

THE Freethinker

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Next week's "Freethinker" will contain a full report of the "blasphemy" trial.

*We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king,
And the lie at the lips of the priest.*

—SWINBURNE.

The Last Word.

THIS is my last word before the Boulter case comes on for trial at the Central Criminal Court. I am writing on Tuesday afternoon, February 4. In a few hours the *Freethinker* will leave my hands for the printing machines; and in twenty-four hours it will be in the hands of the wholesale newsagents for distribution throughout the kingdom.

Twelve months ago I was raising a fund for the widow of my gallant old colleague, Joseph Symes, who died so tragically at the close of 1906. Now I am raising a fund to defray the cost of defending a Freethinker who is indicted for the artificial crime of "blasphemy." Both occasions came upon me (and the Freethought party) with great suddenness. Certainly we were not expecting a "blasphemy" prosecution. And I fancy that the "behind the scenes" element of the present case will prove very interesting.

Perhaps I had better say again, very briefly, why I took up this Boulter case. Mr. Boulter wrote to me, quite naturally, for advice, and of course I gave it. In doing so I was obliged to point out the difficulties he might experience in defending himself personally. Perfectly plain speech was my duty in the circumstances. But I did not seek to determine his judgment. I said that if he decided to defend himself I would help him as far as I could. If, on the other hand, he decided to be defended by counsel, I would find all the legal expenses. I would not take his answer on the spot, so much did I wish him to come to an independent conclusion. I asked him to think it over by himself. He did so, and he resolved to put the case in my hands. Then I summoned a special meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive. At that meeting my action as President was unanimously endorsed.

Let me repeat that Mr. Boulter was not a member of our Society. He was a free-lance. I saw his name in lecture announcements, but I did not know him personally. We were under no sort of official obligation to see to his defence. We acted upon

principle. We would not stand by and see *any* Freethinker prosecuted, and perhaps imprisoned, for attacking Christianity. No matter how he did it. We satisfied ourselves that there was no "obscenity" or "indecent" in the case. It was a case of pure and simple "blasphemy." And on that ground we were prepared to fight to a finish.

And now let me say how I have regarded this case from the very beginning. Having suffered twelve months' imprisonment myself under the Blasphemy Laws, I do not wish to see any other Freethinker get a taste of the same experience. I know exactly what it is, and I cannot recommend it. But that was not all. Something far more important lay behind. Bigotry has the characteristics of a wild beast. When a tiger tastes blood he wants more. Nothing but blood will satisfy his craving. And when bigotry has secured one victim it wants another. Nothing will satisfy its craving but more victims. That is why I have strained every nerve to frustrate "this abominable prosecution."

"These are the times that try men's souls." That fine expression of Paine's applies to all such situations. Those whose hearts are not in their pockets, or in any place but the right one, answer the challenge of tyranny. The timid, the time-serving, the mercenary slink away, with all sorts of excuses on their trembling lips. But their contemptible safety depends, after all, on the bolder action of others. One man goes to prison to-day, another to-morrow, and another the day after; and as the brave men disappear behind the prison gates the turn of the cowards draws nearer and nearer.

I do not hesitate to say that I have been trying to guard the liberty of *all* Freethinkers; and I have no doubt that this will be recognised in the days to come.

Mr. Boulter has stood his ground. The circumstances did not allow of his doing more. Every step in the defence has been taken after ample legal consultation. He accepts what is decided by counsel, and it takes more real courage to do that than to make a mere personal splutter.

Freethinkers will notice a change in the name of our counsel. Mr. Dickens, K.C., was, after all, too busy to accept the brief, but we were able to secure Mr. L. Atherley-Jones, K.C. Having met this gentleman in more than one consultation, I am sure of his ability; moreover, he is a son of Ernest Jones, the Chartist leader, a man of splendid abilities and eloquence and noble character, who suffered three years' imprisonment as a popular leader. May an hereditary passion for liberty pulsate throughout the son's defence of free speech in a later generation. But be the issue what it may, the end is not yet. We shall fight this case while we have an inch of standing room.

G. W. FOOTE

God and Evil.

THE problem of how to harmonise the existence of a God, such as believers conceive, with the existence of the world as it actually is, is as old as theology itself. And it will only disappear when theology is given up as an aggregation of question-begging words resting upon a foundation of primitive ignorance and inherited delusion. For the problems of theology are not such as arise from the pressure of facts upon the human mind. Problems such as those connected with the mutations of matter, the development of life, the growth of society, or the clash of human passions, cannot be evaded. They are present in the facts themselves. But the problems of theology are, so to speak, self-created; they only exist when people believe, and have no existence apart from their beliefs. They are due to the conflict of a theory with facts that cannot be removed, and with which they are in hopelessly irreconcilable conflict.

The difficulties press on all believers alike. Old theologians and new theologians are equally helpless before them. Only one advantage the new theologian possesses over others. The orthodox school use the older formulas, and their familiarity and comparative definiteness enables many to recognise their weakness. The new theologian coins a new formula, which, besides possessing the charm of novelty, is vaguer in its terminology—an added attraction for such as mistake mental haziness for breadth of comprehension. Such people swim about in a mental fog of their own manufacture, and persuade themselves that, because they cannot see the rocks, none exist. In truth, all the old difficulties are still there; none have been removed, for the simple reason that they are irremovable.

A good illustration of the truth of what has been said is furnished in a couple of recent articles by Dr. Warschauer in the columns of the *Christian Commonwealth*. Dr. Warschauer tries his hand—in the light of the New Theology—at dealing with that religious perennial, the "Problem of Evil." And the curious thing is that Dr. Warschauer, as a "New Theologian," simply repeats the arguments that have done duty for generations in the mouths of theologians of an older pattern. He resembles them not only in their arguments, but also in their failure. And in the end he says, as they said, that no explanation could be "other than partial." A mystery remains when all is said and done, and people are called upon to confess that all is very good, when their reason tells them the exact reverse. The new theologian, like his forerunners, has in the end to serve out a mental anæsthetic to keep his flock easy.

Dr. Warschauer says that his correspondents ask him:—

"Why does God allow such and such dire calamities to befall, when he might just as well prevent them by the exercise of his power—as I should do if I were he? Why does he permit poverty, or vivisection, or accidents in the mine? 'I am not God,' says one, 'yet I would stop these things if I could, and with a very strong hand, too.' Another one asks why God, in designing human nature, made it infinitely inferior to his own?"

These are the questions Dr. Warschauer sets out to answer; with what success we shall see.

The first reply made by Dr. Warschauer is to the effect that Omnipotence cannot do everything. It cannot make a stick without two ends, or cause parallel lines to intersect. We must not expect omnipotence to do that which is inherently absurd or contradictory. Well, we will agree to this, only in that case the conclusion is not precisely that which Dr. Warschauer draws. The logical conclusion is, that we are as far off as before getting a God who is a creator. For what is meant, although it is not stated plainly, is that God, so far as he exists, is bound by the conditions of his own existence, and is as powerless beyond these limits as the meanest of living things. For these limiting conditions cannot be self-imposed. To conceive them

as self-imposed, we must conceive that upon which it is imposed as already existing. But if it already exists, it is limited by the conditions of its existence, and our problem remains exactly where it was. Dr. Warschauer has simply thrown in a few more words, which are doubtless as confusing to himself as they will be to the majority of his readers.

Dr. Warschauer's conclusion is that, as omnipotence cannot do that which is self-contradictory, God

"could not make finite beings at one and the same time capable of goodness, yet incapable of sin, and that for precisely the same reason—viz., because to do so would involve self-contradiction. Goodness or morality, or the part of a finite being, necessarily implies the exercise of choice; let me remark, in parentheses, that what it may imply on the part of the Infinite Being we are quite unable to say, the Infinite being necessarily incomprehensible. The Divine omnipotence itself, then, in determining that man should be a moral creature, had to endow him with the power of choice, for only a course of action freely chosen has any moral quality at all; but freedom to do right implies an equal freedom to do wrong—the possibility of virtue implies the possibility to sin."

This passage is so confused, that it may possibly overstrain a reader's patience to quite straighten it out; nevertheless, I will venture. Dr. Warschauer says, for instance, that he does not know what morality may mean with God. Well, but if it does not mean with God what it does with us, what on earth can it mean? If morality with God means something different to morality with us, what is this but another way of saying that it is not morality at all? And if it is not morality, why does Dr. Warschauer call it by that name? Why does he call God moral if he is "quite unable to say what it is like"? God, he tells us, cannot do that which is inherently absurd and self-contradictory. Very well, then all one need say is, on his own principle, that just as God cannot make a stick without two ends, so morality with him must be what it is with us—in kind—otherwise we have a distinct contradiction in terms. By precisely the same reasoning as Dr. Warschauer's we could talk of some place in which $2 + 2 = 5$. We need only think of one 2 as equalling our 3, and the trick is done.

Next, we learn that "goodness or morality" necessarily involves choice—which is true enough, but only with important qualifications, the recognition of which destroys Dr. Warschauer's case. It is true that with all of us there is present the *conception* of choice (I do not say the *power* of choice, because, as we shall see, this varies with different people from the point where the power to do either right or wrong is almost the same, to a state where no conscious choice is made), but this no more involves the power to do wrong than does the conception of flying involve the power of aerial navigation. That the possibility of wrong-doing is not, quantitatively or qualitatively alike with all, is almost self-evident. Some men may do with ease actions that are simply impossible to others. With some the resolve to do the right thing only comes after long hesitation and struggle; with others, there is no more a conscious "exercise of choice" than is involved in the act of breathing. In those cases where the impulse to do right is not very strong, there will be hesitation, deliberation; and only after an internal struggle will the right thing be done. In cases where the impulse to do right is strong and imperative, there will be no hesitation, no deliberation, but simply the automatic reply of the person's moral nature to the circumstances of the moment. And under such conditions no one would hesitate to say that this last case was the more moral of the two. Yet, if Dr. Warschauer is correct, and morality "necessarily implies the exercise of choice," man is increasingly moral as he is increasingly conscious of choosing between right and wrong—that is, he becomes less moral just in proportion as his moral nature is more developed, more certain in its action, and as he becomes less conscious of any desire to do wrong.

Such a conclusion is, of course, ridiculous; yet it must stand if Dr. Warschauer is correct. The truth

is, however, that morality is not dependent upon choice at all. Goodness, *per se*, has nothing to do with choice. It is true that choice has something to do with human nature, but that is merely one of the functions of the problem before us. From the subjective side, goodness is the name given to certain desires or intentions of the human subject; and from the objective side it is the name given to the consequences of actions upon the community at large. But whether these actions result from "choice" or not, can in no way affect their nature so long as they are consciously performed. The sense of choice may have its value as one of the factors that go to the development of character. The man who is brought to the point of recognising the consequences of his conduct may be the stronger afterwards for his previous resolve to choose one course rather than the other; but that, again, is merely an accident of the situation. Conflict will develop strength here as in other directions. Under existing conditions the exercise of choice has its good aspects; but there is no need for Dr. Warschauer to point these out; what he is asked to do is to justify the action of a God who deliberately created these conditions. And this he never comes within a thousand miles of doing.

In the nature of the case, conscious choice only arises where there is hesitation. We do not choose to eat, because the desire is imperative. We do choose—to a greater extent—*what* we shall eat, because the foods are various and our likes and dislikes more nearly balanced. But where our taste for one particular kind of food is very strong, that food is selected at once, with very little consciousness of choice on our part. So with actions. An ill-balanced, an unstable, or an undeveloped character may hesitate long as to what to do because the motives towards different courses are nearly equal. But a well-developed, stable, and *moral* character does not hesitate. The motives towards honesty, truth, and justice are so strong that there is no sense of conflict, and no consciousness of choice. The decision follows upon the occasion. The whole of education, in fact, from the cradle to the grave, aims at taking from us the consciousness of choice, and making right action inevitable. On Dr. Warschauer's theory we are made non-moral by the process of moralisation.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Is Christian Faith Reasonable?

IN the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, the Rev. Professor W. Adams Brown, Ph.D., D.D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York, undertakes to answer that question in the affirmative. If Dr. Brown's treatment of the subject is not convincing it is not because of any lack of ability on his part. He is a man of deep and wide learning, and of considerable fairness in argument. He has published several theological works which are much above the average, and the general impression in theological circles is that he is one of the most logical and effective apologists. It is a natural inference, therefore, that if Christian faith is reasonable Dr. Brown will succeed in proving it to be so, or that if he fails in the attempt the case is utterly hopeless.

Dr. Brown commences his article by making the admission that many modern men are fully convinced that there is "no longer any rational basis for the definite structure of beliefs" called systematic theology. The Principal of one of the leading American universities once said to him, "You have my sincerest sympathy." It should be noted that Dr. Brown is Professor of Systematic Theology. Pressed for the reason for his condolence, the Principal replied:—

"When I was a boy I was brought up to believe that the Bible came as straight from the hand of God as the letters my father wrote me when I was at school came

from his. But you no longer believe any such thing. To you it is the work of men like ourselves, containing elements of diverse character and of different historical value, and you apply to it the same critical methods which you would use in reading Homer or Horace. How is it possible, then, that you can claim for doctrines drawn from such a source the same unquestioning assent which has been given to the teachings of Christian theology in the past? What substitute can you provide for the infallible revelation you have given up, strong enough to furnish a rational basis for Christian faith?"

That is the problem which theological teachers are obliged to face, and which Professor Brown does face in the article under consideration. We shall now carefully examine his treatment of it. He endeavors to solve it as a scientific theologian, and not as one who falls back on any form of external authority. He represents "a scientific theology—a theology, that is to say, that handles the subject-matter of religion with the same rigorous methods of logic which characterise the other sciences, and yet attains the definiteness and certainty which seem necessary to religious, or at all events to Christian, faith." First of all, Dr. Brown gives us his definition of faith. To him faith is not another name for knowledge, though it is at least of equal value. Faith begins where knowledge ends. It is a function of the imagination and of the will. To this definition there can be no valid objection; and it is quite true that, as thus defined, faith is not "the special prerogative of religion." It is of invaluable service in science, art, politics, medicine, and business. It is a radical mistake to think that science offers no scope for the exercise of the imagination. A truly great scientist is also a genuine poet. But this fact affords no argument for the reasonableness of Christian faith. As yet Dr. Brown has not informed us in what respect Christian faith differs from scientific. He does tell us that science and religion "belong to different spheres," but he does not mention what the exact sphere of the latter is. To assert that "the experience which religion brings and the ideals by which it is inspired bring us into contact with objects which are capable of sufficiently exact description, and whose effects upon life may be tested over a wide enough area, to justify their description in scientific terms," is by no means to prove that Christian faith is reasonable. Free-thinkers know perfectly well that religious experience can be described, and they do describe it, in scientific terms; and their description of it is such as to show clearly that the religion which brings it is built on unreason. Even witchcraft is capable of a description in scientific terms, but surely that is no evidence that faith in witchcraft is reasonable.

Next, Dr. Brown supplies us with his conception of Christianity. His contention is that "the particular type of conviction which we associate with historic Christianity, rests upon an experimental basis so permanent, and produces results so beneficial to the individual and to society, that the hypothesis of the ultimate truth of the objects which it postulates is one which it is reasonable to entertain." Now, what is historic Christianity? Where is it to be found? Shall we apply to the Greek or the Roman Catholic Church for a definition of it? Or shall we find it in Protestantism; and, if so, in which of its innumerable divisions? "It might not be impossible to show," says Professor Brown, "that it was *reasonable* to be a Christian, if we could first discover what it *means* to be a Christian. But this is just where the difficulty begins." Suppose the Professor were to present us with his idea of what it means to be a Christian, how many are there who would accept his deliverance as authoritative? This is what the Professor himself says:—

"How different is the world-view of a devout Catholic from that of a convinced Protestant! The Greek Catholic, proud in the sole possession of the orthodox faith, looks upon the Roman Catholic, with his claim to a continuing tradition through the Papacy, as an upstart. Within Protestantism, the high churchman and the broad churchman stand at the antipodes, and the evangelical of the old school looks with equal suspicion

upon the practices and beliefs of both. And when we pass from a study of schools and sects to the consideration of individual convictions, we find ourselves plunged in a variety so endless that any thought of agreement seems out of the question. If the truth we seek to defend be so broad as to include all these types, it would seem also to be so vague as to be little removed from the twilight religion with which we have contrasted it."

In his attempt to overcome this difficulty, so vividly portrayed, Dr. Brown seems to forget that up to this point his aim has been to establish the reasonableness of the historic Christian faith—the Christian faith, that is to say, as almost always interpreted and held by the so-called orthodox Church, because from this point to the end of the essay, his one aim is to emphasise the fact that *no form of historic Christianity is pure*; and that there is alien stuff in all of them. "So there have grown up within Christianity types of religious life that have little in common with the genius of the original stock on which they were grafted, and which have been able to maintain their right to the Christian name only through the powerful influence of an indiscriminating tradition." Hence, according to the Professor himself, no form of the historic faith can be pronounced wholly reasonable. To find a reasonable faith you must discover the parent stock. "Catholicism is only one of many forms which Christianity has assumed in the course of its history, and by no means the purest." Of course, the Professor speaks as a Protestant, and, therefore, from prejudice. A Catholic Professor would express a less favorable opinion of Protestantism; and the one opinion is worth just as much as the other. But what is the parent stock? That alone being reasonable, how are we to get hold of it? "What is really needed," according to Dr. Brown, "is the recovery of that purer, simpler, and more human form of Christianity which the course of the later development has tended unduly to obscure. It is precisely upon the fact that we are able to recover and to observe this parent type, that we base our belief in the possibility of giving a rational defence of Christian faith."

Let us see exactly where we stand. Here is a Professor of Systematic Theology who confesses that the historic Christian faith is not rational, that the essentially Calvinistic theology which he himself is supposed to champion cannot justify itself at the bar of reason, the only genuine article being that "parent stock" which all existing bodies of divinity tend so largely to obscure. But is not Dr. Adams Brown aware that there is an amazing diversity and vehement conflict of opinion as to what "the parent type" is? He says that the ideal which Christianity reveals is "incarnated in a Person." "In Jesus of Nazareth it presents us with a figure of definite character and distinct outline, through a study of whose life and teachings it is possible to distinguish between that which is truly Christian and that which is falsely so-called." But here Dr. Brown speaks as a systematic theologian of a specific school, or, in other words, as a strong partisan. Jesus of Nazareth is the most debatable character in literature. Even his professed disciples have been quarrelling and fighting and putting one another to torture and to death over him from the beginning until now. And, even at this hour, are not the preachers of his so-called gospel slandering and anathematising one another in his name? In the course of his article, Dr. Brown refers more than once to *The Religion of All Good Men*, by H. W. Garrod, an Oxford tutor, and once charges Mr. Garrod with failing to observe the distinction between the parent stock and its derived forms; but had he read the book more closely, he would have perceived that it is "the parent stock" itself which Mr. Garrod so pungently criticises. In the first essay in the volume, it is the moral teaching ascribed to Jesus that is declared to be at fault, and totally unsuited to meet the requirements of the world. On several important points Jesus was in serious error, and taught to the detriment of society; and surely such teaching could not be adjudged reasonable.

Thus we are forced to the conclusion that Dr. Brown has totally failed to justify his thesis; and after reading his article most carefully, and admiring the spirit which pervades it, we are more convinced than before of the utter impossibility of making a good case for the reasonableness of any form of Christian belief. Christianity is a structure built upon the sand of ignorance and superstition; and, instead of serving as supports and buttresses to it, the forces of criticism are steadily undermining it, and making it quite impossible much longer to preserve it.

J. T. LLOYD.

Ingersoll on "Blasphemy."

I DENY the right of any man, of any number of men, of any Church, of any State, to put a padlock on the lips—to make the tongue a convict. I passionately deny the right of the Herod of authority to kill the children of the brain.

A man has a right to work with his hands, to plough the earth, to sow the seed, and that man has a right to reap the harvest. If we have not that right, then all are slaves except those who take these rights from their fellow-men. If you have the right to work with your hands and to gather the harvest for yourself and your children, have you not a right to cultivate your brain? Have you not the right to read, to observe, to investigate—and when you have so read and so investigated, have you not the right to reap that field? And what is it to reap that field? It is simply to express what you have ascertained—simply to give your thoughts to your fellow-men.

If there is one subject in this world worthy of being discussed, worthy of being understood, it is the question of intellectual liberty. Without that, we are simply painted clay; without that, we are poor, miserable serfs and slaves. If you have not the right to express your opinions, if the defendant has not this right, then no man ever walked beneath the blue of heaven that had the right to express his thought. If others claim the right, where did they get it? How did they happen to have it, and how did you happen to be deprived of it? Where did a church or nation get that right?

Are we not all children of the same Mother? Are we not all compelled to think, whether we wish to or not? Can you help thinking as you do? When you look out upon the woods, the fields—when you look at the solemn splendor of the night—these things produce certain thoughts in your mind, and they produce them necessarily. No man can think as he desires. No man controls the action of his brain any more than he controls the action of his heart. The blood pursues its old accustomed ways in spite of you. The eyes see, if you open them, in spite of you. The ears hear, if they are unstopped, without asking your permission. And the brain thinks in spite of you. Should you express that thought? Certainly you should, if others express theirs. You have exactly the same right. He who takes it from you is a robber.

For thousands of years, people have been trying to force other people to think their way. Did they succeed? No. Will they succeed? No. Why? Because brute force is not an argument. You can stand with the lash over a man, or you can stand by the prison door, or beneath the gallows, or by the stake, and say to this man: "Recant or the lash descends, the prison door is locked upon you, the rope is put about your neck, or the torch is given to the fagot." And so the man recants. Is he convinced? Not at all. Have you produced a new argument? Not the slightest. And yet the ignorant bigots of this world have been trying for thousands of years to rule the minds of men by brute force. They have endeavored to improve the mind by torturing the flesh—to spread religion with the sword and torch. They have tried to convince their brothers by putting their feet in iron boots, by

putting fathers, mothers, patriots, philosophers, and philanthropists in dungeons. And what has been the result? Are we any nearer thinking alike to-day than we were then?

No orthodox church ever had power that it did not endeavor to make people think its way by force and flame. And yet every church that ever was established commenced in the minority, and while it was in the minority, advocated free speech—every one. John Calvin, the founder of the Presbyterian Church, while he lived in France, wrote a book on religious toleration in order to show that all men had an equal right to think; and yet that man afterward, clothed in a little authority, forgot all his sentiments about religious liberty, and had poor Servetus burned at the stake for differing with him on a question that neither of them knew anything about. In the minority, Calvin advocated toleration; in the majority, he practised murder.

I want you to understand what has been done in the world to force men to think alike. It seems to me that if there is some infinite being who wants us to think alike, he would have made us alike. Why did he not do so? Why did he make your brain so that you could not by any possibility be a Methodist? Why did he make yours so that you could not be a Catholic? And why did he make the brain of another so that he is an unbeliever—why the brain of another so that he became a Mohammedan—if he wanted us all to believe alike?

After all, may be Nature is good enough and grand enough and broad enough to give us the diversity born of liberty. May be, after all, it would not be best for us all to be just the same. What a stupid world if everybody said yes to everything that everybody else might say.

The most important thing in this world is liberty. More important than food or clothes, more important than gold or houses or lands, more important than art or science, more important than all religions, is the liberty of man.

If civilisation tends to do away with liberty, then I agree with Mr. Buckle that civilisation is a curse. Gladly would I give up the splendors of the nineteenth century—gladly would I forget every invention that has leaped from the brain of man—gladly would I see all books ashes, all works of art destroyed, all statues broken, and all the triumphs of the world lost—gladly, joyously would I go back to the abodes and dens of savagery, if that were necessary to preserve the inestimable gem of human liberty. So would every man who has a heart and brain.

How has the Church in every age, when in authority, defended itself? Always by a statute against blasphemy, against argument, against free speech. And there never was such a statute that did not stain the book that it was in, and that did not certify to the savagery of the men who passed it. Never. By making a statute and by defining blasphemy, the Church sought to prevent discussion—sought to prevent argument—sought to prevent a man giving his honest opinion. Certainly a tenet, a dogma, a doctrine, is safe when hedged about by a statute that prevents your speaking against it. In the silence of slavery it exists. It lives because lips are locked. It lives because men are slaves.

The Great First Cause.

A CHARACTERISTIC sophism of the Christian apologist is the assertion that the unknown "First Cause" postulated by science is identical with the God of religion.

Of origin, science admittedly knows nothing. It is familiar with the evolution and transmutation of matter and forms of life; but the problem of the origin or creation of matter transcends human knowledge. Such a thing is inconceivable, and we can only take refuge in an unknown "First Cause."

To conceive of when time was not, or space and matter were not, baffles the human imagination.

Time, space, and matter must be accepted as eternal and indestructible. Of the origin or purpose of life we are equally ignorant. It is the old, old problem which baffled the Persian poet and philosopher, Omar Khayyam.

"Into this universe, and why not knowing,
Nor whence, like water willy-nilly flowing,
And out of it, as wind along the waste,
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.

What, without asking, hither hurried whence?
And, without asking, whither hurried hence?
Another and another cup to drown
The memory of this impertinence!"

But since the riddle is insolvable, we need not necessarily accept the Omarian resource of the flowing bowl. The most philosophic course seems to be to ignore the question altogether, and devote ourselves to the problems of our immediate existence and the realisation of human happiness. "Not so!" says religion, which has always sought to trade upon man's credulity and turn his ignorance to its own account; "not so; for since science teaches that there can be no effect without a preceding cause, a universe without a God is inconceivable."

This is a fair example of the *non sequitur* logic served up by the average pseudo-scientific theologian.

They were not always thus, these gentry; it was sufficient at one time that they had a divinely-inspired revelation with which to crush the doubter and confound the sceptic. Since those days literary criticism of the Bible has made great progress. The "inspired" revelation is demonstrably full of erroneous and mutually-destructive passages which render the inspiration theory no longer tenable.

But there is no audacity like that of your Christian apologist. With unblushing effrontery he calmly makes a strategic movement to the rear before the advancing legions of science and repudiates the earthworks of ignorance he formerly defended. "Of course," the defender of the faith will tell you, "we never really held the theory of verbal inspiration or literal accuracy of the Bible; much that it contains must be regarded as the poetry of religion, beautiful legends, lovely stories, etc.;" and then he will proceed to lay aside his ancient blunderbuss of inspiration and discharge his new fieldpiece of pseudo-science. If we examine closely this plausible attempt of the Christian apologist to compaginate the unknown "First Cause" of science with the God of his religion we shall discover many fundamental differences between the two hypotheses.

The first difficulty with which we are beset is to discover the Christian definition of God. They will indignantly repudiate the comminatory Deity of the Old Testament when we attack it, and assert that we are "flogging a dead horse."

This much, however, is certain: the Christian believes God to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and good. A God must be omnipotent or nothing, and a Deity that was not good—at least in intention—would be unworthy of our consideration, much less our worship. I say "at least in intention," for nowadays we hear such pathetic stories from muddled moralists, in their attempts to explain the existence of evil, of a God who is impotent to work out his will in us without our assistance. But this unorthodox conception of God we may disregard, for it assumes the equipollence of man and God, and reduces godhead to a mere name without its attributes. Now, when we turn to Nature, what do we find? Nowhere is there any trace of a good and intelligent Being ordering the universe.

The "First Cause" has been neither omnipotent nor good, but always subject to the law of evolution. Man has achieved his present position through unceasing conflict with the forces of nature and bloody war with the lower animals.

Even at this stage of evolution, when man has largely subjugated the forces of nature to his own purposes, those forces frequently gain the upper hand.

Earthquakes, volcanoes, lightning, tempest, and the ravages of fire assail him on land; storms, fogs,

and hidden rocks end to matchwood his ships on the high seas, destroying his life and hindering his commerce; while plagues and diseases in the most virulent forms incessantly attack and annihilate him. Is this the handiwork of a good God, or simply the operation of the blind, unreasoning forces of nature? Nowhere do we find the slightest indication of a power superior to nature that cares for man. Nature displays neither pity nor hatred; that which she evolves without intention she destroys without remorse. In the operation of her forces she shows a sublime disregard for man and his works. The lightnings of heaven reduce to a heap of *débris* the beautiful cathedral and the garish gin-palace with equal unconcern. The evicted widow from the tenement catches cold and dies even more quickly than the cracksman at his crib; while a shipload of missionaries runs equal risk of wreck with a pirate vessel.

Nature views it all with unruffled complacency. None but man has a heart to sympathise with and comfort the victims of her indifference.

Here, then, we see the fallacy of connecting the God of religion with the "First Cause" of science.

Man has endowed his God with human morality instead of the non-morality of nature. God is a conception of an independent force superior to nature, while force in the universe is a characteristic of matter, inherent in, and non-existent apart from matter.

Yet the Christian religion dare not give up its belief in a God powerful enough to interfere with the natural order of things and the affairs of men. It is upon this *a priori* assumption that the existence of the Church is based; but that it is what Spencer would term a bastard *a priori* premise cannot be denied on the grounds of pure reason. In sound logic the *a priori* argument is dependent upon propositions of which the negation is inconceivable, and the premise of a God who assists man cannot be included in this category. Any other ideas of God may be cast aside as mental lumber.

Doubtless a nebulous conception of Deity will persist in the human mind for many generations to come; but the God that demands worship and obedience from man is rapidly dying a natural death, and with it the occupation of the *soi-disant* "men of God." The religion of Humanity and Usefulness is the religion of the future, and the disseminators of knowledge are its high priests.

ALFRED GERMANY.

Acid Drops.

The Birmingham Trades Council has passed a resolution condemning the action of the authorities in interfering with "the right of free speech" of the unemployed. That is all right. But the Birmingham Trades Council should now pass another resolution condemning the action of the authorities in interfering with the right of free speech of the employed. We refer to the exclusion of the Secularists from the use of the public-school buildings, which are available to all other citizens, and the denial of their common right to sell their literature at their Town Hall meetings. The Birmingham Trades Council has done nothing hitherto in this matter, but, as the proverb says, it is better late than never.

Popular preachers always try to improve the shining hour. Several of them seized upon the piping-hot news of the assassination of the King of Portugal last Sunday. Rev. R. J. Campbell, who is a born sentimentalist, naturally had his say over the tragedy; and just as naturally, with nobody to guide him, he took the obvious view—which is nearly always wrong in these cases—Dr. Clifford did ditto. The Catholic Archbishop of Westminster almost wept over the murder of the sovereign of "a Catholic kingdom." How the professional instinct peeps out in these reverend gentlemen! We may add that Catholics, in past times, have gloated over the assassination of Protestant monarchs.

The Church of England boasts of having raised £7,462,244 voluntarily during the past financial year. It is a vast sum.

We do not desire to underrate it. A religion entrenched behind such piles of money-bags must be difficult to attack and conquer. And we hope Freethinkers will bear the fact in mind. Some of them are a great deal too fond of declaring that the battles of Freethought are all over, that the war with superstition is really ended and the victory is practically won. It would be far better, and we think much more to their credit, if they chortled less and supplied some "sinews of war" to those who are doing the fighting.

According to the Bishop of London, Jesus Christ is looking to the 500 Episcopalian clergy and their 50,000 communicants in East London to convert the district. We wonder what's the matter with the clergy, and members of all the other denominations, that Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with them? Even General Booth is not in it. Jesus only has his eye on the Church of England. All the rest may go to the Devil in the fashion that best pleases them.

Bishop Ingram also says that he has two great historical witnesses to the resurrection. One is St. Paul's vision, the other the 500 witnesses "of whose names we have no idea," but who were alive in Paul's day. Excellent! Paul's vision *may* be historical, but that is only proof—of a vision, not proof of an objective fact. Neither are there 500 witnesses; there is only one who says he had 500 other witnesses. He might just as easily have made it 5,000 or 5,000,000. In this case the Bishop would have been still more impressed. Our metropolitan bishop is quite a treat. For kaleidoscopic absurdity he has not his equal on the bench. And we are not surprised to hear him say that after twenty-four years as a clergyman his belief is twenty times stronger than it was at his ordination. Some people progress in wisdom, and some in other directions. Besides, he was not ordained a bishop. Promotion came after, and carried with it proofs peculiarly its own.

The good old Christian Evidence Society is appealing for funds again. Here is a pretty passage from its January circular-letter, signed by that truthful and accurate person, the Rev. R. V. Faithfull Davies, secretary:—

"Most people are probably unaware of the organised attack which is now being directed chiefly against the Person and Teaching of our Lord Himself but also against all belief in a personal God and in a future life for man. This propaganda is carried on not only in journals devoted to the purpose but by Lectures in the Parks and elsewhere. These are financed by unbelievers, while the Christian Evidence Society, which exists to meet them, is in constant anxiety for the means to carry on the defence, by giving to those whose faith is being wrecked reasonable answers, which they cannot supply for themselves, to the attacks made upon Christianity."

Not a word is said about the admirable effects produced by the circulation of the "Secularist whiskey hymn" slander which we squashed a few months ago, and which the reverend secretary of this unreverend Society allowed his underlings to use after its complete exposure. The C. E. S. does exist to "meet" infidels, but it has never yet met them with anything but lies and libels. Not in London, at any rate.

With the begging letter of the reverend secretary of this unreverend Society goes a little sixteen-page pamphlet setting forth its work and virtues. We see that its President is the Archbishop of Canterbury. This gentleman's salary is £15,000 a year. No doubt he is a firm believer. He ought to be at that figure. Fifteen thousand sovereigns are fifteen thousand sterling evidences of the truth of Christianity. Such a religion rings true.

We see that the C. E. S. Chairman of Council is the Right Honorable the Earl of Halsbury. This is the gentleman who, as Sir Hardinge Giffard, did all the dirty legal work for the Tories in "baiting Bradlaugh" after 1880. He is also the gentleman who conducted the prosecution of the *Freethinker* for "blasphemy." We are not aware that he has rendered any other service to the British nation. Yet he has had his hand deeper in the nation's purse than any other man of his time; and, as Lord Chancellor, he scattered his relatives over the public service in what was often called a scandalous manner. Lord Halsbury has found that godliness is great gain. No wonder he believes in the inspiration of the book which enunciates that holy principle.

Having signed a memorial declaring that they believed in Socialism in the sense in which it is expounded by Socialist leaders, some of the 100 clergymen who appended their names now find it necessary to explain. The memorial, it appears, was drawn up by Socialists who were not Christians

and submitted to the clergy for signature. So they were in a corner, and signed. And having signed the statement that "Socialism is required of us by the implications of our religion," the Rev. James Adderley now explains that they do not hold the statement to apply to all Christians—which reduces the manifesto to an absurdity. If Christianity implies Socialism, it must hold true of *all* Christians who are intelligent enough to understand their religion. If it does not apply to all, it is difficult to see how it can apply to any. Mr. Adderley is either stultifying himself or calling his fellow believers fools. Mr. Egerton Swann, another of the signatories, we believe, also writes that there is, "properly speaking, no such thing as Christian Socialism." Which is about the truth of the matter.

Meanwhile, the *Methodist Recorder* asks its readers whether any allowance is made for "religion and the religious instincts" in the Socialistic scheme? It also asks, "under a system that is mainly concerned with temporal and intellectual well-being, what amount would be considered adequate to be devoted to the upkeep of worship and teaching and foreign missions?" We should like to see Socialists face these questions boldly and deal with them and all they imply. Christians who are genuine in their devotion to both Christianity and Socialism are bound to demand an answer, although those clergymen who are merely using Socialism for their own ends may not press for a reply. Christians, we may be sure, will not be content to have their religion placed—as one of the *M. R.*'s correspondent's puts it—upon the same level as amusements, and merely tolerated by the Socialist State. And, on the other hand, Socialists cannot honestly say there is in the Socialist State any other provision than this for religious beliefs. If all Socialists were straightforward in their speeches, and all Christians logical in their beliefs, there would soon be an end to the alliance between the two.

"We have long held," says the *Methodist Recorder*, "that simple unsectarian Bible teaching is the only way out of the Education difficulty." There are none so blind as those that won't see, and the above comment is a first-class illustration of the old adage. As a matter of fact, we had "simple unsectarian Bible teaching" for over thirty years, and hardly any but Nonconformists were content with it. Catholics and Churchmen at one end, and Freethinkers at the other, were not satisfied to see the schools so conducted as to satisfy none but Nonconformists. The Education Act of 1902, the quarrel that has never ceased since the Act of 1870, are eloquent proofs that this is *not* the way out. But it is characteristic of Nonconformists to cry out that because they are satisfied the whole world is content. There is only one way to end the trouble, and that is along the lines of equal justice to all. And we may depend upon it that so soon as we have a Government with enough *men* in its ranks to show that it will deal fairly with all sections and give favor to none, everybody will settle down to the inevitable. Even Nonconformists might learn to act justly if injustice were not so easily practised.

Mr. George Toulmin, M.P., says that what the nation needs is not "Socialism, or Radicalism, or any other 'ism, but Jesus Christism." We commend the opinion to his constituents. At any rate, this gentleman should apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and confine himself to the pulpit.

The *Christian World* gives its readers an illustration of the care of "Providence." At Rhyl, a lantern lecture was being given in a Wesleyan Church. Suddenly the operator was unable to throw any more pictures on the screen, and the meeting came to an early termination. Soon after the audience had dispersed a huge gaselier fell with a crash from the ceiling, which would have killed those sitting under it had it fallen earlier. The strange thing, says the report, is that on examining the cylinder the lantern operator found it still half-full of oxygen. Here, then, was a clear "providential" interference. It was "Providence" that tampered with the cylinder and so sent the people home earlier. But why could not "Providence" have held up the gaselier and let the entertainment run its course? Or consider what a fine effect it would have had if "Providence," before all the people, had carefully guided the gaselier into a vacant corner. At stage managing effects "Providence" has still a deal to learn.

Rev. Thomas Law, Organising Secretary of the National Free Church Council, denies that there is any boycott of the Rev. R. J. Campbell and other New Theologians. But what he says is not convincing. And the fact remains that Mr. Campbell is no longer near the front of the Free Church activity. His own explanation is straightforward and

probably accurate. In his new book he makes the following statement of the results of his New Theology agitation:—

"All my Free Church Council engagements were cancelled by the Churches themselves, as were most of my preaching appointments with other ecclesiastical organisations. Even where they were not cancelled the situation was, as a rule, to say the least of it, somewhat strained. At the present moment I am in the position of having been quietly excluded from an active share in every Nonconformist organisation with which I was formerly connected, with the exception of the City Temple itself. I do not complain of this; it has done me no harm whatever; but it is as well for the public to know the facts."

Mr. Law's general denial is really no answer to this definite statement.

The *Daily News* had an article lately on the evils of cigarette smoking, especially amongst youths, and mentioned the fact that 80 per cent. of the 15,000 youths who are detained to-day in the prisons, reformatories, or industrial schools of the London district are cigarette smokers. Our contemporary placed the following extracts at the head of its article:—

"There is a law in Japan prohibiting persons in minority to smoke, punishing them, fining the parents or guardians who allow them to smoke, and the tobacco dealers who supply them."—Viscount Hayashi.

"Fifteen million cigarettes are smoked every week in the United Kingdom by boys of from eight to sixteen years of age, and the number is steadily increasing."—Estimate for 1907 made by the National Hygiene League.

The moral of this is plain, though the *Daily News* did not draw it. Go to a heathen country for common sense.

A very funny thing happened the other day at Leicester. To be accurate, it was on Wednesday, January 29. No less than 124 Passive Resisters were summoned for non-payment of rates. All of them (save one) were Free Churchmen (of course!), and the Rev. G. W. Seager addressed the bench for the whole 123. "Free Churchmen," he said, "had no objection to the Church of England as a church, but they objected to their children being taught things subversive to their faith and at their expense." The reverend gentleman's grammar is mixed—at least in the *Mercury* report—but his meaning is clear enough. He objects to Church people's children being taught Church doctrines at the general public expense; and especially to Church doctrines being taught in schools to which Nonconformists are obliged to send their children, even although they are protected by the Conscience Clause. Sooner than pay for religious teaching different from his own, the reverend gentleman and his 122 friends were prepared to be sold up or cast into prison. But the magistrates made the usual order, and the curtain was rung down.

Then the curtain was rung up again. There was one Passive Resister who had no connection with all the rest, and he asked to be allowed to speak for himself. His name was F. J. Gould, ex-member of the Town Council, and tolerably well known in the borough. Having obtained leave to speak, he proceeded to say that as the 123 Passive Resisters in front of him, all Nonconformists, were there to protest against being made to pay for Church of England religion, he was there to protest against being made to pay for Nonconformist religion. But we had better give his own words, as reported in the *Mercury*:—

"He said he was a passive resister, but the two gentlemen who had spoken had not represented his opinions, and he was no party to the arrangements just made. That was the first and last time he would appear before the magistrates as a Passive Resister. To simple Bible teaching so called, he strenuously and conscientiously objected. He had heard the Bible lesson given under that system in every one of the Council schools in Leicester, and, therefore, he understood what the teachers taught and what the children heard. He quite admitted that there were some commendable moral elements in this Bible teaching, but the theological portion of it, to his mind, was of no educational value, and it was contrary to his belief as a follower of Positivism—the religion of humanity. The teaching in his opinion was practically a Nonconformist method. It was a sectarian method, a Philistine method, an unscientific method, and in some respects it was morally unsound. Therefore he objected to pay for religious instruction in the Council Schools."

We have seen a sly twinkle in Mr. Gould's eye occasionally, but we did not know he was such a humorist. It was a brilliant idea—a piece of superb satire—and intelligible to every ratepayer in Leicester.

There is a Nonconformist League at Trecynon, South Wales, which, as is to be expected of Nonconformists, is full of the desire for justice and fairplay to everybody, and is brimming over with love for all humanity. At a meeting

of this body the other day several of these liberty-loving Nonconformist parsons proposed that an appeal be made to the editors of local papers, asking them to exclude reports of "Pugilism and Secularism" from their columns. The bracketing of the two things is what one might expect from such quarters. Impudence and intolerance are often found in close company. We are neither advocates nor patrons of pugilistic encounters, but we decline to believe that a community runs anything like the danger from such displays as it does from the existence, in positions of leadership, of such a body of ignorant jackanapes as the movers of this resolution. No one is bound to attend a prize-fight, but these black-coated, social plague-centres force themselves upon all, and contaminate all. Fortunately, for the sake of human decency, one minister present—a Unitarian—objected to bracketing Pugilism and Secularism, and thought it unwise to boycott expressions of opinion. The resolution was carried, but the protest shows there was one gentleman, at least, in the meeting. Pity he does not come out from such company. They are past reform.

A religious paper notes as a "gratifying" fact that the supply of clergymen for Japan now outruns the demand. We are not surprised. No one but Christian missionaries seems to be aware of any demand at all in Japan for this particular article.

The Rev. H. Haigh, ex-Wesleyan missionary, speaking at Stanley, Durham, said that the people of India were naturally and by creed teetotal. They had, however, come to identify British and Christian civilisation with liquor. "If a native of India was seen drunk, the man who passed was certain to offer the jibe, 'How long is it since you became a Christian?'" This testimony has often been given before. Repetition only confirms its truth.

We have received a cutting from a paper published at Barbados (West Indies), referring to the first day's sitting of the Court of Grand Sessions for December.

"As usual this sitting of the Court was inaugurated with service at the Cathedral at 10 a.m., the members of the jury and the officers of the Court, with representatives of the Bar in their robes, being present at the invitation of His Honor the Chief Justice. His Lordship the Bishop was the preacher and based his remarks on Romans xv. 4. In the course of a very able and eloquent sermon Dr. Swaby called attention to the depravity of the age and the growing decline of faith in the Bible which he said, while not altogether free from errors and inaccuracies, nevertheless contained the record of the life of the pattern man Jesus Christ which it was the duty of Christians to try to imitate.

His Honor took his seat at 11.5 a.m., His Lordship occupying a place on his right."

That is how religion goes to work when it has the opportunity. The judge on the bench, and the bishop sitting at his right hand. We all know how Freethinkers would fare in such a priest-ridden country.

It was very good of the Bishop of Barbados, in his sermon to the whole Court—judge, jury, and officers—to admit that the Bible contains "errors and inaccuracies." He would have been more logical and honest, however, to have stated who was (or were) responsible for these errors and inaccuracies. If they were the work of men, it is not unreasonable to suppose (is it?) that men were responsible for all the rest of the Bible. For it is absurd to suppose that the Deity would take the trouble to give mankind a book without taking the trouble to guard it from the distorting hands of rogues and fools.

Naturally the Bishop of Barbados lumps together "the depravity of the age" and the "growing decline of faith in the Bible." That is a trade announcement on his part. His lordship dispenses the A1 patent medicine, which we must all buy and take (or at least buy), else "there is no health in us." We quite understand him. And perhaps in his lucid intervals he understands himself.

Jesus is the maker and ruler of the universe; but he made it badly and rules it worse. He is omnipotent; and yet the world defies him at every turn. He causes disease and suffering, though he is love incarnate. Many of his own disciples go through life in grief and pain, and die terrible deaths. And yet we are told that sometimes he acts the physician and heals the sick. A woman says that after being the victim of dyspepsia for years she went to the Lord Jesus and asked him to cure her, and in less than a week her digestion was perfect. For eight years she had suffered from heart weakness. She besought him to remove it, and he did so right away. When attacked by insomnia, she

appealed to him, and she slept as soundly as a child. Two questions suggest themselves. The first is, why is there disease at all? and the second, why does the loving Savior wait until he is asked before effecting his cures, and why does he not heal all who appeal to him?

Salvation is a curious process. The other evening, a man fervently thanked God that for many years he had been the worst character in the whole town, because the moment he came to Jesus he was made the happiest person in the world. How very nice to be wife-thrashing, burgling, defrauding, or committing a murder one day, and shouting "Hallelujah! praise the Lord," the next. Who wouldn't be a Christian?

The *Christian Herald* solemnly declares that Mr. R. J. Campbell is "fast becoming an infidel, if indeed he is not one already," and that it ought not be possible for him to continue to blaspheme. What a pity the Inquisition is a thing of the past! If it were still with us it would speedily snuff out the *Christian Herald*.

Rev. Dr. Horton, of Hampstead, is a sort of survival from the Dark Ages. His faith is equal to anything. He would go one better than the curate who declared that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, he would have believed it. We have seen many credulous statements by Dr. Horton in print, but the last one takes the biscuit. He told a Liverpool audience that the *Mauretania* was built by prayer. And this is how he explains it. The architect of that monster ship asked God's blessing on every bit of work that was put into her. Consequently the greatest ship in the world was built by prayer. Such is Dr. Horton's argument, and we don't try to refute it. It is worthy of the brain-softening department of a lunatic asylum.

Dr. Horton was simple enough to tell how he knew that the architect of the *Mauretania* mixed up prayer with his business. He got the information from a friend who sat next to the gentleman at a meeting. There's first-hand information for you! Dr. Horton should write a manual of logic. It would probably have a big sale as a bit of comic literature.

"Good-bye; and God bless you and have mercy on me!" Thus wrote Geoffrey Owen Neville, the Middlesex Hospital medical student, who shot himself dead on the eve of what was to have been his marriage. How true it is, as Torrey says, that these Atheists are always committing suicide!

To my mind it is simply absurd for any man to answer with the slightest confidence the challenge of the hasty inquirer, What is to be the religion of the future? I have not the slightest idea. I am perfectly certain of my own ignorance, and I have a strong impression that almost everyone else is equally ignorant. I can see, as everyone else can see, that vast social and intellectual transformation is taking place—and taking place, probably, with more rapidity now than at almost any historical period. I can dimly guess at some of the main characteristics of the process. I can discover some conditions, both of the social and the speculative kind, which will probably influence the result. I cannot doubt that some ancient doctrines have lost their vitality.....Doubtless all the elements which the old belief contains will be somehow represented in the new crystallisation of opinion; but I envy, or rather I do not envy, the confidence of any man who takes upon himself to define its precise character.—*Leslie Stephen*.

The beauty as well as the happiness of the universe requires inequality. Equality, smooth surface, and eternal plains have no beauty. We must have hill and dale, mountain and valley, sea and land, suns of all magnitudes, worlds of all sizes, minds of all dimensions, and persons and faces of divers cast and colors, to constitute a beautiful and happy world. We must have sexes, conditions, and circumstances—empires, nations, and families—diversities in persons, mind, manners, in order to the communication and reception of happiness. Hence our numerous and various wants are not only incentives to action, but sources of pleasure, both simple and complex—physical, intellectual, and moral.—*Alexander Campbell*.

FLOP, v. Suddenly to change one's opinions and go over to another party. The most notable flop on record was that of Saul of Tarsus, who has been severely criticised by some of our partisan journals.—*Ambrose Bierce* ("Dod Grile").

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 9, Town Hall, Woolwich; 7.30, "Christianity and the Social Order: A Reply to the Rev. R. J. Campbell."

February 16, Glasgow; 23, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 16, Aberdare; 17, Mountain Ash; 23, Edinburgh. March 8, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 9, Edinburgh; 16, Woolwich; 23, Glasgow. March 8, West Ham.

J. E. LUCKENS.—(1) Criticism is not attack. Those who take the lead in a battle for freedom have the right to ask others why they are not in the fight. Emerson once visited Thoreau, whose principles led him to prison. "Henry," he asked, "why are you here?" "Ralph," replied Thoreau, "why are you not here?" (2) Bradlaugh's letter to the Prince of Wales (now King Edward) on Freemasonry is not now in print, we believe. (3) Victor Hugo was a Theist—not a Christian. You will find all the information you want in the section on Victor Hugo in our *Infidel Death-Beds*. (4) Thanks for your very good wishes and further list of addresses. Remittance passed on to our shop manager.

E. G. D.—If the reverend gentleman means it as a reply to our *Bible and Beer*, it is very disingenuous. In arguing that Bible wines were non-alcoholic he carefully omits reference to the texts with which that theory is inconsistent. Perhaps he thinks he is an honest controversialist; but, in that case, he is mistaken. We don't think, however, that he is worth a reply from our pen.

C. J. PEACOCK writes: "Your call 'To Arms!' makes my blood tingle. In such a cause there will surely be no lack of the 'sinews of war.' Gladly I send cheque, value £5, to be followed by another, of like amount, if necessary."

W. J. MAY hopes we "shall be successful in defeating this disgraceful prosecution."

J. W. WHITE.—Shall be sent. Glad you noted the things you mention. Thanks for your very good wishes.

M. BARNARD.—You cannot admire Hume too much. His character was as sweet as his intellect was subtle, and Gibbon himself was enraptured by "the careless imitable beauties" of his composition. Your edition of the *Inquiry* is probably not a reprint of the one Huxley referred to. Sorry we cannot give you the reference to that passage just now. Hazlitt thought the *Treatise on Human Nature* by far the finest of Hume's works—though the first.

ELIZABETH LECHMERE.—Pleased to hear of your efforts to draw attention to the true character of the "blasphemy" prosecution. That the papers took no notice of your letters is not surprising. We know them so well. They would have given you more attention if you had rung bells, kicked doors, and tried to address a public meeting from (say) the local parson's doorstep.

T. FISHER.—Glad you have such confidence in us. It is true, as you say, that Freethought is a permeating influence; and you and other Freethinkers who "keep pegging away" privately are doing much to help forward "the good old cause."

J. W. de CAUX says: "I hope Freethinkers will support you thoroughly, and that the fanatical and superstitious Christians will have a warm time of it. I enclose my mite towards the expenses."

G. ETHERTON.—Glad you have succeeded, after two years' effort, in making an impression on the local agent. Thanks.

R. IRVING.—"Hospitals in the desert under Moses" is really too jocular. The facts we mentioned may found in the article on "Hospitals" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. See "Sugar Plums" for the rest. Thanks.

F. WHATCOT.—Yes, it was a memorable morning. With regard to the "behind the scenes" element of the prosecution, we shall have something to say after the trial.

J. PARSONS.—Your action is good and must do good. Glad to hear that Mr. J. E. Sears, the Liberal member for Cheltenham, considers the Blasphemy Laws "antiquated" and considers "their removal from the Statute Book desirable."

BARTHEM SIDE.—You have your desire, and you won it fairly, your subscription being the very first to hand.

R. DANIEL.—We hope we are "the right man in the right place." The place is right, anyhow.

J. K.—It will not "fail for lack of funds." The N. S. S. guaranteed (through us) the total bill of costs before the Defence Fund was opened.

H. HIGGINS.—It is enough to contribute what you can afford. If all did that, Freethought finances would be more flourishing.

W. O. FOSTER.—Never fear.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Shall quote from your letter when the President's Fund is brought forward again. Thanks for cuttings.

J. SUMNER says: "Your present action still further adds to the indebtedness the party should feel to you, and emphasises the judgment of the old chief, when he placed upon your shoulders the mantle of his leadership." This correspondent will subscribe again if necessary.

A. TUPLING.—The secretary will forward you a membership form.

H. A. GILLY.—Our time for private interviews is very limited, especially as we reside out of London now, on medical advice.

GEORGE PAYNE, sending cheque to the Defence Fund, says: "I shall watch how the subscription list goes, and, if it appears necessary, will send a further contribution."

E. A. PHIPSON.—The *Freethinker* could not be reduced to a penny without a good deal of capital behind it. Nor are we quite sure that the change would realise your expectations. We appeal to thoughtful readers in a certain direction, and do not try (or intend) to attract the public by trumpery allurements.

T. HOPKINS.—We note your last sentence.

R. GREEN.—Glad you "much appreciate" our action.

ST. COB.—Glad to have your congratulations on the "splendid excellence" maintained in the *Freethinker*.

RANK-AND-FILER.—Yes, we are afraid that jury-packing is not unknown, even in England.

W. MEDLEY.—Much pleased with your letter.

T. TREZONA (Newquay, Cornwall) says: "I heard Mr. Lloyd in Johannesburg. He was on the wrong side then. I enjoy his articles in your paper."

W. B. COLUMBINE, subscribing to the Defence Fund, says: "Every Freethinker in the kingdom ought to support you in your effort to defeat the latest attempt to enforce the infamous Blasphemy Laws."

A. FRAYN (Plymouth).—Pleased to hear you have had favorable replies to your letters re the Boulter prosecution from two of your local M.P.'s—Messrs. C. E. Mallet and T. W. Dobson.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Your letter was apparently delayed a little in the post, but there is no use in returning to the subject now.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Has your local M.P. replied?

H. SLINGER.—Yes, great issues are involved. See our leading article. We have not the latest figures at hand, but the figures given in Joseph McCabe's little book on Education are quite satisfactory as far as they go.

EDWARD BOWEN.—You are one of the "toilers." So are we. Few work as hard as we do. You give your half-a-crown out of a poor man's wages to help in defending another man's liberty. This is the act of a gentleman. One who gave a thousand pounds would have more to give; he would not be more of a gentleman. You see how we regard all these social accidents.

J. MORTON.—You are quite right. If your fellow Socialists won't fight for free speech, what do they expect to get worth having at the end of all their struggles?

W. J. CONROY.—Thanks for kind expressions and good wishes.

E. W. TODD.—We are "bearing the extra strain" well enough.

G. F. FINN.—We always do our best, and are naturally pleased when it is recognised by those whose opinion we value. The rest don't matter.

C. B. A. AND LIVERPOLITAN send £1 10s. and 10s. respectively for the President's Honorarium Fund. Other subscriptions to this Fund (not anonymous) will be acknowledged in due course.

R. H. ROSETTI.—Cannot acknowledge separately, but glad to see West Ham Branch members in the subscription list.

F. A. DAVIES.—Thanks for the information.

A. B. MOSS, subscribing to the Defence Fund, says: "I cannot help thinking, as one who has delivered hundreds of so-called blasphemous lectures during my thirty years' experience as a Freethought lecturer, that Mr. Boulter is very fortunate in having placed at his service your rare talents and great ability, as well as the funds of the National Secular Society, to prevent him becoming a victim to Christian bigotry and cruelty. I trust this will be the last prosecution for blasphemy in this country."

G. F. H. MCCLUSKEY.—"Special occasions like the present," as you say, "stir up the easy-going Freethinkers who fancied all the fighting was over in the last century." Thanks for the rest of your letter.

T. HAYES.—Your letter is very much to the point. Pleased to hear from one who claimed to affirm forty years ago. That you were insulted then was a matter of course.

J. CAPON.—All right. Thanks.

J. BURRELL.—See paragraph.

H. IRVING.—Sorry the movement is so dull at Sheffield. Mr. Foote may be visiting Leeds or Huddersfield in the near future.

J. LAZARNICK.—Other acknowledgment presently.

JOHN ROBINSON.—Yes, the "superfine ones" do show "where they and their methods are in the hour of danger."

H. JESSOP.—We don't issue a weekly contents-sheet, but we have a permanent poster, if you could get it displayed. Thanks for appreciation and good wishes.

A. H. SMITH.—Perhaps it will work out all right.

H. BLACK.—Sorry our hands are too full this week.

W. MUMBY says: "I congratulate you and thank you as a member of the N. S. S. for what you have done, and are doing, in the glorious cause of liberty of thought and speech."

JOSEPH JAMES.—We never open it, having no taste for mere vermin. Rest of your letter attended to.

E. G. TAYLOR.—An important matter, but we simply cannot deal with it this week. For the rest—"Let the dead past bury its dead."

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

E. J. JONES.—We can afford to smile at them. Thanks all the same.

G. BRADFIELD.—As a matter of fact, we don't "see eye to eye" with any political party, but we don't ventilate that in the *Freethinker*. We have plenty to do as it is, and we are trying to do it—as you are good enough to recognise. We don't mind the *Labor Leader* at all; it is really a Christian paper—and acts as such.

AMY ROGERSON.—Sent as desired.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures in the Woolwich Town Hall to-night (Feb. 9), his subject being "Christianity and the Social Order: a Reply to the Rev. R. J. Campbell." The local "saints" should give all the advertisement they can to Mr. Foote's visit.

Mr. Cohen opened the course of lectures at Woolwich Town Hall on Sunday evening. There was a good audience and a good deal of discussion, much of it being raised by friends of the Salvation Army.

Mr. Lloyd pays his first visit to Edinburgh to-day (Feb. 9) as a Freethought lecturer. He speaks twice, afternoon and evening, in the Operetta House, Chambers-street. Admission is free, with a silver collection in aid of expenses. We hope the local "saints" will do all they can to give Mr. Lloyd large meetings and an enthusiastic reception.

Mr. F. Parsons, of Cheltenham, has sent us a number of subscriptions to the Defence Fund. Three of the subscribers are M.A.'s, one is a D.Sc., and two are LL.D.'s. This will show how far it is from being true that only the "vulgar" are against "blasphemy" prosecutions.

Positivists have always been true friends of free discussion. We are glad, though not surprised, to receive a cheque towards the "Blasphemy" Defence Fund from Mr. S. H. Swinny, President of the London Positivist Society. He writes: "I wish you every success."

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, M.P., has done what another M.P. we could name should have done. He put the following question down on the paper for Tuesday, February 4:—

"48. Mr. Bottomley,—To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the pending prosecution of Mr. Harry Boulter upon a charge of blasphemy is being conducted at the expense of the Treasury; and, if so, upon whose authority the proceedings were initiated."

We fear we shall go to press before seeing the Home Secretary's answer, but our readers will look out for it, and we beg to congratulate Mr. Bottomley on his courage.

The West Ham and District Trades and Labor Council has passed unanimously a resolution protesting against the revival of the antiquated Blasphemy Laws, requesting the Labor Party in the House of Commons to question the Home Secretary as to why the Boulter case has been dealt with in such a manner, and calling upon the Government to expunge these Laws from the Statute Book.

The Westminster Branch of the National Democratic League has passed a resolution against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws in the Boulter prosecution, and has forwarded a copy to the Home Secretary and to Mr. Burdett Coutts, the local M.P.

The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (Kensal-road Branch), at its meeting on February 1, unanimously passed a resolution protesting against the "blasphemy" prosecution, and sympathising with the N.S.S. in its effort to "render all such prosecutions ineffectual."

Mr. F. J. Gould wrote as follows in last week's *Leicester Pioneer*:—

"I am glad to see that my friend Mr. G. W. Foote, in conjunction with the National Secular Society, has taken steps to provide for the legal defence of Mr. Boulter, now awaiting trial on a charge of 'blasphemy.' It is astonishing that any religious people should imagine the expression of heresy can be stamped out or even modified by invoking the aid of the police. The dignity of religion is best protected by its own merit and the honorable conduct of its professors."

The *Leicester Pioneer* is a Labor journal.

A meeting of all the Socialist bodies in Brighton—including the S.D.F., the Clarion Fellowship, the I.L.P., and the Fabians—unanimously passed a resolution protesting against "the revival by the Police authorities of the infamous Blasphemy Laws," and strongly condemning "the action of the Home Secretary in giving his sanction to such proceedings." The resolution has been forwarded to the Home Secretary and the local M.P.'s.

The list of subscriptions following this paragraph is all that we had received up to 5 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. No doubt a good many more subscriptions are on the way. They will be needed. Even if the Boulter case is decided by the time this week's *Freethinker* is in its readers' hands, subscriptions will still be necessary, as the bill of costs has to be paid, and the National Secular Society ought not to bear more than the generous share of the burden we referred to last week.

The "Blasphemy" Defence Fund.

Bartrum Side, £1; J. W. de Caux, £1; R. T. Nichols, £2 2s.; C. J. Peacock, £5; J. H. Gartrell, £1 1s.; R. J. Henderson, 10s.; A. J. Young, £1 1s.; G. Brady, £1 1s.; Horatio Bottomley, M.P., £1 1s.; George Payne, £3 3s.; Author of *The Churches and Modern Thought*, 10s.; R. Daniel, 2s. 6d.; R. B., 2s.; G. F. V., 2s. 6d.; J. K., £1; H. Higgins, 2s.; W. O. Foster, 1s.; T. Fisher, 5s.; Five Dane-hill and Chelwood Freethinkers, 11s.; J. P. S., 1s.; F. Whatcott, 5s.; R. H. Rosetti, 2s.; F. Parsons, £1; J. Gale, 2s. 6d.; J. H. McIlquham, 2s. 6d.; J. Pearson, 2s.; Elizabeth Lechmore, 10s.; W. J. May, 5s.; M. Barnard, 5s.; J. Sumner, Jr., 5s.; H. A. Gilly, 1s.; Jersey Lill, 2s.; F. Bonte, £2; T. Hopkins, £1; J. W. Wood, 10s.; Richard Green, 10s.; G. W. Gray, 5s.; W. G. Earargey, 2s. 6d.; Councillor Merritt (Cheltenham), 2s. 6d.; Miss Eamsonson, 1s.; C. Callaway, 2s. 6d.; J. T., 2s.; E. W. Wilkins, 2s. 6d.; W. Wiley, 6d.; T. Sharp, 2s.; Kingsland N. S. S. Branch, £1 1s.; H. Cotes, 6d.; St. Cob, 2s.; E. C. Rae, 2s. 6d.; (Camberwell), Wood, Baker, Mason, Bailey, "Teddy," Saunders, Pierce, 7s.; Short, 6d.; C. J. Teal, 2s. 6d.; H. E. Branch, 2s. 6d.; P. Bridger, 10s.; T. Warwick, 5s.; Rank and Filer, 2s. 6d.; W. and H., 5s.; J. Tomkins, 2s. 6d.; C. Heaton, 2s.; W. Medley, 2s. 6d.; A. Shiel, 5s.; S. H. Swinny (President of the London Positivist Society), £1 1s.; T. Trezona, 2s. 6d.; H. J. H. and Friends, 8s.; G. F. H. McCluskey, £1; H. Slinger, 5s.; W. P. Adamson, 10s.; C. D. N., 2s.; A. Frayn, 2s. 6d.; W. P. Jacobs, 1s.; A. Rowley, 2s. 6d.; E. W. Todd, 1s.; W. J. Conroy, 2s. 6d.; J. Morton, 1s.; W. H. S., 10s.; W. Stevens, 10s. 6d.; R. Speirs, 2s. 6d.; E. Bowen, 2s. 6d.; E. H. and T. H., 10s.; A. Webber, 2s.; Edward Bailey, 5s.; W. Davison, 5s.; W. Horabin, 2s. 6d.; A. B. Moss, 10s.; Liverpoolian, £1; C. B. A., £1 10s.; F. A. Davies, 2s. 6d.; Edgar Dymond, 5s.; J. W. Marshall, 5s.; J. Lane, 1s.; W. J. Marsham, 1s.; J. Timo, 6d.; W. Hardy, 4s.; — Bury, 1s.; F. J. Short, 1s.; A. Cayford, 2s.; G. F. Finn, £1 1s.; Valentine Caunter, 5s.; W. Mumby, £1; W. Palmer, 1s.; J. P., 2s. 6d.; S. Holmes, 5s.; J. Johnson, 5s.; Emily Jardine, 3s.; H. Black, 2s. 6d.; A. H. Smith, 2s. 6d.; Friend, 2s.; J. A. Mosley, 5s.; J. Martin, 3s.; H. Porter, 1s.; J. G. Dobson, 2s. 6d.; C. Dobson, 1s. 6d.; W. Dobson, 1s.; J. Pructt, 5s.; F. H. H., 2s.; H. B., 1s.; Sydney A. Gimson, £2 2s.; Ludwig Stern, 2s.; John Robinson, 2s. 6d.; J. Lazarnick, 10s. 6d.; H. Avenell, 1s.; H. Barton, 2s.; J. King, 2s. 6d.; W. Low, 1s. 6d.; J. Robinson, 1s.; T. W. and H. I., 4s.; A Family Man, 1s.; H. Lees, 2s. 6d.; Edward Jones, 5s.; Ernest Pack, 10s.; H. Jessop, 5s.; J. Capon, 5s.; Glasgow N. S. S. Branch, £1 1s.; W. Waymark, 2s. 6d.; Thomas Hayes, £1; Anon, £2 2s.; Joachim Kasparly, £1; J. H., 5s.; James Rowney, 10s.; W. W. Kensett, 5s.; J. W. F., £1.—Total: £58 18s.

How the Church Protected the People.

"Then, again, the bishops have sometimes acted as tribunes of the people, to protect them from the tyranny of kings." No doubt, when Pope and Cæsar fall out, honest men may come by their own. If two men rob you in a dark lane, and then quarrel over the plunder, so that you get a chance to escape with your life, you will of course be very grateful to each of them for having prevented the other from killing you; but you would be much more grateful to a policeman who locked them both up. Two powers have sought to enslave the people, and have quarrelled with each other; certainly we are very much obliged to them for quarrelling, but a condition of still greater happiness and security would be the non-existence of both.—PROF. W. K. CLIFFORD, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 382.

MANY claims are advanced by apologists for the beneficent action of the Church during the Middle Ages. We are told that the Church cultivated literature, preserved science, abolished slavery, and raised the status of women. And if you will not admit any of these claims, then they confidently argue that the Church acted the part of a protector of the people—standing between the feudal lord and his vassals, shielding the people from their oppressors, and generally mollifying and soothing the violence of the rulers towards their subjects. In proof of this thesis we are told to consider how the Church, again and again, humbled the pride of the proudest and most powerful emperors; as Barbarossa, Frederick II., and Henry IV. Or, to come nearer home, we are directed to the case of Thomas a Becket, who suffered martyrdom for his opposition to Henry II. And, finally, they point triumphantly to Stephen Langton, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, whose name leads the signatures on the great Magna Charta, forced by the Barons from the tyrant John.

That is the picture painted by piety, and even some Rationalists, misled by Comte—the man who Nietzsche declared "outchristianised Christianity"—have admitted the claim. Let us examine this pretty picture, and see whether it is in accord with the facts as recorded by history. We will commence with the case of

THOMAS A BECKET AND HENRY II.

At the time of his accession to the throne, Henry II. was ruler over the most extensive territories; his power was less limited, and he had command of more wealth than any other monarch of his time. But his power, although very great, was limited in one very serious respect. The clergy claimed to be exempt from the common law of the land. No matter what crime the clergy committed, they could not be tried in a court of justice. As the historian Milman remarks:—

"Every individual in that caste, to its lowest door-keeper, claimed an absolute immunity from capital punishment. The executioner in those ages sacrificed hundreds of human lives to the terror of the law. The churchman alone, down to the most menial of the clerical body, stood above the law. The churchman, too, was judge without appeal in all causes of privilege or of property, which he possessed or in which he claimed the right of possession."†

And it must be borne in mind that the clergy of those days were not the milky individuals known to us today as "the third sex." "The prelates of England" were—in the words of a contemporary writer cited by Milman—in the habit of "wearing arms, mingling in war, indulging in all the cruelties and exactions of war. The lower clergy could hardly, with such examples, be otherwise than, too many of them, lawless and violent men. Yet the Church demanded for the property and persons of such prelates and such clergy an absolute, inviolable sanctity."‡

Henry resolved to alter this state of affairs. He declared that all should be subject to the laws of the realm, without exception. The frequency and atrocity

of the crimes committed by the clergy became unbearable. A canon of Bedford, who had committed murder, was tried in the bishop's court and let off with a fine. To cite Milman again:—

"The enormity of the evil is acknowledged by Becket's most ardent partisans. The king had credible information laid before him that some of the clergy were absolute devils in guilt, that their wickedness could not be repressed by the ordinary means of justice, and were daily growing worse. Becket himself had protected some notorious and heinous offenders. A clerk of the diocese of Worcester had debauched a maiden and murdered her father. Becket ordered the man to be kept in prison, and refused to surrender him to the king's justice."*

It was over this case that Henry determined to join issue with the Church, and for that purpose summoned a Parliament at Westminster. He commenced the proceedings by denouncing the abuses of the ecclesiastical courts.

"The archdeacons," he declared, "kept the most watchful and inquisitorial superintendence over the laity, but every offence was easily commuted for a pecuniary fine, which fell to them. The king complained that they levied a revenue from the sins of the people equal to his own, yet that the public morals were only more deeply and irretrievably depraved."†

He demanded that all clerks accused of heinous crimes should be handed over to be dealt with according to law; "for," observed the king, "their guilt, instead of deserving lighter punishment, was doubly guilty."

In this quarrel Henry II.—however bad his own moral character may have been—was absolutely in the right.

"He appeared," as Milman observes, "as guardian of the public morals, as administrator of equal justice to all his subjects, as protector of the peace of the realm. Crimes of great atrocity, it is said of great frequency, crimes such as robbery and homicide, crimes for which secular persons were hanged by scores and without mercy, were committed almost with impunity, or with punishment altogether inadequate to the offence."‡

To give only one instance. Pope Alexander commissioned the Bishops of Exeter and Worcester to visit St. Augustine's, Canterbury. They reported to his Holiness that they found the buildings and estates in a state of total dilapidation; and, further, that the prior debauched the mothers and daughters of the surrounding neighborhood to such an extent that in one single village he had seventeen bastards!

Talk about the Church standing between the feudal lord and his vassals! Why, the people required protection from the violence and wickedness of the clergy more than they did from the feudal lord, because they could appeal to the law for redress against the feudal lord; but the law had no power over the clergy. The Church stood between these miscreants and the law. The Church was their guardian angel; under her shield they practised their iniquities with impunity.

It was this horrible state of affairs that Henry II. determined to end. But the Church would concede nothing "to cede one tittle of these immunities; to surrender the sacred person of a clergyman, whatever his guilt, to the secular power, was treason to the sacerdotal order: it was giving up Christ (for the Redeemer was supposed actually to dwell in the clerk though his hands might be stained with innocent blood) to be crucified by the heathen."§

Without going through all the phases of the struggle between King and Church, it is sufficient to say that the struggle ended in the murder of Becket, the leader of the clergy, the humiliating submission of the King, who prostrated himself before the Church and did public and ignominious penance.

Becket was indeed a martyr, but his martyrdom was not suffered in defence of the poor against the

* Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* (1903), p. 131.

† Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. v., p. 20.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. v., pp., 19-20.

* Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. v., p. 44.

† *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 47.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 42.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

exactions and injustice of the Lords and Barons. "From beginning to end," says Milman, "it was a strife for the authority, the immunities, the possessions of the clergy."* Here and there, he says, in the long correspondence, there is some slight allusion to the miseries of the people in being deprived of the services of the exiled clergy, "yet in general the sole object in dispute was the absolute immunity of the clergy from the civil jurisdiction." The Church, so that they preserved their privileges and estates, never troubled about the sufferings of the people under the iron rule of the Lords and Barons. Henry, although possessing some noble qualities, says Milman,

"was lustful, cruel, treacherous, arbitrary. But throughout this contest there is no remonstrance whatever from the Primate or Pope against his disobedience to the laws of God, only to those of the Church.....if the King would have consented to allow the Churchmen to despise all law—if he had not insisted on hanging priests guilty of homicide as freely as laymen—he might have gone on unreproved in his career of ambition; he might, unrebuked, have seduced or ravished the wives and daughters of his nobles; extorted, without remonstrance of the clergy, any revenue from his subjects, if he had kept his hands from the treasures of the Church. Henry's real tyranny was not (would it in any case have been?) the object of the Churchmen's censure, oppugnancy, or resistance. The cruel and ambitious and rapacious King would doubtless have lived unexcommunicated, and died with plenary absolution."†

Such was the holy cause for which the pious Becket suffered martyrdom! Let us now consider the case of

JOHN AND THE POPE.

"Foul as it is, hell itself is defiled by the fouler presence of John"; and, adds the historian, Green, "the terrible verdict of the King's contemporaries has passed into the sober judgment of history." John was undoubtedly the greatest monster who ever occupied the English throne, notwithstanding the fact that some of our kings would contaminate a modern convict-prison by their presence.

But before entering into the relation of the position of the Church towards John and the people of England, let us see how the Church exercised that moral influence, of which we hear so much, especially in relation to the "sanctity of the marriage tie."

Both Philip Augustus, King of France and John divorced their wives, Philip the earlier of the two. Philip made a political marriage with Ingeburga, a princess of Denmark. From the very first sight of her he contracted a violent dislike to the princess; even at the marriage ceremony he was seen to shudder; her presence seemed absolutely repulsive to him. Of course, under these circumstances, he ought not to have proceeded with the marriage; but whether he was ashamed to send the princess back unmarried, or from fear of political complications, he went through the form of marriage with Ingeburga, but declined to live with her as his wife; and, although Ingeburga declared that the marriage had been consummated, Philip always strenuously denied it.

When Philip became enamored of Agnes of Moran, he, with the help of the Archbishop of Rheims, divorced Ingeburga. For this the Pope, who hated and feared Philip, placed the whole kingdom under interdict. As Milman says, "For the sin of the man, the private individual sin. For that sin a whole nation at least thought itself in danger of damnation." But Philip was not of a spirit to brook the opposition of the clergy urged on by the Pope, and incidentally we may notice that the picture he draws of the French clergy agrees in every particular with what we know of their brethren in England. "Bishop"—so he addressed the Bishop of Paris—"provoke not my wrath. You prelates, provided you eat up your vast revenues, and drink the wines of your vineyards, trouble your-

selves little about the poor people. Take care that I do not mar your feasting, and seize your estates." He swore that he would rather lose half of his dominions than part from Agnes of Meran, who was flesh of his flesh.

Now let us see how John fared at the hands of the Pope. As Milman remarks, "There was a singular resemblance in the treatment of their wives by these sovereigns, except that, in one respect, the moral delinquency of John was far more flagrant." On the other hand, John's wife agreed to the divorce—probably she was only too glad to be rid of such a monster; in any case, to oppose the wishes of John was to invite death, and generally a lingering one at that.

John had been married for twelve years to the Earl of Gloucester's daughter—an advantageous match for a younger prince. But when he became King the daughter of an Earl was not good enough for John. He aspired to a royal connection. He sought a divorce, which he obtained from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who was as obsequious to John as the Archbishop of Rheims had been to Philip. John then concluded the negotiations for his marriage with a daughter of the King of Portugal; and, suddenly breaking off this match, he marries Isabella, the betrothed wife of Count de la Marche.

"Such an outrage on a great vassal was a violation of the first principle of feudalism; from that day the barons of Touraine, Maine, and Anjou held themselves absolved from their fealty to John. But although this flagrant wrong, and even the sin of adultery, is added to the repudiation of his lawful wife, no interdict, no censure is uttered from Rome either against the King or the Archbishop of Bordeaux. The Pope, whose horror of such unlawful connections is now singularly quiescent, confirms the dissolution of the marriage."

But John, at this time, in spite of his iniquities, was a faithful son of the Church, and the Pope required his aid as an ally against Philip. So his holiness quietly smothers that moral indignation which, in the case of Philip, will not brook the slightest violation of the holy sacrament of marriage!

Now let us return to John's quarrel with the Pope. It arose out of the death of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury. The younger monks of Canterbury at once elected their Sub-prior Reginald to the See. The older brethren declared the election of Reginald void, and proceeded, under John's influence, to elect John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, a martial prelate and the great leader in the councils of the king.

Both parties appealed to Rome. It is the unexpected that happens, says the French proverb; and when an appeal was made to Rome the unexpected generally did happen. It did so in this case. Both elections were pronounced void, and Stephen Langton was appointed to the vacant See. The fury of John knew no bounds, and he dared Stephen Langton at his peril to set foot on English soil. The Pope placed the country under interdict, and John replied by confiscating the lands and property of the clergy. Had John been a popular sovereign, or even offered the Barons a share of the spoil, the Pope might have thundered in vain.

"But," says Milman, "while he defied the Pope and the hierarchy, he at the same time seemed to labor to alienate the affections of all orders in the country. He respected no rights; nothing was sacred against his rapacity or his lust. His profligate habits outraged the honor of the nobles; his passion for his Queen Isabella had burned out; not one of the wives or daughters of the highest barons was safe from his seductions or violence; against the lower orders he had re-enacted and enforced with the utmost severity the forest-laws.....the whole people were oppressed by heavy and unprecedented taxation."*

When John laid hands on the property of the Church, he was touching the holy of holies. To touch their wealth was indeed sacrilege. The Pope not only put the kingdom under interdict, but he went to the trouble of personally excommunicating John, with all the paraphernalia of bell, book, and

* Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, p. 131.

† *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 133.

* Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. v., pp. 277-8.

candle. The English bishops proclaimed the deposition of the impious king, and called upon the King of France and all others, under the promise of the remission of their sins, to take up arms to dethrone him. Philip—now reconciled to the Pope—accepted the command of this new crusade, and prepared a large army for the invasion of England.

(To be continued) W. MANN.

Cheltenham Ethical Society and Blasphemy Prosecutions.

A PROTEST.

DR. CALLAWAY, M.A. (president), took the chair at a well-attended meeting of the Cheltenham Ethical Society on Sunday afternoon, and stated that the committee had been in communication with Mr. Snell (hon. secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies) with regard to the revival of the Blasphemy Laws, and that they had drawn up a letter of protest to the Home Secretary.

Dr. Earengay (hon. sec.) moved the adoption of the following letter:—

"To the Right Hon. the Home Secretary.

Sir,—On behalf of the Cheltenham Ethical Society, we beg respectfully to call your attention to the unsatisfactory state of the law respecting blasphemy. The common law of England threatens with fine and imprisonment persons who deny the being or providence of God, or who expose to contempt or ridicule any part of the Bible. The application of this law at the present time would inflict serious penalties upon large numbers of right-living and law-abiding English people, including many persons distinguished in politics, science, and literature, and not excepting the members of the clerical order. Prosecutions are not likely to be instituted except against uneducated persons, who have not learnt to express themselves with decorum and restraint, and thus the application of the law ceases to be impartial.

Any offence against decency can be punished in other ways, any outrage upon the religious susceptibilities of others is condemned by public opinion; but it has become alien to the free spirit of an enlightened age that men and women should be penalised for the expression of their conscious religious beliefs.

Many had hoped that the Blasphemy Laws were fallen into desuetude, but a recent prosecution in a London Police Court has dispelled the illusion. We therefore respectfully urge you to take such measures, legislative or otherwise, as shall prevent any further interference with religious freedom.

We are, Sir, your most obedient servants,

C. CALLAWAY, M.A., D.Sc., President.
W. G. EARENGAY, B.A., LL.D., Hon. Sec."

Mr. F. Parsons, in seconding, expressed indignation not only with the prosecution itself, but also with the methods employed in enforcing it. He mentioned that during the century just closed upwards of 150 persons had suffered for conscience sake under the Blasphemy Laws, their sentences ranging from nine and a half years to six months' hard labor, and that several had died in prison. He called attention to Mr. Blatchford's challenge in that week's *Clarion* to the authorities to proceed against him, if they wished to afford police protection to the conceptions of the deity set forth in the Old Testament, and not against a working man who had quoted from his (Mr. Blatchford's) works (applause). He added that so recently as 1883, Mr. G. W. Foote suffered the martyrdom of a year's imprisonment for the same so-called offence that the Jews alleged against Jesus himself (applause).

The resolution was carried mem. con.

—*Gloucestershire Echo.*

A Positivist on "Blasphemy."

WHILE we are thus discussing the great questions of the social future, a small event has occurred within the last few days to remind us how much of the past remains. Like some old blunderbuss or matchlock in an armory of quick-firing modern rifles, amid the controversies of the twentieth century, we receive a legacy from the seventeenth in the form of a prosecution for Blasphemy. In the law as laid down in the eighteenth century and generally followed in the nineteenth, the offence was held to consist in the substance of the speech or writing—such as the denial of the truth of Christianity. If that was enforced to-day, it is probable that the gaols would soon be full, and some eminent persons would find themselves therein. But of late, another view has found favor. It is the manner of the speaker or

writer that counts. The law is to be used to safeguard the amenities of debate and to punish vulgarity or bad taste. Now this is really a monstrous assumption. To punish a man because he is leading another to the bottomless pit may appear reasonable enough in certain stages of belief, but what could be more absurd than to use the criminal law to punish bad taste, ill-timed jokes, or ill-regulated argument? The prosecution which is now pending was instituted by the police—the first for many years. Now, I have the highest regard for the good qualities of the police, but are they quite the authority to decide what in a heated controversy oversteps the bounds of decorum, and should therefore be made the subject of a criminal trial? That religious controversy has become less bitter during the last twenty years is generally admitted, yet during that time there has been no conviction for Blasphemy. In fact, the effect of prosecutions for Blasphemy is to seal the lips of those who might otherwise bring pressure to bear on controversialists to mend their methods; for who would venture to denounce or publicly remonstrate with a speaker or writer when the effect of such remonstrance would be possibly to lay him open to a criminal prosecution? Such felon-setting—as it is called in my country—would be impossible even for an honorable opponent, much more for a candid friend. But to the theory that the Blasphemy Laws may be properly used to improve the tone of controversialists, there is a still more decisive objection—they are tainted with injustice at their very source, since they only pretend to protect one form of religion from insult. Those who attack Christianity become criminals if they exceed the bounds of polite argument. The defenders of Christianity may attack my religion or any other person's religion with violence or ribaldry at their discretion. This is not the equal measure of a just law.

—S. H. Swinny, "*Positivist Review*," February.

"Quicquid," a frequent writer in the *Islington Gazette*, has replied to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's letter in that journal, which we referred to last week in our "Blasphemy" Notes. After remarking that the reverend gentleman seems rather too anxious to have opponents of his particular religion sent to prison, the writer proceeds to give his opinion of the laws which Z. B. W. upholds:—

"I consider the Blasphemy Laws to be an outrage on our boasted freedom. If a man offends the delicate perceptions of his audience by inelegant expressions, the audience will show their disapprobation. If he offends them by indecency, there are the usual laws against obscenity, to say nothing of the righteous indignation of the bystanders. If he is unutterably shocking, I should have thought it would have been difficult for any man to retain an audience at all. So far as taste is concerned, no man should be prosecuted: so far as beastliness is concerned, it is a question, not of religion (which has little to do with conduct but only with belief), but of morality—morality, moreover, rightly enforced, in our present circumstances, by the law. But if it is a man's opinions which in themselves offend, then I fail to see how they are to be controlled by the law; and I also fail to see on what grounds we can prevent him propagating them."

The writer goes on to say that if all "blasphemers" are to be sent to prison the "greater part of the population of these islands" would be under lock and key, and Z. B. W. might be amongst them, for some of "his own men, lecturers on behalf of the Christian Defence Society," are guilty of "blasphemy" in the eyes of refined Theists who loathe their savage picture of the Deity.

Argument never made the clergy abandon their devil and hell, but when the world gave these things the merry ha-ha, they ceased to be. We can endure anything but to be laughed at. The smile audible is the great solvent.—*Elbert Hubbard.*

MODEST MERIT.

The Angel was making the list.
"No," admitted the man, "I lay no claim to great virtues, but write me down as one of the Ananias Club."
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

SIMPLY ABSURD.

"Among the Quakers," said Miss Wise, "I believe the men wear their hats in church."
"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Miss Gidday. "As if any one could possibly be interested in men's hats!"

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, T. J. Ford, "Destruction of the Gods." Selections by the Band.

WOOLWICH (Town Hall): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christianity and the Social Order: A Reply to the Rev. R. J. Campbell."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. P. Ward, 3, "Christianity and Marriage"; 7, "When we Die are we Dead?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Operetta House, Chalmers-street): J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, Religion and the Joy of Life"; 7, "Scottish Higher Criticism and its Lessons."

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Concert by Councillor F. B. Grundy's Concert Party.

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Mr. Dunn, "Slumdom: How to Cure it"; 6.30, J. O'Connor Kessack, "The Salvation Army."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Miners' Institute, York-road and Accommodation-road): Friday, Feb. 7, at 8, S. H. Wishart, "Atheism and Social Progress: III.—Rev. Stitt-Wilson and the Useless Devil-God of the New Theology."—Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street: Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7.45, Mr. Hines, "Spiritualism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "The Iniquitous State Support for Christism"; 7, "From Christism to Atheism: A Story of Mental Development."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, M. Clark, "Adam in the Garden of Eden."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Lecture arrangements.

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