What is this but the purely atheistic proposition that nature expresses in its actions set modes of behaviour and cannot do anything else? It is saying that the universe is self-controlled and self-determining. Existence, or God, is incapable of working for ends or using means to achieve ends. To work for ends is to add to something that already exists, and that is impossible in the case of Spinoza's deity. No one has poured greater scorn on those who trace the hand or the wisdom of God in the workings of the world than has Spinoza. The invocation of God as an explanation he says is "the asylum of ignorance." God has neither intellect, nor will, nor understanding, nor desire. Means and ends, beautiful and ugly, good and bad, high and low, perfect and imperfect, all are terms which have a meaning only in relation to our minds and our conveniences. Spinoza is thoroughly deterministic, and, if one translates his ideas into modern terms, completely Atheistic.

Now we know the kind of "God" that Einstein believes in. A mere existence, without mind, or will, or personality, desiring nothing, planning nothing, taking no interest in what man does or what becomes of him. A mere existence with which everything occurs in line with the strictest determinism. Prayers are useless, petitions are vain, communion is impossible. Will anyone say that this is what men mean when they speak about God? Is it the God of religion, or of any conceivable religion? I do not doubt but that others beside Rabbi Goldstein will jump at Einstein because he has used the word "God." Nor do I doubt that others will jump at him on behalf of Christianity. We have reached the stage when genuine religion finds it increasingly hard to live honestly, and altogether lacks the courage to die with courage and dignity. Anything will do, so long as it is given the name of God. It is still a term which exerts a hypnotic power over the unthinking, and it is by the support of the unthinking that established religion to-day hopes to carry on. The pity is that so many public men altogether lack the courage to throw over altogether the word religion. The man who can stand alone is still among the exceptions. The fear of the herd is still strong. But one can imagine the twinkle in the eyes of Albert Einstein when he replied to the Rabbi's inquiry, "I believe in Spinoza's God." Perhaps he whispered to himself, "And that is no god at all."

The Voltaire of Our Day.

"The infidels of one age have been the aureole saints of the next."—*Ingersoll*.

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—*O. W. Holmes*.

"As for my honesty, let him that comes after be told of this."—*Bunyan*.

The function of the humourist is undervalued. In his little, unobtrusive way, the man who jests and sets you smiling back at him does a great service. The physiological value of laughter has never been appraised. Although doctors bestow a benevolent patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that the humourists are benefactors of society. Yet, with the exception of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Dickens—who is liked better for his pathos than his fun—humorous writers are held to be only second-rate literary artists. It is not that we do not laugh, but we laugh apologetically, as if laughter were a weakness of humanity, a thing pertaining to the trivialities of life. So many people think that *Vanity Fair*, which is, on the whole, a serious book, is, therefore, greater than *The Pickwick Papers*, which is, in the main, a comic book. Yet there is much to be said for the view that smiles are as important as tears. Falstaff is just as great a creation as Hamlet. It is allowed in all but pedantic circles that Shakespeare was a great man, and his Falstaff is comedy in the highest.

Rabelais declared, indeed, that laughter is the peculiar property of man, the outward sign which distinguishes the paragon of animals. The man that hath no music in him—we know for what he is fit; and just as certainly the man who has no laughter in him is fit for nothing that is of high service to man.

An advanced movement like our own can have no better champion than a humorist. And if the cause be a great one, and if the arguments barbed by wit and winged by laughter, have any real worth, they strike the deeper because of the humour. In a theological discussion a laugh is a blessing, and a born humorist like Robert Ingersoll was genuinely our benefactor. Although a master of the lash, he used his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a thousand wasps. Rather is he like a Voltaire, into whom has passed the geniality and suavity of Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, looking upon a busier world with the laughing eyes we know so well.

Ingersoll was a master of what Milton calls the "dazzling fence." His attacks on orthodoxy during a generation were so formidable that he forced the reluctant clergy to reply, and he drew Cardinal Manning and Gladstone into the controversial arena. In his discussion with Gladstone, the English statesman taunted Ingersoll with riding a horse without a bridle, with letting his ideas run away with him. Ingersoll retorted crushingly that this was better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." In this particular encounter Huxley claimed the victory for Ingersoll. "Gladstone's attack on you," he wrote, "is one of the best things he has written. I don't think there is more than fifty per cent more verbiage than is necessary, nor any sentence with more than two meanings."

Men seldom talk as brilliantly as they write, but Ingersoll was an exception. A volume might be compiled of his clever sayings, not as invented in the author's study, but as impromptu remarks that flashed in social intercourse. When a friend, finding a set of Voltaire's works in his library, asked how much it cost, the Colonel answered: "I believe it cost me the governorship of Illinois." Speaking of a hot-headed and sanguine acquaintance, he said:

"Show him an egg, and, instantly, the air is full of feathers."

One of his best stories was that of an excitable Fenian, who was boasting of the condition of Ireland. The Irishman said "We have got 30,000 armed men in Ireland ready to march at a moment's notice." "But," replied the other man, "why don't they march?" "Why?" retorted the Irishman, "the police won't let them." When Ingersoll first met George Foote he was desirous of paying the English Freethought leader a compliment. At dinner, Foote passed the oysters, and Ingersoll said, smiling, "Not like oysters, Foote. That's the only fault I can find in you." How good, too, was the Colonel's description of a banknote: "A greenback is no more money than a menu is a dinner."

On one occasion the Colonel had, in a law case, to refer to a legal book: Moses: "On the Law of Mandamus," and the judge, thinking to be witty, asked, "Is that the same author whom you refer to in your work *The Mistakes of Moses*?" "No! your honour," promptly replied Ingersoll, "I am quoting from Moses on Mandamus, but my work is on Moses and God Damn Us." A woman preacher once called Ingersoll "an infidel dog," and he replied: "The lady would have been annoyed had I referred to her as a Christian female of the same species."

Ingersoll's masterpiece *The Mistakes of Moses* is a Freethought classic. Imagination and humour were the qualities in which Ingersoll surpassed the orators of his day, but his humour was extraordinarily good. A collection of his jests are, perhaps, the finest individual contribution to Freethought literature since Voltaire. A good example is his jest, "with soap, baptism is a good thing."

Robert Ingersoll occupied the position in the United States as a militant Freethought orator and writer, which Bradlaugh filled here in this country. Both were big men physically and intellectually; both were born orators; but here the resemblance ends. Bradlaugh sought to beat down Superstition by sheer force of logic and law. His speeches read like judicial utterances by the side of the brilliant, sparkling orations of Colonel Ingersoll. America dearly loves rhetoric, and Pagan Bob as an orator had no equal in the States. He dealt rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being a pioneer. Like Gambetta, he could coin a sonorous and impassioned phrase, which, when uttered, thrilled the hearts and flushed the cheeks of thousands. Phrase after phrase has this rare quality, and reads like prose-poetry, grandiose and sweeping:—

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."

You can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the thrilling, resonant voice. There is music and magic in it. The trumpets sing to battle. Ingersoll was of the rare race of the Sun-Trader, whom Browning worshipped on this side of idolatry. Although the foremost orator of his generation, he was so much more than an orator. His Freethought gave his speeches an all-embracing appeal, which the mere rhetorician never succeeds in attaining.

A thorough humanitarian, Ingersoll's work is full of a fine and noble indignation, directed against all that is cruel and despicable in superstition. Flaming the message of Freethought over a continent, he deserves remembrance. From thousands of minds he lifted the awful belief in eternal torment, and banished those degrading theological conceptions which oppress his countrymen, and which are a bitter heritage from the bad old days of the Ages of Faith. The Ingersoll we treasure in our hearts was a keen-eyed warrior, as well as a very noble man, who fought a brave fight in the Army of Human Emancipation.

MIMNERMUS.

The Tactics of the Modern Sophist.

NOTHING more depressingly noteworthy has characterized the first quarter of the twentieth century than the tidal wave of reaction to every form of superstition and imbecility which has swept over both Europe and America. Who would, twenty-five years ago, ever dream it possible for a famous scientist, not merely to avow a belief in spooks, but openly to preach spookism whenever an opportunity occurs; or for a noted fiction writer and one, by the bye, who had had a medical training, to profess, in the press and on the platform, a belief in fairies! It is sad to reflect, that the credulity of the present age, is not only notoriously widespread, but is a phenomenon so astounding as to pale the credulity of the pagan world to mere moonshine.

Indeed, the conditions are so egregiously different that it would not be an abuse of language to call the credulity that obtains in a semi-civilized world, sanity itself in comparison.

The grotesqueness of a credulous belief depends solely upon the scientific luminosity of the background on which the belief is set. If crass ignorance is universal at the time, the most insane belief is not necessarily silly; it may appear quite *comme il faut*; and does so, if it conforms with prevailing beliefs. But if set in the noonday light of the twentieth century, it becomes a piece of diverting buffoonery, and generally indicates a state of partial dementia.

To believe that the eucharistic bread and wine were actually the very flesh and blood of Jesus was nothing silly in prescientific times; it was quite in keeping with prevailing ideas; but for a modern chemist or physicist to entertain and advocate such ludicrous assumption is pure burlesque, with no extenuating fact to palliate its insanity.

Or take an event of a different order. A few weeks ago there was, in North Finchley, a house to house distribution of a Catholic tract, entitled *Can a Priest Forgive Sins?* in which it was easily shown, by quoting verses from the Gospels, that he can—the Gospels being assumed to be the Word of God, and are therefore the embodiment of truth. I never heard a word of indignation, or even of astonishment at this bold Jesuitic manoeuvre to recapture lost ground. I did not hear even a comment about it. Would that be so if it occurred in the nineteenth century? I trow not. It would be highly interesting to know what would be the attitude of the same people if the R.P.A. *Tract for the Million* were distributed in a like manner!

It is therefore in perfect keeping with this general reactionary trend to witness the Athenian Sophist strut again on the stage of disputation and controversy. And my object in this article is to draw attention to a few of the most noted tactics adopted by his modern descendant as exemplified in some books and articles I have recently read.

1. About the commonest device resorted to is to decry science—to disparage and belittle its achievements—and to ignore or repudiate its generalizations. This is notably the case when some "professor" volunteers to side with the angels and champion their cause by appearing as the devil's advocate against the canonization of science. He seeks to achieve this end by depreciating science in general, and by discounting the doings and discoveries of his own branch in particular. He declares, on platform and in press, that all the findings and generalizations of science are only gropings—hazy, uncertain, and untrustworthy. In their anxiety to convince the public mind that science is of little value, some quit the realm of facts and resort to the fertility of a perfervid

imagination as in the case of Professor Eddington, of Cambridge, who conceives a two-ton elephant sliding down a hillside, and then notifies in some detail the meagreness and the superficiality of what is learnt from poor jumbo's escapade. Did any of the great poets ever give birth to a fantasy so sublime and useful? What a loss to literature that he chose astronomy instead of poetry as his vocation! It is no wonder that "professors" who have thus volunteered to act the devil's advocate against science are so fervently hailed as God's messengers by the priesthood of all creeds and rites.

A reader of this journal sent me, some time ago, a copy of the *Bible League Quarterly*, inviting me to read an article in it on "Creation and Evolution," by a Mr. W. Hoste, B.A. The aim of the article is to discredit science, with the obvious implication that if science can be shown defective or incorrect, then the Bible must be true. All that seems necessary to prove the truthfulness of the Bible is to prove science false! His munitions in the main consists of quotations from the writings of famous men such as Lord Kelvin. He innocently overlooks the palpable fact that had these very persons been born in a mohammedan country they would have championed the Moslem creed and rites with equal fervour. The opinions quoted have not a scintilla of rational value.

He quotes the Bible as if it were an authority on the origin and development of the physical universe and the evolution of living forms, wholly forgetting the fact that it is only a miscellany of legend, folklore, Sumerian and Babylonian traditions, myths, and miracles, priestly rites and prophetic ravings, written by no one knows whom, or when or where save as guess work. To call this heterogeneous medley by one name—Bible—suggests a wicked falsity—*vis.* that it is *one book* produced by *one mind*. The device of denoting this bundle of *disparates* by one term has cruelly deceived a portion of mankind for millenniums; and to call this mixed collection God's Word has given the one-book lie a kind of plausibility.

He is equally oblivious of the fact that the term "creation" is only an euphemism of the word "magic." Both mean precisely the same thing, that of producing a real something out of an absolute nothing—an achievement which human experience and reason declare to be the acme of the absurd.

To be able to perform this premier of all miracles, that is to create, has been the claim of the wizard, magician, and the medicine-man from times immemorial. Since the priest was a magician, his god was one of necessity, as it was from his deity he derived his magical powers. The first verse in Genesis, quoted by Mr. Hoste with such nonchalance, simply stated how all-powerful a magician Jahweh was: at the mere *sound* of the incantation, "Let there be" (in Hebrew of course) without even the aid of a wand, the physical universe leapt into existence! No wizard, either divine or human ever excelled or equalled that feat of enchantment. Fancy putting magic—that figment, that fantasy of power of uncivilized and semi-civilized times—as an alternative to the intrinsic energies of evolving matter, and that in the twentieth century! That events, startling or familiar, great or small, should, in the Bible, be ascribed to magic, was not only natural but inevitable; the writers had no conception of any other form or source of energy. Magic not only brought the universe into being, but kept it in perpetual motion.

Mr. Hoste's essay is not merely an edifice built on Bible quicksand, but is moreover actually built out of quicksand. There is not a single solid brick in its structure.

(To be continued.)

KERIDON.

National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT.

By THE PRESIDENT.

ALTHOUGH the past year has witnessed more than the average activity in connexion with the Society's work, nothing has occurred of so outstanding or so spectacular a character as to call for extended description or comment. In the times, now happily past, when the very right to criticize the truth of Christianity was questioned, and when that challenge was backed by the threat of the prison cell, it was something for militant Freethinkers to meet each other at the end of a year, and to say with a famous revolutionary character, "We have lived." To-day Freethought not merely lives, it is established.

In truth, while the situation is not free from difficulties, there has never been a time when Freethought held so assured a position in the world, or when the admissions of the leaders of the Churches of this country so completely justified the teachings and the principles for which this Society stands. Bigotry is far from inactive, and the weapon of the boycott is still being used with considerable effect; but in spite of all that may be done to prevent it, the disintegration of organized religion proceeds with increasing rapidity, with, perhaps, the single exception of the Roman Catholic Church, the oldest, the best organized, and the most dangerous Church in Christendom. If we compare the state of the religious world to-day with what it was when the National Secular Society commenced its existence some seventy years ago, it would seem almost that we are living in another world. In a sense, we are in another world. Doctrines that were then unquestioned are now freely denounced from scores of pulpits. Expensive commentaries on the Bible are issued, large parts of which read like a Christian edition of the *Age of Reason*. In the daily and weekly press, articles criticizing religion are published that fifty years ago could never have appeared. The number of public men and women who openly proclaim their disbelief in Christianity steadily increases, and even though their proclamations may be accompanied by some saving qualification, the fact of their professing some measure of disbelief is evidence of the extent to which our persistent propaganda has affected the mass of the people, and so made it possible for these men to express their heresy; for the extent to which publicists in this country profess their waning faith in Christianity is not to be measured by the logical or moral weakness of religion, but by the extent to which a knowledge of that weakness has become public property. It would be idle to claim that the whole of this change in public opinion is due to the activity of the National Secular Society, but it is unquestionable that it has been a powerful factor to that end, and it is significant of this that the *Freethinker*, which is virtually the mouthpiece of this Society, was able by its influence to force a paper such as the *Daily News* to invite, for the first time in its history, two avowed Atheists to take part in a series of articles discussing religious topics.

Thanks to the *Freethinker*, the columns of which have always been gratuitously placed at the service of the Society, no more than a bird's-eye view of the work of the past year is necessary. In both the open-air and in halls, propaganda has been well maintained in London and in the Provinces. At Plymouth, a course of lectures was arranged by the local Branch, running from October to March, and it is

pleasing to note that nearly the whole of the expenses of this course was raised by local effort. The Executive takes this occasion to point out that this was done, not by simply appealing to members, but by canvassing sympathisers who were not connected with the Society. What was done at Plymouth could be done elsewhere with both financial and moral benefit. Manchester has carried on its usual winter campaign in various halls, and chronicles a successful season in spite of the depression in trade. Liverpool has also been profitably active, although it suffered somewhat from its inability to secure the Picton Hall for special meetings. Northward, there has been increased activity in Newcastle-on-Tyne, where Mr. J. Bartram—now the Society's oldest Secretary—has been active, and also to the Chester-le-Street Branch and its energetic Secretary, Mr. J. Brighton. Thanks to this Branch, continuous lectures among the mining towns within a radius of some twenty miles have been delivered, and two new Branches of the Society, one at Darlington and one at Houghton-le-Spring were opened. Special lectures have also been delivered at Stratford Town Hall, Birmingham Town Hall, Caxton Hall, and elsewhere.

The work in the open-air has also been maintained at its usual level. Mr. G. Whitehead has again been busy from Plymouth to Glasgow, and reports very successful meetings, and Mr. J. Clayton has also been delivering a number of lectures in a prescribed area around Burnley at the request of the Executive. Mr. F. P. Corrigan, also at the request of the Executive, conducted a very successful week's campaign in the Chester-le-Street district. Mr. R. H. Rosetti has visited a number of provincial Branches during the winter, as also has Mr. F. Mann, and both these speakers have been received with much appreciation. Your President has also been busier than usual with lectures, debates, and with his pen.

On the financial side, although the resources of the Society are greater to-day than they have ever been, the Executive has to express regret that its income does not bear a closer relation to its expenditure. The continued industrial depression is partly responsible for this, but it is a matter to which the attention of the friends of the Society is earnestly directed. The Executive feels that when all allowance has been made, enough is not done by the Branches to exploit local resources. In most districts there are enough sympathisers to meet local expenditure if they were properly approached, and increased financial help means also increased moral help—that is, perhaps, the most important aspect of the two.

The increased cost of propaganda has necessitated the Executive giving a much larger measure of financial help—sometimes in the form of direct financial assistance, but generally in meeting advertising charges and supplying lecturers. In this direction the Executive is now spending a sum which is nearly twice that of the Executive's income at the time of the death of your late President, G. W. Foote. In view of this, it is pleasing to report that the trustees of the Society have received during the year the sum of £2,996 7s. 8d. as the residue of the Martland estate. This has enabled the Executive to pursue its policy with a sense of security, but the need for increasing the actual income of the Executive remains. It should, however, be always borne in mind that the balance sheet presented to the Conference is the income and expenditure of the Executive alone. Each Branch has its own independent income, and issues to its members its own financial statement.

One other direction in which increased activity has been shown during the past year has been in the distribution of literature. Large quantities have been sent all over the country, in many cases where no

actual propaganda, other than this, exists. A great deal of good is thus done, and this form of propaganda can be indefinitely extended. A new series of leaflets and pamphlets is in contemplation. But here, as elsewhere, what can be done is ultimately dependent upon the enthusiasm of our supporters.

We have had the pleasure of welcoming a number of newcomers during the year, but on the other hand, we have had to say a final farewell to an unusually large number of the Society's oldest members. Among those we have to note, Mr. S. Samuels, for over thirty years a member of the Executive. Mr. Samuels was unremitting in his devotion to the cause, and ever ready to do anything that would further its interests. He was far better known in London than in the provinces, but the Society had no harder-working or more loyal member. Mr. E. Wilson, another very old London member, was a man whose spare time, up to almost his death, was spent in propagandist efforts. He was genial, good tempered and generous. Mr. J. T. Thurlow was a well known figure on the open-air platform some thirty-five years ago, and was for many years a member of the Executive. The Society had no member who was more unselfish in his work or more modest in his character. Mr. W. Ross was a very old member of the Liverpool Branch, and until his health prevented him, took an active part in the work of the local Branch. Kindly in nature, he was uncompromising in his opinions, and an unselfish worker in "the best of causes." These men, with others, had worked for Freethought long enough to see their efforts bearing good fruit, and to see some of the things for which they had worked well within reach of accomplishment. To these, who have joined "the immortal caravan," we can but offer our sincere and respectful tribute, remembering that Freethought is where it is to-day because of the lengthy, brave, and unselfish labours of such men as those whose lives continue in the improved outlook of their descendants.

At the opening of this report, reference was made to the extent to which Freethought has gained ground during the past two generations. But it would be unwise to close one's eyes to some very disquieting symptoms that are abroad. In some directions there are distinct signs of reaction, and one that may be pointed out is the distinct growth of the principle of authority in social and political affairs. The extreme view that government should do as little as possible has given way, or is rapidly giving way, to the belief that government should do as much as possible. So far as the political aspect of this is concerned, we are not here concerned with it. But it is of interest to a gathering of Freethinkers when we see this reverence for mere authority spreading from the sphere of politics in which it may have some sort of a claim to existence, to the sphere of opinion in which it really has no legitimate application at all. Every now and again the police take to themselves, or act on the mandate of some State department, to raid printing presses, seize books, or regulate the right to hold meetings in the open-air, and otherwise exert a control over the right to free publication and to the free expression of opinion. Where such powers are exerted, they deserve to be watched with the utmost vigilance, and when necessary fought with the utmost vigour. A motion on the Agenda properly calls attention to this, and it is to be hoped that all Freethinkers will seriously consider the situation. If they do not, none will; and it is not to be expected that Freethought, which has never lacked the courage to stand against the power of the Christian Churches will tamely submit to a police constable or Home Secretary.

Another dangerous symptom to be noted is the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in both numbers and influence. Alone among the Churches it seems to be actually increasing its membership, although, be it noted, solely at the expense of other bodies of believers. Against Freethought it is absolutely powerless. Abroad the influence of the Church is to be noted in the bid makes for political power in some of the independent nations established since the war, and this reached its most dramatic phase in Italy. For the first time since the temporal power of the papacy was broken by the Garibaldian Movement, the Pope has been given the status of a temporal sovereign. The temporality is insignificant in size, but it may be very great in its reactions. The dictator of Italy has awakened to the fact of the aid religion may be to him, and the papacy is well alive to get the most it can for its services. How long this state of things may last it is impossible to say already dissension has arisen, one can say with certainty, that neither dictators nor dictatorships endure for ever, and, after all, Mazzini and Garibaldi were both Italians.

But the significance of the concordat lies in the indication of the danger to Freethought there is in a possible alliance between the Church, or Churches—which includes chapels—and political forces or parties. The suffrage is being gradually extended; in this country the vote is now practically universal, and politicians in their thirst for power may be trusted not to lose sight of the value of "block" votes such as may be commanded by religious bodies, and particularly by the Roman Church. Already we have a retiring Prime Minister asking, in a Nonconformist paper, for the votes of Nonconformists, not as citizens, but as religious sectarians. The retiring Home Secretary based some of his actions on the ground that certain opinions were opposed to his religious views, and appeals for the support of the narrow-minded Church and Chapel-goers for support in his endeavours to perpetuate Sabbatarianism. The Roman Catholic Church openly threatens political parties with the power of the best organized, the most obedient, and the least educated vote in the country unless it receives certain concessions, chiefly with regard to having the expenses of its sectarian schools borne by the ratepayers at large. This intrusion of religion into the political field is a feature to which the Executive has before drawn attention, but it is important enough to stress. The evil does not, it should be added, rest with one political party, but with all. The existence of a large block of votes is very attractive, and as most know in municipal elections, the weight of a few chapels in a constituency may be quite decisive.

Perhaps the most crucial example of what has been said is found in the religious question in the schools. For several years now conferences between the different religious bodies have been going on with the avowed object of arriving at some measure of agreement on the enlargement of religious instruction in the schools. And support from the government of the day has been promised to them, if this agreement can be reached. The government has encouraged Education Authorities to meet representatives of the Churches in order to reach a settlement "based on a common recognition of the vital importance of religious instruction." The proposals put forward not merely allow for definite and dogmatic religious teaching in schools, but aim at building new schools, wholly or in part, out of the rates, and providing definite courses of theological instruction in training colleges, for which certificates are to be issued and inspectors appointed.

The danger here is real and grave. It can only be met by energetic and watchful action on the part of all those who believe in the complete secularization of the State, who hold it as a fixed principle that the teaching of religion is entirely a matter for Church or Chapel, or for a religious organization, as such, but that it is entirely out of place in the modern State where all sorts of opinions on religion are entertained, and where consequently no common agreement can be said to exist. No patronage of religion by the State to-day can be maintained without inflicting a gross injustice on a large body of citizens.

In conjunction with the Rationalist Press Association, your Executive has drawn up a circular for use at the forthcoming election, and it is earnestly urged that the questions, published in the *Freethinker* for May 12, should be put to every candidate in the country, and the result of the questioning sent up to headquarters. Further than that Freethinkers should, between elections, do what they can to enlighten the public mind on this point, and above all should take advantage of the Conscience Clause and withdraw their children from religious instruction. If parents who believe in the State standing aloof from all religion were in each locality to band themselves together for this purpose, a very wholesome effect would be exerted on those religionists who are always anxious to use the wealth and the power of the State to advance their own sectarian interests. It should also be borne in mind that as the law stands at present, religious education in the elementary schools is permissive, not compulsory. There is nothing to prevent any elected Council abolishing religious instruction altogether in the schools under its control if it so pleases.

A motion on the Agenda calls attention to the need of rousing the attention of teachers and organizing them in favour of a policy of Secular Education. If that can be done a very great step forward would be made.

It is well, too, we should bear in mind that, much as we have done the strength of religion rests ultimately, not upon the existence of organized churches and chapels alone, but upon the vast mass of superstition existing in all grades of society. We need only note the vogue of superstition, from faith-healing to the belief in mascots, to realize how vast and how deep this superstition is. Bible crusades can still be financed on a lavish scale, the Foreign Missionary Movement can still spend its millions annually, there are still areas in the country where a tradesman dare not let it be known that he has ceased to believe in religion, teachers are afraid to openly declare their unbelief for fear of injuring their prospects of advancement, and a few months ago we had the British Parliament convulsed over the ridiculous question of the prayer book, while outside the House of Commons controversy raged among so-called educated people concerning the absurd and savage superstition of whether or not an ordinary biscuit and a drop of ordinary wine could be changed into real flesh and blood by the magic of a priest.

All this represents a real danger to such culture and to such freedom as we possess. The blasphemy laws are still in existence, and in the now historic case of Bowman *versus* the Secular Society, Limited, it was laid down that while the advance in public opinion had made it legal to criticize Christianity in terms that were not once legally permissible, an alteration in public opinion might bring back the narrower interpretations that once prevailed. It is well that we should remember these things, and should also remember that it is impossible for us to

(Continued on page 330.)

Acid Drops.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is doing his bit towards the General Election. He has issued the following prayer for use, at twelve a penny:—

Almighty God, the source of all wisdom: Direct, we beseech Thee, the minds of those now called to elect fit persons to serve in the High Court of Parliament, that they may have regard to Thy glory and the welfare of Thy people; and on those who shall be chosen, bestow, of Thy goodness, the spirit of wisdom and true religion; for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—
Amen.

Now, if prayers are really answered we must believe that the new Parliament will have been elected under the direct influence of God Almighty. But that raises some pretty problems. We may safely assume that the new Parliament will consist of Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, and perhaps one or two Communists. And there will be the usual hotch-potch or religionists, with a sprinkling of Freethinkers. So that either God will be having a joke with the electorate, and inspiring people to vote in all sorts of ways, or he may actually be beaten at the polls by a party being elected he doesn't want. Of course, the Archbishop is too artful to say which party the Lord will elect, and we presume he will say, when the election is over, that the Lord in his wisdom has put in power whoever is able to get there.

Quite seriously, what is one to make of a man who issues that kind of prayer, or those who invest a penny in a dozen, believing it will affect the voting results! Does the Archbishop, do any of our political leaders really believe that prayers will actually decide the result of the General Election? Of course, Mr. Lloyd George will welcome the prayers, so will Mr. Baldwin, so will Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. And each will wink the other eye when he says it. And the electorate will, in turn, pretend to believe that the prayers will help. So the game of humbug goes on, in a game in which there is enough humbug and to spare in any case.

It is noticeable that the Archbishop asks people to pray that God will help voters to decide in "the spirit of true religion." Artful man! If he said in the spirit of Christianity he might have the Jewish voters against him, if he said in the spirit of "my Church," he would have all the other Churches against him. But in the spirit of "true religion," well that will please all the motley crowd of fetish worshippers. And that just puts the finishing bit of humbug to the whole performance.

The Lancashire Director of Education remarks that it is said that the average man finishes his education fifty years too soon. Well, if the Christian Church had complete control, the average man would finish his education nineteen hundred years too soon.

Miss Ethel Mannin, the novelist, thinks that when people throw overboard the old conventions, they also discard many gracious and kindly things. Attending church, we haste to add, and touching one's hat to a priest, are ancient conventions, but the scrapping of them entails no loss of anything gracious and kindly. On the contrary, they mark the awakening of larger intelligence, and the acquisition of dignity in man.

Mr. Baldwin says that the word "sin" has been banished from the dictionaries, but the ugly fact remains. Mr. Baldwin might give us the name of any scientific student of human nature who classifies human aberrations as "sin." The conception of these as being "sin," has hindered lamentably the search for rational means for their prevention and cure. A man who talks of the "fact of sin" is living mentally twenty years behind the scientific thought of the age. While Prime Ministers (and Home Secretaries) think thus, no wonder legal and prison reform lags so tardily.

The Rev. Stanley Jones, a missionary, says: "I am not interested in 'white supremacy; I am interested in character supremacy." He means he is concerned with Christian character supremacy. Well, after a survey of

the unlovely deeds wrought when Christian character was dominating Europe, we hope that the Christian character will never again be supreme. The world is all the better for being without St. Bartholomew's Day massacres, Jew pogroms, the Spanish Inquisition, the hunting of heretics, and such like effects of Christian character in the ascendant.

The Editor of the *Methodist Times* says, that the old attitude of the Methodist to the theatre has been definitely abandoned. Give three cheers! The "world" has proved to be right, and the Methodist Church, not so much wrong, as merely stupid and ignorant. At the rate of progress, who knows, Methodist editors in another fifty years' time will be telling the world that the ancient Sabbath taboo on national amusement has fallen overboard.

A very reverend dean says, "the cult of the ugly must have advanced very far when a young girl is an eyesore in a room." Modern hair and dress does seem to worry our friends who nurture their souls on spiritualities. To bring the dean to a proper sense of humility, we add that a cleric in gaiters or in full warpaint is not exactly a thing of beauty and of joy for ever to people living mentally in the twentieth century.

Mr. Sidney Herbert says that "at no time in history has the intellectual class been so uninfluential." We hope he has not been jumping at conclusions, after noting that few people to-day take much notice of what parsons propose or advise.

Dr. Maltby told a meeting that when members of the Church heard about £25,000 being spent in a year, they were to remember that every penny had some service behind it. This is quite true. Much of the cash goes towards the upkeep of buildings for housing a non-existent God, and the rest provides food, clothing and houses for parsons. This be excellent "service" for the men of God, and not one of them has ever been heard complaining about it—save that it is too economical. Seemingly, the "muggins" who are persuaded to give, have their doubts about whether they really are getting some return for their contributions; and so Dr. Maltby does his best to re-assure them on that point. In the future, when doubts become more general among the pious, these re-assuring speeches will become very frequent.

The Rev. Ernest Rattenbury (Wesleyan) says that at the age of eleven, he made up his mind to become a parson. In other words, we presume, God's finger touched him and mentally he slept. We are reminded of the story of the Englishman who was boasting to a Scotsman that he was born an Englishman, and would, thank God, die an Englishman. Said the Scotsman, "Mon, have ye no ambition?"

On the principle of what cannot be cured must be endured, the Rev. Rhondda Williams rejoices that many of the old restrictions and conventions have disappeared. The most serious objection to them, he suddenly has discovered, is that they prevented sincerity and fettered the development of life. Therefore, he is not pessimistic regarding present-day youth of either sex; it compares favourably with the youth of any other time. Freedom to be natural and sincere, he thinks, is a great gain. For he knows of middle-aged people who are suffering badly from having been brought up in "good" homes, where they were never allowed to form their own opinions, and their conduct was channelled for them in accordance with what was thought "proper." To round off Mr. Williams' remarks, we add that the middle-aged sufferers and the insincere and fettered minds of a past generation were the unlovely products of Christian churches and chapels. We leave the reader to find the proper moral.

A writer in a weekly paper mentions that Dr. Cyril Burt (the I.C.C. psychologist) has estimated that the proportion of mental deficient among delinquent children is four times greater than among children of the same class who never get into police-courts. The same

writer cites this as proof of the close connexion between mental deficiency and crime. He also mentions that sexual offences against young persons and brutal assaults on children are increasing, and that the greater proportion of the offenders are mental defectives. Meanwhile, we add, parsons blather about "sin," and prescribe religions as the only cure for it—as if mental deficiency can be cured by religion!

As an instance of the intense interest taken in the Bible by the people of India, the Bombay Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, gives the following facts. An officer of the Salvation Army visited six of seven newspaper offices with the Bible stories of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The Editor of the *Indian Daily Mail*, a Hindu, gave three columns to the Bible Story. His paper is English, and has a very large circulation. The Editor of the *Sunday Chronicle*, a Mohammedan, whose paper is also English, allowed two pictures to occupy more than three columns, and included two pictures of scenes in Nazareth. The *Sauvartaman* gave four columns for the whole of the Epistle of St. John. The Editor is a Parsee, and his paper circulates very widely amongst Parsees, Hindus, and Mohammedans in this area. We suggest this shows the broadmindedness of these editors. How many Christian Editors of religious journals would print propagandist matter for other religions?

Sir Robert Perks is pleased that Royal Assent has been given to the Methodist Union Bill. In union he sees assurance of future harmonious and fruitful co-operation. It will put an end to needless waste and rivalry, and will prove a mighty weapon, in the words of Wesley, "to the glory of God and the service of the Commonwealth." One can guess what harmonious and fruitful co-operation will prove to be in practice. Methodism—with Baptistism as a close rival—appears to germinate and conserve the greater number of insular minds of the religious fanatic type in this country. It is a repository of kill-joys, Sabbatarian bigots, and pious "Temperance reformers." Therefore, with these united for fruitful co-operation, ordinary citizens may get ready to have more of their personal liberty filched from them—"to the glory of God" and the Churches. Methodism specializes in prohibitions and restrictions for "the other fellow." These are its chief means of manifesting to him the Kingdom of God on earth.

Mrs. Burnett Smith (Annie S. Swan), whom a pious weekly calls "a great novelist," says:—

The things which were suffered and permitted, say fifty years ago, would not be tolerated by public opinion to-day. The response to any appeal for the betterment of social conditions becomes daily swifter and fuller. In spite of outward signs, there is more true religion in the world to-day than there has ever been.

Has the good lady ever wondered how queer it is that public opinion should have improved so vastly during the last fifty years, a period when the huge numbers of citizens have been deserting the churches and ignoring religion? The majority of citizens are now outside the churches. Where the deuce, then, do they acquire this "true religion"? And since they have not got it from the churches, and they have so much more of it than these forebears who flocked to the churches, may one infer: (1) that the churches have been, and are, incultating "false religion," and (2) that people become more sensitive to humanitarian ideas, the less they have to do with the religion taught in the churches?

The Rev. J. Bevan says that in a few years, if we are not careful, "England may be a nation without the capacity for religion." We hardly dare to think that the outlook is quite so bright as that. We are hardly optimistic enough to believe that the country will in the near future realize that it can get on well enough without parsons—which is, of course, what Mr. Bevan has at the back of his mind. Folly does not die out quite so easily or as quickly as Mr. Bevan seems to think.

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.—J. LYONS, 58, W. Griffiths, Lt.

A. B. MOSS.—Whether candidates reply or not to the question, it is as well for them to be asked, and their silence may be as instructive as their speech—in the case of many candidates for parliament, we have noted that the amount of instruction on their speech is of microscopic quantity.

F. FLETCHER.—We are glad to hear from one of our old listeners of nearly forty years ago, and from so far away as Burma. Thanks for your very welcome good wishes.

C. WILLIAMS.—Many thanks for your very kindly letter. We have been fellow-travellers along the same path, and can sympathize with each other.

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."

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference, at Manchester, was one of the most successful of recent years. There was a good attendance of delegates, and a considerable number of members were present. The discussions were critical, good tempered, and altogether motivated by zeal for the interest for the Cause. Miss Kough, in the absence of Mr. Mann, and at the request of the Executive, acted as Secretary to the Conference, and the arrangements went through with ease and dispatch. In this she was greatly helped by the Manchester Branch itself, whose experience stood it in good stead.

On Monday the Branch had arranged an excursion to Bakewell, where a large party of members and delegates took lunch, and from thence to Monsal Dale by motor-coach. Monsal Dale is a lovely spot, just a bit of the Alps with vegetation instead of snow, and the weather was glorious. Mr. Chapman Cohen went with them, but unfortunately he had to leave in order to catch a train for London. Altogether the day was an enjoyable one, and the weather was just ideal—fine, sunny, and the heat tempered by a refreshing breeze.

We had almost omitted to mention the Saturday evening reception at the Victoria Hotel, and the singing and reciting of Miss Horne, and Miss Morris. It was a pleasure to meet again visitors from various parts, and if some of the familiar faces were absent through death, it was gratifying to note the number of newcomers, both male and female.

Whitsuntide is not the best time of the year to hold a meeting at Manchester, but the Chorlton Town Hall was almost filled when the speakers, headed by the President walked on to the platform. All the speakers were in excellent form, and what they said met with the fullest appreciation. After an introductory speech by the President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti led off with a review of the relations between religion and science, Mr. F. E. Monks gave some interesting examples of the way in which religious prejudice interfered with social justice, Mr. Whitehead dwelt upon the financial cost of religion to the country, Dr. Carmichael captured his hearers with a fine exposition of the essential opposition between religious and scientific thought, Mr. Clayton showed how in all criticisms of rival religions it was the Freethought criticism that was adopted, and Mr. Corrigan detailed the evil on Children of Roman Catholic instruction. Finally, the chairman delivered a benediction that appeared to send everyone home in a state of satisfaction and enthusiasm.

This week we publish the Executive's Annual Report, next week we shall publish a report of the Conference proceedings.

We have been warning all and sundry for some time as to the underhand "conversations" going on between political leaders and the churches with regard to religion in the schools. Where it is a question of votes, whatever faint grasp of principle politicians have disappears very quickly. Here is one more illustration in support of what we have been saying. One of the Liverpool Labour men, Alderman Luke Hogan, addressing a meeting in the Kirkdale division, said:—

The Labour Party are facing up to that question—and facing up to it without any apology. I have in my hand a report of conferences that have already taken place between Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and representatives of the Catholic Church, the Church of England, and the Free Churches.

The position is this: In the event of a Labour Government being returned, Mr. Macdonald is prepared to convene a conference of representatives of all the Churches concerned to secure an agreement on some real educational policy, and to bring in legislation to give effect to that policy, and so to stop once and for all this tinkering with such a grave question.

What we would really like to know, is whether the Labour Party is really ready to sell itself to the Catholics of Liverpool on this question? Is it really the case that the Labour Party is ready to give the Churches what they require, if they can only agree among themselves as to what it is they want? If it is, we seriously ask the very large numbers of Freethinkers in the Labour Movement, what are they going to do about it? The phrase about agreement about some educational policy is "eye-wash." It is not educational policy that is in dispute, but getting more religion drummed into helpless children at the expense of the ratepayers. We hope that all Freethinkers will make it a point of questioning Mr. Macdonald as to whether he is ready to sell the principle of non-partisanship by the State in religious questions for the sake of securing the Catholic vote. And if he is prepared to sell himself on this question, on what other question may he not be also ready to sell principle for the sake of securing power. Mr. Macdonald ought to be enlightened on the subject by Freethinkers in his division. We sincerely trust that Freethinkers will wake up and not permit themselves to be dragged along at the heels of this religious rump.

Executive's Annual Report.

(Continued from page 327.)

stand still. We must either advance or we must retrograde; and experience has shown that where Freethought is concerned, the only policy that pays is that of "boldness, again boldness, always boldness."

The Executive appeals to Freethinkers to remember these things. Culture is not so secure, our freedom is not so secure, that they cannot be lost, or at least considerably degraded and weakened. There are large numbers of Freethinkers in every town and city in the kingdom. Efforts should be made to induce them to take some active interest in our Movement. If they cannot be induced to join the National Secular Society they might be induced to support it in other ways. Where possible, meetings should be arranged, and where that is not possible suitable literature should be distributed, and where neither is done, send the names and addresses to headquarters, and we will see what can be done from there. More use could also be made of the press. We complain of the way in which editors of newspapers play into the hands of the Churches and Chapels. They are likely to continue to, just so long as Freethinkers remain quiet when they ought to be vocal. If every Freethinker who is capable of doing so made the full use of the press, newspapers would soon find that it really did not pay to ignore the existence of a body of serious-minded men and women who simply declined to be silent where questions of free speech and social justice were concerned. This is work that must be done on the spot. It is impossible for it to be done from headquarters. Headquarters may assist in various ways, but it cannot do all that needs to be done if our Movement is to occupy the place in public life that it should occupy.

Stress has been laid upon the need for more members and a larger income, but the Executive is loth to close this report, leaving the impression that these two things are the main things. They are not. They are only the means to an end, instruments we need with which to work. The work and influence of the National Secular Society has always been altogether out of proportion to the strength of its membership and the extent of its finances. For many years it did its work on an income that would not have paid the salary of a full-fledged clerk. But the work was done, and the change in theological opinion, the number of doctrines that have been either discarded or modified, the freer day of rest that exists, the greater freedom of both publication and speech, are evidences of how well it was done. It is not likely that the work will be less well done now that our resources are greater than they were. But it is well to remember that the value of a movement does not lie in either its wealth or its numbers, but in the quality of its supporters, and in the sincerity of their work. Our Movement is the one Movement in the country to-day, where quality and not quantity counts. We are not buying support, we are not concerned with the capture of votes. Our aim is the Rationalizing of life, our ideal that of making truth and justice dominating facts in the life of all.

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails,
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of Heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round*and send his flying
Off to Hell—a Manichee.

Soliloquy in the Spanish Cloister, Browning.

Locke's Essay.

A CORRESPONDENT, in the issue of April 28, who was kind enough to note, with approval, the article *The Dismal Science*, of the previous week, thought that I might have recommended Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*; and suggested that I say something of this work, and of its value to Freethinkers. That it has been of very considerable value there is, of course, no question, but whatever service it rendered in leading to the treatment of religious subjects from a rational standpoint was altogether contrary to the purposes of the *Essay*. Indeed, when one comes to think of it, Freethinkers owe an enormous debt to the labours of men, who were neither Atheists nor Freethinkers, in the sense in which that term is now used. Thomas Paine himself, whose writings have proved such a valuable weapon in Freethought hands was, as we know, a Deist. While Voltaire, who was probably the most vigorous opponent that Christianity ever had, held Atheism in abhorrence. Locke of course, was a devout believer, who, unconsciously played into the hands of the enemy.

The *Essay*, if we except the third book, is a purely philosophic treatise; and in order to understand its force and value, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the psychology that was current in the seventeenth century. It has been called an epoch-making book, because it destroyed the position upon which religion was entrenched. The idea of God was held to be "innate"; and not only religious, but moral ideas as well, were believed to be inherent in the human mind. Christianity taught that man had fallen from a state of grace and intimacy with his Maker, and that the knowledge of the true God was implanted in man at the Creation. The "conscience"—the moral sense of right and wrong—was also regarded as a divine endowment to enable man to walk in the path of rectitude and righteousness. Religious ideas were claimed to be universal, and that man, wherever found, had some notion of a Supreme Being. The degraded and superstitious ideas of savages and inferior races were only corruptions of the true revelation of Himself which God had vouchsafed to man at the beginning. The allegation that there are no Atheists, which one occasionally comes across even now, dates back beyond Locke's day, and, of course, if the idea of God were "innate," and every man carried the evidence within himself, there couldn't very well be any. But, Locke showed very conclusively that ideas could not be innate, and that all the knowledge we possessed was the result of sensation and reflection. Besides the Atheists of ancient times, of whom history afforded ample proof, Locke produced the testimony of many travellers and explorers, of peoples who had no idea of a God, and who were destitute of any beliefs that could possibly be called religion. He instanced also the early Jesuit missionaries who were unanimous in their opinion that the Chinese literati were all Atheists. And even among ourselves, he said, if it were not for the fear of the magistrate, and the consequent social ostracism, the religious world would be shocked to find the number of persons who would openly declare themselves as Atheists. The publication of the *Essay* brought forth the usual clerical attacks, but the argument for the *innateness* of religious and moral ideas, so far as the intellectual world was concerned, received a blow from which it never recovered. Since then, the apologists for the belief in God have had a sorry time, grasping at one broken reed after another, all of which have proved destitute of stability or support.

Like the philosopher Kant, after Locke had destroyed the accepted basis of Christian belief, he attempted to construct another foundation, maintaining that man, by the exercise of his own faculties, could arrive at a positive knowledge of God. But his arguments on this point are neither clear nor convincing, and I am not aware that they have ever been made use of by Christian apologists. The discussion of philosophic and moral problems has been shifted on to other grounds, and the very terms that were used—innate, liberty, necessity, substance, etc.—have to the present generation lost their meaning.

Locke was not always consistent. In pursuing his argument for the existence of numerous Atheists in the world, he insinuates that in our civilization it is responsible for a profligacy that distinguishes its professors from the good Christians. But, why Atheism should produce profligacy only in the Englishman, and not in the Chinese literati, of any of the numerous peoples he mentions, is a circumstance he does not trouble to explain. It is a question how far Locke is responsible for the moral obloquy which later Christians have delighted to fling at the Atheist.

Besides the valuable grain that Locke's *Essay* contains, there is also a good deal of "chaff," which is more amusing than instructive. His arguments, not only for the existence of God, but for that of angels and spirits, and other supernatural beings, are more worthy of the theologian than of the logician.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

"The Realist."

It is with the greatest pleasure that we welcome the new monthly magazine *The Realist* (Macmillan, 2s.), which made its first appearance in April. The sub-title of the new magazine states it to be "A Journal of scientific Humanism," and its aim, as described by the "Editorial" at the end, "We stand for making the specialist understood, for introducing the laboratorist, who has lived too long with symbols, to letters, and so giving him that important public which has no time to listen to a man who cannot express himself."

This is the crying need of the time. Modern science is becoming so complex that the ordinary citizen who is interested in it, is beginning to lose all contact with its problems, and resigning himself to knowing that he cannot know. What the intelligent public need are competent interpreters, to act as liaison officers between the scientists and humanists, to unite science with literature and carry on the tradition of Huxley, Tyndall and Clifford.

Those who pay attention to our high-brow monthly and quarterly magazines, ranging from half-a-crown upwards, must be struck by the poverty and lack of interest in their contents. Month by month, and quarter by quarter, we search these stoney dialectical deserts for something worth reading, and rarely do we find it.

It was not always so. We can well remember with what excitement we looked forward to the appearance of the *Nineteenth Century*, when Huxley and Tyndall were contributors. Compare the present *Fortnightly Review* with what it was under the editorship of John Morley. Or the *Contemporary Review* with that of its predecessor of forty or fifty years ago. Even after that lapse of time, many of these old monthlies contain articles more alive, and much more interesting than anything we get in their degenerate descendants to-day. With advancing years, they show signs of senile decay.

Indeed, it is difficult, at first sight, to understand how they continue to exist. For surely no sensible person would think of buying them for the sake of any enjoyment or edification he could get out of them. In fact, we believe that if they depended upon the sales of the book-shops alone, they would soon have to put up the shutters. They really depend upon the wealthy literary and social clubs who have to provide them for the library table. Many wealthy people also take them because it is

the thing to do, but do not read them. But their mainstay is the great Circulating Libraries, Boot's Library, for instance, has to provide a set every month for each of its 350 odd branches. Also the Public Libraries, of which there is one, or more, in nearly every town now.

This also accounts for the lack of interest in their contents. For nothing can be allowed to appear that would shock Mrs. Grundy, or her daughters, who are the mainstay of the Circulating Libraries. And no new or disturbing revolutionary sentiments must appear, to upset the nerves of those who repose in the capacious easy chairs—in those lofty, luxurious, and solemn club rooms where, it has been said, the pervading feeling is that of having a Duke dead upstairs.

That the claims of science will be well catered for is guaranteed by the fact that Sir Richard Gregory, the Editor of *Nature*, and Professor J. B. S. Haldane and Julian Huxley, are on the *Realist* Editorial Board. But we do not wish to imitate those exasperating reviewers of books, who, instead of telling you what the book contains, tell you more about themselves. The proof of the pudding in the eating, so we offer a few samples from the first number. Aldous Huxley has a lively article on "Pascal," the great Christian philosopher. He says of him:—

How he hated the poets for having other rules than those of virtue, and for behaving like men rather than like good men! He felt all the Puritan's disapproval of the theatre because it made people think about love, and because it gave them pleasure. Anything that gave pleasure was odious to this great hater. That section of the *Pensées* which deals with worldly distractions is perhaps the most vigorous of the whole book; hatred improved his style. He loathed his fellows for being able to amuse themselves. He would have liked all men to be as he himself was—racked with incessant pain, sleepless, exhausted by illness. "Sickness," he affirmed, "is the Christian's natural state, that is to say, of suffering, of pain, of privation from all the pleasures of the senses, exempt from all passions." Such was the opinion of Pascal, the Christian dogmatist.

And further: "He demanded that everyone should think and feel about the world at large as he did; he wanted to impose headaches, sleeplessness, and dyspepsia, with their accompanying psychological states, on all. Those of us, however, who are blessedly free from these diseases will refuse to accept Pascal's neuro-algia-metaphysic, just as we refuse to accept the asthma-philosophy of a more recent invalid of genius, Marcel Proust."

Dr. Norman Haire has an enlightening article on "Rejuvenation," upon which subject he is an authority. He observes:—

Perhaps the main reason why English people are so ignorant of the real nature of rejuvenation is because it is connected with the *gonads* (sex-glands), and the English do not care to speak seriously, about such things. Our sexual hypocrisy not only makes us look ridiculous in the eyes of the rest of the world; it very often keeps us from acquiring useful knowledge, or from improving our habits and customs, and so from adding to our health and happiness. . . . Rejuvenation is not a cure-all. It is not an infallible remedy for all diseases; it will not restore an irreparably damaged organ to its original healthy condition; it will not enable a man to live for ever—nor even, at present, for the two hundred years rashly prophesied (or so the sensational newspapers would have us believe) by Voronoff.

Another good article is entitled "The Psychology of Revivalism, by Miss Winifred Holtby, the sub-title to which is "The Failure of Aimée McPherson." It commences: "Aimée Sempie McPherson," "Everybody's Sister," the "Hot Gospeller," the "Saleswoman of Salvation," the "Evangelist with the Sex Appeal" has come and gone. As she leant out of the windows of the Boat Train the Press photographers caught the last vision of the face that launched a thousand Great Revivals, but the eye-lids were a little weary."

She had done her best, yet England was not saved. The collection at the first Albert Hall meeting amounted to less than £90. Hull was cold, Sunderland hostile. She had prestige of a kind. She might successfully have sold us beauty creams, or written articles on "My Sex Appeal":—

But she failed to conform to English traditions of a

preacher of the Gospel. She could have lived down her press advertisement; she would have lived down the rumours of her scandal; she could have made a positive asset of the John Blunt posters declaring outside her meeting, "Aimée McPherson's Stunt Exposed." She could have lived down her vulgarity. She might even have got away with her preposterous hymn-book. Some of the Party Songs carolled by young Tories are no better than:—

I've been listening in to Heaven,
And I've had a glorious time!
I've heard such wondrous singing
And the music it was fine.
There can be no oscillation
For the precious blood prevails,
Praise the Lord there's true reception
And this wireless never fails.

But she could not live down her golden wig and her blouses of oyster-coloured satin, the flashlights leaping to expose her graceful figure in the act of prayer, and her suites of private apartments; she could not persuade us that the Sermon on the Mount had led her directly to the front pages of the *Evening Standard*. Some odd tradition makes Englishmen able to accept their Gospel from Lambeth Palace and the Vatican, from a street corner or a Zion Tabernacle, but not from a private suite of rooms at the Hotel Cecil.

And concludes that: "If teachers cultivate scepticism instead of credulity among their pupils . . . the revivalist in the pulpit will be disarmed. Scepticism of authority, intelligent understanding of our own natures, the provision of other outlets for our emotions and desires, and more tolerable conditions of living may combat the revivalist's appeal. For it is, as a rule, the wretched and the fearful, the drab, the desolate, the repressed and the unstable who seek without question and without shame the perilous raptures of Revivalism."

There is a good article entitled "The Wagner's," by our leading musical critic, Mr. Ernest Newman. There are sixteen articles altogether, touching on many popular topics besides religion and science. We hope the new venture will be a pronounced success.

W. MANN.

Two Sonnets on the Free State Censorship Bill.

I

GRIM Dean, who sleeps within his pulpit's shade,
Canst thou rise up to say the bitter thing
Or pen the words that hiss and stab and sting
And flay the foul flesh of the Pope's brigade?
Ah, no! Thou sleepest: and the glories fade
From off the altar, and the censers swing;
The mystic smoke climbs up in clouds that cling
About the Temples of the priestly trade.

O Swift, these tricksters in thy famous town
Have laid a plot to fetter our free minds,
And bring agen the chained Bible days.

And later, doubt not but the martyr's gown
Of living flame, the white hot iron that blinds,
Shall be brought back to better Heaven's praise!

II

O Ban the books and save the children's lives,
And cut the heart out of the sceptic's rage;
Erase the angry word that mars the page,
That sears the soul, yet in its searing shrives.
Go bind our dreaming spirits in steel gyves,
Since freedom's dead in this still darker age;
Lest we forsake the dictates of the sage
And play with ethics of the herds and hives.

O worthy purpose, O most noble plan,
O holy Churchmen who will save our youth
From all the bitter blasphemies of man,
And lead them gently in the ways of truth!

Your God grant pardon . . . my wild rage outran
Christ's love and saw ye perish in red ruth.

JOHN H. HEWITT.

Books and Life.

MR. J. M. STUART-YOUNG, who frequently contributes poetical fireflies to the *Freethinker* has had a book, *The Immortal Nine*, published by Fowler Wright, Ltd., 240 High Holborn, W.C.1., price 5s. If none of us can choose our parents, we can at least select our poetical loves and make a song about them. There are, as we know to our cost, editors who declare war on poets. One editor friend has openly stated that poets should be shot, and a special season observed for this pastime. That is all very well, but could not poets declare a counter-war on writers of prose? Mr. Stuart-Young takes for his subject, nine English poets of the nineteenth century, and vigorously praises them all. His choice has been wise, and in the following order he gives us his reasons for daring to be out of date: Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Keats, Swinburne, Tennyson and Browning. These names are undoubtedly the peaks of a century, which, with all its failings, could not be accused of lack of thoroughness. Taking the average period covered by these poets, a reference to English history would disclose the existence of horrors that would not now be tolerated. There was the well-known dead-set on free speech, hanging for sheep-stealing, flogging women, cruelty to boy chimney sweeps, and countless other monstrosities at large, ignored by those who do not know, and those who do not want to know. In addition, there was the French Revolution and international wars as a background.

Reasoned proof and praise is found in the short essay on Shelley, and the author's enthusiasm will probably cause the reader to revisit the writer whose domestic life was always thrust at any who dared to speak well of the ill-fated poet. It is easier to see a smut than a perfection, but we wish Mr. Stuart-Young had given us more of his opinions of *Queen Mab*. This work, it is constantly pointed out, was "juvenile"; Shelley grew up quickly, and his youth had the wisdom of old age that is not measured in years.

Mr. Stuart-Young takes us instructively through the poetical garden of his other friends. He is brief with Wordsworth, deals very tenderly with the taciturn old man, and shows us his beauties again. The best plums are picked from the basket of Coleridge, and there is one mis-print in his extract from *Christabel*; this was memorized by the present writer during the Boer War. Our author does not agree with Hazlitt, who, in speaking of Coleridge's features in *Winterslow*, wrote: ". . . his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done." Scott, the romantic historian, receives a fair ninth of praise. Byron's plagiarism is recorded, and his influence is mentioned, although the full extent is not given. Keats, Swinburne, Tennyson and Browning are given a generous hearing, and it is to be hoped that what may be called these commonsense introductions to our real poets will be helpful for students who do not wish to spend a lifetime in reading expositions. It would appear that in our present time there are scores of poets all in the front rank; one can hear in imagination, in the lower walks of life some quotation from the innumerable Sitwells, and Noyes, and one in reality can't. Our nine poets have given us a standard of judgment, high and difficult; on this standard new poets can be assessed at their value. This is fair, for it is apparent that the newspaper fuglemen of modern poets have no groundwork for their criticism—for them, Homer and Virgil have lived in vain, and our own noble band of poets are like yesterday's leading article—forgotten.

Mr. T. Sturge Moore, who is well known in the world of art criticism—a world which is almost like the lotus flower that has its roots in the bottom of the river, and its flower in the air—has taken up a defence of Beauty in his book entitled *Armour for Aphrodite*. The publishers are Grant Richards and Humphrey Toulmin, 21 Soho Square, and the price is 8s. 6d. nett. Perhaps Keats is best remembered by the ordinary man for his wonderful crystallization of a truth in a few words. "Beauty is truth, truth Beauty—that is all ye know on

earth, and all ye need to know." Plotinus, in his essay *On the Beautiful*, was not so much concerned about a defence, as a definition, and this, as readers may know, is a prolonged task in a study of the abstract. This wonderful man, who has been mentioned by Emerson and Coleridge, is not everyone's taste. Somewhat in the air do these writers disport themselves, and they may be dismissed as word jugglers, theorizers, or any kind of description that excuses us for being unable to understand them, but the fact remains that Plotinus can tell us something concerning the "Beautiful." This ancient writer touched on the beauty of intellect itself, and somewhat naively asks, if man had a soul, why should not the sun and stars have one also? Santayana in his *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, is also in love with this indefinable abstraction, and the nearest this writer comes to giving us something real to masticate is as follows:

"There is a sense—a somewhat esoteric sense—in which such essences as Beauty may be called "the most real things in the universe." Mr. Moore cannot treat Beauty in the same manner that Landor described philosophy, for the simple reason that there is no disputing about taste. He does, however, in the course of some 200 pages, reward the reader with a stimulation of man's perceptions that threaten to die of disuse, or choking by the fumes from the exhaust of motor cars. One phrase which justifies the writing of Mr. Moore's book is as follows: "Things are only beautiful for a woman's reason—because they are beautiful." The author dares to suggest that we should alter a word or a phrase in any classic if we do not admire it, and this may somewhat atone for the regret one feels that the recipient of some good thought realizes that it has been thought before. Probably in Shakespeare we could find the origin of most noble thoughts—that is, if we are prepared to stop at Shakespeare. But when we remember that in the rope of history Shakespeare was only one small portion, and that he had borrowed from the known classics of his day, they even must, in their turn, have borrowed from their predecessors.

What does belong to me in the world of thought? The answer is, nothing belongs to me in the world of thought, for the very reason that thought is the possession of the whole sentient human race. Mr. Moore has fairly covered the world of aesthetics, and in so doing, has some good things to give us. He would not have us grow old, and although only the heroic can imitate Gladstone, who commenced to learn Greek at the age of eighty-four, our author gives us an amulet which we may occasionally touch to prevent us from being lost in the pleasant world of sloth. "Many men exert their consciences when young, register the result, and abide by it as a rule for life. Those men are surprised to find their sons' consciences in opposition to their own, which has become fossilized by being worshipped instead of used." It is probable that this book of Mr. T. Sturge Moore's will be highly prized in the future, for if we believe that a miracle happened when man rose from four legs and balanced on two, the next miracle, that an intelligent world is looking for, is a miracle in the world of consciousness, and not one, but many will sing, "Glory to man in the highest," when an upward movement in consciousness has taken place. This movement will certainly be in antagonism to ugliness in our surroundings, in speech, in manner, in conduct, and it will be brought about in no small way by those who have dispensed with theological cargo that prevented clear sight, clear action and a clear goal.

"Everyman" is a good and comprehensive title, and the late J. M. Dent, in his splendid undertaking in the *Everyman Library* has given the title a practical meaning and significance. There is a paper now published by this well-known firm, and its appeal is somewhat wider than most weekly journals. The editorial notes have a masculinity about them uncommon and independent, and at times reminding us of the English essayists who were not afraid of saying what they meant. Here is an extract and sample from bulk:—

We deal with literature as perhaps our main subject. But we do not regard it as an academic affair of interest

only to professors and literary men. We look upon literature in its relation to life.

That is putting literature in its right place, for after all there is wisdom in books—books in a way are examples of the immortality of thought—and there is, as yet, no caste system in the true Republic of Letters. *Everyman* is published weekly at the price of twopence; it contains some very good wood-cuts by Mr. John Hargrave and gives a flicker of hope to those who think we are growing up. We notice that *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, according to a vote of readers, was a fine favourite; it would be interesting to know what critical readers of this journal thought of it.

WILLIAM REPTON.

A Microscope or The Myth?

A CHICAGO Church boasts of its costly new stained-glass windows.

The Cross has been discarded in the new symbology. Retorts and microscopes take the place of crosses and halos.

The Son of God has been replaced by the Son (or Sun) of Science. The crucifix has given way to the compass.

All very blasphemous and interesting. It might even be important if it meant that Christians had ceased to live on the square (even a "T" square).

Somehow one remembers that many English Churches display the "royal coat of arms" prominently—even in stained glass.

There are hundreds of rural churches in England where the local "lord of the manor" has to see his own "insignia" in his "own" church.

In France every church displays (probably compulsory at the time it began to be displayed) the Stale motto "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

Hymns and prayers in praise of Labour are not infrequent in modern churches.

The symbology, in brief, is only really valuable if it means that science has actually cast out superstition.

To prove that science is the current inspiration of a church would require much more than a pictorial praise of it.

Kings and influential sections of society (labour is only the latest to become influential) have always been flattered and courted by priests.

Do the churches desire to take science into their fold, or merely to "take in" a few more scientists or those who call themselves scientists.

Is the new symbology as banal and meaningless as "Christian" "science"?

A wit once said that a church spire symbolized that the way to heaven was always *outside* the church. Possibly a microscope made of coloured glass is a fit and proper symbol of a Christian microscope.

A common tavern title in London is "The Goat and Compasses." It is said by antiquarians, that this queer name is just a development of the text "The Holy Ghost encompasseth us." Perhaps the Chicago church window compasses mean this.

During the war field batteries were "camouflaged" to look like a field of growing corn, or like peaceful peasants climbing a tiny hill. It was only when the guns began to speak that the enemy knew that the other fellow was up to his old tricks.

The Christian Church has throughout its whole history "camouflaged" in its symbology. There was something "fishy" about its earliest symbol which gave way to a cross. As Jesus (if he lived) was probably hanged (if executed at the supposed date) a piece of rope would have been a more suitable symbol than a fish or a cross.

At a "Book Tea," a young lady came in dressed like a stage bandit, "armed to the teeth." Guesses that she symbolized "Me, Gangster," or "Hooch" were wide of the mark. She was portraying an older work of fiction called "Evidences of Christianity."

A cross or a gallows might be a glorious inspiration—but only if it symbolized a movement to abolish them.

The cross was not invented by Christians, but the rack was! The Church would not like to put into stained glass windows the thumbscrew and other ancient Christian inventions.

Christians to-day want to hide their guilty past like any "shop-worn angel." They will some day be declaring that they have always believed in evolution, and that they have always opposed prosecutions for blasphemy.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
THE NARIABI PHOTOGRAPH.

SIR,—I am sorry to trouble you again upon this matter, but it was you yourself who brought it up, and Mr. Plimmer now continues the attack. It may interest you both to learn that the photograph was originally obtained by me from Mr. Melton, of Nottingham. When Mr. Palmer claimed it at Nairobi, it was impossible for me to confute his claim. But now I have referred the matter to Mr. Melton, and he assures me that the photograph was indeed taken by him, that it is truly psychic, that he has the original negative, and that Mr. Palmer is quite mistaken. So it would appear that I have been right from the first.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

[We note that Sir Arthur has not verified Mr. Melton's statement, nor has he seen the negative, nor does he know whether or not Mr. Melton is "pulling his leg," he simply has Mr. Melton's word that the picture is "psychic." I do not marvel that Sir Arthur is a convinced Spiritualist.—EDITOR.]

The Shadows.

"Owe Heaven a debt! 'Tis not due yet . . ."—*Falstaff.*

THE unknown gods here trouble us no more,
Nor mystic's vision of a doubtful shore,
Nor past regrets, nor any future fear,
EY'n Death a "friendly countenance" may wear.
For all must die—how vain is this regret!
And vainer still to pay our nature's debt,
In sad forebodings, ere 'tis claimed or due,
So die a thousand deaths where one may do.
Where all have gone one need not fear to go,
Nor coward flinch the final fatal blow.
Nor need one prematurely make an end—
Save dire distress endurance should transcend.
The blow will fall—on infants' cradle bed,
On senile age shrunk limb and hoary head.
It falls at last, however great the care
Bestowed on health; however wild the prayer;
However great the man, or good, or wise;
Nor blunts the dart his hopes of Paradise!
However great the Cause he lived to plead,
However much he was the world's need—
Inventor, doctor, saviour, saint or sage,
With fools and felons torn from out life's page!

Oh, shadow palpable! too heavy lies
This inner gloom! the outer, upper skies,
As we recline amid the Summer grass,
Would soothe with gentler shadows as they pass
O'er sunlit fields without and solemn hills,
As fleet or slow they move, as heaven wills,
All passing on, o'er valley, stream and moor,
To goal determined, yet unknown, obscure;
Dissolving some, in passing, vanish quite,
Some mass afar in "Chaos and old night."

So, only of the sunlight scene I sing—
Only bedimmed with shadows on the wing:
Nor shades of sadness as the heart may know
But such as make the world forget its woe,
As passes, pleases, our Life's Shadow Show.

ANDREW MILLAR.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Mr. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Lady With a Lamp"—The Florence Nightingale Play."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Dr. Bernard Hollander—"Sleep and Dreams."

OUTDOOR.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. Le Maine—"Christianity and Modernism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. J. Hart and R. L. Lennard. 3.30, Messrs. E. Betts and B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt and Maurice Mowbray. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. J. Hart and R. G. Lennard. Every Friday at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* can be obtained outside Hyde Park during our meetings.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. F. Mann—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury; 6.30, Brockwell Park, Mr. L. Ebury. Wednesday, 8.0, Clapham Old Town, Mr. S. Hanson; Friday, Livepool Street, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mr. F. Mann.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Mr. R. G. Lennard and others.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Tuesday, May 28. An important Members' Meeting will be held at 4 Swilly Road, 7.30 sharp. Urgent business.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S.—Members' Meeting, at 3 Socialist Club, Pilgrim Street.

OUTDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Beaumont Street): Tuesday, May 28, at 7.30, Mr. J. V. Shortt—A Lecture. From June 1 to June 14, Mr. G. Whitehead will be lecturing each evening, Saturday, June 1, Islington Square; Sunday, June 2, Queen's Drive (opposite Baths). Full details next week.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Gleniffer Braes, at Paisley Cross at 12 o'clock prompt.

CHESTER-LE-STREET AND DISTRICT.—Mr. Whitehead will lecture from Tuesday, May 21 till Friday, May 31.

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

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be NO UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to—

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.
(Established nearly Forty Years.)

MAZEEN

SUPER HAIR CREAM 1/6 per bottle
SOLIDIFIED BRILLIANTINE 1/- per tin
TOOTH BRUSHES 1/- each
RAZOR BLADES (Gillette Pattern) 1/6 per doz.

FOOT PRINT FROM:

THE MAZEEN TOILET Co., 82 Hart Street, Manchester.



WHEN YOU TALK

of clothes you are oft reminded of us, we are sure. When you think of new clothes, you think also of being measured, and of having garments fitted on. None of our regular clients do so at all. They merely choose a cloth and a style, and say to us, make so-and-so from so-and-so. With our system, it is once measured always measured, and once pleased, always satisfied. This goes on unflinchingly, time after time, and year after year. This is worth doing something about.

MACCONNELL & MABE, LIMITED

High Class Tailors

New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire

CHEST DISEASES

"Umckaloabo acts as regards Tuberculosis as a real specific."

(Dr. Secheyay in the "Swiss Medical Review.")

"It appears to me to have a specific destructive influence on the Tubercle Bacilli in the same way that Quinine has upon Malaria."

(Dr. Grun in the King's Bench Division.)

If you are suffering from any disease of the chest or lungs—spasmodic or cardiac asthma excluded—ask your doctor about Umckaloabo, or send a post card for particulars of it to Chas. H. Stevens, 204-206, Worples Road, Wimbledon, London, S.W.20, who post same to you Free of Charge.

Readers, especially T.B.s., will see in the above few lines more wonderful news than is to be found in many volumes on the same subject.

NATURE'S WAY

The Treatment of Ailments by

Non-Poisonous Herbal Preparations

Send for "HERBAL GUIDE TO HEALTH" (Post Free), and compare our Prices.

FERGUSON'S BOTANIC MEDICAL HALL

667 London Road, Bridgeton Cross, Glasgow.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

BOOKS WANTED.

BOUND VOLUMES (if possible) of "Our Corner," "Secular Chronicle," Standring's "Republican," "Radical."—Box N.E.H. 61, c/o *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

LADY, resident in Monmouthshire, desires companion, who would also undertake cooking and household duties. Household of two; husband and wife. Maid kept. Wage £40 per annum.—Reply, "*FREETHINKER*," Box C.P. 681, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

OFFERS WANTED!—Several bound volumes of *Freethinker*. Also old issue of *Freethinker*, 3 vols., from 1718-1719. Also Old Skeleton Clock under glass case, 70 years in one family.—H.T., 8 Rutland Road, Ilford, Essex.

Failsworth Secular Society.

A BAZAAR

IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE

Failsworth Secular Sunday School

WILL BE HELD IN

THE SCHOOL, POLE LANE, FAILSWORTH,

ON

October 12th, 14th & 15th.

Gifts of Articles for Sale, and Donations will be gladly received on behalf of the propaganda of the Society.

All communications to MR. A. JONES, 8 Andrew Street, Failsworth, Manchester.

Proposed Bradford Secular Society.

FREETHINKERS in BRADFORD AND DISTRICT who are desirous of forming a Branch of the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY in Bradford are invited to communicate with "SCRIBENDI," care of this office.

If sufficient support is offered, a meeting will be arranged, and a Branch formed. As it is hoped to arrange a visit to Bradford by Mr. Chapman Cohen, early replies would be appreciated in order that arrangement for Mr. Chapman Cohen's meeting may be put in hand in time to secure a hall.

Bradford's Freethought activities in the past warrant the belief that a N.S.S. Branch would have a bright and useful future! Please rally round!

Evolution for the Young.

Prehistoric Man and His Ancestors.

By ONA MELTON.

Cloth with 5 Plates.

Price - 1s. 6d. Postage 1½d. extra.

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., 61, Farringdon St., E.C.4.

Now Ready.

The Bible and Prohibition.

BIBLE and BEER

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

By G. W. FOOTE.

A careful examination of the Relations of the Bible and Christian leaders to the Drink Question.

Price - - TWOPENCE.
Postage ½d.

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

THE "Freethinker" Endowment Trust

A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonably short time.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Nr. Leeds. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

There is no need to say more about the *Freethinker* itself, than that its invaluable service to the Freethought Cause is recognized and acknowledged by all. It is the mouthpiece of militant Freethought in this country, and places its columns, without charge, at the service of the Movement.

The address of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

220 pages of Wit and Wisdom

BIBLE ROMANCES

By G. W. Foote

The *Bible Romances* is an illustration of G. W. Foote at his best. It is profound without being dull, witty without being shallow; and is as indispensable to the *Freethinker* as is the *Bible Handbook*.

Price 2/6 Postage 3d.

Well printed and well bound.

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

FOUR LECTURES ON FREETHOUGHT AND LIFE

By Chapman Cohen

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Four Lectures delivered in the
Secular Hall, Leicester, on
Nov. 4, 11, 18 & 25,
1928

Contains Lectures on:

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT—FREETHOUGHT AND GOD—FREETHOUGHT AND DEATH—FREETHOUGHT AND MORALS.

Price One Shilling
Postage 1½d.

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

MATERIALISM : HAS IT BEEN EXPLODED?

Verbatim Report of Debate held at
The Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W.1,
On Wednesday, September 26, 1928

BETWEEN

Chapman Cohen & C. E. M. Joad.

The Rt. Hon. J. M. ROBERTSON in the chair.

ONE SHILLING NET. Postage 1½d.

(Revised by both Disputants)

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