

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. LII.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 1932

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Dope for Dullards.—The Editor</i> - - - -	321
<i>Our Debt to Darwin.—Mimnermus</i> - - - -	322
<i>A God who does Nothing.—W. Mann</i> - - - -	323
<i>The Herald of Dawn.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - -	324
<i>Modern Proverbs.—C. S. Fraser</i> - - - -	326
<i>Executive's Annual Report</i> - - - -	330
<i>The Demonstration at Hulme Town Hall</i> - - - -	333
<i>Gramophone Notes.—Bay</i> - - - -	333
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Dope for Dullards.

LOOKING at the numerous ways in which the public, even that section of it which considers itself and is considered by others to be wide awake, is deceived, and how easily it is deceived, it would seem that the English people hardly deserve to be called a nation of sportsmen. For sport surely implies a struggle in which each of the contending parties stand something like an equal chance. There would be no sport in Tunney meeting me in the prize ring, it would only be a massacre in which neither of us could find any pleasure. Neither would there be any sport in a specialist in Egyptian hieroglyphics deceiving me as to the meaning of a passage, as printed, in the Book of the Dead. The element of real sport involves, not necessarily an equality, but at least that each side shall have a chance of coming out on top.

Now it is true that in the prize ring, in the cricket field, on the racing track, or in similar spheres this sporting element is kept to the front. It is when we come to what is called the higher branches of life, politics, journalism, finance and religion, that this element of fairness, of consideration for the other party, of hesitancy in taking advantage of the weakness of others breaks down altogether. Then it becomes as unsporting as warfare, in which every advantage is taken of the weakness or the ignorance of the other party. In finance the same swindles are successfully worked time after time, by precisely the same class of people. In newspapers the people are told one day they must not spend, and when they adopt the advice and the big advertisers inform the newspapers that if this counsel is persisted in they will withdraw their advertisements, the same papers at once tell the same public it is their duty to spend as much as possible, and hardly anyone notices the change in front. Jones swindles the public and is sent to prison; Smith works the same swindle, and either goes to prison or the House of Commons. But it is the same swindle over and over again. Politicians tell the people one tale one day and are hailed as saviours of the nation. Next day they tell an op-

posite story and are glorified for saving the nation from the disasters into which story number one has plunged it. All this may, of course, be profitable, but it cannot be sport. There is no struggle, there is no thrill, there can be no sense of exaltation in victory achieved. Real sportsmen would die of weariness if they were compelled to play a one-sided game of this kind.

\* \* \*

The Religious Dope.

But, as usual, the finest field for the exhibition of fraud and folly, on which to see clearly the ease with which knavery exploits simplicity, is that of religion. Here it may be said that the really religious man never learns—so long as he remains religious. We may unmask one of those who have played upon his weakness, but he will soon follow another manipulator of the same trick. He may see that thimble-rigging when performed with three peas is a swindle, but if another performer comes along with three small marbles instead of peas, well, that makes all the difference, and he falls into the trap as easily as ever. For instance, for some time the papers have contained an alleged verification of the Bible story of the fall of Jericho. The said verification consists of the unearthing of a hill town, somewhere about the spot where Jericho might have stood, and with it, it is said, evidence that the place had been destroyed by an earthquake. Now the essence of the Bible story is not that a town existed, there were probably a score or more thereabouts, not that it was destroyed by an earthquake, that is no uncommon occurrence; the essence of the Bible story is that after marching round the city seven times the priests blew their trumpets and the walls fell down as a result. All the particulars given in this alleged confirmation does not matter in the least, they have no more to do with the Bible story than has the destruction of Pompeii. If I had been writing up the confirmation of the Bible story, I do not think I should have stopped where these men have stopped. With such a public, and with such a press, I would have dug up a picture of at least one priest blowing a trumpet, with a letterpress "How Jericho Fell," and I think I would have announced a petrified specimen of one of the blasts which blew down the walls.

\* \* \*

Christian Evidences.

Here is another and a more recent illustration of the same asinine quality of the intelligence of at least a large section of the public. It is taken, not from the *Daily Express* or from the *Daily Herald*, but from so respectable a journal as the *Daily Telegraph*. It is headed "Pillar that may be Lot's wife":—

Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed by a rain of fire and brimstone because of their great wickedness, according to the Bible story . . . The whole four cities of the plain have now been identi-



fied . . . On the plain below the hill on which these cities stood there is a curious rock formation. It is about five feet high and legend associates it with the story of Lot's wife, who looking back at the burning cities was turned into a pillar of salt.

The pillar may be Lot's wife! I find it impossible to say that it isn't save for one thing. It is a rock pillar, whereas the original article was of salt. Of course, if God could change a woman into a pillar of salt he could also transform the salt into solid rock. The one thing is as easy to believe as the other. But what ought to have been discovered on the rock is an inscription in Hebrew, "This is the rock that was originally the wife of Lot, converted by me Jehovah, from salt to sandstone in order that it may be preserved for future ages." That would really have been convincing; and I am sure that the *Daily Telegraph* would have published it. In that form it would have given what Pooh-Bah calls, "corroborative details calculated to give an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." There is nothing in finding "cities of the plain," that tells no more in favour of the truth of the Bible story than does the mention of Egypt. There is nothing in finding a rock which looks like a human being, or which legend says was once a human being. There are thousands of such rocks and hundreds of such legends. It is the inscription that would have done the trick. And I am quite sure that one of our tame religious scientists could have been found to report that the rock looked as though it might once have been salt, and that there were strange veins running through the salt which were suggestive of partly transformed muscular tissue. As I have so often said, I have no objection to a liar so long as his lies are told in a way that does honour to one of the oldest and one of the most religious classes of human beings. But I object to a clumsy or an inadequate lie, and if the *Daily Telegraph*, or any of the other papers, will send round a man to the *Free-thinker* office, I will show them how to construct a lie that would do credit to the Christian Church at its best. Greater praise than that could no man give.

\* \* \*

#### How it is Done.

But there is no real sport in this game. At the game of doping the public the failures are so few, the successes are so easily achieved, that there is no excitement about it. The Bible says somewhere that the fowler does not spread his net in the sight of the bird. So far as the human bird is concerned that is not true. For trouble is not even taken to hide the kind of snare that is set. Take an instance from a high quarter. "Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection" is a bulky and expensive work, written by Professor Wallis Budge, and published by the Medici Society, and, so far as I can form an opinion, a very good work. Yet on the covers of the work is printed this passage:—

Reference to, and comparison with modern Christian beliefs is carefully avoided, no deductions are drawn, and the Author has taken care not to offend the susceptibilities of any Believer.

And this in a book which has a host of parallels with Christian beliefs, and a number of opinions expressed that apply as surely to the modern Christian as they do to the ancient Egyptian! Why, the chief value of these elaborate works on ancient religions lies in their relation to succeeding ones. Unless we can relate primitive religious ideas to modern ones, unless a writer points out, what he must know to be the fact, that our modern religious ideas are rooted in these primitive ones, his collections are of no more scientific value than is a little boy's store of coloured marbles. As it is, it is left to others to make the re-

searches of such men as Budge really scientifically valuable by pointing out what they actually mean, and by explaining what their conclusions really imply. Let me try and rewrite this passage from Professor Budge in plain language. Thus:—

As it might open the eyes of many Christians to the character of their religious beliefs, the Author has carefully avoided showing how very similar the religious beliefs and practices of the ancient Egyptians were to those of modern Christians, and as it is evident that the rejection of the ancient Egyptian beliefs as absurd and untrue must involve the rejection of their own beliefs, I have not pointed out what Egyptian beliefs imply. Had I said what they imply many Believers would have been offended. But here I may safely trust to the stupidity of the average believer not to see what these beliefs mean. I may also rely upon most of the leaders of public thought in this country, who do see the inevitable conclusion to which my work points, to be as discreetly silent as I am, and to do nothing that will disturb the ignorance and the serenity of the average believer.

That is putting the quotation in the plainest of plain English. And no one can read that passage and say that it does not mean what my paraphrase says it means. The snare is set in full view of the bird that is to be snared, and no fear is felt that the bird will be alarmed. But there is no real sport in it. The risk of detection is small, the chance of exposure is infinitesimal. The bird is not merely not frightened of the trap, it learns to love it, or to persuade itself that no trap exists. The practitioner of this particular kind of dishonesty, in the press, on the platform, or in the world of books is quite safe. If he succeeds he is praised, and some measure of success always attends his efforts at doping the dullards. And if he fails completely in fooling the public there is always an appreciative crowd to murmur "He meant well."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Our Debt to Darwin.

"Not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!  
But Westwards, look, the land is bright."—*Clough*.

THE fiftieth anniversary of the death of Charles Darwin is a reminder of the debt that Intellectuals owe to that great scientist, who, more than any other man of his time, helped to open up new vistas to men's eyes and widen the horizon of knowledge. For Darwin demonstrated that man has attained his present state through a gradual process of evolution from a lower and less perfect state. The general admission of this truth sweeps away at once the Oriental legends associated with the Christian Religion which men have been accustomed to consider a sufficient explanation of all things. The legend of a fallen race at once disappears, and with it goes the myths of the talking snake in the Garden of Eden, and of "Noah" and his fabulous Ark, and all other strange and monstrous explanations that were necessary to harmonize the false theological theory put forth by Christian priests. With it also goes the Bibliolatry, which, like so many idolatries, has served to cramp and enchain the human intellect. Henceforth, this Christian Bible is no longer sacrosanct, but must descend from its lofty pedestal and take its due place among the alleged sacred books of the world, ranging from the Zend Avesta to the Book of Mormon and the writings of Joanna Southcott.

Nothing more momentous has taken place since the Renaissance. And, strangest of all, this intellectual lever, which will finally overthrow the Christian Re-



ligion, has come among us so silently that many have scarcely noticed its approach. Opposition there has been, as there is to all new truths, but, compared with the momentous issues at stake, the opposition has been trifling. Silently and steadily, decade after decade, Darwinism has been relentlessly pushing its way till few educated people now attempt to contravene it. There has been no "bridal birth of thunder peals" while this "great thought has wedded fact." To the Christian priests and their congregations, whose innocence will not permit them to follow intelligently the course of scientific thought, the new ideas must appear like Banquo's gory ghost to the amazed Macbeth. They look up from their crosses, candles, and their prayers, and see the awful shape in front of them. "Adam" and "Eve," the talking snake, and the apple of discord, are driven out from the fabulous Garden of Eden, not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by Charles Darwin with a steel pen and a note book.

Since Darwin's death, the Christian clergy who formerly denounced him with the entire and voluminous vocabulary of theological abhorrence, have, hypocritically, claimed this great scientist as one of their flock. They actually buried this black sheep in Westminster Abbey, and brazenly pretend that the teachings of evolution is wholly in accord with that of the Old and New Testaments. The ascent of man and the fall of man are one and the same thing, these humbugs protest. Black is white, and white is black. They are as shameless as Iago, when he says: "Thus do I make my fool my purse." To them, the end justifies the means, which is to ensure a comfortable existence to a priestly caste at the expense of their fellow-countrymen.

Only two religious bodies have been honest in this matter. Poles asunder in so many respects the Romish Church and the Salvation Army have remained faithful to ancient ignorance. On no condition will they part with "Eve" and the apple and the talkative serpent. Roman Catholics and Salvationists alike believe that Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and their colleagues are suffering the tortures of the damned. These uncultured people no more believe in evolution than they understand the rudiments of science. How should they know? They leave school at fourteen years of age, and their spiritual "pastors and masters" are either ignorant Irish or Belgian priests, or else working-men as innocent of culture as themselves. But those who are pretending to effect a compromise between the irreconcilables, superstition and science, from the lawn-sleeved Bishops to the plausible liars who grace Free Church pulpits and platforms, are no more honest nor high-minded than race-course touts, who shout imaginary information, "straight from the horse's mouth," to cheerful idiots with more money than sense.

Sincerity sometimes makes respectable even absurd and wrong-headed causes, but sincerity is not a shining Christian virtue. The God of the Christians is not the three-headed deity of the Holy Trinity, nor the sad figure on the cross, but the self-satisfied form of Mammon, with the leer of the trader. Present-day Priestcraft is but an organized, commercial hypocrisy. The clergy are but a race of insects preying on the body politic. There are forty thousand of them in this country, and their desire is to entomb men's minds within the covers of their fetish-book, in order that they may make an easy and comfortable living.

All this Christian humbug and hypocrisy might succeed indefinitely were it not for the fact that there are Freethinkers. For these Christian priests unduly influence our national education, and use their power tyrannously. As a consequence our education suffers sadly. Think for a moment! An education

crammed into nine years; with about forty-four school weeks in the year and twenty-five hours spent in school per week, can never store a child's mind with the knowledge he needs to know. Teachers spend six hours weekly teaching the mythology of the Middle Ages, and hours in reading the Christian Bible. The child is entitled to the bread of knowledge; all the little one gets is the stone of superstition at a cost of £100,000,000 yearly.

The fundamental question of man's place in nature has been solved, and the acceptance of evolution should begin to bear fruit in all practical affairs of life. Sooner or later it should lead mankind to a happier, more consummate condition of life, and to loftier ideals. How much longer is progress to be delayed by modern witch-doctors, who batten on the national innocence? Gross ignorance, even when associated with religion, is still ignorance, and the men who perpetuate the follies of two thousand years ago do as much mischief as criminals, for they are equally the enemies of society. The clergy point to miracles to support out-of-date ignorance. It is easy to do this when they are surrounded by savages. To aim to convert a civilized man by miracles is to insult his intelligence. The best reply to priests is culture, and yet more culture, for, as Shakespeare has told us, "There is no darkness but ignorance."

MIMNERMUS.

## A God Who Does Nothing.

It is a common, and true, criticism of those who believe in a God, that they cannot agree among themselves as to what they believe about God. The educated man's idea of God will be very different from that of the uneducated man's; and even among educated men, hardly two would be found in absolute agreement. Of course this is only natural when nothing is known upon the subject, and it is all guesswork, governed by emotion.

At one time, until practically the middle of the last century, one could roughly divide people into three main divisions, Christians, Deists, and Atheists; with a small assortment of minor sects, such as Pantheists, Positivists, and kindred "Fancy" faiths.

The Christian God was the thundering Jehovah of the Old Testament, who, in these later times has been left to perish in the wilderness Sinai, and who's son reigns in his stead. The God of the Deists was the God of Nature, whose works, so Addison declared in his paraphrase of the 19th Psalm, proclaim: "The hand that made us is divine." Thomas Paine, who popularized Deism, after quoting this line of Addison's asks: "What more does man want to know than that the hand, or power, that made these things divine is omnipotent?"<sup>1</sup>

But to-day the line that divided the Christian from the Deist has been obliterated. Christians, those worth noticing, occupy the position of Paine. Some day, if Christianity lasts long enough, we shall have a Church erected to Paine as a great reformer.

The word God to-day is the most ambiguous word in the language. When a man speaks of God, he may be thinking of Jehovah amid the thunders of Sinai. Or of a magnified old man in a night-gown and a long white beard, seated on a cloud, and absorbed in the doings, for good or bad, of mankind; and which was the belief of his childhood. And there are all gradations between these and the man who believes that God is an immaterial something with less substance than the shadow of a shade, and who does nothing at all. Some even go farther than this, they

<sup>1</sup> Paine: *The Age of Reason* (Ed. 1884). p. 14.



have discarded all belief in God and a future life, yet still cling to religion and declare it indispensable!

A good specimen of the stage to which this evaporation has reached is represented by a recently published book, entitled *This World First*, by Mr. J. H. Curle. (Methuen 6s.) No Atheist could be more devastating in his denunciation of the wanton cruelty and waste of nature than this Deist. Not only is there an utter disregard for man in Nature, but she seems to display an active and diabolical enmity towards him. "We have seen," says Mr. Curle, "that the whole world is now a battle-field; that the Protagonists are Nature and the Human Intellect; and that between them there must lie unceasing struggle."

There are people, he says, who say that animals feel no pain, they have no imagination or fear; and he asks what the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has to say about it? But, he objects, even if no animal suffered at all, "Why such appalling wantonness? Why create myriads of beings merely to be eaten for food, or choked to death for lack of space? Would that be *your* way of running the world?"

Again there are other people, and some scientists among them, who talk about "harmony" within Nature. They will point out, for example, that birds, by eating noxious insects, do great service. But, says Mr. Curle, "that is hardly the point; why have these noxious pests evolved, if they are only fit to be wiped out? It is difficult to associate "harmony" with the universal killing for food, and the sweeping aside of unwanted creatures."

Strangely wanton, too, is Nature's production of a fine organism, followed by a lowly and insignificant organism to destroy it, for instance the horse by the tsetse-fly. There are large parts of Africa where the horse cannot exist because of this fly. The sheep is attacked by fluke and the blow-fly. The cow by the tick. Every animal has its parasite, and man himself has many, perhaps the most disgusting is the tapeworm. Man who is at the pinnacle of all organisms, says Mr. Curle: "finds Nature lurking in wait at a thousand spots, to drag him down to futility or to blot him out. Nature's most powerful weapon against man is disease. Consider the long list of diabolical ills, Nature's wanton thrusts at us, which we do not deserve; yet which are ever hurrying millions of us untowardly to the tomb. Cancer, most dreadful of these, is perhaps increasing, it is said to kill, generally long before their time, one in nine of our Western peoples. 'Sleepy' sickness, a deeply sinister disease, is increasing." This disease, says Mr. Curle, has "in these last years, wiped out blacks by the million." Consider also, he continues:—

That widespread and torturing disease—Asthma? Why should this have been sprung upon us? Why should there be Bright's or Addison's diseases? Why hæmophilia, from which men bleed to death? Consider those thousands who become lepers, for whom there is no certain cure; *their* torture is mostly mental, the body rotting away to a very slow death. Why is there pernicious anæmia; why hysteria, hypochondria, neurasthenia; insanity? Think of elephantiasis, in its several kinds. In Cochín, on the Malabar coast, every second man I saw had horribly swollen legs and feet; and in Africa, where this loathsome growth attacks the body, the diseased part will often weigh a hundred pounds. How came Nature to evolve such wanton and dreadful ills? (J. H. Curle: *This World First*. pp. 16-17.)

Then there is the mosquito; "The torment this utterly useless creature inflicts on animals and men is stupendous." It torments man by seeking his blood, and conveys, through its parasites, a depressing and often fatal fever. "What millions of lives the mosquito has ruined! In this creature, I often think

that Nature reaches its nadir." Who is responsible for these horrors? Says Mr. Curle:—

The usual conception is that this World was created by a Loving, Personal God, largely for the behoof of Man. But the idea of a Loving, Personal God behind the horrors and wantonness of Nature is to me a nightmare. It is unthinkable. Would such a God—such a Creator—organize a world on the basis of killing for food? Would He, no matter to what ends, cause myriads to be born when there is but room for a single one, or approve the continuous and merciless blotting-out? Did He, of His deliberation, evolve all in Nature that is gruesome, fantastic, futile, horrible? Did He think out and approve the octopus, the alligator, the land crab, the leech, the skunk, the snake, the vampire, the rat, the maggot, the house-fly, the mosquito? Did He think out and approve cancer and leprosy, and dementia, and asthma and the bacteria? (pp. 27-28.)

It is a dreadful dilemma for Theology, says Mr. Curle, and it can only tell us that we must have faith. And if God sends the horrors, does He also remove them? "He does not," says Mr. Curle. "It is the intellect of Man, patiently puzzling things out, which is slowly but surely removing them. There can be only one explanation. Whatever Nature may be, there is no God behind it. Neither its beauty nor its horrors are His fruits. God is Spirit—far remote from the world's welter; whatever be the force behind Nature, we know now that it is not the Deity." (p. 29.) This seems to be a pretty full confession of Atheism, yet further on we are told: "There is God! Spirit!—and with Spiritual concomitants. Not to be sought for in creeds and miracles. Not to be found behind Nature." Well what is the use of Him? He might just as well not exist, we should not know the difference.

W. MANN.

## The Herald of the Dawn.

IN all ages and climes the birds have ever proved attractive to mankind. Many have been domesticated, and untamed creatures such as starlings, sparrows and swallows seek human habitations as their nesting places. Most animals tend to avoid man, but the birds, rendered courageous by their powers of flight, commonly adapt themselves to human companionship, and as a consequence more is perhaps known of the life history of avian organisms than any other animal group.

A small and sober plumaged bird, the skylark has been widely celebrated in song. When the lark is on the lea it is a certain sign of the near approach of Spring. Tennyson's splendid picture immediately revives in memory:—

"Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
Now burgeons every maze of quick  
About the flowering squares, and thick  
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
The distance takes a lovelier hue,  
And drown'd in yonder living blue  
The lark becomes a sightless song."

The lark is a favourite singing bird in all parts of the English-speaking world. Indeed, this singer of the skies makes an undying appeal to all lovers of Nature. Most birds perch in tree or bush before they pour forth their melodies, although the lapping and cuckoo emit their notes while on the wing. But the skylark alone ascends into the blue depths of heaven to render those stirring strains so aptly described by Shelley as a flood of rapture.

Although the lark's carol may be heard in autumn and on mild winter days its musical powers are best



displayed in Spring and Summer. The lark's twittering song is sweet and is sustained without a break as the bird rises from the earth to soar upwards until it becomes a mere speck in the sky. Then, just as it nears complete invisibility, the strains cease, and the bird will descend like a stone until, within reach of the ground, it flutters to its rest.

All our song birds bring joy to the human heart, but perhaps the most wistful and wonderful of all the feathered choir is the blackbird, and its relative the thrush is its nearest rival. But even the blackbird's song with all its melodious strains lacks the ecstasy of the lark's thrilling music. Some observers doubt the variety of the bird's notes, but an attentive listener may in time detect differences in the song of the same bird, as also decided superiority in the vocal powers of individual singers.

Shelley's skylark is a highly imaginative poet's ideal, and few indeed are those who discover in the song of the nightingale the many marvellous attributes of night's lone bird in Keats' magnificent ode. Probably that philosophical Rationalist, George Meredith has presented the world with the most life-like picture of the skylark of our meads, furrows and moors:—

"He rises and begins to round,  
He drops the silver chain of sound  
Of many links without a break,  
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,  
All interwolved and spreading wide,  
Like water-dimples down a tide  
Where ripple ripple overcurls  
And eddy into eddy whirls;  
A press of hurried notes that run  
So fleet they scarce are more than one."

When the year's at the Spring and the primrose appears, courtship takes place, and the male bird displays his plumage to the best advantage and sings to his chosen mate. The lark's feathers are brown but beautiful, and its form is graceful. The sober plumage renders the lark inconspicuous on the ground, but this protective coloration proves insufficient against keen-eyed birds of prey.

An omnivorous and hearty eater, the lark consumes both plant and animal food. A useful ally of the farmer, so far as it destroys grubs and other injurious insects, the bird also devours many sown seeds and tender blades of grass and corn. But its services in the destruction of weeds and insect pests vastly outweigh its wasteful activities, while its ever-welcome song and captivating ways endear the lark to every lover of the country-side. The lark thrives throughout an open winter, but in seasons of severe frost and snow the bird must migrate to milder climes or perish for lack of food.

When April arrives the lark gathers dry grass bents and arranges them in a depression in the soil. These the birds line with softer material, and the female deposits from three to five eggs in her simple nest. The labour of nest construction is divided, for the cock bird collects the materials while the hen fashions the nursery. After a fortnight's brooding the young are hatched but, not like the chicks of the fowl, lapwing or partridge all ready to run and feed, for the lark's young are blind and nearly naked when they emerge from the egg. Naturally, these helpless creatures require the closest and most constant care for some weeks, and the parent birds have a busy time in feeding and cleaning their voracious brood.

As a rule the nest is well concealed, and the birds' nesting boy is seldom successful in his quest. The difficulty of locating the site of the nest is increased by the bird's habit of alighting at some distance when visiting the nest; and when leaving the lark moves along a winding path through the herbage or corn-stalks before rising into the air.

That eminent ornithologist, Mr. W. P. Pycraft, has commented on a curious feature very common in the bird family to which the lark belongs. This is the pronounced canary colouring of the interior of the mouth in the nestlings. Moreover, two dark spots appear at the tongue's root and another is seen at the tip of the tongue. Pycraft surmises that these dark markings serve to guide the parent birds when feeding their offspring, thus saving time. As Prof. Thomson remarks: "The meals occur every quarter of an hour or so, and it is obvious that the less fuss there is about the nest the safer the nestlings will be from birds and beasts of prey."

A famous authority on bird life, the late Prof. Newton, drew attention to the fact that while certain birds become rarer with the progress of agriculture, the lark, on the contrary, continues to multiply. A lover of the open spaces, ploughlands and pastures, the lark frequently nests amid the blowing corn, where it is shielded from danger, or in clover fields and meadows set aside for cropping over which the sheep, cattle and horses are not allowed to roam. With such advantages the lark's numerical increase is rapid. With two, or even three broods in a season, the produce of two larks may be averaged "as at least quadrupling the original stock." Yet, although tempered by incidental mercies, the battle of life still goes on.

Many many thousands of these sweet songsters are every year netted for epicurean repasts. This seems very regrettable, but the fact remains. Predatory birds such as hawks and crows and carnivorous mammals such as stoats and weasels are relentless enemies, but the bird not only multiplies, but increases its range.

It has been strikingly said that: "The lark is a creature of light and air and motion, whose nest is in the stubble and whose tryst is in the clouds." And that charming Nature-lover, Burroughs, assures us that the skylark's type of song "is the grass where the bird makes its home, abounding, multitudinous, the notes nearly all alike, and in the same key, but rapid, swarming, prodigal, showering down as thick and fast as drops of rain in a summer shower."

The lark is known as the laverock in Scotland, and it has a similar name in the dialects of York and Lancaster. The bird ranges widely throughout the Eastern Hemisphere. In Scandinavia it breeds as far north as latitude 70 degrees. It is common throughout our Isles and the European Continent, while it extends in suitable surroundings over Russia, Siberia, Asia and Japan. As a winter resident it is found in China, Northern India, Lower Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere.

The lark's migratory powers are great, and when harsh wintry weather prevails in the North, processions of countless thousands journey to warmer lands. So vast are these migratory flocks that, as Howard Saunders informs us in his famous *Manual*, 15,000 have been taken in one night in Heligoland alone.

T. F. PALMER.

---

Before I came to years of discretion, a well meaning preceptor supplied me with an argument to prove the supernatural origin of the Christian revelation. It amounted to this: If Christianity had been a human invention, it could not have lasted for nineteen centuries. It so obviously proves too much. For it would establish the divine origin of Buddhism, it would establish the divine origin of Confucianism; it would establish for Fetichism an origin still more divine. Or, why confine its validity to religions? Roman law, which in its way has had as wonderful a vitality as Christianity, would be entitled to claim superhuman inspiration.

The late Professor Bury.



## Modern Proverbs.

THE trend of popular thought in regard to religious matters makes itself evident in a number of different ways. Occasionally the evidence manifests itself obviously and unmistakably, as, for example, in the ever-increasing accommodation for the faithful in places of public worship. More often it has to be diligently dug from vast volumes of statistical surveys and historical happenings. But now and then at rare intervals it bobs up in the most unexpected manner, such that only the eagle eye of the trained heresy-hunter (like myself) is able to spot it.

Having recently made a discovery of this sort in the weekly press, I propose forthwith to drag it into the merciless light of analytical scrutiny, for the delectation of my brother and sister heretics, and to the utter discomforture of all those who, in fond anticipation of that ever-expected yet never realized Religious Revival, are constantly trumpeting their premature "Hallelujah's" from the housetops.

A few weeks ago the competition editor of that eminently respectable newspaper, the *Observer*, offered a prize for the best new and up-to-date proverb. Out of an unstated total received, thirty of the best were quoted in full. And one may assume that this number did not merely represent the efforts of the most intelligent competitors, but that the ideas expressed also constituted a fair sample of all the entries submitted. It would, perhaps, be stretching inference too far to suppose that the selection given was representative of the views of all the readers, though there is nothing highly improbable in the suggestion. In any case, out of the number quoted, only five had any sort of bearing upon religious subjects, or any sort of connexion with religious sources; all the rest were purely secular.

So much for the proportion of religious or semi-religious proverbs to the total—one-sixth at the outside. But let us analyse further. What of the ideas expressed in these five new proverbs? How, if in any way, do they indicate the trend of religious thought? Let us see for ourselves. Here they are:—

- (1) Love your neighbour, but don't pull down the hedge.
- (2) God doesn't always pay on a Saturday.
- (3) The gods send nuts to those who have no teeth.
- (4) Better the devil you know than the angel you don't.
- (5) It is better to be five minutes late in this world than twenty years early in the next. (Safety first.)

What is the general impression we receive from this little selection? Surely none other than that we have here a very suitable case in which to apply the Blasphemy Laws! It is true that in only one proverb is the Holy Name actually mentioned, but even this one does not put his Almightyness in any too favourable a light. There is a *double entente* about it which leaves us guessing as to what its author really meant. In one sense we may take it that whatever reward his Lordship may decide to mete out to us for our deeds, we need not expect to receive it promptly. In another sense it means that, as an employer, the Deity cannot be depended on by his employees. In either case it leaves his methods of payment open to serious criticism. As for proverb (3), anyone with half an eye can see through the flimsy camouflage that its author is not the Polytheist he pretends to be. He is either an "honest doubter," whose common-sense has got the better of his religious prejudices, or else he is an Agnostic who evades the charge of open blasphemy by the simple ruse of providing God with

a small head and a tail. And whatever interpretation may be put upon the proverb itself, there is no doubt that it is intended as an ironic comment on the sort of justice which the Almighty is accustomed to dispense.

Proverbs (4) and (5) have much in common. In effect they are wholly Atheistic. "You can yarn away till all's blue about the joys of the hereafter," say these two competitors, "but in spite of your yarns we prefer to occupy our thoughts and energies with the certainties of this life rather than with the uncertainties of some other problematical existence."

Lastly, proverb (1)—a winning proverb—very definitely throws overboard a popular saying attributed to the supposed founder of the Christian religion. "Love thy neighbour as thyself," he is reputed to have said. And now—centuries of experience having proved the impossibility of performing the impossible; centuries of Christianity having proved that Christians could not even love their neighbours as their neighbours, we at last arrive at this—that an obscure competitor in a small competition is actually given a prize for re-stating in more or less rational terms one of the most frequently quoted injunctions of the Lord God himself!

Tut, tut! With such blasphemy about, what is the world coming to! It almost looks as if the *Freethinker* were in danger of becoming "respectable." As a counter to the demoralizing effect of this competition, I suggest that the editor of this paper should give a thumping big prize to the competitor who can quote one moral injunction attributed to Christ which, from the evidence of history, has not been consistently ignored by Christians. I am sure that the whole civilized world would await the result with tense nerves and bated breath.

C. S. FRASER.

## Acid Drops.

The B.B.C. has refused to broadcast a service from the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Southwark, unless the prayer for the conversion of England is omitted. We wonder whether Sir John Reith is afraid that the Lord may take the prayer seriously if it comes over the wireless? On the other hand, suppose this particular prayer was omitted. What would the Lord say or do, or the recording angel, or whoever in heaven does the listening-in, if it was found that only a bowdlerised version had been transmitted? After all, we are willing to bet that whether the prayer is omitted or not, it won't make a pennyworth of difference. And we venture to say that this particular prayer would not be sillier than the sermons that are broadcast every Sunday.

Mankind, says the Bishop of Hull, will come to see that war is incompatible with common sense. Whereupon, one infers that there wasn't much common sense in circulation during the last large war, when most of the parsons were performing on the war-drums, and petitioning their God of Battles for a victory. However, there is a moral to be learnt from that episode, namely, that it would be sheer stupidity to look to parsons for lessons in that common sense which leads to saner living.

A case which calls for attention was heard at Hereford, where the Mother Superior of a Convent was summoned for failing to register the death of a girl of seventeen, an inmate of the institution. The child was buried in the grounds of the Convent, and the burial, like the death, was not notified. A fine of £3 and £10 10s. costs were imposed. It is not necessary to believe more than is stated in these particulars to realize that conventional and monastic institutions should be, and so far as this particular matter is concerned apparently are, in the



same legal position as other persons and institutions. Many convents, however, engaged in industry, have laundries and work-rooms, and are exempt from the provisions of the Factory Acts—because most of those employed are not paid wages—and, in consequence, are not liable to periodical inspection. Private burial grounds, and industries in which considerable profit is made by the unregulated labour of unfortunate girls, ought to be prohibited. It is always possible, in special cases, to secure permission for a burial in some place other than a public cemetery if there are good reasons for it and all the legal requirements are complied with. It is humbug to say, as Roman Catholics habitually do (and there are scores of Anglican convents and monasteries as well) that there is no reason for prying on pious people who are living holy lives in these places. It is not their religious, but their secular operations that should have official attention. There is a well authenticated history of cruelty and injustice in these institutions perhaps not in England in recent times, but in every country in the past, and in some countries like France and Spain and Mexico recently and now. If "religious" houses are as innocent and benevolent as we are asked to believe, they can have no objection to obeying the same laws with regard to registration, inspection and the employment of labour as are rigorously enforced on secular citizens and employers.

Even a hangman has discovered that religion has its consolations. For, according to Mr. J. Lawrence, in his book *A History of Capital Punishment*, it appears that William Marwood is reported to have said: "I am doing God's work. I do it simply as a matter of duty and as a Christian. I sleep as soundly as a child, and am never disturbed by phantoms." Is it to be wondered at that when the post of hangman became vacant in 1922, clergymen were amongst those who applied for the new appointment.

The Rev. Frank Eagles, curate of St. James' Church, Southgate, is evidently in desperate straits. He has again challenged any member of a local tennis club to play a match on condition that, if he wins, his opponent will undertake to drag all the other members of his club to St. James' Church on the Sunday following. As an argument for Christianity the idea seems a trifle disconnected; but as a method of increasing the Sunday collection it has its merits. If it catches on, we may yet see a bishopric offered to Mr. Tilden or even Miss Betty Nuttall.

It was a foregone conclusion that, in regard to its religious procedure, the B.B.C. would sooner or later be hoist with its own petard. With a hypocritical pretence of broadmindedness it professes to cater for the needs of the majority of its listeners on Sundays by allowing a variety of persons professing a variety of superstitions to say what they like, while it carefully suppresses or ignores every attempt on the part of its more intelligent public to secure a fair hearing for non-religious speakers. The result was inevitable. Religious bodies are beginning to get "cocky," and to think that they can get away with anything. But, for all its professed religious broadmindedness, even the B.B.C. has its prejudices. Its jibbing at the broadcasting of a Roman Catholic service which included a Prayer for the Conversion of England. It is comical enough to find one brand of Christianity regarding all other brands of Christianity as heathen. But when it comes to actually saying it publicly, then (says the B.B.C.) the fun has gone too far!

Another example of Christian brotherly love was presented to the public when the Rev. R. J. Boggis, Vicar of St. John's, Torquay, said: "What the world calls a gentleman is very seldom to be found in the ranks of the Nonconformist ministry." This looks uncommonly like the pot calling the kettle black, and it is hardly to be wondered at that several of the "kettles" protested. On the other hand, seeing that the phrase used was

"What the world calls a gentleman," and seeing that the World, the Flesh and the Devil are all objects of anathema to Christians, the Rev. Boggis can easily claim to have passed a pretty compliment upon the ranks of the Nonconformist ministry.

We called attention a few weeks ago to the astounding "discovery" of the actual rock upon which "our Lord and Saviour" sat when he fed five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes. The *Daily Express* has been so impressed that it sent Mr. Hector Bolitho all the way to the holy spot and the eminent author vouches for its absolute authenticity:—

No shrine in all Palestine is more authentic. In the year 380 Saint Syria passed this way and wrote of the Church and the sacred stone. Her records are well known and extant in their original text. At that time the Church was shining and new, and the story of the miracle was still fresh among the legends of Galilee.

The idea that anything that happened in Galilee 380 years before was still fresh in the minds of the people is quite as funny as if anything that happened in London in 1552 was still fresh in the minds of Londoners now. But really to comment on the hopeless credulity of Mr. Bolitho would be quite futile if it were not for the fact that Christians will go to almost any length in bolstering up the crude nonsense of Christ's "miracles." There is no story in the fictitious *Lives of the Saints* sillier than the Miracle of the loaves and fishes; yet in a widely circulated national newspaper it is gravely taken as having actually happened. It seems incredible that we still have to fight ignorant superstition in this year of grace, 1932.

That homely old saying—the proof of the pudding is in the eating—applies to more things than puddings. Take Lourdes, for example. We don't know how many thousands of quite obscure people have been cured there, but we simply cannot understand why the greater ones are so often passed by, by the Blessed Virgin. The late Roman Catholic Bishop of Northampton was taken suddenly ill some months ago while leading a party of pilgrims to Lourdes. Instead of being dipped—and therefore cured—in the Holy Waters, he was actually rushed back to a Hampstead nursing home and, we regret to say, passed away a week or so back. But will not some earnest Roman Catholic tell us why Lourdes and all it stands for, so egregiously failed in the Bishop's case? Surely something went wrong. What was it?

70,000 people, the other Sunday, lined the streets of Birmingham to watch a procession carrying the relics of St. Chad, the Apostle of the Midlands, and everywhere "reverence was displayed towards the relics." The ceremony commenced with a solemn exposition of the relics in the Cathedral. Really, comment is needless, but we are left wondering whether there is anything that even an African witch-doctor could do, much sillier than adoring relics.

Archbishop Downey of Liverpool has been lecturing on that hardy old annual, "Is there a God?" He naturally had to admit that there were such beings as "pantheists and agnostics" in the world, and he then proceeded to manufacture arguments for them which he had no difficulty in demolishing afterwards. We know he won't, of course, but what a refreshing change it would be if he were to consent to a debate with a prominent Atheist in a Roman Catholic sanctum or stronghold in front of Roman Catholics. The Archbishop would find it was quite a different proposition answering arguments from a real live Atheist from answering Roman Catholic arguments put into the mouth of an imaginary Agnostic.

The Rev. H. Peverley Dodd, a Wesleyan Army Chaplain, says that the military authorities at Caterham are splendid in their sympathy with religious work. As an illustration he mentions that every Friday morning at



nine, every recruit is paraded for a Chaplain's lecture, at which he had a "perfectly free hand." He adds that there are "scores of ministers who would welcome such a chance as that." After this, one can only marvel at the kind of mentality which can exult because a lot of young soldiers are compulsorily made to listen to a parson's religious slop. We will be content to say that the mentality matches the religion and the religion the mentality.

Mr. Norton Lang warns readers of *Everybody's Weekly* that although the B.B.C. has decided to permit music on Sunday from 12.30 to 3 p.m., listeners need not expect they will get the kind of Sunday programme to which they are entitled. The concession merely indicates that "the big wigs who are steeped in the Puritanism of the back ages have kindly relented a little." Mr. Lang adds: "Personally, I shall keep pegging away until something is done to relieve the Sunday evening gaps and boredom generally, because I know that listeners generally are with me." Meanwhile the B.B.C. is grimly determined to give listeners what it believes they ought to like. And quite right, too. Have not the great British characteristics of patience and forbearance been acquired through Sunday boredom?

When theological divines flounder into problems of social life the result is amusing and sometimes pathetic. Dr. Barnes accuses the Roman Church of anti-social influence in its attitude towards birth-control and sterilization. Dr. Barnes has conveniently forgotten the marriage service of his own church, and the man in the street will say a plague on both your houses. A disinterested observer of all churches can see that they now snap at any subject, like greedy trout—for no other reason than that of advertisement. Mr. C. B. Cochran might take the lot in his stride after "The Miracle."

As a "dead horse" demonstration, it will be well to record that an individual in Wales who drew a horse in the Irish Sweepstake has been stopped from partaking of Holy Communion for six months.

Miss Rebecca West hints that "an historian might do many less valuable things than chronicle a country's illusions about itself." On the other hand, one may suggest that English historians might do many more valuable things. And the same may be said of the ecclesiastical historian, in regard to his Church. But in his case, he might be faced with a scarcity of subject-matter, when he started to chronicle things other than illusions.

A pious journal says that, "This is the supreme purpose and consuming passion of the Church in its missionary activity. It is gathering a people out of the nations that, through them, the nations must be saved." It might be nearer the truth to say that the "consuming passion" mentioned is merely just ordinary human egoism. The Christian zealot has such a great opinion of himself and his way of thinking that he craves the flattery of human imitation—imitation being the sincerest form of flattery and a fine tonic to the egoism of the imitated.

To a gathering of Free Churchmen a speaker said that a new vision of Christ would cure all their spiritual dyspepsia. The suggested remedy appears to be a far from sensible one. For what the patients are suffering from is religious overfeeding. An added dose of the indigestible mixture will merely make the dyspepsia chronic.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has had a successful year, it says. In a year of unparalleled economic distress, it has been able to place over ten and a half million copies of Holy Scriptures in the hands of the peoples of the world. Of course, it would be wrong to conclude that the peoples of the world are not better

off for this circulation of Holy Fairy-tales, because the unparalleled economic distress and the colossal suffering resulting therefrom have not diminished. But, one may suggest that the Bible Society's income of £370,000 last year might have been more usefully expended in filling empty stomachs and in clothing insufficiently clad bodies.

A missionary says that China has changed in mind. In old China the scholar was the aristocrat and the soldier was at the bottom of the social scale. The scholar wore the long robe with wide sleeves and long finger-nails that showed he did no manual labour. The modern student is a different man. What he studies is not his own old classics, but the modern science of the West. China, we learn, has also changed in soul:—

A distinguished German educationalist visited China last December, and after his visit remarked to us, "It may not have struck you, but the fact that has most impressed me is the dying of religion. The temples are empty, ancestor worship is dead. I myself have seen soldiers chopping up idols to light their fires, and the Government taking over scores of temples as schools, Government offices, or even as stables for their troops. The greatest menace is just blank materialism, for the old religions mean—nothing . . ."

### Fifty Years Ago.

THIS country is said to be civilized. To a certain extent it is, but all our civilization has been won against Christianity and its brutal laws. Our toiling masses, in factory, mine, shop, and counting-house, have one day of leisure in the week. Rightly considered it is of infinite value. It is a splendid breathing-time. We cast off the storm and stress of life, fling aside the fierce passion of gain, and let the spirit of humanity throb in our pulses and stream from our eyes. Our fellow-man is no longer a rival, but a brother. His gain is not our loss. We enrich each other by the noble give-and-take of fellowship, and feel what it really is to *live*. Yet our Christian legislature tries its utmost to spoil the boon. It cannot prevent us from visiting each other, or walking as far as our legs will carry us; but almost everything else is tabooed. Go to church, it says. Millions answer, We are sick of going; we have heard the same old story until it is unspeakably stale, and many of the sermons have been so frequently repeated that we suspect they were bought by the dozen. Then it says, Go to the public-house. But a huge multitude answer, We don't want to go there either, except for a minute to quench our thirst; we have no wish for spirituous any more than spiritual intoxication; we desire some other alternative than gospel or gin. Then our Christian legislature answers, You are discontented fools. It crushes down their better aspirations, and condemns them to a wearisome inactivity. Go through London, the metropolis of the world, as we call it, on a Sunday. How utterly dreary it is! The shutters are all up before the gay shop-windows. You pace mile after mile of streets, with sombre houses on either hand as though tenanted by the dead. You stand in front of the British Museum, and it looks as if it had been closed since the date of the mummies inside. You yearn to walk through its galleries, to gaze on the relics of antiquity, to inspect the memorials of the dead, to feel the subtle links that bind together the past and the present, and make one great family of countless generations of men. But you must wander away disappointed and dejected. You repair to the National Gallery. You long to behold the masterpieces of art, to have your imagination quickened and thrilled by the glories of form and colour, to look once more on some favourite picture which touches your nature to its finest issues. But again you are foiled. You desire to visit a library, full of books you cannot buy, and there commune with the great minds who have left their thoughts to posterity. But you are frustrated again. You are cheated out of your natural right, and treated less like a man than a dog.

The "Freethinker," May 21, 1882.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. G. HAWKES.—Sheer rubbish. To live for ever in the company of those who can write and believe such trash adds a new horror to the belief in immortality.

J. W. HUMPHREY.—Much obliged. Cuttings useful.

CINE CERE.—Received, with thanks.

M. ROGERS.—The foolish and slanderous statement by Bottomley was promptly corrected by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. Bottomley had evidently forgotten the Somerset House records.

W. JAMES.—Your question is dealt with in the Executive's Annual Report in this issue. The case is not yet concluded.

"GRATEFUL."—Thanks for letter, which we greatly appreciate. We intend doing as you suggest before the summer is over.

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

Brilliant sunshine weather greeted the delegates and members of the National Secular Society Annual Conference at Manchester last Saturday, and the evening reception by the President, at the Victoria Hotel, was a particularly happy one. The Manchester Branch Executive had everything perfectly organized, and many old friendships were renewed and new ones made.

The entertainment came up to the highest expectations. Mr. Philip Hecht proved an exceptionally fine and gifted violinist. He had a perfect command of this most entrancing instrument, and his rendering of some exceedingly difficult compositions was well nigh perfect. Mr. Ken McKie kept the audience in a state of laughter almost all the time he retailed his ludicrous nonsense—his gift of supposed hesitation adding greatly to the fun. Mrs. Brundritt, from the Secular Sunday School at Failsworth, sang two songs delightfully. Mr. Wingate, from Perth, also gave a fine rendering of a well known Scotch song.

When the President took the chair on Sunday Morning, the long room at the Victoria Hotel was crowded with members and delegates, and presented a most animated appearance. Over thirty Branches were represented and the attendance altogether was perhaps greater than at any recent Conference. Although the business was strictly formal, both the discussion and speeches reached a high level, and the President was certainly agreeably surprised at some of the suggestions made. It showed the interest taken by some of the younger and newer members in the Aims and Objects of the Society, and how anxious they were that the membership should be increased. A full report of the proceedings will be given next week.

At the afternoon Session Mr. Monks read a most useful and interesting paper on the *Legal Aspects of Public Meetings*; Dr. Carmichael, an exceptionally acute piece of logic and reasoning on the *Horizon of Determinism*; and Mr. Victor Morris on *A New Slogan for Secularism*. They will be published in these columns and thus reach that larger audience they so thoroughly deserve.

The excursion to Blackpool on Whit-Monday was, under the capable leadership of Mr. Collins, the President of the Manchester Branch, Mr. Monks and Mr. Atkinson, a most enjoyable affair. It was a new experience for many, and a happy time was spent tasting

the various amusements or walking along the sea-shore. The weather kept fine all day, and it seemed as if this fact made the whole population of Lancashire turn out into the popular sea-side. The pleasantest of memories will be carried away by all those who took part in the N.S.S. outing.

A report of the evening demonstration in the Hulme Town Hall appears in another column. We will only say here that it was a fitting close to a very successful day. The large hall was crowded, and the audience was both attentive and responsive. There was a good muster of Freethinkers from the neighbouring towns, and we were pleased to note a splendid contingent from the Failsworth Secular Society. That is one of the oldest Freethinking organizations in Lancashire, and carries on its good work with persistence and success. All appeared to be highly gratified and filled with renewed inspiration for further work. This is as it should be.

The Sunday Performances Bill—number two—is dead. No right-minded man will mourn its decease. It lived a miserable life and it died a dishonoured death. It outraged every principle that makes for social justice, and trampled on those for which genuine reformers have been fighting for more than three generations. It disclosed all the tricks and evasions to which politicians have always been prone, but which are now fast taking rank as inspired statesmanship. The Lord's Day Observance Society counts its death a triumph. But we feel that it ought to thank the *Freethinker* for its criticism, which we have every reason to believe opened the eyes of many members of Parliament to its true character.

In announcing the withdrawal of the Bill, Mr. Oliver Stanley, speaking for the Government prophesied the birth of another Bill, of a hardly more desirable character. But he seems to have read the *Freethinker* (we know that he and many other members received copies) and said that museums, zoological gardens and debates would be withdrawn from the scope of the Sunday Observance Act. This does away with the Government's attempt to place all Sunday meetings under the jurisdiction of some very probably ignorant local Council. Mr. Oliver Stanley also has discovered what we have been pointing out all along, that licensing bodies have been exercising powers which they do not possess. We suggest that he pays some attention to what is going on in this direction all over the country. It would be far more useful work than that in which he is at present engaged, although it would have the drawback of not leading to Parliamentary promotion.

But the old bad features are to remain, such as compelling profits to be distributed as local authorities may determine, and permission to even this licence is given by the Act only in the 96 areas that have hitherto permitted Cinemas. Theatres are not to be licenced at all. Sunday concerts are also removed from the Act, we suspect because many concerts on Sunday are now held in connexion with Church or Chapel, and we must not expect this Government to offer the parsons. Licensing bodies may permit Sunday Concerts, but in remitting them they may impose conditions as to their suitability for Sunday. That means "sacred" music only, and God help the seaside entertainment that permits anything of a character that would hurt the delicate feelings of Stiggins and Chadband. If any area, which has not yet had Sunday Cinemas desires to have them, they will have to apply to Parliament by way of a private Bill.

That is the new Bill in outline. It is expected to pass because it will be a Government measure, and those free and independent members of Parliament who voted against it last time, or who did not vote at all, will be ordered to vote for it, and like so many obedient sheep they will vote as they are told, unless their constituents call them to book first. £400 a year might be saved in the case of best part of these members if



gramophone records were sent up to Parliament. For our own part, we see little improvement on the old Bill. And it is quite certain that if those who wish reasonable Sunday entertainments, both those who provide them and those who attend them, tell the Government and the Lord's Day Observance Society to go to the devil, and open within the limits at present laid down by the law, all this humbug and hypocrisy will be swept away as the No Treating Order was killed by the war. Our Sabbatarian laws are a disgrace to a civilized country. To accept this revivication of Sabbatarianism is to make them more difficult than ever to remove. They should be treated with the contempt they deserve. We may rest assured that if the feeling in the country against them is only voiced this Sunday Bill, or any other on similar lines, will be killed.

The *Express and Advertiser* (Burnley) contains a good report of a recent debate on "Should We Secularize Sunday?" between Mr. J. Clayton and the Rev. J. Bretherton. The debate appears to have passed off very well, and Mr. Clayton handled his case with vigour and good judgment. The discussion was held in the Phoenix Theatre, and was well attended.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the Birkenhead district for a week, and full particulars of the meetings arranged will be found in the Lecture Guide Column. The local Branch of the N.S.S. is co-operating, and Freethinkers, whether members or not, are asked to give support by their presence.

Owing to a misunderstanding the start of the open-air season in Victoria Park by the Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S. has been delayed. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak there to-day (Sunday) and the lectures will be continued each Sunday at the same place, near the Bandstand, and at the same time, 3.15 p.m.

## Executive's Annual Report.

In spite of a year of political upheaval amounting to almost a revolution, widespread financial distress and the threatening shadow of world disaster, it says much for the strength of our movement that we are again able to report continued and steady progress. This is not because Freethought flourishes on either individual disaster or national difficulties; the truth is rather in the other direction. Comparative leisure and some degree of culture is necessary to the development of ideas, and the progress of Freethought during the period covered by this report bears simple but unmistakable testimony to the fact that the principles for which this Society stand are deeply rooted in all that makes for the higher aspects of modern civilization. These principles and ideas may here and there suffer temporary set-backs, but on the whole they move steadily forward.

It must again be pointed out that this is the Report of the Executive, and covers, so far as finance is concerned its own income and expenditure only, and save for a passing survey of the field, deals only with propaganda arranged directly by the Executive. On the wider question the Executive is glad to report that the activity of the Branches has been well maintained. In London the open-air work has been as vigorous as usual, and outside London, in spite of financial difficulties, the Branches have, on the whole, done better than during recent years. Glasgow, which has been of late depressed, rather than inactive, is again promising to become its old vigorous self. There was a time when it was the centre from which radiated an influence that affected the whole of the West of Scotland, and there is no reason why this should not

again be the case in the near future. The new Perth Branch has been very active with both lectures and debates. The members deserve the highest commendation of their efforts and on the success achieved. Tyneside is showing much greater activity than usual, and Mr. J. T. Brighton, who lectures regularly under the Society's auspices, meets with much appreciation all over his district. Liverpool has a very busy band of workers and an able committee, and runs courses of lectures both in and out of doors. The report of its season's work is very encouraging.

Manchester is also pursuing its work with steadiness and enthusiasm, and judging from the audiences at its meetings must be making an impression upon the general public. The Trustees of the Society have received under the will of Mr. Joseph Crompton a sum of £500, which is to be expended on work in Manchester. This will, of course, help considerably, but it is to be hoped that the legacy will serve as an incentive to others to help rather than as the occasion for a slackening of local support. Birmingham has been passing through a period of slackness of Branch organization, but now seems to be getting back into its old stride. It should be one of the strongest Branches in the country. Perhaps a word might be said of the new Wembley and District Branch. This is not one of the most promising places for direct Freethought propaganda, but it has held a large number of meetings, and has secured a considerable publicity in the local press. The Branch deserves the heartiest congratulations. In the West, Plymouth is still carrying on its work with a fair measure of success, but generally both religious thought and religious heresy move but slowly in the Western seaport.

Coming to the work of the Executive itself. During the past year the Executive has been directly responsible for the holding of 430 meetings in various parts of the country. The majority of these were open-air lectures. Many were delivered in Durham and Northumberland by Mr. J. T. Brighton, and in Lancashire by Mr. J. Clayton. Both these speakers have won excellent opinions from those who listened to them, and their return visits have always been welcomed. In addition Mr. Whitehead has lectured in all parts of the country, and his meetings have been, as usual, excellent. The Executive has in addition assisted many Branches that have arranged lectures on their own account, as has been done in previous years.

With regard to the open-air meetings held by the three speakers mentioned, as well as the large number of open-air meetings in London, Liverpool, Newcastle and elsewhere by numerous other lecturers, the Executive desires to place on record its appreciation of the work done and the devotion to the Cause that has been displayed. Much of this work is entirely voluntary, and the enthusiasm displayed is beyond praise and is of much service to the movement. Very many of the reform movements in this country have been developed in what one may term open-air nurseries, and the Freethought Movement is certainly no exception to this rule. The work is hard, it is carried on in all sorts of weather, and often under the most discomfiting conditions. It is as unselfish a work as any movement can possess, and the spirit manifested deserves cordial and complete recognition.

During the year the following new Branches have been formed—Brighton, Sunderland, Birkenhead, Wembley and District, Ashington and District, Hants and Dorset. An application was also received for permission to form a Branch of the Society in Australia, which was granted.

There has been the usual large number of new members admitted to the Society this year. Many we hope will remain in close connexion with us for many



years, but even though some belong to the order of "migrants" the influence of their association with the National Secular Society will remain as a strengthening of their interest in useful political, social or other public work.

After our gains we pass to our losses. These are due to that grim reaper, Death. Among the principal ones are Mrs. G. W. Foote, wife of our late President, Mr. Greevz Fysher a very old member of the Society, resident in Leeds, Mr. A. Heath of South London, a young and very ardent worker, Miss Alice Baker of Birmingham, daughter of one who played a prominent part in the earlier years of this Society, Miss Harriet Truelove, daughter of a very brave fighter in the cause of reform, and one who paid the price of imprisonment for his courage on behalf of the cause of Birth Control, Mr. Joseph Crompton a generous and sturdy member of the Manchester Branch, and one of the old guard in that city, and Samuel Pulman, another sturdy and devoted Freethinker of the Manchester Branch. To these, along with others, not so well known, but who have yet played their part in the great cause of Freethought we offer the tribute of our respect and of thankfulness for what they have done to make the road easier for those who follow in their footsteps.

During the year the trustees of the Society have received a legacy of £50 from the estate of Mr. A. E. C. Harden, of London, and as residuary legatee the sum of £6,473 8s. under the will of Mr. R. Bulman, also of London.

At last year's Conference a resolution was passed instructing the Executive to consider in what way appreciation might be shown of the many years valuable work done by the *Freethinker*, and also to devise some method whereby the paper might be secured to the Freethought Movement. A sub-committee was appointed by the Executive, which met several times, and after taking legal advice a plan was adopted which secures the taking over of the *Freethinker* with the publishing business of the G. W. Foote Company by the Secular Society Limited, on the death of its present editor or on his ceasing to control the *Freethinker*. An agreement is now being prepared on these lines.

One useful innovation of the year has been the formation of a study circle, held weekly during the winter months in the Society's offices under the guidance of Mr. A. D. McLaren. Those attending have spoken very highly of the quality of Mr. McLaren's tuition, and there are few men in the movement who for completeness of equipment, patience, and kindness of disposition are better qualified for the task. The Executive has already expressed its thanks to Mr. McLaren for his services, but they demand recognition here.

On behalf of this Society your President and Mr. A. D. McLaren attended the International Freethought Congress in Berlin in September last. As a demonstration of the growing power of Freethought on the Continent the Congress was a pronounced success. The speeches of delegates and the reports from different countries made it clear that Continental Freethought is recovering from the set back inflicted upon it by the War, although in some countries this has been accompanied by an identification of Freethought with a definite political programme. The presence of the English delegates was warmly welcomed, and in turn the Congress was assured of the warm support of British Freethought on all those aspects of the work that were held in common. Another very striking feature of the public demonstration held was the evident hold Freethought has on the youth of both sexes. This is a thing of

splendid promise for the future. Delegates were present from a number of countries, but delegates from Italy were prevented attending by the iron rule of the Mussolini dictatorship. Those only who are considered "safe" are given permission to travel.

In its last report the Executive mentioned that it had given financial assistance in an alleged blasphemy charge in Montreal. In this case it was clear on the evidence before the Executive that not only was there a deliberate attempt on the part of Roman Catholic priests to secure a conviction against one who had suffered a domestic outrage at the hands of a priest, but that the court before whom the man was brought, despairing of gaining a conviction, had actually condemned him to a criminal lunatic asylum on the grounds of insanity. The case is still slowly dragging its way along, but at least the man has secured his liberty and medical certificates of his sanity have been procured. So far, although the case is not yet concluded, the result has justified the action of the executive. Montreal is a priest-ridden city, and it is not easy to secure justice where Freethinkers are concerned.

From time to time attention has been called in these reports and in the columns of the *Freethinker* to the action of police and other officials in arbitrarily interfering with the liberty of public meetings—particularly in the open-air. The advice or help of the Society is often asked, by others besides our own members, but to many the Executive is able to give advice only. In two cases, however, the Executive has taken direct action. In Durham, Mr. J. T. Brighton commenced a series of open-air meetings in the market-place of that city. At one of these meetings a number of students from the University created a disturbance. Following this the Superintendent of Police sent an unwarrantable and impertinent letter informing Mr. Brighton that he would not be allowed to speak again in the Market Place. As this kind of thing had been attempted elsewhere, your President went himself to Durham, and held a well-attended and quite orderly meeting in the forbidden area—the market place. He also invited Mr. Brighton to address the meeting, who did so. There were a number of police officials, in uniform and in plain clothes present, but no attempt at interference was made. It was also announced that Mr. Brighton would speak there the following week, and whenever he felt inclined to do so. Since then he has held many meetings, and the police have restricted their attention to the performance of their legitimate functions. The Superintendent had probably discovered that he had exceeded his powers, or had acted under the impression that he was dealing with a friendless individual.

The second case is of more recent occurrence. Early in the present year the Birkenhead Branch applied for the use of a Cinema for a lecture by your President on March 13, but very foolishly, and quite unnecessarily, the proprietor applied to the licensing magistrates for permission to hold the meetings. This was refused on the grounds that the magistrates could not permit an anti-religious meeting to be held on Sunday—a matter over which they had no jurisdiction whatever. Another hall, one holding a music licence, belonging to the Beechcroft Settlement was booked, and all arrangements made. Three days before the meeting was held the Clerk to the Justices wrote to the Secretary of the Beechcroft Hall, informing him that the Justices had already refused to permit Mr. Cohen to lecture in Birkenhead on Sunday in a Cinema, and warning him that if the meetings were held he would be jeopardizing the renewal of his licence. In fear of losing the music licence the Secretary cancelled the meetings.



This was so gross an interference with the rights of public meeting, and with the liberty of the subject, that instructions were given to issue a writ for breach of contract against both the Clerk to the Justices and the Secretary of the Beechcroft Settlement. That action is down for hearing on June 28. It is not advisable to say more upon the matter at the moment, except that this kind of threatening is quite a common occurrence, although not often is an official so stupid as to put the threat in the form of a letter. In this instance, we fancy, vaunting bigotry has over-reached itself. The issue raised is of great public importance, and affects all sorts of interests other than those of the National Secular Society. We have every confidence that the case will be brought to a successful conclusion.

It is possible that, as in the Durham case, had those concerned been alive to the fact that the National Secular Society does not undertake the raising of an issue without the most careful consideration, and that once the issue has been raised it is fought to a finish, neither incident would have occurred. But both cases are important because they involve questions of the right of freedom of speech, and so raise wide and important issues that are of importance to all who value freedom of thought, whether they are with us in our general propaganda or not.

But in each of these cases, as well as with others of a minor character, or those concerned with outside movements, it is evident that eternal vigilance is still the right phrase which should express the attitude of such as value genuine freedom. An illustration of this, and also of how much work still lies before us is the case of the Sunday Performances Bill recently before Parliament. Under the guise of a reform the Bill aimed on the one hand at placating the narrowest of Sabbatarians, and, on the other, to legalize the small amount of Sunday freedom that has grown up in spite of the laws against it. The Government, acting in fear of its religious supporters, refused to face its responsibilities and left the proposed legislation to a private member's Bill. The result was one of the most retrogressive measures that has been introduced for some time. It not merely threw a direct religious issue into the arena of municipal politics, which meant that the organized Chapel vote would exercise a definite and often commanding influence in elections, but it actually placed under licence many things which are not at present so placed, and, in addition made all "debates" on Sunday, which in the present reading of the term would cover such lectures as are delivered on Sunday by any Society, under licence, whether there was a paid admission or not. It also, and for the first time in English law ordered a confiscation of profits made on Sunday from the organization of concerts and other entertainments. The second reading of the Bill was carried by a very narrow majority. It would have been to the credit of the House had it been decisively rejected. We are glad to say that the Bill was killed in committee, although another, and apparently a not much better Bill is promised.

The *Freethinker* was the only paper in the country that pointed out the real character of the Bill and advised all it could influence to vote against the measure. It is interesting to note that the influence of the criticism there offered has been seen in the altered tone of some newspapers towards the Bill, and also in the attitude of some members of Parliament, who up to that time had been oblivious to its character. But it is little less than a scandal that so salutary a measure of reform as permission to provide perfectly healthy entertainments on Sunday should be prevented, not by the will of even the majority of the people, but by the organized opposition of a narrow-minded and

truculent minority. It also speaks eloquently of the need for the further education of the public in this matter of individual liberty that so retrogressive a measure could be put forward in the House of Commons with none there to expose its real nature. It is bad enough to have shackles imposed in the name of religion, but it is infinitely worse when they are imposed under pretence of giving liberty where it had not hitherto existed.

In the light of what has been said this report may well close by emphasizing two things of fundamental importance, not merely to the future of our movement, but to society at large. The constant attacks on freedom of speech and propaganda indicate the existence of a deplorable carelessness on the part of the general public as to whether the freedom that has been won so dearly is retained or lost. Liberty is praised in speech but ignored in action, and they who value and fight for freedom find their efforts obstructed or nullified by the apathy of the crowd. It may be that there is an actual majority in favour of such things as the retention of the blasphemy laws, the continued use of the schools as breeding grounds for the Churches, the denial of a free Sunday, or who favour fussy magistrates and autocratic police officials exercising powers for which they have no legal warranty. There may or there may not be a majority in favour of these things; it is more certain that there is a well organized, noisy and intolerant minority which frightens politicians and impresses the public with its importance. We live in an age when Governments yield readily to clamour, and when organized noise does duty for reasoned conviction.

Now here is, surely, a strong call for a vigorous Freethought and for effective organization among Freethinkers. If we do not show to the world that we value Freethought and are active in its promotion and, in the higher sense of the word, its popularization, we can hardly expect Freethought to occupy the place in the public mind it should have. It will not do to argue that the rapid disorganization of organized religion means a corresponding increase of genuine Freethinkers; but it is quite clear that the number of Freethinkers who take even a modified interest in Freethought propaganda is scandalously small. It may be true that an open confession of Freethought still, in certain areas, opens one to some social pains and penalties. But it is also true that these penalties are often invited by the timidity of those who ought to show more courage. After all, those who have broken with the old creeds have far more cause for pride than they who remain subject to them. As Kingdon Clifford taught, truth is not something to be whispered in the seclusion of one's study, it is something to be shouted from the housetops. Freethought is really something wider than a mere rejection of current theologies. It applies to the whole of life, and it should affect one's whole mental outlook. The past is ours for study, but not for unthinking reverence. Freethought will never in this or in any other country occupy the position it might hold, and which it is rightfully entitled to hold, until the Freethinkers of to-day show themselves worthy of the work done for them by the Freethinkers of the past.

---

He that will not reason is a bigot; he that cannot reason is a fool; he that dares not reason is a slave.

Sir W. Drummond.

Let it be impressed upon your minds, let it be instilled in your children, that the liberty of the press is the palladium of all the civil, political and religious rights.—Junius.



## The Demonstration at Hulme Town Hall.

A PACKED audience greeted the President of the N.S.S. and his lecturers for the evening as they took their seats on the platform. The weather, which had been threatening during the day broke into heavy rain just before the doors were opened, but this had no effect on the audience, who settled down to two hours of solid Freethought expounded from different angles. Mr. Chapman Cohen opened the speeches by referring to the more than sixty years these demonstrations had taken place, and reminded his hearers that next year we would celebrate the centenary of the birthday of the founder of the National Secular Society, Charles Bradlaugh. He mentioned briefly some of the reforms which had taken place since the N.S.S. was formed, and then asked Mr. F. E. Monks of the Manchester Branch to address the audience.

In an excellent and all too brief speech, Mr. Monks pointed out that one sin of many Freethinkers was timidity. He gave instances in his own experience on the question of taking oaths in courts of law, and pointed out how ignorant many people were of what the passing of the Oaths Act of 1888 meant. Those who wished to affirm need give two reasons only and should not be drawn into any discussion. The reasons were: "Oaths are contrary to my religious beliefs," or "I have no religious beliefs." Mr. Monks closed with great applause.

Mr. J. Clayton referred to the attacks by Christians on the N.S.S., and insisted that no other organization had fought so successfully for definite reforms during the past seventy years. He then dealt trenchantly with the clergy and the Sunday question, and was loudly acclaimed on taking his seat.

Mr. A. D. McLaren referred to the appeal to the Youth of England by the Churches, which he had been studying recently, and thought our own movement could appeal to them with far more logic and reason. He wanted all to take an active part in the movement, it was science and Freethought which would save mankind, not supernatural revelation. Mr. McLaren's thoughtful speech met with great appreciation.

Mr. George Whitehead then earnestly examined the many aspects of Freethought, and showed how very difficult it was to attack religion without offending some believer. Religious people offended Freethinkers without scruple, but objected to being hurt themselves. He advocated freedom not merely for us but for our opponents, and closed his passionate plea for freedom amid great applause.

Dr. Carmichael's analytical mind was given full scope in his examination of the Christian query, "What will you put in its place?" and the Freethinker's general reply, "Nothing!" He showed what was meant by this word "nothing," and also the two theories of existence—the supernatural and the natural. Religion, he contended, must inevitably be displaced by naturalism, which considered the religious explanation of life a waste of time. He was greatly applauded.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti gave an amusing account of the way in which Christians attempted to prove the truth of their religion by excavating in Palestine. He thought most believers nowadays would rather see the Old Testament quietly disappear than have to defend some of the absurd narratives therein. His illustrations of this caused great merriment.

Finally Mr. Chapman Cohen wound up the Demonstration with one of those speeches for which he is so famous—a medley of humour, irony and logic, scathing in its denunciation of the "sheep"-like

mind which formed so formidable an obstacle to the advancement of new ideas and the demolition of religion. Nothing showed the contempt for what the people thought more than an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, which claimed that a rock pillar near Sodom and Gomorrah, "may" have been Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt! Referring to the unconscious habits of dogs inherited from far-off ancestors and applying the simile to man's fear of the "gods," Mr. Cohen concluded with tremendous applause from the audience. The evening rounded off a most successful Conference.

## Gramophone Notes.

THE Conference motion that a gramophone record by Mr. Chapman Cohen should be made, draws attention once more to the possibilities of the gramophone.

It often seems to me that meetings of the Branches could often be enlivened by gramophone recitals, because some of the latest records strongly suggest that the public appreciates some digs at religion.

I am thinking particularly of Zonophone Record 609r, on which the Blue Lyres play "Open up dem pearly gates." This is a negro spiritual arranged as a fox trot, and it is impossible to take seriously the suggestion conveyed in the song that if you don't let free those stolen chickens in your hen roost you will have indigestion when you eat them, and that if you don't pour that beer into the river you will not go to heaven when you die.

Again on Zonophone 6103 Clarkson Rose sings "In the Bushes at the Bottom of the Garden." Among the many curious incidents which occur in the bushes at the bottom of the garden Pharoah met his daughter carrying a baby, and her explanation that she found the child in the bulrushes sounds very thin. This too is a skit on the Biblical story of Moses.

The song "Oh! Mo'nah" has caught on with the public, especially with dancers and the constant singing of:—

"Oh Mo'nah you shall be free

When the good Lord sets you free."

is not likely to increase reverence for religion. "Oh Mo'nah" has been recorded on:—

Sterno 86r, on the back of which is the cheery "Get Happy," both played by Ray Staryta and his Ambassadors.

H.M.V. B 6127, played by Ambrose's Orchestra.

Zonophone 6052, played by the Rhythmic Eight.

Columbia CB 40r, played by the Masqueraders.

It should be pointed out that most recording companies bring out versions of all popular hits, but obviously I cannot recommend those which I have not heard.

There has lately been a revival of interest in old songs, and although when community singing is arranged at football matches and great gatherings "Abide with Me" is always worked in, the makers of gramophone records know that the general public does not want hymns in records of old favourites.

Regal MR 530 is called "Old Timers," and includes that classic Victorian sob-stuff "After the Ball," as well as "Git yer hair cut" and many others.

Sterno 886 is called "Old Music-Hall Memories," and is rendered by Nat Star and his Orchestra, and this includes such memory-invoking songs as "A little bit of the top," "There was I waiting at the Church," and "Let's all go down the Strand."

Zonophone 6124 contains the playing of the International Accordion Band of Immortal waltzes, such as the "Blue Danube," and of popular songs such as "The Londonderry Air," and "Lily of Laguna," and on No. 6067 the London Orchestra plays "Dixie Land," which brings in "Everybody's Doing It," and "Back Home in Tennessee," which although not particularly good songs, were once all the rage and certainly show that we like to escape from the dreariness of hymn tunes.

Columbia DX 225 is a War Song Medley sung by the Old Contemptibles, and I recommend it to bishops and



evangelists who talk about our "Tommys who went to battle singing hymns they learned at their mother's knee." Actually what we did sing were "When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there," "I have no pain dear mother now," and "Rolling home." The words which we sang are unfortunately hardly fit to print, but play this record to old soldiers and see them smile as they hum to themselves the actual words they sang during the war.

H.M.V. C 2357 contains the songs which Violet Lorraine made famous and are sung by the actress herself. "Let the great big world keep turning," is perhaps one of the most noteworthy of these songs, and Clarice Mayne is recalled by C 2331, on which she sings a medley of her own songs, including "Joshua," "Over the Garden Wall," and "Put on your ta ta little girlie."

More space than I intended has been occupied by mention of these records, which I suggest would make good openings for meetings, but I must mention one or two recent excellent vocal records which I have heard.

On H.M.V. DB 1531 Chaliapine, Pozemkovsky and the London Symphony Orchestra render the Mad Scene and the Death of the Miller from the opera "Roussalka." This is a record to treasure and to play again and again, especially if one knows the tragic story of the miser and his greed for gold.

Then listen to Gigli singing "Your Tiny Hand is Frozen," from "La Boheme." This is on H.M.V. DB 1538, and mention of this reminds me that Peter Dawson sings the "Song of the Highway" on B 3874. This song of the highway tells how friends turned against a man suddenly rendered poor, and how he found friends in the trees, the breeze and the birds.

A somewhat similar song, "I Travel the Road," is on Sterno 870, sung by Norman Lampert, and the "Song of the Highway," sung by Foster Richardson, is on Zonophone 6068. It is curious that highway tramping songs should be so popular. The hiking craze has something to do with this, but the desire to escape from convention also influences public opinion to crave for tramping music.

BAY.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### POPULATION AND THE LAND.

SIR,—In your issue of the 15th, Mr. D. Dawson says: "For the last thirty years I have been getting a decent living for four or five adults from 1 acre (or less) of land."

Will Mr. Dawson kindly inform me what quantity of each kind of food he grows on his acre, so that I may turn it into food calories. When the calculation is finished, I venture to prophesy that the amount produced by Mr. Dawson will prove to contain very much less than the necessary calories to support five adults. Even if he did raise enough calories of vegetable food to support five adults, that would not go very far, for the people of this country will never consent to live on vegetable food only, and every kind of animal food demands far more land than vegetable.

Observe that I want to find out the number of calories produced by Mr. Dawson, not the number of pounds sterling for which he sells his crop. There are plenty of ways of making a good living in pounds sterling off an acre. A gardener may sell enough roses and tulips off an acre to do fairly well. There are vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers which consist almost entirely of water, and it is possible by a liberal use of the garden hose to get enough of these to fetch a good sum of money, although the number of food calories may not be enough to support a family of rats. A man can keep enough poultry on an acre to live very well, provided he buys their food. Kropotkin unfortunately was ignorant of all these facts, and the consequence was that he calculated in pounds sterling, and wrote two books consisting entirely of mares' nests.

R. B. KERR.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Walham Grove): 7.30, Messrs. Burns and Tuson. *Freethinkers* on sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead), 11.30, Sunday, May 22, Mr. L. Ebury. Monday, May 23, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Tuesday, May 26, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 7.30, Mr. C. Tuson. Wednesday, May 25, Canal Head, Peckham (opposite Rye Lane): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Friday, May 27, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of London Road, High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"What is the Use of Religion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square): 7.45, Mr. S. Burke—"Commonsense and the Time."

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"American in the Deeps." Questions invited.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"America in the Deeps."

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

BERKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead (London) will speak as follows: Saturday, May 21, Birkenhead Haymarket, 7.30; Sunday, May 22, Birkenhead Park Entrance, 3.0 and 7.30; Monday and Tuesday, May 23 and 24, at 7.30, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, May 25, 26, and 27, Birkenhead Haymarket, 7.30.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH (36 Victoria Road, Bourne mouth): 6.30, Conference Report.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): Sunday, May 22, Messrs. H. Little and J. V. Shortt. Tuesday, May 24, Edge Hill Lamp, Messrs. H. Little and P. Sherwin. Thursday, May 26, corner of High Park Street, and Park Road), Messrs. A. Jackson and W. Robinson. All at 7.30. Current *Freethinkers* and literature on sale at all meetings.

## ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street

(OPPOSITE WARING & GILLOWS). Ger. 2981.

Exclusive Run. Third Week.

LEONTINE SAGAN'S

"MADCHEN IN UNIFORM."

A Psychological Study of Adolescence.

and

EPSTEIN'S "MOR-VRAN."

## 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 HALF A CENTURY.



# The Secular Society, Ltd.

CHAIRMAN—CHAPMAN COHEN.

Company Limited by Guarantee.

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

Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

This Society was formed in 1893 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

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

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

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

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

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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

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

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

## The Bible and Prohibition.

# BIBLE AND BEER

By G. W. FOOTE.

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

Price - Twopence. Postage ½d.

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

## 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.

## BLASPHEMY ON TRIAL

# DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH

BEING A

Three Hours' Address to the Jury

IN THE

COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH

BEFORE

LORD COLERIDGE

On April 24, 1883,

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION BY H. CUTNER

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

OWING to the historical importance of the categorical laying down of the Common Law of Blasphemy by the Lord Chief Justice, on the trial of G. W. Foote and W. Ramsay, that trial is to-day the leading case wherever British law is operative. The great speech of G. W. Foote, with its complete survey of the whole field, with its fine literary form, its eloquence and scathing irony, gives the trial first place among the numerous trials for blasphemy that have taken place. The speech gained the deserved praise of the Lord Chief Justice both during and after the trial. The report of this speech has long been out of print. It is one every Freethinker in the kingdom should have by him and every lover of free discussion should possess.

Well printed on good paper.

Price SIXPENCE.

Postage 1d.

# History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science

BY PROF. J. W. DRAPER.

This is an unabridged edition of Draper's great work, of which the standard price is 7/6.

Cloth Bound. - 396 Pages.

PRICE 2/- POSTAGE 4½d.

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.

Postage 1½d

Revised by both Disputants.

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

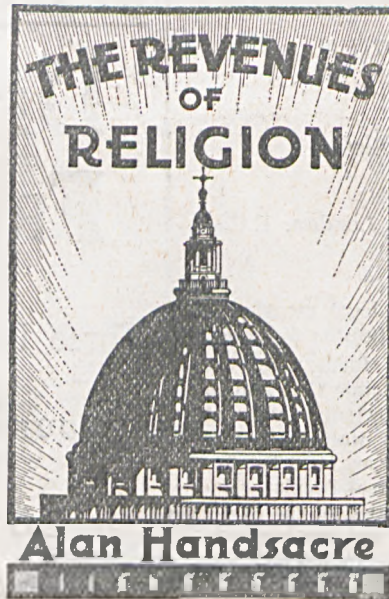


Of topical interest in view of the forthcoming crisis in the relations between Church and State.

**History—Argument—  
Statistics.**

**Cloth 2s. 6d.**

Postage 3d.



The case for Disestablishment and Disendowment from the secular and financial points of view.

**Official Facts about  
Church Revenues.**

**Paper 1s. 6d.**

Postage 2d.

THE \_\_\_\_\_

# REVENUES of RELIGION

With

A RECORD OF ESTABLISHED RELIGION IN ENGLAND

By

**ALAN HANDSACRE**

*Author of "Authodoxy: A Reply to G. K. Chesterton's "Orthodoxy": "The Irish Free State: Its Evolution and Possibilities," etc., etc.*

Issued for the Secular Society, Limited by the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon St., E.C.4.

## THE "Freethinker" Endowment Trust

**A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose**

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

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

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

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

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

## SELECTED HERESIES

An Anthology from the Writings of  
**Chapman Cohen**

This is a selection of pregnant passages and arguments from the various writings, articles and books dealing with questions in Ethics, Science, Religion and Sociology. The whole offers a view of life by one who never fails to speak out plainly, and seldom fails to make himself understood.

**Cloth Gilt - 3s. 6d.**

Postage 3d. extra.

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