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Views and Opinions.

The New Blasphemy Prosecution.

Owing to trade exigencies the *Freethinker* leaves my hands on Tuesdays so that it may be printed on the following morning. It will, therefore, be understood that what I have to say concerning the trial of Mr. J. W. Gott for blasphemy can only refer to the situation as it exists on December 6, which is the opening day of the Sessions at the Central Criminal Court. The case may be over by the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers, or it may not come on till next week. In any case every possible preparation has been made. There have been several interviews with solicitor and counsel, one with Mr. Gott present, and the matter has been discussed from all points of view—including that of the prosecution. We are still under the disability of having only the police court depositions to go upon, but we are expecting immediately the indictment which will set out the exact words upon which the charge is based, and it is upon that the final decision must be taken. But I can repeat here what I said last week. The case is one of simple blasphemy, and the National Secular Society is following its usual policy of fighting these cases until the ridiculous and infamous blasphemy laws—laws so infamous that those who keep them alive are ashamed to own the real reason for their doing so—are swept out of existence. These blasphemy laws are a relic of the Dark Ages. They belong to a time when old women were burned for being witches, and men for affirming the truth of the multiplication table and the universality of the biologic processes. The judge who tries a blasphemy case ought to sit with a parson on either side of him and a dish of holy water before him. And it would add to the verisimilitude of the scene if boiling oil and the rack were kept at hand in order to impress the wicked defendant. We should then know where we were exactly.

A Call to Battle.

Our interest in the fight is one of principle only. Mr. Gott is not a member of the National Secular Society; he was conducting his own campaign against the "great lying creed" in his own way and at his own risk. But in a case of blasphemy it is not a matter of *who* is being prosecuted, nor is it even wholly a question of whether we approve the kind of

language used. Both these questions may be of some personal interest, but our objection, as Freethinkers, is to the blasphemy law itself. Blasphemy is an offence that is created by Christians in the interests of Christianity. It is enforced by Christians against Freethinkers while leaving Christians free to commit the same offence against non-Christian religions without the slightest fear of punishment. You may "blaspheme" all the gods of the world so long as you leave the Christian God alone. In the opinion of Christians it is apparently the case that their god is the only one who stands in need of police protection. All the others can look after themselves. And the question for all real Freethinkers is plain. It is simply, Do you believe in the existence of a law against blasphemy? It is not at all a question of the kind of blasphemy that ought to be permitted or the kind that ought to be suppressed, but, Is blasphemy an offence that ought to be recognized by the laws of a civilized state? And I simply cannot conceive any Freethinker answering that question save by an emphatic negative. We do not believe that such an offence should exist at law, and it is the plain duty of every Freethinker to do what he or she can to show the authorities that these prosecutions cannot be undertaken without evoking the strongest possible opposition from all liberal minded men and women. If the bigots do triumph in their immediate object we shall make them pay as dearly as possible for their victory. And if we can make the price high enough, we may depend upon it that these pinchbeck Torquemadas will not be in so great a hurry to try again. A blasphemy prosecution is a trumpet-call to every believer in freedom of thought. It is a call to battle, and we inherit too great a tradition to refuse the challenge.

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A Cowardly Subterfuge.

Do not let us be led away by the jargon of "indecent" or "obscenity." Fortunately, that will not, I think, appear in the present case. Every blasphemy prosecution is an attack on freedom of criticism in relation to religion. No matter how much that is disguised it remains the ultimate fact in these prosecutions. If the only thing aimed at is the suppression of indecent or obscene language there is no need to invoke the blasphemy laws at all. The ordinary laws are quite able to deal with the matter. But there is not, there never has been, a single case of blasphemy where a jury would have considered the language cited in the indictment as either indecent or obscene if used in the ordinary way and in connection with ordinary subjects. It is only when used in relation to religion that language, permissible on other occasions and in other connections, becomes objectionable and indecent. It is a surreptitious appeal to religious bigotry and passion which the prosecution makes. Opposition to an opinion is camouflaged—or rationalized, to borrow a term from the psycho-analysts—to gratify the feelings of hostility felt towards the opinions of the Freethinker. In effect the prosecution says, "We cannot lock up the Freethinker on the avowed ground that he is attacking religion, public opinion would not stand it,

But we can excite their prejudice by talking of obscene and indecent language, and pretending that while we do not mind our religion being criticized, we are solicitous about the decencies of controversy." As though the history of religious controversy does not exhaust the whole vocabulary of coarseness, vituperation, and blackguardism!

* * *

The Wolf and the Lamb.

The whole history of the laws against heresy and blasphemy proves the truth of what has been said. So long as Christians could afford to be honest in this matter there was no disguise of the fact that it was the opinions that were being aimed at. Denial of the existence of God was treated as a crime, so was a rejection of his providence, so was the rejection of those doctrines upon which the Established Church—Roman Catholic or Protestant—was based. It was only when the growth of dissent and the emergence of a more enlightened form of opinion made this policy dangerous or impossible that Christians altered their tactics. Then it was said that no objections were raised to a discussion of the truth of religious beliefs so long as it was done in a "reverent" manner. But who was to decide what was a "decent" manner in which religious subjects might be discussed? Not a tribunal of non-Christians, not even a tribunal on which Christians and non-Christians were represented in equal numbers. It was a tribunal of Christians who were called upon to say whether a man who attacked their religion was to be tolerated or not. One might as reasonably call on a conclave of wolves to say whether a lamb that had strayed into their encampment ought to be devoured or not. A hungry wolf might well ask for what other purpose was a lamb there than to be eaten. The old reading of the law is not frankly intolerant. The new reading of the law is not less intolerant in aim, but it is more detestable in practice. Cowardice covers itself with hypocrisy, and bigotry takes refuge behind a concern for controversial decency. And that takes from intelligent Freethinkers the last shred of respect for the Christian creed. A religion that has the courage to say that it will not permit criticism of its teachings one may appreciate and treat with a certain measure of respect. But what respect can anyone have for a religion which, while ready enough to derive all the benefits that may come from the most extreme bigotry, has not the courage to avow its intolerance? If such a creed is not to-day rejected by all right-minded men and women it can only be because they have not yet realized its real nature.

* * *

Leave it to God.

Who is it that suffers from the offence of blasphemy? Not any human being, so far as one can discover. No man is made the worse because I think or speak disrespectfully of the deity. Does the believer imagine that the unbeliever is injuring God? That would, indeed, be blasphemy of the most monstrous description. But if it is God who is injured, why not leave it to him to act? It was one of the great Roman (Pagan) emperors who, on being asked to punish someone who had insulted the gods, replied, Let the gods guard their own honour. Why cannot Christians have the same faith in their deity? If we can place any reliance upon the literature of orthodoxy there was a time when God Almighty paid personal attention to those who displeased him. Blasphemers were paralysed, struck by lightning, robbed of sight or speech by the deity whose majesty they had outraged. But that was a long time ago. Now God does nothing. He does not attend to our affairs—nor to his own. When he is insulted he takes no notice, or leaves it to a casual policeman—whose ears are naturally attuned to the

niceties of controversial language—to take action. Or perhaps, as that fine old Biblical blasphemer Elijah suggested on another occasion, "Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." Anyway, he does nothing, and so others have to act in his stead. But it is a principle of English law that every injured party must himself carry his wrongs, real and imaginary, before the courts for redress. Why, then, do we not wait till the deity gives unmistakable signs of his displeasure, and as plainly asks one judge, one policeman, and twelve jurymen to protect his omnipotence against the assaults of an insignificant one of his creations?

* * *

A Premium on Hypocrisy.

No man is made worse by another person committing blasphemy, and it is hard to conceive a deity that is worth bothering about being injured by it either. But there is a very real injury inflicted on the whole of society by the maintenance of laws against the free expression of opinion. What is it that a blasphemy law says, in effect, to all? It does not say you shall not think religion to be a lie, or a cheat, or an absurdity. That would be ridiculous because it could not be enforced. It only says that if you happen to believe either of these things you must not say them. The Christian says that if you cannot think of his religion without laughing at it then laugh at it in private, but in public act as though you had the utmost respect for it. That is, Christians will tolerate unbelief so long as it is accompanied with hypocrisy, but if you happen to be saddled with a determination to say exactly what you feel and what you think, then these defenders of the faith are determined that you shall be suppressed, if it is at all possible. If Christianity can fill heaven with fools, it does not mind stocking earth with hypocrites. And it is one of the peculiarities of any law that places an embargo on the free expression of opinion that it must manufacture hypocrisy. It is, for instance, common knowledge that the number of professed unbelievers in Christianity is only a small proportion of those who actually disbelieve. But people find that in a society where Christianity is powerful conformity is one of the conditions of easy preferment, and disbelief an obstacle to advancement. And beyond the actual but unconfessed disbeliever there are the mass of people who, because they see a frank expression of opinion so often brings discomfort, fall into an easy habit of conformity with established opinions that makes them a sheer drag on the wheels of progress. It is, then, not merely in the interests of himself and his like that the Freethinker is fighting for the abolition of all obstacles to freedom of expression, whether it be that of the college don or the man in the street. The abolition of the blasphemy laws is ultimately a matter of social sanitation in the interests of the Christian even more than in that of the Freethinker. It is, after all, the man who believes that suffers most from his religion.

* * *

Our Justification.

Finally, for the present, let me note that of all subjects on the face of the earth religion is the one thing which feels it must have legal protection if it is to live. Art, science, and literature can get along without it. You may laugh at science till you are tired, you may speak as disrespectfully of the law of gravitation as you are inclined; it never enters into the head of a sane individual to send for a policeman, or for a judge and jury to solemnly try you for your conduct. Everyone knows that the facts will be there when the laughter has ceased and irreverence has lost its piquancy. Laughter, sarcasm, irreverence have no ultimate power against a truth or a fact. They who laugh at truth presently have people laughing at them, not with them,

and the jester's weapon is turned against himself. Christians exclaim with horror that the Atheist says there is no God. But it is they themselves who say so; the law against blasphemy is a concrete expression of their conviction. It is an admission that God cannot continue to exist in the face of a determined assault, that he only lives so long as people believe in him. We Freethinkers have no need to dread the application of the blasphemy law; it is a justification of our attack, a triumphant demonstration of the truth of our assertions. It proves, too, that Christianity will never cease to be dangerous till it is dead, that bad laws will never cease to be a menace to liberty till they are definitely repealed, that Christians will not cease to be bigots till they have learned to ignore in practice the religion they profess to follow.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Mirage—And the Pool."

THE Rev. J. S. Macdonald, M.A., is Ian Maclaren's (Dr. John Watson) second successor as minister of Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, one of the largest and wealthiest churches in the land. Mr. Macdonald exchanged pulpits with Dr. Jowett a few Sundays ago, and his evening sermon at Westminster Chapel is published under the above title in the *Christian World Pulpit* for November 30. It is described as "an arresting extempore sermon," by which the hearers were powerfully moved. The text was in Isaiah xxxv. 7: "And the glowing sand shall become a pool." By "the glowing sand" is meant the mirage which so often baffles travellers in hot and parched deserts. The preacher's interpretation of the text is that "the thing which mocks and cheats us—that is only a phantom and a semblance at the best—shall become a refreshing pool at which we may quench our thirst." Mr. Macdonald treats of several quests, such as the quest for satisfaction and the quest for salvation. Of the former he says:—

How often the quest for satisfaction in life is exemplified in this figure of a mirage. How much of human experience—I mean human experience without God—is just this eager following after what promises satisfaction, but brings disappointment. So much is promised, so little is given.

According to him, some people imagine they find satisfaction in lawlessness, in surrendering to the baser impulses of their own hearts. They even glory in their alleged independence of all laws, in their having "shattered the old puritanical traditions of right and wrong." Who such people are we know not; but we agree with the preacher that, if they do exist, they cannot find satisfaction in that extraordinary attitude. And yet it must be admitted that even criminals are often exceedingly happy—until they are caught and brought to justice.

Mr. Macdonald is clearly mistaken, however, when he declares that no satisfaction can be found in "knowledge and erudition and self-culture, if they are set apart from God." There are thousands of people in this country alone whose keenest satisfaction in life is derived from the pursuit of knowledge. The overwhelming majority of the men and women of science are without God, but not destitute of peace and joy in the study of Nature and her processes. The preacher is equally wrong when he affirms that there can be no satisfaction "in even the love of husband, wife, parent, children, if there be no recognition of One who above all others well deserves the name of friend." These are people for whom Mr. Macdonald has no right to speak because of his total ignorance of them; nor has he the right to speak for God either. Indeed, his picture of God is revolting in the extreme. He

represents him as being, in his thoughts and actions, the embodiment of the worst form of selfishness. Take the following as a sample:—

He has laid his authoritative hand upon this subject world that owns his sway and will not give satisfaction to his children as long as they refuse to acknowledge his claim. Silver and gold are his, and he says to these treasures: Satisfy them not. All the treasures of learning and music and art are his, and he says to them: Satisfy them not. Earth, sea, and sky are his, and he says to these: Satisfy them not. Oh, he says to all good things: Satisfy them not, so long as they forget me. But for those who trust and love and serve him they shall become a pool. He can take knowledge, erudition, self-culture, art, music, the beauty of the outward world, the ties of tender affection, and can make them all by his blessing yield satisfaction. He can work this miracle. He can transform the very face of Nature for those who trust him.

Is it any wonder that people turn their backs upon such a God and live as if he were not? The wonder is that so many still believe in him and nominally submit to what they are assured is his will.

Speaking of the quest for salvation Mr. Macdonald asserts that deep down in the consciousness of men everywhere there is the sense of lostness, a wistful yearning to be found and saved; but this sense is the fruit of the belief in the Fall of all humanity in Adam. To-day, however, the pulpit has discovered and is beginning to announce that the Fall is a bubble which science has pricked, or an exploded myth, no longer to be taken seriously. But Mr. Macdonald keeps repeating the old fable that every man knows he is a lost sinner who needs salvation, and then he tells the story of Paul's and Luther's conversion. Then follow the Englishman, John Wesley, and the Scotchman, Dr. Chalmers, as specimens of converted men. Yet Mr. Macdonald cannot help recognizing the fact that, as the direct result of discarding the belief in the Fall the sense of sin and the need of salvation are steadily dying out. The truth is that all religious senses are the offspring of religious beliefs, and that in the absence of the latter the former never occur. The preacher describes the sense of salvation, the sense that the estrangement from God is gone, the sense of being safe in the arms of Jesus for this world and the next, and tries to show that no other sense is worthy of comparison with it. We frankly admit the reality of this sense and of the exquisite joyousness of spirit which frequently accompanies it. Our only contention concerning it is that it is the child, not of knowledge, but of blind belief, and that its strength and intensity are in exact proportion to the strength and intensity of the belief.

So far Mr. Macdonald has treated of the salvation of the individual, but now he turns to the quest for the redemption of society. That society sadly needs reorganization is beyond question, but by what means the reorganization is to be accomplished is a debatable point. Mr. Macdonald maintains that if you imagine that the country is to be regenerated by secular education you are making a sad mistake; but on what authority does he make that statement? Is he not aware that secular education has never been tried in Great Britain? In France, where it has been in force for many years, we learn from published statistics that it has had the effect of considerably reducing crimes of all kinds. Mr. Macdonald alludes to "the tiger leap of Germany at the throat of civilization," but he ignores the fact that the German system of education is of a profoundly religious character, and that every army officer must be a church member. He has no data on which to base the assertion that secular education can never redeem society. He is only airing his own prejudiced opinion. He condemns secular knowledge as utterly incapable of doing anything

directly to improve the social conditions of life, though a far greater and wiser man, Socrates, held that knowledge, or practical wisdom, is virtue, and ignorance vice. He is equally sure that improved environment cannot secure the redemption of society. All he can say in support of that assertion is that "men and women in spacious, beautiful houses, with far more than the minimum cubic feet for each inmate, with splendid furniture and hothouses, giving them all kinds of fragrant blooms, may be just as full of wickedness as any in Whitechapel." It is quite true that good environment alone cannot moralize society, for heredity may stand in the way. What we aver is that the reformation of society must be conducted by the individuals composing it, and that before they can do anything they must be themselves reformed characters.

We must here call special attention to a characteristic sentence in the discourse: "Environment cannot achieve what only God's grace can do." We have not the slightest idea what God's grace is, but Mr. Macdonald claims that it can regenerate society. The question that naturally arises is, why has it not already done so? Why does it not do so now? History does not record a single instance of supernatural interference in the management of the affairs of this world. Neither God nor his grace has ever stepped in and taken a hand in the solution of any social or economic problem. During the last two hundred years we have had numerous religious revivals, but not one of them resulted in the establishment of social justice and fair-play, while all of them have had the ultimate effect of weakening the hold of religion upon the public mind. Mr. Macdonald confesses that, like many others, he once believed that the Great War would eventuate in the triumph of Christianity and the ennoblement of the world. He says:—

Some of us preached to our credulous people that the country was to be regenerated in this way. We were terribly mistaken. We were following a mirage. The things I have spoken of have their influence. There is but one thing that can deal with the problems of our national life. We must seek God. It is in him that the answer to every problem lies.

Curiously enough God is not a discovery of to-day. The Bible and the theologians assure us that he is the Ancient of Days, and has always sat as king on the throne of the Universe. The late Dr. McCosh, for years President of Princeton University, America, published a large work entitled *The Method of the Divine Government*. It is an able book, but of a purely metaphysical, conjectural character. All clergymen were reading it forty years ago; but it created more difficulties than it succeeded in settling. While dealing at length with the method of the Divine government of the world it signally fails to demonstrate the existence of such a government. Face to face with the facts of history there is no escape, it seems to us, from the conclusion that God, his government and his grace, are purely mythical conceptions. On this point the pulpit and history flatly contradict each other. We challenge Mr. Macdonald to tell us what God has been doing, say, during the last two thousand years. He grants that in describing the state of things just now something like the following language may well be used: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." It is easy enough to exclaim before a credulous congregation that God can cure such a state of things, but the mystery is why he has not done so already. The clergy indulged in the same language a thousand years ago. Where is God, and what has he been doing throughout the ages? Was the late G. W. Foote right when he said that the only saviour of the world is human effort?

J. T. LLOYD.

Hail and Farewell!

THE death of Henry Mayers Hyndman removes a picturesque and representative figure from the ranks of British Socialism. He deserved well of his generation, for, although the son of wealthy parents, he devoted the best years of a strenuous life to a whole-hearted and unselfish service of his fellows.

The story of his seventy-nine years is of absorbing interest. He touched life at so many points. He was brought into contact with men and women of all ranks, in all countries, under all sorts of conditions. And he was as much at home at Trinity College, Cambridge, or campaigning with General Garibaldi, or beachcombing in the Pacific, as he was in a drawing-room of a titled hostess, or engaged in open-air oratory at street-corners.

To the outside world, which only knew him as a revolutionist in a silk hat and a frock coat, it will be news to hear of his being educated as a strict Evangelical Tory. Indeed, Hyndman's father actually gave £150,000 to build and endow churches. Young Hyndman was at Trinity College, Cambridge, in the same year as the late King Edward, who, he says, declared: "When it comes to my turn to be king, thrones will be going by competitive examination." Hyndman met another Royal personage in Australia, the late Duke of Edinburgh, and the two became friendly. One day Hyndman asked him why he sought his society. "Because," the duke replied, "you talk to me just as if I were the same as everybody else."

After leaving college Hyndman found himself in Italy when the war between Prussia and Austria broke out, and he acted as war correspondent for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. His journalistic comrades were Sala, Henty, Burnand, and George Meredith. This campaign brought him into contact with Cavour, Garibaldi, and Mazzini. Of Meredith he says that in private life he showed unusual charm and vivacity, which prompted Burnand to say: "Damn you, George, why don't you write as you talk?"

In the early 'eighties the Social Democratic Federation was born, and the irrepressible Hyndman tried for three hours to interest Lord Beaconsfield in the new movement. We can only wonder what "Dizzy" thought of the fiery apostle of Socialism, but he told a lady: "Your friend Hyndman came to talk, and I am bound to tell you he did talk."

Late in life Hyndman revisited Italy, and was disillusioned. "I sadly doubted," he says, "whether the new generation of peasants who had taken the place of those with whom I had chatted in my early manhood had benefited by the change of rule." There had been material progress, but "modern bourgeois Italy has come upon me with something of a shock." Other countries visited by Hyndman were Australia, Polynesia, and America. He was favourably impressed by the Mormons. He praised their irrigation of the wilderness, their fine city, the absence of so many ugly features of Christian civilization. Curiously, Sir Richard Burton, the great traveller, reached the same conclusions regarding the "Latter Day Saints."

Hyndman was always breezy in his criticism of his contemporaries. Referring to Bernard Shaw's teetotalism and vegetarianism, he says: "His food is not suited to our climate, and his drink does him no good." He quotes a remark of Frederick Greenwood, the then editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, "Shaw is quite unhuman." Indeed, Hyndman was frank to a degree in his dealings with other people, and, doubtless, this accounted for his constant failure in parliamentary elections, where one must wear a velvet glove over the gauntlet.

Hyndman was quite as outspoken concerning religion. He could not be lukewarm about anything. Thus, he spoke of death as an "introduction into nothingness." He was, however, always more attracted by social rather than theological matters. Now and again he was quite epigrammatic, as when he spoke of the nice young Cambridge undergraduates "sunk in the Jevonian bog." He regarded Annie Besant as the finest woman orator he had ever heard, a richly deserved tribute to a very gifted lady who suffered so much for Secularism and Free Speech.

England is poorer by the loss of such a man as Hyndman. Born to a position of wealth and ease, he devoted his life to the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Even men who may differ entirely from his judgments and his methods cannot withhold a tribute to his courage and sincerity. His mind was set on something higher than mere commercialism. He dedicated himself to the service of principles. He was entitled, in his degree, to echo the noble words of Heinrich Heine: "Lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was a loyal soldier in the war of the liberation of Humanity."

MIMNERMUS.

Monism and the Theory of Relativity.

I.

MONISM.

MODERN philosophy is closely connected with science and their progress must needs go hand in hand, for modern philosophy is essentially concerned with the unification of scientific conceptions. In this lies its fundamental contrast with ancient philosophy, which was not an attempt at unifying scientific conceptions—for true science did not exist—but an attempt to find a more or less rational basis for religious conceptions. It was thus as closely connected with religion as modern philosophy is with science, and consequently assumed an essentially religious or metaphysical character, just as its modern counterpart assumes a physical or materialistic character. So modern philosophy, completely divorced from religion, has to follow science wherever it may lead, and its business is to unify and co-ordinate whatever new truths science may bring to light and whatever new conceptions it may form.

Modern Monism, as its name implies, is a philosophy of unification and is, therefore, a scientific philosophy. It is sometimes called scientific Materialism, for it places the older Materialism on a more scientific and defensible basis. This older and rather crude Materialism carried its analysis of existence as far as matter and left it there, asserting that matter was the ultimate reality and that mind was a function of it. This left a gap between the "mental" and the "physical" worlds which no amount of physical interpretation could bridge. "Thoughts" and "things" could not by any effort be assimilated, which was only to be expected, since a "function" can never be identified with its "argument"—an activity can never be identified with that which acts. Monism takes a deeper view. Starting from the postulate, given in the nature of consciousness itself, that mind is a function or activity—which all schools of philosophy except pure idealism probably admit—it recognizes that this function or activity must owe its production to some prior function or activity, as motion can only be generated by antecedent motion, or change initiated by some preceding change. Every "sensation" as it breaks in on consciousness carries with it an implication of some energy or activity affecting consciousness. This, indeed, it is that gives us our irresistible

conviction of an existence apart from and independent of our conscious states. Thus Monism concludes that matter, though still to be regarded as the proximate cause of mind, must for that very reason be regarded as itself a function of some underlying existence—that it is not an entity or "thing in itself" any more than mind is an entity, but that both mind and matter are activities of some ultra-material substance. It is scarcely needful to point out that the latest scientific conclusions as to the constitution of the atom, leading to a thoroughly kinetic theory of matter, fully confirm the monistic view.

The vital function admits of the same interpretation, and thus the difficulty of expressing mental and vital phenomena in terms of physical phenomena disappears, since all three have to be regarded as products of the underlying laws of ultra-material energy. The activities of life and mind are not reducible to the activities of matter because they have not arisen directly out of the activities of matter, but from those deeper energy functions whence the activities of matter have themselves arisen and become differentiated. And this view receives some confirmation when we consider the method of development of these vital and mental laws, for we find that this development is intimately associated with an increasing instability of physical equilibria. Protoplasm must develop before life and mind can appear, and protoplasm is the most unstable form of matter. In view of our recently acquired knowledge as to the nature of matter—that the physical atom is nothing else than a system of energy in equilibrium—this development of vital and mental laws, to which we may also add chemical laws, in close concomitance with an increasing mobility of equilibrium suggests a speculation of the profoundest interest. It suggests that a limited number of physical atoms may, in the course of their evolution, have had locked up within them, as it were, certain complex energy functions possessing the potentialities of life and mind. As long as these atoms maintained their highly stable equilibria these delicate and subtle energies would be unable to break them down, and would remain in abeyance till, through the infinitely diverse combinations and recombinations of the atoms and molecules, their equilibria should assume less stable forms. The dormant energy functions would then be released, and combining with those of other unstable molecules would give rise to activities—"laws"—hitherto inoperative, those chemical, vital, and mental functions which we find to have arisen at successive and definite stages of evolution.

II.

THE MONISTIC THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.

This conception of the "physical world" as a world not of entities but of activities—not of being but of becoming—must profoundly influence our theory of knowledge. If all consciousness and all objects of consciousness—all knowledge and all things known—are alike forms of energy, then there remains no fundamental distinction between mind and matter. The contrast between the "internal" and the "external" world disappears. Mind itself is part of the external world, or rather, mind and matter are alike but transient and partial manifestations of the one universal world of substance and energy. These two activities are of the same order of existence as functions or modes of this universal energy, and the relationship between them is the same causal relationship as subsists between all other activities. Knowledge, then, must be a true, a real knowledge, just as all causal functions are the real and necessary expressions of the activities concerned in them.

Thus the "Relativity of Knowledge," in the old metaphysical sense, disappears. According to the philosophy of Dualism mind and matter being two

absolutely distinct orders of existence with nothing whatever in common, the "phenomena" being the result of their interaction, the "phenomenal world" must necessarily be totally unlike the "noumenal" world which lies "behind" it; just as, if we mix together two totally different liquids the resulting mixture must necessarily be unlike either of them.

But there remains a real, scientific Relativity of Knowledge of a purely physical order which Monism fully recognizes. If matter be but a function of energy then the entire material world and its entire complex of laws as known to us, including those of our own minds, are but partial and particular manifestations of an existence of perhaps infinite potentiality. For limitation and differentiation are of the very nature of a function or mode of being, and to say that it is a function is to say that it is limited. Thus our knowledge, though a true and real knowledge as far as it goes, is a knowledge of only a limited aspect of existence, and not of existence as a whole. Proto-material evolution, like evolution in general, must have been a process of differentiation, and its products—matter and the functions of matter as known to us—would present an aspect of existence not universal and absolute, but limited and relative to the particular lines of differentiation which have been followed. They would give us an aspect of existence conditioned by the nature and scope of the energies which have built them up, and the most fundamental "laws" of the physical world, as well as the verities of geometry and the relations of space and time, may be—indeed we might almost say must be—but partial aspects of a wider and more comprehensive order of truth—an order which includes but does not abrogate them. Hence Monism admits indeed of a Relativity of Knowledge, but it arises from the true and cognizable relationship which a part of the universal existence bears to the whole; while the Dualistic Relativity of Knowledge is an incognizable relationship between two utterly different existences—mind and matter—yielding only a travesty of truth, while truth itself remains for ever hidden.

The contrast between these two theories of knowledge may be illustrated by comparing the human mind to an observer confined to the uppermost chamber of a high tower commanding a view over all the surrounding country. On the Dualist theory the chamber has wide windows on all sides, but, unfortunately, owing to some whim of freakish malice on the part of the tower's builder, these windows are permanently fixed to the walls so that they can never be opened, and are filled with panes of glass abounding in flaws and flexures and of every variety of thickness and curvature. The view obtained by the prisoner within is thus a completely distorted view. Straight roads look crooked, and crooked hedges appear straight. Streams appear to be flowing up hills instead of down, valleys appear convex instead of concave, while houses seem to lean awry or even to stand poised upon their roofs. Thus, though the chamber is indeed full of light it is a misleading light and gives a totally false impression of the landscape.

But on the Monistic theory the room is rather dark, for in place of broad windows it is only lighted by a few narrow loop-holes in the walls. These, however, contain no glass panes, so the partial views of the landscape which the prisoner gets are true and undistorted views, though sadly restricted ones. Moreover, by closely studying the separate partial views and the various movements of objects seen therein he can draw many inferences regarding the unseen parts of the landscape, and thus acquire a fairly accurate conception of the landscape as a whole.

So the Monist, starting with true though limited knowledge, may by the exercise of his reason extend

that knowledge further into the domain of truth, while the Dualist, eternally imprisoned in a world of "appearance" only, can never reach the domain of truth at all.¹

A. E. MADDOCK.

(To be Concluded.)

Can Dogma Survive?

THE thousands of preachers who every Sunday address the faithful in Church and Chapel are, slowly, and very gradually, being recognized for what they are: the most inveterate fortune-tellers, and the most fallible of prophets. It is always dangerous to prophesy unless you know. It is notorious that the preachers do not know. They cannot know. They may believe, many of them do sincerely believe the dogmas they teach, but that is no guarantee of the truth of the dogmas. Honesty is quite consistent with delusion.

There are indications that the clergy begin to realize the fact that they have no means of knowing any more than the laity about God, the soul, heaven, hell, and a life after death. But the creed of centuries is not easily dissipated. The day of blind belief is gone for ever, but it is not probable that the Churches will cease to exist, or to exhort. Superstition will continue to be preached so long as it is profitable to the preachers. There are signs, however, that honourable men are by no means so ready to seek office in the Church as formerly. The *Church Times* recently lamented that "the supply of clergy is not only diminishing, it is almost disappearing," and from the United States we learn that there are at the present day no less than five thousand vacant Protestant pulpits.

Having regard to these admitted facts we ask, Can dogma survive? Is it probable that the millions of people who now nominally embrace the Christian faith will continue their adherence thereto? To put the question in another light, Is there any encouragement for the hope that Freethought is gaining ground, that the citadels of superstition are capitulating, that the peoples of the world are looking towards the path of knowledge rather than to the path of faith?

Within the compass of this article it is not possible to go into the minutiae of the question. But a straw shows the way of the wind. We have seen, in our time, the Bible discredited as a Divine Revelation to mankind. We have heard from the modern pulpit avowals which, had they been uttered in the ages of faith, would have consigned the speaker to the dungeon or the stake. We recognize that, whereas revelation has been the sole bar to freedom of thought, the denial of revelation will be the removal of the bar, and thought will become free.

Looking, then, at the present welter of belief within the orthodox fold, the prevailing pessimism of the clergy, the dearth of candidates for the ministry, not only in this country but throughout the English speaking world, and last, but by no means least, the steady advance of science, and the growth of that worldly materialism so deeply deplored by the clergy, we have every cause for thinking that at long last Reason is coming into her own.

But the end is not yet.

The persistence of an irrational belief cannot be understood until we appreciate and allow for the force of immemorial tradition, and till, by a patient study of the past, we arrive at an insight into the process by which the belief gained acceptance.

¹ See previous articles in the *Freethinker* by the present writer entitled "The Science of the Ultra-material" and "The Evolution of Natural Law."

It seems to be a universal law in the history of man that the dawn of intelligence is the herald of imagination. This law holds good in the case of individuals and nations. We find it so in primitive man, in children, and in all uneducated persons. Hence the general belief in luck, in magic, sorcery, in good and evil spirits, in gods and ghosts. Hence, too, all early history is poetic, fabulous, mythological. Our own history, until quite recent times, was based on the fables of early chroniclers, not, necessarily, the inventions of the writers, but traditions; they were the superstitions of a highly imaginative age.

The language of theology has added not a little to the original mythology. Every sin, every heresy, every doubt, was believed to be the work of some demon. Sickness and insanity were accounted for by the indwelling of the same malignant spirits. Storms, tempests, floods, earthquakes, gales, and cyclones, were all attributed to the devil.

To cure a sickness was thus, in many cases, synonymous with casting out a devil; to break down a heathen altar was to dislodge a demon; to drain a flood was to overcome the great adversary, and to combat a storm was to wage war with the Prince of Darkness.

Such notions account for much of what we now know to be fabulous and false, but which were by no means originally so intended and so employed.

"There is no darkness but ignorance." "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." So long as the mind of man can be kept in darkness and ignorance the bondage to superstition and the belief in what is false may be maintained. Wherever man is most ignorant, or least accustomed to trace events to their natural and proximate causes, there do all kinds of superstition naturally flourish. Wherever the human mind is freed from the yoke which ignorance imposed and superstition has retained, wherever it is freed from the fetters of a false theology, there, and there only, will the searcher after Truth be successful in his quest. Then, and then only, will he attain to that trustworthy knowledge which alone can displace the traditional and out-worn faith.

Freethought aims to let in the light, to disperse the darkness of ignorance, to exorcise the demon of superstition, to treat error as a defect of knowledge, and, on the ruins of a crumbling faith in the supernatural, to build up a sane and purely secular morality based upon sound reasoning and unfettered thought.

The task is the hardest and highest that man has yet attempted. We need standards the most exacting ever formulated. All the resources of our being must be brought into play: courage and high devotion to the ideal, faith in ourselves, in our cause and in our comrades, clean, straight, and honest thinking, self reliance, self knowledge, and self control; above all, human sympathy, and the sincere desire to promote peace and happiness all round.

We enter on the task knowing that the present is the child of the past, and that the future will be the outcome of the present. Our acts to-day determine the habits of to-morrow, and our habits will be the determining factor in our character, and it is on *character* that results must depend.

Freethinkers have a glorious tradition behind them. The pioneers have fought and suffered; it is "up to us" to "Carry on."

BERNARD MOORE.

SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION.

Husband (sarcastically): "Well, my dear, did you derive much consolation from your attendance at church this morning?"

Wife (enthusiastically): "Rather! Mrs. Gibbs had on that old blue hat of hers, and I sat right in front of her the whole morning."

Acid Drops.

We have only just had brought to our notice a copy of *The Hornsey Journal* for November 25, but it contains a letter from some individual who hides his identity under the signature of "A Voter" that is worth noting. Mr. Burgin, the unsuccessful candidate in a recent parliamentary election was asked whether he was in favour of the Blasphemy Laws. Quite properly he answered that he was not because he believed in toleration for all. But "A Voter" does not see how his God is going to survive unless he has the protection of the police force, so he at once wrote to Mr. Burgin referring him to "the notorious case of Foote the militant Freethinker who rightly was imprisoned under that law, for printing indecent prints touching the Holy Spirit." This was done because the writer of the letter was afraid Mr. Burgin did not realize the "bearing of his reply on public morals." The awful thing is that Mr. Burgin did not reply to the letter, which, seeing that he had already given a straight reply to the question, was quite understandable.

"A Voter" is very pious, very bigoted, and a terrible liar. Common justice to a dead man would have recalled the fact that Justice Coleridge went deliberately out of his way to remove from Mr. Foote the accusation of indecency. He said that no one found Mr. Foote pandering to the base passions of mankind. We wonder whether that could be truthfully said of "A Voter"? We have our doubts, for the reason that religion itself is a pandering to the baser passions of mankind—that of fear and the hope of gain. Really, if one wants proof of the demoralizing consequences of religious belief its defenders never fail to supply it. We did not know Mr. Burgin's opinion on the blasphemy law, and we are surprised that some of our readers did not send us his reply. But now we know it we feel sure that he would have been a better man to send to Parliament than the one who was returned, and who is not likely to be heard of save as a docile servant of the Tory party.

We are deeply concerned to see that the secret police, instituted during the war—at least the body was officially acknowledged then—is to become a permanency. We hope that there will be a very vigorous protest against this being allowed. When police spies are employed to discover plots the whole history of the world proves that they make plots as well as discover them. A secret police is an institution that is paid by results. If they discover nothing it is no use their telling their employers that there is nothing to discover, discovering nothing is put down to their failure as spies. Hence the manufacture of plots in order to denounce them. And after all the things that were said about the German spy system it is too much to have an internal spy system established. The disclosures in the recent case when the Duke of Northumberland brought an action against one of these agents reflected discredit upon both the authorities and those whom they employed. It is time the system was scrapped.

Justice Darling says that the whole world was made in seven days. But we wonder how long Justice Darling would take if he had to assess damages for all the blunders made when the world was put together in so hurried a manner? Would it not have been as well if a little more time had been spent over the job, and the work finished in a more satisfactory manner?

The unsuitability of the Bible for children was well illustrated in a discussion that took place at the International Conference on Bible teaching at the Church House, Westminster, on November 30. Miss Longman said that the story of Cain and Abel and the Massacre of the Innocents were quite unsuitable for children. So are a great many others that we might name. There are not merely stories that outrage the healthy feelings of a well-trained child, but there are others that are so revolting, from both a moral and a humanitarian point of view, that if anyone found them in any other book than the Bible

they would be unhesitatingly denounced for what they were. The Rev. E. W. Sara told the Conference that the story of Joseph would have been censored if it had occurred anywhere but in the Bible. Those who have to deal with young boys and girls in Sunday-school know that it is precisely these suggestive parts of the Bible that are passed round the class. Confidential talks with the young would be quite a revelation to many.

Another teacher said that when telling the children the story of the crossing of the Red Sea, one of the children asked the natural question, whether the horses were drowned. When told, Yes, the youngster declared, "I think it was beastly of God." We should like to give that child a present, if we only knew where it lived. It showed a quite healthy nature, and it is little less than a scandal that it should be exposed to the danger of having its finer feelings blunted by a continued course of religious instruction. Another story told was that of a child who was told the story of the crucifixion, and then went home and tried to crucify the baby. Now if it had tried to lasso it we should have been told that it was the effect of the cinema on the youthful mind. But the Bible—that is quite another matter.

Dr. A. T. Schofield has found a wonderful and a convincing proof of the truth of the story that the walls of Jericho fell down at the blast of the trumpets of the Israelites. On the supposed site of the city of Jericho he has actually found the remains of the clay walls of the city (we presume that the "city" is really a walled Bedouin village). But the proof is unmistakable. If the remains of a wall are found, it stands to reason that the wall must have fallen because a trumpet was blown. The man who does not see this is quite unworthy of the kingdom of heaven. And in that assembly Dr. Schofield ought to occupy a front place.

To be guided by the Lord is a fearful and wonderful thing. There is some hope if one has as a guide a mere fallible human instrument, but if it is anything pertaining to the superhuman then, verily, the Lord help us! Thus, the vicar of Swannington refuses the loan of the village school for whist drives and dances. But the Rev. Mr. Degan, another local minister, arranges dances in connection with his church. Now if they had to depend upon their own common-sense they might have come to some agreement on the matter. As it is, it is hopeless.

"What is wanted," says the Bishop of Manchester (Dr. Temple), "is a disciplined kind of intelligence that will help us to know whether men were talking sense or nonsense." Now that is a very dangerous thing for a bishop to say. What would a really sensible mind make of all those Christian doctrines which form the staple of the bishop's business? But we notice that the bishop wants the intelligence to be disciplined, so we imagine that it means an intelligence that has passed through the narcotizing discipline of the Christian Church. And to that all things are possible. Nonsense and sense inside the Church do not quite agree with sense and nonsense as they are classified outside.

The Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall, D.D., author of *Christianity and other Faiths*, is a well-known representative of a certain school of Christian apologetics. Writing in the *Record* (December 1), he gives a number of "reasons for accepting the Bible." He is not afraid of science, of course, introduces his readers to Kelvin, and even claims A. R. Wallace, the Spiritualist, as "an earnest Christian." He devotes nearly a column of space to "the terrible results" of rejecting the Bible—results visible to the world in German militarism and "the present rulers of ill-fated Russia." It is all "according to book"; but it is doubtful whether this sort of thing has not done organized religion in England as much harm as good. It certainly shows—if sincere—where the Church stands in the struggle of the masses against the classes in Europe. For a very large proportion of the "argument" for

religion, based on the dreadful consequences of revolt against authority in Russia and elsewhere, is merely a plea for organized superstition as a useful instrument for keeping the masses in their places.

Effusions like Dr. Tisdall's should be read side by side with an article by Bertrand Russell on "Education in China" in the *Review of Reviews* for December. The Chinese, he says, have a civilization and a national temperament "in many ways superior" to the white men's. He noted in education circles, except those completely controlled by European and American teachers, "a really beautiful intellectual disinterestedness." He adds:—

The discussions which I used to have in my seminar (consisting of students belonging to the Peking Government University) could not have been surpassed anywhere for keenness, candour and fearlessness. I had the same impression of the Science Society in Nanking, and of all similar bodies wherever I came across them.

China has been much in the public eye during the past few weeks, largely as a result of the efforts of Christian countries to exploit her. We ask conscientious Christians—if there are any—to compare the preceding remarks on Chinese education with the efforts in Great Britain, and in the Germany and Russia of pre-war days, to control education in the interests of a discredited creed.

The *Christian World* (December 1) states that both the Rev. Charles Brown and the Rev. F. C. Spurr are suspected of heresy in certain quarters. At recent addresses by the reverend gentlemen "strangers from a distance were present." Their intention, presumably, was to see whether the speakers would utter any unwary word for which they might be called to account. Mr. Spurr warns the public against any report of his discourses issued without his authorization. This heresy-hunting within the fold, and prosecuting for blasphemy by the police outside the fold, afford a fine tribute to the moral and intellectual influence of orthodox Christianity.

We see it suggested that each nation might well regard the conviction that it is God's chosen people as so much surplus war material. We present the suggestion for all that it is worth to Mr. Bottomley and the other leaders of the godly folk of this country. God ought not to be any the worse for their letting him alone, and they might, in his absence, be a little better.

It takes a servant of the Lord to put things in their right perspective. In a Pastoral Letter to Roman Catholics of the Edinburgh diocese Dr. Graham says that Atheists, Masonic, and Jewish agents are responsible for what he calls the "indecent dresses of women." It appears there is a conspiracy on foot between the three classes named to destroy Christian morals. If Dr. Graham is a type of the kind of man that is developed by Christian morals we should say that the sooner it disappears the better.

TO ALL OUR READERS.

We have received complaints from many readers as to the trouble and expense of ordering things through the post. To all of these we beg to point out that all the Pioneer Press Books and Pamphlets may be ordered through any Bookseller and News-agent in the United Kingdom. They need only place their order in the usual way, and the books should be delivered in the course of a few days. As our Publications are now handled by every Wholesale Agent in the country, any difficulty experienced in getting orders duly carried out must be attributable to local bigotry, and we earnestly beg the help of all our friends in breaking this down. The "Free-thinker" may also be obtained in the same manner.

Blasphemy Defence Fund.

WE never had the slightest doubt about it, and now—if the bull may be pardoned—we have less. The response to our article in last week's paper has, for promptness and generosity of response, beaten all previous records in such cases. The Freethought party is solidly behind us in the fight, and it will not be our fault if before it is over the bigots, not forgetting the very sensitive natured policeman who started the trouble, regret that it ever commenced. We have every sympathy with that police inspector, and we can quite understand that the social atmosphere of West Ham and Canning Town is not such as to make him familiar with coarse language and rough jokes. Such delicate natures must find the burden of life in this workaday world very heavy. Let us hope they may soon find themselves in a more congenial sphere.

We do not at present know on which day the trial will come on, but all has been done that is possible. The leading counsel for the defence is Mr. Curtis Bennet, and the junior Mr. Murphy. Both are good men, and both appear to be taking a keen interest in the case. If possible an application will be made for the case to stand over till the January Session, and if that is granted, it will give much better time for preparation. But the best is being done, and Mr. Gott is, as usual, determined to go through with the business. If the prosecution hopes to wear him out by these continued acts of persecution we fancy they will find themselves greatly mistaken, although his health is not at present all that could be desired.

We are able to print but the very smallest selection from the letters received from those who so quickly responded to the appeal for funds. It is heartening to read them. I asked for £150 and have received £164, almost by return of post. I am afraid that I have a little underestimated the probable expenditure, but there need be no concern about that. The fighting blood of the Party is roused, and if the prosecution intended to make the Freethought party a Christmas gift, as a means of stirring it to renewed activity, it could hardly have gone a better way to work.

Mr. C. Bush thinks the prosecution offers a chance to all who love freedom of thought, and hopes the case will be carried further, if necessary, and promises continued support if it is required. W. J. W. E. says that our principles will need to be fought for so long as humanity exists, and wishes he had the means to endow the N. S. S. and reward us as he thinks we deserve. (So long as people continue to support the cause we are quite content.) Mr. F. W. Walsh sends us a cheery, fighting letter written from his sick bed, and with a pencil between his teeth, which helps to make one more determined than ever. F. H. Hart wishes the enemy would go for the Editor of the *Freethinker*, then "we should see the sparks fly." (We are ready, but not anxious. We have no doubt the enemy would try if they had enough encouragement.) Mr. W. B. Columbine trusts that we shall receive at once all the funds necessary to defeat the operation of the blasphemy laws. Mr. G. F. M'Clusky says, "We must fight the bigots every time they attack and so tire them out." Mr. W. Kensett rejoices that the N. S. S. is taking such prompt action, and says it is time these infamous laws were abolished. Joseph Close, with many others, writes expressing regret that the amounts sent so poorly represent the sympathy of the senders. We hardly take this view. Each gives according to his means, and nowadays, with trade in such a state, we have every reason to congratulate ourselves on our subscription list.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Secular Society, Limited, £25; C. W. Bush, £25; W. B. Columbine, £20; G. Smith, £1; R. B., £1; A. R. Wykes, 10s.; A. R. Clark, 10s.; A. Brenton, 10s.; Belgravia, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Harden, £3 3s.; H. Dawson, £1; V. J. Hands, 10s.; Dr. C. R. Niven, £1; G. R. Johnson, 10s.; F. W. Lloyd, 5s. 6d.; W. Jacobs, 5s.; J. Turnbull, 2s.; A. G. Lye, 5s.; J. W. Hartgill, 2s.; F. R. Fallows, 5s.; F. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; G. F. M'Clusky, £2; D. Macconnell, 10s.; J. S. Buckle, £1; South Shields Branch N.S.S., £1; W. A. Holroyd, 5s.; E. Wilson, 10s.; L. Willis, 10s.; H. Irving, 10s.; J. S. R., 5s.; H. Littledale, £1; Mr. and Mrs. J. Neate, £1; Collette Jones, £2 2s.; Mrs. C. Cohen, £1 1s.; D., 10s.; W. J. W. E., £2; E. Parker, 10s.; R. Muir, 10s.; W. W. Kensett, £1; C. E. Hill, 5s.; St. Mungo, 5s.; C. J. Hill, 5s.; S. S., 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Hampson, 10s.; Robert Brown, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. A. Rigby, 5s.; F. H. Hart, 2s.; Atheist Blacksmith, 1s.; A Christian Friend, per R. C. Proctor, 2s. 6d.; W. Pugh, £1 1s.; G. Saunders, 5s.; J. Robertson, 5s.; Mrs. C. M. Renton, £2 2s.; F. Wood, 10s.; S. Clowes, 4s.; Mr. and Mrs. Capon, 5s.; A. Thourmine, 2s. 6d.; E. P., 3s. 6d.; L. B., 10s.; J. T. Ives, 2s.; Councillor E. Anderson (West Ham), 2s.; J. Burrell, 1s.; A Friend, £10; F. W. Walsh, 2s. 6d.; Miss H. Baker, 5s.; J. C. Banks, 10s.; J. Flanders, 2s. 6d.; E. C. Round, 2s. 6d.; T. S. 2s. 6d.; Old Reader of *Freethinker*, 5s.; H. Ball, 5s.; F. Margetson, 10s.; E. Porter, 2s.; G. O. W., 2s. 6d.; W. Wright, 3s.; Dr. B. Dunlop, 10s.; H. Russell Phillips, 5s.; The Taylor Family, 5s.; A. B. Moss, 10s.; H. Jessop, £5; W. A. Williams, 2s. 6d.; A. L. and L. E., 5s.; S. Healing, 2s. 6d.; Octogenarian Atheist, £1; Leeds Branch N. S. S., £2 2s.; J. Crompton, £5; A. W. Davis, £1; Dr. A. D. Thompson, 10s.; T. O'Neill, 5s.; R. W. Blakeley, £1 1s.; W. Todd, 1s.; A. W. Coleman, £2; H. J. Channon, £1 1s.; H. Spence, 5s.; J. S. Norman, £1 1s.; W. Challis, 5s.; W. Connolly, 2s. 6d.; Swansea Branch N. S. S., £2; W. H. Hicks, £2; Joseph Close, 10s. 6d.; Wm. Ross, 10s.; J. H. Wearing, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Bradshaw, 5s.; J. Bartram, 5s.; J. Pendlebury, £10; Gainsborough, £3; J. Flintoff, 5s.; J. W. Wood, 10s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Bullock, 5s. Manchester Branch N. S. S. per H. Black—J. Hall, 1s.; J. Seddon (Cheadle Hulme), 5s.; O. Friedmann, 10s.; G. Bailey, 10s.; A. C. Rosetti, 5s.; Mr. Sefairian, 2s.; Anon, 1s.; H. Trummell, 10s.; F. Robinson, 1s.; Mr. English, 3s.; T. F. G., 5s.; H. Black, 10s.; H. I. B., 2s. 6d.; C. E. Turner, 10s.; W. Collins, 2s. 6d.; A. Aspden (Fleetwood), 2s. 6d.; F. E. M., 10s.; G. Hall, 10s.; Mr. Mapp and family, 5s.; Sundry Contributions, £1 7s. Total £6 12s. 6.

Grand Total—£167 18s.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (December 11) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picture House, Station Street, Birmingham. He will speak on "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the New Prosecution." We have no doubt there will be the usual good audience, but we should like all Freethinkers to make a special effort to induce the attendance of their Christian friends. It is evident that they stand much in need of enlightenment on the state of the law and the position of Freethinkers on this matter. And it is Christians that we have to convert, anyway. So the sooner we all set about it the better.

There was no mistaking the interest in and the appreciation of the audience at Friars Hall on Sunday last in Mr. Cohen's statement of the Society's position with regard to the new blasphemy prosecution. The hall was well filled and every point was followed with the keenest interest. Considering the lecturer was inconsiderate enough to take about an hour and a half over his address, the liveliness of the meeting to the very end was proof of

the way in which Freethinkers are meeting this new attack on freedom of speech and publication. But the occasion excused the otherwise intolerable length of the lecture, and Mr. Cohen seldom offends in that way. The lecturer to-day (December 11) at Friars Hall is Mr. G. Whitehead. He takes for his subject "Conscience and Free Will," and we should be pleased to hear that the audience of last Sunday was duplicated.

We have just received a fresh consignment from America of Bishop Brown's *Communism and Christianity*, which is a good "steady seller." The work is by the only Freethinking bishop known to the public, and that alone makes the work unique. And at the price of one shilling for a book of over 200 pages, with several portraits, it is a marvel of value in these days of high printing. Needless to say, the book is published at a loss, and the bishop pays the deficit. Every reader should send for a copy.

What a delightful press we have to be sure! It is the last word, we should think, in insincerity and hypocrisy. Of last week's issue of the *Freethinker* we sent out over a hundred marked copies to Metropolitan and extra-Metropolitan papers calling special attention to the new blasphemy prosecution. So far we have not seen reference to it in a single one. We do not say that no reference has been made as we have not seen all of them, but we have not come across any. Now if it had been a case of indecent assault we should have had them printing detailed accounts in order to gratify the scarcely suppressed salacity of their readers. But one could not expect them to take serious notice of a case that raises so trifling an issue as that of freedom of speech and of publication. Well, we were not sanguine of much result when we sent out the papers. And it means that the Freethought party goes into the fight "on its own." But we are not disheartened at that. The fewer the fighters the greater the glory, win or lose, and we have the Freethinkers that matter solidly behind us in the fight.

We are asked to announce that the West Ham Branch of the N. S. S. will hold a "Social" at the Metropolitan Academy, Earls Grove, Forest Gate, on Saturday evening, December 10, at 7. There will be songs, dances, and games. All Freethinkers and their friends are invited, and admission is free.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. R. H. Rosetti had good meetings at Manchester on Sunday last. A pleasing feature of the meetings was the large number of ladies present, and the keen interest displayed by them. We understand that the Public Hall is now getting well-known as a meeting place for Freethinkers, and that is all to the good.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green; January 8, Stratford Town Hall; January 15, Swansea; January 29, Stockport; February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

A. STROUD (Calcutta).—Copies of the paper were duly sent, but we are sending you duplicates. You may remit for the *Freethinker* by postal order from any part of the world.

SIXTH SENSE.—We agree that Ireland needs a dose of Freethought. So does the rest of the world. And all we can do is to see that we all play our part in giving the world what it stands so much in need of. It is bound to tell in time.

V. BOND.—Thanks. Shall appear.

A. E. MADDOCK.—As you will see we have your MSS. safely to hand. Our readers always appreciate the endeavour to keep them well informed as to the nature of new discoveries in science and their bearing on existing conceptions of things. Hope you are keeping well.

F. W. LLOYD.—We have a number of things in mind for re-printing, and they will be issued as soon as possible. But we must proceed with caution. To hurry out things means an increase of expenditure, and we must not do that just now. And it also means for every publication a certain amount of extra work for us, and as you may guess, we have our hands pretty full all the time. And we want to issue something on the blasphemy laws as soon as we can find time to write it. But all in good time.

J. W. HARTGILL.—Remittance received. Your application for membership to the N. S. S. will come before the Executive at its next monthly meeting. The Secretary will then write you.

R. M.—We cannot say all we would like at the moment about the Gott trial. There is such a thing as Contempt of Court, and the border line is about as indefinite as it can be. So we must be cautious where no good purpose would be served by want of it. After the trial we shall be able to say more about it. But we are saying all that is necessary for the moment.

ATHOS ZENO.—Received with thanks. We do not find your letters at all wearisome. The views of an observant and intelligent traveller are always worth attention, and in our case they receive it. Hope to see you when you are again in London.

F. R. FALLOWS.—It is quite impossible for anyone to guarantee success in defending a blasphemy prosecution. The dice are very heavily loaded against the Freethinker every time. But the more determined we show ourselves in resisting the application of the law against blasphemy the nearer we are to its abolition.

MR. F. HAMPSON.—"For the last few years I have guaranteed twelve copies of the *Freethinker* to one newsagent in Bolton on condition that he exhibited a copy. At first I had to take from him five or six copies, but am pleased to tell you that to-day he had not a copy left. I have also got another newsagent to take two copies, and he mostly sells them." That is a very real kind of help, and if only half our readers would adopt the same plan to the extent of a single copy a week we should be in clover.

ATHEIST BLACKSMITH.—We quite take the will for the deed. When the call comes one measures the value of what is given by the temper that dictates the gift.

J. B. STUBBS.—We will reply to your query next week. Have not the books at hand at the moment.

E. C. ROUND.—We should be pleased to act in defence of the blasphemy charge, but a layman is not permitted to speak in defence of another. He must be a member of the legal Trade Union.

E. TRUELOVE.—Yes, there is no question of J. W. Gott's courage. We have never doubted either that or his sincerity however much we have disapproved his methods. For the rest, we shall be secure against persecution until the law is abolished, and the law will not be abolished until there are enough Freethinkers to kill it.

The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

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Freethought Eighty Years Ago.

LOOKING back over more than half a century, we find a considerable difference in English national life, but with all the elements of transition from the old to the new. Politically it was a period of great activity. Troubles in China and Afghanistan did not divert attention from the great question of removing the Corn Laws. The middle classes put in power by the Reform Bill of '32 were bent on Free Trade, and the Corn Law League was fast bringing their claims to the front. At Oxford Puseyism was in full career. In the provinces squire and parson still ruled the roost, sniffed at the Dissenters, and damned the Chartists and Socialists. In the towns these bodies were, in a smaller way, as active as the great League of Cobden, Bright and Villiers. Mechanics' institutions were spreading, co-operative societies begun, and even attempts at community life were being made.

Railways were beginning to "boom," but there was comparatively little travelling. Electricity, then recently let loose by Wheatstone's telegraph, was almost unused. Infant Science was still in its cradle, but the modern Hercules was beginning to grapple with the serpents of theology that sought to destroy it. In France, Comte was finishing his *Course of Positive Philosophy*. Here, Lyell had published his *Principles of Geology*, which already threatened the old cosmogonies. Though Darwinism was unknown and Darwin only beginning to settle down to his studies at Down, and even the *Vestiges of Creation*, by Robert Chambers, was not published till 1844, it is a most significant fact that the very first number of the *Oracle of Reason*, with the vicissitudes of which this chapter from my "History of Freethought in England" is mainly concerned, contained the beginning of a long series of papers on the "Theory of Regular Graduation," by William Chilton, in which the theory of evolution was distinctly championed in opposition to the theistic view of creation. The battle for an unfettered and cheap press, so long and gallantly fought by Carlile, Watson, Cleve, Hetherington, Heywood and others, was practically won; and Charles Knight, the brothers Chambers, and others, were ably supplying a rising demand for cheap and good literature. Carlyle had published his *Sartor Resartus* and now in London was preaching hero worship, and Coleridge, in his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, had disturbed the question of Bible inspiration.

In 1841 appeared a second edition of C. C. Hennell's *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, which first appeared in 1838, and which received the commendation of Strauss, and remains an able and candid work well suited to put into the hands of inquirers. It was through Hennell that Miss Evans ("George Elliot") was led to make an English translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, published by Chapman in 1846. They were possibly unaware that an English translation, also anonymous, appeared in 1842, being printed and published by J. Taylor, Smallbrook Street, Birmingham, and with Hetherington's name as London publisher. This work came out in parts. Philip Harwood, afterwards editor of the *Saturday Review*, had in his little book on *German Anti-Supernaturalism* (1841) called attention to the merits and works of the German rationalists.

Henry Hetherington (whose *Poor Man's Guardian*, the first penny newspaper in this country, issued unstamped in defiance of the Newspaper Act, was mainly instrumental in sweeping away the taxes upon knowledge) was in business as printer and publisher in Kingsgate Street, Holborn, issuing various Freethought and Radical publications. In 1840 he had been arrested for selling the bold and incisive *Letters to the Clergy* of Charles Junius Haslam—a veteran who still

remains on the stage in quiet retirement at Benton. Abey Heywood, the original publisher, was also prosecuted, but he having influential friends, the case did not go to trial. Mr. Heywood had previously suffered in the cause of free publication; and he too remains, having long enjoyed the utmost consideration from his fellow citizens of Manchester, where he has occupied the highest dignity of the city.

To test the impartiality of the law, W. J. Linton and some other of Hetherington's friends instituted prosecutions against four high class publishers, Moxon, Frazer, Richardson, and Saunders, of Saunders and Otley, for the publication of *Queen Mab*. The law was clear. Shelley's poem was a blasphemous libel. Despite an eloquent defence from Serjeant (afterwards Judge) Talfourd, Moxon was declared guilty. It remained for the prosecution to call him up for judgment, which of course was never done, the object of the prosecutors simply being to call attention to the state of the law and to advertise *Queen Mab*. The other publishers were not proceeded against. This course obtained for Hetherington a more lenient sentence than he would have otherwise received, and the most moderate expression of the law was then given from his judge. Hetherington defended himself with eloquence and moderation, in spite of a bitter and unfair personal attack of Attorney-General Campbell. Lord Denman, who stated that he had listened to Hetherington's defence with feelings of great interest and with sentiments of respect, laid it down that even the fundamentals of religion might be criticised so long as it was done in moderate language and in a serious reverential spirit.¹ Hetherington was sentenced to four months' imprisonment in the debtors' prison. While in "durance vile" he wrote his *Cheap Salvation*, a capital tract, in which he showed that all the best things of religion could be retained while dismissing priests and their theology.

Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy* was followed by the *Letters to the Bishop of Exeter*, who had attacked Owen and the Socialists in the House of Lords, and by some tracts on *Who are the Infidels?* etc. All were continued in open sale by both Hetherington and Watson, Thomas Powell acting for Hetherington while he was in prison. The prosecutions stimulated a revival of Freethought literature. James Watson then issued numerous pamphlets by Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright, T. Cooper, and Rowland Detrosier, and Voltaire's *Important Examination of the Holy Scriptures*, ascribed to Bolingbroke, a new edition of Robert Taylor's *Diagnosis*, and the important written discussion between R. D. Owen and Origen Bachelor on the Authenticity of the Bible.

On November 6, 1841, appeared (issued from No. 6 Narrow Wine Street, Bristol), No. 1 of the first popular English Atheistic periodical, the *Oracle of Reason*. Carlile, in his *Republican* (1819-1826), had given currency to many Freethought and Atheistic articles, and his *Lion* (1828-29) had been mainly devoted to the anti-Christian letters of Taylor, "the Devil's Chaplain," then in Oakham Gaol. The *Isis*, too, of Eliza Sharples Carlile (1832) was largely devoted to the Freethought discourses of Frances Wright. But the *Oracle of Reason* was the first penny weekly journal wholly Freethought and frankly Atheistic. Despite the famous declaration of Robert Owen that the religions of the world were false and the great obstacle to social improvement, many of the Owenite Socialists sought to give rather a Christian character to their movement, and even to their master's great doctrine that man was the creature of circumstances. Their main organ, *The New Moral World* (1834-41), avoided religious questions, though in the

¹ I have not the report of the trial before me, so only state the purport, not the words, of this important judgment.

last numbers it called itself *Gazette of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists*. The editor, Mr. Fleming, and the more "respectable" Socialists held to the doctrine of Owen, "teach truth and error will fall to the ground." They incurred enough opprobrium, without adding thereto by unnecessary attacks on theology. Certain others, like C. J. Haslam, Ed. Walker and Robert Buchanan did not scruple to carry the war into the enemy's camp, in return for the denunciation by ministers of Owenism. Southwell, the editor of the *Oracle*, agreed with this policy, and had indeed fallen out with Owen and Fleming. In turn pianoforte maker, soldier, actor, orator and Socialist missionary, his restless activity delighted in combat. With William Chilton, a thoughtful compositor, who had educated himself from being a bricklayer to becoming an expositor of the "Theory of Regular Graduation," he determined to start a Freethought journal. The first numbers were entirely written by these two, and were decorous, not to say dull. But the bigots were alarmed, and soon talked of putting it down. This at once roused Southwell. Sprightly and impulsive, with great energy in a little body, he threw himself into the work of the *Oracle* with characteristic impetuosity. In No. 4 appeared a slapdash article on "The Jew-book." At the beginning appeared the motto—

The stupid cant "He went too far" despise,
And know that to be BOLD is to be wise.

The article which followed this motto was bold enough. Southwell, indeed, had studied the two first inscriptions recorded in Spenser's *Faery Queene*, "Be bolde," "Be bolde," but he never digested the third one, "Be not too bolde." It began:—

That revolting odious Jew production called BIBLE has been for ages the idol of all sorts of blockheads, the glory of knaves and the disgust of wise men..... It is a book which contains passages so outrageously disgusting and scandalously indecent, that were it not called the word of God, no modest woman would suffer it to be read in her house.....The truth is, more rubbish has been written about this rubbishing collection of allegories, lies, murders, rapes, etc., called Bible than all other books together.....Every one knows that the Jews were literally a nation of vagabonds; such a lot of rascals, runaways, as *Richard* describes making up the army of *Richmond*: "People that o'erloyed countries had vomited forth, to desperate adventure and destruction." Here was a fine soil for the flowers of philosophy! A lot of cut-throats, who nicknamed themselves the chosen of some god, whom they pretended to carry about in a kind of sedan chair, called an ark; before which one of their monster-kings, a great favourite with their god, and one "after his own heart"—danced *naked!* to the great edification of the virgins of the household. Well might Voltaire say, "that these tales have been written by fools, commented upon by simpletons, taught by knaves, and given to children to be learned by heart; yet the sage is called a blasphemer because he becomes indignant, and is irritated at the most abominable fooleries that ever disgraced human nature."

At the end Southwell cites Luther's coarse expression against the Pope and Papists, which he says "will free us from the imputation of being the most vulgar writer on divine subjects." (The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Concluded.)

An act is really not vicious because it is prohibited, or virtuous because it conforms to the dictates of authority. When man attains to intellectual maturity he smiles at the ethical trick which was played upon his youthful ignorance. It is not sufficient to tell him that he must do this, and must not do that. He requires a reason. His intelligence must go hand in hand with his emotions. It is this union, indeed, which constitutes what we call conscience.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."

Pages From Voltaire.

THE A. B. C.: OR CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN A. B. AND C.

That modern Europe is superior to ancient Europe.

C.—Are you bold enough to maintain that you English are superior to the Athenians and Romans, that your cock-fights and prize-fights, in squalid enclosures, are superior to their games and their Coliseum? Are the cobblers and buffoons who have parts in your tragedies superior to the heroes of Sophocles? Do your orators make us forget Cicero and Demosthenes? In short, is London more civilized than ancient Rome?

A.—No: but London is ten thousand times superior at present to what it was then; and it is the same with the rest of Europe.

B.—You must except Greece, which is subject to the Turk, and that unhappy part of Italy which is under the rule of the Pope.

A.—I do except them; but you must remember that Paris, which is only a tenth smaller than London, was then only a petty barbarous town. Amsterdam was a marsh, Madrid a desert, and all was uncultivated from the right bank of the Rhine to the Gulf of Bothnia. The inhabitants of these countries lived as Tartars have always lived, in ignorance, want and barbarism.

Do you think it a small matter that there are philosophers at this day on the throne at Berlin, Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Russia, and that the discoveries of our great Newton are become the catechism of the nobility of Moscow and St. Petersburg?

C.—You will admit that it is not the same on the shores of the Danube. The light is come from the north;¹ for you English are a northern people with respect to me who was born under the forty-fifth degree; but have all these discoveries made you happier than you were when Cæsar landed on your island and found you half naked?

A.—Candidly, I think they have. Good houses, good clothes, good food, with good laws and liberty are much better than want, anarchy, and slavery. Anyone who dislikes London need only go to the Orkneys. He will live there as we lived in London in the time of Cæsar. He will eat oat-bread, and will cut another man's throat for a dried fish or a thatched cabin. Savage life has its charms, and those who praise it so much should show us an example by embracing it.

B.—But at least they would be living under the law of nature. Pure nature knows nothing of parliamentary debates, prerogatives of the crown, the East India Company,² or land and window taxes, three shillings in the pound for your field or your meadow and one shilling for each window. It is quite likely that you have corrupted nature, but it remains the same in the Orkney Islands and among the Topinambos.

A.—And suppose I told you that the savages have corrupted nature, and that it is we who follow her dictates?

C.—You astonish me! Are you following nature when you consecrate an Archbishop of Canterbury, when you call a German transplanted among you *Your Majesty*, when you can marry only one woman, when you are taxed to the extent of one fourth of your income, without mentioning other sins against nature which I omit to speak of?

¹ C'est du Nord aujourd'hui que nous vient la lumière. (*Épître à Catherine II*, 1771.)

² The East India Company was formed in 1600, and in 1857 was taken over by the British government. Quite the best introduction to a study of Indian government is a pamphlet by Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, just issued by the Labour Publishing Company (Labour Booklets, No. 6).

A.—Yet I can prove it, or I am much deceived. Is it not true that instinct and judgment, the two eldest children of nature, teach us in everything to seek our own well-being and to promote that of others when it coincides obviously with ours? Is it not certain that if two old cardinals, dying of hunger, were to meet each other under a plum tree, they would mechanically help each other to climb the tree and gather the fruit; and would not two rogues of the Black Forest or Chicacas do the same?

B.—Well, what's your conclusion from that?

A.—Precisely the same as the conclusion drawn by those two cardinals and two rogues; namely, that in every similar case we ought naturally to assist each other. Those who assist society the most will be those who follow closest to nature. Those who shall discover the arts, which discovery is an inestimable gift of God, those who shall set up laws, which is a thing infinitely less difficult, will be those who have best obeyed the laws of nature; therefore, the more the arts are cultivated and properly made secure, the more completely will the national laws have been observed. Consequently, when we agree to pay three shillings in the pound in order to enjoy the other seventeen more securely; when we agree to choose a German to be the preserver of our liberty, under the title of king, and arbitrator between lords and commons, the head of the republic; when from motives of economy and household quiet we marry only one wife; when we allow, because we are rich, an Archbishop of Canterbury to have an annual income of twelve thousand pounds in order to assist the poor, to preach virtue, if he knows how to preach, to promote peace among the clergy and other things, then we do more than bring the law of nature to perfection, we even go beyond the mark. But the brutish and solitary savage, if there be such an animal on the earth, which I very much doubt, what does he do from morning to night but pervert the law of nature, by being useless alike to himself and all mankind? A bee which should make neither honey nor wax, a swallow which should not make its nest, a hen which should never lay eggs, would pervert the natural law which is their instinct. Unsocial men pervert that instinct which is the law of human nature.

C.—So that man disguised under sheep's wool, or the excrement of silk worms, inventing gun-power to destroy his fellows, and going two thousand miles from home to contract a filthy disorder, is really the natural man, while the naked Brazilian is the artificial man?

A.—No; but the Brazilian is an animal who has not yet arrived at the complete faculties of his species. He is a bird which has its feathers very late, a caterpillar wrapped up in its case, which will not turn into a butterfly till after some ages. He will one day have his Newton and Locke, and then his human career will have been completed, supposing the organs of our Brazilian to be sufficiently strong and pliable to arrive at this eminence, for everything depends on the organs. But after all, what signify the character of a Brazilian and the sentiments of a Topinambou to me? I am neither the one nor the other; I wish to enjoy myself in my own way. It is our business to examine the state in which we are and not the state in which we can never be. *Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.*

Church service was over on Christmas morning and three prominent members walked home together, discussing the sermon.

"I tell you," said the first, enthusiastically, "Doctor Blank can certainly dive deeper into the truth than any preacher I ever heard."

"Y-es," said the second man, "and he can stay under longer."

"Yes," said the third, "and come up drier."

Correspondence.

SELF AND THE SOCIAL FEELING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—G. O. W. may not have "a single track mind," but his methods, generally, give the impression of an exaggerated one-sidedness. His criticism of Altruism is vigorous and clear, yet he might have strengthened his diatribe by showing that as we rise in breadth of mind and moral vision we also rise above certain petty levels of self-regarding attitudes. Anyway, we *have to be social*, and it is past arguing to-day as to the validity of the socially creative spirit while psycho-analysis reinforces the mass instinct. G. O. W. goes too far when he expects mankind to do what is fair and peaceable towards each other unless they have known and experienced the power of love and of friendship in moulding and mellowing their tempers and lives. A "Social religion" is quite a Secularist aim.

E. T. K.

THE LATE H. M. HYNDMAN AND SECULAR EDUCATION.

SIR,—According to your last Sunday's issue Hyndman, some eighteen months ago, said that he had written "a series of articles in the Melbourne *Argus* fifty years ago urging the establishment of a system of secular education throughout Australia." In 1880, which is but forty-one years ago, Hyndman issued an address to the electors of Marylebone, as a candidate for parliamentary honours. A copy of that address now lies before me. One sentence in it is enough for me as to how much he favoured secular education. "I am opposed to the Disestablishment of the Church of England."

A. G. B.

"The Challenge of Reason."

"RELIGION requires not reason but faith." These, the concluding words of my Christian friend, left me, at the conclusion of so many other arguments, again despairing. Not, however, at the impregnability of the rock of faith, but at the illogical dishonesty of my friend who, driven from reason's entrenchments, took refuge in the sham castle of faith.

Some of us find faith impregnable, and in that the cause of our despair. The hopelessness of this position, however, arises from a false conception of faith itself. Faith is not impregnable, for faith is an anomaly; it is at once the stronghold of religious defence and the weakest point in the religious fortification. Faith is the strength of religion because it demands the complete subjection of reason, and it is the weakness because its strength in the subjection of *reason* is fatal to religious *thought*.

A slight examination of faith will be sufficient to convince us of this truth. The highest attribute of faith is something far lower than belief which admits, nay, demands intelligence. Faith demands no intelligence, no reason, in fact, is content with nothing less than a semi-comatose state, acting not of its own freedom, but on the suggestion of absolute law from without.

Now, if in its demand for blind unreasoning obedience faith is religion's strength, it logically follows that religion's weakness is faith's implication that reason is unnecessary. Religion is illogical and inconsistent in the fact that it demands faith which is the absolute of unreason, and yet by its own conception, structure, pseudo-philosophic form attempts to provide faith with a reasonable explanation. A light cannot be brought into darkness and the darkness remain, neither can reason be applied to faith and faith remain. Religion itself is the reply to the challenge of faith, for religion is an admittance of the necessity of reason, also of the right of reason.

The Bible is an admittance of reason; the mystery man of Galilee is an admittance of reason; so also are the huge religious organizations, and the morbid flatulent vapourings of the host of clergy. All these things arise from the necessity for reason, and are an attempt to ease the burden of faith by explanation. More than this, all these things are a challenge to reason and to the higher right of Freethought.

The dawn of intelligence robbed man of faith, and gave him religion, the first attempt at explanation. Religion, however, which is merely conception or picture thinking, now is driven from its entrenchment by the higher philosophy which is the free thought; man, lost and bewildered, endeavours to return to the impregnable rock. He finds it, but reason is there also, that light which awakened man at the dawn, and if man's eyes are open he perceives that faith is but a sham and a delusion, and the rock is impregnable no more. But the eyes of many are closed, and they know not Truth.

VICTOR BOND.

Obituary.

MADAME BROCHER.

1837—1921.

We note with heartfelt regret that the wife of our good friend and comrade in Freethought, M. Gustave Brocher, passed quietly away on November 4 at the advanced age of eighty-four. She was a woman of amazing vitality and one of the bravest and sincerest workers in the international movement for mental and social freedom. As a child she came into contact with the raw and ugly side of life, for she had seen and felt the revolution of 1848, and later under the empire, the hateful reign of the pinchbeck Napoleon, she was moulded by hardship and tribulation into a revolutionary idealist, fragile in appearance but as hard as nails. When Paris was besieged she volunteered as an *Ambulancière*, or Red Cross worker, and through the fateful days of the *Commune* she served in the canteen or tended the wounded. She would have paid the penalty if the Government's executioners had not been so careless in identifying the victims. This is the explanation of the title of Mme Brocher's volume of recollections, *Souvenirs d'une morte vivante* (Lausanne, 1909). To those who read French we recommend it as a straightforward narrative of events in France from 1848 to 1871 as seen from the point of view of the intelligent proletariat. It is a corrective to the statements of Maxime du Camp and the de Goncourt brothers. We know that some of our readers have a lively recollection of M. Brocher and his energetic little wife who, in the 'eighties, were well-known figures in revolutionary circles here in London. We associate them in our sincerest sympathy with our good friend in his bereavement.

G. U.

Bargains in Books.

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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 post card.

LONDON, INDOOR.

FRIARS HALL (237 Blackfriars Road) : 7, Mr. George Whitehead, "Conscience and Free Will."

FULHAM AND WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (154 Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush) : 7.30, Mr. W. Wright, "Proletarian Philosophy and Culture."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road) : 7.30, Lecture and Debate.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road) : 7.30, Councillor J. Selway, "The Ethics of Jesus. Would they solve the social problems if put into practice in the twentieth century?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate) : 7, Mr. F. Shaller, "Darwinism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2) : 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Atomic Power : A Speculation."

COUNTRY, INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Picture House, Station Street) : 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Free Thought, Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street) : 11.30, Mr. M. B. Laird. (For subject see local press.)

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Youngman's) : 7, Mr. Bernard Sullivan, "The Catholic Church and Socialism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Councillor J. K. Kelly, A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Trades Councils' Rooms, 12a Clayton Street) : 3.30, Mr. A. Bartram, "The Secular Basis and Progress."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *Advice to Parents*, Ingersoll; *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 1s. per hundred, post free 1s. 2d.

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