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Views and Opinions.

On Behalf of the Clergy.

I think the time has come when a good word might be said on behalf of the clergy, and as the *Freethinker* is a journal which will not readily be accused of undue partiality for them, it seems to me that this is the best place in which to say it. One can hardly pick up a paper which deals with the position and quality of the clergy to-day in which their social utility is not depreciated, and stress is laid upon the inferior mental quality of the men who are now attracted to the service of the Lord. Those who so write may still believe that when a man goes into the Church he is called by the Lord, but apparently it is only the mentally feeble ones who hear his voice. And if this process of depreciation is carried far enough it may result in the practical closing of the profession altogether. In a period of acute trade depression, with so many hundreds of thousands already unemployed, the prospect of another 50,000 being thrown upon the labour market, to say nothing of the number employed in allied occupations, is not one that is pleasing to face. So it remains to be seen whether, after all, this process of destroying what was once the most thriving industry in the country, and which is still of considerable size and importance, has not been carried far enough. May it not be that the clergy do actually perform some kind of a social service, and the pulpit play a more useful part in our social economy than is generally believed? I think the enquiry is well worth the making, even at the risk of one who makes it being misunderstood.

Rudiments.

In the social history of the race the clergy represent one of the oldest and the most honoured of institutions. And in the early stages of culture, when men believed that so much depended upon the good will of the gods, the medicine man may be credited with some share—if only a negative one—in the development of civilization. Then the gods did so much, and man needed to pay so great attention to them, that if each individual had been compelled to do his own godding (if the word may be permitted), it is almost certain that the growth of civilization would have been retarded, if it had not been made impossible. By the clergy taking over this work the rest of the tribe was left free to devote its energies to more useful and more promising work, much as slavery by creating a leisured

class gave opportunities for culture in early social development. Of course, if social development had followed an ideal line it may be conceded that the clergy would have died out with the decay of the social conditions that gave them being. But it is a scientific truth that organs do not disappear with the period of their utility. They may linger for generations, so long as they are not directly dangerous to the extent of making existence impossible. Rudimentary organs exist in both the individual organism and in the social structure. They impose a tax upon the structure of which they are a part to the extent of demanding nutrition, but without giving any adequate return. So far the persistence of the clergy presents us with no more than a special example of a phenomenon with which students of biology and scientific sociology are perfectly familiar.

* * *

Modesty in Excelsis.

But it is possible at this point to do the present day clergy a grave injustice. In what may be called the intermediate period between the most primitive times and the present, it was properly urged against the clergy that in virtue of their established position, the power and emoluments they enjoyed, the profession attracted to itself men of powerful intellect who might have done the nation valuable service in politics, in literature, or in science. Only a bigoted enemy of the clergy can accuse them of that to-day. We must be just even to our enemies, and we must admit that far from monopolizing the best intellect of the nation the priesthood does not take to itself even a fair proportion of what intellect the nation has. And the clergy might fairly plead that far from monopolizing the best intellects of the nation, when within recent years a man of more than average ability has strayed into the Church, every attempt has been made to prove to him that he has chosen the wrong path in life. The Churches to-day cheerfully forgo the service of men of genuine ability, and are modestly content with such as would be failures in almost any other occupation.

* * *

Taking Them In.

The case may be put still more strongly. Self-sacrifice is of the essence of Christianity; it has manifested its belief in this by the ungrudging manner in which it has handed over men of ability to secular occupations. In this it is in striking contrast to the rest of the professions. With these the tendency is to be ever raising the standard of entrance, and by so doing keep out the weak and feeble minded. The Christian Church acts on a different principle. It is a gospel for the weak and the infirm, and to them it turns for help. Even Heine—one of the bitterest enemies—had to admit that Christianity was a capital religion for cripples. For these weaker brethren the other professions show little concern, and take no notice save to make provision for shutting them out. But Christianity finds a commendation in the very qualities that others consider a drawback. The weaker you are, mentally, the more Christianity is attracted to you. You cannot be too weak to be taken in by the Church

—may, the weaker you are the more certainly you will be taken in. To such the Christian Church holds out the hand of fellowship and says: "Come, when you are rejected by other professions, turn to us. We will not reject you, but will take you in. And we will take you in with the greater ease and the more gladly because of the very weakness for which you are rejected by the intellectual aristocracies of the world. Long ago it was said by our Lord and Master that unless you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, and the more like a child you are the warmer shall be your welcome, and the more certain your advancement."

How It Operates.

* * *

Now here is a distinct benefit which the Christian clergy confers upon society. These weaker ones are social products; some provision must be made for their maintenance, and, almost unconsciously, society has thus provided for their welfare. And it is done in a way that hardly any other profession could do it. In no other way could the sense of importance be so well satisfied, nor would the community be content to tax itself to the same extent by any other means. It is beside the point to say that this class ought not to exist, neither ought lunatics and criminals. But a class once existent society must make some provision for dealing with it. There is another phase of the same subject. Anyone who has paid attention to what I may call the pathology of the clerical profession will have noted that the prevailing conception of honesty, particularly in intellectual matters, is not that which prevails in the outside world. Little or no care is taken when making statements to see that they are based on facts; attacks on the personal character of such as do not accept the teachings of the clergy are made as quite a matter of course; no compunction is shown at selling the public an article which is not what it professes to be, or at taking money for doing one thing and straight-way doing something entirely different. And it cannot be denied that the qualities manifested by the larger number of the clergy, if the Church were abolished would react very unfavourably on the business or even the political world. It may safely be said that if the average business man acted upon the same principles in dealing with competitors as do the clergy when dealing with opponents he would soon find himself landed with an action for slander, and ultimately in the bankruptcy court. And surely by providing the pulpit as a theatre of operations for this peculiar type the character the Church may claim to be doing society a service that is not being performed by any other body. It may even be claimed that the minimum of damage is done by this type when confined to the pulpit, because from long experience few people are inclined to take the statements of the clergy at their face value. It is a licensed profession, and they who belong to it are recognized by intelligent folk for what they are.

* * *

Our Weaker Brother.

No one can deny that so long as this type of mind exists the whole of the community benefits by its confinement to, so far as may be, a single profession. And one's appreciation of the value of the clergy will be proportionate to his dislike of the play of clerical qualities in social or commercial or political life. Of course, it may be argued that if these men had not the Church to which to turn they would be otherwise brought up, and would be likely to act as do ordinary people. But this is a mere opinion, and we must face facts. And the facts here are (1) there exists an undesirable type of character and a certain type of mind which one would rather not see, but which we have to deal with as social facts. (2) The tendency of the

non-clerical professions to select the better endowed, and the weaker being thus unprovided for, the institution of the Church does open up a field of employment for this class. (3) This institution provides a field for the exercise of qualities which if debarred from any other outlet would be forced to express themselves in the purely social field and so be productive of considerable damage to the mental and moral health of society. On these grounds the clergy may fairly claim consideration, and also that they are a distinct benefit to the social organism. Some outlet must be found for these weaker brethren, and if they are not permitted to enter the Church, what other profession can they enter with so little damage to the community? It is strange that this function of the clergy in modern society should have been overlooked, not only by sociologists, but by the clergy themselves. It is still stranger that it should be left for the present writer to put in a good word for them. But, perhaps, what has been said may suggest to the clergy the proper and sound line on which they may conduct their defence, and also create more toleration in the minds of their opponents. Many may not desire the presence of the clergy, but neither do we desire the existence of other diseases or disorders. And it is surely unreasonable to spend so largely in providing for the physical ailments of our fellow beings and then cavil at what is spent in keeping alive an institution which does provide for those who are suffering from mental predispositions of which they are the unfortunate inheritors.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Intellect and Faith."

RECENTLY the Rev. Dr. Relton preached a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral which was published, bearing the above title, in the *Christian World Pulpit* of January 26. Dr. Relton is Vicar of Isleworth and lecturer in Dogmatic Theology at King's College, London. The subject of the sermon is, to say the least, peculiar. The text is Luke ii. 52: "Jesus advanced in stature, and in favour with God and men." Luke relates the incredible story of the Virgin Birth, and one wonders where and how the intellect comes in as regards that article in the Christian creed. To believe in the literal truth of such a legend is contrary to all reason; and even among the most scholarly and thoughtful clergy there are many who openly disbelieve it. Dr. Relton says that in Luke's Gospel the problem of the two natures never once obtrudes itself upon our notice; but, surely, on the assumption that Jesus was virgin born that omission is a glaring defect. The reverend gentleman assures us that "from first to last the person of Christ in this narrative is a unity." Then occurs the following extraordinary statement:—

We have in fact a view of a reality derived from what an Italian philosopher calls the aesthetic criterion of judgment, giving to us a first-hand impression of the whole by sympathetic insight and intuitive apprehension.

There is, no doubt, an "aesthetic criterion of judgment" in respect of style, but not as regards the truth or falsehood of historical statements. When dealing with the life of the Gospel Jesus what we need is not "a first-hand impression of the whole by sympathetic insight and intuitive apprehension," but an intellectual and critical judgment, capable of duly weighing evidence. Evidently Dr. Relton possesses and exercises this form of judgment in his reference to the Athanasian Creed, of the immeasurable complexity of which he speaks with disdain. Here he finds life translated into creed, and living truth frozen into dogma. We cordially approve of his condemna-

tion, but not by any means of the ground on which it is based. It is the intellect that rejects the Athanasian Creed, not because it is an intellectual document, but because it concerns itself with matters of which the intellect, as such, takes no cognizance, or because it is of a purely metaphysical character. Dr. Relton is wholly mistaken when he declares that "so does intellect present us with a whole series of seeming incompatibilities, of logical antinomies; so does Rationalism present us with a two-natured Christ, the God-man, and challenge the Church with the Christological problem."

Dr. Relton is disloyal to the Articles of Religion which he signed on receiving Holy Orders, for the second of those Articles is as follows:—

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

Dr. Relton dislikes that Article because it is an intellectual reflection upon the Gospel narrative, and not the narrative itself. In other words, the Gospel narrative on being poured into intellectual or metaphysical moulds becomes ridiculous. Curiously enough, the reverend gentleman accepts the supernatural in the life of Jesus, saying, "The supernatural in his person is there so naturally revealed, so essentially native to his truly human life that it almost escapes notice until attention is drawn to it by the mind striving to form its picture of the kind of person it imagines Christ to have been as combining in himself two seemingly incompatible and conflicting attributes." In the Gospels "we find no picture of a fictitious amalgam of an abnormal kind." But if a supernatural element was actively present in the person of Jesus, does it not follow that he was fundamentally different from all other men? We cannot distinguish between a supernatural element and a divine nature. Even on Dr. Relton's own showing there were two incompatible elements in the person of Jesus, the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine; and we cannot see that any greater difficulty is introduced by using the term "two natures."

Dr. Relton has much that is true to say about the unity of personality. For example:—

We have an interesting parallel in the problem of the relation between mind and brain, soul and body. Our knowledge of ourselves, derived from our actual life as we live it, reveals to us the fact that we are indissolubly one. We have no knowledge of mind apart from body, or body apart from mind.

It is perfectly true that we are not conscious of any duality in our constitution; but does the reverend gentleman really believe that mind and soul are entities that can exist apart from the body? He is certainly wrong in thinking that physiology and psychology create any difficulties about human personality. Physiology does truly "present to us the characters and attributes of material substance"; but so does psychology also, only this science confines itself to a study of the workings of the material substance called brain. The standard books on psychology know nothing of mind and soul as separate entities, or as entities at all. Dr. McDougall, in his valuable little book on *Psychology*, in the Home University Library, does not recognize the existence of the soul, and Dr. Boris Sidis, author of the *Foundations of Normal and Abnormal Psychology*,

says that "soul is nothing but superstition," and that "as a hypothesis the soul is useless and scientifically unjustifiable." Thus Dr. Relton has no ground whatever for the statement that the intellect, as such, seeks to "dichotomize the reality which is the original unity." It was the intellect employed as the handmaid of theology that ever did work of that kind. Now, believing in the unity of the human personality, though recognizing the existence of mind and brain, soul and body, the Doctor proceeds to affirm that "in the earthly life of Christ, as he lived it, human and divine were indissolubly united and functioned as one." Thus it follows that as in man soul and body, mind and brain, do exist, though indissolubly united and functioning as one, so the same thing is true of the human and divine in the person of Jesus. Scientifically the analogy breaks down completely. This is what the æsthetic criterion of judgment gives us, which, examined in the light of reason, reveals itself as the most astounding form of absurdity. Indeed, Dr. Relton in effect admits this. He says:—

The Church is content to elaborate its beliefs in metaphysical categories, in terms of the fourth and sixth centuries. It had to do so because intellect had asked questions, and had the Church remained silent, its silence would have been misinterpreted. Make no mistake—from the intellectual standpoint the Christological problem is a metaphysical problem. A belief in the true Deity and the perfect humanity of the God-man, is a claim to interpret ultimate reality in terms which are not less than personal, and involve an interpretation of the cosmic process and of human teleology in terms of One who was and is, and is to be the Almighty.

The admissions made by the reverend gentleman seem to undermine the very foundation of the Christian faith. The intellect enslaved by the Church constructed its Creeds which it is powerless to explain or defend, while the intellect, emancipated by science, is discrediting and pulling down the whole lot of them. Dr. Relton frankly admits that the intellect cannot solve the Christological problem which is to-day perplexing the theological mind. It is, in fact, incapable of solution, and the remedy recommended is thus stated:—

We must believe, not in order to understand, but because of the very absurdity of our belief when judged by the human criterion of a logical judgment. The problem, in other words, is beyond the intellect. There is no way of proving rationally the Deity of Christ. There are, on the contrary, many ways of proving the impossibility of his ever having been on this earth as the God-man. Within the limits of rationality Christ's person cannot be confined. Is there, then, any other way of approach to enable us to get nearer to the truth we seek? Surely. There is the way of life, rather than the way of intellectual reflection upon life.....Instead of intellectual reflection upon the problem of Christ's person, approaching it *ab extra*, there is a way through intuitive apprehension by faith. The Creed seems to cast doubt upon its own validity as the only criterion by which we can gain knowledge of the truth. This is the message of the great modern Spanish philosophers who, despairing of a rational solution as a justification for our belief, bid us seek another way—the way of faith.

This is in reality a plea for a return to the state of things that prevailed in the Dark Ages, when the way of blind faith was in the ascendant; but such a return is to-day absolutely impossible. Science has conquered all along the line, and is successfully secularizing the whole of life, exalting the intellect, and making clear the infinite folly of cherishing blind beliefs, for which there is absolutely no evidence. Dr. Relton, and those who share his views, ought to have lived eight or nine centuries ago. J. T. LLOYD.

A Master of the Lash.

But justice in the sight of outraged man
Must surely be; and may the wide world rise
Upon the rainbow of pure reason's span

—Eden Phillpotts.

THE Swedish Academy has given the 1921 Nobel Prize for Literature to M. Anatole France, the famous French writer. In honouring the foremost of living writers the Academy has honoured itself. For M. Anatole France is the most outstanding figure in contemporary literature. None has keener eyes or a prettier wit. For a number of years each succeeding book of his has been awaited with interest and read with enjoyment all over Europe. Not to have read his works is to have missed some of the best writing of our time. M. France is also the foremost representative of the Freethought tradition in French literature. His forerunners are Rabelais, Molière, and Voltaire, three names which shine like gold on the page on which they are printed. His immediate predecessor is Ernest Renan, the smiling satirist who sapped a solemn creed with stealthy sneer. And, like Renan, M. France's books are full of a splendid irony, which is never overdone. "Do not forget to put some vinegar on your salad," said Count Mouravieff, when cautioning a writer against excessive panegyric. "Never forget to put some sugar in your vinegar" is a maxim of which M. France stands in no need of a reminder. If he be the Voltaire of our day, it is a Voltaire into whom has passed the geniality of a Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, with the physique of a Falstaff, looking upon a sadder and sterner world with the same laughing eyes that we know so well. As M. France so wittily expressed himself at the banquet given in his honour in London some time ago, he is a symbol, as the Citizen Momero represented the Goddess of Reason at the festivals of the French Revolution.

Over seventy years of age, M. France has built up a magnificent reputation, not only as a writer, but as a humanitarian. Like his illustrious predecessor, Voltaire, who used the shining sword of his genius on behalf of the unfortunate Jean Calas, La Barre, and so many others, M. France took his place by the side of the Atheist, Emile Zola, in the terrible days of the Dreyfus struggle, when the heroic Zola championed the cause of the poor, hunted Jew against the embattled ranks of Priestcraft. It was an example of real courage. Honest to their own injury, brave against the enmity of tens of thousands, these Freethinkers exalted their own cause, and raised the world's opinion of human nature.

M. France is a whole-hearted Freethinker. Nowhere is he so happy as when he describes in carefully calculated language how religion grew out of the hotbeds of credulity and ignorance, fraud and mystification. Yet he is never venomous. Although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a thousand wasps. Rather, he is like jolly Francois Rabelais, who pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was so much more tolerant than Swift. To Swift, writing under the dark shadow of the Christian Superstition, all the world seemed a dusty desert, and man the most loathsome thing that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open air, with all the winds of the Renaissance blowing upon him, was so much more than a satirist. Under the motley of the buffoon beat as generous and kindly a heart as ever beat in the service of Humanity. M. France possesses no small share of the tolerant humour of Rabelais, and, at a distance of several centuries, carries on the same splendid intellectual tradition.

Like all really great writers, M. France's sympathies are wide and deep. Who but this most tolerant of Freethinkers could have drawn such a character as the lovable old monk in *The Gods Athirst*, whose only outburst of passion is caused by his being mistaken for a Capuchin; or of the old Epicurean, Brotteaux, who makes cardboard puppets for a living, and carries his well-thumbed copy of Lucretius with him to the guillotine? With what sympathy does not M. France depict the revolutionary Gamelin going without food in order that a starving mother may be fed, or apologizing to a child for his fanaticism:—

Child, you will grow up free and happy, and you will owe it to the infamous Gamelin. I am ferocious that you may be happy, I am cruel that you may be kind, I am pitiless that to-morrow the whole French people may embrace each other with tears of joy.

So, also, with the aristocrat sheltering the outcast of the streets. It is such vignettes as these that show M. France's art at its best, when irony and humanity, tempering one another, lend his works their inimitable charm. No one but a Frenchman could have written his books, for they are aglow with the Gallic spirit:—

Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Mœnad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flame with the smoke-cap crowned.

To us Freethinkers M. France does not appeal solely as the most brilliant and wittiest of contemporary writers. He has a further claim on our attention in his noble efforts towards the destruction of false ideals and illusions that beset the minds of men.

MIMNERMUS.

The Right to Blaspheme.

SOME years ago, the only occasion upon which I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing the late W. T. Stead, I heard him declare, in very emphatic language in a brief speech, at South Place Institute, that "he as a Christian claimed the indefeasible right of every Christian to blaspheme," and by that I understood him to mean that he, as a Christian, claimed it not only as his right, but as his duty to utter his honest thoughts on religion, whether they were considered to be blasphemous or not. And in this technical sense I have been a blasphemer for close upon half a century; indeed, I may say, in this sense, I am a very old sinner. For close upon forty years I delivered lectures on the Bible in the various parks and open spaces in London, and endeavoured to show that that book was a human production and not of divine origin; I also lectured on Christianity, and criticized adversely many of its teachings, and tried to demonstrate that some of them were extremely faulty and others positively harmful in practice to the community; and I have no doubt whatever, after reading carefully the judgment of Mr. Justice Avory in the case against Mr. J. W. Gott, that I have been guilty on many occasions of saying things which he would have construed as being calculated to hurt the feelings of sensitive Christians, and to bring myself up against the law of blasphemy as defined by that learned judge. But I have sinned in very good company, and I would rather be considered a blasphemer and stand in the glorious company of the heroes and martyrs of Freethought of all ages than a humble believer in a creed I had never desired to examine, nor had courage enough to defend.

What strikes me as singular is the fact that we appear to have less liberty to express freely our views on religion to-day than we did thirty or forty years ago if Mr. Justice Avory's interpretation of the law is to stand. Solemn and serious blasphemy like that of Bishop Colenso or Matthew Arnold may stand on

account of the eminence of the men who gave utterance to it; but humorous blasphemy, by whomsoever uttered, is tabooed; it must only be uttered in private company when professing Christians will laugh over it as heartily as anybody else. Well, I claim the right to examine any belief that I think is worthy of consideration, and to offer such objections to it as I think the nature of the case demands; to argue against what seems to me unconvincing, or untrue; to laugh at the absurd, to mock at what seems stupid, mean or contemptible, and to get as many people to share my views as I reasonably can. This is not only my right as a citizen and a Freethinker, but it is the right of every man whether he be Christian, Jew, Mohammedan, or whatever sect or creed he may belong to, or even if he belongs to none at all.

In Mr. G. W. Foote's magnificent address to the jury when he was being tried for the third time for blasphemy, and the presiding judge was the late Lord Coleridge, Mr. Foote showed that some of the most distinguished writers, not only philosophers like Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill and George Grote and Jeremy Bentham, but politicians and statesmen like The Right Hon. John Morley (now Lord Morley), poets like Shelley, Swinburne, James Thomson and others had written some of the most serious blasphemy in expensive books which the authorities had never dared to prosecute. In fact, whenever anyone was prosecuted in this country it was generally a poor man, and often a man who had not the gift of speech sufficiently at his command to defend himself.

Some years ago the famous American Freethought orator, Colonel Robert Ingersoll, delivered a lecture which was published in this country under the title of *Do I Blaspheme?* in which he made out a splendid case for every Freethinker to proclaim what he believed to be true whether it was called blasphemy or any other name. He asked: "What is blasphemy?" And his reply was:—

It is a sin, as I understand, against God. He is, so they say, Infinite, absolutely conditionless. Can I injure the conditionless? Can I sin against anything that I cannot injure? No. That is a perfectly plain proposition. I can injure my fellow man, because he is a conditioned being and I can help to change his condition. He must have air; he must have food; he must have clothing; he must have shelter. But God is conditionless, and I cannot by any possibility affect him.

There is no blasphemy but injustice, and there is no worship but the practice of justice. It is a thousand times more important that we should love our fellow-men than that we should love God. It is better that we should love wife and children, than that we should love Jesus Christ. He is dead, they are alive. I can make their lives happy and fill all their lives with the fulness of joy. That is my religion, and the holiest temple ever erected beneath the stars is home, the holiest altar is the fireside. (*Do I Blaspheme?* page 10.)

According to the old common law in this country, bringing the Christian religion into disbelief was a crime, but now, under the judgment of the late Lord Coleridge, a man may try to undermine the very foundation of the Christian faith, and no action can be taken against him providing he observes the decencies of debate. But if he ridicules the Christian belief, if he tries to bring it into derision and contempt he brings himself in conflict with the law and renders himself liable to punishment. It is, however, extremely difficult for a lecturer to criticize the story of the Gospels without hurting the feelings of some Christians. How, for example, can a Freethought lecturer criticize the alleged miracles of Jesus without bringing the belief in them into ridicule and contempt? What is the good of seriously arguing that it is not possible on any known conditions for any being to

feed five thousand hungry people on five loaves and a few small fishes, and afterwards to take up in fragments more than would have recomposed the loaves and fishes dozens of times over? The only thing the Freethinker can reasonably do is to ask why Jesus, if he be God, cannot perform such miracles to-day, when there are millions of unemployed persons in Europe, and millions of helpless children who are dying of slow starvation? But even to say this in all seriousness would be to hurt the feelings of many sensitive and unthinking Christians. And then if Jesus could open the eyes of a few blind men, why not of all? the young soldiers who lost their precious sight in the war, as well as those who were born blind? And so on with all the miracles.

I remember once when I was lecturing in the open air some years ago I said that Jesus, according to one Gospel, "had nowhere to lay his head"; in fact, according to the law of England, he would be described as "a strolling vagabond," when a poor man in the crowd shouted out, "How dare you call my Saviour a vagabond?" I apologized for hurting the poor fellow's feelings, and I tried in vain to pacify him by pointing out that a man "who had no home, and no visible means of subsistence" was, according to our law, a vagabond, but I never used the term again, and had no desire to wound the feelings of even the most sensitive and ignorant of believers in Christianity.

But what regard have some Christians for the feelings of unbelievers? In all ages professional Christians have never hesitated to try to wound the feelings of the unbeliever. In the case of Jews, as Shylock said, addressing himself to the Christian Antonio: "You call me *misbeliever, cut-throat dog*, and spit upon my Jewish gaberdine." But in the case of Freethinkers Christians denied them the rights of citizenship. They cast them into prison for their unbelief. Well do I remember the lies certain Christians circulated about the brave Atheist Charles Bradlaugh. "The Watch Story" was only one of them, but the slanders they circulated at election times were too numerous to mention. And how cruelly they persecuted Mrs. Besant, and at last deprived her of the custody of her children. George William Foote, too, came in for a good deal of slander, especially after his imprisonment for alleged blasphemy, and even obscure Freethinkers had to put up with petty persecution from time to time; and what did the majority of Christians care? And now nearly forty years after Mr. Foote's trial Mr. J. W. Gott gets nine months with hard labour for publishing a few small jokes on Bible teachings, and the present Lord Chief Justice, who probably knows little or nothing on the question of the evolution of ideas on religious beliefs, describes blasphemy as "a dangerous crime." Is it not monstrous to think of it? One of the things that were considered by Mr. Justice Avory to be particularly offensive to Christians was the suggestion that the "mansions in the skies" mentioned in the Gospels should be regarded as *Flats*. Well, flats after all, so far as we know them on earth, are very substantial dwellings, and thousands of the poor are compelled, for economic reasons, to inhabit them. Two or three months ago when I was on my way to Redriff—known to the masses as Rotherhithe—I had to pass through Southwark Park, on my way to see a friend of mine, a Freethinker, and while walking through the Park I was attracted to a large gathering of the unemployed on one of the open spaces. A Labour Leader was addressing the meeting, and in the course of his speech, which was a very able one, he spoke of the "Home for heroes" that had been promised by the Prime Minister and others; he said that they had heard of "Mansions in the skies," but he suggested that these homes were something like them, merely "Castles in the air." There were two Inspectors and

one Sergeant of the Police standing quite near the edge of the crowd, but they merely smiled and took no further notice, though a good deal of this Labour Leader's speech might have easily been described as blasphemy by fanatical Christians. Do Inspectors of Police of Bermondsey understand the people better than the Inspectors of West Ham? In any case our duty as Freethinkers is clear. We have got to continue our work of educating the masses on the question of religion. We have got to continue to point out its savage origin; to civilize ancient conceptions of God; to enlarge men's knowledge of science; to give a new reading to much that has passed as history, and to purify and secularize our institutions, and to give the masses of the people a surer hope and higher ideal for happiness and progress in the future.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Pages From Fontenelle.

DIALOGUES FROM THE DEAD.

Homer and Æsop.

Homer.—It is impossible to admire too much these fables which you have been telling me. You must have required great art to pack the weightiest of moral instruction into little stories like these, and to hide your thoughts under metaphors so clear and so homely.

Æsop.—It is indeed pleasant to be praised for such art by one who understood it so intimately.

Homer.—Me? I never attempted it.

Æsop.—What, did you not intend to conceal profound secrets in your great poem?

Homer.—Unfortunately, I did not.

Æsop.—But when I was on earth all the good judges used to say so. There was nothing in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* from which they did not draw out the most charming allegorical meanings. It was their claim that all the secrets of theology and of natural philosophy, of morals and even of mathematics were wrapped up in what you had written. Certainly there was some difficulty in unwrapping them. Where one discovered a moral meaning another would bring out a physical one, but in the end they came to the conclusion that you had known everything, and that you had said everything, if only we could understand it.

Homer.—Apart from mere lying, I had a suspicion that people would be found to discover refinements of reasoning where I had intended none. There is nothing like prophesying events at a long remove, and then waiting for the result, or telling fables and awaiting the allegory.

Æsop.—You must have been very daring to leave your readers to put the allegories into your poems. What would have happened to you if they had taken the narrative in a strictly literal sense?

Homer.—If they had, it would not have troubled me.

Æsop.—What! The gods hacking each other, thundering Zeus in a council of the divinities threatening the august Hera with a marital thrashing, Mars wounded by Diomed, howling, as you say, like nine or ten thousand men, and acting as no man ever did—for instead of cutting up the Greeks, he runs to Zeus complaining of his wound—would all this have been worth while without allegory?

Homer.—And why not? You imagine that the human mind looks only for the truth; you must consider more closely. Human nature has great sympathy with the false. If you mean to tell the truth you do well to hide it under fables; you make it more attractive. If you wish to tell fables they will please well enough, although there is no truth in them.

Truth must put on the garb of falsehood to get a good reception by the mind, but the false is well received without any disguise, for it enters its birth place and its dwelling place, while the truth comes there as a stranger. There is another thing I want to tell you. If I had killed myself imagining allegorical fables it might very well have come about that the majority of people would have found the fables too probable, and so ignored the allegory. As a matter of fact, and as anyone must know, my gods, as they are, and without any mysteries, have not been thought ridiculous.

Æsop.—You upset me, I am afraid people will believe that animals really talk as they are made to do in my fables.

Homer.—Why should you be afraid?

Æsop.—Ah! but if people believe that the gods talk as you make them do why shouldn't they believe that my animals talked as I made them?

Homer.—That is a different matter. Men would like to think the gods as foolish as themselves, but they would not like to think the animals as wise.

Englised by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The "Grammar" in America.

".....As a singularly logical and impressive thinker Mr. Cohen has shown his powers in this, his latest work. We feel convinced after giving it a careful examination that it is one of the most readable as well as one of the most useful publications that have come from the Rationalist Press during the entire year. Mr. Cohen is a thinker, and there is not a better reasoner in the whole of Freethought than the author of this admirable volume. We cannot imagine a better reasoned argument than that found between its covers. The world will have to wait many a year before *A Grammar of Freethought* has outlived its usefulness—if, indeed, that day shall ever come.

The thought-surprises in this work are frequent. We constantly wonder why the truth has not thus been presented ages ago, so convincing is the logicity with which the sequence of ideas follow each other. If one were required to limit himself to the acquiring of but two books during 1922, one might say let these two books be *Theism or Atheism?* and *A Grammar of Freethought*. The first treats the subject as it has never been treated before, and the second elucidates the most important of the many subjects forming the superstructure erected on the God-idea in a most masterly way—a way so distinguished that the reader is reduced to the choice of either believing what he reads and acting accordingly, or from fear of believing throwing the book into the fire; for with many it seems better to be at peace with oneself than to possess the truth. This Freethought text-book, for such, in a way, this volume really is, ought to be in the library of every Rationalist. The man does not exist that can answer it successfully. As a messenger of propagandism it would be difficult to find its counterpart. Its wealth of thought will attract every thinker; for after all is said, the warfare between Religion and Rationalism will never be settled except as the result of close and accurate thinking. In *A Grammar of Freethought* we find such thinking to perfection."

The Truthseeker (New York).

MIDDLE-CLASS RELIGION.

The religion of this vast English middle-class ruling the land is Comfort. It is their central thought; their idea of necessity; their sole aim. Whatsoever ministers to Comfort—seems to belong to it—pretends to support it, they yield their passive worship to. Whatsoever alarms it they join to crush. There you get at their point of unity. They will pay for the security of Comfort, calling it national worship, or national defence, if too much money is not subtracted from the means of individual comfort: if too much foresight is not demanded for the comfort of their brains.—*Dr. Shrapnel, in George Meredith's "Beauchamp's Career."*

Acid Drops.

Lord Leverhulme has clearly been guilty of blasphemy. Speaking at the meeting recently addressed by Mr. Lloyd George he said that the government was determined to honour every bond and obligation issued. There might be written across them "I know that my redeemer liveth." Now that is quite clearly, as the law of blasphemy stands, indictable, and we commend this to the pious Avory and to our poor Lord Chief Justice, who should at least be able to realize that Lord Leverhulme comes within his definition of a "dangerous criminal." But perhaps it makes a difference when the blasphemer happens to be a wealthy soap manufacturer. To be washed in the soap of the Lord may be as effective as being bathed in the blood of the Lamb. It certainly seems cleaner.

Lord Leverhulme might plead in extenuation that his blasphemy was only second-hand. The real author of this phrase was Colonel Ingersoll. It was used in a speech on the monetary question. Ingersoll said that he wanted every greenback in the States to hold up its head and be able to say, "I know that my redeemer liveth." But it would never have done, for Lord Leverhulme cribbed this from the great American Freethinker. Evidently making soap does not prevent a speaker borrowing from another without acknowledgement. The Prime Minister does not, we think, ever read anything, or he might have recognized the source of this use of the phrase. And a course of Ingersoll would not do him any harm.

The *Church Times*, which remained quite silent over the recent blasphemy case—probably lacking the courage to approve and the liberality to condemn, finds itself moved by this utterance of Lord Leverhulme. It says that Lord Leverhulme's remark does not come within the purview of the law, but it would give acute pain to some of those who heard the speech. We beg to point out that the *Church Times* is quite wrong in its law. It is clearly blasphemy to so deal with "sacred" things, and the fact that it gives pain to Christians is proof. To quote Justice Avory, the impulse of a real man would be to punch Lord Leverhulme's head, and in the words of delightful Lord Chief Justice, Lord Leverhulme has committed a dangerous crime. The distinction really does not lie in the matter but in the man. One can hardly imagine the ingrained snobbishness and servility of these people prosecuting a *Lord* for blasphemy. That would be an act of sacrilege in itself. But if J. W. Gott had said it in his pamphlets, then it would certainly have upset that fourth member of the established godhead—the policeman.

We have on more than one occasion drawn attention to the noticeable change in the educational system of the new Germany. During the past month the *Observer* and the *Schoolmaster* have emphasized the same thing. The latter says that the disappearance of clerical control, especially in the villages, is probably the most momentous change in this department of Germany's national life. "The squire controlled the parson, and the parson was the inspector of the village schools." By "squire" our contemporary means the *Junker*, the representative of the landed aristocracy who worked in the closest cooperation with the pastors of the State Church to keep a tight grip on the school.

There is another side to this question, and always has been. The pupils under the old system were not only expected, but forced, "to echo the opinions of their teachers." Now they are being trained to think for themselves. "The children are (now) to be led to understand the mentality of other nations and to cultivate feelings of goodwill toward them." The "German Atheism," which a few years ago was declared to be the cause of Europe's trouble, has had to step in and redeem a situation almost hopelessly shattered by superstition.

From a handbill sent us we see that the Rev. W.

Sarginson is preaching at Saltburn Wesleyan Church on "Why is God Silent?" We suggest that one reason may be that he has seen the folly of talking. He did speak to the people of old, and the world has been quarrelling ever since as to what on earth he meant. And when a speaker, whether he be man or God, can't make himself understood, the better course is for him to remain silent. And in any case his representatives on earth will talk enough for him. The less he says the more they talk. And even if both talked at once it would only resolve itself into a contest of incoherence and incomprehensibility.

Canon Barnes recently deprecated the attempt to use such allegories as the creation of woman, the Fall, and the Daniel and Jonah stories for didactic purposes. "It encouraged the prevalent belief that religious people had a low standard of truth." Now, we used to be assured, and are yet in some quarters, that these "allegories" contained profound spiritual truths if they were only dealt with in a reverent spirit. The revolt against the methods by which children are captured for churches and creeds is a beautiful comment on what the cleric and his dupes have hitherto regarded as worthy of reverence, and what they still invoke the aid of the law to protect from irreverence.

Some of the papers are working up quite a lot of excitement over a batch of Mormon missionaries that are at present in England. Of course the objection is that these people preach polygamy, and no one can object to it more strongly than we do. But we should like to remind these good people that they are upholding a book—the Bible—which is saturated with polygamy. The patriarchs were all polygamists. The king who was blessed by God with wisdom over all other men, Solomon, had scores of wives. The New Testament never condemns it. Milton, Luther, Bishop Burnet, and many other Christian authorities were all of opinion that polygamy was a thoroughly Christian institution. And, finally, we owe monogamy, not to any Christian influence whatever, but to the pagan Greeks and Romans, whom ignorant Christians—and lying ones who are not so ignorant—depict as sunk in vice and immorality. Christianity has always hovered between a gross sexualism and an unclean asceticism.

It is common knowledge that the book trade is passing through a bad time. The cost of production is still very high, and when to this is added the bad trade, it is not surprising that publishers are everywhere crying out. All the same we do not see that the *Daily Herald* touches the root of the question when it says: "The really vital fact.....is that books are frankly regarded as a class monopoly. They are an extra, a luxury, a thing for those who are so rich that they are too silly to want them." That is the most curious explanation of the small sales of good books that we have yet seen. In our judgment the real difficulty in the way is the lack of readers of good works in this country, quite independent of either class or wealth. Anyone who is acquainted with the book trade knows that under the most favourable conditions the edition that a publisher issues of a good work is a very small one. In philosophy and science, and good literature, 3,000 copies would be considered a fair size edition, and we believe the general number is about 2,000. And further enquiries would show that the sales are absolutely independent of class and very largely of the conditions of trade. The latter element seems to affect more the cheaper class of novels.

The truth is that the British public is not a reading public. We have a fair acquaintance among people of various classes, and it is only one here and there who regards expenditure on books as a necessary item. And although we spend very much less on books—not half what we should like, or ought, to spend—than many do on whiskey, yet a goodly number of these acquaintances regard what we do spend as quite unwarrantable extravagance, and wonder what on earth we want so many books for. Again, we live in an ordinary London suburban district, and all around us are the houses of men who regard themselves as decently educated. And

yet one can go into house after house without seeing half a dozen books that are worth the trouble of picking up. It is the same if one enters into conversation with travellers in train or 'bus. There is an utter absence of genuine interests in the topics with which serious books deal. Such comments as are made are obviously based upon a paragraph picked out of the daily newspaper. And if the *Daily Herald* writer will carry his researches back to the days when education was not so general as it is now he will probably be surprised to find that the editions of good books were almost as large as they are now.

It is this lack of good reading capacity, or rather the lack of taste for it, that gives to the paragraphic newspaper the power it possesses and makes it the danger it is. The ordinary newspaper is able to fool and mislead the average reader because it is dealing with so ill-informed a public that it has no means of checking the veracity or value of what is served out to it. And it has come to be without the desire to so check it. What it requires is to have its news served out to it desiccated and partly assimilated, so that the only trouble it is put to is to swallow it. All that it demands is that there shall be a pleasant tickling sensation as the allowance is swallowed. And the consequence is that the power to concentrate on a serious work becomes weaker and weaker, writers are forced into a competition to capture the least reflective members of the community, and unless a writer has the genius for self-advertisement of a Bernard Shaw, he is gradually forced into the general movement for the degradation of taste and the lowering of the standard of literature.

As is to be expected the appearance of a film play entitled *The Queen of Sheba* is causing some controversy. The pious are upset over the irreverent handling of a "sacred" topic, even though the party dealt with is Solomon. The *Times* in a leading article on the subject wonders what the audience will think of Solomon when they see him yielding to the charms of the Queen, and thinks they may reflect on the other wives in the background. And asks, "Will they not think that he ought to be the villain rather than the hero of the piece?" We should not be surprised, and if they did so think they would not be very far wrong. If people will only look at the biblical characters from the point of view that they would look at ordinary people they would be astonished to discover what a lot of very shady people were honoured with God's approval and friendship. And that is the real danger of putting "sacred" subjects on the stage or on the screen. It divests them of the hypnotizing influence with which tradition has surrounded them, and people are able to bring common sense to bear on the matter. And that is always dangerous where religion is concerned.

Just imagine what would be the feelings of an audience who saw on the screen Jesus turning water into wine, or seeing the devil and holding a conversation with him? In the one case it would appear as just a common conjuring trick in which the performer managed to deceive the audience, and in the other it would be someone suffering from a not uncommon form of delusion. The chief offence committed by the Freethinker lies in just this direction. What he does is to look at all the fantastic stories in the Old and New Testaments as they appear to the modern informed mind. And, naturally, the clergy do not like this. Once strip religion of the artificial atmosphere maintained by the Churches and Christianity is seen as what it is—a collection of semi-savage superstitions that ought long since to have been banished from the civilized mind.

The Rev. H. D. A. Major, the latest subject of a heresy charge within the Church, has replied to some of his critics. It will be remembered that Dr. Major has reached the tremendous development of not believing in a physical resurrection. And imagine the state of intelligence within the Church when the denial of so ridiculous a belief causes a man to regard himself as a daring thinker and others to look on him as a dangerous heretic. And

now Dr. Major informs all and sundry that if a census were taken of Church attendance in London the figures would show a smaller number of worshippers than ever. "And if we looked at the people who remained in our Churches they did not as a whole represent the more intelligent and vital elements of the community." We do not doubt that for a moment. The proof is Dr. Major himself. For when a man treats the subject of a physical resurrection seriously—even while denying its truth—he is himself evidence of that. It is one of those things that a thoroughly healthy mind could not but hold in contempt and could not avoid showing it.

The *Christian World* says that the lack of a feeling of moral responsibility for war "may be attributed in large measure to the slackening grip which Christian ethics have upon the nation." The statement has direct reference to Germany, but we think it applies to all so far as the lack of a feeling of responsibility for war is concerned. Every nation professes its desire for peace, even while it is making every preparation for war, and every nation blames the other one so soon as war is declared. That is part of the humbug of the situation. But to say that this is due to want of grip of Christian principles is delicious in its unconscious humour. Christianity has always provided the moral justification for war whenever it has occurred, and has given as a whole that cloak of righteousness which more than anything else has perpetuated war. And in this country the sect of Christians who professed to carry out the teachings of Jesus with reference to war were sent to prison as criminals, while criminals were let out to join the army, and these Christians were treated as social pariahs by their fellow believers in the Gospel of Jesus. It is only fair to say that the *Christian World* comment immediately precedes an article on "Humour in the Bible," so that it may only be an attempt on the part of the *Christian World* writer to be funny.

These practical results of false ideas at home are taken for granted. But one would scarcely imagine, from the speeches and writings of European Christians, bearing upon what they significantly call "missionary enterprise," that the whole Christian world-view, in its science and its history, has been condemned at the bar of modern thought. Men like Carey and Livingstone were desperately concerned about those that "die out of Christ." This concern was sincere, but it represented a low ideal both of God and man. Science and humanism are breaking it down at home, but abroad it exercises an influence, and the "inspired" record is still good enough for the native mind in Asia and Africa and the beautiful islands of the Pacific. The material resources of Christendom to-day are considerable, and the extension of its political sway over the undeveloped countries of the world will increase them still further. A militant faith must be prepared to meet the challenge of worldly-minded people.

The Vicar of St. John's Church, Leeds, has decided to cut out the roth Psalm (generally known as "the cursing psalm") from his church service. He says it represents human nature at its worst. We suggest to the vicar that he should go a little further and cut out the rascality of Jacob, the scoundrelism of David, the debauchery of Solomon, the silliness of the talking serpent, the savagery of the casting out of devils, the absurdity of the virgin birth, etc. But it is something to have a vicar say that one part of the Bible pictures human nature at its worst. We have said it for years, but these good Christians insisted that it was impossible to bring children up properly unless the Bible was retained in the schools. Perhaps one day it will be seen that both the Old and New Testament are so filled with savagery and pictures of human nature at far from its best that its only use is to the folk-lorists and the student of the development of manners.

The late Bishop Carnac Fisher, of Ipswich, who left the modest sum of £178,455, has been described as "a devoted priest." His will shows that he was devoted equally to God and Mammon.

Special.

WILL our readers please note that we want the addresses of public men in all towns in the kingdom, and particularly the names and addresses of liberal minded clergymen, to whom a copy of the pamphlet on the Blasphemy laws may be sent. We will then see that they get a copy so far as it can be done. Also, we hope that our readers will do their share with regard to ordering six copies, which will be sent post free for 1s. 6d. The pamphlet is handsomely got up, as in the matter of influencing public opinion appearance counts, and the pamphlet is neither written nor published for profit. We want our friends to take this matter very seriously indeed, as seriously as we do, and we regard this as one of the most serious pieces of propaganda we have undertaken. There should be a raging tearing campaign all through the country, and if that is done it will be a good preparation for the general election which may come upon us at any time. It is the best chance we have had for some time of removing the Blasphemy laws, and all should take advantage of it. We should like to see 50,000 copies of the pamphlet circulated at once. And there is no reason why it should not be done. *We can make the repeal of the Blasphemy laws a question of immediate and practical politics if we will.*

Just as we are going to press we learn of Mr. Shortt's contemptible and cowardly answer to a request that he will exert the powers he has to modify the villainous sentence passed on Mr. Gott. The news reaches us too late to be dealt with in this issue, but we will deal with it at length next week. Mr. Shortt's answer is one more proof that our present gang of officials are a standing menace to whatever liberty the people of this country still possess. All that we will now say is that it enforces what has been said above. We must all take our coats off to the work before us.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 5, Birmingham; February 19, Glasgow; February 20, Motherwell; 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.

WILL E. B., who lately inserted an advertisement in the *Freethinker*, please send her address to the editor?

H. N.—We are obliged, but the only "testimonial" we are hankering after is for each of our readers to do what he or she can to make progress more rapid than it is. And if we can place the publishing side of our movement on a self-supporting basis we shall regard that as one of the best testimonials to what we are doing. It is a big fight, but the bigger the fight the greater the victory.

W. STURGESS.—We are placing your name on our list for delivery of the *Freethinker*, which will be sent you weekly. Hope things will brighten presently.

W. COLLINS.—You will probably be more successful next time. Opinion moves slowly, but it moves. *Blasphemy* pamphlets are being sent.

WALLACE ALLAN.—Thanks for cuttings. The wriggings of the Christian world to escape the obvious inference that the world is outgrowing its creed are quite amusing. Hope you are well.

T. REYNOLDS.—Pleased to find *A Grammar of Freethought* a storehouse of arguments in your discussions with Christians. It was partly to serve that purpose that the book was written. Freethinkers have an unanswerable case if they only marshal their arguments in the right way.

J. DRISCOLL.—We are glad to learn that Mr. Jack Jones, M.P., is disgusted with what he properly calls the "savage sentence" on Mr. Gott, and also that he promises whatever assistance he can give to bring a better state of the law. There will be opportunities for all who dislike the Blasphemy laws to do something in the near future, both inside and outside the House of Commons. We hope that all our readers will do what they can to keep the question in front of the public. You are doing your share.

SCEPTIC.—We have no "agent" for the *Freethinker* in Weymouth, but it can be ordered through any newsagent, or from any of W. H. Smith's bookstalls. If you have any difficulty in getting copies please let us know.

A. BARTRAM.—Thanks for copy of Mr. Shortt's letter. As you will see we have promised to deal with it next week.

MR. H. DAWSON writes: "If the spirit of the *Freethinker's* editor is the spirit of the Freethought party we shall still make the bigots pay." We quite believe that the party is taking this matter as seriously as we are, and in that we are only voicing what the rest feel.

"SEAGUL" (Dublin).—Ingersoll's *Declaration of the Free* is not, so far as we are aware, to be had at present apart from his complete works. If there is no Crematorium in Ireland, the nearest would be Liverpool.

D. E. BONVONI.—We have noted the wave of reaction in connection with religion in the schools, and hope that something will be done to check it. It is part of the general reaction which was bound to set in after the war, although we did think that the people would show a little more regard to the principle of liberty than has been shown up to the present. We have been going to write at length on the new education proposals, but other things have been continually getting in the way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 5) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Birmingham. Special endeavours have been made to see that the large hall shall be well filled, and we hope these will be crowned with success. The subject is "The Foundations of Faith, with special reference to Bishop Gore's *Belief in God*." The lecture commences at 7, but stewards are asked to be on hand not later than 6.15. Ticket holders will note that they enter by doors D and K, Branch members and friends from a distance at door A.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd held two very successful meetings at Manchester on Sunday last. The Secretary writes us that his "persuasive eloquence added to the number and coffers of the Branch," which is as it should be.

We have already dwelt upon the glaring stupidity of the Lord Chief Justice in describing blasphemy as a dangerous crime. Such a statement labels a man as being quite

unfit to occupy so responsible a position, and the sooner his retirement is announced the better. We now note that even so staid a paper as the *Solicitor's Journal* has been moved to protest against so ridiculous a judgment. It calls it "somewhat of an exaggeration" and says that the Lord Chief Justice, in the light of the present state of the law, occupied an untenable position. In our opinion his whole view of the matter is so hopelessly belated and out-of-date as to make his decision nothing short of a public scandal. If he were not so old we might express a hope that he would learn better in time.

We have also said that in spite of the legal defeat we have advanced the legal view of blasphemy a step. This case took us a distance along the road of forcing the prosecution to prove a breach of the peace in order to make out their case. We are glad to find this view supported by the *Solicitor's Journal*, which says:—

With questions of good taste, short of corruption of public morals, the law does not concern itself, and in fact the offence of blasphemy, so far as it still exists, must be based upon the tendency to endanger the peace. This requires that the evidence should show that there was in fact a danger of the public peace being disturbed, and we did not notice that this evidence was given in the case in question. We are not sure that the Court of Criminal Appeal in the present case had all the bearings of the matter sufficiently in view, or it would probably have discouraged proceedings which it was thought were becoming obsolete.

As we watched the judges very closely the whole of the time, and sat very near them, we are strongly of opinion that all they went on was their own personal dislike to the matter published. Other considerations seemed to trouble them very little. Justice and religion have very little connection.

This from the *Nation*:—

The confirming of the sentence of nine months' imprisonment on Mr. Gott for blasphemy is made worse by the Lord Chief Justice's description of the offence as a "dangerous" crime. "Dangerous" is the epithet of all others that the Roman official applied to the early Christian derision of the Olympian gods; it represents, indeed, the pagan view of religion as an established *étatisme* which at no cost must be disturbed. In that sense most of the religious reformers are "blasphemers." Luther (who had a rough tongue) certainly was. So was Dr. Colenso, who questioned the "inerrancy" of Genesis, the basis of the conventional theology of his day. So would Dr. Inge have been called four hundred years ago, if he had written (at the imminent risk of the stake) such an article as that in the *Church Family Newspaper* on miracles. The Blasphemy laws are indeed a pitiful relic of the time when it was thought that religion could never stand up for itself, unless the State, with rack and prison, stood firmly at its back. But even on the Bench we ought long ago to have worked beyond that stage of thinking.

Unfortunately cases are constantly occurring which show that we have judges whose intellect, apart from a mere knowledge of legal technicalities—in itself no greater evidence of ability than is a schoolboy's familiarity with the technicalities of a game of marbles—show them to be quite incapable of respectable thinking. They are only proficient tradesmen.

Mr. Desmond MacCarthy contributes the following to the *New Statesman*:—

Nothing can be more ridiculous and more revolting to every right-minded man's sense of justice than the spectacle of judges who have the works of infidels and mockers on their shelves at home, sentencing a poor man to nine months' hard labour because he sells in the streets literature calculated "to outrage," as the Lord Chief Justice said, "the feelings of a Christian." Even if their lordships do not personally possess the works of Hume, Blake, Swinburne, and Voltaire, it is ten to one they own a Gibbon. The blasphemy law is a dead thing, and if there are a few Christians who would like to revive it, they dare not. Though the bigotry that gave it life is dead, the corpse of the noxious thing still lies about our streets, poisoning now and again some poor man who is only carrying on the same propaganda as the well-to-do pursue with perfect immunity behind their study windows.

Such a decision as that of the Court of Criminal Appeal in the case of Mr. Gott the other day, such a summing up as that of Mr. Justice Avory, lays Christians open to a charge of the meanest cowardice. It blazons before the modern world the fact that they dare not attempt to silence formidable enemies, but are eager to strike at any weak ones. If these sort of sentences continue it will be the duty of Freethinkers of every sort to start blaspheming and mocking, whether they want to or not. Moreover, I do not suppose that there is a bishop who does not sympathize more with Mr. Gott than with his judges.

We should like to feel that Mr. MacCarthy is correct about the bishops. At any rate, as most of them will receive a copy of Mr. Cohen's pamphlet and will be invited to express an opinion thereon, there is a way of testing the matter.

We have sent out copies of Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on *Blasphemy* to over 600 papers, and more may go out. We should, therefore, be glad if those of our readers who come across reviews or comments on the pamphlet would be good enough to let us have the cutting. They will all be useful for future propaganda. We also want the addresses of clergymen, of a liberal type, to whom copies of the pamphlet may be sent as well as those occupying public positions.

In the course of two or three weeks we hope to publish a new work by Mr. Cohen entitled *The Other Side of Death*. The work will consist of a careful examination of the whole belief in a future life and a careful study of Spiritualism from the point of view of a scientific psychology. It will avoid the crudity of both those who see in Spiritualistic phenomena the proof of an existence after death, and those who believe there is nothing in it save the antics of deliberate impostors and clever conjurers. The book will be published in paper covers at 2s. and in cloth at 3s. 6d.

Last Monday evening Mr. A. D. McLaren addressed the members of the Cricklewood branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union on "The Workers' Interest in Science." The address was followed with keen attention, and aroused considerable discussion. There is a very wide field of useful work for Freethought in the ranks of the skilled artisans. When the final attack is made on the great superstition, very considerable help should come from this source.

The Glasgow Branch has to-day (February 5) a Christian speaker on its platform, Mr. W. Smith, who is to speak to them on "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?" The meeting will be held at the Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street, at 11.30. There should be a good discussion.

We are asked to again call attention to the "Social" of the West Ham Branch which will take place on Saturday evening, February 4, at the Metropolitan Music Academy, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E., at 7 o'clock. Admission is free; all Freethinkers and their friends are welcome.

The Atomic Theory.

ALTHOUGH the atomic theory in its present form was not formulated until about 1810, when Dalton published his *New System of Chemical Philosophy*, there have long been theories of matter which have postulated a granular structure.

The ancient philosophers of the East—India, Greece, Italy, etc.—made many quaint guesses at the constitution of matter. Among these guesses, we find one taught by Kanáda (the founder of a system of Hindu philosophy) long prior to the rise of Grecian philosophy. The same guess was made by Democritus, Leucippus, and Lucretius, and their guess lives, more or less modified in modern chemistry. These philosophers seem to have taught: (1) matter is discrete; (2) all substances are formed of atoms

which are separated from one another by void spaces; (3) the atoms are in constant motion; and (4) motion is an inherent property of the atoms. The atoms were supposed to be too small to be perceived by the senses, and they were further supposed to be eternal, indestructible, and unchangeable. Atoms differed from each other in shape, size, and mode of arrangement, and the properties of all substances were supposed to depend upon the nature of the constituent atoms and the way the atoms were arranged. So far as the experimental evidence available to the Grecian philosophers in support of this particular guess is concerned, its long life—in the form of the chemist's atomic theory—can only be attributed to chance (*Modern Inorganic Chemistry*, Dr. Mellor).

Coming to more modern times we find that many other thinkers developed something like an atomic theory. Among them were Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, John Mayow, Isaac Newton, M. W. Lomonosoff (1748), Bryan Higgins (1776), and William Higgins (1789). In 1801 John Dalton employed the atomic hypothesis to explain the diffusion of gases, and later based an hypothesis of the structure of matter upon the following postulates:—

(1) Atoms are real, discrete particles of matter which cannot be subdivided by any known chemical process.

(2) Atoms of the same element are similar to one another, and equal in weight.

(3) Atoms of different elements have different properties—weight, affinity, etc.

(4) Compounds are formed by the union of atoms of different elements in simple numerical proportions.

(5) The combining weights of the elements represent the combining weights of the atoms.

In a modified form Dalton's atomic theory has survived until to-day.

The modern chemist regards all matter, whether it be solid, liquid, or gaseous, as being composed of aggregations of minute particles, called molecules (*i.e.*, little masses). There are interspaces between the molecules, and each molecule is in a state of motion. In gases the average space of separation of the molecules is large compared with the dimensions of a molecule, so that considerable freedom of motion is possible. In liquids they are close together, and motion is more restricted, while in solids the motion is even more restricted, a molecule merely oscillating to and fro about a mean position, and never far removed from it.

The molecules of any given substance are all alike. Thus all the molecules of a drop of water are alike, but are unlike those of alcohol, say. Similar molecules exert forces on each other. These forces are either attractive or repellent; the former tending to draw the molecules closer together, and thus to cause the substance to assume the solid state; while the latter tend to separate the molecules, and convert the substance into a gaseous body. The changes which substances undergo by the action of these forces are physical ones, the chemical composition of the body remaining unchanged.

Molecules are, therefore, the smallest particles of matter which can exist in the free state.

The actual size of the molecules has not yet been determined with exactness. But it is certain that they are less than .000008 of an inch. Some idea of their magnitude may be gathered from Lord Kelvin's calculation, that if a single drop of water were magnified to the size of the earth, each molecule being proportionately enlarged, the mass would present a grained appearance, probably finer than that of a heap of cricket balls, but coarser than a heap of small shot.

But molecules are not simple, indivisible, masses. They consist of aggregations of still smaller particles,

which are held together by the operation of some other force. These more minute particles are known as atoms, and the force holding them together is called chemical affinity. One may think of the molecules as microcosmic solar systems—although, of course, they contain nothing analogous to a sun—the atoms being in a state of motion with regard to one another (possibly revolving about one another), whilst the entire system (*i.e.*, molecule) performs its own independent movement. But in the case of the heavenly bodies the force (gravitation) which regulates the movement of the individual members of the system amongst themselves is the same force that controls the motion of the system. The precise relation, or difference, if any, between the forces which operate between the atoms and those which control the movements of the molecule is not known.

Now any change which matter undergoes, in which the integrity of the molecules is not destroyed, is a physical one. For example, water consists of molecules containing one oxygen atom to two hydrogen atoms. The water may be converted into steam (*i.e.*, the molecular interspaces increased and their energy of motion augmented), or into ice (*i.e.*, the interspaces diminished and the energy of motion reduced), but the three atoms will remain united. Hence, such changes are physical changes.

Any change in which the molecular structure is altered is a chemical change. Thus, if an electric spark be passed through steam, thus heating the molecules to a much higher temperature, the molecules are broken up into their constituent atoms, which then unite among themselves to produce molecules of oxygen and hydrogen.

Hence, *atoms are those smallest particles of matter which can take part in a chemical change.*

Recent developments in science have given us very good reason to believe that atoms themselves possess a structure and can be broken up into something even more elemental. But a discussion of this would be a lengthy business, and must await a later article.

W. H. MORRIS.

The Blasphemy Case.

APPEAL PROCEEDINGS.

(Continued from page 77.)

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: The learned judge in his summing up says, "But you must look at the argument of the learned counsel." It was a fact that they were being sold.

SIR HENRY: The argument which the judge was dealing with was my argument.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: He was only at that moment dealing with that part of it connected with the sale.

SIR HENRY: I had said there was no evidence here that anybody was likely to have their feelings outraged or that a breach of the peace was likely to occur because the person who was purchasing knew what he was purchasing. He had to pay for the document and the evidence is that there was no sign of any breach of the peace.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: It does not follow. When I buy a book it is because I want to know what is in it.

SIR HENRY: But if you had bought this book you would have seen "Conducted by J. W. Gott. Prosecuted for blasphemy." Then there are a number of pictures of what happens to a man who has been prosecuted for blasphemy, convicted and sent to prison. There is a picture of something called skilly, and it is written "J. W. Gott as B. 130, Birmingham Prison. Prisoner for blasphemy." Then you see at the bottom of the page "J. W. Gott, of London, Leeds, Liverpool. The last person to be imprisoned in England for blasphemy." You could have no doubt as to what you were purchasing.

MR. JUSTICE ROCHIE: You would have thought it was an anti-Christian paper, but you would not have known it was coarse and ribald.

SIR HENRY: The insinuation is that this is another blasphemous publication.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: How do you make that out?

SIR HENRY: There are the pictures of the man in prison, and then underneath it says that he has been a visitor to some of H. M. Prisons prosecuted for blasphemy. In my submission that would show that you were getting something anti-Christian. I do not want to put it higher than I have put it, but it would probably contain something of a blasphemous nature.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: The man had been prosecuted, had served his term, and there is no reason to suppose that he was going to commit the same crime again. You cannot say how you infer from the fact that he has been prosecuted that he was doing the same thing again. That would be a very hard measure to mete out to a man.

SIR HENRY: A person purchasing this document would not have been shocked if he had found that it was an anti-Christian document written in strong language.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: He might think that he was going to get it in language which would not lead to this result.

SIR HENRY: That is the argument which was being addressed to the jury with which the learned judge was dealing when he said what I have drawn the attention of the Court to. And I submit that he ought to have said that publication was a matter which had to be looked at where they were determining that a blasphemous libel had in fact been published.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Is not the learned judge right in what he said that whether you sold them in the street or in a shop does not affect the fact that they are blasphemous libels?

SIR HENRY: Calculated to outrage the feelings of persons who purchase them.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: The form of sale might aggravate the offence if the language is language of a blasphemous character. The fact that you are getting money for it does not prevent you from publishing a blasphemous libel. It might possibly from one point of view increase the enormity of the offence that you are not doing it from any genuine spirit of converting the other man, but really with the sordid motive of getting money.

SIR HENRY: I am arguing that the mode of publication is one of the ingredients of this offence.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: It is an element to be taken into consideration, but I cannot see, if you publish it, what it matters how you publish it.

SIR HENRY: I have already tried to put my submission upon that. Supposing Mr. Gott publishes this to another man who holds similar views?

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: But there you have got to go a step further. But if you can prove that no one bought this document but persons who would be interested and would agree with Mr. Gott then you might, no doubt, prove a defence. But you do not. You say the mere fact that it was being sold without uttering blasphemous sentences is sufficient.

SIR HENRY: I have put my submission. I cannot carry it further upon that particular matter. I desire to draw your attention to another paragraph which immediately succeeds what I have already read to you on page 23.

Now, my Lords, before leaving that paragraph, I have already shown your lordships and drawn your attention to the outside of one of these documents which is called the *Rib Tickler*. I have pointed out that on the face of that document the publisher is showing that at any rate he has been prosecuted, and prosecuted several times, for blasphemy. On opening it one sees upon page two what the editor of the *Freethinker* said about the blasphemy trial. You then find the *Rib Tickler*, the subject matter of this indictment, and there are other matters in the paper. Now, on the face of the other document which was being sold one finds this: the *Liberator*, then it says what it is, then there is a picture or a number of pictures of some man in prison, and underneath it is "J. W. Gott, who did three months' hard labour in Birmingham Prison, 1921, for circulating birth control literature." Inside the pamphlet were two pamphlets. One of them is in these terms: "Prosecuted for blasphemy," *Rib Ticklers, or questions for parsons*;

then there is a picture of Gott again in prison, and underneath is written, "J. W. Gott in Birmingham Prison." The other is entitled *Gott and God*, and there is "Sale of blasphemous pamphlets," "Attack on religion." All those matters were, of course, patent to any persons who were buying these pamphlets. It may be said that these two last documents I have dealt with might not possibly be seen until the pamphlet was purchased. But it is quite clear that on the face of the *Liberator* it shows Gott had been prosecuted for blasphemy and prosecuted with success, and the *Rib Tickler* shows in three places he had been prosecuted for blasphemy. Upon that the learned judge in his summing up said: "The learned counsel says the people who bought them knew what they were buying, and quotes the description of one of the pamphlets as being *Rib Ticklers, or questions for parsons*, and therefore he says people must have known they were buying something that was irreligious, but in point of fact that particular pamphlet was enclosed in the pamphlet called the *Liberator*, which is described outside simply as advocating birth control, and the person who pays two-pence for that upon opening it finds inside these other two things which are the subject of the indictment, one headed *God and Gott* and the other one headed *Rib Ticklers, or questions for Parsons*. That is not disclosed until the person has bought the pamphlet and opened it. The other one is simply described on the outside as the *Rib Tickler*. Therefore, you may imagine the kind of people who might be tempted to buy these things, one called the *Rib Tickler* and the other the *Liberator* advocating birth control. I ought to tell the Court that when this case was being tried it was agreed between Sir Richard Muir and myself, representing the prisoner, that the whole of these documents should not be put before the jury, because if they were it would show Gott had been previously convicted. It was thought only the part in the indictment should be put before the jury. Therefore, the jury never had before them the actual documents. Therefore, I was estopped from showing to the jury what was on the face of the *Rib Tickler* and also on the face of the *Liberator*. All that I could point out was that one of the documents inside the *Liberator* was *Rob Ticklers, or questions for Parsons*. But the learned judge had these documents before him, and in my submission it was wrong to tell the jury that any person buying these particular pamphlets would not have known that these were attacks upon religion, because upon the face of the *Rib Tickler* and on the face of the *Liberator* was the fact that this man Gott had been previously prosecuted for blasphemy.

MR. JUSTICE BRANSON: Where is that on the face of the *Liberator*?

SIR HENRY: On the face of the *Liberator* it says: "Journal advocating birth control by J. W. Gott." Then there is a picture of somebody in prison, and underneath "J. W. Gott who did three months' hard labour in prison, Birmingham, 1921, for circulating birth control literature."

MR. JUSTICE BRANSON: There is nothing to show there is an attack on religion.

SIR HENRY: It is inside the *Liberator*.

MR. JUSTICE BRANSON: Is not that the point he was making—you must buy the *Liberator* before seeing it?

SIR HENRY: He said: The other one is simply described on the outside as the *Rib Tickler*. Therefore, you can imagine the people who would buy that. It is not merely described on the outside as the *Rib Tickler* but as the *Rib Tickler* conducted by Gott prosecuted for blasphemy. I put to the jury that as far as the *Liberator* was concerned, when you purchased it you could see at once it was an attack on religion because one was headed *God and Gott*, and the other—

MR. JUSTICE BRANSON: I do not understand the point you are making that the sale of the *Liberator* is not a publication of blasphemous libel.

SIR HENRY: My comment on this part of the learned judge's summing up was directed more to the *Rib Tickler* than to the question of the *Liberator*, and you will remember these documents have been dealt with side by side.

MR. JUSTICE BRANSON: But if the judge is right on one he must be right on the other.

SIR HENRY: The *Rib Tickler* was the one that was intended—the subject matter of this indictment.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Intended to be was it?

SIR HENRY: Yes, my lord. The *Rib Tickler* on page three contains the subject matter of the indictment. That was an extract from the *Rib Tickler* itself.

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: Which the persons who bought the *Liberator* wishing to read about birth control had given to him.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: He got a shock as one might say. The document which he thought was dealing with a scientific subject was dealing with a religious subject.

SIR HENRY: In addition to the statement outside the *Liberator* you could see what you were purchasing, there were also two placards being held up. One did not show it, but the other was a placard showing Mr. Gott in prison again. Now, my lord, those were the matters I desire to draw the attention of the Court to as regards the misdirection of the learned judge to the jury. Now, your lordships will remember that Gott had been tried upon the Wednesday, and after a careful trial, and after the jury had retired for some considerable time, for about one and a half to two hours, the jury were unable to agree. The case was retried on Friday, December 9. Now, my lords, after the summing up of the learned judge, the jury considered their verdict in the jury box without retiring for a period, to be exact, of thirty-three minutes, and at the end of that time they desired some further direction in law. The learned judge repeated to them in short his direction in law, and they then went on considering their verdict for another seventeen minutes, so that after fifty minutes altogether the jury came to the conclusion, and in coming to the conclusion they recommended the appellant to mercy. Now, my lords, nowhere in the summing up of Mr. Justice Avory is anything said at all to the jury about giving the prisoner the benefit of reasonable doubt. Here was a case, in my submission, where it was most desirable and proper such caution should be given, because already there had been an abortive trial, already one jury had not been able to come to a decision adverse to the prisoner, and in this second trial it was shown there was considerable controversy amongst the jury; and at no place in the summing up does the learned judge say or even hint that the proper course for the jury to pursue is to give the benefit of any reasonable or proper doubt to the prisoner.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: In the further summing up it indicates the question which they asked the learned judge on page 24. It does not appear to constitute any doubt whatever upon the subject matters you are arguing. That is to say, the mode of publication or the fact that it was bought and not distributed gratis.

(To be Concluded.)

From a Note-book.

Cynicism.—The next vice to stupidity is that of cynicism, or, in the words of Wilde, being in the state of one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Cynicism is the note of despair, and the theory of "Original Sin" is theological cynicism. Here is the negative side of Christian doctrine. Man is a fallen being say the priests; to whom would it be dangerous if the same energy were used in telling him that he was a risen animal with the potentiality of a God? Let us laugh gently in our hats at the affirmation in the first Commandment. There were other gods apparently—and omnipotence becomes suspect; for all other gods could have been banished by the one breathing the spirit of intolerance. If man discovers that he is or can become a god—in comparison with what the priest states of him, what becomes of the charge of the negative teaching of Freethought? How often we hear the cursed phrase "Human nature being what it is." It is the cynic's creed. Human nature is like the modeller's clay, and it can be made in a noble image if we can effectively keep off it the claws of the priest, and those of his brother in Christ, the Banker. Who are the sncerers at humanity? The answer is, the vermin on humanity's back.

Public Conversation.—In the population of London one may be tragically alone surrounded by millions. London people only become talkative when they are drunk; what

they say when sober is mainly inspired by picture papers and the latest murder or horse-race, and is consequently of no interest. What they say on these subjects is prompted by newspapers, and no sensible person would discuss matters with gramophone records. For what one hears in a day's march in the city deafness would be no affliction. The standard of public conversation is low, uninteresting, futile, banal; the priest and the press are fit leaders of this multitude, for no wise man would desire power over it. Meredith's aristocrats talk splendidly; our own only wish that they could converse in the same manner. We believe that the topics of conversation now, in that circle, veer round from horse power of motor cars to the bad conscience complex of revolution.

The Function of Newspapers.—To keep their readers in a state of thoughtless ferment; to have the same effect on them as a conjurer's speech on an audience during the trick. For signs of depravity look at newspaper placards—murder, war, robbery; the particular is taken for the general by the public, and if any placard expressed a noble aspiration, an elevating thought, or held out a hand to struggling mankind—the present writer has never seen it. Newspapers and newspaper proprietors measure their public by printing house standards, which is only our old friend "Original Sin" in another disguise.

C. DE B.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 26, 1922.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the Chair. Also present: Messrs. Kelf, Moss, Neate, Rosetti and Quinton; Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of the Special Meeting held on December 15 read and confirmed, also minutes of the ordinary meeting held on November 24.

Financial statement presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Fulham, Halifax, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, South London and the Parent Society.

Permission was granted for the formation of a Branch at Halifax.

It was reported that a legacy of £100 under the will of the late Mr. Edward Shields had been received and a further sum of £100 had been generously contributed by a friend of the movement for the purpose of issuing new tracts and keeping in print others already circulated.

The following reports in connection with the Blasphemy case, *Rex v. Gott*, were also received:—

(1) Refusal of bail to J. W. Gott pending the Appeal, and subsequent failure of the Appeal, and consequent increase of the term of imprisonment by five weeks, the sentence of nine months' hard labour dating from the day of the Appeal. Legal charges were ordered to be paid, and the amount of £434 19s. 3d. received from the *Freethinker* Fund acknowledged.

(2) The highly successful Protest meeting held at South Place on January 18, when the resolutions already appearing in the *Freethinker* were carried enthusiastically.

(3) That by instruction of the Executive letters had been addressed to prominent public persons of all denominations likely to be interested in the repeal of the Blasphemy laws, and as a result, a preliminary meeting had been called to form a Committee, Mr. Cohen, Miss Vance and Miss Kough being elected to represent the N. S. S.

Mr. Rosetti reported enthusiastic meetings at Stratford, and the West Ham Branch was heartily thanked for its assistance. Cheques were ordered to be drawn for outstanding liabilities, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

'Tis a good thing preachers don't go to Congress. Whin they're ca'm they'd wipe out all th' laws, an' whin they're excited they'd wipe out all th' popylation. They're niver two jumps fr'm th' thumbscrew.—Mr. Dooley.

Obituary.

JOHN FERGUSON TURNBULL.

When, some twenty-five or thirty years ago I attended the meetings in the Secular Hall, Albion Street, Glasgow, I was much impressed by a familiar chairman of those historic meetings, namely, the late J. F. Turnbull—the round, ripe, full-flavoured personality of a common, yet very uncommon, working man. His memory was a storehouse of brilliant anecdote of the ripe philosophy and rapier thrusts of the Secular platform—memories of forty years; of Harry Long, Mrs. Law, Bradlaugh, Foote, Cohen, Robertson, Watts, and many lesser giants of the period—memories, alas, also expunged and razed when the grave in Cathcart Cemetery closed over their possessor on Wednesday afternoon, January 11, 1922—the day had been gusty and vile, but cleared later in cold but cloudless serenity, symbolic, it might seem, of the careless, cloudless sleep of one of the finest men that ever drew the breath of life. Partly from health reasons Mr. Turnbull had gone to live in the Ayrshire village of Auchinleck. Auchinleck was famous for the classic Boswell family. To me it will be a sacred memory as the place where, at midday on Sunday, January 8, 1922, one of Glasgow's noblest sons quietly breathed his last. We knew he had for long been very ill, but had I known he was passing so soon and so suddenly I would have walked the twenty-five miles between us to see him once more before he crossed the ferry. The Editor, I know, was well aware of Turnbull's value to the Cause, and held him always in honoured and intimate esteem, and not less so, that aged Glasgow lady, a doyen of Freethinkers, his mother, who has survived many sad losses in her now depleted family, and whose firm and still virile philosophy may surmount this, the heaviest blow of all. But after all it is not death that matters, but life, and this life so well and nobly lived, so fitly, if prematurely, closed at fifty-five, leaves nothing to regret, but only a proud and loving remembrance. To the devoted and loving wife left behind him and their only son—like his father a fine musician—all Freethinkers who knew them all will tender sincere and mutual sympathy. A secular burial service was read by Mr. Lancaster of the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S.

ANDREW MILLAR.

[We regret that owing to circumstances beyond our control this obituary notice has been unduly delayed in publication. We hasten to add our tribute to Mr. Turnbull as a very sterling worker for Freethought, and offer our sincere sympathy to the surviving members of his family.—Editor.]

On Wednesday, January 23, was laid to rest at Willington Cemetery, Co. Durham, John Hume, aged 79 years, a life-long Freethinker and respected tradesman. A secular service was given at the graveside with a preliminary sketch of his career on politics, social, and religious subjects. Whilst a youth he read Paine's *Age of Reason*, works of Voltaire and others which settled for him once for all the authenticity of the Jew Books. During a busy career he met and conversed with many of the foremost warriors in the Freethought camp, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Joseph Symes, Charles Watts, G. W. Foote and others, for whom he had great admiration. He lived a Freethinker and he died a Freethinker.

JOSEPH CLOSE.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (JOHNSON'S DANCING Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Ernest Dales, "The Shame of the Old."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. L. F. Willis, M.A., "Adult Education."

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