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Views and Opinions.

Political Trickery and Blasphemy.

Just about ten years ago Mr. Edward Shortt, the present Home Secretary, then but a private member of Parliament, was approached by Mr. J. Bartram, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, one of Mr. Shortt's constituents, on the subject of the Blasphemy laws. Mr. Bartram sent Mr. Shortt a pamphlet pleading for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws, and to this our present Home Secretary replied as follows (the letter has already appeared in these columns, but it will bear reprinting) :—

*House of Commons Library,
26. 2. 1912.*

DEAR MR. BARTRAM,

I quite agree with you that teachers of Secularism are as much entitled to freedom of speech as any other members of the community. I am personally entirely opposed to your opinions and teachings, but I should think very little of my case if I found that it required the help of the criminal law to maintain it. *I cannot see why the decencies of public religious discussion should not be sufficiently safeguarded by healthy public opinion as are the decencies of political discussion.* I am opposed to all laws which attempt to stifle freedom of speech or discussion, whether emanating from priestcraft or from any other source. *I think the sooner the Blasphemy laws are abolished the better,* and I am obliged to you for the loan of the pamphlet which I return. I remember seeing it some years ago. *You may rely on my help if an attempt is made to repeal the laws.*

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD SHORTT.

The italics in the above letter are mine. Now I am quite unable to say dogmatically whether this letter was the result of an unconscious attack of intellectual honesty, or the expression of the "Them's-my-sentiments - but - they're - subject - to - alteration" species of politician. At any rate, Mr. Shortt after writing the letter probably thought it would end there. Unfortunately for our well-paid Home Secretary Mr. Bartram preserved his letter, and when J. W. Gott received from Grand Inquisitor Avory the sentence of nine months' hard labour, and when that sentence was upheld by the old gentleman who fills the chair, even though he may not discharge the higher functions, of a Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Bartram worried the Home Secretary into a reply to the question as to what he was going to do about it. And as the reprinting of the

letter in the *Freethinker* and its appearance in a number of papers made it quite clear that the original document was not to be shelved, Mr. Shortt at great length summoned his courage to the sticking point and sent the following reply to Mr. Bartram and to the Press :—

*Home Office, Whitehall,
January 28, 1922.*

DEAR SIR,

Referring to your letter of December 12, 1921, on behalf of John William Gott, I am desired by the Home Secretary to say that he could not, consistently with his public duty, recommend any interference with the sentence imposed by the judge and now confirmed by the Court of Appeal. Gott was convicted not under the Blasphemy Acts but of a misdemeanour under the common law. The Blasphemy Acts were intended to restrict freedom of religious opinion or its expression, and as Mr. Shortt stated to you in his letter of February 26, 1912, he was then and he still is of opinion that these Acts may well be repealed. They are already obsolete. The common law, on the other hand, does not interfere with the free expression of bona-fide opinion, but it prohibits and renders punishable as a misdemeanour the use of coarse and scurrilous ridicule on subjects which are sacred to most people in this country. Mr. Shortt could not be prepared to support any proposal for an alteration of the law which would permit such outrages on the feelings of others as those of which Gott was found to be guilty.

Yours faithfully,

A. MAXWELL.

I want to restrict myself to very moderate language—in view of what this effusion really deserves—but I do not think I have read a more cowardly or a more contemptible letter written by a public man on a subject of public importance. It is the letter of a mere politician, ready to stoop to any misrepresentation, and to any falsification of the facts so long as he is able to escape a difficult position. It has neither the ugly courage of the bigot nor the clarity of sincere conviction. In 1912 there was no immediate prospect of Mr. Shortt being called upon to do anything in support of his opinion that the Blasphemy laws should be abolished. In 1922 there is an actual blasphemy conviction before him. It was safe to profess a liberal opinion in 1912. It may mean risking something to act on it in 1922. There is no need to go further to understand the situation—and Mr. Shortt.

* * *

The Lie Inferential.

Let me take first the statement of fact. Mr. Shortt says that Gott was not convicted under the Blasphemy Acts, but for a misdemeanour at common law. That statement is not exactly a lie, but it is so near one that to call it by that name would be no serious exaggeration. For the purposes of a prosecution there is only one Blasphemy Act, and that is the Act of William the Third. But that Act, so far as a criminal prosecution is concerned, is, and has always been, a dead letter. There has never been a prosecution under it. Prosecutions have been under the common law of blasphemy. The last two words, omitted by Mr.

Shortt, are of vital importance, and their omission could only have been for the purpose of misleading those who were not in a position to correct the statement. Mr. Gott's indictment was for publishing a "blasphemous libel"; it was so described in the indictment, and Mr. Shortt knows it was so described. But had he said that in his letter, which he gave to the Press, the contradiction between that and his avowal of ten years earlier would have been apparent to all. I repeat that the statement was intended to trap the unwary, and it at least succeeded in one case. It led the editor of the *Daily Sketch* to append a note to the Home Secretary's letter saying that the basis of the agitation was the "erroneous impression that Gott was sentenced for blasphemy." On the part of the editor that was an exhibition of pure ignorance, but it was upon the ignorance of the ordinary journalist and newspaper reader that Mr. Shortt was evidently counting. The truth concealed by the Home Secretary is that blasphemy is a misdemeanour at common law; whether it was under common law or statute law that Gott was sentenced is not in the least degree material. And Mr. Shortt knows it is not. He knows quite well that a man cannot be convicted for a misdemeanour in the abstract. It must be for a specific offence, and in this case it was for blasphemy and for blasphemy alone.

* * *

The Difference of Office.

After that exhibition of mental turpitude one might leave Mr. Shortt to the judgment of decent minded men and women, but it is, perhaps, as well to exhibit this government official in his full character. I have *italicised* some passages in his letter of 1912 and I wish to call special attention to them. Mr. Shortt says (1912), "I cannot see why the decencies of public religious discussion should not be sufficiently safeguarded by healthy public opinion as are decencies of political discussion." The same gentleman (1922): "Mr. Shortt could not be prepared to support any proposal for an alteration of the law which would permit such outrages on the feelings of others as those of which Mr. Gott was found guilty." Now I do not admit that what Mr. Gott was charged with publishing deserved these extravagant condemnations, even from so high minded a gentleman as the Home Secretary, but we will let that pass. What I wish to know is, if Mr. Shortt was justified in saying in 1912 that the only controlling force to secure decencies of discussion in religion should be the same public opinion that controls the decencies of political discussion, what has happened between that date and 1922 which makes Mr. Shortt believe that the law, not public opinion, must be the force to make a man observe the decencies of discussion? The only difference that I can see is that Mr. Shortt is now in office and in receipt of public money. In 1912 Mr. Shortt would be ashamed of his case if it required the criminal law to support it. In 1922 he does not see how he can get along without it. But I do not quite despair of Mr. Shortt. If only public opinion can be enlightened to the point of becoming ashamed of the Blasphemy laws there is not the least doubt that he would return to his opinion—or shall we say to his avowal?—of 1912. Men with so accommodating a mind move with equal ease in either direction. Mr. Shortt implies in his last letter that when he replied to Mr. Bartram in 1912 he had in mind only the statute law of blasphemy. It will not do. So feeble an excuse would not deceive a child. The pamphlet sent to Mr. Shortt dealt with prosecutions for blasphemy under the common law, and it was upon those prosecutions that Mr. Shortt was invited to express an opinion. And his opinion was emphatic. "The sooner the Blasphemy laws are abolished the better.....You may rely upon my help if an attempt is made to repeal the laws"—not, be it

observed, the statute law of blasphemy, but the *Blasphemy laws*, the whole of them, the laws that were being complained of in the pamphlet before him. If Mr. Shortt really had in mind the statute of William the Third, which has never been used as a ground for a prosecution for blasphemy, then he was deliberately deceiving his correspondent and constituent. If he meant the Blasphemy laws, statute and common law, then he is plainly trying to throw dust in the eyes of people now. He cannot have it both ways. And if that is the most he can do after taking six weeks to think over the best reply he could give to a simple question, well, his ingenuity and his straightforwardness seem about equal.

* * *

A Question of Superiority.

Mr. Shortt repeats the old falsehood that the common law of blasphemy does not aim at opinion. That is downright nonsense. And it may be tested by the simple fact that had Gott used precisely the same language about the Roman Catholic Mass, or any non-Christian religion, or any subject other than Christianity, it would have been impossible to have brought a charge of blasphemy against him. Mr. Shortt, as a lawyer, knows this quite well. And the only inference is that whatever your opinion may be about Christianity, the law says that language which is permissible when used in connection with any other subject becomes a criminal offence when used in connection with Christianity. And that is legal protection of one opinion and legal suppression of another. If anyone doubts that let them take the words used by Gott and then ask themselves whether in any other connection that language would be considered criminal—or, to use the stupidity of the Lord Chief Justice, a dangerous crime? The truth is that it is Christians who make the use of these words a criminal offence, and that is what some timid and respectable heretics, in their own fear of offending Christians, are apt to overlook. For myself, I am not impressed with the horrible character of Gott's language. It is not the way that I am in the habit of putting my objections to Christianity—I prefer a more deadly way. But the kind of language that one uses is a matter of taste and education, and provided it does not become positively indecent—and there was not the slightest mention of this in the whole of the case—the corrective is public opinion, not the policeman. And I say deliberately that it is a piece of downright impertinence for men like Mr. Shortt, or Justice Avory, who have never, so far as I am aware, sacrificed a single shilling for the sake of any opinion they *may* have, and who have never betrayed the slightest willingness to forgo anything on behalf of what they believe, to assume these high and mighty airs in relation to Mr. Gott. Let him be as mistaken as you please, let his methods be as reprehensible as you wish, he has given unmistakable evidence of his sincerity and of the genuineness of his belief. He let a business go to ruin to pursue his propaganda; he has served three terms of imprisonment, and is undergoing a fourth because he would do what he thought he ought to do. That is evidence of sincerity, of conviction, however mistaken he may be. And, I repeat, it is an impertinence on the part of a man who has given no such guarantee of his sincerity, but merely draws a large sum from the public purse for doing work which any capable departmental clerk would probably do as well, to assume superiority over one who has—in a rough way, maybe—given undeniable proofs of his honesty. It is probably useless telling Mr. Shortt that he ought to respect sincerity. It is, perhaps, more to the point to warn him, if he will write letters of the kind criticized, he must beware of exposure. And we warn him now that this is not the last he will hear of his letter, and his running away

from a deliberate pledge. We do not intend to let this matter be forgotten, and we think we may answer for the fighting section of the Freethought party that they will not let it be forgotten either.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Authority.

HIS HONOUR JUDGE PARRY contributed an excellent article to the *Evening Standard* of February 1, entitled, the "Killjoys of London." The judge's views on most subjects are exceptionally sane and wholesome. He is a firm believer in and eloquent advocate of freedom. He is a natural man who agrees with Horace and Menander that "a little innocent fun and frolic sit well on everybody." He therefore thoroughly approves of the society that has been formed "to take practical steps to brighten London." To the Puritan and killjoy such a society is an abomination, for the due condemnation of which there are no sufficiently strong words. According to Judge Parry the Modern Puritan "wants a world without theatres, novels, gay dresses, whist drives, suppers, and all those social delights in which the average man takes pleasure." The Rev. A. H. Thompson, Vicar of St. Peter's, Eaton Square, London, is not a Puritan, but in a sermon, preached in St. Paul's Cathedral and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of February 2, he dwells on the need of authority in the life of to-day. He deplores the absence of authority at the present time, and expresses the hope that it may soon return. Mr. Thompson is in many respects broad-minded, but he labours under the delusion that "mankind will not be obedient to any law of self-restraint or self-denial unless it is imposed upon their consciences by a supernatural authority which they believe to be divine." That is a simple point of fact upon which the reverend gentleman is entirely mistaken. There are thousands of people in London alone whose character is above reproach though they have no faith in the supernatural. In the estimation of most of them there is no such thing as self-denial, their belief being that they are in the world for the purpose of self-expression. Many Christians declare that they deny themselves by abstention from theatres, music-halls, and dances; but in reality they do nothing of the kind. People always do what pleases them most. Voluntary abstinence from a certain thing is self-assertion rather than self-denial.

Mr. Thompson admits that the authority of the Bible is a thing of the past. He says:—

In old-fashioned days it was sufficient to say that so-and-so was in the Bible, and that was a final answer and decision. Over that conception has come, from the increased knowledge of science and criticism, a change in men's minds. They are not set, they are not sure that because a certain thing is in the Bible therefore it is true. It has lost largely, for the majority of people, that authority, unintelligent it may be, mechanical and unthoughtful, but at any rate in those days a commonly accepted authority that men were prepared to accept and obey. And more than that, they were prepared then to acknowledge that when they departed from its obedience they were doing what was wrong. There is no consciousness in the present day, generally speaking, in the majority of people that this is so.

That passage is perfectly true. With the infallibility of the Bible has also gone its authority, its power over the minds and hearts of its readers. To say that a thing is in the Bible is now almost a reason for doubting its truth. With the authority of the Bible has departed that of the Sabbath. Mr. Thompson is candid enough to recognize that the Puritans made

Sunday a dull, uninteresting and objectionable day not only for themselves, but for all others as well. Sabbath observance, as they conceived it, was made legally binding on all, and heavy fines, imprisonment, and in some instances even death were the penalties for disobedience. Mr. Thompson does not find any serious fault with that conception of Sunday. He says:—

No doubt it was a very dull day. No doubt it lacked a great deal of that spirit of freedom and humanity which the Sunday had in the Gospels and in the early Church. It was a return to Moses rather than to Christ. But at the same time practically it worked out in life. It held for men and women, conventionally it may be, but still, as it practically worked, a power to live that held certain authority over men's consciences and over men's lives.

We are convinced that the Puritans' conception of Sabbath observance was radically false and did nothing but harm to all concerned. Even sixty years ago it was a punishable offence to make any allusion to the beauty and charms of Nature on the Lord's Day. A boy of ten was severely rebuked by a young clergyman for venturing to look over a gate and saying of a field of barley white for harvest, "How lovely it is!" "It is not permissible," said the reverend gentleman, "to talk about earthly things on God's own day."

Mr. Thompson affirms that "without any dispute whatever, we must some way or another find some commonly acknowledged authority in life if we are to pass through these times and to be to the world what God means that we shall be." We may well ask the reverend gentleman how he knows what God means us to be to the world. Where and when did he acquire such information? He is quite right in thinking that Christianity has completely lost its hold upon the public mind. He quotes Butler's words, written in 1736, to the effect that men have discovered Christianity to be fictitious. The passage occurs in the "Advertisement" to the *Analogy*, and is worthy of citation:—

It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.

Professor Foakes Jackson, in his paper before the Cambridge Conference of Modern Churchmen, said practically the same thing about our own age; namely, that men are to-day "less and less troubled by religious doubts; not because they have ceased to doubt, but because they are hardly interested at all in the religious problem." Mr. Thompson assures us that Butler's language is "extraordinarily applicable to these days in which we live." He adds that "men and women who think and write seriously about these days in which we live are deeply concerned and deeply impressed with the quite extraordinary and general revolt against organized Christianity and institutional religion." The truth of this is abundantly evidenced by the abandoned churches and chapels and the general secularization of life. This is absolutely undeniable; and the clergy are naturally most anxious to bring such an awkward and difficult state of things to as speedy an end as possible. What the masses need, according to Mr. Thompson, what they are really hungering and thirsting for, is "some spiritual leadership, some spiritual truth which shall guide and inspire and help." What he means by the adjective "spiritual" is a mystery. Does he employ it as synonymous with supernatural? If he does, we must

remind him that Christianity's claim from first to last has been that it is pre-eminently a supernatural religion, and that it has failed to redeem the world.

In the end Mr. Thompson finds the authority he needs in the person of Jesus Christ. "There is no hope," he says, "for any authority that men and women will accept but in a personal authority." The curious thing is that the world has never subjected itself to the authority of Jesus, neither as Teacher nor as Redeemer. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, has remained a dead letter throughout the ages. The idea of putting it into practice does not seem to have occurred to any Christian leader in any century. Every Christian loads it with praises, innumerable eulogistic commentaries on it have been issued, although no two commentators have ever agreed as to its true interpretation. As Redeemer also Jesus has been equally or more unfortunate. It is true that belief in him has rendered countless myriads of individuals during specific moments supremely jubilant and joyous; but the blessedness has invariably been in exact proportion to the depth and intensity of the belief. All through the ages the world, society, remained untouched except for the worse. And yet Mr. Thompson has the audacity to recommend Jesus as the world's final authority on every subject. He attributes the failure of Christianity to two mistakes committed by spiritual leaders; namely, the mistake of binding men and women to an infallible Church, and the mistake of treating the Bible as an inerrant and infallible book; but the reverend gentleman forgets that the Church is described as the body of Christ, and that no body can do anything except at the bidding of its head. Consequently, the inefficiency of the Church has been due to the weakness or non-existence of its head. The Bible again is Christ's own book, the Old Testament foretelling his advent, and the New narrating his life's story and placing him as the only Mediator between God and man. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the failure of the Church spells the failure of Christ, its head.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

Who Are the "Reverends"?

The services of the clergy are imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description.

—G. W. Foote.

Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.

—Shakespeare.

THE Bishop of Durham, preaching recently in Durham Cathedral, said that there was a serious reduction of candidates for the clerical profession. The number of men annually ordained since the war had been less than one-third of those annually ordained before the war. The outstanding requirement was to bring the Christian ministry into full and sympathetic relation with democracy, so that the last relics of class association might disappear from the parson's career.

These are serious words, and it is worth while to recall what the clerical profession is in reality. There are about fifty thousand men in this country alone who bear the title of "reverend," and who form a caste apart from their fellow citizens. Who are they? What do they do to entitle them to be revered? In what way are they different from other men who are simple "misters"? These are plain questions which require a plain answer.

It is contended that this reverence is paid to these men because they have chosen as their business the supervision and direction of the religious habits of their fellow countrymen. In reality they are modern medicine men engaged in similar work to their coloured prototypes in uncivilized nations. They tell us of

gods who get angry with us; of a devil who must be guarded against; of angels who fly from heaven to earth; of saints who can assist if supplicated. Fifty thousand men are engaged in this business, to say nothing of their assistants and satellites. This, remember, occurs in a civilized country. And the clerical profession is as honest as fortune-telling. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a servant girl, after promising her a handsome husband and six children, but these parsons are allowed to take all they can get for promises of good fortune in the "beautiful land above."

These clergymen have a good time on earth. They are not crucified. The average reverend enjoys a comfortable livelihood, and lives in a nice house. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he likes to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in the household expenses. And the higher ecclesiastics have a better time than ordinary parsons. The Bench of Bishops alone share £180,700 yearly, including the bachelor Bishop of London, who enjoys a salary of £300 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep fifty ordinary families in comfort.

Seeing that little merit attaches to the clerical profession, are we to assume that reverence is due to the exemplary lives led by those belonging to this favoured class of the community? Divorce Court proceedings and Police Court records show that the clerical character in no way differs from any other class. They may retort that there are black sheep in every fold. True, but people who are professional religionists do not pretend to be a class apart. They do not wear a special dress, and ask to be known as "reverend," or by any other title implying special respect. It is because parsons expect people to look up to them that we are comparing their behaviour with their boastings. When they decide to come down from their pedestals we will make the same allowance for them that we make for ordinary people.

It appears also that many of the clergy are perjurers. Many thousands of them subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion. The articles are sufficient to make a bronze statue blush. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that Adam was the father of the human race, and that the first woman was made from a man's rib; that Adam and Eve ate fruit, in consequence of which the human race is damned; that Roman Catholic doctrine is a vain invention; that the Bible is God's Word, and that the monarch is the head of Christ's Church. To these Articles of Faith, among others, every Church of England minister subscribes. And we know that numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them, and that their main reason for remaining in the Church is "purple, palaces, patronage, profit and power," as a former cheerful dean of St. Paul's wittily expressed it. And the right to appoint parsons to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or a quack remedy.

The Church of England has forty representatives in the House of Lords, and the votes of these lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics are sufficient to rouse the hostility of all right-thinking persons, and to show how far removed from democratic ideals is the Church of Christ. Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to University degrees, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Free-thinkers. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating

women in prison, and the use of the lash in the Army and the Navy. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working classes have been opposed by these bishops, and their record carries its own worst condemnation.

Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than that of possessing a priestly caste in its midst that hinders the wheels of progress. The word "reverend" in their case is pure humbug. To apply it to the ordinary parson, or to the purse-proud prelate, is as absurd as to apply the term "All Highest," or "Imperial Majesty" to the pious decadent who once battered upon the German people.

MIMNERMUS.

A Religion of Hate.

II.

(Continued from page 69.)

Rather than that the doctrine of endless punishment should be tried, I would like to see the fabric of our civilization crumble and fall to unmeaning chaos and to formless dust, where oblivion broods and where even memory forgets. I would rather a Samson of some imprisoned force released by chance should so wreck and strain the mighty world that man in stress and strain of want and fear should shudderingly crawl back to savage and barbaric night. I would rather that every planet would in its orbit wheel a barren star rather than that the Christian religion should be true.—Col. Robert Ingersoll, "The Dying Creed," p. 30.

DURING the night of the Middle Ages, when Christianity was supreme, as Lecky remarks, "An entire literature of visions depicting the torments of hell was soon produced by the industry of the monks."¹

The same historian remarks:—

A long series of monastic visions, of which that of St. Fursey, in the seventh century, was one of the first, and which followed in rapid succession, till that of Tundale, in the twelfth century, professed to describe with the most detailed accuracy the condition of the lost. It is impossible to conceive more ghastly, grotesque, and material conceptions of the future world than they evince, or more hideous calumnies against that Being who was supposed to inflict upon His creatures such unspeakable misery. The devil was represented bound by red-hot chains, on a burning gridiron in the centre of hell. The screams of his never-ending agony made its rafters to resound; but his hands were free, and with these he seized the lost souls, crushed them like grapes against his teeth, and then drew them by his breath down the fiery cavern of his throat. Daemons with hooks of red-hot iron plunged souls alternately into fire and ice. Some of the lost were hung up by their tongues, others were sawn asunder, others gnawed by serpents, others beaten together on an anvil and welded into a single mass, others boiled and then strained through a cloth, others twined in the embraces of daemons whose limbs were of flame. The fire of earth, it was said, was but a picture of that of hell. The latter was so immeasurably more intense that it alone could be called real. Sulphur was mixed with it, partly to increase its heat, and partly, too, in order that an insufferable stench might be added to the misery of the lost, while, unlike other flames, it emitted, according to some visions, no light, that the horror of darkness might be added to the horror of pain. A narrow bridge spanned the abyss, and from it the souls of sinners were plunged into the darkness that was below. (Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II., pp. 221-3.)

Nor did these detailed descriptions of hell's terrors end with the twelfth century. Matthew of Paris, in the thirteenth century, and Richard Rolle of Hampole, in the fourteenth century, were in no way behind their predecessors in piling up the agonies of hell, and even added fresh atrocities to those already recorded.

¹ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II., pp. 220-221.

As to the eternity of hell's torments, Suso, in the fourteenth century, gives the following illustration:

"Give us a millstone," say the damned, "as large are the whole earth, and so wide in circumference as to touch the sky all around, and let a little bird come once in a hundred thousand years and pick off a small particle of the stone, not larger than the tenth part of a grain of millet, and after another hundred thousand years let him come again, so that in ten hundred thousand years he would pick off as much as a grain of millet, we wretched sinners would desire nothing but that the stone might have an end, and thus our pains also; yet even that cannot be."²

The Roman Catholic, Father Bouhours, declares:—

When a damned soul shall have shed tears enough to fill all the rivers of the world, even if he should only shed one a century, he will be no further ahead after so many millions of years; he will only have begun to suffer, and even when he shall have recommenced as often as there are grains of sand upon the shores of the sea, he shall even then have done nothing.³

At the Reformation the Protestant churches insisted quite as dogmatically as the Roman Church upon the horrors of hell and the eternity of its tortures. In the Augsburg Confession of Faith drawn up in 1530 by Melancthon, with the approval of Luther, belief is explicitly required in a judgment day, and the eternal punishment of the condemned. The *Westminster Confession*, ch. xxxiii. declares: "The wicked who know not God and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ shall be cast into eternal torments."

Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Vol. II., p. 188, Ed. 1838), says: "No description can equal the severity of the Divine vengeance on the reprobate....his indignation is like a most violent flame, which devours and consumes all that it touches." Wherefore, continues Calvin, the condemned are—harassed and agitated with a dreadful tempest, they shall feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God, and transfixed, and penetrated by mortal stings, terrified by the thunderbolts of God and broken by the weight of His hand, so that to sink into any gulf would be more tolerable than to stand a moment in these terrors (Vol. II., p. 189).

Jonathan Edwards, the greatest theologian America has produced, exults in the fate of the condemned, as follows:—

The world will be converted into a great lake or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked will be overwhelmed, which will always be in tempest, in which they shall be tost to and fro, having no rest day or night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads, of which they shall ever be full of a quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals shall for ever be full of a glowing melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and, also, they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torments; not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for a hundred ages, nor for ten thousands of millions of ages, one after another, but for ever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never to be delivered. (Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, Vol. III., p. 165.)⁴

Edwards also gives the following revolting picture of the Christian God:—

God holds sinners in his hands over the mouth of hell as so many spiders; and he is dreadfully provoked, and he not only hates them, but holds them in the utmost contempt, and he will trample them beneath his feet with inexpressible fierceness, he will

² Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, Vol. II., p. 152.

³ Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future*. Citing Bouhours' *Pensées Chrétiennes*.

⁴ Cited in *The Christian Hell*, by Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, pp. 71-2.

crush their blood out, and will make it fly so that it will sprinkle his garments and stain all his raiment. (*Works*, Vol. VII., p. 499.)⁵

What a pleasant God!

The great Bishop Jeremy Taylor, of the Church of England, writing on the Pains of Hell, says:—

We are amazed at the inhumanity of Phalaris, who roasted men in his brazen bull: this was joy in respect of that fire of hell which penetrates the very entrails without consuming them.

He declares: "Every distinct sense and organ shall be assailed with its own appropriate and most exquisite suffering."⁶

The Nonconformist Churches were quite as emphatic as the Churches of Rome and England in their insistence on the terrors of hell. In the hymn book composed by the brothers Wesley, the title-page of which reads: "A collection of hymns for the use of the people called Methodists, by the Rev. John Wesley," we find the following verse in hymn 43:—

How shall I leave my tomb?
With triumph or regret?
A fearful or a joyful doom,
A curse or blessing meet?
Will angel-bands convey
Their brother to the bar?
Or devils drag my soul away,
To meet its sentence there?

And there are several others of a like nature. Dr. Watts, the popular hymn writer, in hymn 44 of his hymn book, tells us:—

Far in the deep where darkness dwells,
The land of horror and despair,
Justice has built a dismal hell,
And laid her stores of vengeance there.
Eternal plagues and heavy chains,
Tormenting racks, and fiery coals,
And darts to inflict immortal pains.
Dyed in the blood of damned souls,
There Satan the first sinner lies,
And roars, and bites his iron bands;
In vain the rebel strives to rise,
Crushed with the weight of both thy hands.

The Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the popular Baptist minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was never tired of dwelling upon these horrors. In a sermon preached in 1885, we read:—

Only conceive that poor wretch in the flames, who is saying, "O for one drop of water to cool my parched tongue!" See how his tongue hangs from between his blistered lips! How it excoriates and burns the roof of his mouth as if it were a firebrand! Behold him crying for a drop of water. I will not picture the scene. Suffice it for me to close up by saying, that the hell of hells will be to thee, poor sinner, the thought that it is to be for ever. Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God—and on it shall be written, "For ever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall say "For ever!" When they howl, echo cries, "For ever!"

"For ever" is written on their racks,
"For ever" on their chains;
"For ever" burneth in the fire,
"For ever" ever reigns.

Here is another extract from Spurgeon's sermon on "The Resurrection of the Dead":—

When thou diest, thy soul will be tormented alone: that will be hell for it; but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire exactly like that which we have on earth, thy body will be, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁶ Taylor, *Contemplation of the State of Man*, chapter lxxviii.

⁷ Cited by White, *Life in Christ*, p. 59.

Yet, the very same people who teach these abominations also insist that the God who created hell is our Heavenly Father, that he is a God of Love, and that Christianity excels all other religions as *the* religion of Love!

W. MANN.

(To be Concluded.)

When They Film the Bible.

THE episode of Lot and his Wife will be called "Don't Turn Round."

The episode of Jonah and the Whale will be called "Inside Information."

The episode of Jezebel will be called "Going to the Dogs."

The episode of Absalom will be called "I'll Be Hanged if I Do."

The episode of the Prodigal Son will be called "The Price He Paid."

The episode of Aaron and his Staff will be called "Spare the Rod."

The episode of Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter will be called "Whence Came This Baby?"

The episode of King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther will be called "Behold My Wife."

The episode of Samson and Delilah will be called "By a Hair's Breadth."

The episode of Noah and the Ark will be called "The Beast-Boat."

The episode of Daniel in the Lion's Den will be called "Dauntless Dan."

The episode of Job and his comforters will be called "Without a Friend."

The episode of Rebecca will be called "Well! Well! Well!"

The episode of Methuselah will be called "Monkey Glands."

The episode of David and Goliath will be called "David Did It."

The episode of Shadrach, Mechaek and Abednego will be called "Tried by Fire."

The episode of King Solomon and his Wives will be called "One Man in a Thousand."—*Motion Picture Magazine*.
Truthseeker (New York).

Acid Drops.

The Home Secretary's letter, with which we deal elsewhere, seems to have confused many of our journalists, who seem to be shockingly uninformed about matters that a little reading of constitutional history would have instructed them on. The *Pall Mall and Globe* cites Mr. Shortt's evasion of the truth that the common law holds that things sacred to most people must not be scurrilously or coarsely ridiculed, and adds that "Laymen have always understood that to bring such ridicule within cognisance of the law it is necessary to prove that it might lead to a breach of the peace. Otherwise, why were the Blasphemy laws ever introduced?" Now this is a point which we raised in the Gott case, but apart from that there has never been a case in which it was shown that a breach of the peace was likely. That has been far more likely in some of the Protestant attacks on Roman Catholics, but in that matter there has never been an attempt to prefer an indictment for blasphemy. The sole issue has always been whether a jury of Christians thought that their religion was being treated with proper respect. We have driven the judges to consider the fact of a breach of the peace, and that, as we have said, is an advance.

A reading of constitutional history would have enlightened the *Pall Mall*. The Blasphemy laws were introduced for the suppression of anti-Christian opinion. The law made no disguise of that until the growth of public opinion made it dangerous to openly avow it. We can supply our contemporary with a demonstration of

that if it needs it. And to say that things which people hold sacred must not be coarsely ridiculed is an indictable offence is, when stated in that way, not true. It all depends upon what it is that is held sacred. If it is Church of England doctrines, or broadly, Protestant Christian doctrines that are being ridiculed, then you may get into trouble. But other things that people regard as sacred may be ridiculed in as coarse language as you please, but the Blasphemy laws do not apply. The illustration only demonstrates how deeply the whole subject is saturated with hypocrisy, and how it contaminates all who touch it.

The editor of the *Sketch* is another example of what has been said. Having published Mr. Shortt's dishonest letter he added a note to the effect that Gott was not sentenced for blasphemy. That was not true. His offence was specifically blasphemy. When we saw this statement we sent round a note of about five or six lines pointing out the error. The note was not inserted, nor was any acknowledgement made of its receipt. Having backed up the Home Secretary's subterfuge, and illustrated its own ignorance of the law and of the case, it lacked the common honesty to insert a correction when it was offered. Really, our Press seems to be about the last word in moral turpitude and intellectual cowardice.

John Bull says, "If the Blasphemy laws were honestly administered such eminent critics of the Christian religion as Viscount Morley, of Blackburn, and the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson would long ago have been sent to gaol. But it is always the small fry who are persecuted. They have no friends." That is the case, and it is pitiable that the more eminent heretics, who very largely owe their own immunity from attack to the daring of the "small fry," remain silent when they see a man persecuted and imprisoned under a law which they declare to be unjust. These more eminent men could kill the Blasphemy laws in a month if they only had the courage to speak out. If they did even our Home Secretary might pluck up courage and return to the spasm of liberalism he had in 1912. Social celebrities are very plentiful, but *men* are as scarce as ever.

We cited last week Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's forceful letter in the *New Statesman* against the prosecution of persons for blasphemy. A reply, writ sarcastic, was offered in the following issue by "A. W. S.," who concludes by saying:—

After all we are, officially, a Christian country, and it cannot be advisable to undermine the faith of the illiterate, especially in times of unemployment like these, when revolutionary tendencies are abroad. Feeling strongly, as I do, that our Churches are in a somewhat difficult position owing to their patriotic services during the war in inculcating hatred and bloodshed, I must deplore anything that may hinder them in their efforts to regain their hold on the multitude. The law against blasphemy should, therefore, be executed with rigour.

There is much more truth in this than is apparent on the surface. There is no greater force that makes for genuine social reform than Freethought. All the sinister interests in the country know this quite well. That is why there is nothing hated quite so heartily as is the attack on religion. Men who are mentally slaves are easily ruled. It is the free man whom it is difficult to keep in chains.

If one were to read our newspapers carefully and select passages from the speeches of our spiritual guides, and then compare with these platitudes the actual facts recorded in the same papers, the combination would form a delightful picture in contrasts. The *Manchester Guardian* (January 24) reports a speech by Dr. Temple, Bishop of Manchester, urging the Christian Churches to co-operate. "The duty to evangelize the world without was at least as strong as the duty to intensify the spiritual life within the Church." The same issue of our contemporary reports a case of eviction. One of the unemployed in Preston, who bore a high character both as a man and a worker, owed six or eight weeks' rent. The whole family

was evicted, in bitter weather, three weeks after the man's wife had given birth to twins. Yet we are asked to spend time and money in covering the whole world with the "glad tidings of the kingdom."

This is the way a writer in the *Maha-Bodhi and the United Buddhist World* for January addresses the missionaries of Ceylon:—

You live in the barbaric world of Hebrew ignorance. You are paid to teach the myths of Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Persia to advanced and more ancient races who have had a higher morality. Before Christianity reached the shores of Buddhist Asia the people lived in an atmosphere of a serene and progressive morality. In giving the teachings of the Hebrew prophets to the Buddhist peoples you are not giving them anything European. You are giving the contents of the garbage box of the backward races of west Asia to a more advanced and more enlightened people who have had a superior morality and a higher economic civilization founded upon economic principles. You give the unsophisticated peoples of Buddhist Asia the poisons of alcohol in the shape of whisky, gin, brandy and other abominations.

You are paid high salaries, you live very comfortably breeding children like any other worldly people, who do not care for the religious life. We see no difference between the paid missionary and the European trader and the European planter.....Christianity was preached to the half civilized Asiatics by an Asiatic who had no culture. It is an Asiatic religion, and the Asiatic peoples understand the spirit of Christianity better than the Western Christians.....Think of the hypocritical life you live. You live sensually, get good salaries and preach an unprogressive religion, full of inanities falsified by the discoveries of modern science. If modern science is true then the fable of the Bible is false. But modern science is truth, and you are untrue to truth in preaching the barbaric religion of the Hebrews to the morally civilized peoples of Asia.

We are quite certain that the missionary societies will not publish the above in their annual report as a sample of what educated natives think of their missionaries in Ceylon. They prefer the lying reports of their paid servants, or the stupid praise of some government official who repeats words put into his mouth by the missionaries themselves.

Here are a few other passages from an article on "The hell and damnation doctrine of Galilee," from the same issue of the *Maha-Bodhi*:—

In all seriousness we wish to ask the believers in the story of the God who killed his only begotten son, whether the deity then had any idea of the millions upon millions of people in India and China who had a great ancient civilization.....The British Christians who are yet in the stage of infantile regression should be informed that long before the birth of the Hebrew deity there were great civilizations in existence built on the foundations of ennobling and sublime ethics by settled nations in India and China. The sublime ethics given to the Chinese people by Confucius and Laotze are certainly superior to the helot psychology given to the low born Greeks and half caste Jews of pagan Galilee. The destruction of the glorious civilization of China is due to the unmoral, unethical, alcoholic civilization of Europe. The adventurous hooligans, pirates, and freebooters of Europe having organized filibustering expeditions came over to Asia and destroyed everything that was good and aesthetic.....The world for a thousand years had been under the grip of the devil brought into existence by self-hypnotized Arabs and low born Jews. The Babylonian devil put fear in the Semitic brain, and in order to kill the devil the Semitic impostors destroyed the civilization of pre-Christian Asia.

Centuries of subjugation to the priests of the Church have atrophied the analytical function of the people of Europe. The continuous harping on the hell and damnation doctrine of the morbid pessimist of Galilee by the priests, week after week, has had a diabolical effect in stupefying the brains of the ignorant masses. When will the millions of Europe get freedom from the demon of fear and superstition? The Devil-Doctrine that was enunciated by the Church is responsible for the degradation of the European consciousness.

It is just as well for Christians to see themselves as others see them. And all the world over, when we leave the savage world, the last thing that people are ready to

recognize is the superiority of Christianity. Christians are the only ones who see and proclaim that.

A large number of Sunday-school League football club members have been ordered off the field for bad language. This distressing fact is recorded by the Lancashire Football Association, which reports that of 655 players so ordered off by referees sixty per cent. belong to Sunday-school clubs.

Mr. Robert Blatchford, writing in a Sunday newspaper recently, quoted the saying of Bismarck, "Here below there is nothing but hypocrisy and jugglery." Mr. Blatchford added, "This is not true of England or France." We are afraid that super-patriotism sometimes leads astray even the best intentioned journalists. The *Melbourne Age* (December 2, 1921), contains an article on "Flogging of Natives in New Guinea," which makes peculiarly nauseous reading to those who honestly believed the charges made against the Germans, during the war, in regard to the treatment of native races. Our Australian contemporary says:—

The publication of the articles dealing with this subject in the *Age* appears at last to have had the desired effect. For a long time the government maintained a stubborn silence, which added to the feeling of concern and disquiet which the ventilation of the scandals created. Now the charges have been thoroughly investigated—and substantiated.

The articles did not produce the "desired effect" a day too soon. One native at Rabaul was so severely flogged, by a Frenchman, that he had to be taken to the hospital. Both Great Britain and Australia were loud in their demands for a mandate to administer the territory which Germany lost in the Pacific. One reason why it could never be restored to Germany was declared to be her systematic ill-treatment of the natives.

The Powers guilty of such cruelty and cowardice as that referred to all proclaim their good conscience in the matter of imperial expansion, and all send Christian missionaries to "the heathen." We heard much in derision of German *Kultur* during the war. We ourselves, however, had Rhodes and Chamberlain, who, had they been Germans, would doubtless have made excellent henchmen of Treitschke and Bernhardt. They preached the world's need of the *pax britannica*, but the world apparently was not longing for it in India and Ireland. France, too, had her *mission civilisatrice*, and had taken Roman Catholic missions abroad under her special protection, though at home the Church complained bitterly of persecution "at the hands of the civil authorities." We are often assured that no State ever prospered without religion. In the case of Christian States they certainly prosper with religion.

Writing on the subject of prayer, Dean Inge says: "Nobody before buying shares in an insurance company would inquire whether the company employed experienced faith-healers for the benefit of the policy-holders." We should like to see this text framed prominently in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Miss Fanner, President of the Association of Head Mistresses, once asked a class of girls of 15 years of age to write down their ideas of hell. No names were to be appended to the descriptions given. Fourteen out of twenty-five described hell as a state of mind, and others declared that they could no longer hold childish beliefs on this subject. Only a few described hell as a real locality of physical torment. Two comments suggest themselves. The first is, that if boys and girls were more often relieved of the obligation to sign their answers on religious questions, a good deal more than hell-fire would be declared "childish." The second is, that Miss Fanner's question and its answers show what religious instruction really accomplishes in the way of training the young to think accurately. The youngest girl in her school knows as much about hell as the greatest theologian in England—or Scotland.

It evidences the little real concern the public has for genuine freedom of speech and publication that more than three years after the war is over a man should be sent to prison for an offence under the Defence of the Realm Acts, which were purely war measures, and which were passed on the understanding that they should only exist for the period of the war. Mr. Inkpin is now condemned to six months' imprisonment with hard labour for having published some Communist documents of a purely historical character, and the Lord Chief Justice's Court has upheld the sentence. We are not surprised at this, bearing in mind that gentleman's extraordinary and mediævally-minded attitude on the subject of blasphemy. But we agree with those who have just signed a memorial to the Prime Minister—the signatories include Lord Henry Bentinck, Canon Adderley, Professor Soddy, C. P. Scott, Maude Royden, and Earl Russell—that the sentence is an outrage upon the political traditions of the country. Communists have as much right to be heard as have anyone else, and it is time that public opinion made it plain that it is high time the Courts ceased to treat the profession of Communism as almost in itself a crime. That was the case during the war, and a people who really loved liberty would hardly have tolerated that. But for it to be continued three years after the war for freedom has ceased is an outrage on right and decency.

The other day Mr. Justice Hill granted a decree of separation. The parties were Roman Catholics, and in granting the separation the judge said that he did so with reluctance—meaning that in his opinion a divorce would have been preferable—because it was bad for public morality. We think most will agree with the judge. To keep two people tied together while decreeing their separation cannot make for either sense or morality. In the normal course of events it means the forming of all sorts of loose and undesirable relationships between the sexes. We have noticed so many examples of judicial stupidity of late that we note this one of judicial common sense with the greater pleasure.

But in this we are reckoning without the *Church Times*. This journal does not believe in divorce, and it, therefore, says that Justice Hill's expression of opinion was an impertinence. The *Church Times* does agree with separation, because the intolerable nature of a situation where two people are totally unsuited to each other being compelled to live together is too plain to be denied. So in the name of a mediæval and ascetic morality, which only recognises the union of the sexes as a concession to the weakness of the flesh, it is ready to support an arrangement which everyone knows cannot help but end, in many cases, in the total and permanent wrecking of two lives, with probable ill-effects on public morals.

The *Church Times* also says that "To censure, in effect, a petitioner for not doing that which her religion forbids is to exceed the office of a judge." That is when the opinion censured happens to be one with which the *Church Times* agrees. But when it happens to be a man accused of blasphemy, and he is given nine months' hard labour for doing what he believes to be right, the same writer remains quite silent and apparently approves. So much for the sense of justice as developed by Christian belief. It is sheer bigotry putting on the airs of judicial impartiality.

Our interest lies with so much of the past as may serve to guide our actions in the present, and to intensify our pious allegiance to the fathers who have gone before us and the brethren who are with us; and our interest lies with so much of the future as we may hope will be appreciably affected by our good actions now. Beyond that, as it seems to me, we do not know, and we ought not to care. Do I seem to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"? Far from it. On the contrary I say, "Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together."—*William Kingdon Clifford.*

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 19, Glasgow; February 20, Motherwell; March 5, Nottingham; March 12, Manchester; March 19, Leicester; March 26, Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool.

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.

E. G. ELIOT.—We do not seriously disagree with anything you say in your letter. The reply to one portion of it is that "blasphemy" is a charge than can only occur in connection with an attack on the established religion of this country. Every other religion, and every other form of Christianity can, in the opinion of the authorities, stand without the aid of a policeman. It is the God of the Established Church that needs a policeman to protect him. We agree that it is the time-servers who are much greater enemies to reform than religious fanatics. The fault of the Christian religion here is that it tends, in developing devotion to itself, to rob a man of a proper sense of self-respect and intellectual rectitude.

M. T. FINNEY.—Thanks for calling our attention to the matter. We have looked through our letters and discovered yours marked with a note of a contribution of 6s. to the Blasphemy Defence Fund. Sorry it got overlooked, and so was not acknowledged when the Fund was in existence.

J. LAW.—You have been misled by the dishonest letter of the Home Secretary. We have corrected him in our "Views and Opinions." There is no such thing possible as merely charging a man with misdemeanour. It must state what is the misdemeanour that he has committed. And in Gott's case the offence was Blasphemy. Mr. Shortt concealed this fact and so imposed upon the ignorance of the general public.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss H. M. Vance acknowledges: F. H. DELL, 1s.

J. BALL.—Congratulations on achieving your seventieth birthday, and on your finding your attachment to Freethought as strong as ever. We hope to hear from you and to have you as a reader for many years yet.

T. A. BAKER.—Thanks for getting new reader. The paper is being sent. We hope you will be equally successful in securing more subscribers.

F. H. DELL.—Your subscription received and handed over to the N. S. S. General Fund.

C. E. WHITE (Johannesburg).—Newspapers seem everywhere alike, and some are more so than others, as someone said. They are all terribly afraid of offending the man in the street, which means that they write down to the poorer intelligence instead of writing up to the better type.

C. W. BISHOP, W. CHALLIS, W. PORTER.—Thanks for list of addresses for Blasphemy pamphlet, to which it is being sent.

W. W. BARTON.—Thanks for list of addresses. The pamphlet is being sent.

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

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

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

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.

The Blasphemy pamphlet is getting into circulation among public men and women in various parts of the country, and it *must* have some influence on public opinion. We are also pleased to say that the Rationalist Press Association has taken three thousand copies for circulation among its own members. When Parliament meets each of its members will have received a copy of the pamphlet, and that should inform them that there is an agitation afoot. It remains for our friends all over the country to see that they face it in the proper manner.

The Committee for the Abolition of the Blasphemy laws is now formed, although it has not yet elected a permanent Secretary and Treasurer. For the moment Mr. McLaren is acting as Secretary and Mr. F. W. Read, of 65 Harley Road, Harlesden, N.W., as Treasurer, and to whom all donations and subscriptions may be sent. The minimum subscription is 2s. 6d. per year. A Bill has been prepared for presentation to Parliament, and other methods of conducting a strong agitation are being considered. We shall report further on this matter as soon as there is anything to announce.

To-day (February 12) Mr. Lloyd will lecture in the Elysium, High Street, Swansea. His subject will be "The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion," and we hope to hear that the hall was well filled. Mr. Lloyd has a great number of admirers in Swansea and district, and provided the day is anything like suitable for travelling there is certain to be a large number of visitors from the surrounding district. The lecture will commence at 7. Admission is free, but there are reserved seats at 6d. and 1s.

Next Sunday (February 19) Mr. Cohen will visit Glasgow. The morning meeting will be held in the North Saloon of the City Hall, and in the evening the large City Hall has been taken. The entrance to both halls is in the Candleriggs. In the morning his subject will be "The Foundations of Faith," and in the evening he will take for his subject *The Other Side of Death; with an Examination of Spiritualism*. Special advertising has been done for the evening, and we hope that all who can will do their best to make the lecture known among their friends. The City Hall is a large one, and we should like to see it crowded.

Mr. Joseph McCabe sends us the following concerning the South Place meeting:—

I have lectured to various Secular Societies this winter, and expressed a very strong opinion in the course of my lectures on the savage punishment of Mr. Gott. I fear my many secularist friends will, on that account, have been puzzled by the non-appearance of my name in the list—which purports to be complete—of those who, as stated in your last issue, sent letters to be read at the South Place meeting. Permit me to inform my friends that a very strongly worded letter of mine was read at that meeting (and without any reserves as to Mr. Gott's methods), and that, as I informed Miss Vance, only a lecture engagement elsewhere prevented me from being amongst the speakers.

The report of the meeting did not mention the names of all who wrote letters explaining their absence from the meeting, and we did not notice the absence of Mr. McCabe's name. His letter was read to the meeting, and all present understood why he was unable to come. The meeting was originally arranged for the day previous to the one on which it was held, and Mr. McCabe had promised to be one of the speakers. But it was found later that the hall was already booked for that evening and the meeting had to be held on another date. And, as Mr. McCabe says, on that date he was unable to be present. We gladly insert this note, and trust it will remove any possible misunderstanding.

To-day (February 12) Mr. McLaren pays his first visit to Manchester. He lectures at the Rusholme Public Hall, over the Public Library, Dickenson Road. His subject in the afternoon at 3 will be "Is Religion a Necessity?"

and in the evening at 6.30 "A Freethinker Looks at the World." We hope that Manchester friends will make a special point of being present, and that they will induce their friends to attend also. Mr. McLaren is a speaker who never talks on a subject without understanding it. His experience in Germany for many years and his travels in other parts of the world should give the evening lecture an air of "reality." We trust we shall hear of excellent meetings.

Some of our readers will remember the row there was some years back as to whether the *Freethinker* should be placed in the reading rooms of the West Ham Libraries. Eventually it was decided that it should be kept in the Reference Library only, and that those who wished to see it should ask for it. But our friends there have not lost sight of the matter, and we are pleased to say that at a recent meeting of the Library Committee it was decided to place the *Freethinker* in the reading rooms of all the libraries in the Borough along with other newspapers and periodicals. That is one injustice removed, and may be taken as one of the fruits of the blasphemy prosecution. Inspector Elphick may now consult the *Freethinker* at his leisure. The Library Committee also ordered a copy of Mr. Cohen's *A Grammar of Freethought* for the library. We believe it already has his other works.

The Glasgow Branch is holding its Annual Social and Dance at the St. Mungo Hall, Govan Street, on Friday evening, February 17. Tickets are, gentlemen, 6s. each, ladies, 5s. 6d. each. We are not aware of the time at which the function will commence, but assume that it will be at or about 7 o'clock. We hope that those who join in it will spend, as hitherto at these functions, an enjoyable evening.

Bishop William Montgomery Brown, whose very striking book *Communism and Christianity* we have for some time been advertising for sale, is to be made the subject of a heresy trial. He resigned his Church and diocese (Arkansas) in 1912, and since then has been engaged in a propaganda on which he must have spent a great deal of money, and from which he cannot have derived any financial profit. Steps are now being taken to bring him to trial before the ecclesiastical authorities on the charge of heresy and anti-Christian teaching. We do not suppose that will trouble Bishop Brown much, but from a letter received from him the other day we gather that he intends making the most of the situation to let a little light in on people who would not otherwise get it.

Candidly, we are rather surprised that the Church authorities have not taken this step long since. Those who have purchased copies of the book will know that it is a very drastic attack on Christianity, from both the doctrinal and social points of view. It is thoroughly uncompromising, and we advise those of our readers who have not yet purchased a copy to do so without delay. Over 200 pages of letterpress for one shilling is a lot for money nowadays, and is proof that Bishop Brown is not issuing the work with an eye to profit. He is paying for his opinions, which appears to be the lot of the reformer in more senses than one. The aim of the book is openly avowed as that of banishing capitalists from the earth and gods from the skies. We are not here concerned with the first of these aims, but we do not care how soon the second is realized.

The severe weather of Sunday last interfered somewhat with the attendance at Mr. Cohen's lecture at the Town Hall, Birmingham, on that date, but it was, nevertheless, one of the best meetings that he has yet held there. And judging from the manner of the audience the lecture was highly appreciated. Prior to the lecture Mr. Cohen performed the ceremony of "naming" the infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sandys, two very enthusiastic members of the Branch. The little lady went through the ceremony with the utmost confidence, and it also interested the audience, some of whom—and there were many strangers present—were doubtless surprised to find that Freethinkers had so much that was human about them.

Mind Your Own Business.

A main difference between men is whether they attend their own affairs or not. —*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

ONE of the last lessons that even the wisest learn is to attend strictly to their own affairs and not meddle with those of other people. And yet the real secret of general wealth and happiness is in minding one's own business.

Let us see how wide is the sphere to which this all important maxim applies.

(1) How much better off we should all be if the Church would mind its own business. Strictly speaking the Church should have no business to mind, for there is no good reason why it should exist. The world would get along very well without it. I am not referring to Christians as individuals, but to the Church as an organized and authoritative institution. For the sake of argument we may admit that the Church has some business and that that business should be the saving of the souls and the guidance of the lives of as many persons as choose to be saved and guided by the clergy. The moment it attempts to save or guide those who do not wish for its ministrations it is impertinently meddling with other people's affairs.

The Church has a right to formulate a creed and to insist on all its members accepting that creed, but it has no right to get any of the articles of that creed embodied in any of the laws of the land, because the doctrine of the Church is thus forced on people who do not believe in it or wish to be guided by it. There is no objection to the Church getting God into its creed, but there is the gravest objection to the Church getting its God into the constitution of the realm. The Church has a right to insist on the Bible being read in its pulpits and Sunday-schools, but it has no business to use its influence to have the reading of the Bible forced upon the pupils in our national schools. The Church has a right to insist on its own members observing the Sabbath in any manner it chooses, but it has no right to embody its Sabbath regulations in the secular laws, thus compelling non-Church members to obey them. The Church has a right to keep its own places of worship open on Sunday, but it has no right to work through the State for the purpose of closing libraries, theatres, shops, public-houses, or any other places of business or pleasure on that or on any other day. Those who wish to go to church on Sunday should do so, but they have no business to try to interfere, by force, with those who wish to go elsewhere.

(2) How much better it would be if the State would mind its own business.

For what should that business be? Simply and solely to protect life and property against attack by violence; to come to the assistance of the weak when they are physically attacked by the strong. The moment it attempts to do more than this it ceases to mind its own business and begins to meddle with the affairs of others.

For example, the State should grant no monopolies. It should not secure persons in the exclusive possession of light, air, water or land for which they have no productive use and for purely monopolistic purposes. It should not put the control of the currency into the hands of a few persons, for the reason that it thus gives those persons a monopoly of the manufacture and sale of a thing (money) that is an absolute essential of trade in our present state of civilization. It should not establish a monopoly of the business of educating children. It should not give doctors, lawyers or other professional men the right to dictate the terms of entrance to their profession. The State should not give manufacturers the control of the

market by imposing a duty on foreign goods. Nor should it give working people a monopoly of the field of employment by excluding immigrants. Again, the State has no business to prevent anybody doing anything he pleases unless a violent attack on person or property is being made. To fine a person by taxation for buying foreign goods; for selling liquor or tobacco; for owning a dog or a house or a motor-car, is an outrageous interference with the business of individuals.

The State should not prevent persons from assembling for any peaceable purpose. It should not establish a censorship of the Press, or punish anybody for the free expression of his opinions about religion or anything else. It should not hold a monopoly of the carriage of letters, or break open private letters, as it does to-day. Neither should it have the right to compel us to pay for all sorts of military adventures and the upkeep of hordes of useless officials. Any decent State that kept strictly to its own business could easily collect the necessary money without using brute force. But our State pays little attention to its legitimate business and a great deal of attention to the granting of monopolies, and to preventing people from doing things that they should have a right to do, with the result that it cannot get enough money for its own support without itself physically attacking the weak and robbing them.

Since the State does all this, it militates against the freedom and happiness of society, which would have each person mind his own business, and thus arrays against itself the most intelligent members of the community; some day it will be generally recognized as a serious bar to progress, and will then disappear like a sandbank that obstructs the current of a river.

(3) How much better it would be if husbands and wives would mind their own business.

When a woman marries a man, it should not be thought that she becomes his property; that she sinks her identity in his; that in marrying she ceases to be an independent person having affairs with which her husband should have nothing to do, except by her free consent. If a wife discharges all the obligations she voluntarily undertook when she entered upon the contract of marriage, nothing more can be justly demanded of her. The husband should not invade the privacy of her thoughts and feelings, or her liberty of action. He has no right to demand what she has been doing, where she has been or whom she has seen. Such questions from husband to wife are as impertinent as if put to a stranger.

And this is as true if the case is reversed. The wife has a right to demand from her husband the due performance of the duties he undertook when making the marriage contract with her. If he does not carry out his part of the agreement, fairly made, she should have a right to leave him, without any process of law, for the regulation of marriage should be no part of the business of the State. But within the limits of the marriage contract, a husband should have the right to think, feel and act without any more interference from his wife than if she were a perfect stranger. I am writing now only of what should be the rights of husbands and wives: of what justice demands and not of what love concedes. Of course there are some marriages in which no question of rights between the husband and wife ever arises. In such cases the partners are so bound together by mutual love, respect and comradeship that no question of rights ever arises. But a great many marriages are sad failures, and these failures are all the worse and more bitter because the husbands and wives have never learned to mind their own business.

(4) How much better it would be if neighbours, friends, relatives and strangers would all mind their own business.

Think what a lot of busybodies there are who would compel you to believe or to vote just as they do, if they could! How many there are who would forcibly prevent you from drinking beer, or playing cards, or betting on the race course or the stock exchange; as if drinking or gambling could ever be prevented by force; as if people could ever be made virtuous by violence.

Petty, personal gossip is one of the great curses of society to-day, and its attractiveness lies in the desire for meddling with other people's affairs. Many a brain has been racked and many a heart broken by this neglect of the golden rule—mind your own business.

I have treated this subject in the merest outline—have barely suggested what there is in it. For herein is enfolded the entire problem of society. What should be done to redeem the world? Let the Church, the State and the individual simply mind their own business. Others have imagined heaven as a place with golden streets and pearly gates where every desire will be satisfied. My idea of heaven is a place and time wherein every one will mind his own business. Remember Emerson's words: "Mind thy affair, says the spirit. Coxcomb! would you meddle with the skies, or with other people?" G. O. W.

Woman and the Abolition of War.

THE abolition of war is an ideal that is in many minds at the present time. We want to abolish war: how are we to accomplish that laudable desire? Limitation of armaments is a step in the right direction, but it will not necessarily abolish war. If the use of poison gases, explosives, gunpowder, and every kind of chemical were ruled out of warfare, and we reverted to bows and arrows, spears, swords and battleaxes, it would not abolish war, though it would make it less costly. If these things in turn were ruled out, there would still be sticks and stones and fists to fight with.

The only way to abolish war is to eradicate the warlike spirit in human nature, which is the root of the evil. It is of little use to cut and prune the branches and fruit of the Tree of War; we must cut away its roots, dig them up and destroy them, instead of watering and fostering them as we do. Why do we give our children warlike toys to play with, toy cannons, rifles, swords, and toy soldiers? These things inculcate and foster the spirit of war and the love of war in children at a most impressionable age. Why do we forever laud and magnify living and dead fighting men and their deeds in song and story and poem? and why do we sing in our churches, "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war?" So long as we do these things it is sheer hypocrisy to say we desire to abolish war. All we mean is, that at present we are "fed up" with war, and don't want another war as long as we live. As the Church prayer book says, "Give peace in our time, O Lord."

If we really and truly desire to abolish war for all time, for the benefit of future generations, then we must go the right way about it, and commence at the root of the evil, in the training of children. We must cease giving them warlike toys, cease the praising of warriors, do away with the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war," and teach and train our children to look upon war as murder, as a wicked, unholy and inhuman thing; we must cease to mock God by asking His blessing on so vile a thing, and by praising and thanking Him for victories won by it. Thus the Spirit of War may, perhaps, in time be eradicated from human nature, and war be abolished. In the accomplishing of this laudable and desirable end women can, and must, play a great part. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," and women can, if they

will, become in this way the earthly saviours of mankind.

The Book of Genesis says that God made man in His own image, and it has been truly said that man returned the compliment. O Man! thy name is Vanity and Self-conceit. Man has propounded many religions in the world trying to save himself, but he was not able to save himself from such a catastrophe as the Great War. The horrors and frightfulness of this war and its disastrous after effects have made him feel a bit sick, like one who has been drinking heavily overnight and wakes up in the morning with a bad head, and the very thought of alcoholic drink is nauseating to him. So now, man, after his orgy of war, wants to be a good boy and never fight any more. "When the Devil was sick, the Devil a Monk would be." In the next generation or two he will have got over this feeling, and the Great War will become but a matter of history, like the Peninsular war and the Crimean war. Who, nowadays, pays any tribute to the monuments erected to those who lost their lives in the Crimean war? In a few years' time the Cenotaph in Whitehall will be passed by as heedlessly as are those older monuments. How many to-day out of the crowds that celebrated the third anniversary of November 11, 1918, could give the date of the Declaration of Peace after the Crimean war?

The cause of man's failure to save himself is this: *He has left woman out of the question.* In his religions women have been looked upon merely as slaves, playthings, goods and chattels. It is this selfishness, vanity and self-conceit on the part of man that has led to his failure to save himself from his own folly. Man forgets that he is only one half of a complete human being, and that he can never work out his earthly salvation alone, but that the two halves of humanity, man and woman, must carry out human salvation together, hand in hand, and heart to heart. As, according to the Book of Genesis, man and woman were driven out of the Garden of Eden together, so must they seek and re-enter it together—or not at all.

A family of children who have lost their mother, governed by the father alone, what is it? It is incomplete, and like all incomplete things likely to become a failure. As with families, so with nations. A government composed of men alone is incomplete, and consequently a failure. We must have as many women as we have men in Parliament. At every election each constituency should be represented by a man and a woman, not by a man alone. Man has been trying for a long, long time to run this old world alone by himself, and a sorry mess he has made of it, and until he takes the other half of humanity, woman, into equal co-partnership in the conduct of affairs, he will never make a success of it. "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" is a fine-sounding phrase, and another instance of man's vanity and self-conceit; but we must have the Motherhood and the Sisterhood of Woman as well if we want to make anything of it.

There are not wanting signs that this intellectual union of man and woman in the ordering of national and political affairs is coming to pass, and if it be welcomed and advanced in every possible way we may then hope for the realization of the present-day ideal—the Abolition of War. A. W. MALCOLMSON.

The commercial and decorous inhabitants of England manifest in their religion their attachment to the decency of forms and the respectability of appearances. Assuredly, at least amongst us, the outward and visible sign is esteemed the best, perhaps the only, token of the inward and spiritual grace. We extend the speculations of this world to our faith in another, and give credit to our neighbour in proportion to his external respectabilities. —*Bulwer Lytton.*

The Blasphemy Case.

APPEAL PROCEEDINGS.

(Concluded from page 93.)

SIR HENRY: The real question, apparently, they wanted to be directed on again was the question as to the line between the proper attacks on Christianity which, of course, are not blasphemous libels, and whether or not they were indecent and offensive. Surely, in every case a judge ought to tell a jury that if they are in doubt, pointing out the sort of doubt one knows has to exist in the minds of a jury before they give the benefit to a prisoner, and the judge ought to point out that if they are in reasonable and proper doubt the prisoner is entitled to the doubt. And in my submission that is more desirable and proper where there has already been a disagreement of the jury. There is nothing in the summing up.

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: I suppose you called attention to that?

SIR HENRY: The jury do not take from counsel statements like they do from the learned judge. The jury wait to see if the judge says anything to corroborate what learned counsel has said to them. If they waited to see if he said anything to corroborate what I said about giving the benefit of the doubt they would find he made no reference.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Is there any case that has held that that is misdirection? It is simply the onus of showing on whom the onus of proof lies.

SIR HENRY: There are many cases on that. It does not amount to the same thing. The learned judge does not point out anywhere in his summing up to the jury, as far as I know, and I think I am right on this, and I shall be corrected if I am wrong, the learned judge does not say anywhere in his summing up that it is the duty of the prosecution to prove the case, and that it is not the part of the defendant or counsel to prove he is innocent.

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: There was no disputed evidence. It was only a question of what the jury thought.

SIR HENRY: It shows, does it not, am I not entitled with respect to say this, that the facts here speak for themselves—that it was a matter of doubt which juries could have—doubt because the first jury which tried Gott had so much doubt they could not agree at all?

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: That is an argument from which you cannot produce anything. No one knows what manner of people there might be upon that jury. If you had a Gott on the jury he would disagree. There might have been a person holding similar views on that jury. What conclusion can we draw from that?

SIR HENRY: All one can do is to take the facts as one finds them. One finds twenty-four people. The first twelve cannot agree at all, and the second twelve agree after fifty minutes' consideration. Surely, that shows this is a case where a considerable doubt did exist in the first jury, and existed for some time in the second jury.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I have not read these things carefully at all, and therefore I do not know whether it is possible for a reasonable man to have doubt upon the subject. I can imagine there might be such statements and documents where it would be the utmost nonsense on the part of the judge to say to any jury "If you have any reasonable doubt the prisoner is entitled to the benefit of the doubt."

SIR HENRY: The learned judge when this case was being tried knew that a previous jury only two days before had disagreed.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I do not admit that any inference at all can be drawn from a previous jury.

SIR HENRY: Assuming there had been no previous trial is it not right—I won't put my argument as high as I was putting it—but is it not right in every case that a learned judge in directing the jury should point out to them that the onus is upon the prosecution, that it is not upon the defence, and if there is a doubt the prisoner is entitled to that doubt?

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: I do not see why he should point it out any more because a jury had disagreed.

SIR HENRY: I am leaving that part of my argument out, because I feel the force of what has been said about

it. In every case that is tried before any jury—every criminal, of course, tried before any jury—at some time before the summing up the learned judge ought to tell the jury where the onus is—that it is upon the prosecution—and the learned judge ought to point out that if the prosecution have not fulfilled that onus, and there is proper and reasonable doubt in their mind the prisoner is entitled to it.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Lower down you see the jury were in doubt because they were not clear that he had realized the gravity of the offence he had committed.

SIR HENRY: That was the whole defence here. This language is not language which anyone could seek to justify if it was written by a well educated man.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: He had been educated well enough by having had those previous convictions. He ought to have been the last man. He knew the gravity of it perfectly. The jury without having read the document thought it was very grave—the nature of the statements contained in the documents—and they say "We can scarcely think he realized the gravity of what he was doing. Perhaps you had better hear more about it before you modify that."

SIR HENRY: When I convey to you the way the man had been educated I do not mean that his attention had not been called to the fact in some other document he had written he had in the opinion of the Court and jury been guilty of blasphemous libel. I mean to say he was a person of such education who might use language to show his argument was correct which would not be used by a well educated man.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I follow that, but there was no evidence of that before the Court, was there?

SIR HENRY: Except the documents. And, of course, Mr. Gott, who was there, and whom they could see.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: If this is at all a good picture he looks a most amiable man.

SIR HENRY: Sometimes pictures in papers are flattering, and sometimes not.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: We all know that.

SIR HENRY: I am not in a position to say whether this is a good picture or not. My submission is that the question of onus was not pointed out to the jury, and the jury was not told that if there was a reasonable doubt that doubt ought to be solved in favour of the prisoner. Those are the matters I desire to put before this Court in submitting that this conviction ought not to stand, and that this summing up was not a proper one, and that the circumstances of the case and that the facts are the facts now before the Court. I am told I ought also to have said one word on the question of sentence. The sentence passed upon the appellant was a sentence of nine months' hard labour, and your lordships will notice that the way in which the notice of appeal is drawn was directed, and was, I am told by Mr. Murphy, intended to be directed against the imposition of hard labour having regard to my client's state of health and the jury's recommendation to clemency the sentence involving as it does a sentence of hard labour was excessive. The prisoner was a man who had been convicted on several occasions previously, but after conviction Mr. Murphy handed up a doctor's certificate showing the man was suffering from diabetes in an acute form.

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: He will not be dealt with any differently than his state of health warrants.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Careful attention will be paid to his state of health, and nothing will be imposed that could possibly injure him in any way.

JUDGMENT.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE in delivering his judgment said: In this case John William Gott was convicted at the Central Criminal Court of publishing blasphemous libel, and was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labour. He now appeals against the conviction, and applies for leave to have the sentence of hard labour modified. Sir Henry Curtis Bennett has argued a case on his behalf with force and skill. The prisoner was selling in a public street, as I understand, these documents that we see here, the smaller ones being inside the *Liberator*. Sir Henry argues that the publication of these documents was not a blasphemous libel, partly because the thing was sold without any statement or shouting to attract the

attention of the crowd around; that they were being suspended in this way (demonstrated) for people to see; and they were being sold. Certainly the documents when you have examined them are most offensively blasphemous, a calculated offence. One cannot read them without saying that they were intended to be offensive. This is a man who is said not to be a well educated man. He is certainly not happy in his education, for he has been convicted three times before for publishing blasphemous libels. One cannot shut one's eyes in considering this matter to the fact that he had ample knowledge of what he was doing, and of what the character of the offence was. When we look at them we find them, as I say, calculated to be offensive to anyone reading them who was in sympathy with Christianity, whether he was a strong Christian or only a moderate or lukewarm Christian; he could not read some of these documents without being grievously offended. Then it is said the learned judge misdirected the jury in not saying anything further than he did, on page 23. I cannot see there is anything in the nature of misdirection. What the learned judge said is quite accurate in dealing with the argument that it was not publishing a blasphemous libel because they were being sold. The fact of the pamphlet being sold does not prevent them being blasphemous libels. That depends whether they are likely to outrage the feelings of ordinary people reading them. It does not require a strongly religious person to be outraged by a description of Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem like a clown on two donkeys. Whether a man is religious or irreligious he would naturally be outraged by such statements. There are others. That is only an instance. There are others of a similar character. And then he said further that the learned judge did not point out or did not emphasize the matter of the onus of truth, and did not tell the jury that if they had any reasonable doubt on the subject they should give the prisoner the benefit of it. There is no doubt that it is a prudent thing on the part of a judge summing up to use that phrase in order to show the jury clearly where the onus of truth lies. But there are cases and cases. And here is one clearly where there was no room for saying that. It was admitted that he did publish those documents. It was admitted that those were copies of the things he published, and unless it could be said that a reasonable mind could doubt that these amounted to blasphemous libels it would only be troubling the jury and not assisting them to say that if they had reasonable doubt they ought to acquit him, and no one could have reasonable doubt who understood the laws of blasphemy that these were blasphemous documents. Therefore I don't see how the learned judge could tell them anything that would be of any assistance to them. Consequently, notwithstanding the able arguments of Sir Henry Curtis Bennett, this Court does not think it can see any ground to interfere with the conviction. With regard to the sentence, the period of six months certainly is not too long.

SIR H. C. BENNETT: Nine months, my lord.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I thought it was six. Nine months is not too long for a person who has previously been three times convicted, and had been treated on one occasion at least with considerable leniency, because he only got six weeks on that occasion. On the last occasion before this he got six months, because there were two convictions and he was sentenced to three months on each consecutively. Then Sir Henry suggests that the hard labour should not be applied in consequence of the state of the prisoner's health. Well, of course, if that were going to be enforced so as to injure his health this Court would certainly pay attention to the appeal on his behalf; but there is no ground for supposing that. Indeed, I am not sure that the fact that this sentence to imprisonment with hard labour does not cause the authorities to pay greater attention to his health and to see to it in every way, particularly as he is suffering from this disease Sir Henry has mentioned; they will be particularly careful as to his diet and as to the amount of labour he is subjected to. In these circumstances the Court sees no ground for interfering with the conviction or the sentence.

SIR H. C. BENNETT: Would your lordships say the sentence might date not from to-day but from the date of conviction?

MR. JUSTICE ROCHE: When was it?

SIR H. C. BENNETT: It was as long ago as December 9. There has been a vacation in between. He has been in custody all the time.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I know he has. He has applied for bail. This is a most dangerous class of crime and the rule of this Court is not to make the time count unless leave has been obtained. With the overwhelming number of appeals that are being brought without any real question to argue—I am not applying that to your case—here, we cannot encourage them as we should be doing if we made the order in this case.

Correspondence.

WHY NOT THE KING?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The law of England, as interpreted by the Lord Chief Justice, has failed us. The Home Secretary will not act in the cause of Freedom. There yet remains one more means which may be tried to raise our fellow-Freethinker from the depths. That means is a Petition to the King of England. Why not?

The British Realm is not bounded by the shores of England, neither is its religion limited to the worship of the Christian God. The King reigns over more Mohammedans than Christians. Within the Realm are all shades of supernaturalism, and, perhaps, there are as many Freethinkers as any single body of religionists. In any case it is the honour of kings to be impartial, and mercy "becomes the throned monarch better than his crown." Let us, therefore, petition the King and get Gott home again, if possible.

E. ANDERSON.

(Member West Ham Borough Council.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

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

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

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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.

FULHAM AND WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (154 Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush, W.): 7.30, Mr. Eustace Steele, "Criticism of the Labour Movement."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (JOHNSON'S DANCING Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Maurice Mawbrey, "Putting Our House in Order."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Councillor W. Carter, "Trade Unionism."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. J. H. Van Biene, "What Atheism has done for Humanity."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Decay of Moral Training."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Mr. B. Golder, "The Religious Education of the Jewish Child, Abroad and in Great Britain."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Youngman's): 3, Rev. David Stewart, A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. R. Neft, "The New Morality."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, Manchester): Mr. A. D. McLaren, 3, "Is Religion Necessary?" 6.30, "A Freethinker Looks at the World."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Elysium, High Street, Swansea): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "The Bankruptcy of the Christian Religion."

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