

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVII.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
Coronation—The Editor	321
The Twilight of the Gods—Mimmernus	323
Henry Hetherington—1792-1849—Ambrose G. Barker	324
Religious Recrudescence in Education—J. Reeves	325
Differences in Worship that can't be Bridged—F. Hill	325
Executive's Annual Report	326
The World Union of Freethinkers—C. Bradlaugh Bonner	331

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

Views and Opinions

Coronation

We are trying to determine the extent to which a professedly civilized country has been led to the semi-deification of its King, and to indicate some of the causes that have contributed to this result. Of the fact there can be no question. Not for centuries has the religious aspect of the Kingship been so emphasized, and nowhere save amongst uncivilized peoples has the King as chief and semi-medicine-man of the tribe been so publicly connected. It may be only a straw that indicates the flow of the stream, but we invite a recollection of the number of recent occasions on which that embodiment of cunning ecclesiasticism, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been present with the existing King on public occasions. Even at a semi-political gathering such as the luncheon of the Commonwealth premiers, the Archbishop occupied a prominent place.

It is not easy to date the beginning of a historic phase, but a starting point may be fixed with the date of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. She had a long reign, and by mere length of living, had become an institution. Further, and a more important factor in the bemusement of the public mind, her reign coincided with an enormous development of British-governed territory and of the national wealth. The long reign tended to make the country forget the character of her predecessors (in any case a woman cannot lead the openly vicious life of a man) and the growth in wealth and possessions induced people, in the true spirit of the god-king worshippers, to place the development of the country to the credit of the throne. This tendency to deification was always there, but a knowledge of social psychology hardly existed, and the "transference" was an easy one.

Victoria's Jubilee marked the opening of a period of Imperialism, Militarism and King-worship, and after Victoria's death the game was played with cunning, skill, and persistency. On every occasion the Royal Family was kept well in the limelight. Not

merely the monarch, but every one who was in the line of succession. No matter how trivial the occasion, or how *unpremeditated* the visit to a curiosity shop, or how *accidental* the King's or Queen's conversation with a working-man or woman, a picture in the papers was bound to appear. The most commonplace remarks were duly hailed and reported as exhibitions of profound wisdom, or illustrations of human feeling that were remarkable—in a Royal Family. The most commonplace action was hailed as though a new cosmic wonder had been discovered. The god-chief had come down to the level of ordinary decent humanity. Those who did not worship royalty expected from it the same degree of sense of speech and decency of action as was found with ordinary folk. It was their worshippers who were astounded when it came. It is just as surprising to discover that a God is a man as it is to discover that a man is a god.

Never has a Royal Family been so persistently, so carefully, advertised. Even the babies were used to exploit the sentimentality of the British public. Enlarged pictures were published of the eldest baby of the Duke of Kent, giving prominence to his first tooth. If that tooth could be preserved it might rival the preserved footmark of the Buddha, and would rank in a special cabinet for the adoration of his descendants—the cigar was given him by Edward VII. A life of the Princess Elizabeth was published when she was *six years of age*, and sold by the thousand. After the Jubilee of George V. the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times* published letters suggesting that there was more than mere coincidence in the spell of fine weather which ended with the Jubilee. After the death of George V., a biography of his dogs was published, and many pictures of his favourite pony; and when, some six months after, his favourite parrot died, it was promptly stuffed and sent to the Natural History Museum at Kensington. If the chairs upon which George had sat could have been cut into splinters and sold at a good price, they might have found the Chancellor the money for re-armament. We seemed to be getting back rapidly to the food-producing, rain-giving, victory-bestowing god-king, and one began to have a keener appreciation of the relic-worship of the Church, and the veneration of saints. Between the advertising methods of the American film star, and those used for the Royal Family, the difference does not seem very great. At any rate one appears to be getting right back to the frame of mind which dominates the Piji Islanders and the primitive African tribes with regard to their chiefs.

* * *

The God-Man

The gap between ourselves and pre-historic man was lessened considerably when the Archbishop of Canterbury and other prominent divines began to emphasize

the magical character of the Coronation and to sound the "Recall to Religion." There was an added motive here. The Archbishop had in January, 1936 commended Edward VIII. to the British Empire on the grounds of his personal knowledge of his character from boyhood. At the end of the year he had discovered that Edward was quite unfit for the post of King, on the avowed grounds of his dissolute acquaintances—well-known to the Archbishop all along—and because he wished to marry Mrs. Simpson. Had Edward concealed his intentions in this direction the Archbishop would have duly transformed him into an incarnation of the voice of God, and if Edward had lived with Mrs. Simpson instead of suggesting marriage, the Archbishop would have no more denounced him for so doing than other Archbishops have denounced occupants of the throne for similar conduct.

The time, therefore, seemed to have come when the magico-religious nature of the Coronation might be emphasized, and so assist a revival of religion. And it has been done with a thoroughness that no body of Churchmen has dared to do for centuries. Bearing in mind what I said last week that from the secular point of view, the Coronation adds nothing whatever to the status or power of the King, we may take two or three leading utterances. First the Archbishop of Canterbury :—

The consecration of the crowning of the King and Queen [is] a great religious act. . . . In his Coronation and Crowning the King . . . is the representative of his people. . . . They associate themselves with him in a great act of consecration to the service of God.

The Archbishop of York says, the Coronation ceremony

is the dedication of the King and of his consort to the service of the King of Kings. . . . *The King incarnates the community.*

The italics in the last quotation are mine. I agree with it entirely. It is the essence of the Coronation ceremony and takes us back to the anthropology of the subject, with which I will deal later. It is the primitive idea that the chief not merely incarnates the "mana" of the community, but that he also incarnates the tribal joss. He is selected by God (as the Pope is selected by God through the inspiration received by the college of cardinals) as the chief medicine-man among savages "smells out" the one who is to embody the tribal deity.

Canon Anthony, of St. George's Windsor, says :—

The King was meant to be the human symbol . . . of Divine Power. . . . [He] is God's minister typifying the twin ideas of the Divine authority and the Divine guardianship. The English Sovereign is no mere furchead or State official.

The Bishop of Peterborough :—

The Coronation is a religious ceremony throughout. By it we believe that the King receives the grace of God by which alone he can execute his office.

Here it is, as plainly put as it can possibly be. The intensive advertising of the past fifty years has not been without results. We do not have it openly said the King is King by divine right, but it has always been there in the Coronation Service, which, so far as Kinghood is concerned, is a magical ceremony or nothing. Nothing has, in form, been added; the only new phase is that never since the time of the first Stuart Kings have any of our "spiritual" leaders had the impudence to proclaim so plainly the deification of the King. I shall have to return to this incarnation of the God in the King later. At present it is necessary only to note that there is in this expressed, in un-

mistakeable words, one of the oldest beliefs in the history of the social life of man. Among the Shiluks of the White Nile, it is an article of faith that the spirit of the god is incarnate in the chief. Among the ancient Mexicans the King was worshipped as a god, and one of his duties was to take an oath that he would cause the rain to come, the sun to shine, and the earth to be fertile. Even with the existing Japanese, the Mikado is officially the descendant of the gods.

What difference in kind is there between these things, and the declarations of the Archbishops and Bishops, and the whole tone of the Coronation Service? The only difference is that the modern ceremony is more expensive, the people are more showily dressed, and the spectators consider themselves the cream of British culture; in every other respect the thing is direct from the jungle. With a fine ignorance (real or pretended) of history, literature, and science, Sir Cecil Harcourt-Smith, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* for May 7, says that a spectator of the Coronation,

looking down the vistas of the past might, in imagination, see a line of Kings reaching back to Saxon Egbert in 785, their Coronation Service hardly changed from that to-day.

The imaginary spectator *might*—if he knew as little about the subject as Sir Cecil Harcourt-Smith appears to know. If he really understood what he was looking at he would probably reflect :—

How little mankind understands, how slowly it learns! Looking down the vistas of the past, whether in terms of years or in terms of cultural development, here is a ceremony that runs back to a time when the god-king was believed to be responsible for the stability of nature and the welfare of man. Looking through the outward trappings, here is the savage ceremony wherein the King is endowed with divine power, and becomes an incarnation of the deity. Westminster Abbey has, in principle advanced not a step beyond the jungle. In this ceremony the King, the Courtiers, the Christian hierarchy join hands with their spiritual brethren in primitive Australia, in the African forest, and with the culture of the Stone Age.

The clergy have shown their hands. Cunning, but not possessed of a far-seeing intelligence, they have spoken more plainly than they have dared to do for centuries. They invite plain speech in reply. We must see that they get it.

* * *

A Very Ancient Magic

I must admit that the clergy are speaking by the book. They are right, so far, in assuming that the King, whether he be a fool or a rogue, a debauchee or a monument of virtue, is by the application of the magical "holy oil" lifted out of the common ranks of mankind. Holy oil has always played a part in transforming episodes. Readers of Apuleius, will remember how, in the *Golden Ass* women are transformed into animal forms in this way. And students of witchcraft also know that it was by anointing themselves with a magical oil that women were able to assume different forms and fly through the air to have a "right royal" debauch with Satan. It is after the King has been transformed by this holy "Macassar" that the Archbishop declares the King has the power of God in him, and that the princes and the peers (the latter representing the people also) promise to the King "earthly worship." The incarnation is complete. Had not Edward VIII. insisted on marrying the woman he loved, had he been less open in expressing an opinion about the distressed areas, and confined himself to inspecting hospitals, looking at cup-football matches, and performing other simple

public functions, he would have to-day had the Archbishop's blessing and would have had God incarnate in him. The gods are no respecters of persons. Their incarnations cover an extraordinary variety of individuals.

About three centuries ago a King of England was shortened by a head for acting upon the principle of the divine right of kings. There was some excuse for Charles Stuart. The people were yet in the shadow of the Dark Ages, and but little of the real history of man was known. His people were guided by the Bible, and in the New Testament the duty of blind obedience to the King is clearly enunciated. That, too, is in the Coronation Service. In that service it is said that it is only by divine power that the King can carry out his duties. That is nonsense. The history of the past two hundred and fifty years proves that *anyone* can carry them out. In an hereditary monarchy no personal quality of any kind is requisite. The "people associate themselves with him in a great act of consecration to God." No one knows better than the Archbishop that this is a lie. There are millions of the King's subjects quite prepared to carry out their duties, as subjects, so long as the King carries out his part of the contract. But they do not, and will not, lower their intellectual self-respect by pretending to believe in the magical ceremony of the Holy oil and wonder-working spoon. This farrago of nonsense should have no place in the appointment of a titular head of the State. Our experience of Kings has not been such as to lead us to become enamoured of this persisting Stone Age ceremony.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

The Twilight of the Gods

"And that inverted bowl we call the sky,
Whereunder crawling, coop't, we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to it for aid, for it
Rolls impotently on as thou or I."

Omar Khayyam.

THE present time is the twilight of the gods. Free-thought, which is advancing from one victory to another, and which enlists in its service the keenest intellects, looks with sceptical eyes upon all deities and all theologies. And this detached attitude is having its influence upon public opinion. The clergy have had to moderate their transports, and the bewildered laity is shaking off some of the shackles of its antiquated and barbarous faith. More and more the laity is discarding the old idea of a personal deity. The idea of a magnified, non-natural Oriental Sultan, to be approached only through his privileged priestly suite, no longer satisfies. And the more modern conception of a titanic Doctor Barnardo, or Father Christmas, is exceedingly difficult to harmonise with the painful facts of life.

The clergy, of whom there are forty thousand in this country alone, still insist as far as they can on the willingness and interference of their god. But the British priests have to behave more warily than the black medicine-men in savage countries. Our home-grown pastors no longer call benefits or evil out of the sky beyond asking for fine or wet weather, or calling for blessings on individual members of a prolific Royal Family, and invoking victory to the national arms. Priests may be tricky, but they are not all fools. They are alert enough to know that they could never succeed in praying for or prophesying anything that pleased all. The majority would restrain them with injunctions, or the minority would have them

put under lock and key as public nuisances. The old primitive conception of a paternal deity has gone for ever among educated Christians, and only survives in the case of small, side-street religious communities that are mere pathetic survivals from the ignorant past. The majority of present-day pietists no longer believe in a limited-liability deity, and that such a being can be swayed by the sweet smell of sacrifice, the stimulus of entreaty, or the gift offerings of the faithful.

Some years ago, in a far corner of South Carolina, a clergyman was prompted, in the midst of a severe drought, to offer up prayers for rain. His luck was in. Shortly after rain did fall and was very heavy and lasted too long. The contentment of the inhabitants of South Carolina was not so great as it might have been. A few, it may be, were pleased; but the majority was highly indignant. Certain crops were ruined, and business affairs compromised. In this complicated world nothing ever happens without offending or upsetting somebody. This rain, supposed to be summoned by a parson's supplication, forced some of the inhabitants of the town to go to court and ask for an injunction against him. So the story goes.

This yarn shows the resentment men would feel in the present time were the old exciting Bible times to return. For, according to the highly-coloured legends, the prophets were "a pain in the neck" to people in authority. They were for ever doing things far more troublesome to the mass of men than merely petitioning the "Great White Throne" for rain and getting it sooner or later. They foretold the onslaught of Assyria, the triumph of the barbarians from the West, and poked their sacred noses into many things with more assiduity than the Roman Pontiff and the Archbishop of Canterbury do to-day in social and political affairs. Statesmen of those far-off times may have been forgiven for supposing that these pious busybodies were a public nuisance, and for acting accordingly.

Christians pray, but they are outdistanced by some of the more exuberant religionists in other countries. Most Christians pray once a week, but Mohammedans pray daily. But both are put completely in the shade by the Buddhists who hit on the bright idea of the mass production of prayers. Buddhism, so backward in so many respects, is the only religion that has invented praying by machinery, the principle of which is that there is use in keeping it up, a fact well known to wives and to commercial travellers. An incessant stream of repetition of prayers is kept going in some Buddhist countries by turning cylinders on which the words are inscribed. A rich harvest awaits the trader who induces Christians to adopt similar pious methods. Where electricity can be obtained economically, prayers can be kept revolving continually at a minimum of expense. No Christian home would be complete without such an instrument. Even the slot-machine manufacturers might consider the proposition.

Whether our own clergy will ever permit the association of dynamos with devotion is an open question. They are themselves as ignorant and anthropomorphic as the stupidest of their congregations. According to these oracles of wisdom, the Christian deity is still the Lord of Hosts and the God of Battles. Yet these priests, who consecrate battleships and regimental flags, are themselves "too proud to fight." They prate that their deity is a loving father, and that we are all his children. What absurdity and what hypocrisy! In the last gigantic war Prussian parsons said "Germany must win, because she ought to win. God cannot desert his children." The Prayer Book of the Church of England used much the same language, tempered by British patriotism. "Give peace in our

time, O Lord," intones the priest. "Because there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou O God," responds the docile congregation. It is the same almost everywhere. The priests of all the nations at war blessed the flags which afterwards floated over seas of blood and scenes of carnage, and invoked their God for victory. And, as all cannot win, what about God? When the priests fail, God should undergo the same criticism as the priests, for what is he but a dream figure, a spectre? If the peoples were wise, this God would be dethroned for ever. Then the people would no longer require priests, who would have to seek more honest employment.

MIMNERMUS.

Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

(Continued from page 316)

THE masters of the recently-formed White Guards, alias the New Police, were anxious to test their reliability and efficiency. It was not long before an opportunity presented itself. On Monday, May 13, 1833, an open-air meeting was attempted to be held in Coldbath Fields by a number of the working classes to discuss their grievances. This was the opportunity seized upon by the Government for their fell purpose. The newly-organized White Guards, otherwise the police, surrounded the crowd, and a fearful onslaught was made upon the people, men, women, and children being knocked down and maltreated by the police bludgeons. In the mêlée, one of the aggressors, Robert Culley, a policeman, was killed by a stab of a flag-pole; and the man supposed to have inflicted the wound, being taken into custody on the charge of murder, every attempt was made by the Government to induce the Coroner's jury, ever after known as the "Memorable Calthorpe Street Jury," of whom Mr. S. Stockton was foreman, to return a verdict, convicting the accused of that crime, but which, after hearing the evidence, they refused to do; on the contrary, returning a unanimous verdict of "JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE"—a result which was hailed with delight throughout the country, as well as the Metropolis, as the public Press and workmen's meetings of that day testified. The inquest occupied four days, during which time also magisterial proceedings relating to the same took place at Bow Street. After reading the account of the inquest, the Bow Street proceedings remind one of Nupkins in Morris' *Tables Turned*. All the witnesses were policemen, with the exception of the police surgeon. Unfortunately for the police, they had not properly learned their lesson. One could not remember where he had taken his prisoner after capture! Nothing in the nature of defence was heard, and the one charged with murder was sent down to the cells, and so were the others who had been arrested, for the magistrate demanded such excessive bail that it was impossible for poor working men to obtain it. However, at the inquest, proceedings did not go so smoothly (for the Government) since both sides were heard. It appears the meeting had been proclaimed by the Government. No name was on the bill, but it was merely signed, "By order of the Secretary of State." These bills were not posted up until the day after the meeting. The meeting was attended by about 300 people. No sooner had the meeting commenced than about 300 police appeared upon the scene, closing up every avenue of escape, and commenced an indiscriminate attack upon the crowd, which continued for an hour. A reporter, who was present, stated in evidence that the ground was covered with men, women, and children, lying in all directions. Two girls who

were standing on a doorstep were both struck down. He goes on to state: "I saw a policeman beating an elderly woman, who was screaming loudly for mercy. A gentleman who was with me said to me, 'Courtney, we can't stand this.' We went to the police calling 'Shame, shame,' when he called out, 'You b—y b—r, you shall catch it too,' and he raised his truncheon to strike me, but my friend caught his arm." Throughout the whole of the proceedings at the inquest, the members of the jury took the keenest interest, and questioned the witnesses considerably, to the annoyance of the Coroner, who finally directed the jury to return a verdict of wilful murder. The whole of the police evidence was utterly discredited. On the fourth day, the jury begged for a further adjournment, which the Coroner refused. When they returned a verdict of "Justifiable Homicide," the Coroner was dismayed, and tried his best to browbeat them into recalling it, but to no effect. The following is part of the dialogue which took place:—

Coroner.—I shall strike it out.

Foreman.—I cannot agree to that.

All the Jury.—Nor any of us.

A Juror.—If you record any other verdict it will be a false and untrue verdict.

Another Juror.—It will be his verdict and not ours.

Several.—You had better dismiss us if you will not take our verdict.

Coroner.—It is not a good verdict.

A Juror.—Well, if you will not take it you had better dismiss us and call another jury.

Foreman.—We have read over all our notes, and we can come to no other verdict.

A Juryman.—So help me God, I am ready to faint—I have fasted from 10 o'clock this morning [it was then nearly 11 at night]. I have had nothing but a glass of water. If you will not have our verdict, dismiss us, for if you keep me here for a year, I will not alter my verdict.

The other Jurors.—Nor I, nor I, nor I.

And so for two hours this went on, the Coroner alternately cajoling, browbeating, bullying, but the jury remained firm. Finally, after a consultation with the officials in Court, the Coroner, impudent to the last, recorded the verdict and dismissed the jury with, "Gentlemen, I consider your verdict disgraceful to you." It was close upon midnight when the proceedings terminated, and the jurymen met with a most deservedly cordial reception from the vast crowd that remained to the end.

The Press appeared unanimous in its laudations of the jury, and it was proposed that "some public mark of respect should be paid to a jury which had so nobly interposed its shield between the people on the one hand and a would-be police tyranny on the other."

In the following July a monster procession and demonstration took place in London, marching through the proclaimed district to London Bridge, where a chartered steamer conveyed the jury and 600 supporters on a marine excursion down the Thames to the Medway.

On May 21 the following year, a banquet took place in honour of the jury, when about 500 sat down to the tables. The jurymen were each presented with a handsome silver cup, with an inscription which bore testimony to the "glorious verdict of 'justifiable homicide' on the body of Robert Culley, a policeman who was slain while brutally attacking the people when peacefully assembled in Calthorpe Street." Nor did it end here. Medals were struck in honour of the verdict, and frequent meetings were held in commemoration of it. As late as 1861, fifty persons dined together with the foreman, and as many of the jury as could be found, when a clock was presented to Mr.

Stockton, the foreman, as a recognition of his services on behalf of the poor.

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

(To be continued)

Religious Recrudescence in Education

FURTHER extension and intensification of ecclesiastical—including Bible—propaganda proceeds. The *Journal of Education* states that "the teaching of Scripture is playing an increasingly important part in the minds of educational experts of all kinds to-day" (a statement to which we may oppose a direct negative). Again, "many universities now also offer a diploma in Biblical studies. London is the pioneer in this work." If the latter statement is true, as it probably is, we may well exclaim, "What a fall was there my countrymen!"—London, with the College in Gower St., at its foundation, an institution (the first I believe) which omitted theology from its programme; "an omission," writes the late Chief Inspector of Schools in Ireland, "which impelled the Anglican party to establish a rival place of education, King's College, 'where the doctrines and duties of Christianity as the same are inculcated in the United Church of England and Ireland' could have a free field"; "and," the writer continues, "naturally the latter college obtained its charter almost at once and set about teaching 'the same,' while equally naturally the secular institution in Gower Street did not obtain its charter till seven years later." (Dr. Beatty, *A Short History of Education*).

The same educational paper also informs us that "A new society—the Institute of Christian Education at Home and Overseas—made its debut at the Conference of Educational Associations"; but I have not seen any report of the proceedings.

The presentation to and discussion of a resolution calling for the secularization of State education at the Conference of the Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary schools was a welcome event—following a similar occurrence at the Conference of the National Union of Teachers two or three years ago. The former case was, however, the more important, as the resolution came from a local branch of the Association, where it was passed. This, I believe, was the first event of the kind. Naturally enough the religionists—plus the mere traditionalists—formed a majority. But we may hope that further discussion will gradually reduce it to a minority.

At the I.A.M.A. Conference there was a sort of counterblast to the resolution. The Rev. Dr. Scott Lidgett attended ("by special invitation," the report states) and gave an address on "The Fourth Century of the Reformation and the English Bible." Among other things, the speaker asked, "Do we not owe an immense political debt to the Bible for the unique combination of freedom and order which we enjoy as a British Commonwealth of Nations, and which is not shared to anything like the same extent by those who have not had the same spiritual source of information and culture?"

Dr. Lidgett's notion of the "debt" differs much from that of H. G. Wells, who in his *Anatomy of Frustration* has the following: "The preservation of the Bible as a book sacred beyond criticism has kept alive a tradition of barbaric cunning and barbaric injury of economic and political life. . . . Hitler never made a speech yet that could not be rephrased in Biblical language." And as regards information and culture (except so far as the book contains a contribution to the history of the passage of a people from barbarism to civilization—a contribution which is a

dead letter to most Bible readers), we point to the innumerable false statements made and ideas inculcated, combined with its notably unintellectual character.

I learn from a member of the Association concerned that the proposed new departure in having a religious address at the Conference met with strong opposition at a meeting of the executive, but the Bibliophiles won the day. Much more resistance to the encroachment of the churches will, however, be needed unless the thousands of unbelieving—all non-Christian—teachers are to be driven from the schools.

J. REEVES.

Differences in Worship that can't be Bridged

SPEAKING on Good Friday, at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney (N.S.W. Australia), the Rev. Father John Hall, C.M., said:—

Christianity could never make the progress in the world which it should until the majority of Christians united in faith and discipline. The educated Mohammedan, Buddhist, and Confucianist could not be blamed if, when Christianity was proclaimed to him as God's true religion for mankind, he replied, "Select among yourselves what is the true brand of Christianity, and we will consider you. Till then, we remain as we are."

There's nothing new in the reflection here expressed by Father Hall. Christians everywhere are riotously divided as to the form of service that God requires from them. Still, it is refreshing to find Father Hall himself declaring his shame at the spectacle thus presented.

Nor is there the slightest prospect of the unity which he indicates ever being effected, if only for the obvious reason that every denomination—every one of the multitude of conflicting, warring creeds and sects—is firmly convinced that the particular doctrine which it enunciates is the one-and-only true form of Christian worship.

Isn't Father Hall himself in the same boat?

Would he, for a moment, concede that Catholics should compromise with Anglicans—that is, to the Catholics making any concessions to Anglicans?

Or, if we go further afield, would he not recoil in horror from the suggestion that Catholics should align themselves with, say, Methodists and Salvationists?

Clear it is, then, that the plea for a solid front is for ever destined to utter frustration.

The complaint, I consider, lies entirely with the Almighty. Let us assume that, in the Divine dispensation of things, a form of worship was demanded. Why the failure simply and clearly to specify what it should be? Either the Almighty in the first instance, or Jesus in later years, could very easily have done this. The neglect to do so implies (1) the censure by the human race upon the heavenly authorities, or (2) a complete disregard in that Celestial quarter as to the worship respecting which Father Hall and Christians generally are becoming more-and-more profoundly disturbed.

I say this, particularly in view of the fact that in Sydney the very day he was preaching—that is, Good Friday—the annual show held by the Royal Agricultural Society was in full swing, and the attendance at this was 127,562!

To Christians, of course, there could not be—or should not be—a more solemnly observed day. Irresistible, therefore, is the conclusion that Christianity is being overwhelmingly dropped by the public, if not in the sense of direct, conscious repudiation, at least to the extent of complete indifference. Well may Father Hall and his fellow-priests—in fact, the expounders of all creeds and sects—feel driven into one another's arms in the way of making a last, despairing bid in the hope of retaining some of their ever-declining members.

But even in this they are doomed to disappointment and disaster, because of the insoluble problem that has been set them by the Heavenly hosts in so signally failing to make known the character of the worship, if any, that is deemed to be due to them from the creatures whose lot it is to live in this very troubled world.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

FRANK HILL.

Executive's Annual Report

It will assist to a clearer understanding of this report if it be borne in mind that it is not a detailed account of the total of the Society's activities. Each Branch of the Society possesses and exercises an autonomy, within the Constitution of the organization, and is bound only by loyalty to its declared Principles. Each Branch raises and administers its own funds, and is responsible directly to its own members. The function of the Executive is to assist Branches in their work wherever possible, to advise, occasionally to direct, giving whatever financial and other help it considers necessary. This report is the Executive's, and aims at no more than taking a general review of the work of our movement, noting, as it goes, such phases of the existing situation—friendly or unfriendly—as may be considered advisable.

Once again, in view of much correspondence at headquarters it is necessary to emphasize the fact that this Society is not a political organization. Its members include all shades of political opinions. On this head no inquisition is made or permitted. It need hardly be said that in its ranks are large numbers of keen politicians, nor need the historic fact be stressed that it has during its existence not merely given birth to many reforming movements, but is constantly passing on to them some of its most ardent workers. The main work of the militant Freethought movement in this country since the time of Thomas Paine has been a liberative one, and its main purpose that of securing a freedom of thought, speech and publication without which progress can be neither certain nor permanent.

It can hardly be denied that to-day this pioneer work, a work that appeals for long only to the most idealistic, is more imperative than ever. Fifty years ago it was common ground with nearly all parties in the State that Freedom of thought was an indispensable condition of social betterment. To-day that principle is not merely questioned; over a large part of Europe to advocate freedom of thought is a criminal offence. The mass-production of what is flatteringly called "thought" has followed hard on the mass production of goods. We are to be machine-clad at one extremity and machine-fed at the other. Principles are lost in politics and united shouting is to take the place of individual thinking. In this country the encroachments on thought and speech have not been so great as elsewhere, but attacks have been made, and these are likely to become greater if events are not watched with care. Whatever reasonable excuse may be offered for such Acts as the Police Act of 1919, the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934, and the Public Order Act of 1936, they mark serious restrictions on the liberty of the subject, and the possibility of their extension is very clear. Some of these Acts are conceived more with a view to the future than to the present, and may be used for further curtailing the liberties we possess.

In such circumstances the existence of an organization such as the N.S.S. is of greater importance than ever. In the inevitable and, properly considered, even desirable conflict of economic interests and political policies, of old beliefs with current thought, and of vested interests with new-born needs, it is surely to the good that some organization should exist that is continually calling men back to the consideration of first principles. The weakening of theological beliefs has not diminished the need for a real Freethought movement; it has rather made that need the more evident; for the turning of the theological type of mind from its original field to the sphere of sociology has

made it more dangerous than ever. A disguised enemy is ever more dangerous than an open one.

One very pertinent example of what has just been said is found in the struggle for the child in the educational system of the country. On the one side it is a fight for the control, on the other for the freedom of the rising generation. All religious organizations know that with the loss of the control of the child the source of supply for the peopling of Church and Chapel is gone. The famous "compromise" of 1870 was, like all compromises, bound to weaken in time, and for some years the Churches and Chapels have been working to strengthen their hold on the schools. In some educational areas pressure has recently been brought to bear on teachers to assist in marching children to religious services during school hours. In another area (Carnarvonshire) an inquiry was instituted concerning the religious opinions of teachers and indignation expressed on the Education Committee that many of the teachers were unbelievers; and in one area in Scotland, the question was raised whether a teacher who has given up religious belief ought to be retained in the service of the Council. Where this kind of thing does not openly exist, there are, nevertheless, many attempts to convert the schools into preparatory institutions for the breeding of future clients for Church and Chapel. The result is that the teacher is driven into hypocrisy as a first (religious) condition of teaching his pupils straightforwardness.

The Executive suggests to all lecturers and members that they should give this question of religion in the schools their constant attention. Above all, there should be no hesitation in parents availing themselves of their statutory right of withdrawing their children from religious instruction. A written request to the head-teacher is all that is required. No reason should be asked or need be given. Any difficulty in this matter should be at once reported to the Executive, and the matter will at once be taken in hand.

The difficulty of hiring public halls for Freethought meetings is not so great to-day as it once was, but a recent case at Birkenhead has shown that official bigotry is still active where it finds it can indulge itself with impunity. The Birkenhead Branch of the N.S.S. has for some time been trying to secure the Town Hall for a Freethought meeting. The hall is freely let for meetings of all kinds, religious and non-religious, but it was refused for the use of the N.S.S. Quite rightly the Branch determined that this act of pure bigotry should not meet with tame submission. It has, therefore, for some time been conducting a public campaign, which includes the holding of meetings, a house to house distribution of suitable literature, and some excellent letters to the local press. This is all that can be done at the moment, since there is no way of compelling bigots to act justly while they are in office. But the agitation will continue, and the Branch may be assured of whatever help the Executive can give it in its fight for just and equal treatment. It would be well if in all cases where religious partiality is so openly and so shamelessly shown by public bodies for the same policy of resistance to be followed. Quiescence under unjust treatment merely encourages a continuation of injustice.

An outstanding event of a more pleasing nature during the past year was the commemoration of the bi-centenary of the birth of Thomas Paine on January 29. There is hardly another man in the past hundred and forty years that has exerted so great and so continuous an influence as Paine. That his name has been taboo to an extent that a conspiracy of silence concerning him has been carried out by many historians does not matter. The creator of democracy in

this country, the vital inspiration that called into being the United States of America, the man who put forward a scheme of social and political reform which in many directions we are still striving to realize, Paine stands as the greatest advocate of his day, of an enlightened and universal humanism. And that influence for good in politics and religion has continued until to-day. No more powerful attack on the citadel of the Christian superstition was ever published than *The Age of Reason*. A very wide appreciation of Paine was paid in the newspaper press, thanks partly to a quiet preparation from those interested, and for the first time since Paine's death a Town's meeting was held in his native town of Thetford to do honour to the great humanist and Free-thinker.

(Continued on page 330)

Acid Drops

A pious correspondent to the *Church Times*, obviously very angry at the large number of favourable notices the "infidel" Gibbon has received in connexion with his bi-centenary, quotes an extract from the *Decline and Fall* too good to miss these days. It deals with Pepin's Coronation by St. Boniface, about which Gibbon says:—

The royal unction of the Kings of Israel was dexterously applied: the successor of St. Peter assumed the character of a divine ambassador; a German chieftain was transformed into the Lord's anointed; and this Jewish rite has been diffused and maintained by the superstition and vanity of modern Europe.

Gibbon evidently had no delusions about such ceremonies as a Coronation, and evidently was not afraid of saying so. It is a pity that passage is not more universally known.

The *Church Times*, anxious to maintain the "divine" character of the Coronation, pointed out in a recent "Summary" that the King is a "modest Christian gentleman," and the Queen, bred in "the Catholic tradition of the Scottish Episcopal Church." This being the case, the journal did not doubt that they both realized the "awful solemnity of the service." Perhaps they, like lots of other people, did realize the "awful" solemnity of the "divine" proceedings, only not exactly in the way religious people hoped. The awful thing about the whole affair is the perpetuation of the superstition and vanity so rightly deplored by the great Gibbon.

It is interesting to find the same journal, while regretting the dictators of other countries, particularly because they are more or less anti-clerical, points out that Mr. de Valera, though doing his best to join their ranks, is thoroughly Christian, and "not ashamed of his religion when he is in the company of Freethinkers." In particular, we are told that English politicians might learn a good deal from Mr. de Valera on such questions as the family and marriage. Needless to say the Irish leader is absolutely opposed to birth-control and divorce; he is tied down without reserve to what the Roman Catholic Church lays down on such subjects. And this is the *Church Times* great ideal!

How happy the Society of Friends must be to receive royal permission as to what kind of trousers Quakers may wear at the Coronation. William Penn and all the Founders of the Society would be ashamed of these alleged "followers." Penn refused to enter any kind of church, and he went to prison rather than take off his hat when he didn't want to do so, and he very often interviewed the King without sacrificing a single principle. When will the flunkey-spirit understand that nobody really respects the undignified surrender of principle merely for a ticket to see a King crowned?

We don't know anything about Councillor James Watts of Manchester, but he is evidently a very curious individual. At a recent Council meeting he objected to an exhibition of child-welfare and maternity services being held in the Manchester Central Library. He said there could be no cultural relations between this country and Russia, because this country based its culture on Christianity. Councillor Watts is terribly uninformed on this last point, and one doubts his ability to discuss the question of culture at all. But as the improvement in the care of children and in maternity service has been admittedly great, it is just possible that something might be learned from Russia in this respect. The freeing of women from labour for a period before and after child-birth is one instance that might be given. And after all there is no necessity for this country to go back, as in the Coronation Service, to the Fiji Islanders for cultural instruction. Altogether "culture" is such a human thing that something might even be learned from the Fijians. Whether the Fijians could learn much from Councillor Watts is quite another question.

The Rev. Dr. F. E. England "explains" what Christ meant when He said we should ask God to "lead us not into temptation." "We may be sure," he says, "that the petition means 'Bring us not into places where the struggle will be too uneven for us.'" It is a distinction without a difference! Dr. England is no interpreter: he is merely the author of a rather inferior paraphrase.

A feature of the times is the churches' efforts to resuscitate ancient public displays to draw people back to the "faith." May the Fourth was set apart at Cannington, near Bridgewater, for a procession of schoolchildren to go round the village singing litanies, and taking part in short services in gardens and allotments. This was supposed to be a revival of the old Spanish—sorry, *Christian*—custom of "Blessing the Crops," though the Romans called it Terminalia and Ambarvalia. . . . The previous day was commemorated in other parts as "Rood Day," otherwise the anniversary of "the discovery of the Cross at Jerusalem by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great."

Sir Alexander and Lady Seton, of Edinburgh, have returned a piece of bone claimed to be part of a Pharaoh's skeleton, to Egypt, blaming it for recent accidents which had befallen them. Mr. R. Engelbach, keeper of the Cairo Museum, waxes sarcastic over the prevalence of such superstitions, and says "he has never encountered or heard of an authentic case" of any influence from remains and relics, which, he says, "without exception, behave in an exemplary manner" when they reach him. . . . But the testimony of this leading authority on ancient Egypt is little likely to reassure the "cultured" products of "civilization," still under the influence of primitive religion.

The London Missionary Society is facing a crisis. With an unrivalled amount of Prayer to its "credit," it finds its Balance Sheets more and more depressing. For the past nine years its deficiency has increased with a sickening regularity. It is now £76,207 to the bad. Many remedies are suggested, but sooner or later the end must come to this and other stupid attempts to convert the "heathen" to a religion they don't want, and which is no longer the "working hypothesis" of the land which has sent the missionaries on their wild-goose chases all these years.

The new threepenny-bit incurs the scorn of the Rev. Editor of the *British Weekly*. It looks like a big coin, it makes more noise than a sixpenny-bit as it falls into the Offertory. May it not be that some who once dropped sixpence into the plate will now let all the church see that a new threepenny-bit looks like a substantial contribution? But let us quote the natural indignation of the man of God faced with this greatest of all crimes:—

That any person—who has even so much as come in sight of what making an offering in the House of God means—should be seduced by the subterfuge which the new “three-penny” suggests—is one of those things about which St. Paul once said that “they ought not so much as be mentioned amongst us.”

A religious periodical called *Spiritual Life* describes itself as “A Monthly Paper Emphasizing the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost.” We have often thought that the Third Part of God—the “ghost” of a “spirit” as it were—was entitled to an equality of publicity with the other two. There seems to be some subtle humour on page 8 of the April issue of the paper; the Holy Ghost is “thanked” rather half-heartedly “for partial recovery from illness in answer to prayer,” at a meeting where the attendance was poor “owing to the bad weather.” Hard lines when you have to pray for good weather in order to get a quorum large enough to pray for something else.

Miss Ruth Adams’ admirable new novel: *War on Saturday Week*, will give many a shock to Christians who pray for Peace and other things. Little Nora in her story is a child who has often prayed, but has been led by bitter experience to distrust human prayers to a super-human God. Her criticism expresses itself in these reflections: She had prayed for a bicycle, a pony, a kitten, a baby, and so far God had not approved of any of them. She had a strong conviction that God did not really know what was good for her, and she considered it quite likely that He might put being blown up by bombs in the wrong category. She thought someone ought to explain things like that to Him.

“They seem to be becoming pals with the devil,” said the Rev. J. Muir Elliott, speaking of the people of Southend, at Westcliff Congregational Church anniversary. “Never before had he found so much of a certain kind of wickedness as in Southend,” he lamented. That “certain kind” is too vague and mysterious—as most parsonic utterances are; perhaps it only refers to a healthy contempt for parsons and pulpits. After this “snapping” the “reverend” actually turns his collar round to normal, to testify that “he had never found so much kindness as he had in Southend.” However, Southend’s Imps should thank him for “giving the devil his due”—in the usual “facing-both-ways” fashion of clerks-in-holy-orders.

In a recent article, the sky-pilot of the *Star*, Mr. Weatherhead, shirks the religion he is paid to advance, in order to write about gardens and gardeners just like an ordinary columnist. “With a moral,” he may perhaps claim, but there’s nothing of the kind beyond what staff journalists are producing daily. Still—what matter when the title Reverend is all-sufficient to make every cleric’s writing a homily? Few, if any, of them are honest enough to stick four-square to their gospel theme, and all trade on the virtues discovered only in pure Secularism. Of course, they cannot avoid Secularism when drawing a sensible “object lesson,” which must always, necessarily, be based on *mundane* experience. Pretend as they may, “divine influence” will never fit in, and that’s their immovable, eternal stumbling-block.

A firm of publishers has been inspired by the happy idea of producing some Biblical biographies, and the lives of Isaiah, David, Jezebel, and Joseph have now appeared for the delectation of a select public. One pious critic admits that their authors are seen “struggling with the impossible task of writing the biography of a great Biblical hero—for the Bible is our only source of knowledge.” One might just as well write biographies of Ali Baba, or Sinbad the sailor. What does anyone *really* know of Joseph, or St. Paul, or Jeremiah? It is by no means certain that any but a very few Biblical characters ever lived. The aforesaid critic sadly writes that “on the whole, the religious value of these biographies is small and their literary success is also dubious.” But how could anyone hope to improve “Holy Writ”?

The answer given by Roman Catholic authority as to what is Purgatory is “Purgatory is a place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins.” Further we are told that “those souls go to Purgatory that depart this life in venial sin; or that have not fully paid the debt of temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven.” If superstition, credulity, and tomfoolery could be better exemplified than in these “explanations,” we should like to know how. Yet this is the kind of drivel from which a large part of mankind obtains its “spiritual” food. It makes one almost despair of human intelligence.

The “miracle” of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius took place once again in Naples a few days ago. In general, it only occurs *after* the saint has been fervently prayed to. But on this occasion he was so anxious to oblige that hardly were the relics touched when the congealed blood became liquid. The Neapolitan true believers went, as usual, wild with joy at the news; but we sometimes wonder what some of our more intelligent converts really think about the whole affair. Do they believe these “miracles” actually take place, or are they content to believe entirely on faith? Or even do they prefer to ignore them and concentrate on the wonderful work of “Our Lord”? We never seem to get a definite pronouncement on these things—and perhaps there is a reason.

Fifty Years Ago

A STRIKING illustration of clericalism occurred last week, when the Queen went to open the People’s Palace. When the practical business was gone through; when the brilliant writer who conceived the idea was duly praised; when the people who found the money, and those who laboured to promote the scheme, were properly honoured; when her Majesty was about to wield the trowel; when nothing short of a miracle or an earthquake could make the People’s Palace a failure; up stepped the Archbishop of Canterbury, dressed in full costume, to treat the company to a little of his pious blarney. The proceedings were instantly suspended while he offered a specially prepared address to the Lord, who, of course, knew every word of the document beforehand. We never remember to have read a more stupendous piece of humbug. The nation which pays a man fifteen thousand a year to go through such wretched mummery must have a great deal more money than sense. Even as a composition the Archbishop’s prayer was miserably poor. Our printer’s devil could have done as well; and even we, ignorant infidels as we are, could turn out any quantity of better prayers at five shillings each or, if that price is exorbitant, we might say twenty shillings a dozen. The substance of the Archbishop’s prayer was extremely rich. He thanked God for the whole affair—subscriptions, objects, and everything. It was the coolest piece of impudence imaginable. No one but a priest could have risen to such a height of imposture.

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s performance reminds us of an old story. An English nobleman arrived at Rome, which then swarmed with priests and beggars. His luggage was seized by many hands, and when he arrived at his hotel there was a long row of light porters, each of whom expected a handsome gratuity. His lordship fed them one after another, wondering when the procession would end. At last it terminated in the person of a venerable beggar, with bare head and a snowy beard, who was evidently too feeble to carry anything. “Well,” exclaimed his lordship, “and what did you do?” The tottering applicant spread his dexter palm, laid it near his breast, made a dignified bow, and replied, “I was also there.” The Archbishop of Canterbury resembles that mendicant. He did nothing to help the project, but “he also was there.”

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- G. I. DEAN (Ottawa).—Glad to have your appreciation of the *Freethinker*. We have a great variety of men such as Mr. W. T. Ellis in this country. They flourish best where stupidity is most prevalent.
- J. N. writes pointing out that in the article "What is Truth?" by Mr. E. Syers, a typographical error attributes to Solomon the phrase "a roe of a young hart," instead "a roe or a young hart."
- J. HAYS.—We have read your letter with pleasure. Hope it will do good.
- H. SHAW.—The only way we know of, that lies within the scope of our work, to relieve men of the fear of speaking the truth, is the line of attack that we pursue. We question neither the value nor the need of other plans, but the line we are following takes all our time and energy. Others take their own line and contribute work in their own way.
- D. ALLAN.—Thanks for newspaper. So long as religion is in the schools, so long will there be unofficial and clandestine religious tests, and teachers will be forced to conceal their real opinions on the matter.
- L. MARTIN.—You appear to be making the common mistake that the cultivation of a mass "opinion" is a good thing so long as it is an opinion with which you are in agreement. The danger of a mass opinion is that it has no basis in logical conviction and may be in one direction to-day and an entirely opposite direction to-morrow.
- D. FISHER.—We fancy the notice in *Contact* is in the nature of a skit. We cannot get any confirmation of it here. Will bear the other matter in mind, but it is too late now for the Annual Report, although the question of Sunday labour is exploited in the interests of the Churches. If the only rule was that no person should be allowed to work more than a certain number of days per week the whole matter would be settled in terms of public convenience, as in France.
- Owing to our going to press a day earlier than usual with last week's issue a number of lecture notices arrived too late for insertion.
- For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher, 48; A. E. Stringer (India), 58.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- 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 offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- 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*."

Sugar Plums

The Executive's Report of the National Secular Society appears in this week's issue. The proceedings of the Conference will appear next week.

The Liverpool Conference was an unqualified success. There was a good attendance of delegates, and there was a business-like air prevailing—which was exactly as it should be. Differences of opinion were, of course,

numerous, but it was plain that all of these were expressed with good-temper, and animated by the one idea of furthering the "best of causes."

The Deity appears to have a special weakness for the N.S.S. Conference, and he favours it almost invariably with his best efforts in the shape of agreeable weather. On more than one occasion we have known religious processions at Whitsuntide to be "rained off," whilst less than twenty miles away the Freethinking armies were enjoying the best of weather conditions. Liverpool was particularly well favoured, and it is perhaps one of the disadvantages of our standpoint that there is no one to whom a vote of thanks can be given on the receipt of special blessings of this kind.

The Reception, on Saturday night, in the Stork Hotel, brought together old and new friends from all parts of the country. The Liverpool Branch had provided liberal and adequate entertainment. The evening passed agreeably and profitably.

The evening meeting after the Conference was highly successful. It was too much to expect that we should receive a temporary consideration in the way of heavy and refreshing showers for the period of this meeting only, but considering that Whit-Sunday is a day that most people prefer to spend out-doors, there was a very good attendance when the President and his attendant speakers walked on to the platform.

Mr. Clayton led with a speech emphasizing the essential folly of the special brand of superstition in this country, and Mr. Whitehead dealt with the special aspect of the futility and hypocrisy of Prayer when put forward as a remedy for social disorders. Mr. Bedborough in his breezy way, did not forget to make a useful appeal for Branch support. Dr. Carmichael took a rather special point and dealt with it in his usual way, showing that special gift of lucid exposition which his listeners have learnt to expect from him. Mr. Ebury gave a very good speech, orderly in arrangement and with telling and correct emphases, receiving a specially good reception. Mr. Shortt was vigorous and aggressive, and made an effective appeal to the audience. Mr. Rosetti also chose a special phase of Freethought activity, and was clear and economical in his presentation. Mr. Brighton gave a humorous speech in connexion with the numerous blessings of Christianity, which was hugely enjoyed by all.

The President—well, Mr. Cohen was Mr. Cohen. He terminated the proceedings in a speech of great eloquence and with close applicability to current events. He imagined an inhabitant of the Stone Age being dropped down from the empyrean into England; his amazement at the mechanical aids to living now enjoyed, and his relief at finding himself amongst shouting mobs, and particularly, at the Ceremony in Westminster Abbey—the place amongst all others in which he found himself thoroughly at home.

The splendid weather prevailed for the outing on Whit-Monday. This was at Chester, where the historic walls and forms of architecture were examined and appreciated by the company. Many as well found time for a stroll along the banks of the Dee, and a valuable rest on the green grass alongside the River. Then came the inevitable, but rather sad, partings and the Conference for 1937 was over. Over in a technical sense but these meetings stretch with splendid effect well into the future.

There is nothing but the highest praise for the way in which the organization of the Conference was carried out by the Liverpool Branch. We know that we speak for the delegates, and also the individual members who attended the Conference, when we express here both their pleasure and gratitude.

A good report of the Conference, embodying the resolutions passed, appeared in the *Liverpool Post*. Accounts may have appeared in other papers; but if so these have not come to hand at the time of going to press.

In the *Freethinker* for May 9, we said what we thought of Sir John Simon's decision that a "limited number" of children from Bilbao might be admitted to this country provided it involved no expenditure of public money. For some days 4,000 terror-stricken children have been waiting for permission from our Government to land here. Day and night air-raids were in progress. But this Government of ours delayed the necessary permission as long as possible. At last, after repeated telegrams from English men and women in Bilbao, the Government of Baldwin, Hoare, Chamberlain and Simon, grudgingly permits 2,000 to land. It is well that this infamy should be placed to the credit of those responsible for it.

It is not a question of politics or of international rights and wrongs, but one of pure humanity. There was a time when Britain would have opened its arms even to adults in such circumstances; to-day we deny it to even children. It must not cost a penny of public money! We decline to believe that the British public have so deteriorated that they would count the cost of saving the lives of thousands of children in terms of pure finance. And now even that miserable plea is dissipated. The money is there, and a hundred thousand pounds might easily be gathered for the purpose of saving these children. It is the Government alone that stands in the way. Their action should be remembered. There is no room, no material for argument. One does not argue in such cases, one acts. So does the Government—by seeing how few children they can save, and how long they can delay doing even that.

Executive's Annual Report

(Continued from page 327)

It is noticeable that in this country-wide tribute to Paine, the B.B.C. dominated by religious influences, stood aloof. To enquiries from all parts of the country as to the possibility of a broadcast, the official reply was that it could not be fitted into the programme. Room could be found for a eulogy of the evangelical clown, Moody, whose centenary celebration took place near the date of January 29, but no time could be found to note the life, work and world-wide influence of one of the greatest of Englishmen.

Paine's *Age of Reason* has been a steady seller ever since its first appearance in 1794. Scores of men and women went to prison for the "crime" of selling it, and its appeal is still strong for intelligent men and women who are under the influence of Christian orthodoxy. Taking advantage of this the Pioneer Press issued a complete edition of the *Age of Reason*, with a lengthy introduction by your President, at the phenomenal price of fourpence. It is the cheapest book ever published in the history of Freethought, and the sales more than justified expectations. An edition large enough, it was thought, to last four years looks like being exhausted in one. The very rapid sale of the work is evidence of two things, first, that the book still meets the needs of a large class who have not completely liberated their minds from the Christian superstition, second, that for this very large class no better introduction to Freethought than *The Age of Reason* can easily be found.

To turn to domestic matters. It is pleasing to record that the number of new members exceeds those of last year, and although the income is slightly less, this is due to the fact that a number of subscriptions were received after March 31. Next year's accounts should be the larger for this.

On the lecture platform your President has not been so busy as in previous years, but lectures given have been well attended, and quite up to the usual level, in point of numbers. Mr. G. Bedborough has visited some of the Provincial centres, as also has Mr. Rosetti and their services have been greatly appreciated.

A new Branch has been opened at Kingston-on-Thames, and also another one in far-off West Africa, at Accra. There have also been enquiries concerning the formation of a Branch in South Africa.

The work of the various Branches is reported so freely from time to time in the *Freethinker*, that only a very rapid glance is needed here. The new Edinburgh Branch is still doing very good work, and Glasgow continues its campaign on the usual lines, both in and out of doors. The Branch could do with more support than it gets from local Freethinkers, and if that were forthcoming it might do more work in the surrounding district, and so lead to the formation of new Branches. The Lancashire Branches, which, of course, includes both Liverpool and Manchester, report a satisfactory season, and Mr. Clayton continues his work among the smaller towns. He is one of the men for whose expenses in lecturing the Executive is responsible.

On Tyneside, Mr. J. T. Brighton, also under the direction of the Executive, with a band of helpers, is doing some excellent work, and has shown that he possesses the ready humour, tact, and ability which makes him an "acceptable" speaker on a platform where these qualities are of first-rate importance. There is a very rich field for work in this area. Birmingham continues its work with rather better conditions than of late, and the new Branch at Leeds is also keeping steadily to its work, and with good results. South Wales is not, perhaps owing to the industrial depression, very active at the moment, but things may brighten there in the near future. Mr. George Whitehead continues his summer propaganda, under the direction of the Executive, and reports many excellent meetings.

The London Branches have held more indoor meetings than usual during the past winter, and it is to be hoped they will hold a similar number of meetings in the winter before us. In the West the West London Branch carries on a very energetic campaign, both indoors and outdoors, and has largely increased its membership. In the East the Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches hold the fort, and made a good move in combining for the purpose of holding in-door meetings during the winter months. We hope to see them repeat the experiment in the coming "close" season. In the North, Mr. Ebury, under the auspices of the local Branch, carries on a very energetic propaganda, and it is to be hoped that the work he is doing will not overtax his health. Open-air work is of all, the most arduous, and the policy of living for a movement rather than dying for it, is usually a good one. The Freethought movement, in common with other reform agitations, owes much to its self-sacrificing speakers and workers in the open-air.

Death has levied its usual toll on our ranks, and among those who will remain with us only as treasured memories, and in the inspiration from their labours we can now note but a few. C. G. Quinton was a very old member of the Society, for forty years a member of the Executive, and for years Treasurer and a Trustee of the Society. A man of unimpeachable integrity, quiet and unassuming in character, he inspired in all who knew him intimately a real personal affection. G. F. H. McCluskey, also a trustee, was one whose membership went back to the stormy Bradlaugh days. Of late years he had not taken so active a part in the Society's

work, but his interest in the movement never flagged, and he gave help in many ways. By his will he bequeathed a sum of £1,000 to the National Secular Society, which is also the residuary legatee. The widow receives the interest from the estate during her life. Another whose name is now a memory is one whose character endeared him to all who knew him, and who was well known to readers of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Andrew Millar was one of those rare characters who retained the simplicity of a child combined with a keen and intelligent interest in the world and its affairs. He did much for Freethought in the press, and stood high in the opinion of the community in which he lived. Mr. Ezra Hale, a late President of the Glasgow Branch, and an ardent worker for the movement is another who has to be added to the list of those who have joined the "eternal caravan," and whose labours will continue to bear fruit. Finally, London Freethought is the poorer by the death of F. Schaller, once well known as an indefatigable worker at public meetings, but whose extreme age kept him inactive in body for some years, although still as active as ever in mind. To these and to others who have passed from our midst, the Society pays its tribute for selfless work done.

The Society continues its association with the National Peace Council, League of Nations Union, Secular Education League, and the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. The Executive has also distributed gratuitously a considerable quantity of literature, and supplied lecturers for a number of organizations that have applied for them. In this way a quiet, but valuable propaganda is being carried on. It is a form of work that might be indefinitely extended.

The head of the English Church has selected 1937 for a year of "Recall to Religion." And by emphasizing the primitively religious aspects of the coronation ceremony, the essence of which is the virtual transformation of the Chief or King into a God, it is evidently hoped that by mixing an unintelligent form of patriotism with an ill-understood religious ceremony, to secure a revival of religion among the less intelligent section of the community. It is very likely that some measure of success may be gained by this manoeuvre. Self-interest may induce a more public profession of religion, and the glamour of processions and parades, with elaborate religious services may create a resurgence of that primitive superstition, which Sir James Frazer has reminded us lies just below the surface of our civilization, and which may one day, if we are not careful, overwhelm our achievements. It is in the survival of primitive forms of thought that the chief danger to modern civilization lies.

But Freethinkers can if they will turn this stirring-up of the savage to our advantage. The awakening of interest in religion, may make it easier to excite interest in an examination of religion. Conditions are vastly different to-day from what they were a hundred years ago when the evangelical fakir and mountebank held a prominent position in the religious world. We have at our command an armoury of information concerning the origin and nature of religion combined with a conception of the character of social evolution, such as had no existence a century since. We have also a volume of cheap well-written literature on the subject that can be used with explosive force against these modern revivalists.

If Freethinkers will do what they might do and ought to do, if they will set themselves to the work of organization, and convert themselves into individual missionaries of Freethought, the Archbishop's recall to religion may easily lead to a great strengthening of Freethought in this country. We cannot always make

opportunities for disseminating the gospel of Freethought, but we can take advantage of opportunities when they are offered us. And if we make the most we can of the opportunity that is now given, we should see the next year one in which something has been done definitely to bring nearer the reign of intelligence, justice and humanity in the affairs of the world.

The World Union of Freethinkers

THE year 1880 was an important one in the history of European Freethought. Anti-religious thinkers until that year were organized locally, if they were organized at all; in few countries were there national associations. There existed a National Atheist Society in Italy under the presidency of Garibaldi; the National Secular Society had been founded in 1866 as all our readers know. In France the Grand Orient Lodge of Freemasons had in 1877 erased from its procedure all reference to a Deity, and thenceforward became a means of spreading Freethought in the Latin countries of Europe.

In 1880 Belgian Freethinkers established a national federation at a meeting held in Brussels, and at the same time invited Freethinkers of other countries to join them in forming an International Federation of Freethinkers. This proposal met with general support. National Federations were founded in many other countries in that same year or in the following years, and the first International Congress was held in London in 1881 at the invitation of the National Secular Society. The International Federation had its headquarters at Brussels and held its congresses every three years. The third congress was also held at London, and there are probably some English delegates still with us who could exchange memories of that congress with the Belgian delegate Dr. Terwagne, who has guided the fortunes of the international body in recent years. Charles Bradlaugh presided over the congress and Mrs. Besant and J. M. Robertson were the secretaries.

A condition of affiliation to the International Federation was that of no political bias, which has been a condition of membership of the N.S.S., that is to say that an affiliated society, just like an individual member, might have a special and specific political aim, but in so far as it co-operated with the international association it could not expect its peculiar political tenets to be incorporated in any resolution binding on the international federation.

The early years of this century marked a great increase of activity among Freethinkers, and a consequent development of organized Freethought, mostly in France, Italy and Spain. A very remarkable congress was held at Rome in 1904, which was followed by another in the very next year at Paris, one which marked the separation of State and Church in France. A similar celebration gave rise to an interesting congress at Lisbon in 1913, where Freethinkers had taken leading parts in the establishment of the Republic in 1910.

The War put an end to International Freethought activity and a brake on national work. The end of the war gave rise to a tremendous development in certain countries, notably in Russia, Germany and Austria, Czechoslovakia, in Italy for a short time, and later in Spain. During the war the Portuguese organization the *Registo Civil* lost power, and has since faded out under the dictatorship of Salazar.

In Germany the palmiest days of pre-war Freethought did not bring more than 50,000 subscribers to the various Freethought Societies, of which the most

noteworthy were the Freidenkerbund and the Monistenbund (followers of Haeckel). After the war the three main organizations in German-speaking countries could boast a list of members totalling to over 1,000,000. In Austria the Catholic Fascist reaction has driven all Freethought activity underground; in the words of that most noble Prince Starhemberg, Freethought is "kulturschändlich," a cultural shame. In Hitlerian Germany there is no place for Freedom of Thought, any more than there is in the Italy of Mussolini, the renegade Rationalist. In these three countries Secularist propaganda is now carried on at considerable risk of severe imprisonment, even of death (as a prisoner endeavouring to escape or resisting arrest).

In Czechoslovakia the great ferment of the new century led to the formation of a Czech organization under conditions of considerable difficulty. It became, nevertheless, sufficiently strong to invite the International Federation to hold its congress there in 1907. The *Volna Myslenka* was suppressed during the war, but rose again vastly stronger in the new Republic, for its leaders were also leaders in the new state, and the first congress after the war was held at Prague in 1920 amid scenes of remarkable enthusiasm. At Prague, or, as our Czech friends invite us to call it, Praha, was also held the last congress, that of 1936.

This congress was a notable one in that the International Federation of Proletarian Freethinkers had asked to join the older body, which was frequently known as the Brussels International because its seat had been at Brussels since 1880 (except for a short period after 1931, when the Secretariat was at Prague). The chief society in this Communist International was the Russian Association of Militant Atheists. In other countries it had relatively few members, but in the U.S.S.R. the number of its subscribers attained the formidable figure of 6,000,000. This in the last year or two has dropped to under five million. Its activities are chiefly educational, e.g., scientific films, summer schools as well as the usual platform work, literature, etc.

The international federation changed its title last September to the World Union of Freethinkers. It invites all Freethinkers to attend its congresses, and calls on all Freethought organizations to support it to the best of their ability. The word Freethinker (*Libre-Penseur*, *Freidenker*) is one of wide meaning. It rejects all who accept authority in religious opinion, and includes all who endeavour to form convictions as to religion for themselves. As this admits too great a variety of heretics, a qualification is introduced by requiring Freethinkers also to be Rationalist, i.e., to accept reason as the supreme test of truth. The Freethinkers then whom the World Union would unite may be Atheists or Deists, Agnostics, Theists or Secularists (a name which arouses curiosity among foreigners since it suggests a connexion with "*sicut erat in principio et nunc et in saecula saeculorum*," and so seems more appropriate to a clerical society). At the present time there is a greater need for union amongst Freethinkers, no matter of what label, than there has been for many a long year. Those who would have the privilege of thinking freely also require the right of speaking freely and writing freely and assembling freely. If they would retain what powers have been gained for them by those who have been ready to suffer for freedom in the past, they must be ready to act freely and in particular to give freely.

The authority of the World Union devolves from the Congress, now to be held every two years, to the International Council to which every country is invited to send two delegates. The voting is so arranged that no single country can override the rest. The Council elects on personal grounds an Executive Committee,

and the following officers: President (now Dr. Modeste Terwagne, Belgium); Vice-President (Professor Lukatchevsky, Russia); Treasurers, R. Clerebaut (Belgium) and de Ronde (Holland); Secretaries, Mademoiselle H. Pardon (Belgium) and J. Jansen (France). The seat of the Secretariat is at Brussels. The Council meets yearly, the Executive twice a year or more often as required. Minor matters are dealt with by the officers.

The World Union endeavours to focus the attention of Freethinkers on those subjects which it believes are of the most urgent importance to us, either for the time being or universally. Science and Religion, the formulation of a rational Ethical system, Education both of the adult and the child, are things which we unceasingly study. Ecclesiastical policy, political reaction and clerical and other irrational activities have to be carefully watched and combated. Last, but not least, an essential for the development of liberty is Peace. There is never a lack of material for the debates of the Congress, nor any lack of work for the Executive; what is always lacking is treasure. Excellent projects are proposed; praiseworthy decisions arrived at in Congress or in Council; but the Executive views them wryly and the Treasurers wring their hands. No resolution entailing expense should be tabled if it does not include a practicable scheme for finding the necessary money.

No International Congress has been held in England since 1887, and the Executive Committee of the World Union asks the English Societies to consider the possibility of holding the Fiftieth Congress in London in 1938. The Executive Committee of the N.S.S. has therefore placed on the agenda of the Annual Conference a resolution inviting the Union to hold its next congress in the Metropolis in September, 1938.

There are not many parts of the European mainland which are not strongly affected by clerical and political reaction at the present time. England is comparatively undisturbed. It is therefore felt that it offers a better meeting-place for the nations than any other country. We English also hope that the presence of Freethought leaders of other lands will stimulate our own people to still greater activity.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

THE SWINBURNE CENTENARY

SIR,—In "Mimnermus'" article of the *Freethinker* dated May 9, he comments upon Swinburne's life and the odium which the church and its supporters bestowed upon him. But, in one of the paragraphs, it appears as if Mimnermus is playing into the hands of established institutions, for he relates that "curiously, he (meaning Swinburne) made no mark at Eton or Oxford." I wonder if any intellectual heretic can really make a "mark" at such orthodox schools as Eton or Oxford? It seems that those men of high talent who are truly individualistic find great difficulty in succeeding at academic studies, especially if these studies are so procustean as to eliminate any possibility of the student using his own mind.

One must remember that amongst other men who have had their genius decried one can count Thackeray (whose teacher told him that he should give up both writing and painting and enter business), and Hardy, who in *Jude the Obscure*, related the incidences of his own life, although transposing these to his principal character "Jude," discouraged from entering the architectural profession by a pedantic professor.

The *Freethinker* is becoming finer every week. It

knows when to use badinage to defeat its opponents, and it knows when to use philosophy. The policy of the *Freethinker* is truly the didactical materialism of Atheism.

ROBERT S. BLUM.

SIR,—Mimmermus in his interesting article on "The Swinburne Centenary" wrote: "But for his outspoken views about priestcraft and monarchy, he must inevitably have succeeded Tennyson as Poet Laureate."

Would Swinburne have accepted the Laureateship? The following is an excerpt from one of his letters:—

I am not a professional or official poet, and could not undertake to write any verse patriotic or other—to order.

EDGAR SYERS.

VEGETARIANISM

SIR,—Your correspondent, Frank Hill, is, of course, quite correct in maintaining that the terrible cruelties he describes in connexion with slaughtering for food are irreconcilable with the Christian myth of a loving creator. The quotation from Ingersoll is, however, very misleading as a description of the ways of Nature. Actually, only a minority of mouths—animal or human—are "Slaughter houses," or stomachs "tombs."

It should be remembered, too, that the methods of man are far more cruel than those of nature in this respect—if I may be allowed to separate "man" from "Nature" for the sake of argument. The carnivorous animal kills his prey in the heat of the chase, and nature's mechanism has provided that when the nervous system is keyed up in the efforts of escape or self-defence, the sensations of pain are reduced to a minimum. This is not the case when man slaughters animals in that condition of passivity and trust which the processes of rearing and feeding have developed in them.

Man is by nature vegetarian, having descended from non-carnivorous stock, and his habit of flesh-eating, with the terrible barbarities it involves, is quite indefensible.

Many of the world's greatest thinkers—Plato, Voltaire, Shelley, G.B.S., etc., have been vegetarians on principle. I suggest that it is a question deserving of our serious consideration, and not merely to be dismissed after employing it to emphasize the foolishness of the belief in a "good" God.

JOHN A. TYSOM.

NOISY RELIGION

SIR,—The following is an extract from *The Sydney Morning Herald* of April 2:—

In a letter to the Hurstville Council, a resident of Dora Street complained of "shouting, singing, and loud testifying" at a mission in the Baptist Church adjoining his home.

He said that he was reluctant to complain; but a continual nuisance had been caused which made it impossible for his family to secure any rest. His child was awakened at night with fright by the bellowing of the congregation.

The writer stated that he had been asked by church authorities, on occasions, to stop using his piano when services were being held; but he could not be expected to do so until the noise in the church ceased.

He asked the Council to take steps to abate the nuisance, so that he could obtain the peace which might reasonably be expected in his own home.

The custom throughout Australia is for all trams, etc., to stop running on Sundays during church hours. I suppose it is very much the same in many other British communities.

Thus, the arrangement is all in favour of the church. Let us welcome, then, the change that we have in the protest here entered—in other words, in the Hurstville resident declaring that "the bellowings in the Church next door" are a public nuisance.

More important still—in the way of indicating the healthy, present-day trend—is the fact that a conservative daily paper like *The Herald*, with its enormous, State-

wide circulation, gives full publicity to the complaint, and thereby exposes the worshippers in question to public ridicule and derision.

Yes; verily the world is moving!

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

FREETHOUGHT IN SYDNEY

SIR,—A communication from a correspondent signed "George Waite" appeared in the *Freethinker* of February 28, under the caption, "The Decline of Secularism in Sydney." The position of Secularism in this State is so misrepresented by the writer, that in the absence of a refutation readers of the *Freethinker*, outside Australia, are likely to be seriously misled. (1) The hall mentioned by the writer formerly used by Freethinkers has not been used for decades by Freethinkers; it passed through many hands before its present use by a religious sect.

(2) The late Thomas Walker never "seceded" from the cause of Freethought. Even when a prominent figure in the Western Australian Parliament he frequently lectured upon Freethought subjects. (3) Neither did the late W. W. Collins secede from Secularism. During his short term as a parliamentarian in New Zealand he frequently lectured from the Freethought platform, and continued to do so regularly (in addition to publishing a Freethought journal) until a year or two prior to his death in Sydney. (4) Wallace Nelson has spent most of his life as a journalist, not as a parliamentarian, and has lectured in recent years from our platform. Joseph Symes, like W. W. Collins, was a personal friend of mine for years, and were he alive he would be the first to acclaim the great work of Mr. J. S. Langley in Melbourne, where he spent most of his life (not in Sydney), and the activity of Freethinkers in Sydney, but Joseph Symes was always a man to be taken seriously!

What is the position of Secularism in Sydney to-day? Our Society occupies Ingersoll Hall which has a seating accommodation for four to five hundred people. It is pleasing to state that the seating capacity is frequently taxed to the utmost. Lectures are delivered regularly every Thursday and Sunday evenings. Our open-air meetings in the Sydney Domain—the Hyde Park of Australia—attract hundreds of people every Sunday afternoon, they are now probably the largest meetings held in that open-air forum.

At all our meetings there is a very large sale of Freethought literature. In addition to books and pamphlets thirty dozen copies of the Australian *Rationalist* are sold at our meetings, in addition to the widely spread distribution of the *Secularist*. Among other activities our Society is now holding for the second term a well-attended class in Psychology, which is conducted by one of the foremost psychologists trained by the Sydney University.

Neither is the æsthetic side of life overlooked, for we will shortly be holding the 150th Saturday night musical recital in charge of a gentleman justly famed for his knowledge of music. The "decline" of Secularism in Sydney is further shown by the fact that at a debate recently held under the auspices of our Society in this city between one of our speakers and the Principle of Moore College, the theatre in which the debate took place was packed to the doors! Such is the position of Secularism in Sydney. Had your correspondent's letter appeared in a Sydney publication there would have been no need for this communication, the misrepresentations would be readily recognized, but when the readers of the *Freethinker* are likely to be misled the matter calls for a reply.

A. SCOTT BENNETT.

A LAST SURVIVOR

SIR,—I write with regard to your reference to *Man and His Universe*, by John Langdon Davies. In this book, which is of great interest, he certainly and finally disposes of the Village Atheist, with his (the Village Atheist's, of course) vulgar brawls, and, worse still, of both the Materialists and the, curiously named, Rationalists.

I feel sad about this, as I claim to be all three of these

apparently extinct entities, Atheist, Rationalist, and Materialist.

Later in the book, Mr. Davies says, we may legitimately wonder if we are as much alive as an atom of radium, but we mayn't—no Mr. Davies not if we use the English language in a legitimate way.

Now using "living" in this way, makes me wonder if the gifted author in question means what I mean by the word Atheist, or Rationalist, or Materialist, or does he just put a meaning in words to suit himself, or his argument?

I have bred, using in each case one of each sex, animals and birds of many sorts.

Would Mr. Davies say if the living radium atoms—I can go no further, there are words which even the *Freethinker* would not flunk proper), but Biologists may know what is necessary effectively to reproduce the species of birds and animals anyway.

As a child I was taught that young got here by a kind of strategical method; as a Village Doctor, I now know better.

If any are left, I will be pleased to entertain round about tea time, any Village Atheists, with a view to perhaps a protection Society for any survivors, and maybe an effort to propagate the species, which it would be a pity to lose. Finally, Mr. Davies, is it at the moment of contact of the bodies of the radium entities that the sparks begin to fly?

W. R. ENGLISH.

Branch News

MANCHESTER BRANCH

THE Twentieth Annual General Meeting was held in the King's Café, Oxford Road, Manchester, on Sunday, April 25.

Mr. Monks occupied the Chair.

The Secretary gave a report of the year's working. During the Summer the many open-air meetings had been fruitful of good results—it was proposed to continue, and if possible extend this form of propaganda during the coming Summer commencing with Mr. G. Whitehead's campaign from May 15 to 29. During the Winter Session indoor meetings had been held with National Speakers and a Demonstration addressed by speakers from our own and nearby Branches. Provided a hall can be obtained at a suitable rent, weekly meetings will be held next Winter.

The Balance Sheet, unfortunately showing a large deficit, was approved. If members whose subscriptions are in arrear will remit quickly to the Secretary, there will be a substantial reduction in this deficit. The subscription (2s. 6d.) is low, but all who can increase the amount will assist the Branch in the continuance of its propaganda. The President, Alderman Geo. Hall, who has occupied the position for two years, was compelled, owing to ill-health, to refuse nomination. He was thanked for his past services and received the good wishes of the members for his speedy recovery to his normal good health.

The following Officers and Committee were elected: President, Mr. W. Blaney; Secretary, Mr. W. A. Atkinson (40 Montford Street, Salford, 5); Asst. Secretary, Mr. W. Collins; Literature Secretary, Mr. C. McCall; Committee, Mrs. McCall, Messrs. Bayford, C. H. Black, Dunstan, Firth, Freeman, Monks and Newton, Auditor, Mr. J. R. Guard; Conference Delegates, Mrs. McCall, Messrs. Atkinson and Blaney.

The Branch will be able to report a substantial increase in membership and financial standing. If the Slogan, "Every member another member" is acted on, the year 1937/8 will be a record for Freethought in Manchester.

The formation of local groups was discussed, and it is intended to initiate this scheme—which should result in greatly increasing the strength of the movement in the City—in the near future.—W.C.

GLASGOW BRANCH

THE Glasgow Secular Society Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, May 9, when a satisfactory Balance Sheet, showing a steady increase of members, and increase of social and financial activities, was submitted. A special feature of the meeting was the profit both in money and membership resulting from the social functions. A favourable bank balance was accepted with much satisfaction.

Election of Office Bearers: Wm. Hamilton (again), President; Vice-Presidents, T. L. Smith, A. Copland; Secretary, M. I. Whitefield; Treasurer, D. McSimon; Librarian, W. S. McNeil; Committee: Mrs. Bridges, Miss Cairns, Mr. Findlay and Mr. Henderson; Delegate to Annual Conference, M. I. Whitefield.

Obituary

JOSEPH GEORGE SHEPHERD

THE remains of Joseph George Shepherd were cremated at Golders Green Crematorium on Thursday, May 13. Starting work at 11 years of age, and in his 71st year when he died, he had sixty years of activity to his credit, during which he spent considerable time in the interest of his fellow workers. A convinced Freethinker, he took an active part in Trade Union affairs as a railway worker, and filled the positions of Branch Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer in the National Union of Railwaymen. He also served for a time as a Borough Councillor for St. Pancras, and for a number of years was a member of the Management Committee of the London & North Western Railway Provident and Pension Societies. In all those undertakings he was keenly interested. A large number of friends and representatives from his various interests joined the family and relatives in the Crematorium Chapel, where a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market): 7.0, A Public Debate between Mr. C. Tuson and the Rev. T. B. Scrutton, Vicar of Kingston. Literature for sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, May 22, Mr. Rosetti. White Stone Pond Hampstead, 11.45, Sunday, May 23, Mr. Leacy. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, May 24, Mr. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Sunday, Mr. H. Preece. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mrs. E. Grout. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"The Archbishop's Recall to Religion."

Conway Memorial Lecture

Dr. STANTON COIT will deliver the Twenty-eighth lecture, entitled "The One Sure Foundation for Democracy," at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Wednesday, May 26. Chair to be taken by Dr. G. P. GOOCH, at 7 p.m. Admission free. Reserved seats, 1s. Tickets to be obtained from Conway Hall.

The Book That Shook The Churches

The Age Of Reason

THOMAS PAINE

With Critical Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN

For more than Thirty Years Men and Women went to prison to vindicate the right to publish and circulate this book

This is a complete edition of Paine's immortal work, and covers, with introduction (44 pages), 250 pages of close type, well printed on good paper with portrait cover. Price 4d., postage 2½d., or strongly bound in cloth with portrait on plate paper, 1s. 6d., postage 3d.

This is the cheapest work ever published in the history of the Freethought Movement. No other book ever shook the Churches so thoroughly, and its wide circulation to-day will repeat the effect it produced more than a century ago. It is simple enough for a child and profound enough for a philosopher. Paine's book appealed to the people in 1794; it appeals to the public to-day.

THE MIRACLES OF ST. MARTIN

BY

C. CLAYTON DOVE

Price post free 7d.

Footsteps of the Past

BY

J. M. WHEELER

Price 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

LETTERS TO THE LORD

Chapman Cohen

This work shows Mr. Cohen at his best and his wittiest.

Price 1s. By post 1s. 2d. Cloth, by post 2s. 2d.

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

BUDDHA The Atheist

By "UPASAKA"

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price ONE SHILLING. Postage 1d.

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

SPECIAL OFFER.

Essays in Freethinking

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Three Volumes Complete of "Essays in Freethinking" will be sent post free for

7s. 6d.

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

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

SECOND EDITION

Paper 2s. Postage 2d. Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

A New Propagandist Series
by **CHAPMAN COHEN**

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

- No. 1 Did Jesus Christ Exist?
2. Morality Without God
3. What is the Use of Prayer?
4. Christianity and Woman
5. Must we Have a Religion?
6. The Devil

OTHERS IN PREPARATION

Each Pamphlet contains Sixteen
Pages

Price 1d. Postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Christianity, Slavery and Labour

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth 2s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus

BY

W. A. CAMPBELL

Cloth 2s.

Postage 2d.

THE REVENUES OF RELIGION

BY

ALAN HANDSACRE

Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d. Paper 1s. 6d. Postage 2d

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth, gilt, 2s. 6d. Postage 2d. Stiff paper
1s. 6d. Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 Farringdon St., London,
E.C.4

INGERSOLL'S

famous

AN ORATION ON THOMAS PAINE

One of the most eloquent
tributes to the greatness
of Thomas Paine

Price 2d. Postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

220 pages of Wit and Wisdom

BIBLE ROMANCES

By **G. W. Foote**

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

Price 2/6 Postage 3d.

Well printed and well bound.

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

DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL?

An Exposition of the Subject in the Light of the
Doctrines of Evolution.

By **CHAPMAN COHEN**.

Half-Cloth, 2s. 6d.

Postage 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

SECOND EDITION.

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