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**THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND BLASPHEMY.**

“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken Blasphemy; what further need have ye of witnesses? Behold now we have heard his blasphemy.

“What think ye? They answered and said, he is guilty of death.”—MATTHEW, c. 26. V. 65-6.

**I**F the spirits of the high priests and the “elders of the people” could have been present in the British House of Commons on January 24, they would have looked with proud approval on seventy-seven of its members who showed by their votes that they endorsed the famous judgment alleged to have taken place in Jerusalem some nineteen centuries ago. The occasion was the proposed repeal of the laws against blasphemy, when 131 voted for and a faithful seventy-seven against. The minority agreed that blasphemy was an offence that deserved punishment at law, that it was blasphemy to permit the feelings of a Christian to be outraged. They agreed that controversy on religion could not be left to good taste, education or a sense of public decorum. It must be a matter for the criminal court, and like the Sanhedrin of old, these seventy-seven elders of the people cried of the blasphemer, “Let him be crucified!” That gallant band has a somewhat distinguished spiritual lineage. It is a longer one than that of any member of the House of Lords. They are the spiritual descendants of those who sent scores of men and women to prison during the nineteenth century; of those who slit tongues and cropped ears and branded foreheads in the seventeenth. Their ancestors were there when the fires of Smithfield blazed and the blood of the night of St. Bartholomew ran. They stood round the blazing faggots that licked the body of Bruno, and mounted guard over the prison of Galileo. They handed the hemlock to Socrates, and applauded in the high priest’s palace in Jerusalem the sentence “He is guilty of death.” That seventy-seven might well inscribe on their banner, “The same yesterday, today, and forever.”

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I will deal with the general question of blasphemy later. For the moment, the debate. Mr. Thurtle’s speech, in introducing the motion for the repeal of the blasphemy laws, was all that could be wished. It was moderate in tone, temperate in expression, but firm in demanding the repeal of laws for the removal of which, as Dr. Salter said, the Statute Book will be the cleaner. Dr. Salter delivered an admirable speech in seconding the measure, there was one of impas-

sioned earnestness from Mr. George Lansbury, and a very fine speech from Mr. Sorrensen, which, in my judgment, reached the highest level of the debate.

I do not think it is altogether bias that leads me to say that the speeches against the motion were on a much lower level. There were tearful appeals from some to maintain the blasphemy laws in the interests of children. (I can assure these men that children do not crowd to Freethought lectures, nor do they spend their pennies on buying Freethought literature). There was the mental ineptitude of Lord Eustace Percy, which was chiefly noteworthy for its piti-fully primitive character. When a man in 1930 can solemnly argue that the only authority the House of Commons has for passing laws is derived from a supernatural source, and therefore you must have laws to protect this supernatural power from attack, he is interesting only to an anthropologist, who would welcome him as he would welcome the discovery of paleolithic man in the flesh. In some public institution Lord Eustace Percy should certainly remain.

On the principle that certain things must be kept to themselves, Mr. Lovat-Fraser deserves to be dealt with separately. It was—to use quite plain, but deserved language—it was a magnificent display of either ignorance or falsehood. First he told the House that the Bill proposed to “regularize,” “scoffingly or irreverently ridiculing or impugning the doctrines of the Christian faith.”

It does nothing of the kind. It simply asks that the law shall not make these things illegal. Perhaps Mr. Lovat-Fraser had better consult a legal friend on the distinction, which is important. And it may be of interest to Mr. Lovat-Fraser to know that for forty out of sixty years I have been “scoffingly or irreverently ridiculing or impugning the doctrines of the Christian faith,” and the blasphemy laws do not stop and cannot stop me. It cannot stop my doing it either on the platform or in the *Freethinker*. It cannot because it shall not.

Here are a couple of excerpts from a man who is dreadfully afraid lest the decencies of controversy may be outraged:—

You have no idea how horrible, scurrilous, veno-

mous, and filthy have been the utterances of the men, who, during the past hundred years, have been prosecuted for offences of blasphemy.

Tom Paine was a decent man . . . and yet his attacks upon Christianity were of a particularly offensive and foul-mouthed type.

I am not surprised that when Mr. Lovat-Fraser gave utterances to these particularly venomous and scurrilous remarks Dr. Salter was led to interject, "You have never read them." That was a charitable interpretation. The only other interpretation was that Mr. Lovat-Fraser was deliberately lying to his fellow members.

It has been my duty to read all the trials for blasphemy during the past hundred years, and I challenge Mr. Lovat-Fraser to take from the indictments of the leading Freethinkers of the past hundred years or so, from the indictments of Carlile, Hetherington, Southwell, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Foote, or others, passages that could be made the ground of an indictment to-day. In the leading case of the past fifty years, that of G. W. Foote, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge specially cautioned the jury that while Foote might be blasphemous, "you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind." I would give something to hear Lord Coleridge's opinion of Mr. Lovat-Fraser.

And Paine! The description of Paine's writings is "foul-mouthed" and "scurrilous" to the last degree! Paine's *Age of Reason* is still on sale. The blasphemy laws are still here. I invite Mr. Fraser to institute a prosecution. If it will help him I will arrange to have copies sold outside the House of Commons, or will send a copy to every member. They will then be able to judge of the kind of man they have in Mr. Lovat-Fraser. The truth is that *The Age of Reason* is a deistic attack on Christianity, and there are few lines in it that could be objected to on the ground of taste; similar conclusions regarding the Christian scriptures are being preached to-day in scores of advanced Christian pulpits. Mr. Fraser's speech was an insult to the members of the House of Commons. It assumed on their part an ignorance of the facts that is almost inconceivable.

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It is evident there is considerable confusion concerning the nature of the blasphemy laws, and the desires of those who wish an alteration in the law. Mr. Thurtle had properly pointed out that the blasphemy laws offered no protection for the Jewish religion, or religions other than Christianity, and that one might ridicule the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass and the blasphemy laws could do nothing. Mr. Clynes retorted that while the law could not interfere, unless the criticism invited a breach of the peace, general feelings of decorum would. I agree. But if public feeling is enough to enforce a degree of good behaviour in criticizing one of the most sacred of the Roman Catholic doctrines, why does Mr. Clynes think it necessary there should be some law which should specifically give to religion a measure of protection which it does not specifically give to other forms of opinion? Does he mean that in his opinion the Protestant religion is the only one that cannot command a sense of decency from the general public? If not, what does he mean?

When a deputation recently visited Mr. Clynes on the question of the repeal of the blasphemy laws, Mr. Clynes expressed his sympathy with the object of the deputation, but said "there must be some definite piece of law that will enable the country to enforce the view which we commonly hold, namely, that incitements to a breach of the peace must not be permitted." I reminded Mr. Clynes that this law already exists. To that Mr. Clynes replied, "I agree."

What then does he now mean by saying that the Bill should be altered in committee, and that "the leading representatives of every denomination will agree that the law should not be so altered as to afford no safeguards to irreligious attacks?" Has he been consulting the leaders of the sects as to whether they wish to have the blasphemy laws repealed? Why, it is such as they who brought these laws into existence; it is they who kept them alive, it is their beliefs that are the subject of criticism; and when did the representatives of the sects desire to promote criticism of their doctrines? Surely it is the duty of a Minister of the Crown to reflect that he ought to take a higher ground than that of wishing to gratify the sects. I hope I have misunderstood Mr. Clynes, but his speech seems to read that he is quite willing to see the law altered provided that in the future it remains as it is.

I fancy I have as much right as any man in Britain to speak on behalf of Freethinkers, and in this respect I think I may also speak on behalf of that large number of Christians who are opposed to the blasphemy laws. We are not raising any protest against a law which forbids the use of indecent language, incitements to a breach of the peace, or any law that affects all citizens alike without reference to their religious opinions. But we do object to any law that places religious opinions in a legal category by themselves, which gives them a special measure of protection, and inflicts special penalties on such as offend religious believers. We are asking that all shall be placed upon a footing of equality. Politics, art, literature, science, all can get along without this special legislation. Why cannot religion? We say as did the *Observer* in discussing the Bill, that the possibility of opinion being prosecuted on the score of blasphemy is a disgrace to the statute book.

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Originally the "crime" of blasphemy consisted in an attack on or an expression of disbelief in any of the doctrines of the established religion. In this country it was an attack on the Christian religion as taught by the Church of Rome at one date, as taught by the Established Church at another date. Originally, and properly, a matter for the Church Courts, it later drifted into the Secular Courts as an offence at common law. Had the Church courts continued blasphemy would have been judged only in relation to doctrine; and in that case it would have remained at least a straightforward offence. For a long time, roughly, for about a century and a half, blasphemy continued to be a question of attacking a teaching; how it was attacked, might aggravate the offence, but it did not constitute it. But the growth of dissent and of non-Christian opinion compelled judges to use the elastic Common Law so as to ease the situation. The return of the Jews to England in the latter half of the seventeenth century caused them to be omitted from the penalties imposed under the Act of William, then the growth of Unitarianism led to a further broadening; ordinary dissent, the multiplication of Deistic Freethinkers, the removal of Catholic disabilities, the entrance of Jews into Parliament, all made the punishment of criticisms of Christian doctrine, as such, farcical. When a Jew could become a Judge it was ridiculous asking him to sentence another man for not believing in the divinity of Jesus.

While it was quite plain and clear that it was the opinions that were illegal, the law against blasphemy was at least logical and honest. The era of hypocrisy and dishonesty, with its process of "rationalization" began when it became a settled dictum that it was not the matter of the criticism, but the manner which constituted the offence. The hollowness of the plea

was shown as late as 1917 when the present Lord Chief Justice argued in the House of Lords against the legality of a bequest to the Secular Society, Limited, on the ground that to attack the teachings of Christianity was illegal. Every case in which verdicts were given against individuals or organizations involving the setting aside of a bequest, refusal of copyright, non-fulfilment of contract, etc., and there have been very many, has turned upon the opinions that were to be expressed through the use of the bequest, the use of the buildings, etc. It could not be otherwise.

The blasphemy laws have never been anything other than an attack on opinion, they are that to-day. One of the speakers in the debate said that if this Bill became law "the Christian religion will go unprotected." And other members agreed with him. Why not? So far as blasphemy is concerned, every other religion is without special protection. Surely no one will argue that the feelings of a Jew or a Mohammedan, or a Roman Catholic, are less sensitive about his religion than a member of the Established Church, or Protestant Nonconformists are about theirs? Allow, what is not true, that it is the manner and not the matter that is the subject of prosecution, that, as Mr. Clynes said, "It is not so much the thing she said, as the nasty way she said it," why is it that this qualification is true only of one form of religion? It is a particular opinion that must not be dealt with scoffingly or irreverently. It is still the Christian—of a particular type who says in effect, "You may scoff and jeer at the religious opinions of anyone else, but you must not scoff or jeer at my opinions, no matter how bad or ridiculous you may think them, under penalty of imprisonment." Opinion and nothing but opinion is the object of the blasphemy laws.

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It was pointed out, during the course of the debate, that if the blasphemy laws were fairly administered, men such as Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, to say nothing of many other writers and even preachers would be prosecuted. One may add that but for the gallant men and women who braved the blasphemy laws a century ago, these writers would not be able to safely say what they are saying to-day, and so probably would not be saying it. To-day it is not the leaders of blasphemous opinion that are persecuted, but comparatively unknown and assumed friendless men, and who often say in a coarser, and therefore less dangerous way, what better educated men say in a more subtle and in a more dangerous manner.

Mr. Lovat-Fraser is a man, I think, in years, and is—we will say, astute. He merely referred to the filthy and foul-mouthed language of those who had been prosecuted and trusted to the ignorance of his hearers to carry him through. Mr. Marjoribanks is a younger man, and less astute. He rushed in and gave a sample of this horrible language, because he thought "it is right to know." Here is the specimen, taken from the last trial for blasphemy in this country. The entrance of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem was described as being "like a circus clown on the back of two donkeys." I do not know that I should have described the Ass and the foal of an Ass incident in the words cited, but I can think of a dozen ways in which I could have made it more humorous and more decorous, and therefore less legally blasphemous, but more dangerous to Christianity. It is a question of education, of the development of a sense of humour, and also of the class of people addressed, and of the price at which the blasphemy is published. These defenders of the blasphemy laws have not yet got over the notion that while blasphemy may be permitted

among the "upper," it is well to prevent its dissemination among the "lower" classes. There is still the superstition that religion is required to keep the lower classes in order. One suspects that the primitive mind of Lord Eustace Percy works round this idea. The blasphemy laws are the only ones we have that make lack of education or of subtlety displayed in relation to religion a criminal offence.

Much was said during the course of the debate as to attacks on the religious feelings of people being likely to cause a breach of the peace. Assuming that to be the case, there remains the ordinary law provided for such occasions, and this law is found sufficiently effective everywhere except where religion is concerned. Why not here? But as a matter of fact there has never been a case of blasphemous libel where the speech or the writing indicted has led to a breach of the peace. There have been no disturbances where the speech was delivered, there have been no assaults or disturbances where the pamphlets were being sold, no body of police have been called out to protect the shops in which the blasphemous literature was being displayed. In every case the prosecution has been engineered by some narrow and bigoted person, or by some police officer who may have been a member of some narrow sect, but never has there been cases of public disturbance, which have led to a prosecution for blasphemy. In the last trial, the strongest evidence brought forward was that one person was heard to say "disgusting." At how many meetings addressed by Members of Parliament has that expression been heard, I wonder.

The "disgusting" language likely to lead to a breach of the peace has been decided in the peaceful atmosphere of a court, where a Christian Judge has put it to a Christian Jury, whether their religion has been dealt with in a way that does not wound their feelings! A greater travesty of justice than a trial for blasphemy in such circumstances it is impossible to imagine. In such circumstances, and before a Mohammedan Jury each of the gallant seventy-seven might well receive penal servitude for life. But we have here the reason why trials for blasphemy never fail. With a Christian judge, playing on the feelings of a Christian jury, how can they fail? Only a Lord Eustace Percy would *think* of calling such a trial a just trial, and only a Lovat-Fraser would *say* it—to an audience that knew nothing of the circumstances.

Often the attempt is made to confuse the law against blasphemy with the law against obscene libel. There is no analogy between the two. The law against obscene libel has no relation whatever to any opinion. If a statement comes under the head of obscene libel, it is so whether it be in relation to a religious or a non-religious subject. The mere fact that action has to be taken under the blasphemy law proves that action cannot be taken for the offence under either the law of obscene libel or the law preventing a breach of the peace. It is because I am attacking the religious beliefs of Christians that I may be subjected to arrest and imprisonment. A very eminent judge, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen pilloried the hypocrisy involved in the position I am criticizing in words that are as true now as when they were first written. He said:—

Practically, prosecutions for the employment of coarse and disrespectful expressions are used in order to suppress serious arguments. People are prosecuted not because their arguments are blasphemous, but because their arguments are anti-Christian, and because to a devout believer in Christianity every pointed denial of its doctrine, every exposure of the weak side of any common opinion, appear blasphemous.

In these days there is far more coarseness of expression with regard to the expression of political opinion,

and the temptation to make personal reflections that may easily lead to a breach of the peace, is far greater there than in relation to religious controversy. Yet no one desires a special law with regard to political discussion. Nor do we take it as an excuse if a man is summoned for disturbing a public meeting, and he urges in defence that his feelings were outraged by the speaker. Religion is the special exception. In secular affairs a judge would say to a man brought before him that he must learn to be tolerant of differences, that if the language is coarse don't listen to it. If the writing is offensive don't read it. The religious man is alone given encouragement to be intolerant, and the law promises to assist him to gratify his intolerance so long as it is exerted on behalf of a particular form of faith.

After all the blasphemy laws do not prevent "blasphemy." Richard Carlile spent nine years of his life in Christian prisons for Blasphemy, but in the end the *Age of Reason* was sold freely, and only Mr. Lovat-Fraser would have the impudence and the untruthfulness to describe it in the terms used by him. Holyoake went to prison for blasphemy and came out and repeated his blasphemy to the end of his life. G. W. Foote went to prison for twelve months for the offence of publishing the *Freethinker*, but republished the prosecuted number directly he was liberated, and the *Freethinker* is doing its work forty-seven years later. Brave and honest men can always be found to defy laws which they consider partial or unjust. Moreover, no blasphemy law that was ever framed can say to a man, you shall not think a particular religion to be false, contemptible or ridiculous. It can say only that no one shall say as much. No one was ever made worse by hearing or reading blasphemy. The evils of religious intolerance, of attempting to prevent religious ideas meeting the fullest and widest criticism, is written over the whole of human history. People learn that lesson slowly. Only the other day the Roman Church was celebrating the centenary of its political liberation in this country. On January 24, a member of the House of Commons, Mr. Logan, speaking on behalf of his brother believers protested against the removal of the blasphemy laws. I condole with Mr. Logan on his being so loyal to the evil traditions of his church.

The last occasion on which I heard the late W. T. Stead, was at a meeting advocating the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. He commenced his speech by saying, "I have come here to demand the right of every man to blaspheme as often and as much as he likes." That was the remark of a man who was honest in his opinions, and scorned to ask for police protection for them. He knew that blasphemy was largely a question of geography. Every one of the seventy-seven who shrieked blasphemy at an attack on Christianity, with different parents and in a Mohammedan country would have found a supreme blasphemy in a preaching of the divinity of Christ. They would have pleaded for the protection of Moslem children from the blasphemy of Christian teaching as in the House of Commons they asked for their protection against anti-Christian teaching. These men run true to type wherever found and whatever religion they profess. The laws they uphold are the surviving remnants of a long list of persecutory laws that are now defended by few. A strong law, one that says definitely and plainly that certain opinions must not be questioned, is an expression of intolerance, but it is clear enough to command a measure of respect. A law that really means this, but professes something quite different deserves nothing but the contempt of honest men and women.

CHAPMAN COHEN,  
President, National Secular Society.

## The Exodus from Earlswood.

"Because an egg was good once it does not necessarily follow that it is good for ever."—Ingersoll.

The fact of life with dependence placed  
On the human heart's resource alone,  
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced  
With loving kindness fully blown,  
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

Thomas Hardy.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH who was, in his own characteristic way, a keen theologian, declared that religions did not die, but they changed. The Christian Religion was then undergoing a transformation. Since Bradlaugh's death the alteration has been continuing and it has taken place so quietly that it appears to have been wrought with the complete unconsciousness of clergy and congregations alike.

In England the clergy themselves assisted at this silent revolution. In their intense desire to disarm Freethought criticism, they played the sedulous ape to the Freethinkers. With quiet persistence they persuaded a large number of their followers that "hell," contrary to belief, was slightly less monotonous than "heaven" itself; and that everlasting punishment meant only an eternity of unpleasantness. Blood and brimstone were eliminated from the vocabulary of the educated clergy, and left for the use of Irish priests and Salvation Army ranters. After that came the deluge, which has brought upon its flood undogmatic religionism and the rest of that beautiful nonsense which now passes for the religion of Christ.

This dilution of dogma has had its disintegrating effect upon all the churches save that of Rome and the Salvation Army. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. String bands and soloists share the programme with leather-lunged preachers. Tame Labour Members of Parliament, lady speakers, and actors out of work, threaten to oust the very parsons from their pulpits. Nor is the process stopped, although it can have but one ending, which is the secularization of the Christian Religion. Some time since, at a leading London Nonconformist place of worship, a popular actor and a contributor to *Punch* occupied the pulpit to pronounce eulogiums upon a world-renowned Freethinker. The queue of people outside the chapel gave the finishing touch of high comedy. It was magnificent, but it was not Christianity as taught for near twenty centuries. It was a surprise, like meeting one's pet dog in the form of sausages.

Nor is this all. *The Book of Common Prayer*, the official devotional volume of the English State Church, has also undergone a transformation. Changes have been made in the once-hallowed book. Prayers have been modified, and barbarous and unseemly quotations from Holy Writ eliminated. Even the Marriage Service has been toned down. These are straws which show which way the wind is blowing.

What does the ordinary believer, the man in the pew, himself gain by this change of front on the part of his spiritual advisers? He is left with his fetish-book, the Christian Bible. But here's the rub! His pastor and master no longer tells him that this Bible is true from cover to cover. It is impossible to read the volume, as he used to do, as if it were written yesterday, and the legends but the facts of every-day life. At every stage of his reading the unfortunate believer is now reminded that time makes ancient good uncouth. Jonah and the Whale is now but a jest; Noah and the Ark is but nonsense; Balaam's ass is unbelievable.

It no longer seems credible to him that Omnipotent

tence put the first man and woman in a garden, and for a paltry crime of petty larceny punished them with death, and damned the entire human race. Nor is it easy to believe that mankind became so wicked that the Almighty drowned them all, except eight persons, like kittens in a pail. It is surprising also to read that Omnipotence became the War-Lord of these ancient Hebrews, who were his chosen people, although he could not always help them to victory. And so on, through the marvellous legends of this Bible, until the astounding climax when the Almighty is put to death to appease himself.

If his pastor and master bids the unhappy believer to avert his eyes from this distressing record and concentrate upon the teaching of "The Sermon on the Mount," the position is just as bad. The man in the pew has escaped from one dilemma only to find himself on the horns of a fresh one. The believer cannot usefully adopt New Testament ethics with his ordinary business avocation, and keep out of the workhouse. He cannot, with any success, apply these Christian principles to his everyday life, if he is to escape Earlswood or Colney Hatch. Indeed, a nation ruled on rigid Christian lines, based strictly on the teaching of "The Sermon on the Mount," would in a year or two be in a lunatic asylum, or a mortuary. Babies would die in their tens of thousands, for prayer is no substitute for surgical obstetrics. Disease would be rampant, and claim its victims by hundreds of thousands, for prayer is no substitute for drainage and sanitation.

These nonsensical ideas emanate from the New Testament, and match the barbarities of this Bible as a whole. Of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books this volume is one of the most remarkable. The work which freethinkers have set themselves is that of freeing their fellows from the absurdities of ignorant and barbarous times which are perpetuated by this fetish-book. To class this Christian Bible as a work of ordered knowledge is the last word in absurdity. It is a Salmagundi of riotous, exuberant, Oriental imagination, and is, in this respect, similar to the *Arabian Nights*. If people would only read the volume carefully instead of worshipping it, such absurd veneration would be impossible. The first stage in the religious road to ruin is to regard such a comedy of errors as the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The last stage of the same sad journey is to find the feet of the priests upon the necks of a proud people, as may be seen in Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Fortunately, the conscience of the race is rising steadily above the old-world teachings of priests. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which marches to victory under the banners of Liberty and Fraternity. Freethinkers are determined men. There was one who had orders to admit no one to an ammunition dump. A general came along and was refused. "Don't you see who I am? I'm the G.O.C." "Very sorry, sir," said the sentry, "couldn't do it, not if you were G. O. D."

MIMNERMUS.

### Bradlaugh's View.

How Mr. Bradlaugh, at the time of the prosecution of the *Freethinker* in the 'eighties, summed up Mr. Thurtle's arguments in favour of his Bill to amend the Blasphemy laws:—

Freethought at 12s. 6d. a volume is pure philosophy, published at 2d. a week it is rank blasphemy.

"Star," January 27, 1930.

## Neutral Monism and the New Materialism.

(Concluded from page 70.)

### IV.

THE outcome of Russell's philosophy is that "events" are fundamental. These events, moreover, are *physical* events. "Physics, together with a dictionary, gives apparently all causal knowledge." "There is reason . . . for regarding physics as causally dominant." (*Analysis of Matter*.) He says with regard to such things as beauty, "I should concede that the thoughts of Shakespeare or Bach do not come within the scope of physics. But their thoughts are of no importance to us. Their whole social efficacy depended on certain black marks which they made on white paper." (*Ibid.*) His last word is, "We cannot escape from the universality of physical causation," this being true of our present stage at least.

### A COMPARISON.

In comparing Russell's *Neutral Monism* with Mr. Chapman Cohen's *Materialism Re-stated*, we have already noted that both include Determinism, and this is an important feature. We have now to observe that they are practically compatible. "Events" do for Bertrand Russell what "matter" does for Mr. Chapman Cohen, what "water" did for Thales, and what "atoms" did for Democritus.

Mr. Chapman Cohen says, "Give me existence and I will build a world." He chooses "matter," a hypothesis open to revision. Materialism re-stated.

The Hon. Bertrand Russell says, "Give me existence and I will build a world." He chooses "events." Materialism unstated.

Sometimes Russell himself seems to think that "matter," after all, might be a more workable hypothesis, and this lukewarm attitude indicates how far he is removed from the New Materialism. He speaks of matter as "probably not the ultimate reality," and thinks that "if our scientific knowledge were adequate to the task it would exhibit the laws of correlation of the particulars constituting the momentary condition of a material unit, and would state the causal laws of the world in terms of these particulars and not in terms of matter." (*Analysis of Mind*.) In this way we shall get "to a unified account of what really happens," free from logical fictions.

This brings us to the fact that the philosophical antagonism to Materialism to-day is mainly on the ground that our knowledge does not reach to matter itself, but only to causal laws woven round it. Hence come such as expressions as "the unknowable noumenon behind phenomena," and the like. Bradley and others have written on the same matter, which is reminiscent of Kant's "Thing-in-Itself." And to-day we have Prof. Eddington asserting that the problem of the elephant sliding down the hill tells us nothing whatever about the elephant and the hill. All this, of course, is quite true, and scientifically sound, but it fails to budge the New Materialism (we shall presently have to apologise for the repeated use of this expression). Russell is another who deems it "not necessary to the physicist to speculate as to the concrete character of the processes with which he deals." (*Analysis of Matter*.) Electrons and protons, he tells us, "are not the stuff of physics," but "elaborate mental structures composed of events." (*Ibid.*) "The only legitimate attitude about the physical world seems to be one of complete agnosticism as regards all but its mathematical properties." (*Ibid.*) This agnostic attitude about matter is exemplified by all leading scientists (and this is where

agnosticism serves a useful purpose). Heisenburg's electron, for instance, is just a collection of radiations observable in other places, and Einstein's is associated with a crinkle which becomes less and less marked as we recede from it, yet theoretically extending throughout space. Coming to Russell again, "a physical object or a piece of matter is a collection of all those correlated particulars which would be regarded . . . as its effects or appearances in different places." (*Analysis of Mind*.) But moving nearer and nearer to the object we come finally to a limit where the media, save perspective, exercise no distorting effect, and that limit is matter (see *Ibid*). And in his *Outline of Philosophy*, he describes matter as "a convenient formula for describing what happens where it isn't."

## V.

All this agnosticism about matter is what encourages some Materialists to scrap the term and use "Determinism." But it leads Bertrand Russell to look for some more fundamental entity than matter. Thus he arrives at "events." And the chief difference between "matter" and "events" is that, whereas the former has been conceived as impenetrable, "events" can interpenetrate one another and overlap. (Two overlapping events will belong to the same piece of matter). Russell thus abolishes impenetrability, which he cannot see anywhere. "The matter that we construct," he says, "is impenetrable as a result of definition." (*Analysis of Matter*) and he makes the rather neat analogy that "one might as well argue that London is impenetrable because nobody can live in it except one of its inhabitants." (*Ibid*.) Matter he thus analyses "into constituents analogous to sensations," viz., events. Yet, armed with "events," he is no nearer to the noumenon than the Materialist, for he has to admit that he knows nothing of the intrinsic character of events, but only their mathematical laws!

How far he is right we leave readers to judge, and the future to decide. It seems to us, however, that Russell's mathematical training has much to do with his present position. He came to philosophy through mathematics, and its joys are more to him than are those of Rackmaninoff's Prelude to many other people.

We have only been discussing his theoretical philosophy, but those who would look for a practical philosophy of life we refer to his little book *What I Believe*, which shows that Russell's philosophy is what would commonly be regarded as materialistic. Here are culled gems which all Materialists will endorse: he says that to regard electrons and protons as qualified to think is as absurd as expecting a solitary individual to play a football match; and so, as regards immortality, "If a drop of water were to maintain that it had a quality of aqueousness which would survive its dissolution, we should be inclined to be sceptical." "The organized energy of a living brain becomes disorganized at death, and therefore not available for collective action."

Here is our last quotation from Russell. It sums up what we have been contending for about his theoretical philosophy:—

"Materialism as a philosophical doctrine becomes hardly tenable in view of this evaporation of matter. But those who would formerly have been Materialists can still adopt a philosophy which comes to much the same thing in many respects." (*Outline of Philosophy*.)

We have only to add that a suggestion of Neutral Monism is discernable in the Materialist Mach's *Analysis of Sensations*.

And now, having said so much tediously—it is feared—about Neutral Monism, we hope a few remarks on the other half of the title of these remarks will not be out of place in winding them up. We first of all apologise to those to whom the term "New Materialism" has been obnoxious, and tentatively suggest that by a little relaxation of the term we may save the principle, which is more important.

Philosophy to-day is, as we take it, *ultimately* of three types:—

1. Mr. Chapman Cohen's Materialism.
2. Materialism plus Teleology—God playing draughts with himself, so to speak.
3. Vitalism, whether in the neat, systematized and formulated way of C. E. M. Joad, or in the un-systematic chaos of Bernard Shaw.

The first works, the second involves a superfluity, and the third explains nothing.

All that has been understood has been done with Materialism as the working principle of Science. That which has not yet been understood imposes no veto on the Materialist position, nor does it prove that an understanding must be sought on other lines. We don't know when an electron will "jump," but neither does the Vitalist. We should describe the New Materialism as the Working Philosophy. We do not, of course, expect it to receive universal endorsement. It took some people a long time to assimilate the idea of a round earth long after it was established. But the round earth was walked on by those who did not believe in it as well as by those who did, and we should say Materialism works for those who do not subscribe to it as well as for those who do.

G. H. TAYLOR.

### One God or Three Gods.

THE Christians say their religion is monotheistic, that is, they worship one God. We are told that the Jewish people had a direct revelation from the one true God and they were a monotheistic people, whilst other races were idolators and worshipped many gods.

This is not true. The Jews worshipped many gods, one of them as we know being a Golden "Calf."

But the Christians to-day worship not one God but three. The Roman Catholics may be said to worship four, for they have elevated Mary, the wife of Joseph the Carpenter and the mother of a large family, to the position of a goddess.

The creed of the Christian undoubtedly says there are three gods, who are specifically named Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The three gods appear on certain occasions in definite roles. For instance, it is the Holy Ghost who is said to be responsible for the conception of Mary. The Father at the baptism of Jesus says, "This is my beloved Son." And Jesus is said to be the son.

There are three gods therefore with clear cut personalities.

What is the Christian idea of God? It is that He is Omnipotent and Eternal.

In the Athanasian creed this doctrine is set forth quite clearly. "The Father is Eternal, the Son Eternal and the Holy Ghost Eternal." So it is obvious that the "Father," "Son," and the "Holy Ghost" have never had a "beginning"; they are eternal and have existed from all time.

Also they are co-equal. "Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Ghost." That is the Christian's creed, which "unless a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved."

If the Father and the Son have existed from all time and are co-equal, one of them cannot be the father of the other. A father is one who begets another. If the son was begotten then he is not a god and is not co-eternal and co-equal with the begotter.

Yet Jesus the "Son" is said to have been begotten. Therefore he cannot be a god. He cannot be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Christians, it is clear, contradict themselves. No Christian can explain this doctrine of the Trinity. It is one that is incomprehensible to reasonable men, for it cannot be true that a father and a son are exactly the same age.

The Christian slowly developed their creed and they borrowed from other religions. Older religions than Christianity had this magic figure three. The Trinity flourishes in India: Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Ancient Egyptians worshipped a Trinity. The Oracle of Serapis used to answer: "First God, afterwards the Word, and with them the Holy Spirit."

The ancient Persians, the Assyrians, the Phœnicians, the Scandinavians, the Druids worshipped a Trinity.

This doctrine of the Trinity is one for which no reasonable justification can be offered. The early Fathers of the Church were captured by the idea because it was a common idea in Pagan religions and so they adopted it. But no Christian apologist can explain how things can be equal and yet unequal at one and the same time. A Father has always existed before the Son. If the "Father" and the "Son" are co-equal and co-eternal, then they are not "Father" and "Son."

The Christians say that those who do not believe this impossible creed will be damned everlastingly.

No man of reason and courage will take any notice of what is said by people who believe the impossible.

W.H.W.

## Acid Drops.

Our readers will remember the terrible gale that raged on the Sunday of January 12. The wind reached a tremendous force and there were wrecks everywhere. Incidentally it helped to illustrate the marvellous prophetic power possessed by the Rev. F. L. Macassey, of Stoke Newington. For although he had been thinking of lecturing on another subject he felt supernaturally moved to take for his sermon the text "They that go down to the sea in ships." If anyone doubts the supernatural source of Mr. Macassey's sermon, they may remember that while the wind was howling round the church, slates were being blown off roofs, trees uprooted, and walls blown down, the preacher was moved to say "Even now there may be brave men facing death" in ships. We are almost convinced that nothing short of supernatural inspiration could have put such a marvellous thought, in such circumstances, in the preacher's mind. It is so marvellous that the *Daily Chronicle* devotes half a column to the matter.

Mr. Macassey told the reporter that he was quite a wonderful man in many directions. For example, he discovered that he has a most surprising memory. He never forgets anything. Which means, we take it, that he never remembers anything he forgets.

Two of the speakers in the debate on the Blasphemy Laws Bill were almost tearful in their assurance that they were asking for the continuance of the Blasphemy Laws on behalf of the children. Well, we see that Visual Education Limited has just put out a film "for religious purposes," which gives "a wonderful representation of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, and the swallowing of the Egyptians in the Red Sea." Now, if ever children needed protection they surely require it from such wholesale exploitation of their unavoidable ignorance. Even Christian scholars now know that the story as told in the Bible is sheer myth. Yet men who plead ostensibly on behalf of children, really on behalf of the perpetuation of their own religious ignorance and intolerance, stand calmly by while this villainous outrage is perpetuated on the children of the nation! Any lie, any fraud, any rascality so long as it is done in the name of the established religion of the country.

The Rev. P. B. Clayton complains that the dignified and deliberate reticence with which men suffered and died in the great war has been betrayed by publishers. It is very strange that this was not discovered until the war novels began to show up the parsons. Until then it was felt, rather late in the day, that if men were ever to give up war they must know war as it is. The men who were in the war know all about its filth, its cowardice, its vice and cruelty and general demoralizing effects. But they naturally are not inclined to talk about it when they return, and by the time another, a fresh generation, has grown up, it is deluded by the talk of the greatness and the bravery of war, and dazzled by the pomp of military displays. So most people thought that the novels, even though none of them have told *all* the truth of the villainy of war, were yet doing good in going as far as they did. But they began to tell the truth about parsons, and that was too much. Better have another war than the truth about the clergy. Religion can always survive a war, but no religion the world has ever seen has yet been able to survive the truth. Hence the tears of Parson Clayton.

The Lord Mayor of Nottingham is organizing a mission to get rid of the indifference to religion shown by the young. He says that over a million and a quarter have been lost to the churches during the past twenty years. We really don't know what he is going to do about it. We invite him to read the classic history of the worthy Mrs. Partington.

An Ashington (Northumberland) Wesleyan superintendent has been denouncing boxing on Sundays. Perhaps he had better join hands with the Mayor of Nottingham. We suggest that if the boxing was done in Church during the services the attendance would rapidly increase. The suggestion might be worth considering.

Sir Charles Marston, of Tunbridge Wells, is tremendously elated at the discovery of the walls of Jericho. Somehow that seems to him to prove the reliability of the Bible; and he now announces that he is spending a fortune in founding a lectureship. We can assure him that if he will only make the fees solid enough there can be found scores of men who will discover proofs of the truth of every sentence in the Bible. But Sir Charles appears to be basing his faith upon excavations, so before long we must expect to hear announced the discovery of a petrified piece of the darkness that overcame Egypt, an early photograph of the sun standing still while Joshua slaughtered his enemies, fossilized specimens of the plague of lice that the Lord sent over Egypt, part of the pillar of salt into which some of Lot's family were converted, manuscript of the list of animals that Noah took into the Ark, original plans of the Tower of Babel, the actual trumpet that blew down the walls of Jericho, fragments of the tables of stone broken by Moses, skeletons of the bears that devoured the children who mocked the prophet of the Lord, some specimens of mixed darkness and light before the Lord separated them, with many other remarkable proofs of the truth of the Bible story. We feel sure that Sir Charles Marston will be able to record some wonderful discoveries—if he will only spend enough.

The Oxford Press has issued a book of hymns (words only) suitable for children between the ages of eight to eighteen. The book is also eminently suitable for adults whose mentality has stood still at the same age—that is, for most Christians who have obeyed the Christly injunction to be childish. By the way, we wonder why Jesus was so anxious to turn Heaven into a kindergarten? This spiritual conundrum should interest various chapel study-circles.

As regards the slump in church attendance, the Rev. Dr. Ernest Bramham says:—

The Church must forget herself to save herself. There are millions of folk . . . who have never had a visit

from a parson. Get into the homes of the people, then we may expect the folk to come to church.

The dear man really believes that people are staying away because the parson hasn't personally begged them to come to church! Any explanation except the right one will do.

A recent childrens' service broadcast from London pleased someone. He or she says in *Radio Times* :—

We are all delighted by the reading and singing, and the alert intelligence of the children's questions and answers; but couldn't you ask some of the little ones to speak up a trifle next time?

Maybe some of the little dears hadn't properly memorized the alert intelligent answers, and were afraid to speak up lest their kind instructors should realize the fact.

People who delight in prohibiting to others what they have no desire for themselves are at large in Hungary as well as England. A Government Bill is being drawn up in Hungary which will prohibit all alcoholic beverages from being sold during week-ends and also during public holidays. How unhappy the Puritan would be if he were compelled to practise the "Golden Rule," instead of interfering with other people's pleasures! Life for the Puritan in such circumstances wouldn't be worth living. Still, one ought not to laugh at him. He tries hard to be Christ-like.

Youth is to-day not at all eager to suck in all the parson tells them. Realizing this, the Rev. H. L. Simpson (Congregationalist) declared in a sermon :—

We must admit that these are days when it is hard to believe . . . Doubt is not necessarily sinful . . . Let me warn you against this itch for an unholy assurance. There are some things that cannot be explained.

The young people should therefore keep on doubting! They have only the parson's word that they ought to accept what he cannot explain.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society budgeted for £223,000, but has received this year only £139,769. Wesleyan mugs are therefore being implored to dub up a bit more. As an inducement a lovely message supposed to have come all the way from India is added. It runs thus :—

Haidarabad, sending greetings, rejoices in the great advance during the year; 8,000 baptisms, many of whom in caste movement, which spreads widely throughout the district; thousands more pressing towards the light. In bewilderment we again seek your support and sympathy.

It's wonderful how the right kind of message turns up at the right moment. The hand of God again!

There are now between fourteen and fifteen million books in London libraries. The next step might well be that of teaching people and the children how to read—to read intelligently and critically. This is a rather different process than that of merely following print with the eyes and sucking in facts and ideas as a sponge sucks in water. The latter process, however, is the only one taught to millions of children in this country. It is a venerable one, no doubt inherited from the days when schools were conducted by Christian monks. It deserves a speedy and reverend burial. Will the Ministry of Education oblige at any early date?

A pious journal says that Dr. Douglas Brown's recent rather pessimistic speech concerning the condition of the Churches is likely to stir them into action, and the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches is giving the matter serious attention. No doubt! But seeing that the N.C.E.F.C. will not admit the main cause of the slump in church attendance, we are not sanguine of an

effective cure being discovered. Meanwhile, the *Free-thinker* and its readers are doing their best to worsen the situation. The greater the difficulty, the greater the glory for the Churches when they overcome the difficulty! Who knows? God may even utilize Free-thinkers to provoke lethargic Christians into earning glory!

A "visitation campaign" was recently carried out by the churches of the Ealing district. Pious inquisitors called at every house to discover whether there were any children not attending Sunday school. In all, 22,318 houses were visited. In 5,903 homes there appear to have been no children of kidnapping age. The children of 4,731 houses were found to attend Sunday school. But at 8,684 homes with children, none were attending. The net result of the Paul Pry business was the capturing for Christ of 480 new scholars only. And most likely a goodly proportion of these have enrolled because of probable material benefits to follow in due season—such as free teas and annual "treats."

Viscount Cecil, in a foreword to the book, *Ten Years' Life of the League of Nations*, says :—

People sneer at the Geneva atmosphere. But it is the real thing. It does not merely consist of high falutin and insincere speeches in praise of peace. Those are merely the foam that rises to the top. But the stream underneath is real and strong. It is the outcome of the deep human hatred of that orgy of cruelty and violence which we call war. It is not just the fashion of the moment. Still less was it the invention of President Wilson. As far as history extends will traces of it be found. Some of the greatest of men have devoted their minds to a search for a better international system. St. Augustine, Dante, Henry IV., William Penn, Rousseau, Kant and Tennyson, to name only a few, made more or less definite proposals to substitute for war some more rational method of settling international differences.

Viscount Cecil names "only a few." And the reader might be pardoned for fancying that Christians were the chief suggesters of the League idea. Rousseau was, of course, a sceptic. And Thomas Paine, the execrated Freethinker, could well have been mentioned to make the short list as representative as possible. His proposals were clear-cut; and not "more or less definite."

Derby has sold its war tank as scrap iron for eight pounds. The City Fathers should distribute the money among the parsons of the city, as a slight reward for persuading God to give Britain the victory, and their positive and negative contributions to the war. With less religion in the past the war might never have occurred. Without the efforts of the clergy in the direction of moralizing war, even the last war might not have been nearly so bad as it was. This was the one thing on which the clergy of every warring country stood shoulder to shoulder.

From a long experience of dealing with parents, Mr. D. M. Cowan, M.P., says that he thinks there is more parental responsibility, more thrift, and a greater desire for the children to be well educated than ever before. This, we take it, is the opinion of a man who prefers to observe for himself rather than echo the pessimistic utterances of parsonic slanderers. Mr. Cowan might have added that this growth of parental responsibility has been coincident with the putting on one side of a great deal of religion.

Great as has been the advance in educational matters during the past fifty years, the Rev. J. Chambers believes that the "spacious days" of education are yet to come. We sincerely hope so! Education will indeed border on the "spacious" when it is no longer compelled, by priests and parsons, to study the business needs of the Churches. Education can never grow spacious while priests and parsons fetter it with their narrow creed, nor while so many teachers are compelled to hide their opinions on religion for fear of losing all chance of promotion.



## Special.

THE present issue may well be called a Blasphemy Report number, and I want every one of our interested readers to help towards giving it as large an effective circulation as possible. I am sending a copy to every member of the House of Commons, to selected members of the House of Lords, and to a number of newspapers all over the country. But readers can help by each one taking an extra copy and sending it to a serviceable quarter. Those who would like to do more than this may have twelve copies sent post free for 2s. 6d. The question of the Blasphemy Law is very much in the public eye just now, and we must make the most of our opportunities.

C.C.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.—Balance of amount received to January 27, £8 5s. 6d.; Received since closing of this Fund, W. Matthews (S. Africa), £1; Balance in hand, February 3, 1930, £9 5s. 6d.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST—H. J. V. Templeman, £2. A. D. CORRICK.—You do not say what you wish us to correct or explain.

WE thank all the readers who have sent us papers containing comments on the Blasphemy Bill Debate. They are very useful.

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 51 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 9) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street, Plymouth, at 3 and 7.0. The recent agitation over the Blasphemy Laws should serve to secure a larger audience than usual.

Next Sunday (February 16) Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow, and on the Monday evening, Paisley. Correspondents will oblige by sending all communications that are to be dealt with in the issue dated February 23, so as to reach this office by the first post of Saturday February 15.

The New Bradford Branch made a very good beginning with what may be called its official propaganda on Monday last, when Mr. Cohen spoke to a good audience in the King's Hall. The lecture was listened to with attention and evident appreciation, and there was an hour of questions at the close of the address. Mr. Searle made an excellent chairman, and we hope to find him figuring in the same capacity on other occasions. The new Branch has a number of capable and enthusiastic members, and we hope it will have a quite successful future.

We feel that we ought to apologise for taking up so much space in a single issue with our own article on the Blasphemy question. But the subject is a big one and an important one. And even now there are many aspects untouched. There is, for instance, the question of the judges who try such cases. We do not hesitate to say that they invariably misstate the Common Law to secure a conviction, and no Counsel dare contradict them because it would mean setting the jury against the judge, which would mean in subsequent cases the judge against the counsel. But if juries understood that they have as much right to say what the present interpretation of the Common Law shall be, as have the judges, their verdict in a blasphemy case might be materially different from what it is.

We have no hesitation that to-day a verdict of guilty in a trial for blasphemy case occurs only because the judge wishes to have that verdict. It is not the jury that returns the verdict, it is the judge that gives it, the jury merely repeats it. A judge who did not believe in the blasphemy law could prevent the jury arriving at a verdict of guilty every time. It is curious also, that in these trials for blasphemy there is never an avowed Freethinker selected. The invariable selection of a jury composed wholly of religious believers, and who are misdirected by the judge as to the meaning and limited application of the Common Law of blasphemy, is quite miraculous. The officials must be providentially directed in their selection.

The *Christian World* says that Mr. Lovat-Fraser put the case for the retention of the Blasphemy Laws "persuasively and gracefully." We commend readers to our review of the debate for specimens of Mr. Fraser's persuasive and graceful eloquence. Had it not have been for those men on whom Mr. Fraser showered his abuse the position of the Labour Party, to which he belongs would be very different from what it is to-day.

The following letter on the Blasphemy Laws appeared in the *Times* from the pen of Sir Frederick Pollock:—

Sir,—In the debate on the Bill to abolish prosecutions for blasphemy no one appears to have noticed the impartial provision of the Indian Penal Code, S.298, whereby insulting words or gestures used "with deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person" are punishable with imprisonment up to one year and fine. The intention, it will be seen, is material and has to be found as a fact. This seems (notwithstanding the fears of some commentators) to succeed in hitting the line between fair controversy and wanton insult. Macaulay's note to the original draft is worth consulting.

It will be noted that the British Government in India must have proof that there is a deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, and applies to all religions. In this country the British Government permits you to wound the religious feelings of anyone provided he is not a Christian, and no proof of a deliberate intention to wound is required. It is enough if a selected number of Christians say that the Freethinker has not criticized their religion in a way that does not hurt them. That seems to put the final stamp on our Blasphemy Laws as a piece of intolerant hypocrisy.

A Berlin reader informs us that recently and for the first time, an address over the wireless was given, as a variant from the usual religious sermon. We suppose that one day something of the kind may happen in this country, but it will only be when all those who strongly object to the B.B.C. converting itself into an evangelistic agency make their protests felt. A large number have protested, but there are many thousands who tamely put up with what is little short of a national disgrace.

We congratulate the editor of *Everybody's Weekly* on his living up to a resolve to give every side a hearing. In a recent issue—for January 25—there is an article on "The Other Side of the Bible," by Hubert Temple. Mr. Temple's article is very outspoken, and he even falls foul of that shoddy modern Fetish, the moral-

ity of Jesus. Much of the article might easily have been taken from these columns. We congratulate both Mr. Temple and the editor.

We are asked to announce that Mr. C. T. Shaw, formerly of Wolverhampton, has removed to 72 Alma Street, Birmingham. He can supply any of the Pioneer Press publications to order, and also the *Freethinker*, which will be delivered anywhere in Birmingham.

The *Herald* angels have lately been running one of their famous Christ and War stunts. A friend of ours, who has been a Socialist for over forty years, sent them the following letter—in vain:—

In the second of your leader columns [to-day] you have an article entitled, "Christ and War," which sets forth Jesus as a teacher of pacifism. Immediately below that article you have another entitled, "Actions not words." Never was there a more suggestive juxtaposition. The same Jesus, who said, "Resist not him that is evil," twice caused a great breach of the peace by driving inoffensive tradesmen from the forecourt of the temple. The same Jesus who said, "If they smite thee on the one cheek, turn to them the other also," frequently endangered the peace by giving his opponents the most abusive names. The same Jesus who threatened people with hell-fire for calling other people fools, applied that very term to his own enemies. Moreover, this prince of pacifists said plainly, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword"; and just before his arrest he told his followers to provide themselves with swords. Surely it is high time to give up quoting Jesus as a supporter of peace, since his conduct proves him to have been nothing of the kind.

Last week, in reply to our notes on the Christian Science attempt to terrorize booksellers into refusing to supply a recent life of Mrs. Eddy, we published a letter from Mr. Tennant, an official publicity agent of the Christian Scientists. Mr. Tennant made the statement that Mark Twain declared Mrs. Eddy had discovered a healing principle and called her a benefactor of the age. We replied that, without knowing whether the citation was accurate or not, all that Twain could have meant only that to keep a cheerful mind, in other words, auto-suggestion, was a good thing. But that was not Mrs. Eddy's principle at all. Mr. Tennant's reply was evasive, to use a mild term.

We have heard no more of Mr. Tennant, but from another and opposing group of Christian Scientists, we get a letter signed by a Mr. J. F. Fellowes, we give the following:—

Referring to your interesting letter of January 26, the discovery that Mind in all its varying expressions, is the one and only factor in the healing of disease, was made after years of honest investigation by P. P. Quimby. Mrs. Eddy merely broadcast his discovery by organizing a church on the basic principle involved. It is obvious that Mark Twain's allusion to humanity's boon referred to the discovery of the principle which rightly belonged to Quimby. Had Mrs. Eddy acknowledged the discovery all might have gone well. Her dishonesty subsequently led her, and all her followers into the further denial of the valiant and evolving efforts of the scientist, theologian and the doctor.

It is evident that which ever branch of Christian Science one belongs to does not develop the habit of speaking the truth. We asked for the exact reference in which Mark Twain acknowledges the principle of Christian Science. We have silence in the one case, and in the other the issue is shifted from Mrs. Eddy the quack to P. P. Quimby the quack. We are not concerned with which quack borrowed from the other. Only in correcting false statements about Mark Twain.

#### EPIGRAM.

Honey-sweet, wormwood-bitter,  
Of life the breath:  
This is the draught that all have quaffed—  
We call it . . . Death!

J. M. Stuart-Young.

## The Progress of Atheism.

(Continued from page 68.)

It is not only the unbelievers in religion who stress the growing alienation of the masses from the Churches. We have the unwilling testimony of believers themselves—accompanied by dismal warnings as to coming disasters in consequence—to the same fact. The yearly reports of the falling off of the membership of the Protestant Churches have become monotonous. The facts can no longer be concealed.

The Rev. Dr. Douglas Brown, President of the Baptist Union, described as "one of the greatest revivalists of his day," declared, to a gathering of Norfolk Nonconformists at Worstead, on January 15, that the slump in membership of the Baptist Union (a loss of 4,450 Church members, and 11,000 Sunday school scholars) was such, that "If it were the balance sheet of a limited liability company, there would already have been consternation among the shareholders, and the calling of a special meeting to consider, with brutal frankness, the desperate situation." The *Daily News* (January 16) devotes over two whole columns, in a prominent position, to Dr. Brown's speech along with a commendatory editorial article, and a portrait of Dr. Brown. We quote from the *Daily News* report:—

If the present "spiritual slump" continues unchecked, and the deplorable drift continues for another ten years, organized religion (for all practical purposes) will be as dead as the dodo. The Churches' greatest and most pressing problems are not "outside ones," but "inside ones."

"We stand," continued Dr. Brown, "staggered and humbled before 'figures of failure.' It is no consolation to us to know that other denominations are no better off than we are. The generality of the gruesome facts and figures increases our concern and deepens our anxiety." . . . It was a pitiful sight to behold half-a-dozen churches of various denominations in a tiny town all on the verge of bankruptcy, all struggling to make ends meet, all half-paralysed by despair, all being propped up by central funds which were fast being bled to death. . . . Coming to their own denominational statistics for 1929, the leading article in the *Baptist Times* of January 16, so exactly expressed his thoughts and feelings on the matter that he could not do better than quote some of its sayings, such as: "We are going back," "Suffering defeat," "The figures are grim, gaunt and ugly. They burn into all serious minds like a nightmare."

It was no use trying to befool themselves. Something was radically wrong. When a ship was on a lee shore and steadily drifting towards the rocks it was time for the officers to take desperate and drastic means to 'save the ship' from disaster. . . .

"Yes," concluded Dr. Brown, "organized religion has fallen on evil days. In many places it is nothing more than a 'self preservation society,' manifesting symptoms of further dangerous relapse."

The Churches appeals, concludes Dr. Brown, "are plenteous and pathetic," but "The liner sends out its S.O.S. to its own lifeboats, but they themselves are drifting and waterlogged, and can render but slender aid." However, he thinks there is a remedy, "Defeat can and may be turned into victory. Organized religion needs a Pentecost." Yes, but where is the faintest sign of such a thing coming to pass to-day? Can the most vivid imagination, conjure up a vision of the people rushing to the Churches, and Chapels, as they rush to see the arrival of a Cinema Star, or to a Cup-tie football match? Where are the people who would stand in a queue for twelve hours, in order to gain a front seat at a religious ceremony, as many people do at the theatres?

Mr. Joad, who is well known to us as an opponent of Materialism, has just written a book entitled, *The Present and Future of Religion*. We have not seen the book yet, but there is a review of it by Mr. Leonard Woolf, in the *Nation* (January 25.) Mr. Woolf, as our readers are aware, is the Literary Editor of the *Nation*, to which he contributes a criticism of noteworthy books every week, under the title "The World of Books." Mr. Woolf has a fine literary style and is always interesting, even when we disagree with him, which is rarely. In our opinion, for what it is worth, he is the best literary critic now writing on the London Press. One feels in reading him, that here is a writer who is conscientious, sincere, and in earnest. A brilliant writer who is not afraid, as so many Fleet Street men are, of taking the unpopular view if he thinks it is in the right.

Mr. Woolf says that Mr. Joad has written a very amusing and interesting book, but it leaves him slightly puzzled. While Mr. Joad claims that the interest in religion is increasing, his facts are in patent contradiction:—

The facts and figures which he gives in his first chapter about organized religion and religious bodies are startling. In 1906 there were nearly six and a half million children attending the Sunday schools of the Anglican and Free Churches; in 1928 there were four and three quarter million. In 1902 the total number of persons attending services in the churches or chapels of a London area was 10,370; in 1927 it was 3,960. The Church is practically the only profession, trade, or occupation in which the supply does not equal the demand, though the fact does not appear to have been noticed by Mr. Thomas. It is estimated that in England 650 new shepherds must be ordained for the flock every year; during the years 1917-26 the average yearly number ordained was 306. Religious belief, according to Mr. Joad's first chapter, has declined and is declining, and in his second chapter he shows that the Churches are disintegrating. "Christianity has been a great adventure of the human spirit," he says, "and Christianity, it seems, in its organized and traditional form has failed. The consideration cannot fail to depress." Leonard Woolf: *The Nation*, January 25.)

The condition of unorganized religion, outside the Churches, is not a bit better. "When he [Mr. Joad] was thinking about writing his book, he asked a chance gathering of half a dozen young men and women whether they believed in God, and, if not, whether they ever felt the need of religion. All without exception answered "no" to the first question; only one answered the second question in the affirmative, "and the recurrence of her occasional need was regarded by all, including herself, as tending to the discredit of religion. She felt the need of divine comfort and guidance," she said, "when she was weak, ill, or in trouble." Mr. Joad concludes that "religious belief is rapidly and palpably on the decline. Young people in particular are either indifferent or hostile to it. For the first time in history there is coming to maturity a generation of men and women who have no religion, and feel no need for it." He finds the outlook for the Churches is equally black. "Throughout their history," he says, "they have with singular unanimity ranged themselves on the side of reaction and oppression," and he argues that they are still doing so to-day. They are, too, so entangled in biological, astronomical, geological, metaphysical, cosmological doctrines which very few civilized people to-day can even pretend to believe, that it is difficult to see how they can possibly shed them without disrupting themselves in the process."

For our part we can see no contradiction between

the fact that there is an increase of *interest* in religion, with a decline in *belief* in it. When we were young, people took an interest in religion because they believed that it involved the salvation, or damnation, of the soul. But to-day the interest is scientific, or, more often mere curiosity. They want to know all about it, not to believe in it.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## The Book Shop.

THE *New Adelphi* is a quarterly, having more than one point of contact with the *Freethinker*. The issue for December, 1929—February, 1930, is full of thoughtful and instructive writing. Mr. John Middleton Murry, the editor, is happy in having some fine contributors, among whom are George Santayana and Max Plowman. Mr. Santayana has a European reputation, and one feels when reading him, a sense of being overpowered by logic. A little of his writings goes a long way, and one instinctively wishes that his type was more plentiful in the world at the present. His contribution is entitled "Enduring the Truth," and he discusses Mr. Walter Lippmann's book, *A Preface to Morals*. In the intellectual feast he supplies, I come across the following: "The virility and chivalry of virtue lie precisely in being inflexibly true to oneself, although other people may be different, and one might have been different too." Shakespeare expressed the same idea in slightly different language, and Mr. Santayana is timely in reminding readers at a period when standardization, the fetish of education, the worship of money, and other minor lunacies threaten to put life-giving ideas into a straight jacket. If this were accomplished, mankind might find itself reduced to a robot, allowed only to sit and wonder at the prodigious genius of Mr. James Douglas, Eleanor Glyn, Epstein, and Lord Beaverbrook. One of the first steps towards being oneself is to question authority; one of the next in being true to oneself is to know definitely if one's ideas flow in the life stream of the butcher, the baker and the candle-stickmaker. If they do, they will be in conflict with monuments of power embodied in the Pope, or any other symbol that has ascendancy over thought as its aim. Mr. Santayana appears to be rather sceptical about Mr. Lippmann's idea that mankind can endure the truth; as mankind for many historical reasons has not had much practice through lack of opportunity, the world would not come to an end if the experiment was made.

Mr. Murry, in his contribution, "The Creation of Conscience," compares Pascal with Newman, and in the course of his helpful study, he shows that rare courage so seldom encountered in public journals. There is passion and sincerity in his writing, and he admits that God, who is responsible for everything, is responsible for nothing. The doctrine of the Fall of Man and Original Sin is repulsive to him, and the gentle Spinoza is brought to his assistance. In his own particular style, Mr. Murry throws overboard his theological cargo, and if he will allow us, we congratulate him. His ship will drive better for a human goal as a consequence. The difficulties of Pascal and Newman were brought about by accepting certain religious premises as true. If we were asked to look for a needle in a haystack, it would be elementary commonsense to require to know exactly and precisely that the needle was put there in the first place. Middle and old age in the religious world is largely a hunt for a needle that was supposed to be put there at a time when a childish mind might be better engaged with a good slice of bread and butter and strawberry jam, with the jam on thick.

Mr. Herbert Rivers in the *New Age*, January 16, draws a parallel between that paper and the *Freethinker*, in one respect. Both are fighting superstition. Where the *New Age* is explaining the jargon of finance, the *Freethinker* is striving to banish gods great and small

from the human calendar. Where the *New Age* says there is too little, the *Freethinker* points out that there are too many. It would be difficult, in a few words, to summarize the aims of the *New Age*, but, in its attitude towards a shortage of money, it says, in effect, make some, and provides the technique at the same time. The absence of money causes physical suffering; the presence, in a sensitive mind of a host of religious lies inflicts mental torture. Both symptoms are not beyond removal by perfectly natural means. The layman knows that a bountiful harvest of fruit does not mean any big share in it by people with limited means. Engines in America have been stoked with maize. Cotton dealers have congratulated themselves when a pest attacked the cotton plants. Sugar growers cannot dispose of their surplus. Oranges this season have been so plentiful that they have been carted away from the market as refuse. One does not need to have a profound knowledge of political economy to ask, "What's the catch?" In the same way, when preachers of the blessings of poverty die, and their wills are made public, there is no explanation needed of the humbug. We wish the *New Age* success in its stupendous fight. If it wins Freethinkers will have more leisure to read good books. Whitman only desired to live for ever to enable him to read all the good books in the world, and the "Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft" is Gissing's tribute to leisure brought about by a small and safe income that could be distributed holus-bolus to all citizens. It is only the superstition attached to finance that prevents it.

It was the unusual appearance of a small book that attracted my attention. The writings of Spencer are as a rule in bulky volumes, but this work was contained in green cloth covers eight inches by four, having a plain label: *Philosophy of Style*, an Essay by Herbert Spencer. The publishers are D. Appleton & Company, 549 & 551 Broadway, New York, 1876. An imprint runs as follows: Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by D. Appleton & Co., in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington. In a preface to it, I find: "The writer is acquainted with nothing in any language better calculated to subdue the mania for "wild and whirling words" than the present essay, and therefore recommends it to the advanced students of our colleges and universities." My little eight by four, to judge by the rush of American gibberish was a pearl thrown in 1876. A notable exception, and of course there are others is the *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, by Mr. Thornton Wilder. Let us treat words with respect. Look what Rousseau did with three—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality. And look what that democrat of the cocoa pot, the *Daily News*, is doing with "jay-walker." It may not know it, but it is trying to destroy common law with a term of abuse instead of using constitutional methods. But then, so many Nonconformists follow the Lord in a motor car! The *Philosophy of Style* is a prize picked up by me on the same day that Columbus discovered America. Spencer had time to know Longinus, Emerson, Shelley, Johnson and Goldsmith; I found in him an idea used by a University professor, and up to now was none the wiser. C-DE-B.

### In Memory of R.S., aged 13.

DEATH was not meant for Youth: why should he die  
 Who scarce had ope'd the virgin Book of Life?  
 Full many a fruit was riper for the knife  
 And ready, yet the Gardener passed them by.  
 The airy castles that he loved to build  
 Have vanished at the Grim Destroyer's touch.  
 The song is ended that we loved so much  
 Ere but a fragment of its tune had thrilled.  
 'Tis cruel that the hand of Death should fall  
 On one whose day had hardly passed its dawn,  
 When those sad hearts whose part it is to mourn  
 Were readier far to answer to the call.  
 And yet who knows, perhaps 'tis best to die  
 With hopes unshattered, heart unbroken still;  
 Ere Life the Cup with bitter herbs can fill,  
 And sorrow teach the meaning of a sigh.

FRANK SHARP.

### Burns at the I.L.P.

It is inevitable that a certain amount of exclusiveness, even tolerance, should creep into all clubs, parties, causes, etc., secular and "sacred"; as among Masons, Templars, Rechabites, Buffaloes, Orang-outangs, Clans Yankee and Gael; the Christian combination—when it can combine—the narrowest of all, which keeps itself unspotted from the world, which is to abjure the world, which is to be dead in all but the *rigor mortis*. Socialism of the more primitive sort—of which I am the friend, not the enemy, if it does not know it—runs a good second to Christianity; lives, indeed, even in high places, in mortal fear of offending religion, *i.e.*, of losing votes; even Freethought has its reservations, while necessarily, notoriously, meritoriously, the freest and most fully informed of all. So we start quite fair.

The subject of these reflections was a seasonable one, an I.L.P. lecture on Burns, especially the aftermath. The opening remarks were in excellent taste and sense, but soon marred by the all too familiar "long narration" of *Tam O'Shanter*, every word of which is known to every Scot before hand and heard as a ritual, not a rousing thing. There is no other recital so difficult to do well, or so often done ill as this same bacchanalian masterpiece, and over no other composition does the fervid Scot, so tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, happily the fury reaches not the poet in his grave! Shades of Shakespeare, of "George Underwood," of Robert Burns—"Oh! Rabbie! did ye hear yon?"

Our speaker woke from his trance at the end, exhausted and a little confused, losing his "threads" for a moment. Burns was a son of poverty and toil. His parents taught him the simplicity, nobility and honesty of Nature. Like so many more poor parents, even today, they wore themselves out to give their sons a doubtful footing in the world. Socialism had to change all that. Burns had but three years actual schooling. Then Love took up the harp of life and taught him how to pour his soul in song. Manhood came, reason and rebellion grew and sorrow for the poor, oppressed, but honest man. He attacked the Scots Church and shook it as it has not been shaken before or since. Much of the lecture was taken up with Burns denunciation of the Church; but one sensed a reservation in the speaker's mind, it was "the hypocrisy of the Church"—but it was more as may easily be shewn . . .

The speaker had to leave hurriedly, a great pity, but the audience remained to discuss the lecture. The chairman, a simple soul, but well-schooled, if not skilled, in the saving grace of evading, or actually vetoing direct discussion of religion, found himself in difficulties, but remained faithful to the policy of the I.L.P., as of the more imposing Labour Party. He was asked why he had allowed the speaker to discuss the religion of Burns if the audience might not? The speaker, he said, was not attacking religion, but religious hypocrites; but the vocal part of the audience would not have that. Burns attacked not only the hypocrisy of the Unco Guid, but the fundamentals of religion, the Bible itself, Calvinism. I don't care, said the chairman, my ruling is that discussion of religion be not allowed. He was reminded that we had a Labour Government in office, and that a Bill to abolish the Blasphemy Laws might be brought before it, would the House in that event refuse to discuss religion? or would it find some means of shelving the whole matter as its understudy was trying to do? But the unhappy chairman was adamant—or putty, and finally jumped out of the chair, which ended the discussion. But, happily, such matters are not so ended. A good purpose had been served, even in the service of Socialism, there was a stirring of the dry bones, they might yet be clothed with flesh. The night wore late and one retained, on leaving, a vision of animated groups in corners of the room. Again, a few seeds were sown. What shall the harvest be?

ANDREW MILLAR.

If I renounce my reason, I have no longer a guide—I must then blindly adopt a *secondary principle* and the matter in question becomes a supposition.—*Didcot*.

## The Blasphemy Bill.

### How They Voted.

AYES—131.

AYES:—Adamson, W. M.; Addison, Rt. Hon. Dr. Christopher; Ayles, Walter; Baker, John; Baldwin, Oliver; Beckett, John; Bennett, Capt. E. N.; Bennett, William; Benson, G.; Bentham, Dr. Ethel; Bevan, Aneurin; Brown, C. W. E.; Brown, W. J.; Burgin, Dr. E. L.; Buxton, C. R.; Carter, W.; Charleton, H. C.; Chater, Daniel; Cluse, W. S.; Cocks, Frederick Seymour; Cove, William G.; Daggan, George; Denman, Hon. R. D.; Dickson, T.; Ede, James Cluter; Edmunds, J. E.; Edwards, E.; Elmley, Viscount; Evans, Capt. Ernest; Foot, Isaac; Freeman, Peter; Gardner, J. P.; Gillett, George M.; Gossling, A. G.; Grenfell, D. R.; Griffith, F. Kingsley; Groves, Thomas E.; Grundy, Thomas W.; Hall, G. H.; Hall, Capt. W. P.; Hamilton, Sir R.; Hastings, Dr. Somerville; Haycock, A. W.; Hayes, John Henry; Henderson, Arthur, Junr.; Henderson, W. W.; Herriotts, J.; Hirst, G. H.; Horrabin, J. P.; Hudson, James H.; Isaacs, George; Jenkins, W.; Jones, Rt. Hon. Leif; Jowett, Rt. Hon. F. W.; Kennedy, Thomas Kinley, J.; Knight, Holford; Lansbury, Rt. Hon. George; Lathan, G.; Law, A.; Lawrence, Susan; Lawson, John James; Lawther, W.; Leach, W.; Lee, Frank; Lees, J.; Lindley, Fred W.; Longden, F.; McEntee, V. L.; MacNeill-Weir, L.; Malone, C. L'Est-range; Markham, S. F.; Marley, J.; Matters, L. W.; Mills, J. E.; Morgan, Dr. H. B.; Morrison, Herbert; Morrison, Robert C.; Mort, D. L.; Muggeridge, H. T.; Oliver, George Harold; Palin, John Henry; Paling, Wilfrid; Parkinson, John Allen; Perry, S. F.; Phillips, Dr. Marion; Pole, Major D. G.; Potts, John S.; Raynes, W. R.; Richards, R.; Richardson, R.; Ritson, J.; Romeril, H. G.; Rosbotham, D. S. T.; Rowson, Guy; Samuel, H. W.; Sanders, W. S.; Sandham, E.; Sawyer, G. F.; Shaw, Rt. Hon. Thomas; Shepherd, Arthur Lewis; Shield, George William; Shiels, Dr. Drummond; Shillaker, J. F.; Simmons, C. J.; Smith, Alfred; Smith, Ben; Smith, Frank; Smith, H. B. Lees; Snell, Harry; Sorensen, R.; Stephen, Campbell; Strauss, G. R.; Sullivan, J.; Thomas, Rt. Hon. J. H.; Tinker, John Joseph; Trevelyan, Rt. Hon. Sir Charles; Viant, S. P.; Walker, J.; Wallhead, Richard C.; Watkins, F. C.; Wellock, Wilfred; West, F. R.; Whiteley, Wilfred; Whiteley, William; Williams, Dr. J. H.; Wilson C. H.; Wilson, J.; Wood, Major McKenzie; Wright, W.; Young R. S.

NOES—77.

NOES:—Albery, Irving James; Baillie-Hamilton, Hon. Charles W.; Beamish, Rear-Admiral T. P. H.; Beaumont, M. W.; Berry, Sir George; Bevan, S. J.; Bowyer, Captain Sir George E. W.; Boyce, H. L.; Braithwaite, Major A. N.; Brown, Brig.-Gen. H. C.; Butler, R. A.; Cadogan, Major Hon. Edward; Castle Stewart, Earl of; Cautley, Sir Henry S.; Chadwick, Sir Robert Burton; Chapman, Sir S.; Courtauld, Major J. S.; Cranbourne, Viscount; Crookshank, Capt. H. C.; Croom-Johnson, R. P.; Cunliffe-Lister, Rt. Hon. Sir Philip; Davies, Dr. Vernon; Eden, Captain Anthony; Everard, W. Lindsay; Fremantle, Lieut.-Colonel Francis F.; Ganzoni, Sir John; Gill, T. H.; Gower, Sir Robert; Graham, Fergus; Greaves-Lord, Sir Walter; Hacking, Rt. Hon. Douglas H.; Hamilton, Sir George; Henderson, Capt. R. R.; Hennessy, Major Sir G. R. J.; Hudson, Capt. A. U. M.; King, Commodore Rt. Hon. Henry D.; Knox, Sir Alfred; Lambert, Rt. Hon. George; Law, Sir Alfred; Leighton, Major B. E. P.; Lewellin, Major J. J.; Logan, David Gilbert; Macquisten, F. A.; Makins, Brigadier-General E.; Meller, R. J.; Monsell, Eyres, Com. Rt. Hon. Sir B.; Moore, Sir Newton J.; Morrison-Bell, Sir Arthur Clive; Nicholson, Col. Rt. Hon. W. G.; Nield, Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert; Oman, Sir Charles William C.; Ormsby-Gore, Rt. Hon. William; Peake, Capt. Osbert; Percy, Lord Eustace; Power, Sir John Cecil; Pybus, Percy John; Ramsay, T. B. Wilson; Reynolds, Col. Sir James; Roberts, Sir Samuel; Ross, Major Ronald D.; Samuel, A. M.; Sande-

man, Sir N. Stewart; Sryngeour, E.; Simms, Dr. John M.; Smith-Carington, Neville W.; Somerville, A. A.; Southby, Commander A. R. J.; Steel-Maitland, Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur; Stuart, J. C.; Thomas, Major L. B.; Titchfield, Major the Marquess of; Todd, Capt. A. J.; Turton, Robert Hugh; Warrender, Sir Victor; Wells, Sydney R.; Windsor-Clive, Lieut.-Colonel George; Womersley, W. J.; Wood, Rt. Hon. Sir Kingsley.

### A Fishy Conversation.

I MET him returning from a day's fishing. He had sat near the Weirs all day and displayed two small dace.

"The dry summer is responsible," he said, "I know many anglers who have not had a catch for months." He then, by way of extenuation, began to tell me of the marvellous trout, roach and tench he had caught. I was smiling, he glanced up and flushed red.

"Why," he asked, "are all angling stories suspect?" "You must blame those early fishermen," I replied, "the story of Jonah and the Whale, the loaves and the fishes; these stories have had a tremendous boosting and circulation, their truth was supported by fire and stake, and now they are turned down by the most simple. It is the reaction against all angling stories."

"But the Jews were responsible, not the fishermen," he retorted, "they were adepts at story telling, probably the Jonah story was the Sindbad and the whale revised with a moral." "Yes, there is a moral to every happening if one chooses to apply it," I said.

"Well, what is the moral of this," he asked:—

"Mary went a fishing  
And caught a little trout,  
She said, You little devil,  
Does your mother know you're out?"

"Why, that though there may be a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, there is evidently none in favour of trout," I replied.

MAX COORLEGH.

### Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

#### THE CRY OF A CURATE.

SIR,—*Freethinker*, January 19, p. 35, you mention that Socialists ought not to acquiesce in a State Church. I can see why Individualists ought not to acquiesce, but for Socialists, who believe the State ought to provide everything, surely a State religion is quite natural. In Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, the Socialist State does pay all parsons of all the sects, at least of all big enough to claim one.

You are also wrong in saying the average parson is only educated in the matter of his profession. Mostly he has a costly education in a matter which is only slightly connected with his profession, namely the Greek and Latin Classes. I have the best reason to know, for I had that education myself. I won four scholarships, but even so my education must have cost my father nearly £500. And then, as I proved quite unfit for a parson (I couldn't preach, and was a born heretic), I had to find some other market for that education. I never found one. I have been on the dole once, and had to beg several times. Still, it is not true (as your Party often say) that any fool can be a parson. Some kinds of fool can't. The Bishops do reject some claimants for Orders. No bishop would have ordained me.

C. HARPUR.

#### JESUS AND PAUL.

SIR,—The columns of the *Freethinker* may have room for a comment upon the line in the issue for January 26, which reads, "the ideal of that plastic and putty-like figure—Jesus." We are jealous of the memory of the pioneers of Freethought, but ignore the remnants, badly "hashed," of the philosopher Jesus.

To get a true idea of the man—Jesus—you must commence with his crucifixion for sedition. He threatened the power of the time, and so was put out of the way. That which he taught must have been akin to the ideas taught by those eulogised in the *Freethinker*. And he suffered for it. Fair consideration of this fact cuts out all the "life-after-death philosophy" fathered on in him by Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, and much more of the sloppy stuff dished up as Christianity. Jesus did not claim to be the Son of God nor to be Christ. This was Paul's idea long afterwards.

In defence of this Jesus it can be said two things at least. One is, that we must beware of false prophets—judging them by their fruits. That Paul with his Christology and Church have not, does not reflect on Jesus. It is still a reasonable and a reasoned scientific test. The Christ in fact stands condemned thereby. The other is the Golden Rule. We must do unto others as we would be done by and in so far alone do we prosper. It is a principle (law) of social organization. We do not apply it consciously—but we prefer or suffer as to whether our actions are governed by it. No step forward has been made except this principle has been fulfilled. We go to War—but we fail in our purpose. We try to kill our fellow-man one day; take him prisoner the next; but do we then work our will upon him? No! We treat him as we hope his fellows will treat their prisoners, *i.e.*, "ourselves" in their hands. We dare not ill-use him for fear of retaliation. So in other walks of life. We do not do as we could like—but as we must. What is our turn to-day may be their turn to-morrow.

In conclusion I would commend to my fellow-Freethinkers the suggestion that Jesus used the term "Our Father in Heaven" as we use Mother Nature, and with as much justification. It makes a world of difference to the worth of his contribution to the literature of "Free" thought.

H. WHITHAM.

### Society News.

A GOOD attendance gathered on Sunday last at Conway Hall to hear Mr. A. H. Hyatt give recitations on "The Pickwick Papers," and various others.

The audience were duly appreciative of these fine efforts, especially as they were delivered entirely from memory.

At the conclusion a very hearty vote of thanks was given to Mr. Hyatt, and the meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

B.A.I.E.M.

THE Birmingham Branch held their first lecture at Bristol Street Schools, on Sunday February 2, and despite the bad weather had a numerous gathering. The subject of the lecture was "A New Code of Sex Ethics," and was delivered in a very able and forceful manner by Miss Stella Browne, and her tribute to the clean thinking of Freethinkers was amply justified by the animated discussion which followed.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY. WEST LONDON BRANCH.

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B.A., will Lecture on

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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, February 13, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, W.1, Social and Dance, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Edward H. James—"The British Prime Minister as Seen by an American."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road, S.W.): 7.30, Mrs. Janet Chance—"Passion and Politics."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Lecture, Mr. Bonar Thompson—"The Mystery of Oscar Wilde."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, entrance Theobald's Road): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith—"The Human Soul."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Place of Reverence in Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Dr. Marie Stopes—"Racial Ideals and Some Religions." Questions Invited.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE.—Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster—Sunday, February 9, at 3.30 p.m., Recital: "Une heure artistique." All are invited.

##### OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and J. Hart; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture at 3.0, on "The Savage in our Midst," and 7.0, on "Christianity and the Labour Question." Admission free. Questions and Discussion invited.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): 3.0, E. Roy Calvert (Secretary National Council for the Abolition of the Death Penalty)—"The Case Against Capital Punishment."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"Does Leicester Need Jesus?"

LIVERPOOL, (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. E. Cheshire (Liverpool)—"Population Lessons."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Club Room, Middle Chase): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton will lecture on "Religion, Dreams and Sex." Chairman, Mr. F. S. Houghton.

### Rationalist Press Association (Glasgow District)

Grand Hall, Central Halls, 25 Bath Street,  
Sunday, February 16th, at 3 p.m.

Professor GODFREY H. THOMSON, D.Sc., Ph.D.,

Dept. of Education, Edinburgh University.

##### SUBJECT—

### The Function of Education in the Biological Record

Violinist ... SENOR MANUEL LUNA.  
Questions and Discussion. Silver Collection.

### Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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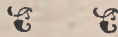
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