

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XLII.—No. 1

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 1922.

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
Blasphemy.—The Editor - - - - -	1
"The Best of Causes."—J. T. Lloyd - - - - -	3
The Gospel Writ in Steel.—Mimmermus - - - - -	4
Flaubert.—William Repton - - - - -	5
Saving the Children's Souls.—A. D. McLaren - - - - -	6
Blasphemy and Poetical Licence - - - - -	7
Blasphemy Defence Fund - - - - -	9
Pages from Fontenelle.—George Underwood - - - - -	10
Prosecution for "Blasphemy" - - - - -	11
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

## Views and Opinions.

### Blasphemy.

By the common law of England blasphemy is a misdemeanour punishable on indictment by a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment, with or without hard labour, and the imposition of a fine. The more startling it is that Christianity itself should be based upon a blasphemy prosecution. Every Christian believes, or professes to believe, that many centuries ago there appeared in far-off Judea a preacher of a new religion. He addressed the people in the language of every-day life and lashed the preachers of the established creed without mercy or moderation. They were a generation of vipers, whited sepulchres, hypocrites wearing long faces only to disguise the meanness of their motives and the selfishness of their aims. They were winning the world and losing their souls. It was language that, to copy the words of modern judges when summing up for a conviction in a blasphemy trial, was well calculated to outrage the feelings of believers and so lead to a breach of the peace. And that is the kind of language which cannot be used without risk. His enemies took counsel together, he was arrested, charged with the solemn offence of blasphemy, declared guilty, and executed. Not an unlikely sequence of events where the accuser, judge, and jury are substantially the same person.

\* \* \*

### Mistaking a Warning for an Example.

On that alleged act of intolerance the Christian religion is built; and if mankind were in the habit of learning aright the lesson of its own experience, persecution among the followers of Jesus would have been as rare an occurrence as it is among the followers of the Buddha. But time was to show that Christians saw in this event, not a warning of what to avoid, but an example of what to follow. No sooner had Christianity become established than intolerance became a characteristic of every Christian sect and part of the settled policy of the Church. The imperial patronage of Constantine, the first of the Christian emperors, furnished the beginning of a series of enactments which aimed at the suppression of heretics and unbelievers, and a statute of A.D. 428 details over thirty heretical sects that are marked down for destruction. Hereafter appetite grew by what it fed on, and we have the beginning of a series of persecutions for religious differences which have characterized Christian rule in

all parts of the world. It is a depressing story, and one which we would rather remained buried, or left to the archæologist for treatment. But recent events have once again reminded the world that the spirit of religious persecution is still alive and will manifest itself whenever it is given the opportunity.

\* \* \*

### Persecution.

Open persecution is defended by few to-day. Far from persecution being defended, it is decried on all hands, and even those who are playing the part of persecutors are anxious to disown the fact. And the ordinary publicist talks so glibly of the freedom of opinion enjoyed in this country, that the general public are probably unaware that a blasphemy law exists, or if it does exist exactly what is its nature. It must be admitted there are many circumstances that lend colour to the belief that religious persecution belongs to the past. The nineteenth century, though it opened with a series of savage persecutions for religious and political offences, saw very considerable advances in the direction of securing the legal right to freedom of opinion. Jews and Catholics were admitted to Parliament, Dissenters had many of their grievances removed, and later the religious oath was made voluntary in courts of justice and elsewhere, thus giving to Freethinkers the right to affirm. Avowed Atheists may hold office under the Crown—some of them do, and there is no suggestion that the constitution is in danger as a consequence. It is the more surprising that there should continue in existence laws against the most complete freedom of expression of opinion in matters of religion. For the sake of human nature one hopes that the majority are in ignorance as to either their nature or their scope, and that a mere knowledge of their existence may excite with fair-minded people a desire for their repeal. In that event their help may be counted on in ridding our law of these relics of an unenlightened mediævalism. They are a survival from the dead, and should have no place in the company of the living.

\* \* \*

### The Beginnings of Blasphemy.

Blasphemy laws are a heritage from a wicked and a deplorable past. In their essence they belong to a period when laws were far more ferocious than they are to-day, and when it was held the duty of the State to enforce and openly coerce opinion. They are also part of the general belief that the right discharge of the duties of citizenship depends, in some more or less obscure way, on the holding of right religious beliefs. In such circumstances, unbelief, heresy, and blasphemy partake of the nature of treason. The heretic is one who is a threat to the welfare of the tribe or nation, and in the interests of the whole group he must be suppressed. Indeed, this aspect of a blasphemy law has never been quite lost, and its ghost can be detected haunting a modern court whenever a trial for blasphemy takes place. It has been repeatedly affirmed in earlier blasphemy trials that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of England, and by a curious perversion of both law and logic it was held

as a corollary that an adverse criticism of Christianity was, in consequence, illegal. It was a ridiculous conclusion, but it endeared itself to very many eminent judges.

\* \* \*

#### A Chapter of History.

In England, prior to the conquest, there does not appear to have been any clear line of demarcation between ecclesiastical and civil affairs. There were Bishops' Courts in which the bishops exercised jurisdiction over a special class of offences, but the bishops also appear to have sat in the ordinary courts and to have taken part in the administration of the ordinary law. At the conquest an important departure was made by William. Two orders of courts were definitely established. The Church Courts decided all ecclesiastical cases under the guidance of Canon (Church) law, and were concerned with what was called "sins"—what would now be called moral offences. The civil or King's Courts were concerned with what was known as "crimes," and which included all offences against the person or property. Where "contumacy" was shown in the Church Courts the offender might be excommunicated or otherwise punished, and the Sheriff would enforce the punishment. This dual arrangement gave the clergy a more definitely legal position than they had hitherto possessed, but it also involved a limitation of their power and marked the beginning of that divorce and opposition between the secular and the religious powers that has played so large a part in our history. But under this arrangement blasphemy and other offences against Church teaching or discipline came within the purview of the ecclesiastical powers. Their authority in this respect was very great and extended to the imposition of the death penalty. In the time of Henry the Fourth and Henry the Fifth special statutes were passed, as a consequence of the Lollard agitation, which empowered the bishops to arrest those accused of heresy, and after trial and condemnation hand them over to the sheriff, who was authorized to burn them alive. There was also the issue of a writ—the famous, or infamous, "De Heretico Comburendo"—which was responsible for the burning of heretics. These various statutes continued in force till the time of Henry the Eighth, when they were replaced by others. There was a reversal to the old laws under Mary, but they were afterwards abolished and a Court of High Commission established with power to deal with all offences against religion and morals.

\* \* \*

#### The End of a Chapter.

The death penalty for heresy and blasphemy was only finally abolished in the reign of Charles II (1677), but it was then expressly stipulated that nothing in the Act should "extend or be construed to take away or abridge the jurisdiction of Protestant archbishops or bishops or any other judges of any ecclesiastical courts, in cases of Atheism, blasphemy, or schism, and other damnable doctrines or opinions." In actual practice these courts are now limited in their jurisdiction to clergymen of the Church of England. Still, there appears to be nothing that would prevent, at law, the Ecclesiastical Courts ordering a layman to six months' imprisonment on his conviction of heresy, although one wonders whether if the Ecclesiastical Court did have the courage to so condemn a layman the civil authorities would carry out the sentence. But when these Ecclesiastical Courts lost their power over laymen for the committal of religious offences the Court of King's Bench stepped in and took over that portion of its duties under cover of the common law. And it is under common law that all recorded cases of blasphemy have been tried. From one point of view this has been a gain, since it has enabled

judges to make concessions to the spirit of the age, From another point of view it has favoured the continuance of a practice at law that otherwise might have disappeared. Had conviction for blasphemy been by statute there is little doubt that by this time it would have been repealed. Every prosecution would have made the anomaly of the continuance of such an Act more patent. As it is, we have a statute law under which not a single prosecution appears to have ever taken place, but which is used to encourage prosecutions under common law that have occurred in profusion. Bigotry has been able to save its face under the cloak of concern for the public peace and public morals.

\* \* \*

#### The Blasphemy Statute.

The only existing statute law against blasphemy is the ninth and tenth of William III c. 35. It is called "An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness," and was originally passed in response to an address to the king asking for the suppression of pernicious books and pamphlets designed to subvert the Christian religion. As originally designed it would have rendered every non-Christian in the country liable to persecution. But in order to protect Jews a saving clause was inserted making the Act applicable to such as had been brought up in or had at some time made profession of Christianity. There was subsequent modification of the Act which permitted the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. As it stands the Act sets forth that any who shall by writing, printing, or advised speaking assert that there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority, shall upon conviction be deprived of all office or employment, civil or military, or of any profit arising from them. And if they so offend a second time, they shall be disabled to sue, or prosecute in any court of law, to receive a legacy, to be the guardian of a child, or executor or administrator of a will, and shall be deprived of any office for ever, and shall also suffer three years' imprisonment. This Act bears ample testimony to the ferocious spirit that animated the prosecution of anti-Christians, and there is no wonder that liberal minded judges like Sir James FitzJames Stephen and Lord Coleridge denounced this Act as "ferocious" and "infamous." It is a standing monument to the spirit that underlies all prosecutions for blasphemy, even when they are brought under common law. With that we will next deal.<sup>1</sup>

CHAPMAN COHEN.

<sup>1</sup> Although there is no record of any prosecution ever having been undertaken under this Act, it would be quite a mistake to assume—as some writers have done—that it has been a dead letter. On the contrary, it has been taken as the basis of many decisions adverse to Freethinkers. During the nineteenth century quite a number of bequests, where they could be shown to be intended for a purpose that involved a teaching contrary to Christianity, have been declared by the Courts to be invalid. Copyright has been refused to books and writings on the same ground. In one instance, a contract which let a room for the purpose of delivering a lecture entitled "The Character and Teaching of Christ; the former defective, the latter misleading," was pronounced invalid on the same ground. And this was practically the reason for which Mrs. Annie Besant was deprived of the custody of her child. The question of receiving a legacy for secular purposes was only decided definitely in favour of Freethinkers by the House of Lords in 1917.

## "The Best of Causes."

GEORGE MEREDITH, in his first letter to G. W. Foote, said: "I admire the fight you are making. You carry on a brave battle for the best of causes, personally profitless as you must know it to be, and my good wishes are with you." A more suitable name for the Freethought movement could not be coined. Ours is undoubtedly "the best of causes," because of the nobility and loftiness of its motives and aims. Its supreme object is to deliver mankind from intellectual bondage and moral degradation, and teach it to walk by natural knowledge rather than by supernatural belief. Mankind, as such, has never yet had experience of the real meaning of the word freedom, or of the rich and ennobling joy to be derived therefrom. The emancipation of the intellect and the rationalization of morality must be accomplished before it can be possible for society to regulate its activities on right lines. Now, if Freethought, as thus understood, is "the best of causes," how are we to account for the fewness of its adherents, or, in other words, for its apparent failure? The first answer to that question is that the non-success is more apparent than real. Avowed Freethinkers may be few, but Freethought, like leaven, is working mightily everywhere, even within the Churches themselves. It may be true that at present there is a considerable slump in such causes as ours, but this is by no means due to any general revival of interest in supernatural religion. The slump in religion is greater than in any other cause known to us, and the leaders in all the Churches are profoundly saddened by it. Of course, they still believe that the most wonderful of all religious revivals will shortly overwhelm the whole land and put a speedy end to all secular causes; but they have been cherishing and expressing that belief every year since the opening of the twentieth century. It is true that the revival led by Evan Roberts caused no inconsiderable stir for a while, but it is equally true that it did more harm than good to religion in South Wales. The same thing may be said of practically all other revivals. A revival is a religious carousal, when people go on a spree emotionally. It is a form of madness from which some never recover. In the long run revivals play into the hands of Freethought, as the last Welsh revival has certainly done.

This is a most important point which deserves to be elaborated. "The best of causes" gains by anything that tends to show the mischievousness and absurdity of religion, and surely nothing does that more effectually than an old-fashioned revival. Lately, a wave of religious awakening swept over Lowestoft, Yarmouth, and East Anglia. A young man named Jock Troup, a cooper of Wick, was at Yarmouth whence he went to the North of Scotland, afire with religious zeal, to convert his fellow countrymen. He is described as having "a forceful personality and tireless energy," with a marvellous command of language. He went to the North-east coast of Scotland by boat, landing at St. Combs, where he held meetings of a highly exciting nature, and his fiery eloquence soon captivated the fisher folk. From this small village he proceeded to Fraserburgh, the chief centre of the Scottish herring fishery, and here he crowded three churches to the doors daily. Peterhead, Cairnbulg, and other fishing villages along the coast, as well as St. Combs and Fraserburgh, are in the rueful throes of an awful conviction of sin, publicly confessing all sorts of sins, such as dishonest dealings, and unspeakable, though previously hidden, vices. One reporter says:—

It was a unique experience; the atmosphere tense with excitement, women rocking in their seats, old men moaning and groaning, children shouting

hallelujahs, and then sudden spasms of deepest silence, during which the crowd seemed to be gathering new energy for manifestations of emotionalism. Women of doubtful reputation, girls of no reputation at all, rose, and amid a chorus of praise, made their way to the front and wept for their sins; men whose respectability no one had ever called in question stood up and confessed hidden vices and dishonest dealings. Wretches whose whole life had been spent in trailing from one public-house to another vowed with transfigured faces that they had sought and found salvation.

Those who have seen and taken part in revivals know what value to set on such scenes. Indeed, we learn from a report in the *Sunday Chronicle* for December 18 that at one village a well-known tradesman surprised everybody by standing up and admitting that he had been guilty of shameless profiteering. "Instead of showing indignation the crowd almost bore him in triumph." A few days later the journalist visited his shop and discovered that his prices had not been reduced, although he was still prominent at revival meetings. At Peterhead a professional man was dramatically converted. Afterwards he met his baker in the street who ventured to remind him of a long-standing account. Instead of paying or promising to pay, this new convert favoured his creditor with a sermonette on the sin of setting his heart on such worthless things as money when imperishable spiritual treasures were to be had for the asking. Another convert, a lady, on "being asked by her dress-maker to settle an account, blandly informed her that, as she was coming along the street, the Holy Ghost appeared to her and told her to go her way rejoicing, for all her debts had been wiped out."

The paltry character of the conversion in many instances is shown in the following passage in the *Sunday Chronicle* report:—

In a mission-hall in Cairnbulg a curious spectacle meets the gaze, viz., a collection of about 350 pipes and tobacco pouches, numerous packs of playing cards, large quantities of cigarettes, draughtboards and draughtsmen, crown-and-anchor boards, and stocks of dancing shoes.

A big bonfire was lit and that unique collection thrown into it and burnt. The same thing happened at Thurso-wick also.

One of the effects of this strange revival is insanity. A dozen people have already been sent to lunatic asylums, one of whom has died. As the *Sunday Chronicle* observes, "ill effects have not been long in manifesting themselves, several persons having had to be removed to asylums and infirmaries. If the movement continues an epidemic of mental cases is feared." Indeed, the revival itself is said to be the effect of hunger from which the fisher folk have been suffering. The *Sunday Chronicle* says:—

A local doctor expressed the opinion: "There is a close relationship between empty stomachs and religious hysteria. The herring fishery is an absolute failure, and as there is no work available on the land there is no money for amusements. The public's present craving for excitement thus finds outlet, but the emotionalism is likely to have a very serious effect on the public health."

For a while, no doubt, the inhabitants of the North-east coast of Scotland will exhibit a marked degree of religious zeal and keep the churches crowded, while public-houses and cinemas will remain deserted. But in a year or two the present excitement will have become very largely a thing of the past, and many of the converts will have resumed their former ways of life. When the war broke out several men of God predicted the speedy downfall of all Freethought movements. The nation was on its knees, churches and chapels were thronged, the long prayed for and expected revival

was actually taking place, and all anti-religious forces were doomed. All are aware now how quickly that revival stopped and what little effect it had in checking the advance of Freethought. The Evan Roberts' revival in South Wales was immediately followed by the rise of secular societies, which are now exerting tremendous influence in the southern part of the Principality. We are confident that the present religious revival in Scotland will prepare the way for the triumph of "the best of causes" in that land also.

It is impossible to foretell with any degree of certainty what will happen in the future, but we cannot forget that the present is the child of the past and that the future will be the child of the present. The signs of the times may be extremely difficult to decipher, and yet we cannot help studying and attempting to read them. Beyond all doubt, we have reason to believe that the secular philosophy of life is destined to outlive every other philosophy. It is a well-known fact that the majority of the British people are no longer Christians, and that even some clergymen are unbelievers. Scientific knowledge is percolating into every corner near and far, even into the Churches, and the inevitable tendency of knowledge is to dislodge faith and make Nature supreme. Among learned and scientific men there is a growing number who "think that the profession of Christianity is incompatible with the conclusions of modern science." It is undeniable that science is acting as a secularizing factor in the world, and there is no indication that it will ever cease so to serve.

On the whole, then, Freethinkers are justified, as they begin a new year, in looking forward to a time of great progress in the service of "the best of causes."

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Gospel Writ in Steel.

If Christians would teach infidels to be just to Christianity, they should themselves be just to infidelity.

—John Stuart Mill.

I have searched over the grounds of my belief, and if wife and child and name and fame were all to be lost to me one after the other as the penalty, still I will not lie.

—Thomas Henry Huxley.

The system which begins by making mental indolence a virtue and intellectual narrowness a part of sanctity, ends by putting a premium on something too like hypocrisy.

—Lord Morley.

CHRISTIAN apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the religion they profess. It is well, therefore, to attempt to dispel the ignorance everywhere displayed as to the persecution of Freethinkers by the Orthodox. Although trials for blasphemy have been numerous, the comparatively enlightened nineteenth century holds the unenviable record for the number of blasphemy and free-speech prosecutions, and the early years of the present century continue the bad record of its predecessor. The reason is that during this period the working classes of this country have woken to intellectual issues, and the Church and governing classes have united to suppress freedom of thought.

A hundred years ago the lion-hearted Thomas Paine was dead, but his "soul was marching on." His books were very much alive, and were being circulated widely. This was one of the earliest concerted efforts made to arouse the workers with the Freethought evangel, and the pioneers had to pay a heavy price for their opinions. And, be it remembered, *The Age of Reason* was a thunderous engine of revolt. There were critics of the Bible, it is true, before Paine, but they were scholars whose writings were over the heads of ordinary folk. Paine himself, a man of real genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their own language and made their thoughts articulate. Boldly

as Paine might write, his books would have been still-born but for the extraordinary courage of the Freethinkers. Richard Carlile, for example, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible and prolonged battle. The Orthodox were thoroughly aroused by so determined a resistance, and persecuted without mercy. They attacked women as well as men, and Carlile's brave wife and courageous sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. As each Freethinker was imprisoned fresh ones stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison. Think of it all! One small circle of Freethinkers serving between them over fifty years in prison, thousands of pounds worth of books destroyed, and all in defence of the rights of free speech in a country supposed to be in the van of civilization.

The Freethinkers fought with their backs to the wall against overwhelming odds, and they gave a most excellent account of themselves. Paine's works were followed by Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy*, Clarke's *Critical Life of Jesus*, and Cooper's *Holy Scriptures Analysed*. The State clergy joined forces with the Nonconformists and engineered many prosecutions against the Freethinkers. John Cleave and Henry Hetherington were both prosecuted and sentenced. Then the Freethinkers did a very bold thing. They prosecuted Moxon and other publishers for selling Shelley's *Queen Mab*, an Atheistic poem for which so many Freethinkers had suffered. This clever ruse succeeded, and the counter-attack showed the orthodox that they were not to have things all their own way.

Quite a campaign was conducted around Charles Southwell's *Oracle of Reason*, the first distinctive Freethought periodical. The last word in audacity, it soon attracted attention. Before many issues had been published Southwell was prosecuted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. Holyoake, the second editor, followed with six months' imprisonment for a jest after a lecture. Thomas Paterson, the third editor, shared the same fate as his predecessors. His defence, which was published under the caustic title of *God versus Paterson*, earned for its author the affectionate title of "Bulldog." These prosecutions were not confined to England, and up in Scotland two stalwart Freethinkers, Finlay and Robinson, were sentenced. Then Matilda Roalfe was imprisoned for selling *The Age of Reason*.

The middle of the century saw a change. The Freethinkers were no longer friendless. In 1857 Pooley, a poor labourer, was sentenced to nearly two years' imprisonment for chalking words on a parson's gate. This example of Christian charity attracted the attention of Henry Thomas Buckle, the historian, and of John Stuart Mill, who stirred decent people by denouncing such abominable persecution. At the trial of Pooley the prosecuting counsel was the famous John Duke Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, and by the irony of events the judge in the memorable blasphemy trial of 1883. It was in that year that George Foote was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and W. J. Ramsey and Kemp to nine and three months' imprisonment, respectively. The petition for release was memorable, for it was signed by almost everyone of intellectual eminence in England, and the honoured name of Herbert Spencer headed the list.

In earlier days imprisonment was by no means the only indignity imposed. Daniel Eaton, who was so ably championed by the poet Shelley, was not only prosecuted seven times, but had the pillory inflicted and £2,500 worth of books destroyed. Shelley himself was judicially declared, because of his Freethought, to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant. A large number of the prosecutions of the unstamped press were simply disguised blasphemy trials. It was really Bradlaugh's alertness which pre-

vented his imprisonment for blasphemy. As it was, he had to fight the bigots for thirteen years for his right to represent Northampton in Parliament. The late Marquis of Queensberry was deprived of his seat in the House of Lords on account of his known Freethought opinions. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels, but happily the famous Bowman case stopped this highway robbery in the name of religion. In addition, Freethought leaders have been involved in constant and costly lawsuits, deluged with personal abuse, and have been the victims of a concerted press boycott.

The Christian Church sentenced the Freethinkers to prison, but the Freethinkers have brought the persecuting Church to the bar of Humanity. The clergy, entrenched behind their money-bags, no longer have solitary Freethinkers to deal with, but have to face a compact army, upon whose banner is inscribed the significant and stirring phrase of the great Voltaire, "Crush the Infamous."

MIMNERMUS.

## Flaubert.

ONE hundred years ago Gustave Flaubert came to this earth, and there was no question then as to whether this genius accepted it or not; as in the case of every human being it was, and is, Hobson's choice. Once born, there is no turning back, and from this simple point we arrive at the conclusion that life is a fact. The human form then becomes a vase in which may be found seraphim, basilisk, or both—or nothing to distinguish it from the millions that contain the spirit of man until dissolution.

Flaubert was a magnificent, but not to be imitated attitude towards life. Dante, very wisely in our opinion, delegates incontinent people to the first circle of hell. In fact, we do not know of a better place for the housing of cyphers. What Flaubert stood for, or symbolized, would be difficult to define in a sentence; it would be easier to state what he did not symbolize. Happy the farmer's boy with his dream of heaven, no higher than that of eating fat bacon and forever swinging on a gate. The Columbus germ of discovery in the brain of a genius loving solitude, has an urge beyond the heaven of man, and below the hell of priests. Sufficient for us that Flaubert definitely stood for something. His words are like whips. His descriptions hammer out pictures that the mind cannot forget. He has the terrible and remorseless cruelty and passion for the vivid, for the majestic, for the tremendous, and he plays with his historical subject in *Salammbô* in the same manner that Plato frolicked with an idea. Witness the slow ruin of the vain woman Madam Bovary; in the hands of the craftsman this theme would be developed in the direction of any of Hall Caine's novels—chapters of it might be read at meetings for men only, or it might be dramatized as the woman who took the wrong turning, with the usual happy ending. When Emma Bovary dies there is no moralizing. The debts she had secretly contracted are presented to her late husband Charles, who thought every one would be the last every time he paid a bill. "How happy my poor wife would have been to have heard of this!" he says, on reading an announcement of the approaching marriage of Leon Depuis, one of his wife's admirers. "Perhaps it was a platonic affection," he exclaims, when finding a letter written to his wife by Rodolphe—another fateful shadow over her life. This passion of Emma Bovary was as mad as that of Balthazar Clae's in Balzac's *Quest of the Absolute*, and Flaubert writes down the death of the unhappy Charles in the same cold manner that the sculptor would view the figures of "The

Laocoon"—his art forbidding him to display emotion for fear of losing a view of the swelling veins, the tightening muscles or the quivering of an eyelid. In this book we have Flaubert, the moralist of hatred—hatred of the stupidities of that vast community, guilty of neither form nor matter, cruel in their ignorance, and incapable of saying yes or no to life—that vast community known as the *bourgeoisie*. Our choicest specimens are our Labour leaders and moneyed merchants who now stand where they hope one day to sit. May Max Beerbohm be there with his whip on the day they bend their bodies.

To say that Flaubert hated life would be untrue; he only hated what was hateful; this with him was a passion—it has the doubtful value of being negative. If we must gather illusions to our hearts let us, with disciplined imagination, cherish the illusion of Love as the regenerator of the world; the icy east winds of hatred kill flowers and weeds alike. Flaubert has written in large and flaming type the seven deadly sins with their natural consequences—this, not to confuse him with the priest mind that illogically reasons from earthly action to heavenly or hellish consequences.

In *Salammbô* the chapter entitled "The Defile of the Axe" is the last word in realism. Here, the reader, if he be afflicted with physical bitterness through our last war, will find his feelings written down for all time. Flaubert, writing from the catalogue of a stupendous imagination takes form and makes chaos of it—that is what the concentrated wisdom of all authority did in the last war. In the slim volume of *Salammbô* Flaubert has engraved for eternity all that can be said of war with the exception of one matter that cannot be dealt with here. The courage, the cowardice, the splendour, the meanness, the brave, the vicious—nothing has been left out—even down to the acceptance by Hamilcar for his army of the men of evil repute, the scum of Megara, and the sons of barbarians. Readers will remember that our muddle-headed population would have put *all* strikers in the front line trenches with our brave lads—as a punishment. Reasoning of this kind, besides being a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, proceeds from the stomach; the chapter we have mentioned shows the tenth degree of madness in mankind, and the taxpayer in our day should hail Sisyphus as his brother.

The last book to be recommended for serious reading by those spiritual pastors who rule the world by fear would be *The Temptations of St. Antony*. It is an epitome of all plain and fancy religions, yet we discern in Flaubert's treatment of Greek Mythology one of those all too seldom touches of intellectual sympathy. He seemed always to be writing in a passion, and his nerves appeared to register all the heights and depths of deception that have kept mankind in submission to gods—through the bellies of whom St. Antony could see the sand trickling.

To conclude, Flaubert has carved out with a minimum of material, but not of effort, all those vile things in life with which no friends of light can temporize—only at peril of disaster. He was an artist in the only free thought that will set us free. He had gone down to the depths of pessimism, yet rose again on the wings of his art, to rid himself and life of perilous stuff. His art is not for little people or fools—it has the utter down-going and cathartic properties of the Greek dramas, and the *tempo* of action in *King Lear* or *Macbeth*. The leaves of the laurel are bitter—yet they symbolize the crown of Flaubert—if he has given us nothing but the biting and satiric spirit of comedy at which we smile with sorrow, he has magnified for all but the blind to see, those odious consequences that follow in the train of vanity, greed, and the pride masquerading as humility in the monk. He has made vice repugnant, but some breath from an evil genie prevented him from striking in a positive direction by making virtue

attractive. Hatred of the meanness of the bourgeoisie, of the militarist wreckers of society, of the pretensions of religions—these he accomplished in a regal manner, and splendidly failed to touch those responsive chords in mankind that sound the music of battle to life. In the words of Henry James, Flaubert stopped too short. "He hovered for ever at the public door, in the outer court, the splendour of which very properly beguiled him." With the love and tolerance of Montaigne, he might have brought harmony into his art, and we should have been spared his savage hatred of the masses, and his denunciation of the Positivism of Comte. Religion has failed because of its carefully disguised hatred of mankind, and its vamping on emotionalism which is only *part* of life—yet mankind cannot exist on the bitterness of Flaubert who, in a moment when touched by the fairy of sweetness and light, wrote these few words, to cage our ego—to get it out of the way, to subjugate the part to the whole—"L'homme n'est rien; l'œuvre est tout."

WILLIAM REPTON.

### Saving the Children's Souls.

ABOUT twelve months ago, just after Canon Barnes had delivered himself of the shrewd observation that it is unfair to teach the child one thing in the Scripture lesson and another thing in the geology class, several correspondents asked, through the columns of the *Daily Mail*, what effect the changed outlook concerning the inspiration of the Bible should have upon the religious training of the young. On November 29 and 30 of this year a conference of educationalists was held at Westminster to consider how schemes of Bible teaching in schools may be brought into line with approved educational methods.

The champions of the faith to-day are facing valiantly, as is their wont, "the modern world," and the same is true of the State's officials who are persuaded that the divine character of Christianity can be vindicated by trials for blasphemy. Believing in a constructive policy, especially in spiritual things, they begin with the foundation. It affords a profound insight into the nature of this faith, and perhaps into our national morals as well, that the present state of things in regard to what is taught to children as religious truth should exist in England in 1921. A few extracts from the recent writings of acknowledged authorities on the subject of religious education of children will serve to show what this state of things is:—

We cannot go on any longer trying to teach our children what, at the bottom of our hearts, we have ceased to believe. (Hetty Lee, *Present-day Problems in Religious Teaching*, 1920, p.3.)

If we find that it (the Old Testament) contains matter which is not historically or scientifically true .....that will not affect the Divine messages any more than the parables used to convey spiritual truths or than earthen vessels containing precious liquid destroy what they are used to transmit. (Rev. W. H. Cock, B.Sc., *A Scheme of Graded Religious Instructions*, 1918, p. 19.)

But God could, certainly, if He liked, make the sun and moon and earth, and all the stars, too, stand still. (H. R. Stevenson, M.A., *What a Child ought to know about the Bible*, 1917, p. 48.)

We may be perfectly sure that God could have made the whale swallow Jonah. (ib. p. 77.)

When Joshua found out, however, that their country was near by, he made them (the Gibeonites) become hewers of wood and drawers of water for Israel..... And Joshua conquered all the towns from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen from Gaza to Gibeon. And he slew all the people, burnt all their cities, and took all their land.....As the Lord was with Joshua, so will he be with us. (Thomas

Harwood, Superintendent, Education Department, Nigeria, *Moral and Religious Instruction*, 1919, pp. 129-30.)

The ethical difficulties of some of the stories are not repugnant to him (the child). The interest of the story does not centre in the indications of a low moral standard, but in that God-consciousness which is so marvellously the essential characteristic of the Old Testament from the first word to the last. (Quoted, with manifest approval, by G. B. Ayre, *Suggestions for a Syllabus in Religious Teaching*, 1911, p. 20.)

May it not be, even on the supposition that a physical resurrection never happened, that a belief which has done so much for the race still has its part to play in the history of the individual soul? (T. Raymont, M.A., *The Use of the Bible in the Education of the Young*, 1911, p. 175.)

Despite the lip-service paid to science, and the professional cant about its epoch-making triumphs, most children to-day receive the same ideas of the universe and man as their parents and grand-parents received. "Creation, Fall, Abraham" is in one syllabus of religious instruction drawn up since the war and used in many English schools. In ten of the thirty-one syllabuses issued by the Diocesan and Local Education Authorities the story of the sacrifice of Isaac is still prescribed for the religious instruction of children of six and under. In several of them the story of Gehazi is recommended to illustrate the importance of the Ninth Commandment. The punishment of Gehazi is stated in the second book of Kings: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." And to whom is this taught? To "scholars up to the age of six or seven." In the Winchester Syllabus, sixth (latest) edition, Exodus xxxi., 14 is recommended to illustrate the awful consequences of violating the Fourth Commandment. The Sabbath-breaker is to be put to death and "cut off from amongst his people."

This is the treatment meted out to children in twentieth century England. And its advocates dread that the decline of religious training may result in serious inroads on the child's moral character. They are whole-heartedly antagonistic to any system of education that regards exclusively the training of the intellect. Yet we are assured that child-study *has* made noticeable progress in recent years, that its contributions to the science of education are beyond assessment, and that a considerable literature has accumulated round the subject. There is no question that institutions of various kinds concern themselves with the child's welfare. Why, then, have the main results of half a century of investigation not been embodied in our educational system, and used to promote the mental and moral development of our boys and girls? The answer is simple. Because professional advocates are allowed to consider the relationship of their religion to the child, and to exercise a controlling influence over its education. They foist upon children a choice collection of doctrines which are positively rejected by many of their teachers in secular subjects, and then proceed to defend their action in the interests of "morality" and "character." To crown the infamy of the whole thing, even men of science are sometimes found prepared to make a pernicious compromise with organized Christianity and to taint the new generation on the very threshold of life. It is of the highest significance that those who reflect religious opinion on this question frequently assert that the exclusion of religion from the school will result in the spread of indifference to it. This fact, apparently, affords ample justification for teaching what is false. On the same principle, we suppose, the inadequacy of the existing creed to compete against new cultural values gives it complete right to exclude the latter. How many would think, judging from the religious "instruction" given in church and school to-day,

that the new lines of thought traced out by science affected the whole modern outlook concerning man's origin, or even that the old doctrine of Biblical inspiration was utterly untenable?

The Christian Church to-day has only a progressive revelation, which means in plain English that it has debaters and dialecticians but no prophets. That is its own concern. My appeal is to those who have the welfare of children at heart. Too long have men and women cried out against the little lie of a day and played fast and loose with the big lie of a life-time. Nowhere is this fact more tragically in evidence than in the religious training of the young throughout Christendom. "No consecrated absurdity would have stood its ground in the world if the man had not silenced the objection of the child." Among the great utterances to the credit of Jules Michelet there is none greater than that.

A. D. McLAREN.

### Blasphemy and Poetical Licence.

In our issue of December 18 we referred to the prosecution, in New Zealand, of the editor of the *Maoriland Worker* for "publishing a blasphemous libel." In this case the blasphemy is contained in Sassoon's poem, "Stand-to: Good Friday Morning"—one of the well-known *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* published by Mr. Heinemann in 1919. Some of our readers, we feel sure, will appreciate both the blasphemy and the poetry of Mr. Sassoon's lines.

I'd been on duty from two till four.  
I went and stared at the dug-out door.  
Down in the frowst I heard them snore.  
"Stand-to!" Somebody grunted and swore.  
Dawn was misty; the skies were still;  
Larks were singing, discordant, shrill;  
They seemed happy; but I felt ill.  
Deep in water I splashed my way  
Up the trench to our bogged front line.  
Rain had fallen the whole damned night.  
O Jesus, send me a wound to-day,  
And I'll believe in Your bread and wine,  
And get my bloody old sins washed white!

In the poem "At Carnoy" the poet, musing amid the medley of confused sounds at twilight, sees the camp and the moving forms "down in the hollow." The concluding exclamation is a neat touch of satire, the very simplicity of which, in the scene of carnage of which Sassoon was an eye-witness, is an answer to a whole library of Theistic apologetics:—

O world God made!

Again in "To Any Dead Officer" he asks, "how are things in Heaven?"

Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,  
And tell Him that our Politicians swear  
They won't give in till Prussian Rule's been trod  
Under the Heel of England.

In "How to Die" we learn that the men at the front did not "go West," "hankering for wreaths and tombs and hearses." They had been "taught the way to do it like Christian soldiers."

But, after all, the blasphemy in the English poets of the nineteenth century would supply the editor of the *Maoriland Worker* with an abundant stock of quotations. We conclude with two from men whose genius is fairly well acknowledged. Robert Buchanan, in one of his finest sonnets, asks, Who is to try God when the latter is arraigned at the bar of humanity:—

The angels thou hast sent to haunt the street  
Are hunger and distortion and decay.  
Lord, that mad'st man and send'st him foes so fleet  
Who shall judge thee upon thy judgment day?

Swinburne, in "The Hymn of Man," declares that the name of the Christian God was written in hell fire, and burned at the point of his sword, but his days are numbered:—

Thou art smitten, thou God, thou are smitten,  
Thy death is upon thee, O Lord!

### Acid Drops.

The Rev. C. I. Drawbridge, Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, thinks that Mr. Gott's prosecution is a "great asset for the National Secular Society, and it will injure the cause of religion. Many people will imagine that it is because Christianity is bankrupt that it has to descend to legal proceedings." We congratulate Mr. Drawbridge on his ability to discover the existence of a brick wall—when he runs his head against it. It shows unusual perspicacity—for a clergyman. Of course, the National Secular Society will make capital out of it. Why should it not? It will help to drive home to the minds of thoughtful and really decent-minded people the kind of thing that Christianity really is when it is driven into a corner. Then it is seen that all its talk about love, and brotherhood, charity, is sheer cant, a mask for some of the most detestable characteristics of which the civilized mind is capable. And when a religion has to call in a policeman to its assistance what are we to think but that it is bankrupt in argument?

Mr. Drawbridge says that in his opinion the blasphemy laws should be abolished. If he really believes that we suggest that he attends some of the meetings which will be held to demand the repeal of these laws and say so much publicly. But we have our doubts here, for Mr. Drawbridge says "I am sure that the community ought to be protected by some other law," that is, he believes in the repeal of the blasphemy law provided that some other law of a similar kind is put in its place. After that we doubt whether Mr. Drawbridge really had the native ability to see a brick wall when he butted into it. Some more wide-awake friend must have demonstrated to him that it was there.

The reason that Mr. Drawbridge gives for the existence of some sort of a blasphemy law is, "If the community ought to be defended against uncalled for attacks on their bodies why should they not be protected against assaults on their deepest feelings!" That, if he will not mind our saying so, is sheer cant. We have no law to protect people's feelings in political or any other kind of controversy, why should we have it in religion? If people are sufficiently civilized to have their opinions on all other subjects attacked by every argument possible to man, are we to assume that religion is the one subject on which there still obtains a perfectly uncivilized state of intelligence? Freethinkers do not ask for a law to protect them from the ridicule of Christians, why cannot Christians develop the same degree of fortitude with regard to Freethinkers? Does Mr. Drawbridge wish us to conclude that Freethinkers are made of such superior stuff that they possess a self-control which Christians lack? And even Mr. Drawbridge ought to be able to see that when Christians ask for the help of a policeman and prison warden to protect them against Freethinkers they are proclaiming to the world that in the open field of controversy Christianity would not survive. And that is the bottom fact of the situation. It begins by prostituting the intelligence of the child, it proceeds by purchasing the venality of the adult, and it threatens men of intelligence and of courage with the prison in order to silence a speech it cannot buy. What a religion for self-respecting men and women!

The Earl of Pembroke, Chancellor of the Primrose League, asserts that books used at Socialist Sunday-schools are "too disgusting and filthy to quote." If these books contain anything worse than the Bible story of "Lot and his daughters," there may be some reason for the earl's excitement. We regret that the earl does not read his Bible more attentively.

Christ said lay not up treasure. The clergy constantly disobey the divine injunction. The latest wills include the late Rev. F. C. Norton, of Ditching, Sussex, who left £12,077; the late Rev. J. B. Lock, of Cambridge, £35,221, and the Rt. Rev. G. C. Fisher, formerly Bishop of Southampton, left £178,455.

In fifteen minutes £10,000 was realized at a sale of jewellery at Christie's, one tiara of diamonds fetching £3,500. England is a country which professes to worship a pauper-god; and there are nearly two millions of people workless at the present time.

Education costs this country over £100,000,000 yearly. One result of this outlay is that hundreds of thousands of children are taught that the Bible yarns are sober history; and that the tangle of the Trinity is justified by mathematics.

Mr. P. J. Hannon, M.P., speaking in aid of a building fund for a Birmingham church, said that it would be a bad day for England when the elementary schools were secularized. "England as a nation, and the possessions under the Crown as an Empire had flourished on the basis of the great Christian principles which had marked the progress of English public life." Bravo! We presume that what Mr. Hannon had in view was such teachings as "Take no thought for the morrow," "Woe unto you rich," "If any man strike thee on the one cheek turn to him the other," and "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We are not surprised at Mr. Hannon being in Parliament. Either that or the pulpit seems the right mental atmosphere for so profound an intellect.

Civil marriages are growing in favour, and the latest returns show that four out of every ten in England and Wales during the past year were performed in registry offices. This is an increase of twenty per cent. upon the figures for 1914. No wonder that the Dean of St. Paul's is gloomy.

In a review of the life of Bishop Percival the *Sunday Times* states that "the deeper mysteries (of religion) he left undefined." As the French wit said: "It is so easy to believe in God if one does not define him."

A curiously uninformed leading article on the blasphemy case appeared in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* for December 12. The article quotes the passage read out by the judge, "Where the Bible reports Jesus as saying 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' the word mansions should read 'flats,'" and says the jury were asked to say whether such stuff was within the bounds of decent controversy. And it ends by saying that "what is counter, in an outrageous degree, to the general taste and sense of decency, ought not to go unpunished, or at least unrestrained." The criticism quite misses the essential point. The play on the words "mansions" and "flats" would not be considered indecent or contrary to good taste in connection with any other subject than that of religion. And we question whether any of the Christian parties concerned in the case, including the judge, would have felt very much shocked even in that connection had they been used by anyone other than a Freethinker. In this case it is not the words that shock so much as it is the Freethinker that disturbs the believer. Moreover, the proper corrective to bad taste is the good sense of the public, not the prison warden. And in all other matters of controversy expressions contrary to good taste are left to the public for correction. It is in connection with religion alone that the policeman is called in to educate the taste of the unbeliever. The bad taste of the religious evangelist goes unchecked.

The Rev. W. J. S. Weir, assistant director of the Bishop of London's Sunday-school Council, says: "The foundational fact of the Christian faith is that God is love." Yet, if the Christian religion be true, the majority of the human race tread the primrose path to eternal perdition.

Dunmow has no provision for vagrants, as the vicar declines to act as a "relieving officer." But what has happened to the person who fed five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes?

"Many clergy are living within the poverty line," says Dean Floyer. For example, the Bench of Bishops shares annually £180,000.

The *Daily News*, always noted for its pious humbug, remained quite silent over the blasphemy prosecution, but it published a leading article on the outbreak of epidemic religious insanity in Scotland. It says that however crudely and feverishly these revivals stand for an ideal principle. The Scotch revival convert flinging his pack of cards in the fire "is symbolic of what is noble in human nature." That is first-class journalistic humbug, and we can imagine the writer penning those words with his tongue in his cheek, that is, if he thinks about what he is writing. But the probability is that he does not think about it at all, but just turns on the religious tap, with a consequent flow of all the customary phrases that do duty whenever religion is on the carpet.

For there is nothing that is symbolic of noble things in the religious ravings of a number of temporarily—and some permanently—demented people. So far as they are coolly conscious of what they are doing they are bent on the not very noble task of saving their own souls. And to talk of that as a noble task is to mistake the nature of human nobility. It is religious terror that drives them to what they are, and the selfishness engrained by Christianity leads them to put their own salvation before all else. They do not stand for a single noble or unselfish end. And it is shameful that newspapers and others should, from more or less interested motives, exploit these revivalistic manias, with the facts before them as to their disastrous consequences, both individual and social. If the editor of the *Daily News* would read some of the chapters in Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex* he would know the kind of thing that is going on. But then he would not be able to write the religious "gush" which we have criticised.

Finally, suppose that instead of these frantic goings on by a crowd of religious folk it had been a case of a man or number of men who honestly believed that Christianity was a lie and a danger to society. And suppose they set themselves the work of convincing other people of the truth of what they believed, and in the process used language as crudely forcible as these uneducated converts use. Suppose also, that their doing so exposed them to the penalty of imprisonment, and they faced it, not with the selfish desire to save their own souls, but with the really unselfish purpose of bettering their fellows. In that case would the *Daily News* have seen in their work evidence of something "symbolic of what is noble in human nature"? Not a bit of it. It would have talked of the decencies of controversy, and have remained silent while such men were sent to prison as criminals. Really, of all cant there is none quite so detestable as the religious variety.

We are glad to see that a discussion has been proceeding in the columns of the *Johannesburg Star* on "Paganism and Christianity." The letters from the Freethought side are well written and to the point, and if the editor does not stop the discussion it cannot but open the eyes of many Christian readers of the *Star*. So long as the clergy can manage it they will keep their dupes ignorant as to the true nature of the creed that is forced upon them, and any sort of discussion that sets people on the track of what Christianity is does good. Even a blasphemy trial does good in so far as it makes some folk wonder why adding a policeman to the Trinity strengthens that supernatural combination. And it may make some people smile—which would be a very shocking offence in the eyes of Justice Avory.

The Earl of Pembroke, Chancellor of the Primrose League, complains that Socialist Sunday-schools are concerned with "alien propaganda." But the ordinary Sunday-schools are open to the same objection. The Christian religion is Oriental, and its founder was not even an Englishman.

**WHY NOT HAND THIS COPY TO A LIKELY**



**C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.**

January 8, Stratford Town Hall; January 15, Swansea; January 22, Stratford Town Hall; January 29, Stockport; February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester.

**To Correspondents.**

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

A. D. CORRICK.—We agree with you as to the advisability of every Freethinker writing the Home Secretary protesting against prosecutions for blasphemy. We wish they would all do so.

W. D. HINDMARSH.—There is no truth whatever in the Lady Hope story of Darwin giving up his belief in evolution shortly before he died. And it would not make a ha'porth of difference to the truth of evolution if he had done. Such stories can only interest fools, and are generally connected with knaves.

A. E. MADDOCK.—"Concerning the Cloth" received, with thanks. Compliments of the season.

O. B. THOMAS.—The expense of the Blasphemy trial is entirely due to the charges of two counsels and solicitor. By the time the Appeal is heard there will have been three trials, and three trials are not managed for nothing in this country. Mr. Cohen, on whose shoulders rests more work in connection with the case than with anyone else concerned, makes no charge for his services, not even for his inevitable out of pocket expenses. That is one of the perquisites of his position.

JOHN'S PARENTS.—Your comments on the Blasphemy laws have our warmest approval. Pity we have not the space to print a selection from the many excellent letters we have received. The pamphlet you enclose on *Regeneration* quite deserves the description of piffle. It makes one wonder whether the people who write these things are quite sane.

S. CAMERON.—Certainly there is a world of difference between "blasphemy" appearing in the *Westminster Gazette* and it being sold by an avowed Freethinker. And we agree as to the strangeness of judges being "unable to distinguish between Manners and Morals." Sometimes we feel inclined to say that the manner of their morals and the moral of their manners are equally peculiar.

J. A. HUMPHREYS.—Pleased to hear of the success of your meeting.

H. HERBERT.—We always think it a reflection on the judgment of Jesus when we look at the faces of some of those who are so certain that Jesus died for them. Perhaps it might be said in his defence that he died for them before he saw them. Had he seen them first anyone might have excused him hesitating.

E. A. PHIPSON.—It is not at all because we are blind to the importance of so important a subject as the prevalence of venereal disease that we do not start a correspondence in these columns, but because we really have not the space to devote to it. We have to remember the specific purpose for which the *Freethinker* exists, one to which other papers pay no attention whatever, save to misrepresent or decry. And there is at least one society which exists for the purpose of enlightening the public mind on the subject of your letter, and which distributes a considerable quantity of literature.

ROBERT ARCH.—Thanks for reminder. Will publish next week.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Sizilicte, 2s. 6d.; J. de B., 10s.

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

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

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

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

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

**Blasphemy Defence Fund.**

THE following is a list of subscriptions to date:—

Previously acknowledged, £297 6s. Christmas in Gaol, 5s.; T. Nash, 2s. 6d.; John's Parents, £1; J. Almorel, 5s.; T. S., 2s. 6d.; W. P. Adamson, 2s. 6d.; M. Beesley, 2s. 6d.; G. Royle, £1; J. Bingham (Ballycarat), 4s.; A. Russell, 2s. 6d.; J. H. English, 2s. 6d.; E. Truelove (second subscription), 10s.; Frank Smith, £5.

Total—£306 5s.

**Sugar Plums.**

A happy New Year to all our readers. And a happy New Year for Freethought. We commence the new year with unabated confidence in our cause, and in the firm belief that if each only does what can be done to advance it we may make 1922 a red-letter year in the history of Freethought. It is astonishing how many opportunities present themselves to each of us if we are only on the look-out for them and ready to take advantage of their emergence. The Churches are, from the point of view of having the support of convinced supporters, weaker than they have ever been in the whole history of the country. And it is quite certain that we could capture many of those who are leaving the Church if we were only on the look-out.

That brings us to the first reminder that we have to offer for 1922. Membership subscriptions date from the first of January. Members will please note this, and they may also note that if the work of the N. S. S. is to be carried on with the utmost degree of efficiency it is essential that all should do what they can in the way of subscription. Last season we had a very successful amount of open-air work put in by Mr. Whitehead, but this involves heavy expenses, travelling, hotel bills, and payment of lecturer, and we must look to the members to supply the sinews of war. And when subscriptions are being sent it should be borne in mind that money has not yet reached its pre-war value, and that a pound is not quite what it was in 1914.

One friend, who does not wish his name to be mentioned, has borne this in mind, and sent us the other day a new year's present for the N. S. S. in the shape of a cheque for £100. We handed that over to the funds of the Society with a large sense of satisfaction and a quiet hope that it might serve the purpose intended—that is, induce others to do likewise.

Finally, there is the question of the *Freethinker* on which so much, we might say, everything hangs. It is impossible to say what would be the position of the fighting Freethought movement in the absence of a journal such as this one, which is devoted to keeping its interests and point of view alive. It is certain that its position would not be what it is. And for that reason we should like to see, before the end of the year, the *Freethinker* placed on a self-supporting basis. But we do not want this done by endowment or donation, we want to see it done in the completely healthy way by increase of circulation. Is it asking too much of our readers to see what they can do in the coming weeks to introduce one new reader to the paper? In some circumstances this may not be an easy task, but in most cases it will not be a very difficult one. And if they will do this we feel sure that we shall be able to say in 1923 that the paper has ceased to lose money and is paying its way. We do not stint our own work, and we feel, therefore, that we have every right to ask continued effort on the part of others.

On Sunday next (January 8) Mr. Cohen will give the first of a course of three lectures at the Town Hall, Stratford. In view of the blasphemy prosecution, and of the fact that the apparent instigator of it, Inspector Elphick,

**SUBSCRIBER AFTER YOU HAVE READ IT?**

is stationed at West Ham, Mr. Cohen is taking for his subject "Free Speech and the Blasphemy Laws." We have no doubt but that Inspector Elphick will not be present at the meeting, but if he feels inclined to attend in person—and there are certain to be things it would be good for him to hear—and will let us know, we shall be pleased to see that he has a platform ticket. Then he will be able to see without trouble and hear without effort. We hope that all Freethinkers will do their best to make this meeting widely known, and especially to direct the attention of their Christian friends to it. Stratford Town Hall can be easily reached from all parts of London. Trams and omnibuses pass the door, and it is only a few minutes' walk from Stratford Station (G.E.R.). Those who care to help by distributing small handbills may have any quantity they desire by applying to this office or to Miss Vance.

The National Secular Society has been for some time without having for sale any of its pansy badges, which have always been so popular with members and Freethinkers generally. A new stock has now been secured, and can be supplied at 1s. in white metal and 3s. 6d. in silver. A drawing of the badge appears in our advertisement pages, and as will be seen it is a neat pansy design, supplied as either a button or brooch. It is a neat badge, and has helped many Freethinkers to become acquainted with each other.

The following resolution passed at a meeting of the congregation of Greenfield Church, Bradford, on December 18, reported in the *Bradford Observer* for December 20, quite warrants being given in full:—

That in the opinion of this meeting the Blasphemy laws are an abomination which ought to be annulled without delay. That while having scanty knowledge of the manners and motives of Mr. Gott, recently convicted under the Blasphemy laws, this meeting considers the means used for his conviction grounds upon which to make a strong appeal for his immediate release from prison.

A copy of the resolution has been sent to the Home Secretary.

Another letter which appeared in the same paper is signed by four ministers, three Free Churchmen and one Anglican, and runs as follows:—

Owing to the occasional resort to the Blasphemy laws, an idea seems to be present in some minds that Christianity enjoys special legal protection, and that Christian ministers consent to this protection. The recent case of Mr. Gott lends some support to this idea. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the decencies of controversy ought to be protected by law—on this point we, the undersigned, are not agreed—the protection should apply equally to all, whether in attack upon doctrines of Churches or upon theoretical Atheism. There is no ground for giving to religious opinion a privileged position against the recognized rights of free speech, or for that opinion to shelter itself behind obsolete laws. As a matter of fact, the Blasphemy laws do not protect religion in this country from destructive or constructive criticism.

Believing that religion is vital enough to defend itself, we hold that only harm is done by evoking from the grave of the past the force of such laws. We urge upon our fellow citizens and the community generally that the time is long overdue for the abolition of all enactments directed against those who express disagreement with commonly held Christian doctrines.

This letter is the outcome of a casual meeting of four ministers, three Free Churchmen and one Anglican.

The letter is signed C. Harold Luckman, Vivian T. Pomeroy, Oliver Ransford, and H. F. Runacres.

Now here are two groups of Christians to whom we take off our hat. We have not the slightest respect for their religion, but we can respect them as men. And we congratulate them all on going to the root of the matter in seeing that the fight we have taken up is one of principle, and not allowing themselves to be frightened into a passive endorsement of an iniquitous law by quite irrelevant excuses about the "coarseness" of the man

who happens to be the victim of that law. An unjust law remains unjust whether it is enforced against an Oxford Don or a member of some thieves' kitchen. And we may point out to our friends—and enemies—that had it not been for the N.S.S. taking up this case, this last exhibition of a policeman's religious bigotry, would have been made without more than a mere handful being aware of the fact. We advise our friends to make it a point of introducing those copies of the *Freethinker* containing the report of the case to as wide a circle as possible. If every reader took an extra copy and posted it to a friend it would be an excellent method of making the bigots pay. When the *Freethinker* gets the circulation it should have the claws of the persecutors will be cut indeed.

We have received a resolution demanding the repeal of the Blasphemy laws passed at a meeting of "Swansea Citizens." We hope that there will be scores of resolutions poured in on the Home Secretary during the next few weeks.

Owing to the Christmas holidays we have had to go to press twice in one week, and as this issue of the *Freethinker* leaves our hands on Friday, December 23, there is very little to chronicle about the blasphemy case in addition to what we wrote on the 20th. This will also account for the small number of subscriptions acknowledged to our Defence Fund. The list includes only such sums as were received up to the morning of the 23rd. But the list will be larger the next week, and then we hope to be able to put a closing date to the Fund, which should not be more than two or three weeks later.

The only fresh item of news is that an application for bail for Mr. Gott was made in the High Court on December 21, before the Lord Chief Justice and two other judges, and the application was refused. We have no information yet as to when the appeal will come on, but we expect it will be so soon as the Court reassembles in the new term. That puts us under considerable restraint, and we beseech our reader's sympathy in that matter. Wearing a gag is something to which we are not accustomed, and we shall not mind how soon it is removed. But it would be folly to do anything that would prejudice the issue, and personal feelings have to give way to the requirements of the cause.

## Pages From Fontenelle.

DIALOGUES FROM THE DEAD.

*Strato and Raphael of Urbino.*

*On Common Opinion and Prejudice.*

*Strato.*—I did not expect that the advice I gave to my slave would have such happy results. Yet in the world above it saved my life and brought me a kingdom, while here it has brought me the admiration of all the wise.

*Raphael.*—What was the advice you gave?

*Strato.*—I was at Tyre. All the slaves in that town revolted and cut the throats of their masters; yet one of mine had enough humanity to spare me, and to protect me from the fury of his companions. They agreed to choose for their king the man who, on an appointed day, should be the first to see the sun rise. They got together in the plain, the whole multitude fixing their eyes on the eastern heavens, where the sun is wont to rise. My slave alone, for I had instructed him what to do, looked ever towards the west. You can easily imagine that the others thought him a fool. However, by turning his back on them he beheld the first rays of the sun, which gilded the turrets of a lofty tower, while his companions still sought the sun's body in the east. They marvelled at the subtlety of his mind, but he confessed that he was indebted to me, and that I was still among the living. They elected me king as a man of divine birth.

*Raphael.*—I can understand that your advice was useful, but I cannot see anything wonderful in it.

*Strato.*—All our philosophers here will explain to you that I taught my slave what all wise men should do: that, in order to get at the truth, we must turn our backs on the mob, that general opinion is usually sound opinion provided it is turned upside down.

*Raphael.*—These philosophers talk like philosophers. It is their business to abuse common opinion and prejudice; yet there is nothing more convenient or more useful.

*Strato.*—From the way you speak, I should imagine that they suited your temperament exactly.

*Raphael.*—I assure you that I stand up for prejudice in a quite disinterested way. Besides, by taking prejudice's part I laid myself open to no small ridicule. At one time they were searching the Roman ruins for statues, and as I had the reputation of an able sculptor and painter they appointed me to judge which were ancient. Michael Angelo, my competitor, made in secret a beautiful statue of Bacchus. He broke off one of the fingers and then buried the statue in a place where he knew we would dig. The moment I saw it I declared it to be antique. He said it was modern. I based my opinion on the beauty of the work which, according to our principles of art, was well worthy of a Grecian hand. Annoyed by the contradiction I met with I became even more positive, and declared that it must have been done in the time of Polycletus or Phidias. Then Michael Angelo brought out the broken finger, an argument to which I had no reply. I was laughed at for my prejudice, but what could I have done without prejudice? I was judge, and in that capacity I had to decide.

*Strato.*—You decided according to reason.

*Raphael.*—Yes, but does reason ever decide? By no process of reason could I have found out to what age the statue belonged. I could have seen only its marvellous beauty; but prejudice came to my aid and told me that a beautiful statue must be ancient. There you have my decision and my judgment.

*Strato.*—It may well be that reason has no incontestable principles by which to judge matters of such slight importance; but for all things that concern human conduct her decisions are perfectly sure. Unfortunately, men do not consult them.

*Raphael.*—Let us, then, consult her on some one point, and see what she will decide. Ask her if a man should weep or laugh at the death of his friends and relations. On one side she will say, "They are lost to you, therefore weep." On the other, "They are delivered from the miseries of life, you must be joyful." Here you have reason's answer, but the custom of the country is what decides. We weep at its bidding, and we weep so thoroughly that we cannot imagine the possibility of laughter, or we laugh so thoroughly that tears seem equally impossible.

*Strato.*—Reason is not always so irresolute. She allows prejudice to decide on questions which are not worthy of her attention; but consider, for a moment, how many important things there are upon which she has clear ideas, and from which she draws conclusions not less clear.

*Raphael.*—If I am not mistaken there are very few of these clear ideas.

*Strato.*—No matter, they alone are worthy of our complete belief.

*Raphael.*—That cannot be, for reason offers us a very small number of incontrovertible maxims, and our mind is so formed as to believe in many more. The surplus of our inclination to believe goes to the credit of prejudice, and false opinions help to fill up the void.

*Strato.*—But why rush into error? Is it not possible to suspend our judgment in unprovable matters?

Reason stands still when she knows not which road to take.

*Raphael.*—Very true, she stands still, because she has no other means of keeping herself from going astray. But such a situation does violence to the human mind, it is in movement and must continue to move. Not every one of us is able to doubt, we need enlightenment to acquire this faculty, and strength to preserve it. Moreover, doubt is without action, and action of some sort is necessary to mankind.

*Strato.*—In this way we ought to preserve the prejudices of custom in order to act like another man, but discard the prejudices of the mind in order to think like a wise man.

*Raphael.*—It would be better to preserve them all. You seem to forget the old Samnite's answer when his countrymen sent to ask him what should be done with their mortal enemy, the Roman army, which they had caught in the Caudine forks, and held at their mercy. The old man replied that they should put everyone to the sword. The advice seemed too drastic and too cruel, and the Samnites put before him their objections to such an action. He then said that they should set the enemy free without any conditions, and in the end they did neither one nor the other, with woeful results. It is the same with prejudices; we must either keep the whole lot or discard them altogether, otherwise those which you have put on one side will cause you to mistrust those that remain. The pain of being deceived in many things will not be balanced by the pleasure of being unwittingly deceived, and you will have neither the illumination of truth nor the comfort of illusion.

*Strato.*—If there were no way of escaping your dilemma we should not long hesitate about taking a side. We should discard all our prejudices.

*Raphael.*—But reason would hunt out all our old opinions and put nothing else in their place. She would create a sort of vacuum. And who of us could put up with it? No, no! considering how small the share of reason possessed by all men it would be just as well to leave them the prejudices to which they are accustomed. These prejudices are reason's complement. All that is wanting on one side you have on the other.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

## Prosecution for "Blasphemy."

### III.

(Continued from page 829.)

MR. CURTIS BENNETT said: I have to submit on behalf of the defendant that there is no case upon this evidence to go to the jury. It is quite clear, as my learned friend has already intimated, that the condition of the common law in relation to blasphemy has undergone during the past one hundred years very considerable change. As long ago as 1838 there was a case where it was decided without any dispute that to make any attack at all upon Christianity was in itself blasphemy. In 1883 the case took place in which your lordship was engaged before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge of Ramsey and Foote. That is the case referred to by my learned friend, and it is quite clear in my submission to your lordship that by 1883, owing to the passage of time and also to the different conditions in which people were living at that time, the law of blasphemy had very much altered from 1838. And I desire to draw your attention to what I think no doubt your lordship has in mind, the part of the judgment of the Lord Chief Justice in the case reported in *15 Cox's Criminal Cases*. The passage to which I am about to refer is on page 234 and the learned judge said this: "The other and more important question however remains. Are these passages within the meaning of the law blasphemous libels? Now that is a matter entirely for you. You have the responsibility of judging, looking at and reading these passages, whether they are blasphemous libels. My duty is to explain to you what is the

law on the subject, after which it is for you absolutely to determine the question. Now according to the old law and the dicta of the judges in old times these passages would undoubtedly have been blasphemous libels, because they asperse the truth of Christianity, but as I said in a former trial and now repeat, I think that these old cases can no longer be taken to be a statement of the law. At the present day it is no longer true, in the sense in which it was true when these dicta were uttered, that Christianity is part of the law of the land. Nonconformists and Jews were then under penal laws and were then hardly allowed civil rights. Now a Jew might be Lord Chancellor, he might certainly have been Master of the Rolls and the learned judge whose loss we deplore might have had to judge the case, and he might have had to tell a jury partly composed of Jews that Jesus Christ was the Messiah when he denied it and it was part of the law that he might deny it. Therefore to asperse the truth of Christianity cannot be sufficient to sustain a criminal prosecution for blasphemy." I call your attention to that for the purpose of substantiating what I have already put before your lordship, that the law was altering and had altered very considerably from 1838 to 1883, and by 1883 it was no offence to make an attack generally upon Christianity, but an offence was then limited to the way in which the attack was made and the language which was used in the making of such attack. I submit since 1883 there has been very great general progress in the conditions under which we live, and things which in 1883 would have undoubtedly been offences are now no longer offences owing to the condition of free speech and free criticisms which is now allowed in so many matters.

HIS LORDSHIP: Is it not better to come to what the law is now?

COUNSEL: I am just going to draw your attention to the case referred to. That is, I think, the oldest case, although there was another case.

HIS LORDSHIP: You need not fear that I am going to lay down the law as it used to be and not as it now is.

COUNSEL: I know you would not do that, but my submission is that since 1883 there has been just as much change in the law of blasphemy as there was between 1838 and 1883. This is not a prosecution under any statute, but a prosecution under the common law, and in my submission one has, when dealing with cases of this sort, to look at what the condition at the time is and the condition of affairs generally when the case is being tried. Now the case of Bowman and the Secular Society, Limited, has in it two important judgments I desire to draw your lordship's attention to. But may I first refer to the other case of blasphemy which was tried in 1908 before the then Mr. Justice Phillimore, *Rex v. Boulter*, and you will remember that that was a charge against a man called Boulter for blasphemy, and the evidence in that case was that he was not selling some documents which were alleged to be blasphemous, but that he was speaking to the crowd, and in the course of that speech was making use of what were alleged to be blasphemous statements. In my submission that was quite a different state of affairs to the evidence in this case. The case of Bowman and the Secular Society, Limited, came before the House of Lords in 1917, and is reported in *Appeal Cases*, 1917. I would like to draw your lordship's attention first of all to the judgment of Lord Parker on page 446. My learned friend has referred to one passage in the judgment of Viscount Finlay, then Lord Chancellor. The judgment of Lord Finlay was the dissenting judgment in that case.

HIS LORDSHIP: Not on this point at all. You must understand what the case was. The case there was a question whether a bequest to a particular society was a valid bequest. The Lord Chancellor being of the same opinion with the other Law Lords as to what constituted blasphemy was nevertheless of the opinion that this particular bequest was invalid. The other Law Lords thought that it was valid, but on the question of what the law of blasphemy was at that date there is no difference of opinion.

COUNSEL: I am going to ask your lordship to say that in the judgment of Lord Parker and Lord Sumner the true state of the law as regards blasphemy was quite fairly stated, and I am going to ask you to say that if it was so truly stated by these two lords that there is nothing here in law for the case to go to the jury. The first passage

begins on page 446: "In my opinion to constitute blasphemy at common law there must be such an element of vilification, ridicule or irreverence likely to exasperate the feelings of others and so lead to a breach of the peace. I cannot find that the common law has ever concerned itself with opinions as such, or with expression of opinion so far as such expression is compatible with the maintenance of public order." A little later he says "Christianity is clearly not a part of the law of the land in the sense that every offence against Christianity is cognizable in the courts." Then on page 460 in the judgment of Lord Sumner this appears, "it is no part of your lordship's task to decide whether Lord Coleridge's ruling was or was not the last word on the crime of blasphemy, but the history of the cases and the conclusion at present reached go to show that what the law censures or resists is not the mere expression of anti-Christian opinion whatever be the doctrines assailed or the arguments employed."

HIS LORDSHIP: You ought to begin a little earlier.

COUNSEL: Very well: "Later prosecutions add nothing until Lord Coleridge's direction to the jury in *Rex v. Ramsey and Foote*. For thirty years this direction has been followed, nor was it argued by the appellants that the publication of anti-Christian opinions without ribaldry or profanity would be enough to support a conviction for blasphemy."

HIS LORDSHIP: That means that the publication of anti-Christian opinions with ribaldry or profanity was enough to convict for blasphemy.

COUNSEL: But in the next paragraph it says this: "But the history of the cases and the conclusions at present reached go to show that what the law censures or resists is not the mere expression of anti-Christian opinion whatever be the doctrines assailed or the arguments employed." And therefore we come to a question of the narrow line of arguments employed as to whether or not they just stepped over the border line. Later on the same learned Law Lord says this: "What after all is really the gist of the offence of blasphemy or of its nature is a case of civil instability. Ribaldry has been treated as the gist, which must be a temporal matter as between the creature and creator. How can the provocative nature of such a denial be anti-Christian. The denial itself, not the mode of it must be what merits the Divine anger, but that is an offence against God. Our courts of law in the exercise of jurisdiction do not nor ever did punish irreligious words as an offence against God. They dealt with such words for their manner, for their tendency to endanger the peace then and there, to deprave public morality generally, to shake the fabric of society, and be a cause of civil strife. The words as well as the acts which tend to endanger society differ from time to time in proportion as society is stable or insecure, or is believed by its responsible members to be open to assault." That paragraph I very much rely upon. "In the present day," the learned Law Lord goes on, "meetings or processions are held lawful which 150 years ago would have been deemed seditious, not because the law is weaker or has changed, but because the times having changed, society is stronger than before."

HIS LORDSHIP: You are just missing another part.

COUNSEL: Then I will read it: "In the present day reasonable men do not predict the dissolution or downfall of society because religion is publicly assailed by methods not scandalous."

HIS LORDSHIP: "Not scandalous."

COUNSEL: "Where it is possible in future that irreligious attacks, designed to undermine the fundamental institution of our society may become criminal, that is as constituting a public danger, is a matter that does not arise. The fact that opinion grounded on experience has moved one way does not in law preclude the possibility of it moving on fresh experience another way by succeeding generations when conditions have another change."

HIS LORDSHIP: That shows what is the meaning of the other passage on page 460 when he said, "It is no part of your lordship's task to decide whether Lord Coleridge's ruling was or was not the last word on the crime of blasphemy." This subsequent passage shows that he had in his mind that it might happen that the law might be made more strict again.

COUNSEL: But one has also to read with that the words

to which I drew your special attention on page 464: "The words as well as the acts which tend to endanger society differ from time to time in proportion as society is stable or insecure or is believed by its responsible members to be open to assault." Another paragraph says, "After all, the question of whether a given opinion is a danger to society is a question of the times and is a question of fact. I desire to say nothing that would limit the right of society to protect itself by the process of law from the dangers of the moment whatever they might be, but only to say that experience having proved dangers once thought real now to be negligible and dangers once possibly imminent to have now passed away there is now no general rule as known to the law which prevents us from varying its application to the particular circumstances of our time in accordance with that experience. If these considerations are right and the attitude of the law both civil and criminal towards religion depends fundamentally on the safety of the State and not on the doctrines or metaphysics of those who profess them, it is not necessary to consider whether or not any given body is relieved by law at one time and frowned at at another, or to analyse methods Christian and otherwise on which I can give no comment." The evidence shows here that on some previous occasion Mr. Gott was selling documents—we have no evidence as to what they were—somewhere near Stratford Broadway. He was then cautioned by the Inspector for obstruction, told to move away, and moved away. Upon this occasion he was selling these documents, there was a crowd of people, and the evidence now is that amongst those people there were two, a man and a woman, who said something showing that they disliked and objected to the contents of these documents. I submit that the evidence in this case shows that these documents upon the face of them were irreligious documents. It is quite clear from the title which was given by the Inspector to one of the contents of *The Liberator—Rib Ticklers or Questions for Parsons*—that it was irreligious. It was not being given away to any person, it was being bought. My learned friend says that children in Stratford Broadway might have bought them, but they were twopence apiece, and no person need have come into possession of the documents—and this is different from the case of Boulter where the people had to listen in passing whether they liked it or not. In these circumstances, in view of the evidence given here, and having drawn your lordship's attention to the state of the law as laid down in 1917, I submit that there is no case upon this evidence in law to go to the jury.

Continuing, Mr. Curtis Bennett submitted that taking those judgments generally, what they came to was that there must be some evidence that something was being done by the person on trial which was likely to cause a breach of the peace then and there.

THE JUDGE asked if he contended that there must be some evidence that somebody who bought the pamphlet and who read it, thereupon immediately assaulted the person who was selling it.

MR. CURTIS BENNETT said that he did not say there must be evidence of an immediate assault, but the mere fact that some person said, as they might say about any political argument, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself" was not sufficient. He submitted that there was nothing like enough evidence to say that what had been done had a tendency to endanger the peace then and there; to deprave public morality generally; to shake the fabric of society, and to be the cause of civil strife. Times had changed to such an extent that the evidence before the Court did not bring the case within the definition laid down.

THE JUDGE: Do you say that in an ordinary case of defamatory libel there must be evidence that some person was in fact provoked immediately on the publication to a breach of the peace?

MR. CURTIS BENNETT said that one essential of a defamatory libel was that on the face of the document it was a defamatory libel. The second essential was whether or not in the opinion of the jury the defamatory libel was likely to cause a breach of the peace. When they came to test whether something was likely to cause a breach of the peace they could only take what the evidence before the Court was—that these papers had been sold certainly on two occasions at Stratford Broad-

way, and one found that out of a large crowd of people one said "You ought to be ashamed of yourself" and the other said "Disgusting." He put that as the test. The Inspector, too, when he arrested Mr. Gott was aware of the contents of these documents.

SIR RICHARD MUIR, interposing, quoted Lord Phillimore's remarks in *Rex v. Boulter* as follows: "A man is free to think, to speak, and to teach what he pleases as to religious matters though not as to morals. He is free to teach what he likes as to religious matters, even though it is unbelief, but when we come to consider whether he has exceeded the permitted limits we must not neglect to consider the place where he speaks and the people to whom he speaks—a man is not at liberty in a public place where passers by have to listen to him not knowing what he is going to say or accidentally have to hear his words, or young people might be present—a man is not free in such cases to use coarse ridicule on subjects that are sacred to most people in this country. He is free to advance argument."

MR. CURTIS BENNETT said that that was a case of spoken words and was different from this case where people who were not desirous of having these documents need not have them for they were being sold at twopence.

THE JUDGE said the fact of publication did not affect a thing being held blasphemous. In his opinion there was evidence in this case to go to the jury, and it was for them to determine whether these publications were blasphemous libel. He would lay down the law exactly as in *Ramsey and Foote* in 1883, which, in his opinion, had been held in the House of Lords in a later case in 1917 to be the law as it now stood. He would tell the jury that the words "Lead to a breach of the peace" did not necessarily mean that there must be evidence that any person was at the moment of the publication provoked into committing a breach of the peace. The whole question was whether they had a tendency to provoke a breach of the peace either at the moment or at some future time.

(To be Continued.)

## Correspondence.

### RECURRENCES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Bradlaugh discountenanced the crude woodcuts and broad jokes of the *Freethinker* in its early days. Foote contended they were necessary. He discarded a philosophical mode of controversy for this ruder form, suitable for the masses. The Bradlaugh struggle was his reason for doing so. Foote in later years disapproved of Gott for carrying on this kind of propaganda. He said it had served its purpose. In face of the savage sentence of nine months' hard labour I am convinced—with all the respect in the world for the daughter of Charles Bradlaugh—that it has become necessary to reproduce pictures and jokes in the *Freethinker* of to-day, as uncouth as any that ever graced its pages. Otherwise, we must confess that Freethought is a bad thing for the masses, even though good for the classes; put the *Freethinker* up to a shilling and form a little coterie of back-scratching sceptics.

The verdict and sentence upon Gott prove that there is a fear of the mass mind being liberated from the power of religion. Even the *Freethinker*, we are told, is being watched with the left eye. I don't want to say anything rash, but surely the *Freethinker* is too respectable for suspicion. It has taken care to show its disapproval of the bad boy Gott.

We are aware that *Rib Ticklers* would not reflect Mr. Cohen's philosophical mind or his polished humour. Neither did caricatures of Bible heroes and their doings represent Foote's scholarly manner. It was Foote's deliberate policy designed for certain ends. He thought he had accomplished those ends. Gott's case shows his judgment at fault. Foote was blamed for his methods by superior cotton-wool Atheists. It is regrettable that Bradlaugh, the courageous, should have been the rock behind which these valiants shielded themselves. I believe that Foote's pictures and "coarse" jokes have had a far more reaching effect in Freethought propaganda than anything since the *Age of Reason*. They were dropped too soon and should now be revived and continued until the Blasphemy

laws are abolished. There would be an outcry as usual from finical Freethinkers; but are these not a greater obstacle to freedom than religionists?

I think they are.

H. IRVING.

[We fancy that Mr. Irving has allowed his quite justifiable indignation to overcome his usually good judgment. In spite of the sentence on Mr. Gott the conditions to-day are not what they were in 1883, and it can hardly be claimed that G. W. Foote discarded philosophical propaganda for the sake of appealing to the masses. Every volume of the *Freethinker* will prove that philosophical propaganda has never been absent from its pages. What Mr. Irving quite wrongly calls "uncouth" pictures and jokes were never more than a part of the contents of the *Freethinker*, and that is a very important point to bear in mind. And on the whole, it is well to keep a level head, even when one feels intensely indignant. Mr. Irving may rely on our doing all that we consider necessary to defeat the bigots, and we shall do it the more effectually by keeping cool.—Editor.]

THE LATE H. M. HYNDMAN AND SECULAR EDUCATION.

SIR,—Had Mr. Arch read his *Freethinker* more carefully he would probably himself have seen that his letter in the December 18 issue was unnecessary. It was stated that more than fifty years ago Hyndman had advocated secular education for Australia, and I simply pointed out that ten years later he had opposed it for England. Why should this bare statement of a fact arouse Mr. Arch's indignation?

Mr. Arch tells us he had personal knowledge of Hyndman during the last six years of his life. I met Hyndman more than forty years ago and knew him to the end. As a historian Mr. Arch shows his utter incapacity. The story of the rise of the modern Socialist movement would take up too much space in the telling for the *Freethinker*, but many myths would be dispelled. Says Mr. Arch: "Hyndman founded the Social Democratic Federation in 1881, and secular education and disestablishment of all State Churches have been part of the programme of that body from that day to this." Not a word of this is true. Hyndman founded nothing. The Social Democratic Federation did not come into being until 1884. Previously, it had been the Democratic Federation, and in its programme not a word of secular education occurs. I fairly well know the events of that period as I was an ardent worker in the "left" (non-Parliamentary) section of the movement. I was in the chair when the programme was drawn up which the Social Democratic Federation at its formation in 1884 adopted. Then it was that secular education first appeared in its programme. A. G. B.

BLASPHEMY AND LIBERTY.

SIR,—I am aware that the *Freethinker* and the N. S. S. as a body take no part in national politics, as such, and I very much regret that attitude. Why? For the simple reason that little or no progress can be made in gaining the right to free expression of opinion until pressure be brought upon the Government to give the right to free speech and free press to Freethinkers.

Many years ago now I endeavoured to get Mr. Foote to take a definite line politically, but he did not agree with me, and since that time there has been no advance in our freedom. In fact—as Gott's sentence shows—there has been retrogression. I hope the party are satisfied, I, at least, am not, and I still want action—definite and uncompromising—in a political line. Until that is adopted I cannot see any progress towards equal rights for anti-Christian propaganda.

As it is always the advanced parties in any country from whom liberty is most likely to be gained we should at all times use our power with discretion for one or other of those parties. Not only as individuals, as we are doing now, but as an organized body. The Conservative, the Liberal, and Radical sections are quite useless to us as Freethinkers and should be opposed continuously. The right wing of the Labour Party may be influenced, but our principal efforts should be to aid the left wing, or Socialist Party, and place Freethought in the forefront of its programme. Most of its members are with us already, and a virile campaign could be undertaken throughout the country if the leaders of Secularism adopted a definite political programme on Socialist lines.

Such a policy is only similar to the policy of Charles Bradlaugh and other great leaders who threw in their lot with the then most advanced section and were successful in the past, and, I am sure, until we do the same we shall be a bye-word and merely supply victims to the Moloch of the Lying Creed. E. ANDERSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (JOHNSON'S DANCING Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, New Year's Party.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Grand Concert. (Silver Collection.)

RARE BARGAIN.—*Freethinker*, complete from First Number to date, well bound, since 1915 unbound. No reasonable offer refused.—Apply *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation .....

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

## RELIGION AND SEX.

Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.

BY

**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

A Systematic and Comprehensive Survey of the relations between the sexual instinct and morbid and abnormal mental states and the sense of religious exaltation and illumination. The ground covered ranges from the primitive culture stage to present-day revivalism and mysticism. The work is scientific in tone, but written in a style that will make it quite acceptable to the general reader, and should prove of interest no less to the Sociologist than to the Student of religion. It is a work that should be in the hands of all interested in Sociology, Religion, or Psychology.

Large 8vo, well printed on superior paper, cloth bound, and gilt lettered.

Price Six Shillings. Postage 9d.

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

## THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.

For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians.

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

NEW EDITION.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

CONTENTS :

Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities.  
Part III.—Bible Atrocities. Part IV.—Bible Immoralities,  
Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unful-  
filled Prophecies.

Cloth Bound. Price 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

One of the most useful books ever published. Invaluable to Freethinkers answering Christians.

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

## JESUS CHRIST: Man, God, or Myth?

With a Chapter on "Was Jesus a Socialist?"

By GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

Author of "The Psychology of the Woman Question," etc.

A Careful Examination of the Character and Teaching of the New Testament Jesus.

Well Printed on Good Paper. In Paper Covers, 2s., postage 2d.; Printed on Superior Paper and bound in Cloth, 3s. 6d., postage 3d.

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

**A Bomb for Believers.**

## THE HISTORICAL JESUS and MYTHICAL CHRIST.

By GERALD MASSEY.

(Author of the "Book of the Beginnings"; "The Natural Genesis"; "Ancient Egypt," etc.)

A Demonstration of the Egyptian Origin of the Christian Myth. Should be in the hands of every Freethinker.

With Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price SIXPENCE. Postage 1½d.

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

## The Parson and the Atheist.

A Friendly Discussion on  
RELIGION AND LIFE.

BETWEEN

Rev. the Hon. EDWARD LYTTTELTON, D.D.  
(Late Headmaster of Eton College)

AND

**CHAPMAN COHEN**

(President of the N. S. S.)

With Preface by Chapman Cohen and Appendix by Dr. Lyttelton.

The Discussion ranges over a number of different topics—Historical, Ethical, and Religious—and should prove both interesting and useful to Christians and Freethinkers alike.

Well printed on good paper, with Coloured Wrapper, 144 pages.

Price 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

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

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FREETHINKERS

CONCERNING :

Withdrawal of children from religious instruction in public schools. The right to affirm. Religion in the Army and Navy. Church attendance in the Navy. Secular funerals. Civil marriages. The naming of infants, etc.

(Issued by the Executive of the National Secular Society.)

Price TWOPENCE, post free.

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

## GOD-EATING.

A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism.

By J. T. LLOYD.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

A Valuable Study of the Central Doctrine of Christianity. Should be read by both Christians and Freethinkers.

In Coloured Wrapper. Price 6d. Postage 1½d.

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

## Bargains in Books.

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM.

By PHYSICUS (G. J. Romanes).

Price 4s., postage 4d.

THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT.

By KARL PEARSON.

Essays in Freethought History and Sociology.

Published 10s. 6d. Price 5s. 6d., postage 7d.

KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN OF INDIVIDUALISM.

An Introduction to the Study of the Native Problem.

By DUDLEY KIDD.

Published 7s. 6d. Price 3s. 9d., postage 9d.

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

# STRATFORD TOWN HALL

## Sunday Evening Lectures.

- JANUARY 8.**                      **C. COHEN.**  
 "Free Speech and the Blasphemy Laws."
- „    **15.**                              **J. T. LLOYD.**  
 "The Story of the Earth."
- „    **22.**                              **C. COHEN.**  
 "Why the World Needs Freethought."

Doors open at 6.30.    Chair taken at 7.    Discussion Invited.    All Seats Free.

## A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.)

### CONTENTS:—

Chapter I.—Outgrowing the Gods. Chapter II.—Life and Mind. Chapter III.—What is Freethought? Chapter IV.—Rebellion and Reform. Chapter V.—The Struggle for the Child. Chapter VI.—The Nature of Religion. Chapter VII.—The Utility of Religion. Chapter VIII.—Freethought and God. Chapter IX.—Freethought and Death. Chapter X.—This World and the Next. Chapter XI.—Evolution. Chapter XII.—Darwinism and Design. Chapter XIII.—Ancient and Modern. Chapter XIV.—Morality Without God—I. Chapter XV.—Morality Without God—II. Chapter XVI.—Christianity and Morality. Chapter XVII.—Religion and Persecution. Chapter XVIII.—What is to follow Religion?

A Work that should be read by Freethinker and Christian alike.

Cloth Bound, with tasteful Cover Design. Price FIVE SHILLINGS. By post 5s. 4d.

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

### A BOOK THAT MADE HISTORY.

## THE RUINS:

A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE LAW OF NATURE.

By **C. F. VOLNEY.**

A New Edition, being a Revised Translation with Introduction by GEORGE UNDERWOOD, Portrait Astronomical Charts, and Artistic Cover Design by H. CUTNER.

Price **FIVE SHILLINGS.** Postage 3d.

This is a Work that all Freethinkers should read. Its influence on the history of Freethought has been profound, and at the distance of more than a century of philosophy must command the admiration of all serious students of human history. This is an Unabridged Edition of one of the greatest of Freethought Classics with all the original notes. No better edition has been issued.

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

### Two Great Freethinkers.

## ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

BY

**C. T. GORHAM.**

A Biographical Sketch of America's Greatest Freethought Advocate. With Four Plates.

## CHARLES BRADLAUGH

BY

The Right Hon. **J. M. ROBERTSON.**

An Authoritative Life of one of the greatest Reformers of the Nineteenth Century, and the only one now obtainable. With Four Portraits.

In Paper Covers, **2s.** (postage 2d.). Cloth Bound, **3s. 6d.** (postage 2½d.) each Volume.

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