

The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XLII.—No. 8

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1922

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Egotism and Religion.

One of the things upon which Christians pride themselves is the power of their religion to attract certain low types of character. And we are all more or less familiar with the converted scoundrel who dwells upon the goodness of God in lifting him out of his sin, while gloating upon past misdeeds, which are the sole grounds on which he wins the attention of the evangelist, and his only claim to distinction at a revivalist meeting. There is, again, the narrow, self-seeking, egotistical type which is equally sure that God has paid them special attention, but which seldom finds this close harmony between themselves and their deity any bar to all sorts of mean actions and discreditable deeds. On the contrary, it seems often to encourage them. Their religious conviction prevents their getting to close quarters with themselves, and their real motives are thus never permitted to rise into consciousness. The psychologist will naturally regard these types of religionists with suspicion. He knows that mean characters are not easily attracted to unselfish or noble ideals, and will therefore look in another direction than the one indicated for the cause of the phenomenon. A lofty creed will seldom attract mean men, and a doctrine of genuine unselfishness will prove quite unattractive to the selfish. On the other hand a teaching which masks selfishness with a superficial unselfishness will be certain of response. Give men a chance of gratifying their lower motives under cover of an appeal to their higher ones and the road is easy. In such conditions men can be mean without risking the social condemnation of their meanness, as we had illustrated during the war, when mere tribal hatred was in numerous cases masked by a proclaimed devotion to country, and service to a country in dire need was used as a mask for some of the most shameless jobbery and robbery that we have experienced.

* * *

God and "Me."

The *Star*, in its issue for February 11, published an abstract of the will of one Edward Davis, J.P., of Leyton, which makes rather interesting reading. I am not referring to the disposition of his money, but to some very pious passages used in the will. Mr. Davis says:—

I thank God that when left at two years of age

fatherless and motherless, and penniless at sea, thousands of miles from England, He raised up for me protectors in my maternal uncle and his wife, who treated me with complete parental love, and sent me to a good school, and gave me the example of a Christian life. I also thank Him for saving me from many snares and delivering me from many perils.

Now there is nothing unusual in this sort of thing. It is of a very common-place kind, and is usually the expression of a common-place character. Very often when it is used it means no more than the parrot-like repetition of stock phrases, but in the existing case I do not know to which order it belongs. I should think the better of Mr. Davis if he were merely repeating phrases that meant nothing to him. To say they are the product of an intense conviction of their truth indicates a narrow self-centred egotism that reflects small credit either upon the person who uses them or upon the teaching which calls them forth. I know nothing of Mr. Davis; to me he only stands—if the above expressions really represented his heartfelt convictions—as a type, one that is very common in the history of Christianity, and which the world would have been very much better without.

* * *

Our Father.

Mr. Davis's case is not unusual, unfortunately. There is a very large number of children who are left at a very early age, robbed of their natural protectors by what the law courts would call an "act of God," and in very many of these cases the children are neglected, they sometimes die, and sometimes they live on when they would have been far better dead. In the case of thousands of these neglected little ones God does not, evidently, interfere. In Russia, largely owing to the failure of the crops, children are dying of slow starvation by the thousand, and the same thing is occurring in other parts of Europe on a smaller scale. But in these cases God does not raise up an uncle or an aunt or even a friend. He simply lets them die. I say He lets them die, because if the above cited expressions mean anything they mean that he does sometimes raise up uncles and aunts to befriend little children, and consequently he exercises judgment and selection in the matter. And on what ground is this selection made? If God is the heavenly father, each one of these children had precisely the same claim upon his care. To say that he carefully looked after the one will not excuse his neglect of the others. There are many cases which appear in the courts in which a parent, sent to prison for ill-treating one child, carefully pampers the rest of his family. God's preference in this respect offers nothing that is unknown to man. But we do not thank the father who neglects one of his children for not having neglected the others also. To thank God for looking after some of his children really saddles him with the responsibility for the neglect of the remainder of his family.

* * *

An Indictment of God.

Now a really sensitive character, one with less egotism in his nature than Mr. Davis possessed,

would have been apt to doubt whether he was of so great importance to the world, and his claim for protection so much greater than that of others that God went out of his way to "raise up" an uncle and an aunt for the purpose of looking after him. For an uncle and an aunt cannot be produced—like Aladdin's palace—in a night. They take some time to grow. And one can faintly picture the colossal conceit, even though it be of the unconscious variety, of one who can believe that God created a man and a woman so that they might stand to him as a protector when he needed one! This kind of conceit is not unusual with Christians. It appears time and again in the prayers that are offered thanking God for having preserved someone—usually the one who prays—from a wreck, or a train accident, or a disaster. And the burden is "Thank God that I'm all right." "God saved me." The others, apparently, did not matter. But it is just these others that bulk largest in the mind of the better type of human character. The other week, at one of my lectures, a member of the audience seemed to think it important that he wanted to live again in order to see his friends in the next world. He was somewhat taken back when I told him that the thing that really mattered was, not whether he wanted to see certain people in the next world, but whether they wanted to see him. Being a Christian that view of the matter had never struck him. It was he that was of paramount importance; his needs, his desires, his expectations that were of consequence, and to that type of character there is nothing repugnant in feeling that if there is an accident God saved him while leaving the others to perish, and if his parents die while he is an infant that God specially sent two people to care for him while callously leaving thousands of other babies to perish. And with such natures there does not usually go the mental clarity which enables them to see that each case of alleged help for which they thank God is only making the charge of neglect against him longer and blacker.

* * *

A Religion of Self.

The problem suggested by a study of these cases is this: Does Christianity attract the narrow, selfish type, or does it create that type where it does not already exist? And the answer is, in my opinion, that it does both. The great lesson of Christianity is individual salvation. That is its great fundamental message. It does not take man as a member of a social whole as did the old Greek and Roman ethic. Man is an individual, and his principal business in life is to save his own soul. If that can be done by the neglect of social duties and the ignoring of family and social life, then these things must be put on one side. If it can be done by helping others, than others must be helped, but always and everywhere it is your own soul that matters. Your chief business in life is to save that. And a consequence of this teaching, spread over centuries and personified in institutions, and camouflaged by the name of virtue, is that it has on the one side given the utmost satisfaction to the truly selfish nature, while making the life of the unselfish and sensitive character a veritable hell upon earth. A Christian of the type of the one whose will I have mentioned will have no doubt of his own worth and of his importance in the eyes of God. He will pass through life without a single misgiving, and end it thanking God for the way in which he has paid special attention to him. A better character, one of the type of Bunyan, or St. Augustine, will have their seasons, during which a sense of their own unworthiness will make them feel in their minds the torments of the damned. Christianity has often enough used a lofty character—like an army in the modern State, the character of the Church has been saved by its

accidents—but it has been beyond its power to develop one.

* * *

A Dividend-Hunting Creed.

Intolerance and narrowness, with their psychological equivalents, egotism and self-seeking, are imbedded in Christianity. Its assertion of monotheism, so far as it existed, worked in that direction. For it is not true that the early Christian believers asserted the existence of one God, who ruled all, and the non-existence of all others. What was asserted was the existence of one God that was more powerful than the others, and the relegation of these others to a subordinate position. It was, again, an embodiment of the appeal to self-interest. And what strikes independent students, from the outside, of Christianity is not its lofty morality, but rather the low ethical level upon which it moves. From the ignorant egotist of the small chapel, who cheerfully damns the whole of the world while preserving as the salt of the earth his own meagre congregation, to the Churches which assert that salvation is to be found only within their own boundaries, we have the same principles of exclusion, of selection, and the assumed value of the selected, exemplified. The mental and moral narrowness of Christians, the ease with which they have always managed to harmonize their professions of disinterestedness with the most energetic self-seeking, to lay up treasures in heaven while retaining a good balance at their bank, is not accidental, nor is it evidence of duplicity. It is a normal product of their creed. That creed was built upon man's fear of what was going to happen to *him* in the next world, and upon what he might gain there if he put out his actions at the proper rate of interest. It has always camouflaged the operation of man's lower and meaner motives while making, apparently, an appeal to his higher ones. The Leyton J.P. is but another specimen of a very unpleasant mental type.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Authority.

(Concluded from page 100.)

We have discovered that the seat of authority cannot be in supernaturalism, because the very existence of the supernatural is insusceptible of proof. A supernatural Book and a supernatural Church are fully as inconceivable as a supernatural Being. Both the Bible and the Church are now known to be products of the human brain, and consequently both are fallible. It inevitably follows that neither of them has the slightest right to be treated as an authority on the subject of religion. Some years ago the Rev. Dr. Forrest, of Edinburgh, published a large work, entitled *The Authority of Christ*, in which he endeavours to explain and account for what he conceives "to be the true nature of Christ's authority over us in all that relates to our religious belief and our personal conduct"; but so far is he from explaining the nature of Christ's authority that he utterly fails to demonstrate even the actuality of it; nor has anybody else ever succeeded in doing so, though the keenest intellects have attempted the feat. The story of the quest for supernatural authority is highly amusing, if not instructive. We are told that the Council of Nicæa was not occupied with the problem of the authoritative sources of the Christian Creed. The chief work undertaken in the fourth century was the formation of the Canon, which, of course, really meant the search for authoritative documents. In the fifth century there was already a struggle for supremacy between the Bible and the Church, and

even so great a man as St. Augustine wavered considerably as to the side to which to attach himself. In one place he says: "To the canonical Scriptures alone I owe agreement without any dissent"; but in another place the opposite: "I should not believe the Gospel, did not the authority of the Catholic Church move me thereto." As a matter of fact, this distinguished theologian did believe many things of which there is no trace in the Bible, but which were among the traditions of the Church. It was not till the Council of Trent, however, that tradition was officially recognized as of equal authority with Scripture. It was at this Council also that the Vulgate version of the Bible was made authoritative—*pro authentica habeatur*—in all public addresses, expositions, and debates. Curiously enough, whilst this translation of Scripture was declared to be authoritative and all its books canonical, it was decreed, further, that all interpretations of it must be in complete harmony with those of the Church which alone determined "its true sense." Thus the Church became supreme, and the cry was, not "Back to the Fathers for the standard of orthodoxy," but "Listen to the voice of the living Church." At length, the infallibility of the Church found expression only when the Pope spoke *ex cathedra*. When the Protestants appeared they located the seat of authority in the infallible Book, but endangered its permanence by making provision for the right of private judgment, though it proved in practice, at first, a most inadequate provision.

To-day, Mr. Thompson declares, there is no obedience paid to authority anywhere, because the generality of the people are becoming convinced that there is no seat of authority in existence. The sense of dependence on and responsibility to any Church or Church's head is dead. Belief in supernatural authority is no more, except amongst small knots of people to whom a clergyman is still a somewhat superior personage; but even to these the sense of the supernatural as a regulative principle is not nearly so vivid and dominant as it was in the case of their forefathers. Of course, authority as a natural factor in human affairs has still its uses. The supreme arbiter is Reason, enlightened intelligence. As Mr. John M. Robertson, in his excellent little book *Rationalism*, well says:—

Reasoning against the validity of reason is recognizable as suicidal by all who can reason coherently. If reason is untrustworthy, what is the value of reasoning to that effect? Either you go by reason or you do not. If not, you are out of the debate, or you are grasping your sword by the blade, a course not long to be persisted in (p. 25).

Mr. A. J. Balfour has written two masterpieces, *The Defence of Philosophical Doubt* and *The Foundations of Belief*, in both of which he treats reason very cavalierly, saying that he and others when they contemplate religion and science as "unproved systems of belief standing side by side, feel a practical need for both." Then he adds: "We are in that matter unfortunately altogether outside the sphere of Reason." He confesses, however, that he accepts scientific doctrines and the theological opinions to which he adheres, whatever they may be, "without any ground for believing them to be even approximately true." Evidently both his religion and his science sit very lightly on Mr. Balfour. One wonders what, in his system, is reason's function, for we have no reasonable assurance that the sun will rise tomorrow, or that we shall die. He accepts doctrines and opinions on no authority whatever except that of a vague sense of need, "without any ground for believing them to be even approximately true." Sir Leslie Stephen is much nearer the truth when, in his Prefatory Essay to the

twenty-eighth volume in the tenth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, he wisely observes:—

In philosophical or religious discussions popular writers still oppose reason to authority, as if the words were mutually exclusive. If to believe on authority means to believe because you will be burnt for not believing, the process is clearly irrational. But it is simply rational to attach due weight to the opinions of competent inquirers. When the Protestant claimed the right of private judgment, the claim might be perfectly right or clearly preposterous. It would be right if he meant that he was to be guided by reason in choosing his guides. It would be preposterous if he meant that every ignorant man could settle for himself innumerable questions only to be answered by the combined efforts of profound critics and historical inquirers. But the absurdity would not be that he reasoned, but that he neglected the only kind of evidence which he was competent to appreciate.

The fundamental fault of supernatural religion is that it asks for faith on no reasonable authority at all. Neither the Pope of Rome nor the Archbishop of Canterbury knows one tittle more about God and heaven and hell than does the most ignorant and illiterate man in the street; and it would be simply preposterous to expect the latter to accept as truth what those highly placed and highly paid officials of the Church are pleased to communicate to him out of the fulness of their own purely imaginary knowledge. They may or may not believe much more than he does, but their and his ignorance of the supernatural are exactly equal.

Mr. Thompson quoted Bishop Butler's reference to the desperate state of Christianity in his day, nearly two hundred years ago, because he regards it as the truest description of the popular attitude to it just now. Well, Butler undertook the heavy task of defending Christianity against the powerful Deistic attacks upon it, and the method he adopted was that of instituting an analogy between natural religion and Christianity. The argument against revealed religion was that it was confessedly so imperfect, contained so many things in the highest degree contrary to reason, was so far from being universally and completely known, that it must certainly be dismissed as false, like all other similar religions. It is a peculiarity of Butler's style of reasoning that he does not seek to meet the objection by denying the truth of the charges. What he says, in effect, is this: "You and we are in the same boat; we must win through to dry land or sink together." It was a most subtle retort, but it proved and resulted in nothing, save, ultimately, in the evolution of Deism into Atheism. The argument, as far as Christianity is concerned, was and is utterly valueless, for it applied equally well to any other religion. As Mr. Robertson points out, "the complete answer to Butler, of course, lies in stating the simple fact that analogy leads rationally to the conclusion that all alleged revelations are alike human products." Then he adds, significantly, even triumphantly:—

If every one (alleged revelation) in turn is found to embody cosmological delusion, historical falsity, fabulous narrative, barbarous ethic, and irrational sanctions, all of which are by each believer singly admitted to be the normal marks of human stumbling, the case is at an end. The one silent and sovereign probability is the one that the believer ignores. When this mountainous fact is realized, the full force of Butler's argument is seen to recoil on its premise no less than on its conclusion. The dilemma that was to turn Deists into Christians is simply the confutation of all Theism (*Rationalism*, pp. 53, 54).

We conclude, therefore, that, if Mr. Robertson's argument is thoroughly sound, and it is certainly extraordinarily difficult to pick holes in it, there is no honest escape from the very rational inference that a super-

natural authority need not be imposed upon mankind to secure from them full obedience to any law of self-restraint or self-denial that makes for the living of a just, sane, and happy social life. Behind the moral maxims of Buddhism, which over-ran and completely transformed India in two or three centuries, there was not the slightest suggestion of anything like a super-human authority. The splendid harvest of righteousness, peace, and prosperity reaped in India over two thousand years ago from an Atheistic seed sown in good soil by one lovable and loving man, may and shall be grown, gathered in and enjoyed in Europe in this and coming centuries as soon as we shall have learned to obey the laws of our own nature, obedience to which will eventuate in complete adaptation to all necessary modification of the environment.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Passing of a Pope.

If we live thus tamely,
To be so jaded by a piece of scarlet,
Farewell nobility. —*Shakespeare.*

THE death of a Pope and the election of his successor by the Cardinals must always be a matter of interest to Freethinkers. For the Pope of Rome is the ecclesiastic who addresses the largest congregation in the world. Compared with the Papal dignity other archbishops seem parochial. Using the language of his office, a pope utters words which are heard from Bolivia to Bermondsey, from Stockholm to the South Seas. The rhetoric may be enfeebled and the platitudes exhausted, but the Papal patriarch possesses something of the tragic character of Tithonus, "immortal age beside immortal youth." His unique position with regard to the huge numbers of men and women who hold their rule of faith from the largest of the Christian Churches is striking, and nothing was more remarkable than the late Pope's attitude on the Great War. Unlike the Archbishop of Canterbury he never made the silly mistake of including national flags and Lewis guns among the most sacred emblems of religion, and he again and again deplored the awful waste of life among Christian peoples. That his warning was treated with contempt by Christians was not his fault, and the Pope was spared nothing that the energy of the militarist parties and the hypocritical indifference of the religious world could make him suffer. Publicly he stood, the Lear of thankless and ungrateful children, a little shrill in his menaces, but keeping unimpaired the dignity of a paternity rejected.

The events of the Great War showed clearly the ebb-tide of the political power of the Papacy, and the bitterest comment on the daring diplomacy, which, under Cardinal Rampolla, the Papal Secretary of State during two decades, sought untiringly for the means of restoring the Pope's temporal power. It was Rampolla who suggested the Catholic Church's remarkable flirtation with Republicanism and Socialism. When Leo XIII died Rampolla would have been elected to succeed him but for the veto of the then Emperor of Austria, which was communicated to the conclave by a Polish cardinal. While the cardinals hesitated to accept the veto, Rampolla himself accepted it, another pope was elected, and Rampolla's dream ended. He lived thenceforward in retirement, his diplomatic combinations crumbled into nothingness, and with the outbreak of the Great War went the last hopes of the greatest and most powerful of the Christian Churches.

The paralysis of the great Roman Catholic Church has been a slow process. There was a time when she

was as broad-minded as her young Anglican sister. She once had her intellectual wing, her scholars, her statesmen, her thinkers, who found her borrowed mummeries and stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. The ignorant, bigoted, evangelical party prevailed gradually over these, and exterminated them by fire and sword, rack and gibbet, leaving themselves more ignorant and more bigoted than before. By slow and sure degrees the whole Catholic Church was made over to their leprous likeness.

It required centuries to produce this dire result. The very triumphs of Freethought throughout Europe indirectly contributed to this end. Every Catholic who became an "Intellectual" assisted this process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Church the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten down to a mere mass of superstition and intolerance. What constitutes the obstructive character of the Roman Catholic Church is the abyss which now separates it from the highest intelligence around it; the live, alert brains of science, and the leaden, moveless stereotype of dogma. Today the voice of the Pope, at which kings once trembled, attracts as little attention as "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing."

As belief has waned in England, the English Church has sought more and more to imitate the methods of Rome. The Ritualists have taken part possession of the Church of England. Maybe they have not yet done all that was dreaded by timid Nonconformists, but they rule the ecclesiastical roost, and the archbishops and bishops are powerless. At this hour there are covered by the banner of the English Church men who hold the extremist doctrine of the freedom of the individual, and creatures who are willing to submit to the utmost doctrine of priestly control. How long will this battle between Romanists and Evangelicals last? That a large and increasing number of the Anglican clergy were coquetting with Rome caused, some years ago, attention in the Catholic Church, and the then Pope had some idea of reconverting England, and of reimposing the yoke which our ancestors threw off. But even popes cannot force the clock back, and the English people still, as a nation, refuse to acknowledge Papal supremacy, and bear with the lesser evil of the priests of the Government religion.

In darkened and superstitious times the power of the Catholic Church was great, but it finished in this country with the glare of the fires of Smithfield. It was never at any time so unquestioned and unresisted as in Italy, Spain, and France. There is a wholesome obstinacy in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. It shows itself whenever the whip is cracked too loudly, as Charles I and James II knew to their cost, and as the long contest for the freedom of speech also proves. Priestcraft can never do its worst in England. We shall never again, as a people, permit the cesspool of the confessional, we shall never submit to the poisoned weapons of Priestcraft, its hypocritical affectations of celibacy, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace and robbery at the death-bed. Priestcraft had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the Ages of Faith, even before the days of the Reformation. It is an impossible dream now that there is an organized national Freethought party, which has inscribed on its banners that significant and soul-stirring Voltairean phrase, "Crush the Infamous."
MIMNERMUS.

It is my wife whom you shall not insult; it is my house that you shall not enter; it is my country that you shall not traduce; and by a species of ultra-mundane appropriation, it is my God whom you shall not blaspheme.—*Bulwer Lytton.*

A Religion of Hate

III.

(Concluded from page 102.)

Who can estimate the misery that has been caused by this most infamous doctrine of eternal punishment? Think of the lives it has blighted—of the tears it has caused—of the agony it has produced. Think of the millions who have been driven to insanity by this most terrible of dogmas. This doctrine renders God the basest and most cruel being in the universe. Compared with him, the most frightful deities of the most barbarous and degraded tribes are miracles of goodness and mercy. There is nothing more degrading than to worship such a God. If the doctrine of eternal damnation is true, let me have my portion in hell, rather than in heaven with a God infamous enough to inflict eternal misery upon any of the sons of men.—Col. Robert Ingersoll, "Orations," p. 74.

In Scotland, during the seventeenth century, the clergy enlarged upon the terrors of hell with a violence impossible to exaggerate. The historian Buckle tells us that:—

The aspect of a Scotch congregation in those days is, indeed, hard for us to conceive. Not unfrequently the people, benumbed and stupefied with awe, were rooted to their seats by the horrible fascination exercised over them, which compelled them to listen though they are described as gasping for breath, and with their hair standing on end.¹

The same historian records:—

The clergy boasted that it was their special mission to thunder out the wrath and the curses of the Lord. In their eyes, the deity was not a beneficent being, but a cruel and remorseless tyrant. They declared that all mankind, a very small portion only excepted, were doomed to eternal misery. And when they came to describe what that misery was, their dark imaginations revelled and gloated at the prospect. In the pictures which they drew they reproduced and heightened the barbarous imagery of a barbarous age. They delighted in telling their hearers that they would be roasted in great fires, and hung up by their tongues. They were to be lashed with scorpions, and see their companions writhing and howling around them. They were to be thrown into boiling oil and scalding lead. A river of fire and brimstone, broader than the earth, was prepared for them; in that they were to be immersed; their bones, their lungs, and their liver were to boil, but never be consumed. At the same time, worms were to prey upon them; and while these were gnawing at their bodies, they were to be surrounded by devils, mocking and making pastime of their pains. Such were the first stages of suffering, and they were only the first. For the torture besides being unceasing, was to become gradually worse. So refined was the cruelty that one hell was succeeded by another; and lest the sufferer should grow callous, he was after a time moved on, that he might undergo fresh agonies in fresh places, provision being made that the torment should not pall on the sense, but should be varied in its character, as well as eternal in duration. (Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, pp. 768-9).

In his footnotes Buckle gives extracts from contemporary sermons in proof of every statement made in the preceding quotation. "All this," continues Buckle,—

was the work of the God of the Scotch clergy. It was not only his work, it was his joy and his pride. For, according to them, hell was created before man came into the world; the Almighty, they did not scruple to say, having spent his previous leisure in preparing and completing this place of torture so that when the human race appeared it might be ready for their reception (p. 769).

¹ Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 1904; p. 767.

"Even now," says Buckle, "such language freezes the blood" and—

we shudder when we think of the dark corrupted fancy, the vindictive musings.....No hesitation, no compunction, no feelings of mercy, ever seem to have entered their breasts. It is evident that their notions were well matured; it is equally evident that they delighted in them. They were marked by a unity of conception, and were enforced with a freshness and vigour of language which shows that their heart was in their work.....No wonder that (their hearers), with these ideas before them, their reason should often give way, and that a religious mania should set in, under whose influence they in black despair put an end to their lives (p. 770).

Nor is this delight in contemplating the agonies of the lost something new; we find this ferocious sentiment in Christianity from the commencement. Tertullian, the earliest of the Christian Latin ecclesiastical writers, looks forward with joy to witnessing the torments of the damned in hell as follows: "Which sight gives me joy? which rouses me to exultation?—as I see so many illustrious monarchs, whose reception into the heavens was publicly announced, groaning now in the lowest darkness with great Jove himself." He savagely exults:—

I shall have a better opportunity than of hearing the tragedians, louder-voiced in their own calamity; of viewing the play-actors much more "dissolute" in the dissolving flame; of looking upon the charioteer, all glowing in his chariot of fire; of witnessing the wrestlers, not in their gymnasia, but tossing in the fiery billows.²

Peter Lombard declares:—

The elect will come forth to behold the torments of the ungodly, and at this spectacle they will not be smitten with sorrow; on the contrary, while they see the unspeakable sufferings of the ungodly, they, intoxicated with joy, will thank God for their own salvation.³

St. Thomas Aquinas, the "Angelic Doctor" who is still upheld by the Catholic Church as the greatest and most orthodox teacher of the Catholic faith, declares, in the third part of his famous *Summa*: "That the saints may enjoy their beatitude and the grace of God more richly, a perfect sight of the punishment of the damned is granted them."

In a mediæval work, known as the *Elucidarium*, by Honorius Augustodunensis, which consists of a dialogue between a disciple and master on the whole Christian theology; the master, after describing the frightful tortures suffered by the damned, tells the disciple that the saved will behold these sufferings for ever. The weeping disciple asks: "But will they not grieve to see such agonies?" "Not at all," replies the master:—

The father will look with satisfaction on his son in such predicament, the son likewise on the father, the mother on the daughter, and the daughter on her mother, the husband on his wife, and the wife on her husband. Nay, so far from grieving, they will exult and be glad to see them thus, just like so many fishes playing in the sea.⁴

That is, in the sea of flame.

Nor were the Protestants at all behind the Catholics in asserting the delight of the saints in witnessing the agonies of the lost. Jonathan Edwards declares that the sight of hell torments by the righteous—

will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness. It will give them a more lively relish of it; it will make them prize it more. When they see others who were of the same nature, and born under

² *De Spectaculis*, c. 30.

³ Cited by Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, pp. 256-7.

⁴ Mew, *Traditional Aspects of Hell*, 1903; p. 248.

the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them the more sensible how happy they are.⁵

The Rev. Thomas Boston says:—

The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the judge in the condemnation of her ungodly husband. The godly husband shall say amen to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom. The godly parents shall say hallelujah at the passing of the sentence of their ungodly child. And the godly child shall from the heart approve the damnation of his wicked parents who begot him, and the mother who bore him.⁶

The Rev. Nathaniel Emmons declares that:—

Every time they (the saints) look upon the damned it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. The sight of hell's torments will exalt the happiness of the saints for ever.⁷

And further:—

The happiness of the elect in heaven will, in part, consist in witnessing the torments of the damned in hell. And among these it may be their own children, parents, husbands, wives, and friends on earth. One part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of those miserable objects, will say, "Amen, hallelujah, praise the Lord."⁸

Christopher Love, the zealous Puritan and Presbyterian, in his book of sermons on *Hell's Terrors*, says: "When thou art scorching in thy flames, when thou art howling in thy torments, then God shall laugh, and his saints shall sing and rejoice, that His power and wrath are thus made known in thee."⁹ We ask with Ingersoll:—

What must be the real character of a God who laughs at the calamities of his children, mocks at their fears, their desolation, their distress and anguish?.....Think of the echoes of Jehovah's laughter in the rayless caverns of the eternal prison.¹⁰

No pagan or heathen god can compare for savage brutality with the hideous monster here depicted. And it must be borne in mind that this frightful belief is by no means dead yet. Many sects still hold it; the hymns of Wesley and Watts are still in use. In the book of *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Salvation Army*, prepared for the training homes by General Booth, Section 24 deals with hell, the first question in the catechism being, "Do you believe in hell?" To which the reply is, "Yes, all the time." Question No. 3 reads, "Do you believe that this punishment will last for ever?" the answer being, "Yes," and the words "for ever" are added in italics.

There lies before me a copy of *Sighs from Hell*, written by John Bunyan, the famous author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This is a cheap reprint, published at sixpence, in 1907, as No. xv. of the "Red hot Library," an appropriate title, by the Salvation Army and edited by Bramwell Booth. In this work Bunyan, addressing the sinner, says:—

Oh! what wilt thou do, when not only the supposition of the devils appearing, but the real society of all the devils in hell will be with thee, howling and screeching and roaring in such a hideous manner, that thou wilt be at thy wits' end, and be ready to run stark mad again for anguish and torment? (p. 26).

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, 1789;

p. 25.

⁶ Rev. Thomas Boston, *Fourfold State*, p. 333.

⁷ Rev. Nathaniel Emmons, *Sermons*, xi.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁹ Mew, *Traditional Aspects of Hell*, p. 288.

¹⁰ Ingersoll, *Reply to Gladstone*, p. 19.

And further:—

When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament, or drops in the sea, or sands on the seashore, yet thou hadst to lie there for ever. Oh, this one word EVER, how will it torment the soul? (p. 27).

They that fall short of Christ shall be tormented even as long as eternity lasteth, and shall not have so much as the least ease; no, not so long as while a man may turn himself round, not so much leave as to swallow his spittle, not a drop of cold water (pp. 37-38).

Instead of being the religion of love, Christianity is the religion of hatred, of cruelty and fear. It began in fear, it propagated itself and triumphed by fear. During the Middle Ages it ruled by fear, and when that fear began to wane Christianity began to wane with it. To revivify Christianity the clergy would have to revive the belief in eternal torment in which it had its birth, and for the educated majority that is a hopeless task. W. MANN.

As It Was Spoken.

The speaker cleared his throat. "Well, ladies and gents," he began, "'ere we are agen for to preach the gospel of our true Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ..... thank you kindly, lidy.....for the benefit of those 'co 'adn't 'card, she just said, 'God bless yer'—which shows she knows where the true gospel is preached, and I 'opes, if you will all kindly stay and listen, ye'll all 'ere somefing to your advantage. I'm preaching to save the sinners, I am, an' bring you all to the glorious throne of 'im 'oo died for you, amen..... Well, 'ere's a go.....blest if there ain't a come creeping up, a Atheist.....do I believe me eyes? 'e knows where you get the right stuff, don't 'e? 'e's left 'is own platform to learn somefing from us—which is the only bit of true sense 'e shows—what's that?..... not much we can teach you.....oh, go on, you do make me larf.....ha! ha! Well, first I want to know why all you blessed infidels and Atheists always go on that side.....you'll always find, ladies and gents, that they invariably 'eckle us from the right 'and side, never from the left.....bosh, did you say.....well, that's what you always get from these 'ere Atheists, as they 'aven't a argument to bless themselves with, and so they goes in for all this 'ere personal abuse, which, bless their 'earts, we can put up with like the 'oly martyrs in pagan Rome. And when they are not indulging in personalities, they indulge in most awful talk and obscene langwidge.....from the Bible, did you say?.....and what do you know about the Bible.....what does any Atheist know about the Bible? Why, bless me, I'll bet you even don't know what langwidge it was writ in—do yer?—no, I thought 'e didn't, ha! ha! you can't 'elp larfing at these 'ere infidels' 'opeless ignorance. Why, take their God, a 'un called 'aekel—'e was on the side of the dirty Germans, 'e was—and 'e signed a document to say that the 'uns was quite right in invading poor old Belgium, there's a Atheist for you, and what Atheism does for you. What about Oiken?—well, what about 'im? And what do you know about him, anyhow? Why, I'll bet you can't even spell 'is name—I thought so—and this 'ere Atheist, 'oo can't even spell 'is own langwidge, wants to come 'ere and teach us somefing. Well, I was telling you somefing about 'aekel, when this 'ere infidel came and interrupted me.....you didn't.....yes you did.....and if you are not satisfied with my lecture, why don't you get a platform of your own instead of interrupting me and making yourself a public nuisance.....we don't want to hear your Atheistic rubbish.....and if it comes to that, what did

Rennen say?.....do you know? Of course he doesn't—he don't know nothing—and then comes 'ere trying to break up this meeting. And, ladies and gentlemen, there's one thing they never tell you—and that is, what Strose said about Jesus and Mill, and Lecky, and Tom Paine. I've read all their books and they all agree that there never was such a being like Jesus—I mean such a great teacher and so meek and gentle, whose gospel was all love, and a blessed waste of time it was to read all those books; I'll sell 'em for waste paper for the best offer.....No offers?.....I'm not surprised.....why they are all exploded theories, every one of 'em. 'oo takes any notice of Blatchford and 'aeckel now-a-days? Not a single scientific man in the whole blooming world, not one! I 'old in my 'and one of the greatest books ever written. *The Religious Beliefs of Scientists*. In this 'ere book you'll find 'undreds of the greatest men of science in the world, 'oo 'ave personally written to Mr. Tabrum, the author—'ere 'e is—each and every one of them testifying to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. There's Stokes and Kelvin and Newton and Fraser—that makes you a bit sick, doesn't it?—Fraser, 'im as wrote the *Golden Bough*—a book as infidels are always quoting and never reading—ha! ha!—which makes 'em think that Fraser is one of *them*, which 'e's not, as 'e's in *our* camp, like Tom Paine, the drunkard. There's the book, and if it doesn't convert you, after reading it, well.....well, *you know what I think of yer*. And then look at Foote, 'im as did time for blasphemy and dirty pictures.....never mind what Lord Coleridge said.....'oo's Lord Coleridge? And I'll tell you a story about Foote, and I'll give £50 to anyone who proves it isn't true.....all right, don't show such impatience.....you Atheists don't know 'ow to take your medicine like men.....well, this Foote—'e wans't getting enough money from the *Free*—never mind what the name of the paper is—so 'e went before 'is society, what kept 'im, and told 'em if they didn't immediately raise 'is salary he'd turn Christian and could easily become a bishop, and so to avoid the scandal they did so, and that's your Foote. Where did I get that precious yarn from?—well, I'm glad it is a precious yarn, ha! ha!—never you mind. Why didn't Foote say where's your literature, what great authors 'ave you got? Foote—bah! Look at our infidel 'ere—not a smile on 'is face—all these 'ere Atheists are glum blokes; it takes a Christian to laugh, and that's why you all come to 'ear us on this platform. Look at Darwin—didn't 'e confess 'e couldn't read a novel or go to the theatre or laugh? But Darwin wasn't a Atheist.....as Lady 'ope proved in one of her books. That's a surprise to you, but you always learn something from this platform—that's why you always crowd round it. And then didn't Darwin recommend the Bible to be taught in schools.....what's that—it was 'uxley? Well, it doesn't matter which—thank 'eaven their materialistic philosophy of forty years ago is fully exploded now. I'll tell you 'ow these 'ere infidels interpret the Bible. They never read it like any other book—why, Foote says when it says in the Bible 'I'm the door,' it means Jesus is a *real* door, ha! ha! and when it says 'I'm the vine,' it means Jesus is a bunch of grapes, ha! ha! Why, when you're 'aving tea in the kitchen with your missus and she says, 'Hedley,' ha! ha! 'is the kettle boiling?'—does she mean the *kettle* boils? of course not, the silly chumps, and that's how infidels interpret God's 'oly word, *Bible 'andbook* or no *Bible 'andbook*. In my next lecture I'll give you some more of the silly teachings of this 'ere Atheism, which is the laughing stock of the world, and all the 'arm it's doing, and may the Lord bless you all, amen."

And, as that high souled defender of England's free speech, Mr. Justice Avory, would say, that's that.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops.

Neither France, Italy, nor Germany propose to limit their expenditure on education. This is the only country that suggests that step as a method of economy. If the English people really cared for education they would begin by limiting the expenditure in other directions, on the Monarchy, on the Army, the Navy, and see in an increased expenditure on a sound system of education the surest method of preventing the spending of money on the fighting forces. But the English people do not care for education. It is largely true that the "lower" classes send their children to school because there is an Act of Parliament compelling them to do so, and the "upper" class because education of a sort is a mark of social distinction. Hence the vogue of those wretched institutions—Private Schools—manned by indifferent teachers and turning out imperfectly educated children. It prevents their children mixing with the "lower" classes. And we have the same miserable spirit repeated in the greater schools of Eton, Harrow, and Rugby. It may safely be said that a very large number of parents who send their children to these schools are not primarily concerned with education, but with getting their children into "classy" schools that will count as a method of social advancement afterwards. And it is unfortunately true that to be a "public schoolboy" is to pave the way for a well-paid job in many directions. We are a nation of snobs when all is said and done.

The worst feature of the proposed economy in education is the increasing the size of classes. If one imagines the task of attending to fifty children at once they will have some notion of what it means to a teacher. What it must mean in practice is that instead of paying that amount of attention to individual children that will ensure willing attention to work, and so make discipline follow automatically, a teacher will, in most cases, be driven to maintain discipline by a greater or less amount of bullying, with its accompaniments of slyness and deception on the part of the child. But we do not think of the child in these matters. A century ago England was murdering children in factories for the sake of filling the pockets of the factory owners. To-day we propose an attack on the mental health of the child so that we may spend more on an army, a navy, and a number of social parasites that we should be far better without.

It is gratifying to learn that even though it is proposed to enlarge the classes in the elementary schools to fifty pupils, and teachers set the almost impossible task of adequately training children under such conditions, there is no suggestion that the staffs in the military and naval schools will be reduced. At Sandhurst the Army has a staff of 562 to 700 cadets, at Dartmouth 529 for 445 cadets, and in the Air Force 6,201 officers and men train 6,501 others. Of course it may be argued that the intelligence displayed by these trained men in after life proves the uselessness of so many teachers, but it looks far more as though whatever happens nothing must be done, and nothing will be done, to injure the interests of the armament rings and to restrict the number of "jobs" which the "services" offer. Now if only the schools could offer the same openings for the sons and daughters of the upper middle class and of "society" things might be very different.

Mr. J. Eisdale Motson, the present member for Gainsborough, was written by one of our readers as to his attitude on the Blasphemy laws. He replied "That so long as England remains legally a Christian country, I do not see how blasphemy can be permitted." We are not sure whether Mr. Motson means that so long as England is a Christian country one must not expect Christians to behave like enlightened and civilized beings. But it is quite clear that so long as Mr. Motson thinks there is a majority of voters who would prefer the Blasphemy laws to remain, he will do nothing to secure their removal. To this type of politician there is no such thing

as right and wrong, there are only votes to be lost or votes to be gained. So we advise our friends to keep an eye on Mr. Motson when he again puts up for election.

The *North Mail* views a revival of prosecution for blasphemy with "misgivings," and adds:—

In these days of liberty of thought and speech, it is an exceedingly delicate task to set limits to the extent to which the weapon of ridicule may be used by the sceptic without offending the susceptibilities of those whose creed is assailed. Criticism which to the broad-minded and cultured would appear legitimate, even if distasteful, would afford ample ground, in the mind of the bigot, for invoking the aid of the law as a means of repression.

The fact of the matter is that the Blasphemy law is a direct encouragement to bigotry. The law simply guarantees the bigot that his intolerance shall be protected and gratified. And it makes the most ignorant and the most bigoted members of the community the judges who shall decide whether a man is to be imprisoned or remain at liberty.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says that Spiritualism was sent by God as an answer to the Materialism of the Huxley-Haeckel school. This is hardly worthy of the author of Sherlock Holmes. Spiritualism was about long before Huxley and Haeckel wrote. And, besides, if God went out of his way to send Spiritualism as a reply to Huxley and Haeckel, would it not have been easier to have stopped Huxley and Haeckel when they commenced writing. These defenders of God are very amusing. All they do is to picture God getting into one trouble after another, and then inventing stupid and quite inadequate methods of getting straight again. Heine called God the Aristophanes of the skies. If we are to be guided by what men such as Conan Doyle say, the Handy Andy of the skies would be a far better title.

The Rev. A. E. Garvie, Principal of New College, London, has addressed a letter to the Press pointing out the value of the Bible as literature, and suggesting that more time should be allowed in the public schools for its study. We do not doubt that the Rev. A. E. Garvie would wish day-schools to be transformed into training colleges for manufacturing Christians; but he will have a difficulty in persuading parents that the "Song of Solomon" and the "Book of Ezekiel" form suitable literature for little boys and girls.

Damage to the extent of £15,000 was caused by fire which destroyed Woodchurch Congregational Chapel, Birkenhead. During their work the firemen were severely handicapped by the frost. The tender care of Providence is not seen in this matter.

The reliability of Jesus Christ as a guide is amusingly shown if one contrasts the views he is claimed to support in the world of politics. On the one side we are having just now frantic appeals being made from certain quarters on the ground that Christianity alone can protect society against the advance of Socialism and other revolutionary doctrines. And on the other side we have that curious creature, the Christian Socialist, claiming that in the Jesus of the Gospels is a forerunner of the gospel of Socialism. It never seems to dawn upon these people that when the same person's teachings can be taken as a sanction for widely different teachings they are demonstrably of little use to anyone. The first requisite in a teacher is for him to make his meaning plain. When it can be made to mean anything the less one has to do with it the better.

The truth of the matter is that the Jesus of the Gospels—assuming his actual existence—was not, and could not, be at all interested in what we know as social questions. The character there is concerned with the purely religious question of the salvation of one's own soul, and it is religion in its morally lowest form. A teacher who

depended upon his ability to call to his aid supernatural powers, who held and taught some of the lowest and most degrading superstitions, can never be a safe guide for a people who wish to be thought civilized. And it says little for either the courage or the honesty of so many of our political and social leaders that they should so harp upon the Jesus of the Gospels. Frankly, they are either playing upon the ignorant sentimentalism of the people, or they are exhibiting their own inability to think sanely and seriously. And in that circumstance lies the source of many of the evils of which the people are at present complaining.

Some of our judges seem bent on doing their utmost to bring the law and its administrators into the utmost contempt. We have had the savagery of Justice Avory in the Gott case, the stupidity of the Lord Chief Justice with his classification of blasphemy as a dangerous crime—the same judge that, as a correspondent reminds us, made himself notorious for a whole series of flogging sentences in 1908. And now we have Mr. Justice Horridge refusing to allow a young man, who was said to be suffering from strain, to sit during his trial, and who explained that we were getting too delicate towards people who are being tried. We may remind Justice Horridge that he occupies the only comfortable seat in the court, and that while a judge may be severe there is no reason whatever why he should be brutal. And it is a form of torture to compel a man, even though a prisoner, to stand during the whole of a trial, merely because he is accused of some offence. As we have said before it must be the ridiculous costume.

We are glad to see that there is at least one magistrate who has got beyond the humbug of saying, when they are called on to administer a ridiculous law, "It is our duty to administer the law as it stands." Everyone knows that when a law is unjust or ridiculous a judge has it within his power to tone its more obnoxious features, and that the formula is an elaborate hypocrisy. The judge believes in the injustice, but lacks the courage to say so boldly. We note with the greater pleasure that when several shopkeepers were summoned by the police for selling sweets, etc., on Sunday the magistrates imposed a penny fine on each "to show our contempt for the proceedings." They also instructed the Clerk to write the Home Secretary as to their inability to carry out so obsolete an Act as that of the Lord's Day Observance. Doubtless if Mr. Shortt feels that he has nothing to lose by acting sensibly in the matter he will move. If not he will be quite ready to justify this Act as he was to justify the Blasphemy law at the cost of deliberately misrepresenting the facts.

A correspondent in a daily paper draws attention to the fact that, whilst appeals are being made everywhere on behalf of "the starving clergy" the multiplication of bishoprics goes on merrily, and the new ecclesiastics are being allotted excellent salaries. The original disciples may have cast their nets into the sea; the modern priests drag the sees with their nets.

The *Birkenhead News*, reviewing Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on *Blasphemy*, says that for the most part "a difficult and delicate subject is written logically and with reason," but it thinks the author goes too far in describing the trial of Jesus Christ as a blasphemy prosecution, and the crucifixion of Christ as "an alleged act of intolerance." But we are not responsible for the first part. It is the New Testament which says he was accused of blasphemy, and we may presume there is nothing wrong in saying that it was an act of intolerance. To say it is "alleged" is no more than saying that the writer does not accept the truth of the story. But it may be that the reviewer means that it was not intolerance because those who put Jesus to death were only carrying out parts of God's plan of salvation. And that is sound doctrine, if Christianity be true. For Jesus came to be crucified. It was part of a prepared plan, and every Christian should thank the Jews of that time for helping all the Christians of subsequent generations to be saved.

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.

G. W. (Victoria).—Glad to hear from you, and next time hope for better news. We value your very high opinion of *Theism or Atheism?* as we know that you do not either form opinions or express them lightly. The paper is being sent you. If it does not come to hand regularly please let us know. Do not trouble about the other matter.

WILL E. B. who recently inserted an advertisement in these columns please send her address to this office?

WE have to thank those of our readers who have sent us lists of names and addresses to which the pamphlet on blasphemy is to be sent. They will be attended to as early as possible.

MR. WALTER MANN writes: "The forces of reaction seem to be in the ascendant, we have gone back fifty years since the war. Three years ago I should have smiled at the idea of a sentence of nine months' hard labour for such poor weak jokes as Gott perpetrated, and still more at the idea of the sentence being upheld by the Lord Chief Justice of England! Christianity is dying, but it can still kick. Our reply must be to attack the monster still more energetically."

J. A. HUMPHREYS.—Your notice of the Annual Dinner did not reach this office until Tuesday evening—too late for use in the issue for February 12.

W. A. WILLIAMS.—A life of G. W. Foote, which would have to be built up from his published writings, would require far more time than we can at present give the subject. We should like to see it done, but we simply cannot undertake any extra work at present. We shall hope to see you at Liverpool at the end of March.

E. DAWSON.—Thanks for addresses. Shall hope to meet you in the flesh one day.

A. EISEY.—Those of your Christian friends who are so anxious to see God's face might sometimes ask themselves whether God will be equally pleased to look on theirs. But that is just like that type of Christian—he never stops to consider the feelings of the other fellow.

R. HALLAM.—We appreciate your high opinion of our reply to Mr. Shortt. But he is, after all, but small fry mentally. When a political accident throws these mediocrities into a position of importance they are apt to imagine that it is sheer worth that has brought them there. We thank others of our readers who have written us appreciative letters on the same topic.

W. MACKENZIE.—Thanks for what you have done with the clergy in your district. Keep the game going. We must show the Lord Chief Justice that we really are "dangerous"—so dangerous that he may soon be prohibited through a change in the law from using his position for the voicing of stupidities.

THEOS.—Our opinion of Spiritualism is given in *The Other Side of Death*, which is published this week.

S. BEARDALL.—Sorry to hear you have been unwell. We are sending you on extra copies of the *Blasphemy* pamphlet. Shall hope to see you at Nottingham.

B. A. BAYFIELD.—Too late for use this week, but will do for our next issue.

"MUSICIAN."—Several letters are awaiting you at the *Freethinker* office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 19) Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow and will lecture in the North Saloon of the City Hall at 11.30 on "The Foundations of Faith." In the evening at 6.30 he will lecture in the Grand City Hall on "The Other Side of Death, with an examination of Spiritualism." As this is a very large hall special care has been taken with the advertising, and we hope it will have the effect of introducing a large number of newcomers to the meetings. Admission to both meetings is by silver collection.

On Monday evening Mr. Cohen will pay a flying visit to Motherwell, and will lecture there on "What is the Use of Christianity?" leaving directly after the meeting for London so that he may get to the office on Tuesday. He will then be ready for a night's rest, even if he hasn't earned it.

By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers Mr. Cohen's new book, *The Other Side of Death; A critical examination of the belief in a Future Life with a Study of Spiritualism* will be published. The latter is, of course, undertaken from the standpoint of the new psychology, and we think we may say will prove of service to those who wish to have some inkling of what really lies at the root of this much discussed subject. The book is published in paper at 2s., postage 2d., and cloth bound 3s. 6d., postage 3d. We are expecting a large sale for this work, and it may be taken as forming a fitting sequel to *Theism or Atheism?* and *A Grammar of Freethought*. A formal review of the work will appear in due course.

We are pleased to announce that the Rev. Walter Walsh is taking for his subject at the Steinway Hall, Lower Seymour Street, Portman Square to-day (February 19), "Repeal the Blasphemy Laws." The lecture is at 11 o'clock in the morning, and some of our readers will, we have no doubt, be interested in hearing Dr. Walsh give his views on the subject. One thing they may be sure of, Dr. Walsh is a fighter and a man of conviction, and whatever he has to say will be worth the hearing.

Mr. Lloyd had a good meeting at Swansea on Sunday last, and although the questions asked showed little trace of opposition they were unusually pertinent and interesting. Part of the questioning turned on the subject of religious teaching in public schools—a particularly urgent question in Wales at the moment—and the result of what was said led to the audience passing a unanimous resolution condemning the suggested concordat between the Welsh Churches on this matter.

Leicester friends will please note that Mr. Lloyd will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, to-day (February 19), at 6.30. We trust that there will be a record gathering of both Christians and Freethinkers. The lecture is certain to be worthy of their attendance.

Mr. T. A. Jackson contributes a lengthy article against the Blasphemy laws to the *Communist*. There are probably few subjects on which there exists so much agreement among men of otherwise widely differing opinions as on this topic. We suppose the reason is that all men who have any respect for freedom, no matter what their opinions may be on social, ethical, or religious matters, detest these mediæval obstacles in the way of freedom of speech. And so long as freedom of speech exists no one need despair of society getting ultimately to the truth on most matters of importance.

An illustration of this, not by any means the only one, is furnished by a letter from the Rev. W. B. Graham, who addresses a letter to the *New Statesman* from Arkham Vicarage, Penrith. After saying that the Blasphemy laws invite the very antagonism they are designed to prevent, he adds:—

I hold no brief, of course, for Mr. Gott, whose works and methods, so far as I know them, are calculated to disgust fair-minded men. But so must the methods of a great many Protestant fanatics likewise in their attacks on Roman Catholicism. Yet we do not prosecute these for blasphemy! It certainly appears to me that blasphemy as such should only be punished when it appears likely to lead to a breach of the peace, as not infrequently happened in the anti-Roman and anti-High Church campaigns of the late Mr. Kensit. Otherwise, so long as other people's (to us) unpleasant religious convictions are expressed in what an impartial judge might call a fair and straightforward manner, we ought to be content to endure them, knowing that we shall have an equal right to counter these opinions by reasonably stating our objections to them, if we wish to do so. But if we insist on "bludgeoning" such convictions, we must expect "reprisals" sooner or later. And, in any case, there will remain in our opponents' minds a rancorous sense of resentment against us which will more than counter any attempt on our part to win over such opponents by reasoned appeals. And in the minds of the public, whom most we hope to influence, there will be a sense of unfairness on our part. On this account I for one, who, whether "sensible" or not, do believe in the truth of the Christian religion, wish to publicly dissociate myself from these unfair and antiquated laws against blasphemy.

We think that Mr. Graham should join the Blasphemy Abolition Society. The Committee would, we are sure, welcome his adhesion.

Our readers will be pleased to know that the *Blasphemy* pamphlet is doing its work, although that work is only commencing if we get the hearty support of our readers. Newspaper reviews are coming along, and what is more, expressions of support from clergymen. The following, for example, is from the Rev. E. S. Shuttleworth, of Kingston Hill, Surrey:—

I thank you for your pamphlet which you have been good enough to send me on *Blasphemy*, and I think it is only right to say that on this question I am quite at one with you. I always feel ashamed when I read of a prosecution under these laws. My reason, of course, is that liberty of speech is precious. No one need listen, no one need read, unless they like. I also feel very strongly that the Christian faith can stand—and stand firmly—without such so-called protection. Years ago my brother, Professor Shuttleworth, stood up for Mr. Bradlaugh. He believed he was unfairly treated: so he was. Of course, your point of view is different from mine, but I believe in honesty. To criticise any position, it seems to me, one must get to know the point of view and look at all opinions at their best—trying to get into the minds of people, and not superficially condemning them. I am confident that you feel like that, and have tried to see our point of view.

Rev. D. H. Hislop, of Milngavie, also writes: "My own view of the 'Blasphemy Laws,' so-called, is that they are stupid, unfair, as well as harmful to the Christian faith." The Rev. J. W. Coutts, also of Milngavie, says, "I should certainly support a repeal of the Blasphemy laws." We trust our readers will do their best to see that the clergy in every district in Britain are well canvassed on this matter. A complete list of all in favour of a repeal of the Blasphemy laws would perhaps convince even Mr. Shortt that he need not have run away from his opinion. There might not be so much to lose from straightforwardness after all.

At its last meeting the Committee for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws made arrangements for the introduction of a Bill into Parliament at the earliest moment for the repeal of the statute and common law on the subject. It was also resolved to print at once a form of question to be put to candidates at all Parliamentary elections, and particularly at the expected general election. For this purpose the Committee desires the names of friends in every constituency in Britain who are prepared to question candidates. We must again impress upon all our friends to take this matter seriously if they wish to bring the agitation to a triumphant issue. It is no use some standing on one side feeling that someone else will do the work. *All must help*, and the more in each constituency that are ready to help the better. There cannot be too many. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner has kindly consented to look after this branch of the work, and those who are ready to help will please send their names to her at 23 Streathbourne Road, Tooting Common, London, S. W. She will then forward the necessary form to them. In order to do this work thoroughly a register must be compiled of the questioners in each constituency. Hence the need for their sending their names to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. But we must get to work *at once*. And none ought to permit themselves to stand aside. Freethinkers will get justice when they show they are determined to have it.

We note a review of Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on the blasphemy question in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, which cites with apparent approval the advice to leave all matters of taste to the corrective of public opinion. We shall be obliged if our readers will keep us supplied with any comments they come across in any of the papers they read.

Mr. A. D. McLaren paid his first visit to Manchester last Sunday and delivered two addresses, his subject in the afternoon being, "Is Religion Necessary?" and in the evening "A Freethinker Looks at the World." There was a good attendance at the latter, and the questions at the conclusion showed the interest with which the address was followed. Manchester is feeling the present industrial depression severely, but with the return of normal conditions we feel sure that there is a promising future ahead for Freethought in this district.

We are pleased to learn that the Annual Dinner of the Birmingham Branch was quite a success. There was a good attendance and an excellent programme of songs, etc., which was arranged by Mr. W. Simpson, Jr. The toasts of the N. S. S. and its President and the Birmingham Branch and its Lecturers were warmly honoured.

To-day (February 19) the Branch resumes its lectures at the Picture House, Station Street, at 7 p.m. The lecturer will be Mr. F. E. Willis, who will speak on "The Freethinkers' Struggle for Liberty." We trust that the Birmingham friends will roll up in force.

MORALS AND MIND.

Imagination or mind employed in prophetically imaging forth its objects, is that faculty of human nature on which every gradation of its progress, nay, every, the minutest, change, depends. Pain or pleasure, if subtly analysed, will be found to consist entirely in prospect. The only distinction between the selfish man and the virtuous man is, that the imagination of the former is confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumstance. In this sense, wisdom and virtue may be said to be inseparable, and criteria of each other. Selfishness is the offspring of ignorance and mistake; it is the portion of unreflecting infancy, and savage solitude, or of those whom toil or evil occupations have blunted or rendered torpid; disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination, and has an intimate connection with all the arts which add ornament, or dignity, or power, or stability to the social state of man. Virtue is thus entirely a refinement of civilized life.—*Shelley*.

The Verbal Inspiration of the Classics.

VERY often when looking for one thing another, which had been mislaid for a long time, or the existence of which had not been known, is discovered.

It was in this way that I came across a curiosity of literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I was not particularly regarding the mental attitude of the time, having a much more tangible enquiry in view, but, after reading quite a number of books purported to be highly technical, I had forced upon me the very complete change in the fashion in which we regard mechanical projects or scientific problems from the view of our forefathers.

To-day we are not conspicuous for our sense of reverence; if anything, reverence is practically out of date. We are shrewdly critical before everything that is presented to us. We examine it carefully before we accept its face value, and we want to be quite certain that it is what it seems to be before we give it our approval.

In the seventeenth century the majority of people, even educated people, were very reverent towards the work which had been done in earlier times. They regarded the acceptance of the dogma formulated as an important factor in the stability of the time. They had a much keener appreciation of the past than we have; where we are sufficient unto ourselves they were devoted to the worship of tradition.

In spite of the fact that many wars were waged in the eighteenth century it was a period of very great development in mechanical invention, and the increase in the number of enclosures changed the whole system of farming. The educated world was not particularly affected, except, possibly, in regard to its financial advantage. Wonder was piled upon wonder, but the spread of knowledge was slow, and the time occupied in the development of any particular device or system was very much longer than it is to-day.

For instance, the period of invention was spread over fifty years. The system of enclosure which had been gradually increasing throughout three centuries, drew to a climax during the last fifty years of the eighteenth century.

All this appearance of stability, in spite of the insidious changes which were taking place, tended towards the acceptance of things as they were, rather than a fer-rid criticism of them as they were and a looking forward to them as they were to be.

To-day the whole world is in a state of flux. Ideas rise and decline with the rapidity of a shooting star, and they are consequently not accepted in the slow and ponderous fashion of our forefathers. Each one is subjected to a fire of criticism which renders it difficult of acceptance.

The writers on agricultural problems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show a slow but certain development of invention consequent upon a gradually changing system of farming, but, even while they write about these new instruments, they are calling all the time upon the wisdom of the ancients of 1,500 or 2,000 years before their time. Each time they wish to bring an argument to a precise conclusion they quote some classic writer on the subject, and they seem to have thought that because they have quoted a classic writer verbatim they have absolutely clinched their argument. It is quite clear that their regard for the inspiration of the classical writers was little, if any, less than their regard for the inspiration of the Bible, although they themselves would not have acknowledged it. An erroneous quotation would never have had the same effect upon their opponents as a correct one. The essential thing was to find a sentence applicable

to their argument which could be quoted in the original language. When that had been done the process of reasoning was complete.

To-day we have no such idea of the verbal inspiration of the classics. Very few modern engineers or scientists would cite a classical phrase in support of their contentions. They would probably be regarded with suspicion if they did, and our attitude towards theories and speculation is such that, as I believe has been stated, the science of to-day becomes the non-science of to-morrow. G. E. FUSSELL.

The Unitary Theory of Matter.

MANY of the early Greek philosophers postulated a primal element, or "potential matter," which they supposed consisted of parts which, when grouped in different ways, produced the various kinds of matter considered by them to be elemental. The philosopher Anaximenes considered air to be the primal element; Herakleitos, fire; Phcrekides, earth, and Thales, water.

In various forms this unitary theory of matter has survived down to the present day.

Isaac Newton, for example, wrote:—

It seems probable to me, that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, movable particles.....These primitive particles, being solids, are incomparably harder than any porous body compounded of them, even so very hard as never to wear or break in pieces.....The changes of corporeal things are to be placed only in the various separations and new associations and motions of these permanent particles.

And, about 1815, Prout wrote: "We may almost consider the primal matter of the ancients to be realized in hydrogen." According to his theory the elements are different aggregates of the atoms of primordial hydrogen; *i.e.*, hydrogen is the stuff out of which the material universe is made.

The elements, of course, are substances which have never been resolved into simpler components. Much evidence has been accumulated in recent years which makes it difficult to deny, however, that the various elements have been formed from one homogeneous, simple, primal matter, called by G. Hinrichs *panlogen*, by J. L. G. Meinecke *urstloff*, and by W. Crookes *protyle*. This protyle is "matter generalized, stripped of its distinctions, the same from whatever source derived; it is matter in potency rather than in act; intangible, inaccessible to sense perception, probably indifferent to the solicitations of gravity."

One hypothesis which seeks to reconcile the observed facts and experimental data with a unitary conception of matter is as follows: The elements have been developed by the condensation of a primitive matter, the different elements having been, as Crookes put it, evolved by a kind of struggle for existence. Those elements not adapted to their environment have disappeared, and are called *extinct elements*. Other elements—the *rare elements*—have survived only on a limited scale, whilst the *common elements* predominate because conditions have been favourable to their formation and preservation.

Not only does this hypothesis seem to accord with our general ideas concerning the operation of the universal laws of evolution, there is also a vast mass of very suggestive evidence for its truth. I will briefly review some of this.

The International Table of Atomic Weights (1916) contains 83 elements, 43 of which are whole numbers within one-tenth of a unit. This approximation of the atomic weights to whole numbers can hardly be due to chance—indeed, Dr. Mellor suggests that "the probability of this occurring is exceedingly small—something like one in 20,000 millions."

Moreover, the elements can be arranged in order of increasing atomic weight, and then fall naturally into closely related families or groups having like qualities. This is known as the *Periodic Classification* of the elements. I hope to be able to deal fully with this subject in another article, but for the time being it is sufficient to say that all the properties of the elements appear to be a periodic function of their atomic weights. That is to say, there is a steady development, of some sort, of all the characteristics and properties in order of increasing atomic weight. Speaking of this Dr. Mellor says:—

The periodic law dimly foreshadows an identical origin or common parentage of families of elements. A study of the alkali metals, the metals of the alkaline earths, the halogens, etc., makes it highly probable that the different elements of one family, at least, have been formed by the conglomeration of monads or atomcules formed of the same primal matter so as to build up ordinary atoms of different sizes or shapes, and that the evolution has progressed from homogeneity to heterogeneity. In other words, said C. R. A. Wright (1873), the so-called elements are allotropic modifications of a primitive matter, and they differ from one another in the amount of latent energy they contain, per unit mass.

Another suggestive fact is the manner in which certain closely related elements occur in proximity to one another in the half-mile crust of the earth. Although no disturbing natural agency has been at work sorting them into like sets of elements, certain groups nearly always occur in juxtaposition. For example, Cobalt and Nickel occupy the same group in the periodic table, and cobalt is never quite free from nickel, and *vice versa*; Zinc and Cadmium are close together in the periodic classification, and are always associated in nature; silver is almost always associated with lead ores and gold, and the rare earths are found together usually. These associations cannot be due entirely to chance, for the elements in question are not plentifully distributed, nor have they any marked chemical affinity for one another. "Consequently, it has been suggested that the elements in question were formed from some common material under almost identical conditions, and where slight variations in the conditions led to the almost simultaneous formation of closely related elements. Environment has determined the path of the evolution of the elements."

Further circumstantial evidence for the unitary theory has been obtained from the groupings of the spectral lines, the magnetic perturbation of the spectral lines; the phosphorescent spectra of the meta-elements; the spectra of the stars and nebulae; electron discharges in attenuated gases; and radio-activity. It is outside the scope of this article to deal with those, but I mention them to show the mass and variety of evidence which supports the unitary theory.

But some more detailed mention must be made of the evidence obtained from the spectra of stars and nebulae.

"The sun, stars, and nebulae," says A. M. Clerke,—

form so many celestial laboratories where the mature and mutual relations of the chemical elements may be tried by more stringent tests than sublunary conditions afford. In the very hottest stars (estimated temperature 25,000 degrees), *e.g.*, Beta-Cruis, comparatively few chemical elements can be detected, while in the cooler red stars, *e.g.*, Betelgeuse, the number of spectral lines is comparatively large and a large number of elements are present. New elements appear to be introduced at each stage in the cooling of hot stars, so that elements which were non-existent in the hotter stars make their appearance in the cooler stars, and a few elements disappear in passing from the hot to the cooler stars. In the hotter stars little more than hydrogen can be detected; then follow hot stars with calcium, magnesium, and a few other

elements superadded; then come cooler stars with more complex spectra corresponding with a greater variety of elements. The planets, of which our own is a type, are among the cooler orbs. If the different suns and stars be arranged in a series *the order of the appearance of the elements in the cooling stars is approximately the order of their increasing complexity as deduced from the magnitude of their atomic weights*. The lightest elements alone appear in the hotter stars. These facts fit very well into the hypothesis that the matter of which the stars are made passes through a real change in the nature of the constituent elements, and that there is a progressive tendency of the elements to assume more stable forms in passing from the hotter to the cooler stars. This corresponds with the assumption that the atoms are built of particles which form more and more complex aggregates as the temperature falls..... In a general way, however, the elements appear in the cooling stars in the order of their increasing atomic weights. The stars may thus be arranged in groups corresponding with different stages in their development. The hydrogen and helium stars pass by insensible graduations into stars of the solar type, and finally into deep red stars. (*Modern Inorganic Chemistry*, Dr. J. W. Mellor.)

Again, the spectra of the gaseous and, therefore, presumably younger nebulae consist of three lines, corresponding to helium, hydrogen and some unknown element.

As the nebulae grow older and more compact, more lines, corresponding to other elements appear.

These spectra are supposed to represent clusters of corpuscles more stable than the rest. Hence, according to J. N. Lockyer's evolution hypothesis, the spectra of a properly arranged series of stars and nebulae indicate that *the Chemical atoms have been grown during the cooling of the primal ultra-atomic gas much as visible rain drops grow from invisible water vapour*. Before hydrogen¹ appeared a whole series of lighter elements were probably formed by the gradual condensation of the cooling "fire-mist," and then passed into the heavier and more complex elements as the temperature fell still lower (Mellor).

If the unitary theory be correct we may suppose that long before the earth was formed a kind of ultra-gaseous protyle was diffused throughout space, and had a temperature inconceivably hotter than anything known on the earth to-day. In the course of time, some process akin to cooling reduced the temperature of the protyle, and it condensed into material atoms. Naturally, the simplest elements, being most closely allied to the primitive protyle, condensed first. Thus, hydrogen and helium, with their low atomic weights (1.008 and 4.00 referred to oxygen 16), came into existence. Then came other more complex elements, until finally uranium and radium were formed (atomic weights 238.2 and 226.0, respectively). We know of no element with a greater atomic weight, and consequently presumably a more complex structure than radium. As the temperature continued to fall the earliest formed elements began to unite among themselves and produced chemical compounds.

But a full discussion of the formation of compounds must await another article. A full consideration of the fascinating subject of radio-activity, too, is beyond my present task, although it has much bearing upon the subject of this article. But in conclusion let me quote from R. W. Hutchinson's *Magnetism and Electricity*:—

In the study of radio-activity we have witnessed the gradual "breaking down" of the heavy radio-active elements into lighter ones with the ejection of helium atoms and electrons, and as there are indications that possibly all substances are "active" to some extent the suggestion may be made that, on

¹ Hydrogen is the lightest element known to the chemist.

this earth, all matter is possibly breaking down into helium (the cautious physics student will add "and possibly hydrogen") with the emission of electrons. Now, in the study of astronomy it is found that the newest (hottest) stars are made up of helium and hydrogen (and two other unknown elements), whilst as older and still older stars are examined, heavier and still heavier elements make their appearance. Is it possible, therefore, that in the "earth's beginnings" the elements as we know them now were gradually built up from these light elements, helium and hydrogen, to undergo again a gradual breakdown into these light elements on the earth as we know it? To quote Mr. J. A. Crowther (*Molecular Physics*): "The question suggests itself, are the elements merely a part of a great cycle of growth and decay? Is the atom born, to grow old, decay and die? Are new atoms being formed in the secret places of the universe to take the place of those that have passed away?"

W. H. MORRIS.

Book Chat.

NOTES ON RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

A FEW weeks ago a report came through from St. Petersburg that the folk-novelist, revolutionary and Free-thinker, Vladimir Korolenko, had died in December last. He was one of a small group of writers (the others were, Chekhov, Garshin and Gorky) who relieved the monotony of what Mr. Maurice Baring calls "the period of literary and political stagnation," a period which extends from the death of Tourgueniev to the revolution of 1905. Korolenko was born in a small town in Western Russia, received his earliest education there, and at the age of nineteen entered the Moscow Agricultural Academy, from which he was expelled for taking part in a student's movement. Later he was exiled first to the Urals, then to Western Siberia, and afterwards to an encampment many miles from Yakutsk. When he returned to Russia in 1886 he was not allowed to live in any university town. He had to make his home at Nizhni-Novgorod, living as best he could by journalism and literature.

Korolenko's earliest and best stories were built up from his impressions of Siberian life. As might be expected he suffered from the unintelligent brutalities of the literary censor, until, by repeated experiments, he became a master in the art of saying one thing and suggesting another. This is one of the peculiarities of revolutionary literature. The suppression of free thinking and free speaking forces the thoughts inward, and the mind of the reader rendered agile and subtle by the demands made upon it, has no difficulty in recognizing general ideas under individual and concrete signs. This, I take it, is precisely the philosophic quality which gives a certain artistic value to even the most ordinary Russian story, which is always something more than a mere anecdote. In the finest Slavonic fiction the symbolism is strengthened by imagination, verisimilitude, and that indescribable something which we call charm.

Some of my readers may remember the wonderful pictures of Siberian life, *Makar's Dream*, *A Sakhalin Convict* and *Forest Murmurs*, which were translated sometime in the early 'nineties. They were equal to the early Tourgueniev studies in folk-fiction, and that to those who know the beauty and symbolic meaning of the *Sportsman's Sketches* is, indeed, great praise. But Korolenko had in him a vein of sentimentalism which interfered with the veracity of his psychology. He was unlucky in making a great hit, especially in Europe, with a rather mawkishly pathetic story, *The Blind Musician*. After this experiment in the art of sinking he seems to have done nothing worthy of his talent. If he had been harder, if he had had a touch of irony and cynicism he would have equalled Gorky, whom, however, he excels in sheer beauty and atmospheric truth.

The outstanding figure of the "period of stagnation" is the novelist and dramatist Anton Chekhov who died in 1904. He was a free-thinking doctor of medicine, a profound observer of that dismal tragedy or tragi-comedy which we call human life, an ironist with a touch of kindly or sardonic humour, and an all-embracing humanity. The temperamental and unthinking optimist will, no doubt, object to the general tone of the stories as too grey, and complain of the absence of those primary colours which delight the children of larger growth; but for those of us who have thought and suffered at all deeply, life is, on the whole, a sorry business. If it is impossible for the pessimist to get any pleasure out of it, any substantial and direct pleasure, I mean, he has at least the excitement of trying to understand it. To understand anything in this sublunary world is surely to come as near as we can to loving it. Chekhov is often compared with Maupassant. Obviously there are points of resemblance. They both preferred the short story to the full length novel, and brought to perfection the technique of a difficult and delightful form of fiction. But there is one important difference. Chekhov has a more delicate discrimination in moral values. He never irritates us as Maupassant does in *Une Partie de Campagne* by passing off a cad for a gentleman.

Any of my readers who have not yet made the acquaintance of Chekhov cannot do better than get a volume of his stories published by Mr. C. W. Daniel, *My Life and Other Stories* (7s. net). The seven stories fairly represent the Russian novelist's method and philosophic qualities, and unlike so much modern work, that of O. Henry for instance, they will bear, and indeed call for, repeated reading.

In striking contrast to the humorous, restrained and ironical temperament of Chekhov is the turbulent and questioning spirit of Andreiev who died about three years ago. Leonid Andreiev was born in 1871 of bourgeois parents, and brought up under the cruel discipline of poverty. In Russia, as the reader may know, higher education is not the privilege of the wealthy, and we are therefore not surprised to find that Andreiev attended the lectures of two of the great universities, and kept himself in the bare necessities of life by giving private lessons on absurdly low terms. Not seldom did he pursue his studies at the expense of his stomach. In 1897 he received a law degree, and if he had had clients he would no doubt have made a name in the Moscow law courts. He had, however, to fall back on journalism and literature, and after a number of unsuccessful attempts he got a story called *Silence* into one of the journals. He was at once recognized as a new force in letters. I remember reading it with a Russian friend of mine, a poet of some distinction, and the impression it made upon me is as vivid now as it was at the time. It is simply the story of a village priest who by austere reticence and silent repression exerts a sort of mental tyranny over his household, his wife and daughter, a bright intelligent girl. Vera has come home for the summer holidays apparently weighed down by some secret sorrow which she cannot share with her parents. One day she throws herself under a railway train, and her secret dies with her. The mother, who loves her passionately, is struck down by paralysis, losing all power of movement and speech. The silence which Father Ignaty inflicted upon his family returns to him with the force of an overpowering blow from which there is no escape. Andreiev's power of suggesting states of mental suffering is simply amazing. We have the veracity of a statement by a specialist in mental pathology doubled by the imaginative sympathy of a poet.

Silence is a typical story. His most powerful work is on these lines, although he has at times a lighter and more ironical touch. And occasionally he tries what can be made of subjects that would be merely horrible in the hands of a less sincere and responsible artist. In a story called *The Abyss* (I have not seen it in English) he takes a subject which the unthinking will dismiss as revolting, and by his imaginative insight and human pity uses it to throw a new light on normal psychology. I am afraid

that the English reader has not shown much interest in Andreiev, and for that reason much of his work is not accessible in our language. I am glad, however, to note that one of his finest stories, *His Excellency the Governor*, is published by Mr. C. W. Daniel at 3s. 6d. in an admirable version by Mr. Maurice Magnus. The same publisher has also given us the opportunity of reading Andreiev's *And it came to pass that the king was dead* (2s. 6d.), a powerful little study of the Revolution and the trial and beheading of a king.

In *The Governor*, with the amazing psychological skill we have come to associate with all his work, Andreiev analyses the mind of a highly placed Russian functionary who understands that he has been condemned to death by a secret revolutionary tribunal for his brutal suppression of what, in a moment of weakness, he thought to be a serious revolt of peasants and artisans. It is the finest artistic projection I know of the moral truth, the absolute futility of revenge. GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

THE GOTT CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I do not think Mr. Anderson's suggestion would be much use in view of the Home Secretary's recent letter, but no harm can ensue from such a petition. I am strongly of the opinion, however, that it would be good propaganda work to post a copy of your *Blasphemy* pamphlet to every Chief Constable in the principal towns in this country. Certainly it should be productive of better results than sending same to the clergy or M.P.'s. For my part I have already sent a copy to the Chiefs of the Manchester and Salford police departments.

H. BLACK.

POLITICAL TRICKERY AND BLASPHEMY.

SIR,—Permit me to express my admiration of your article on the above in this week's issue of the *Freethinker*. You have simply beaten your own records in this wonderfully powerful article. If printed as a leaflet at election time and distributed in Mr. Shortt's constituency it ought to drive him out if there is enough sense in the electors. However, he is very small fry, and so are those who administered "justice." The object of these lines is to voice the admiration and devotion of your readers and followers who cannot help being very proud of your magnificent lead. JOHN'S GRANDPA.

Obituary.

The cause of Freethought has lost a good, though unobtrusive, worker in the person of Tom W. Love, aged 39, postal telegraphist, and member of the National Secular Society, who died at the Infirmary, Carlisle, on February 6 from multiple neuritis, following on severe influenza, the collapse being materially contributed to by Mr. Love's war experiences in Palestine and Syria. The funeral took place on February 9, deceased being laid to rest without any ceremony, Mr. Robert Irving offering a few words of explanation to the mourners and friends assembled, and Councillor Ernest Lowthian closing with a brief tribute to Mr. Love's admirable social and domestic qualities. T. C. R.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Ernest Dales, "Graven Images." Discussion Circle held every Wednesday at 7.30 p.m., "Coronet" Hotel, Soho Street, W., near Tottenham Court Road Tube Station. Strangers welcome. Annual Dinner, "Coronet" Hotel, February 16, at 7.30 p.m. Tickets 3s. Public Meeting 8.30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Miss K. Raleigh, "Words that Deceive."

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Do we Value Education."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Picture House, Station Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, "The Freethinkers' Struggle for Liberty."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall, Candle-riggs): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11.30, "The Foundations of Faith, An Examination of Bishop Gore's *Belief in God*"; 6.30 (Grand City Hall, Candleriggs), "The Other Side of Death, Spiritualism and the belief in a Future Life."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Young-man's): 3, Mr. J. Ashurst, "Fetichism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism Caricatured."

MOTHERWELL (I. L. P. Hall, Miller Street): Monday, February 20, at 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "What is the Use of Christianity?"

HEMINGWAY, ALFRED.—Wanted to know the whereabouts of above, who left Manchester 1896, late Master Printer, of Higher Chatham Street, last heard of in Dryden, New York, at Wollen Mills in 1898. Anyone knowing his address please write his daughter—MRS. E. MILLER, c/o Editor, *Freethinker* (Mother now dead). Will Mr. John Smith, *Freethinker*, please write Mrs. Miller?

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