

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. LI.—No. 17

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 1931

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
Humbug in High Places.—The Editor	- 257
Some Freethought Editors.—Mimnermus	- 259
A Few Opinions.—C. S. Fraser	- 260
The Book Shop.—C-de-B.	- 261
"The Few and the Many."—E. A. McDonald	- 263
Jesus and his Followers.—Arthur B. Moss	- 266
On Solomon: His Wives and his Wisdom.—Alan Handsacre	- 267
The Inadequacy of Christianity.—Ignotus	- 269
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

Humbug in High Places.

By a vote of 258 to 210 the House of Commons, on Monday last, gave its assent to the Sunday Performances (Regulation) Bill, one of the most cowardly, one of the most hypocritical, and one of the most dishonest measures ever brought before that body in modern times. The vote was a technical set back to extreme Sabbatarianism, but it was a fight in which insincerity joined forces with convinced bigotry, and timidity restrained principle from asserting itself. Of course, there still remains the committee stage of the Bill, and modifications may be made there, but I am not very sanguine of anything drastic being done now. Members will be told that the House has given its assent to the main principles of the Bill, and these are thoroughly bad. The only word that adequately describes the measure is "contemptible." It is cowardly in its refusal to face the actual situation, and contemptible in the devices adopted in the hopes of pleasing everybody.

Mr. Clynes has acted with regard to Sunday performances exactly as he acted with regard to the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. In that case he agreed to the repeal provided those responsible for the Bill would consent to the passing of another Blasphemy Law which would reintroduce all the bad features of the common law of blasphemy, and actually leave the position worse than he found it. In the present instance he agrees to the removal of certain restrictions, which no one keeps, on Sunday performances, and by way of making existing practice legal leaves the situation worse than it is at present.

A New Censorship.

So far as I am aware, none of those who have commented on this ridiculous Bill have noticed that if this Bill becomes law it would leave the position of

affairs much worse than under the Act of 1781. Take clause one as an instance of this. It says:—

The Council of any county or county borough may by a licence granted under this Act . . . permit any place within their area to be opened and used for public entertainment or amusement or for publicly debating any matter on Sundays, notwithstanding that persons may be admitted thereto by payment of money or by tickets sold for money, but only for such of the following purposes as may be specified in the licence, that is to say, the purposes of (a) musical entertainment: (b) cinematograph entertainments: (c) exhibitions of animals or of inanimate objects: (d) debate.

Now by the existing law any entertainment or exhibition or debate is quite legal *provided there be no charge for admission*. And while this is so, by the existing practice, founded upon legal decisions, any place may be opened on Sunday, provided admission is free, although by far the larger part of the hall may be composed of reserved seats, for which any price may be charged. The Queen's Hall concerts have for years been run on these lines, almost the whole of the hall being made up of reserved seats, for which a charge is made.

Now under the Bill this procedure will be no longer possible. Whether admission be free or not, the entertainment, or the public meeting will be at the mercy of any local council. Every political meeting, every Freethought meeting, every entertainment of whatever description must hereafter be *licensed*. It places every public meeting and every exhibition, under the control of a council. It is the most rigorous censorship of opinion and practice—on Sundays, ever attempted in this country for over two hundred years. If Mr. Clynes does *not* realize this he is—not worse than I imagined him to be—completely justifying my opinion of him. A House of Commons that finally passes such a law—if it does pass it—places on record its own degradation. If the British public will stand this kind of thing, it will stand anything.

* * *

The Rule of the Sabbatarian.

The remainder of the provisions of any importance are, (1) Every Council must operate under a general resolution that it is expedient to grant Sunday licences, (2) no such resolution may be passed unless the council is satisfied that there is a "substantial demand" in the locality for such licences, and the council before passing the resolution must publish notice of its intention to do so in at least one newspaper circulated in their area not less than fourteen days before debating such a resolution, and must have regard to any representations made to them on the matter. (4) among the conditions granting the licence, it must be specified that all profits derived

from the meeting or entertainment must be paid to some charitable object approved by the council, (5) no person may be employed in connexion with the entertainment on Sunday who has been similarly engaged during the remainder of the week, (6) a place that is to be opened for one day must make application seven days beforehand, and if for consecutive Sundays twenty-one days, (7) notice that such application has been made must be placed in a conspicuous position outside the place it is intended to use. Did anyone ever see before in a proposed Act of Parliament such an absurd hodge-podge of cowardice, hypocrisy, petty tyranny and injustice?

No council may move in the matter until it is assured there is "a substantial demand" for Sunday entertainments. How on earth are they to determine this? Is a bare majority a substantial demand? Or would the opposition of a few prominent sabbatarians, or a fashionable church or chapel, be enough to outweigh a genuinely large demand? It would be bad enough if the question were to be decided by a majority vote, but by a "substantial demand"! Again, take an East end district where there is a "substantial" number of Jews. Would their demand for Sunday performances be enough to outweigh the demand of a minority Christian opinion. I doubt it. Or suppose, what would be in strict line with plain justice, a majority of the population in an area were Jews and they decided that Friday evening shows and Saturday matinees were objectionable since it outraged their notions of the sanctity of the Sabbath, would the wobbling Mr. Clynes consider an amendment to the Act, giving them the right to regulate on these lines. Could one trust a council to decide whether there was a genuine public demand or not? I doubt it. Why, Mr. Clynes, with millions of people scrambling for sweepstake tickets says he is not aware there is any public demand for these things. And with every cinema in London packed to the doors on Sunday evenings, he is not aware of any public demand for this kind of entertainment. If councils are as blind, or as timid as Mr. Clynes, what kind of justice can one expect from them in the administration of the Act?

The only people to determine whether there is any demand for Sunday entertainments are those who supply them and those who pay for them. The most expensively produced plays are withdrawn when there is not a paying audience, and one may rely upon it that if the public in any area does not want Sunday entertainments they will not be kept open for long. Mr. Clynes is perhaps under the impression—his innocence of the state of the law on many subjects and of the readiness of people to attend entertainments on Sunday excuses the assumption—that it is proposed to force the public to attend cinemas and theatres under penalty of fine or imprisonment. All that is asked is that they who desire to go shall not be forcibly prevented from doing so.

* * *

Local Option and National Humbug.

As I said a week or two ago, the application of local option should have no place in the question of Sunday entertainments. In applying it, it is taken for granted that a majority—even granted its existence—has the right to say in what way the minority may spend its leisure times, the available ways being legal and moral. A district in which there are two hundred and fifty thousand people have, say, one hundred and thirty in favour of entertainments and one hundred and twenty thousand against. But the larger number have the right to say categorically to the minority, you shall not go to a cinema, or to a theatre, or to a concert, or play a game on Sunday,

because we do not wish to see you doing these things. And this is done, not in behalf of any real discipline of social character, or in restraint of some form of anti-social behaviour, but in behalf of what is obviously, even admittedly, a narrow-minded form of superstition! And all the time Mr. Clynes knows full well that he cannot stop men and women doing any of the things prohibited by his Bill, so long as they are prepared to form private clubs, or find in an expensive way the things that public entertainments provide in a cheap way for the general body of the people. And this Bill is fathered by a Labour Government, which professes to act in the interests of the working classes! It is the same spirit that smiles on the rich man's golf, and frowns on the poor man's cricket or bowls in a public park.

The distinction between cinemas and theatres is so utterly indefensible that none but a man of the mental make up of Mr. Clynes would ever have been impudent enough to father such a clause. Sunday cinemas have been approved by the heads of the police force all over the country as leading to less time spent in public houses, and better behaviour on the streets. Would, or could theatres have any different result? You can see to-day the same kind of play on both the screen and on the stage. What kind of a stupidity is it which says that while the one may be quite harmless or even beneficial, the other can only be productive of evil results. The pretence that if this were done actors would work seven days a week, is sheer hypocrisy. If people can be prevented from working seven days per week in a cinema, what is there to prevent this being done in the case of theatres! Mr. Clynes knows that there is no difficulty at all. It is a mere excuse.

The question of not making profits is little short of iniquitous. If it is meant that profits must not be made on a Sunday, we have Sabbatarianism in its most objectionable form. If that is not meant, it is quite a new principle in English law to say that certain people may do a number of things on a certain day, but they must labour for nothing, on no account may they make profits. Railways, tramways, omnibuses, ships, breweries, land, all these things may go on earning profits on Sundays as on other days, and *earn it for the benefit of those who oppose Sunday entertainments*, but cinema proprietors and the proprietors of other entertainments and exhibitions must work for nothing. There is one other thing that ought to be added here, which is that under this Bill, I do not see that the man who lets a hall for an entertainment could legally claim a rent above the expenses of lighting and cleaning, and caretaker for the day. If he can, then he is clearly making a profit out of the entertainment. One could submit to the "no profit" condition when it was laid down by a number of councillors or magistrates without any great understanding of the law. But for a government to lay down the same thing as a governing condition of rational Sunday amusement is too absurd for serious discussion. If Mr. Clynes desires to kill whatever respect is left for parliamentary government, he is going the right way to succeed. No one will run Sunday entertainments without the prospect of making profit, that is so long as it is his business to run them. And cinema proprietors have kept open because they did make profits, in spite of the charity clause. I have no doubt whatever of that.

* * *

Throw it Out.

The Bill is contemptible through and through. The Government might have declined to interfere, hoping the Act would die of disuse. It might have interfered by bringing forward a measure which

showed courage, and statesmanship. But it has neither the stubbornness to stand still, nor the courage to go forward. It can only wobble, and has in the end taken its instructions from the committee of Free Church ministers who issued their manifesto a few weeks back. In this it has run true to form. At the orders of the narrower body of Christians it wrecked the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, although a majority of its own party would have voted for it. For fear of the organized Catholic vote it allowed an important measure of its own on education to be shelved. And now in obedience to the chapel vote it has brought forward a measure about which no words could be too strong in condemnation. It professes to legalize things that have been done for a long time, and are being done, but are distinctly illegal. And it leaves by its Bill things in a worse state than ever, by making things illegal that were previously legal. It has neither courage to enforce the old law nor to devise a sensible new one to take its place. The Bill is the last word in political ineptitude. It says to the public, you may go on doing what you have been doing, because we cannot stop you doing it, but we will place as many obstacles in the way of your doing what you will do, Act or no Act. Sixty years ago the Government of the day, by giving local option for religious teaching in State-supported schools, made religion an issue in our educational system, with the result that the development of education has been hindered ever since. Mr. Clynes is now doing what he can to make religious bigotry a live issue in all municipal elections, in which the organized strength of little Bethels will be exerted to prevent people enjoying themselves in a reasonable and healthy manner. In the circumstances, I should have been pleased if the Bill had been defeated. The way would then be paved for something better. If the Committee passes it, I hope those interested will ignore it. Events have shown with the 1781 Act, that if people have the courage to ignore a bad law, that law breaks down. A century of Freethought propaganda has been largely responsible for the breaking down of Sabbatarianism. It is to be hoped that those who care for real reform, will not help to establish a new Sabbatarianism, and one that will be difficult to remove.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Some Freethought Editors.

"To bear all naked truths
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
That is the top of sovereignty."—Keats.

"Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like.—Ambrose Bierce.

At a time when the *Freethinker* has nearly completed half a century's regular publication, it is fitting that tributes of admiration should be paid to its editors who have guided its destinies through the troublous times in which it has been published. George Foote and Chapman Cohen share the greater honours, but it is only fitting that some place should be given to Edward Aveling and Joseph Wheeler, both of whom rendered yeoman service in that time when help was most needed.

Aveling, who was a Doctor of Science, occupied the editorial chair of the *Freethinker* during the twelve months that Foote was "in durance vile," for criticising the Christian Religion, and he did the work well and truly. Wheeler was assistant-editor of the paper from its foundation in 1881 until his

death in 1898, and he emptied many an inkpot in the service of the best of causes. His own literary contributions were always a most attractive feature, and his versatility was extraordinary. An omnivorous reader, he was ever ready to share his knowledge, and his bright articles on folk-lore, the history of the Freethought Movement, and allied subjects, were always welcome. In his leisure he haunted the book-stalls, and bought more sixpenny bargains, probably, than any other man in London. In his modest home he had thousands of volumes and pamphlets. "Joe," said Foote once, "is so kind-hearted, he can't bear to see even a book in the wet." Unlike so many collectors, Wheeler read the volumes he purchased, and, booklover that he was, read at his meals, too. I have seen him so absorbed in his latest purchase, that the cat has dared to help itself from his plate. Foote knew Wheeler's worth, and paid him the compliment of placing his name on the front page of the paper. Wheeler knew as much as anyone of the Movement, and his *Dictionary of Freethinkers* is well known, but few know that he had prepared a history of Freethought which was unpublished at the time of his death. It would be interesting to know if the manuscript is still in existence.

Wheeler and Foote were real friends, and I know that Joe loved his chief "this side idolatry." Foote's own feelings may be gauged by the article he wrote in the *Freethinker* on the occasion of Wheeler's death. The two had been comrades from earliest manhood, and young Foote had spouted Shakespeare's verse on the hills outside Edinburgh, whilst his friend sat at his feet and applauded the golden voice that was to charm and fascinate so many audiences in later years.

Of frail physique, Wheeler did an amazing amount of work for Freethought. His activities were by no means limited to the *Freethinker*. Books and pamphlets came from his pen, and he did journalistic work in many other directions for a quarter of a century. Maybe, one cannot make a great story of what he had done with his life. He was a working journalist, and not a famous author. Yet to those near him he had the qualities which are quite as precious as those which make for fame and reputation. He had a light heart and a kindly one, and he possessed that vagrant, potent thing which men call charm. No wonder he took hold of one's mind as he took hold of one's hand, with a warm affectionate grip that lasted.

Wheeler had the spirit of the idealist without the sharp edges that sometimes make the missionaries of ideas less attractive to the world than one might wish. He was, above all, sociable in his idealism. A truly modest man, he preferred the position of a common soldier in the Army of Human Liberation. This is the kind of work which does a man honour but brings him none in a saucy world.

At the time that the *Freethinker* was launched on the perilous waters of Freethought propaganda, the *National Reformer* was, deservedly, well established. This publication, which proclaimed itself Atheist in every issue, was edited by the redoubtable Charles Bradlaugh, the Napoleon of the Freethought Movement. It was truly "a thunderous engine of revolt." Although Bradlaugh was one of the foremost of living orators, he was not a distinguished writer. He made up for this defect, however, by the brilliance of his staff, whose weekly contributions made his paper an intellectual feast. In its pages James Thomson first published his poem, "The City of Dreadful Night," and John M. Robertson issued those articles which showed that England possessed a scholar and critic head and shoulders above all his contemporaries.

aries. After Bradlaugh's death in 1891, Robertson occupied the editorial chair, but the *National Reformer* survived only until 1903. The defection of Mrs. Annie Besant, and other troubles, affected the fortunes of the paper, and it died after an honourable existence lasting over a generation.

Nothing daunted, Robertson promptly founded the *Free Review*, a monthly periodical for "intellectuals, which made the *Nineteenth Century* and *Contemporary Review* appear as innocuous as parish magazines. It deserved success, but advertisers at that time were very shy of advanced publications. The *Free Review* changed into other, and less capable, hand, and died a lingering death from lack of circulation.

Besides editing the *Freethinker*, Foote published a brilliant monthly, entitled *Progress*. In its pages he told the story of his imprisonment, which he intended to republish in book form under the facetious title, *How I Fell Among Thieves*. Illness prevented this, as it did the revision of his articles on Shakespeare. Happily, Mr. Cohen rescued the unfinished manuscript from oblivion. Foote also edited for some years the *Secular Almanac*, which contained a most useful annual summary, and a number of interesting features. Foote's own activities as a publisher included the publication of over two hundred books and pamphlets. This, in addition to his own journalistic work, his numerous lecturing engagements, often at great distances, and the arduous work as president of a national society. Small wonder that he shared the fate of Bradlaugh and died from overwork. That the same fate has not yet overtaken Mr. Cohen is a miracle more marvellous than any associated with the Christian Religion.

With the exception of the *Freethinker*, all these periodicals fell on evil days at last. That they lived at all is a tribute to the animating power of conviction, and the talents of their editors, who, in every instance, were exceptional men. Lack of adequate financial support, unhappily, is one of the perils of pioneer work. As an example of the difficulties of conducting advanced periodicals, it is no secret that nearly ten thousand pounds was spent on *Justice* during twenty years. Even the arresting personality of Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *Clarion* had a much larger circulation than *Justice*, but even Robert Blatchford's deserved popularity could not make his paper pay without substantial subsidies from his readers. And if two such gifted men cannot make such papers a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

Journals of this kind have enormous difficulties of publication. They are literally starved by the neglect of advertisers, who are too stupid to realize that advanced people are human beings with purchasing power. They are also handicapped by being relatively more expensive than their Fleet Street rivals, which exist by "tickling the ears of the groundlings," and pandering to the least educated portion of the community. The writers of this trash do not all believe it. They are not all monkey-skulls. It is not entirely due to fanaticism or sheer ignorance, but is simply done to promote huge circulations. It is, in the last analysis, simply a matter of money-making.

Fleet Street is full of men who sell their pens to the highest bidder, and who do not care a straw what rubbish they write. The Freethought editors, however, are a different breed. Humanitarians, idealists, dreamers, if you will, these men command respect. The unselfishness of their lives excites admiration. At a time where a greedy commercialism is rampant, their careers are an exception so rare as

to be scarcely credible. In an age of flabby compromise these men have ever remained faithful to their principles; in an age of hypocrisy and make-believe they have cared only for what they honestly believed to be the truth.

They are as the Poles asunder, these men of fine and sensitive fibre, these inheritors of a great intellectual tradition, and those wielders of the Fleet Street muck-rake who, year in and year out, put haloes on murderers' heads, and prostitute their talents to the purposes of the gutter and the sewer. Yet both are journalists, and both profess to represent the free press of a civilized country. Those that take the State seriously will say that such a comparison was never more necessary than in this generation.

MIMNERMUS.

A Few Opinions.

Not so very long ago the *Sunday Observer* published a series of nine interviews with leading men of science and literature, in the course of which the interviewer elicited answers to certain questions of philosophical interest to the public. To the *Freethinker* the chief interest lies not so much in the detail of what was said as in the general impression which is given of the increasing credence accorded in intellectual circles to beliefs which have long been commonplaces of Freethought.

The questions put by the interviewer do not appear in any sort of fixed sequence; the form of words for the same question varied considerably in each interview; while some questions which were asked in one interview were omitted in another. But in spite of this somewhat haphazard manner of obtaining information, there was a sufficient similarity of treatment to make it possible to form an abstract of the combined nine interviews.

The method adopted has been to find a common denomination for questions which refer to the same subject; and in cases where the question was not asked directly, to gather what the answer would have been from the replies given to analogous questions. Answers to questions upon subjects of no interest to Freethought have been purposely ignored.

The *dramatic personæ* are as follows: Sir A. S. Eddington, Mr. H. G. Wells, Sir James Jeans, Sir Josiah Stamp, Mr. Aldous Huxley, Professors Schrödinger, Max Planck, and M. Painlevé, and the Prince de Broglie. Every one of these gentlemen had something interesting to say, and one is left wondering why the net was not cast a little wider so as to include at least another nine intellects of equal standing. Possibly the interest in the subject was deemed to be waning; possibly the interviewer found that he was not getting the answers he expected; possibly the closure was effected for editorial reasons. Who can say?

The first question of interest to Freethinkers was: "Do you believe that man has an immortal soul?" It was never worded in this relatively unambiguous manner, but the answers given show that the persons questioned were in no doubt as to the information which their interviewer required.

Of the six persons to whom this question was put only one answered in the affirmative. Three definitely did not believe in personal immortality, while two preferred not to commit themselves in any way. One other expressed disbelief by implication, though the question was not put to him in any form. It is interesting to note that the one person who did believe in a soul admitted that scientific proof was impossible.

The next question of interest amounted to this:

"Do you believe in Determinism?" This question was, more often than not, masked under a somewhat ambiguous terminology. Thus, the phrase "scheme or accident" was frequently used, as though the one were the obvious antithesis of the other. From the contexts in which the phrase occurred, however, it is clear that by the term "scheme" the interviewer implied an intelligent creator, and that by the term "accident" he meant the ordinary, though at present not wholly explained, laws of nature. From the replies, too, it is clear that such was the interpretation put upon these words by the persons questioned. Further confirmation was provided by their answers to the question as to whether Heisenberg's "Principle of Indeterminacy" was to be regarded as a fundamental law of nature or merely as a temporary device of science rising out of incomplete knowledge.

Five out of the nine unequivocally accepted the deterministic outlook. Four did not. But of this four, two admitted that it was impossible to understand "the scheme of things," if scheme there was; while a third declared that no scientific proof of it could be had. The remaining one made the somewhat naive admission that "of course scientific determinism may come back." In view of the five who accepted determinism, the implication that determinism had definitely departed from the realms of science appears somewhat premature!

The only other question of relative interest might have been worded somewhat as follows: "Do you believe that consciousness existed before matter, or matter before consciousness?" Only six were clearly questioned on this point. Two of the six believed that matter resulted from consciousness; one refused to commit himself to any definite answer; one believed that matter and consciousness had always co-existed; and the remaining two believed that matter existed before consciousness. Of the remaining three, one was not asked the question in any form, and the other two, by implication, favoured the view that matter preceded consciousness.

To anyone possessing something more than a merely rudimentary knowledge of the functions and limitations of language, this last question is, of course, an absurd one. For "consciousness" is no more than one of those verbal abbreviations invented for linguistic convenience, called "abstractions"; and it is a logical fallacy to regard such words as though they are symbols which refer to real entities. One might ask, with as little hope of obtaining an intelligible answer, the question: "Did nourishment exist before digestion, or digestion before nourishment?" or, "Did fear exist before courage, or courage before fear?" All such questions bear a remarkable resemblance to that problem so popular among junior schoolboys: "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Another point of interest to note is that of the five persons who unequivocally accepted the deterministic interpretation of the universe, four were consistent in their remaining answers. The fifth stated that he regarded "matter as derivative from consciousness" since "everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness."

Now while the latter statement is true as far as it goes, unfortunately it does not go far enough. Hence the fallacy of the first statement. For the second statement should have ended with the words "in us" — since it is clearly absurd to suppose that, if we were unconscious, we would be able to postulate anything as existing. We could not even postulate consciousness. So that the capacity to postulate consciousness obviously postulates something anterior both to "consciousness" and unconsciousness"; and that something is "us." If, then, it can be shown that "consciousness in us" (or in anything) is pos-

sible without the "matter" of which we are (or anything is), composed, we might be justified in assuming that "matter is derivative from consciousness." But if, on the other hand, it can be shown that "consciousness" cannot exist, and never has existed, either in us or in anything without the accompanying "matter"; or if it can be shown that "matter" can exist and has existed without "consciousness," or in a state of "unconsciousness," then the probability is that what we mean by "consciousness" (and also "unconsciousness") is a derivative from "matter." (see Note below.)

Perhaps, when the functions and limitations of language are more thoroughly understood and the science of language has been placed upon a more stable and intelligible basis, we shall be spared the humiliating spectacle of great minds being made to look foolish by questions which are little better than childish riddles. The Freethinker, fortunately for himself, is not as a rule easily hoodwinked by such questions, little as some may know about the intricacies of linguistic science. For he insists upon referring the proof of all problems to experience which can be tested and verified. And this, of course, is the basis upon which the future (and, let us hope, not long to be delayed) science of language will build. For every word has its origin in the realities of experience, and any word not capable of being explained in terms of such experience, or whose use is not related to reality by demonstrable ties, is nothing more than an empty sound or a senseless scribble.

Note.—The word "derivative" is apt to be misleading in this connexion. A child may be said to be "derivative" from its parents; oxygen may be said to be "derived" from the air, or from water. But to say that "consciousness" is derivative from "matter" (or the reverse) is to imply that the one is a material growth from, or a material component of, the other. This is as logically incorrect as to say that "temperature is derivative from motion," or that "beauty is derivative from sight." A better phrase than "derivative from" would be "dependent, or consequent, upon."

C. S. FRASER.

The Book Shop.

CERTAIN public men appear to be, in their mental make-up, on no higher intellectual level than our worst samples of the Penny Press. Rank should carry its obligations; the obligations of those favoured should be to provide high standards of thinking, to set a good standard of values for those who require them, and, in short, to be worthy leaders of the human race. Some few weeks ago, a fair number of prominent men took part in a demonstration against the importation of "slave" timber from Russia. The prominent men in question stated the case from their side. In the *Times*, March 19, there is a report of an annual dinner given at the Park Lane Hotel by the Timber Trade Federation of the United Kingdom. The President, Mr. E. P. Tetsall, replying to the toast, stated, that in reference to the Northern Timber Camps of Russia, to suggest that a system of convict labour was in operation in the export timber trade of Russia was a serious misrepresentation which must operate to the prejudice of the British timber trade at the time when the opportunities for its expansion were favourable. It could be stated on authority that the accommodation was satisfactory, and food supplies in those Russian timber camps were better than in the towns. Now it must not be supposed that England has no troubles of her own, social, international, or political, or that the United Kingdom is safe for Free-thought. Far from it, and any sensible Freethinker would not willingly add to them. But the point we cannot sufficiently emphasize is, that mis-statements, backed by the penny press, can be given a good send-off by the cream of society, and it takes several weeks for the accredited representatives of the Timber Trade to

put right the titled shepherds of silly sheep. The year 1931 will be eventful even for one item alone; *the penny press is on the defensive*. And all intelligent people, whilst resenting the worst type of yellow journalism, will say to every attitude or statement of that press, "We know you; and before lending eyes or ears to your statements, you must prove them, for your game of assertion is up." In the meantime, where possible, support might be given to the *Times* as it appears to be trying to carry on the best traditions of British journalism. It covers national activities, news can be found without digging into advertisements for baldness and ladies blouses, it gives reports of important lectures on science, art, letters, etc., and on the face of it, as the "stunt" press has now cut its own throat, there only remains the clearing of the body away. The above dissertation is chiefly on timber; transpose the word timber to Truth and its significance can be underlined in connexion with the movement for Freethought. The excuse for the inclusion of the above note in the Book Shop must be found in the fact that newspapers are frequently the outposts of the world of books, and there is always a time for discrimination in the matter of daily reading, some of which seems designed to destroy the benefit of popular education.

Miss E. Sylvia Pankhurst, together with her other accomplishments and activities has translated the *Poems of Mihail Eminescu*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 7s. 6d. net. The author (1849-1889) a Roumanian, was born in Moldavia, and he seems to have an affinity with the thoughts and sentiments of the late Edward Carpenter. He had a varied career, and according to the translator's notes his work, after 1870, influenced all the subsequent literary expression of his country. "Calin," a Fairy Fantasia, is pleasing in form and matter and, in my mind's eye I can see the pencil and brush of Mr. Arthur Rackham having a wealth of material for his imagination. "Emperor and Proletarian" is a sustained and vigorous poem on behalf of the oppressed; if there is one universal language it must be the cry of the down-trodden, and this particular poem once again provides the ancient conundrum of why any one who does not subscribe to orthodoxy should be interested in any work of amelioration. To say that there are no rewards for Quixoticism only makes it more difficult—not of course for Freethinkers, but for the cock-sure crowd that inherit all the virtues. I must give one typical extract of the temper of the piece:—

"Religion—'tis but phrasing, create for your deceiving,
That by its lure entralling, your yoked necks ye'll bow;
For held the heart no vision of recompense relieving,
After your bitter labours and life of constant grieving,
Would ye the curse still carry, like oxen at the plough?"

The volume is sponsored by Mr. George Bernard Shaw in a letter reproduced in facsimile; the substance has that intimate touch of fellowship from a man who is now wealthy enough to be himself, take with both hands the consolation of Voltaire "to say what he thinks," and I believe that this is a privilege that is the open secret of Freethought. Eminescu, the poet, belongs to that category mentioned by Mr. W. B. Yeats in *The Cutting of an Agate* . . . "Providence has filled them with recklessness" . . . but very little of value is created in the world if bread and cheese is the sole consideration. I trust that Miss Sylvia Pankhurst's efforts in this translation will meet with encouragement among those who know that poets also have a right of way to truth.

An admirable shillingsworth, the *Adelphi*, for March, continues to be a generous and vigorous antidote to all the press and periodical soft soap that fails to wash the face of humanity. There is, however, an article by Leon Shestov "Death and Sleep," translated from the German text. Shestov, we are told, is a remarkable Russian philosopher. That is nothing for or against him, but the article is full of fallacies, high sounding phrases, and Plato's Cave, now a King Charles' head in pseudo-philosophy is also brought in. The writer uses such words as "super-terrestrial," "divine quintessence," slings about the word science without particu-

larizing, and concludes with the following sarrago: "Who are the more practical? Those who compute earthly life to sleep, and look forward to the wonder of awakening, or those who see death as the final, dreamless sleep and spend their days concocting 'reasonable' and 'natural' explanations? That is the fundamental problem of philosophy, and he who masters it masters philosophy itself." It would be as relevant and humanly useful to pose the problem of philosophy as "Would the reversal to Aunt Jemima boots by women benefit the nation?" Yes, the philosophy of Shestov is remarkable—in the mere fact alone that it is not new. It is a sample of that slippery mysticism that slides about from one category to another, using the word science as an Aunt Sally, and making up in sound what it lacks in sense. What is the title but a little brother to an English penny sermon? And it all boils down to the fact that disguise the language as the writer may, the explanation can be found in the origins of religion. On the credit side of the *Adelphi* is a weighty and characteristic article by George Santayana, and a good essay on Gauguin the French painter by John Gould Fletcher. There is a broadside for the Archbishop of York, and a fine contribution by John Middleton Murry, "New Wine in Old Bottles," in which he writes, "Our inward debate should take this different form: 'I haven't a religion, though I know the need of one. And my knowledge of the need brings me no nearer to a religion, but rather takes me farther away. Let me accept the situation; let me see if I can live, really live—fully, freely, richly, positively—without a religion. If I can, then life has solved one of its great problems through me.'" There is nothing to prevent Mr. Murry from taking the plunge; there are thousands who get along without religion, that is, accepting the word for its true and circumscribed meaning. In the correspondence columns the barbaric penny press receives a few good and well-deserved clouts on its thick head. We wish the *Adelphi* well, for there is a long way for the human race to travel before it is out of the jungle created by the Great War and perpetuated by the stupidities of religion and its idiot brother the "stunt" press.

I have been reading the writings of our Editor for over twenty-five years, and regret none of the time spent. In exposition he deals easily and lucidly with difficult subjects, and very frequently the difficult subjects are so owing to the uncertainty of those who put them forward as serious contributions to philosophy. I came to the conclusion that *Materialism Re-stated*, a book for the pocket, slender, but worth its weight in gold, was his *Magnum opus*. After reading *God and the Universe* I am inclined to think that it receives reflected glory from *Materialism Re-stated*. The substance in the latter book is used as an engine of criticism of scientists, whose major troubles seem to be that of not risking unpopularity with the religious world. Their lesser troubles are the results of trying to choke nearly every question into one category that happens to be in their special field. Like a recurring decimal the warning runs through Mr. Cohen's book; Sir James Jeans is not allowed (on page 117) to ride away to victory on the assumption that mathematics is the one category for the interpretation of nature. On page 115, a gem worthy of a noble setting is to be found in the following crystallization of the end and purpose of science . . . " . . . the main function of science is to provide man with maps that will enable him safely to find his way about the world in which he is living." Such fine writing is a habit with the author; it would have made an original thesis for a member of a university, or it could have been diluted to make three volumes by some industrious English or German professor. My copy of *God and the Universe* is well underlined, and if the study of it does not give that hilarious and boisterous blown-out feeling of personal importance pandered to by priests, it can be used as an excellent guide book in conjunction with Emerson's declaration of "One world at a time." There are 133 pages of compressed writing in the book; it is brief, and like good poetry, memorable. It is brief because the writer knows his subject, and for that reason he deserves our praise and thanks. His clarity is a

mutual gift for reader and writer, and it represents the dynamic of disinterested interest, a very rare quality in the world where philosophy is sold.

C-DE-B.

"The Few and The Many."

It is no libel to say that the overwhelming majority of men and women never have nor, in all probability, ever will "love" Truth. It is a statement of psychological and historical fact.

Movements exposing superstition, delusion, and the machinery prompting the "stunt" press will never become popular in the sense that Toc H, military pageants, mystic physicists and the Derby are popular. This is the truth that every ardent young reformer must accept should he hold a visionary conception of human nature—a position too often resulting in his sensitiveness becoming dulled, his enthusiasm quenched, and his opinion of his fellows twisted into a cynical hatred of or paralysing indifference towards all the nobler social activities of life.

These impatient ones, so quick to despair, neglect or forget history. The many overwhelmed the magnificent civilization created and sustained by the glorious few of classic antiquity. The few cherished the relics of knowledge throughout the Dark Ages of Faith in peril of their lives at the hands of the many for whose freedom they toiled and suffered. Again, during the period of the Italian Renaissance the few inspired the exquisite statues, paintings, the fabrics and daring architecture, and the literature which will forever mark that time as one of rare flowering of the human spirit. And it is the few in Italy and Russia to-day who are guiding and controlling the economic and political destiny of the many—however much they may try to conceal this in the terminology of their political textbooks. In South Africa, the writer's home, a few Boer parsons impose the forbidding rule of their repulsive calvinistic religion upon the inhabitants of the smaller towns and villages, where Sunday sport is considered a crime, and natural joy outside the Kerk a degradation.

The millions of "heathen" natives have little say in the disposition of their lives, although they form the vastly larger proportion of the population.

The unexpressed wish of the average citizen is to be left in brainless peace, especially if his material circumstances are monotonously comfortable. He works, eats, sleeps, takes a desultory possessive interest in his family, reads the paper which causes him the least effort to understand, muses in a dull incurious fashion . . . a stupid prey to the mass suggestion of advertising journalism. If he "fought in the Great War," he will probably read occasionally, in a mood of self-worship, the most advertised war novels and talk irresponsibly to his youngsters about the "next war." To those who were too young to "fight for civilization," the current interest in war plays and novels is, in my opinion, largely sadistic. It is the rare few who are moved by the recital of war's grim horrors to work urgently and sincerely for permanent peace in the world.

The many, unless provoked by outrageous tyranny, are unwilling to change their selfish habits, averse to shed their prejudices and patriotisms and gods, but if it is done for them, with manifest increase to their freedom and well-being, they will come to accept and defend the new standards.

So don't give up your subscription to the *Freethinker* because the fellows in the office or the workshop turn a deaf or indifferent ear to your arguments for truth, or because G. K. Chesterton and millions of savages in lounge suits still believe in the Immaculate Conception and Transubstantiation in this year of civilized grace 1931. The battle of progress and liberation is between minorities keenly attacking or sullenly defending privilege and superstition, and the desertions from the other camp are growing. And don't leave it to the next man to "carry on" in the pious belief that the ideals of Truth are indestructible and inextinguishable. That

way lies disaster; for so lazy a creed is, although you may not know it, due to the influence of your Christian environment, and is tantamount to surrender.

"Let the victors, when they come
When the forts of folly fall
Find thy body by the wall."

E. A. McDONALD.

Johannesburg.

What is Life!

"ONE touch of Nature makes the whole world kin!"
You'll find that Life is nothing more than this!
No mystery or miracle herein,
Life is the simple act of Nature's kiss.

And yet, there's no such thing as Nature, so
How can we say that she does that or this?
Nature being nothing but a passing show!
Still while she dallies she imprints a kiss.

Life is only own sister to the kiss,
Love is at once the parent and the swain,
And thus, through Nature's metamorphosis,
By love we live; and live to love again!

B. L. BOWERS.

Acid Drops.

A good commentary on the silly excuse for the opposition to Sunday entertainments on the ground that there is no general demand for them is given by Sir A. S. Woodward, a Vice-president of the Zoological Society. He says the objection to opening the London Zoo on Sunday is that if it were open "there would be such congestion that visitors would not be able to see the animals properly." We assume this was one of the incidents that helped Mr. Clynes to conclude there was no general demand for Sunday entertainments.

We notice that Plymouth Navy Week is being held from August 1 to August 8. Those who take their holidays in the glorious West Country at this time would do well to include Plymouth, even if it is only for a day. Whether people object to armaments or not, they will be able to see how their money is spent, and how the policemen of the seas live and work, at the same time Freethinkers could let their opinions be known, and help to bring the West Countrymen up to their sensible level, because at present they are about 100 years behind the times. We understand that Navy Week costs the country nothing, and the charge for admission is in a good cause, viz., charity, and as things stand at present, it is the only way of helping the underdog. We have many friends in the Service who are willing to help us, so lets help them.

While in Chelmsford on an evangelical mission, a number of theological students were invited to inspect a large factory. All of them, we learn, were aghast at the monotony of the whole system of machine-tended labour. One of the students remarked that he would go mad, if for two hours a day he had to do what some of the factory employees do for eight. We presume that the students are now more than ever determined to be parsons, in order that they may escape the monotony of productive labour.

The Rev. George Jackson, in a religious weekly, has been talking about some books he has found useful as a parson. He omits to mention any Freethought publications. Yet, if he is a modern parson, we feel sure he has benefitted by such works, in the way of having his ideas refined as to the nature of his God. Freethought has been a wonderful in-

spirer of "progressive revelation"! We are not optimistic enough to hope that the debt will ever be acknowledged. That kind of gratitude doesn't come easy to a Christian.

A suggestion has been made that the inhabitants of Mars may be able to hear our wireless programmes. One fervently hopes the Martians will not judge the quality of civilization on the earth by the B.B.C.'s religious broadcasts; or our culture will be credited with being 2,000 years more backward than it really is. If the inhabitants, after listening-in, would like to imitate the B.B.C. and engage Sir John Reith, we should welcome any discovery that would lead to his transportation thither.

"Review the past!" says a reader of a daily paper. We don't see the necessity. Reverence for the past leads to that hide-bound conservatism and petrified intelligence which have a rooted objection to new ideas and any kind of progressive move. The best use to be made of the past is to analyse it, to improve on its good points, to avoid its bad ones, and to improve on its mistakes. To do this is impossible while reverence for the past is allowed to dope the critical faculty into slumber. Churches may thrive on reverence for the past. Nothing else does. Study the past, but be on your guard against it, is a much better rule.

Education in this country costs the taxpayers £83,690,000 a year. In this connexion it may be noted that our popular newspapers and journals achieve million circulations by catering for—so we are told—"the lowest common denominator of intelligence of the public." Bearing this in mind, one may be pardoned for wondering whether this £83,690,000 is utilized to the best possible advantage. Another matter exciting our wonder is the popular fancy that, the greater the amount of money expended on scholastic administration, equipment and instruction, the better the quality of education resulting therefrom. It doesn't necessarily follow.

In the House of Commons recently, the attention of the members was drawn to the following items:—

£1,250,000 is spent by the Government on poison gas research each year.

£150,000 is spent by the nation on medical research for the people's health.

Similar facts are no doubt to be noted in connexion with the other big Christian nations. One conclusion to be drawn is that the perfecting of means for destroying human life is regarded as of far more importance than the discovering of means for preserving it. There is, however, nothing particularly remarkable in the fact that such a notion has enjoyed an undisturbed existence in Christian minds for so many years. It quite naturally fits in with the Christian belief in war, and a God who helps to win wars. But now that Christian beliefs are losing their hold, there is a possibility of the nations acquiring a new and better perspective.

A couple of meetings were held in the Albert Hall, in connexion with the churches' "Youth Campaign" in London, for the purpose of thanking God for the conversion of 10,772 young people. We wonder why God should need to be thanked for temporarily deranging the minds of a number of young Londoners? At one meeting a speaker asked all the C. of E. adherents to hold up their hands, and then, in succession, the Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Salvation Army members. And the "converts" duly obliged. The vast majority of them were Christians before they were "converted" in the campaign! They have merely been enjoying a religiously emotional bank-holiday. As the campaign was to capture the "unsaved," God must have played a joke on the evangelists, in sending Christian sheep into the folds instead of unsaved goats. We have heard of these mass con-

versions. On examination we have always found that the statistics were either fictitious or they were made up of those who were regularly converted at every mission that comes along.

Methodist Times does its best to cheer up the despondent. It asserts that the Church of Christ is the greatest miracle in the world to-day. Outside its boundaries are enemies and critics. Notwithstanding the indifference of many people, Sunday recreation and amusements, the call of the countryside, and the convenience of travel, the aggregate attendance at the House of God is a striking tribute to the vitality of the Church's loyalty to Christ. Also "vast sums of money are being literally poured into the Lords Treasury." Probably, says our contemporary, "never in the history of the Christian Church was wealth so lavishly poured out" for Christian purposes. Home missions are distinctly encouraging; and in the foreign mission field, "in a remarkable way Christ is winning." These are evidences of glowing and abundant life. Finally: "There is firm ground and abundant reason for talking the Church up." Our Methodist friend has made a really gallant attempt at trying to convince the faithful that things are not actually so bad as they seem. The art of "talking the Church up" depends chiefly on ignoring or glossing over unpleasant facts, and exaggerating and inventing some pleasant ones. With a little more practice in this art, there's no reason why our contemporary should not achieve even greater success in boosting the Church.

A reporter of a religious weekly has interviewed Prof. S. P. Andrews Dube, the only Christian member of the Servants of India Society. The professor was asked what he thought of Stanley Jones' idea about the permeation of the whole of Indian life by Christian ideas. Mr. Dube replied that he cannot agree on all Stanley Jones' conclusions. He adds:—

Undoubtedly there is in India a large amount of opinion and thought that is consistent with Christian ideals. Indians would admit it. But they would contend very strongly that these ideals were inherent in Hinduism. It is very difficult to define how much is due to Christianity and how much to the inherent growth of Hinduism. And I am not sure that Christianity has permeated into Indian thought so much as British institutions have done through the Government, etc. You see, the same ideas may be in both Hinduism and Christianity.

A modern youth tells a daily paper that, although he loves to go to church, yet he disagrees with the Lord's Day Society, that there is harm in going to a cinema on Sunday. After all, he says, that is only another way of reading a book. Perhaps so. The point is, from the Sabbatarian view, that anything which gives pleasure on Sunday is wrong. Why, the main reason for a Christian's going to church is that it is a duty. And the art of being a Christian consists in persuading oneself that the disagreeable duties alleged to be required of man by God are really a pleasure! And the adult mind doesn't take kindly to this art, that is why the parsons insist that this self-hallucination shall be taught to the young.

In religious matters, says a writer in a Methodist journal, those who interfere with the faith of others are the greatest dastards of all. Our godly friend might bear this in mind when asked to subscribe to foreign missionary societies. Their chief aim is to destroy the faith of the "heathen" in the creed they were trained to believe in. We fail to see any difference between a Christian trying to disturb the faith of a non-Christian, and an Atheist endeavouring to disturb the beliefs of a Christian. The Atheist has certainly as "good intentions" as the Christian. But it is only the more ignorant type of Christian who refuses to see that. The more intelligent kind might do worse than take the education of their more ignorant brethren in hand.

Our Jubilee.

The Jubilee issue of the *Freethinker* will be published on May 10. That issue will consist of thirty-two pages, instead of the usual sixteen, which will include a reprint of the first number, and an account of the history of the paper. No extra charge will be made for this double number, but we are suggesting that readers should order at least two copies, using the extra ones for distribution. They will be thus helping to defray the increased cost of production, and also help to make the paper better known, and so secure new subscribers.

It is important that those intending to take extra copies should give their orders well in advance, as newsagents have to order of their wholesalers somewhere about ten or twelve days prior to the date of publication. By giving in their orders for extra copies by, say, the end of April, we shall thus have a guide as to what number we are justified in printing of this special issue.

In celebrating fifty years of existence the *Freethinker* is setting up a record not previously achieved by any Freethought paper in the whole of Europe. We want our readers to make it an occasion worth remembering.

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. R. H. Rossett, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We have just space to remind members and Branches of the National Secular Society of the Annual Conference, which is to be held in Liverpool on Sunday, May 24—Whit-Sunday. We hope to see a record attendance of members and delegates.

The Nelson Branch of the N.S.S. has been reorganized, and arrangements made for an active open-air season. The new Secretary is Mr. R. Hartley, 241 Chapel House Road, Nelson, Lancs. He is anxious to receive applications for membership to the Branch from all Freethinkers in the locality with sufficient interest in the movement to join and help.

We are not here concerned with the political aspects of the revolution in Spain, but the removal of Alfonso from the country throws one's mind back to the cordial alliance between the Church and the Crown in that land, which together were responsible for the murder of Ferrer in 1909, and the outrages on all kinds of would-be reformers a few years earlier. In the latter instance, under cover of an alleged Anarchist outrage in Barcelona, when a bomb was thrown into the theatre, the outrage was made an excuse for imprisoning thousands of radicals, trades unionists, liberal teachers

and professors, and subjecting them to tortures fiendish in their cruelty, and revolting in their beastliness. We were connected with a committee which in this country was conducting an agitation for either bringing these men to trial or releasing them, the Committee secured certificates from London medical men testifying to the brutal and beastly tortures to which the few who had managed to get to this country had been subjected. In the end the international agitation compelled the Government to release the prisoners, and they were deported. But they were never brought to trial. In face of the international indignation aroused, the Government and the Church dare not risk it.

Ferrer's sole offence was that in a country in which the Church controlled all education, and in which only about half the people could read or write, he set up a number of modern schools. When someone threw a bomb at Alfonso on the occasion of his wedding, the opportunity was again too good to be missed. Once more there was an attempt to crush all kinds of reformers by locking them up wholesale, and accusing them of participation with the offence. Ferrer was seized, imprisoned, and ultimately shot, on the strength of some forged letters, and manufactured evidence. Over fifty of the schools he had established were closed. Some will remember the thrill of horror that went through all liberal circles in Europe at this murder, but the majority of people have short memories, and the picture of Alfonso as a brave, dashing sportsman has been published so regularly in the papers, that the darker side of his reign has been forgotten with most. But others in Spain had more tenacious memories, and in his exile the ex-King, who so well exemplified the traditional picture of the Bourbons, a family that neither learned anything new nor forgot anything old, may well feel himself haunted by the ghost of Ferrer and the obscene tortures of Montjuich and other prisons.

What is rather puzzling in all this is to find out what the Church is doing. There is no other country in the world where the Church is so strong as it is in Spain, but it appears to have been strangely quiet during these events—or it may be that the Roman Catholic influence on the English Press has been strong enough to prevent anything very derogatory to the Church appearing. There was a report that the new Government had disestablished the Church, but all that seems to have been done is to proclaim the freedom of religious worship. That will certainly not suit the Church, which has so recently protested against freedom of religious propaganda in Italy. We shall watch further developments in this connexion with interest. But anyone who knows the history of Spain knows that it provides as clear an example as the world of a country which was brought to the verge of ruin by the Roman Catholic Church, and which reduced Spain from the most enlightened and the most civilized country in Europe to one of the most ignorant and most retrogressive in the world. Those who wish to have a bird's eye view of how this was done will find a sketch of the process in Mr. Cohen's *Creed and Character*, in the chapter entitled "A Lesson from Spain." It can be obtained from the Pioneer Press for fourpence.

London Freethinkers will be interested in a performance that is to be given to-day (April 26) for the first time by the Taulhoms Theatre Club, Souldren Road, Brook Green, W. The play is entitled "The Crucible, a Drama of the Inquisition," and deals with Giordano Bruno. The theatre is not, of course, thanks to our absurd laws, open to the public in the sense that a theatre is on other days in the week, but membership is only 2s. 6d., and those wishing to be present may become members at once by application at the box office on the evening of the performance. The nearest railway station is Hammersmith Broadway, and buses pass the door from all parts of London.

We are obliged to hold over for publication several letters until next week. We could really do with a much larger paper, but do not see how that is to be managed at present.

Jesus and his Followers.

Most Christians take it for granted that the Jesus of the Gospels is a historical character. They have been told so repeatedly by their priests and parsons, and they come to believe it now without question. And yet every impartial critic who has examined the evidence from profane sources knows how small it is in quantity and how unsatisfactory in quality. Jesus is alleged to have been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, and although his mother Mary, was espoused to Joseph, it was found that "she was with child of the Holy Ghost." Certain wise men, we are informed, "came from the East to worship him, saying "where is he that is born 'King of the Jews'"—and "when Herod heard these things he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." (Matthew ii. 1 to 3.) Further, we are told that Herod, fearing that the predictions of the wise men might be fulfilled, "sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men." (Matthew ii. 10.) Fortunately for young Jesus, Joseph having been warned, in a dream, of what was likely to happen fled into Egypt with the young child and his mother and thus they were saved. It is, however, rather strange that this important event is not mentioned by either Mark, Luke, or John, and there is no evidence from profane historians in corroboration of it. After the death of Herod, Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus back to Nazareth in fulfilment of a prophesy "that he shall be called a Nazarene." (Matt. ii. 23.) The Gospels are absolutely silent about the childhood of Jesus, but we are told that when he became twelve years of age he devoted some of his time in arguing with and answering questions of learned doctors. (Luke ii. 46.) On the other hand, in the Apocryphal Gospel (The Gospel of the Infancy) there is a full account of how he conducted himself at school, and how to the astonishment of the masters and the boys alike, he performed miracles. Jesus, however, was about thirty years of age when he began his mission as a prophet and a preacher. He is alleged to have performed numerous miracles, some of them of a useful and beneficent character, but others of doubtful utility. For instance, Jesus may be admired for curing a man of leprosy, or, even for "removing" a fever from Peter's mother-in-law; but if Jesus were God, it is difficult to understand why such persons should be afflicted with these diseases at all, especially if their conduct was meritorious; and if such diseases were sent as a punishment, it is equally hard to understand why Jesus should select these among so many for cure, and leave all other afflicted persons to deal with the diseases by natural methods or perish.

Jesus is said to have turned devils out of bodies of persons possessed. But as my friend, Mr. Cohen would say, "what the devil is a devil?" Some say devils are "fits." But fits are not entities; they are a physical condition resulting from a derangement of the nervous system. It is alleged that Jesus walked on the sea on one occasion, and on another stilled the tempest, and although this latter may have been a meritorious performance, there were only a few disciples whose lives were at stake. But if he could perform such a miracle how is it that he as a God allows great vessels to-day heavily laden with human beings to be engulfed, when the sea is lashed into a fury by a storm or tempest and many lives lost? The career of Jesus as a preacher lasted only a few brief years, and then we are told that he was betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, tried for sedition and blasphemy, and condemned under Pontius Pilate. We

are further told that he was crucified but rose again from the dead. It is also said that there were three hours of darkness over the land at the time of the crucifixion; an earthquake breaking open graves and rending the Temple veil; and a number of corpses came out of their graves and wandered about Jerusalem and showed themselves to a crowd of persons, who presumably had long or short conversations with them, and finally Jesus ascended into heaven in broad daylight. (Matt. xxvii. 51-52-53.) But unfortunately for this very dramatic story Gibbon, the great historian, says that none of the historians of the time mention these alleged sensational events. (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II., pp. 191-192. Ed. 1821.

* * *

Having given this brief resumé of the main incidents of the life of Jesus, let us now consider some of his leading teachings and see how far his followers may be said to carry them out in their conduct in daily life.

Jesus was a poor wandering peasant who "had not where to lay his head."

Where shall we find his followers in this respect? Shall we find them in our Casual Wards, in our Common Lodging Houses? or in our Prisons? for let it be understood that any persons without home or habitation, who is found wandering about the country, is described by the law of this land "as a rogue and a vagabond," and is liable to be sent to prison. I dare say, now that we have over two million and a half persons unemployed there are few magistrates who are hard-hearted enough to enforce this law. But let us look more closely into some of the chief teachings of Jesus. Jesus said that it was "blessed for men to be 'poor in spirit,' for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3). Poverty of spirit is not of much value in this hard world of struggle to-day, and those who are not prepared to fight against dreadful odds, are likely to go under in the strife.

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Indeed? Look at those who have mounted the slippery ladder of success in life and you will assuredly find that "meekness" is not one of their characteristics. Jesus said "Blessed be ye poor for yours is the Kingdom of God," but he also said "Woe unto you rich for ye have received your consolation." (Luke vi. 21.) But suppose you have become fairly rich by hard struggle—Jesus then says: "Give to every man that asketh of thee, and from him who taketh away thy goods ask not again." (Luke vi. 29-30.) The poor man goes to heaven because of his poverty—and the rich man finds his way to hell on account of his riches. (Luke xvi. 19-31). So that according to Jesus it is no use to struggle to get on in life, for if you become wealthy you run a great risk of being consigned to hell-fire for ever and for ever. It's a long time! To-day many Christians have given up belief in the horrible doctrine of hell—under the pressure of modern criticism and a more highly cultivated intelligence; but they still cling on to the more attractive doctrine of heaven above hereafter, where they will meet the loved ones they have lost in the world below. But those who know anything about astronomy are unable to even suggest whereabouts in among the myriad stars and suns they are likely to find this heavenly abode.

Jesus constantly harps on this doctrine of poverty. "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled." (Luke vi. 21.) In a pamphlet written by the famous Charles Bradlaugh over fifty years ago, entitled *What Did Jesus Teach?* he says on this subject, "The only intent of such teaching could be to induce the poor to remain content with the want and misery attendant on their wretched state in this life in the

hope of a higher recompense in some future life. Is it good to be content with poverty? Nay, 'tis better to investigate the cause with a view to its cure and prevention."

"The doctrine is a most horrid one, which declares that the poor shall not cease from the face of the earth. Poor in spirit and poor in pocket. With no courage to work for food or money to purchase it. We might well expect the man who held these doctrines with empty stomach also, and what does Jesus teach? 'Blessed are ye that hunger now for ye shall be filled.' He does not say when the filling shall take place, but the date is evidently postponed until the time when you have no stomachs to replenish." (*What DID Jesus Teach?* p. 2.)

Another important teaching of Jesus, which looks very well on the face of it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," but Jesus is often very contradictory in his teachings, for a little later on he says that, if you go into the country and you find people who are not willing to accept your doctrine, then "thou shalt shake off the dust of your feet," and it shall be "more tolerable in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for these people," who prefer to use their own judgment than be under the domination of priest or parson. (Matt. x. 14-15.)

But enough for the present. I have already occupied all the space at my disposal for this article. I must return to the subject later. So far I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the so-called "followers of Jesus" do not attempt to put his teachings into practice in their daily life, and also that such teachings are out of harmony with the spirit of the age. In point of fact we require something more practicable and useful; something more conducive to human well-being, something that will add not only to the health and happiness of mankind to-day, but also to those in ages yet to come.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

On Solomon: His Wives and his Wisdom.*

THE volume from which most of this article is taken is one which, in our childhood we learned to call the "good book." We still read it, though with less credulous eyes than before. If anyone desires to check our quotations, or to attribute to us an amount of research to which we can lay no claim, he may find in a handy, but now-a-days little used "chronological arrangement of the Old Testament," in "The English Version of the Polygot Bible" (Bagster) (of which we possess a well-thumbed copy), a very convenient and time-saving memorandum. Part of what follows may not be considered suitable for childish eyes; but we have to confess an acquaintance with it which dates from our tenderest years.

First, as to the birth of Solomon. We will not go too far back into his genealogy, but begin with his forerunner, Saul, who is described, although he afterwards belied the description, as "a choice young man and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people." Thus his long neck may have accounted for its occasional stiffness.

Jesse had numerous sons, of whom David was the youngest. The latter was "a cunning player on an harp," presumably of the Jewish variety; "a mighty

valiant man, and a man of war and prudent in matters, and a comely person." Good looks ran in the family. Prudence, however, seems to have waned early in the case of David. The birth of his son Solomon was on this wise.

"David comforted his wife Bath-sheba, and went unto her and lay with her; and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon; and the Lord loved him." But David can hardly have been surprised at the reputation afterwards accumulated by this son. We will only mention in passing the little matter of the other Bath-sheba, "the wife of Uriah the Hittite," and how it led him to write "a psalm of David" (51) "when Nathan the prophet came unto him, when he had gone into Bath-sheba." Although, in this much-quoted psalm, and, it is to be feared after a canting and hypocritical fashion, he prayed: "purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow"; the "purging" and "washing" did not have much effect. For, a good deal later, in fact when poor David was on his last legs, all that could be thought of for his senility was as follows: "Now King David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin; and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him and let her lie in thy bosom, and my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag, a shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, but the king knew her not." It is not surprising that soon after this "David slept with his fathers," having reigned "forty years," of which "seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned in Jerusalem."

We must get back to Solomon, who gives the title to this piece, and with whom we are mainly concerned. We continue, therefore, where we left off the last paragraph. "Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was established greatly." If we are inclined to jibe at the latter adjective, it is because Solomon did not come to the throne without a bit of a dust with one, Adonijah, who said: "I will be king; and prepared him horses and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him." But Bath-sheba (Solomon's mother, not the other one), turned up in the nick of time, and, although when "she went into the king's chamber" she saw "Abishag the Shunammite ministering to the king," she managed to remind the king of certain vows he had made about her son Solomon, and, by a great stroke of luck, "while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in." Between them they dished Adonijah of his pretensions to monarchy. Solomon, "riding upon king David's mule," arrived shortly after, and, in less time than seems possible, Solomon was "sitting on the throne of the kingdom," as aforesaid. Poor Adonijah, who was meanwhile entertaining a few people on the prospects of succession, heard the news, and, though that did not mend his fortune, "he and all the guests that were with him made an end of eating."

Solomon, although he "loved the Lord," walked "in the statutes of David his father," and, it may be added, in his footsteps. Like his progenitor, he could not go straight. His judgment in the famous case of two ladies of easy virtue, who quarrelled over the possession of a child made a sensation at the time, and has often been mentioned since. Indeed, we are told, "all Israel saw that the wisdom of God was in him" on that occasion.

There is a certain aspect of Solomon's character that always reminds us of another biblical character,

* The passages in inverted commas, with one or two exceptions, are quotations from the Bible, Authorized Version.

only mentioned once, but in rather striking terms, which, in their conclusion irresistibly turn our thoughts to Solomon. We refer to Naaman, and will quote the passage to clinch the point. "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable . . . he was also a mighty man in valour—but he was a leper."

Solomon's life is full of "but's." Here is a characteristic one, which refers to the time when he was busy in the building line, building "the king's house" (*i.e.*, his own), and, having done that, "the house of the Lord" (*i.e.*, The Temple). All the men employed, and all the treasures used, they are all recorded in great detail in the books of Kings and Chronicles, "but King Solomon loved many strange women . . . and he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." Yet, "for his father David's sake," he was permitted "to reign in Jerusalem over all Israel" for "forty years" before "he" also "slept with his fathers, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."

Rehoboam had not a very cheerful inheritance to come into. It had been arranged, by way of punishing his father for his erring and straying, that his son should reign over only "one tribe." Ten were to go to Jeroboam, "a mighty man of valour," and what happened to the other one is a matter of debate in some obscure circles to this day. It is sometimes even suggested that the British race itself is the lost tribe, the "remnant that remains." We hope it is not so. In these days pedigree is a matter of character, rather than of privilege, and there are numbers of seat-holders in churches and chapels, established, endowed, or maintained by "free-will offerings," as the case may be, who would do more than sniff at the suggestion that they are the descendants of the promiscuous Solomon.

We come now to "The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel." Whether he wrote them or not is a small matter, for they are like the majority of proverbs, either platitudes or lies. We had better give evidence in support of this statement. "All that glitters is not gold." Was there ever a more fatuous assertion? And "It's a long lane that has no turning," when, as everybody who is not blind or lame is aware, it is the short lane that has no turning—or turn in—which ever you like. The proverb is a lie and an abuse of language; not the same thing, but both properties of proverbs. Solomon's are no exception.

One of the first of Solomon's proverbial observations is a counsel to youth as to its temptations, which he was the last man to give with a chance of being believed. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The author of this saying (if it was Solomon), as we have seen already, was not considered likely to take this advice when he was an old man, so the chances of his having followed it in his youth are slender, and contrary to the probabilities. Also he said, "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird"! And, though he had himself been the subject of vengeance from high quarters, he tells other people to quake and tremble before a god who says: "I also (*i.e.*, with Solomon) will laugh at your calamity; I will mock you when your fear cometh," and, "they shall call upon me but I will not answer"; they "shall seek me early but not find me." Note the last eight words, turn over a couple of pages (if you should be following this with a Bible at hand) and you will read other words by the same author or authors: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." If this contradictory trash is the wisdom of Solomon, the less said about it the better.

Next in order we come to "Ecclesiastes; or, The

Preacher; the son of David, king in Jerusalem," and, it would seem, a jack of all trades. It contains a good deal of what we expected to find to be the truth about the author. And more platitudes. For example: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." That that which is crooked cannot be made straight might apply to Solomon's temperament, but, in any other sense, it is a lie. It is followed, however, by something which, as we have suggested, has a more genuine ring about it. "I commune with mine own heart, saying, Lo! I am come to great estate; and have gotten more wisdom than all they who have been before me in Jerusalem; yea my heart had great experience of wisdom, and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly . . . I said to mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?" To which we will add a proverb that, on the whole, is the truest we have ever heard, namely, "a guilty conscience needs no accusing." It is all very well for Solomon, as a preacher, to say, "be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools"; but as a man of valour he does not seem to have lived in perpetual contemplation of his own dictum, that "a good name is better than precious ointment," nor to have practised the serenity of mind which he preaches.

The last, and in a literary sense, the most significant, of the works attributed to Solomon, is "The Song of Solomon; the song of songs." And so it is, if criticism counts for merit in judging them. Here is an amorous poet who has personal experience to draw upon, more such experience, if the records are to be believed, than any poet who ever lived or wrote. Nor has this song done much harm so far as it has been read and enjoyed as a love poem. But, if the truth is to be told—and that is what the *Freethinker* exists for—this natural, but not very restrained human emotion, and the glowing colours in which it is recorded have been the progenitor of a whole crop of fanaticism, of cults of perversity, of "spiritual" teaching as a trap for robbery and rape; of the extactic illusions of "saints" of both sexes; of the abominations of medieval clerical celibacy; and, in more recent times, of the Mormons, and the Agapemonites, to name only two of the better known sects that have been based upon the false and dangerous "mysticism" of Christianity with regard to sex.

The pious families of this country, who allow their children to reach the age of puberty without a warning of peril, or any clean and essential information about their bodies and functions, are responsible for a large proportion of the high percentage of lunatics which is one of the saddest features of our annual national statistics. And the Song of Solomon, silently and secretly pondered in convents, and in the luxury of rich and battenng sects, like the mystical "Marriage" which is part of all Christian teaching, Protestant and Catholic, are sources of untold mischief in many sensitive and unconsciously affected minds.

Apart from its presence in the "canon" of so-called holy writ, the Song of Solomon, if it passed the Censor, might well find a place in the windows that display the novels of Mrs. Elinor Glynn, and other volumes supposed to be what they are not. Judged by the standard of the best of what are a very miscellaneous collection, from classics to lascivious tripe, the Song of Solomon may be said for the readers who like such things to be just the sort of thing they like. Whether any author less familiar with the deity would be allowed to have his work sold to, and given as school prizes to children, if it contained such passages as that with which we close, is, in our opinion, a

matter of doubt. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my love, till he please. The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping the hills. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart; behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake and said to me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with a tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

ALAN HANDSACRE.

The Inadequacy of Christianity.

The frequent changes of ground made by the apologists for Christianity show that many of them have misgivings about the hold of tradition and religious custom. The world has had 2,000 years of organized Christianity, and the man in the street advances the perfectly legitimate criticism that there is as yet very meagre evidence of the practice or operation of its professed principles, particularly when the present wretchedness of so many human beings is kept in mind, and when one has regard to the numerical strength of Christianity in the World. Numerically, Christians form a very small—if confident, insolent and domineering—minority of the world's religious population.

Christianity has miserably failed to reach and grapple with the root causes of human disorders and maladies. One of the reasons for this is that it only concerns itself with effects. It is always shutting the stable door after the steed has escaped or been stolen. That is why representative Christians are always loudly mouthing about the examples of Christian beneficence furnished by hospitals for instance. Leaving aside the point that unbelievers, Jews and believers in other creeds also take a share in providing and supporting hospitals, why is it that we cannot acquire the higher and wider view?

It is certainly right that the sick and maimed should be carefully and efficiently treated. But need we have so many sick and maimed? Prevention is better than cure. If we get down to really fundamental questions we would realize that the humanistic solution is the wise one—that from infancy human beings should be treated and taught in accordance with and in obedience to those great silent, unerring monitors—the Laws of Nature. After all Hospitals in themselves are no more pleasing objects of the landscape to thinking people than prisons, workhouses or reformatories. The many seem to regard them as necessarily permanent institutions, while the Freethinker hopes that they are only temporary and provisional.

But the Christian sneers at and heaps continually upon the Laws of Nature. Laws of Nature forsooth! Could a civilization like ours have been evolved on the basis of the Laws of Nature?

In so far as civilization is a success, it is entirely due to the co-operation of Naturalism and Humanism. There is no possible understanding between the enlightened natural men and suppositious supernatural beings. As Paul puts it: "The natural man is enemy 'against God.'" God was made by man in the dark days of his ignorance and fear and weakness

—when science was unknown, and when in his terror under natural cataclysms like thunderstorms, earthquakes and unseasonable darkness, man could only attribute these terrible happenings to the actions of superior powers of whom he knew nothing. Man was then entirely at the mercy and dictation of his emotions uncontrolled and without direction by a trained intellect.

As Grant Allen observed, another cause of belief in supernaturalism among primitive peoples was the coming of death. When the head of a tribe actually died his people did not know that all his powers were extinct so far as they were concerned. They regarded him more as being asleep or in a coma or trance, involving suspension of the exercise of his powers. They did not know he was dead as we know now. So these people put their dead chief in a cave and placed beside the corpse food, drink, garments, staves and other things that he might need when his consciousness was restored. How illuminating are these customs when we come to examine the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection! There is probably no more complete answer to the doctrine than that given by the great apostle of common sense Thomas Paine to Paul, who used the simile of the seed sown in the earth as representing the buried dead body of a believer. Paine conclusively demonstrated that a dead seed could never germinate, and if a man lived and died and then lived again, there was no reason why he should not also die again. Yet the Christians to-day regard as one of the irrefragable bases of the doctrine of the Resurrection this foolish falsity and false foolery of the apostle Paul!

After all it is only common decency that any community should see that every member of it is adequately fed, clothed, housed; and if ill in health, tended and treated. It is no magnificent generosity of spirit that is required for what after all is a social duty for the conservation and health of the body politic. How elementary and petty is the Christian idea of brotherliness and neighbourliness! Many Christians who style themselves "advanced" and "liberal" have subordinated the idea of "redemption" to what may be described as "Institutional Ethicism." They want to change the centre of gravity, and to develop a religious system which shall be one of ethical sanctions and ethical reforms.

And does this fact not testify to the failure of Christianity in its essentials? Once you belittle, you may as well discard wholly, original sin, the atonement, salvation by faith and the Resurrection. Who believes in the virgin birth idea to-day? And what moral or beneficent purpose can be read into such doctrines as the Virgin Birth and the miracles of the New Testament?

Search the Scriptures and you fail to find any declaration of principle higher than you can find in the teachings of persistent creeds and philosophies. Christian would have us believe that their faith is the only true faith; that they only have the true God (though his nature and attributes are hazy and undefined); and that their faith provides for all the needs of humanity. Is it altogether cynical to ask why therefore the needs of humanity remain to such a tremendous extent unsatisfied and unheeded? Why do we see so many human wrecks around our very doors?

No, the whole trouble is due to the want of knowledge and the lack of sensible and efficient organization of ourselves and of our resources.

We are content to grope along in a state of unscientific muddle. The quacks, the exploiters and the clever gamblers who so reverentially genuflect, cross themselves, and bow on Sundays in the great Churches are the modern workers of the oracles of

God. Did we speak of the misgivings of Christian apologists about the enduring hold of tradition and custom? Do not let us be too sanguine. Yet, surely, when we survey the world—showing great unrest wherever we turn—which is evidently the prelude to mighty organic changes—we are justified in believing that men and women will learn thoroughly to test all things and cleave to that which is good and true. If we can depend on that, the fetters of supernatural tradition will surely if slowly be filed away—for behold "old things are passing away: all things are becoming new!"

IGNOTUS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 17, 1931.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Clifton, Wood, Silvester, Corrigan, Hornibrook, LeMaine, Rosetti (A. C.), Ebury, Mrs. Venton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary. Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. The financial statement was before the meeting.

New members were admitted to the Liverpool, W. London Branches, and Parent Society. Permission to form a Branch of the N.S.S. to be known as the Brighton Branch was given.

Correspondence was dealt with from Birmingham, Burnley, Liverpool, Eastbourne, and Montreal. In accordance with the votes received from Branches, the Executive declared the Annual Conference of 1931 will be held in Liverpool, and the Secretary was instructed to proceed with all necessary arrangements. The audited Balance Sheet for the year was before the meeting, and passed. Motions for the Conference Agenda were passed over to the Agenda Committee, consisting of the President, Mr. Quinton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary. Final details concerning the Social on the 18th were reported, and the meeting closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will be held on May 15, at 7 p.m.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

N.S.S. Social.

THE N.S.S. Social at Caxton Hall last Saturday was a very successful gathering. A large and merry party danced to the excellent music of the Somerville Band, which, with other items made an enjoyable programme. Walter Newman's humorous character sketches were clever, and provoked much laughter, and Miss Somerville's delightful violin playing thoroughly deserved the hearty applause. The Marvelles gave a much appreciated entertainment of thought-reading and card manipulation. A "Few Words" from the President is always demanded at such functions, and with our President's happy knack of making his remarks fit the occasion, the "Few Words" are always a marked addition to the programme. Mr. H. R. Clifton was again a kindly and efficient M.C. The refreshment arrangements were in the capable hands of Mrs. E. Venton and her band of voluntary workers, and the result of their efforts may be summed up as quality, quantity, efficient service, and generally expressed satisfaction. Among those missing was one whose absence was quickly noticed, and many were the expressions that the wife of the President was not well enough to be present. We wish her a speedy, complete, and lasting recovery, and assure her our warmth of feeling towards our President will always include the President's wife.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

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.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt, A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ebor Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Saturday, 7.30, Messrs. A. Frank, G. Haskell and W. Aley.

INDOOR.

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, April 29, at 7.45, Debate—"World Socialism Restrict Liberty?" Affir.: Mr. A. Nagar; Neg.: Mr. G. Head.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, B.A.—"Some Reflections on Psychological Research."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Henry S. Pollack—"The Situation in India."

SOCIETY FOR THE PRACTICE AND PROPAGANDA OF FIVE ETHICAL RESOLUTIONS.—Emerson Club, 6 Old Queen Street, Westminster, Sunday, April 26, at 3.30, lecture by Mr. F. J. Payne, on "The Root of Goodness." All are invited.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, facing The Brecknock): 7.30, Mr. C. F. Ratcliffe—"Future of our Society." A General Meeting will follow the lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, April 26, Ramble to Ogden. Meet at New Victoria Cinema at 2.15 p.m.

INDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members Meeting. At 7.30, Mr. Jno. T. Brighton will lecture in Bigg Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

S.D.F.—St. James' Hall, Burnley, Sunday, April 26, 11.0, Lecture by Mr. J. Clayton—"This Sabbatarianism."

YOU WANT ONE.



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

THE GENERAL SECRETARY, N.S.S., 62 Farringdon St., E.C.4.

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.)

"A Book every Freethinker should possess."

The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church

By Joseph McCabe.

No fiction, no work of drama, no fabulous tale of terrific or fantastic imagination could approach in amazing interest *The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church*, as told by Joseph McCabe in six double volumes—altogether, 360,000 words that are packed to the last "i" and "t" with startling pictures of Catholic history, which is interwoven by broad crimson threads with the history of our western world. For centuries Catholicism dominated Europe. The dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church prevailed as powerful law. Catholic intrigues and Catholic ambitions were carried through relentlessly. Through all the great events of history trailed the immense and ominous policy of the Church of Rome.

It is more than a general understanding of the role of Catholicism in history that Joseph McCabe gives in this important and complete story of a religious institution which has represented not merely faiths and beliefs but tremendous political, social power. True, McCabe impresses vividly upon the reader the broad sweep of events and the vast, surging tides of conflict and feeling. The story is envisaged as a whole, as a series of events and struggles and revolutions which are logically connected. But going to make up this whole—to make it effective and convincing knowledge for the reader—is the most detailed, careful, exact chronicle of happenings. Innumerable facts of the most vital significance are for the first time made available to a popular audience in this immense, scholarly work by McCabe.

The following are the titles of the twelve books (two in a volume): 1. How the Roman Catholic Church Really Began. 2. How the Roman Catholic Church Became Wealthy and Corrupt. 3. How the Pope's Power Was Made and Enforced. 4. How Rome Made and Ruled the Dark Ages. 5. How the People Were Made to Submit to Papal Power. 6. The True Relation of Rome to the Revival of Art, Letters and Learning. 7. The Height of the Papal Regime of Vice and Crime. 8. How Rome Fought Attempts to Reform Morals. 9. The Truth About the "Reform" of Rome. 10. The Last Alliance of Church and State. 11. Roman Catholic Intrigues of the Nineteenth Century. 12. The Roman Catholic Church As It Is To-day.

SIX DOUBLE VOLUMES 10/6d. (Post Free) Inland Postage only.

Imperial and Foreign Customers must add Extra Postage.

ORDER NOW ON THIS FORM.

THE LITTLE BLUE BOOKS, 82, Eridge Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

Enclosed is 10/6d. for which send me, post free, the six double volumes of "The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church," by Joseph McCabe.

Name
(BLOCK LETTERS, PLEASE.)

Address

The Foundations of Religion

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN.

Paper Ninepence
Postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Christianity & Civilization

A Chapter from "The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe."

By Prof. J. W. DRAPER.

Price - TWOPENCE. Postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity

BY
UPASAKA

Price—ONE SHILLING. Postage—One Penny

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

MATERIALISM: HAS IT BEEN EXPLODED?

Verbatim Report of Debate between

Chapman Cohen and C. E. M. Joad.

One Shilling Net. 5 5 Postage 1d

Revised by both Disputants.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

EDDINGTON, JEANS, HUXLEY & EINSTEIN

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

THIS is a work that should be in the hands of every Freethinker and as many Christians as can be induced to purchase it or read it. It will enable all to gauge the value of the new apologies for religion that are being put forward in the name of recent science.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited)

Paper 2s Postage 2d.

Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

SEX and RELIGION

BY

GEORGE WHITEHEAD

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price - 9d. Postage 1d.

FOUR LECTURES on FREETHOUGHT and LIFE

By Chapman Cohen.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price - One Shilling. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Cloth Bound THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE
Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

ATHEISM

What It Is——What It Means

BY

JOSEPH LEWIS.

A lecture delivered at the invitation of the Community Church, New York, U.S.A.

This is certainly the most remarkable lecture ever delivered in a Church.

The Minister of the Church describes the address as "Brilliant in the extreme; altogether the best statement on Atheism I have ever heard." Mr. Lewis is an able and resourceful leader of militant Freethought in the United States, and a constant thorn in the side of orthodoxy. Published in 1930 has already run through two editions. We have a limited supply sent from the United States.

Price SIXPENCE. By post Sevenpence.

War, Civilization and the Churches

By CHAPMAN COHEN

A BOOK THAT NONE SHOULD MISS

160 Pages. Paper 2s. Cloth 3s.
Postage—Paper 2d., Cloth 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, 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 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.