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## Views and Opinions.

### Toleration and Religion.

The possibility of a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws coming before Parliament for its second reading within the next few days is a matter of considerable importance not merely to Freethinkers, but to the whole of the community. The Bill may or may not pass the ordeal of a second reading, but whatever be its fate it will serve as a touchstone as to the amount of liberality of mind current, and whether the age of religious intolerance is quite dead. With a very large number of the members of Parliament the fact of an approaching election will play its part for or against the Bill. If they think voting for the Bill will help them in their constituencies the Bill will get their support. If otherwise, it will receive their opposition. The probability is that the more wary ones will not vote at all. As to these matters we shall be wiser in the course of a few days, and it might have seemed wiser to wait for those few days to elapse before writing on the subject. But whatever be the fate of the Bill it cannot undo the past, nor can its passing remove the fact of the large amount of intolerance that is still current in connection with religious beliefs. And even in the case of many who say that the time is passed when such things as blasphemy laws should be tolerated, it requires little study to see that it is the futility of persecution rather than its inherent wrongness that is responsible for what they say. Their objection to suppressing the heretic is that he is not suppressed. Force has failed, and they are shrewd enough to realize the danger of using weapons that are unable to do more than advertise their own worthlessness.

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### A Premium on Stupidity.

There is here a problem which is worthy of a little attention. It is true that intolerance is a common human failing, and so far is not peculiar to religion alone. People are intolerant of hostile opinions in politics, in literature, and even in science. The distinction between these things and religion is that with none of them is intolerance encouraged. It is marked at once as a failing, and the majority of those who sin are not offensively intolerant. But in connection with religion intolerance is—under other names—accepted as a virtue. The government of this country is theoretically based upon the possibility of people arriving at diametrically opposite conclusions,

and it is so far held to be their duty to express these differences publicly. The politician who refused to examine other views than his own would be an object of ridicule. But in religion it is taken as a sign of grace. In all but religion to refuse to examine every side of a subject is taken as a sign of pig-headedness. In religion we have it glorified under such expressions as “sturdy faith,” “unflinching belief,” “deep religious conviction,” etc. It is sometimes said that this is so because religion is concerned with matters of so great importance that men cannot bear to have their beliefs questioned. The reply to this is two-fold. First, if religious questions are of so great importance there is the more need to hear what can be said on the other side and so make sure that we are not mistaken. Second, it is not true that religious questions are of first-rate importance. The business of life goes on quite as well without as with religion. Religion is important only so long as it is believed to be so. Cease to believe it of importance and it is of no value whatever.

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### A Vicious Rule.

Intolerance has been one of the most constant features of Christian history. Creeds have changed, dogmas have been discarded, beliefs outgrown, but the intolerance of Christianity has remained constant. The one thing that impressed the old Romans when they were brought into contact with Christians was their intolerance. Christians refused to eat at the same table with non-Christians, or to take part in the amenities and duties of social life. They showed the same intolerance towards each other. Differences of belief, so minute as to be almost indiscernible to the modern eye, served as the occasion for bloody conflicts, and afterwards for the most fiendish of judicial tortures. Intolerance in religion, practically unknown in the old Roman world, was established as a ruling principle by the Christian Church. The best god for a man to have, said the Roman, is the god of his own country. The only god you may have, said the Christian, is my god; and every other was suppressed as a militant State suppresses an armed invader. This principle took so firm a hold on the Christian conscience that even to-day differences of religion are not discussed as are differences on other subjects. Dispute the Christian's religion, and how often does it happen that all that is bad in his nature rises to the surface. He will asperse your character, impugn your motive, ruin you in business, drive you out of public life, imprison you if he can, boycott you if he can't, or if it is impossible to punish you in this world, will express the hope that your punishment is only deferred till you get “beyond the veil.” And he will all the time assert—perhaps feel—that he is acting under the impulse of the loftiest morality. In other matters there is at least a chance that a man may stand face to face with his worst passions, and that their repulsiveness may effect a cure. In religion they are obscured, cloaked by a training that is older than any living individual, hidden under plausible motives, ready with a traitor's stab delivered under shelter of a flag of truce.

### Perpetuating the Savage.

The facts are plain ; it is a pretty problem for the religious man to explain them. Why should we not discuss religion as we discuss other subjects, with a complete readiness to give up our beliefs if they can be shown to be false? The only reason why we cannot, is that religion, as a whole, belongs to the more primitive part of our nature, and appeals to feelings and associations that we have outgrown in other directions. Among primitive peoples religion is not discussed—it is the one thing that is not—it is accepted. The gods are facts of the primitive environment, facts too ugly and too dangerous to be made the subject of debate. The savage will discuss the wisdom of a chief's decision, or the advisability of a proposed course of action, but he fears to question the supposed decrees of these mysterious spirits who punish in secret, and against whom there is neither appeal nor protection. All the early religions have this characteristic ; they fear discussion because of the danger it involves. Later, the danger of discussing religion is recognized from a different motive, but by that time the inadvisability of questioning the supposed decrees of the gods has become socially organized, and meets each newcomer into the social arena as a recognized thing. But the basic reason is plain. In each of us there lies imbedded a good deal of the primitive savage, or, to be quite accurate, our social organization is such that we are ready to react to religious influences in a quite primitive manner. In attacking religion we are fighting an uncivilized and an uncivilizable thing ; and the method of defence is a true indication of its character.

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### The Danger of Discussion.

So if there is anything like a full discussion on the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill we shall without doubt hear many of the old excuses for the perpetuation of these shameful laws. We shall be informed that religious people do not object to their beliefs being discussed so long as it is done "reverently," or that the Blasphemy laws are intended only to prevent the outraging of people's feelings. These excuses may pass muster with those who deal with such subjects with but a poor knowledge of the history of religion and without understanding of its nature. To others it will be plain that we are dealing with the latest phase of a frame of mind that has been with us from the dawn of history, nay, from the time when history was yet unborn. Religious people do still, the vast majority of them, object to their religion being discussed in any spirit of hostility. And so long as they could prevent discussion they did so. When they could no longer prevent it wholly they allowed it under conditions. But there were always limits imposed such as do not exist with any other subject. The savage did not discuss the gods because he was afraid of their vengeance on the tribe. The modern believer no longer takes up that position ; he is afraid of discussion for another reason. He knows that his beliefs will not stand critical and informed discussion. He feels that the very fact of putting up a subject to discussion is an admission that one may be in the wrong. And when a religious person begins to feel that, his belief becomes a rapidly vanishing quantity. It will not do for anyone to hold religious beliefs as he may hold beliefs on other matters—subject to revision or rejection as developing knowledge demands. He must have certainty. And the only way to secure certainty for a belief that provides neither reason for its existence nor justification for its preservation is to see to it that it is excluded from the arena of public discussion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## A Chapter in Scottish History.

DR. MILROY, of Ayr, has published a remarkable treatise, of a hundred and fifteen closely printed pages, entitled *The Seven Martyrs of Ayr* (1666), and *Afterwards*. Neither publisher's name nor price is mentioned, and we do not know whether the brochure is for sale or not ; but it is a splendid piece of work, and the author deserves great praise for the fair, impartial manner in which he has treated a very difficult subject. Dr. Milroy, we understand, is a Freethinker, and on that account was able to deal with the facts uninfluenced by the venom of prejudice. The seven martyrs of Ayr, who were executed on December 27, 1666, were covenanters who paid the penalty for having risen in rebellion against the cruel tyranny practised at the instigation of the archbishops and bishops who were determined to force Episcopacy on Presbyterian Scotland. Dr. Milroy tells us that the religious history of Scotland may be divided into eight or nine distinct periods. The first period extends from the third century to the beginning of the twelfth, during which the Celtic Church was in power, whose ministers were anchorites called Culdees. As Campbell says :—

The pure Culdees  
Were Albyns' earliest priests of God.

The second period from 1100 to 1560 was dominated by the Catholic Church, which initiated the custom of burning heretics. From 1560 to 1690 Presbyterianism and Episcopacy kept on fighting for the supremacy. Catholicism was succeeded by Presbyterianism, Presbyterianism by Episcopacy, known as Tulchan Episcopacy, whose bishops were appointed to their sees under the Concordat of Leith (1572), who as the price of their promotion had to pay the greater part of their income to the barons. After twenty years Tulchan Episcopacy was supplanted by Presbyterianism which reigned for a period of ten years, and was ousted by what our author calls the first Episcopacy, which lasted some thirty years. This was a most calamitous period, when banishing, nose-slitting and cutting off ears were forms of punishment to which Nonconformists were subjected. Then from 1640 to 1661 Presbyterianism held the field. It was during this period that Puritanism arose and covenanting began.

This was a most distressful time in ecclesiastical history. Presbyterianism was fully as intolerant as Episcopacy or Popery. Its hatred of all other "isms" than its own was boundless and most bitter. Charles I was asked to abolish Episcopacy even in England, and to sign the Covenant himself. The king on his conscience refused, declaring his belief in the Divine right of Episcopacy ; and it was his aim to stamp out Presbyterianism even in Scotland. The Presbyterians were too numerous and influential, however, to be extirpated, and a time came when the Commons, "with uplifted hands," swore in St. Margaret's Church to observe the Covenant. Even the Westminster Confession and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms were approved by Parliament. In fact, Parliament formally adopted Presbyterianism, though it never became popular in England. It was in Scotland alone that the people were happily loyal to this creed and polity. There was a parliamentary law, made under Presbyterian influence, which rendered church attendance compulsory. Part of it read thus : "The fine for non-attendance at Communion to be £1,000 for a lord, £500 for a baron, £40 for a yeoman." This law was executed, in the first place, by the Kirk Sessions. Dr. Milroy mentions that "in 1641 the Covenanted Kirk Session of Dalmeilton enacted : 'If any should be found absent

from the kirk upon the Lord's Day they must stand in the public place of repentance and pay of penalty and mark,' which was then as valuable as thirteen shillings and fourpence to-day."

On January 30, 1649, Charles I was beheaded, and the Commonwealth came into existence. For a time there was considerable friction between the Presbyterians and the men at the head of the Commonwealth; but Cromwell was a firm believer in religious toleration, with the result that the Presbyterians were no longer persecuted, though they themselves were governed by an intolerant spirit all the time. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth only lasted eleven years, and with the Restoration came peculiarly bad times for Scotch Presbyterians. This had a demoralizing effect upon a large number of the people. Many of the nobles degenerated into mere vassals of Charles II, having thrown their principles and convictions down the wind. Like his father and grandfather the king was the sworn enemy of Presbyterianism, though he had signed the national Covenant, and the solemn League and Covenant, and promised his assent to Acts of Parliament which enjoined those Covenants. But all his good promises were ruthlessly broken, with the result that Episcopacy was forced upon Scotland as its established religion. As Dr. Milroy says:—

When the second Episcopacy was set up in 1661 it aimed at the complete subjugation of both the minds and bodies of men (passive obedience) nominally to the king but really to the bishops, and it was this fact that brought about the killing times, the death of the Ayr martyrs, the downfall of Prelacy and even of Puritanic Presbytery itself, as well as the end of the Stuart kings who had kept the country in a fry for a hundred and fifty years. Their heads were blown up with ideas about "the Divine right" of themselves, "royal prerogatives," "falschood," "double dealing," "sacerdotal frippery," "mummeries," and "a uniform style of tailoring for the clergy," so that no room was left for consideration of the Divine rights of the people.

To the Government officials in Scotland during this period our author attributes a peculiarly bad character. He says:—

In the first session of Charles' first parliament (1661) held by Middleton, who at one time was a common pikeman, the Covenants entered into by the Presbyterians were declared to be illegal, and therefore null and void. As the outcome of a drunken spree that Parliament wiped from the Statute book all the laws made by some of themselves and their predecessors, the good Covenanters, one of which was the 1646 Education Act that aimed at compelling schools to be planted in every parish with better provision for the teachers. During the meetings of the first Parliament Middleton was sometimes so drunk that he could not sit on the throne, yet at the end of it the members managed amongst them, drunk or sober, to behead the good Earl of Argyle and hang the Rev. James Guthrie of Stirling. These were our first martyrs.

The men who were made archbishops and bishops were as devoid of principles and convictions as the noblemen on the Privy Council. Most of them were ex-Presbyterian ministers, or as Dr. Milroy calls them, renegade Covenanters.

Amongst these men was the Rev. James Sharp, now a professor of Divinity, but at one time the minister of Crail, a very pious man, and heretofore called "the godly man of Crail." Sharp was made Archbishop of St. Andrews, and afterwards became the villain of the piece, especially in bringing about the murder of the Ayr men. In the year 1666 a very bad man, Archbishop Alexander Burnet, ruled over the Glasgow diocese, to which Ayr belonged. He, like Sharp, had a seat in the Council, and was largely responsible for the cruelties committed in Ayrshire. Another renegade minister, not much less wicked than

the above, called Hamilton, held sway as Bishop of Galloway. These three ruffians, but especially Hamilton who used to be a Covenanting minister at a place near Wishaw, brought about the Pentland Rising in 1666, of which year our martyrs' stone declares and prays:—

Heaven keeps a record of the sixty-six,  
Boots, thumbkins, gibbets were in fashion then.  
Lord, let us never see such days again.

Very graphically does Dr. Milroy tell the sad story of the Pentland Rising and its consequences. The first open act of resistance to the rapacious and inhumanly cruel policy pursued by the Privy Council took place near the village of Darly, in Galloway. An old man was being terribly tortured by soldiers to induce him to pay his church fines. His cries were heard and four countrymen rushed to his rescue. The soldiers were disarmed. In their anger the people rose in direct rebellion against the Government. They went to Dumfries, where they arrested Sir James Turner and disarmed his men. From Dumfries they proceeded to Ayrshire, and from there to Lanark, where their numbers reached two thousand men; but they had neither organization nor discipline. When the royal army under Dalziel attacked them on the Pentland Hills they were completely defeated. Upwards of fifty were slain and one hundred taken prisoners. The prisoners were tried at Edinburgh, found guilty of rebellion, and forty of them were executed at different places. Dr. Milroy informs us that they were divided into batches, the Ayr batch being the fifth. Then he relates the particulars about the seven heroes who were executed at Ayr, to whose memory a monument has been erected with their names engraved thereupon.

All through the ages Christians have been engaged in torturing and killing Christians because of slight differences of opinion; and, possibly, no other country in the world has suffered as much from religious persecution as Scotland has done. It is true that the Covenanters were fanatics, but so were the Episcopalian. Scott and Crockett have told the story of the persecution in profoundly interesting novels, and Dr. Milroy's *Seven Martyrs of Ayr* takes a high place as a veritable history of the disgraceful events which occurred in Scotland between the years 1661 and 1690. We are living in happier times simply because supernatural belief has been largely dislodged by secular knowledge, or because reason has won its way to a dominant position in most departments of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Public and the Press Gang.

Who shall persuade the kings that God is not,  
The politicians, usurers, financiers,  
Priests, warriors, that depend on God to bear  
The burden of their inhumanities?

—John Davidson.

THE newspaper Press of this country is in a bad way. The so-called free Press is to-day less free than at any other recent period of its history, with the exception of the military restrictions during war-time. The power of the editors and writers has been constantly diminishing of late years, and the power of the commercially-minded proprietors as constantly increasing. All have become the slaves of the advertisement manager.

Journalists can neither do justice to themselves nor serve the public honestly in a Press dominated by advertisers and purely commercial interests. In spite of their rivalry, the British newspapers are of one mind in suppressing advanced ideas, which are thought to be fatal to fat dividends. The conspiracy of silence against Freethought, for example, is truly wonderful,

The editors devote columns to the most brutal murder cases, and report, with all the art of the novelist, the salacious details of divorce and police-court cases. In the summer-time, when space is more plentiful, room is always found for the sea-serpent or the big gooseberry. Even during the world-war room was found for circumstantial accounts of "angels" on the battlefields, or of the alleged miraculous happenings to stone statues of the Madonna. Let there be no mistake on this matter. The writers of this trash do not all believe it. It is not entirely due to fanaticism or ignorance, but it is simply done to "tickle the ears of the groundlings," and to promote huge circulations. It is, in the last analysis, largely a matter of business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are weak, foolish, and ill-conditioned persons, but they wish to curry favour with the many-headed orthodox. The imbecilities of the Bishop of London, and the nonsensical utterances of ignorant revivalists, are reported at length, but the leaders of Freethought seldom get so much as a few lines devoted to their work.

The result is that newspaper readers, who number millions, are kept in ignorance of the intellectual ferment that goes on outside the very narrow limits of the "respectable" Press; that is the Press which is first and last a money-making concern. The glorious free Press is the emptiest of mockeries. Journalists are now simply employees of newspaper proprietors, or even of syndicates. They may be ever so ignorant, ever so shallow, and ever so disreputable; it is enough if they can write in a taking way, and flatter the prejudices and passions of their readers. Prostitutes of the pen, they foment enmities, flatter vested interests, and write attractive "puffs" for advertisers. Personally unknown, associated with one journal after another, they are nothing to the world.

The only really free Press in England consists of a mere handful of journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. They have relatively small circulations, they derive little revenue from advertisements, and that they live at all is a tribute to the talents and consciences of their editors. Journals of this kind have untold difficulties of publication. They are starved by the neglect of advertisers, and they are subjected to a boycott which prevents them finding their way to more than a mere fraction of their potential purchasers. They are perpetually between the proverbial devil and the deep sea, and their continued existence is a miracle more marvellous than any related in the Gospels.

As an example of the enormous difficulties of conducting advanced periodicals, it is no secret that nearly £10,000 was spent on *Justice* during twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. Even the arresting personality of H. M. Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *Clarion* has had a very much larger circulation than *Justice*, but even Robert Blatchford's deserved popularity could not make his paper pay without subsidies from his readers. And if two such well-known men cannot make such papers a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

Freethought in this country has been represented in the popular Press by the *Freethinker* for over forty years. It is an achievement to be proud of. And a wider circulation for this journal is the best antidote to the conspiracy of silence and misrepresentation of the hirelings of the commercial Press. If our readers will do a little missionary work, and do it regularly, the boycott will soon be a thing of the past. Many new readers have been obtained through the editor's appeal. The process can be continued indefinitely, and contribute towards the final triumph of what George Meredith called "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

## The Religion of Jesus.

### II.

(Continued from page 182.)

In a famous debate known as the Hammersmith Discussion, which took place eighty or ninety years ago, the Rev. John Cumming threw the Bible down on the table in front of his Roman Catholic opponent and said, "Our Rule of Faith is the Bible and the Bible alone." Cumming was a consummate debater, knew Roman Catholicism inside out, and had a fine working knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He had read the early Fathers and was thoroughly acquainted with the various codices and Greek and Latin MSS. of his day, as well as the history of the various translations of the Bible. But it would be safe to say that a good many of his hearers (like most of the evangelical Christians of to-day) looked upon the Bible as having come straight from heaven in its Authorized Version form, and that therein you get the identical words of Jesus as he said them to the enormous crowds of Jews who hung on his every word as the most Divine music ever heard in this sinful world. Cumming was ready to defend with all his power and eloquence the whole of the Authorized Version, and it must be confessed he knew his subject well. The modern Christian, however, cannot get away from the Revised Version and the various other versions that are being constantly published, and if he has any education at all and has read any of the books written to enlighten him, such as *How we got our Bible*, etc., will have the uncomfortable feeling that the Bible, and the Bible alone, has not got, after all, God's infallible guarantee, as it is very difficult to know which is the absolutely true and faithful version of God's word. That is why the Roman Catholic is right, from his point of view, in protesting against the indiscriminate reading of Bible handbooks and works showing you the origins of the Bible. For instance, how can anyone who knows something of the true history of the Vulgate really believe that that version is God's holy word, pure and undefiled?

This preamble is necessary when dealing with those people who tell you it is time to give up "organized" Christianity and go to the actual words of Jesus to find out what "true" Christianity really is. "Never mind what Paul says," we are told, "or Jude, or James, or John, or Peter, or what the Roman Catholic Church tells us, or any Church or commentator—all that matters is, *what did Jesus say?*" Time after time in many discussions with Christians I have found Apostles and Fathers thrown overboard wholesale and Jesus referred to as the *only* Rule of Faith. It would have broken old John Cumming's heart to see his great fetish (the Bible) thrown contemptuously aside except for the words of Jesus, and, eventually, even those words so transformed as to make it very difficult to believe they could have ever been spoken by a Jewish peasant in Palsetine nearly 2,000 years ago.

When people talk about the words of Jesus it is as well to remind them that no one has ever reported what Jesus actually said. It can be stated with confidence that if Jesus spoke at all it must have been in the language of his countrymen, that is, Chaldeo-Aramaic. It is true that some Christian writers are beginning to see what this means and are arguing that he must have spoken in Greek. But the fact that, as he tells us in his autobiography, Josephus had to learn Greek in his adult age, is sufficient proof that the Jews of his day did not know it, and even if Jesus did he could not have made himself understood if he had used it. The first question, then, that one must ask when discussing the religion of Jesus is, who was it that translated the Chaldeo-Aramaic of Jesus into

Greek? Is it conceivable that an uneducated "publican" like Matthew did? The "original" words of Jesus as we have them are in Greek, and it makes a pretty problem for experts to settle among themselves as to how the translation was made. Of course it had to be in Greek. Dr. Tregelles, in Horne's *Introduction to the New Testament*, devotes a chapter to show you why "the New Testament writers should have, under divine guidance and inspiration, employed the Greek tongue," but he might have spent his time more profitably if he had told us why, in addition, the exact words Jesus used in his own tongue should not have been preserved. At all events, we have not the precise words anywhere, and it becomes something more than a farce to be told, as Lecky does, that "the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." Renan uses even stronger language, though it is only fair to point out that Albert Mordell, in his book *The Erolie Motive in Literature*, analyses Renan from the psycho-analysis point of view and comes to the conclusion that the great French writer simply made *himself* the hero of his popular romance *La Vie de Jesus*. Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, with its terrific exposure of the myths surrounding Lecky's "simple record of three short years," also contains due homage to Jesus, and both Mill and Voltaire add their meed of praise to the eulogies of the Jesus of Christian writers. I have purposely mentioned Rationalists in this connection because it has always been a great puzzle to me why they were such bitter opponents of Christianity. If Jesus was all they claimed him to be, why did they not proclaim themselves to the whole world as his followers, and why, which is far more important, did they not tell us exactly which were the teachings which made Renan say that "among the sons of men there is none born who is greater than Jesus." If the indiscriminate exaltation of the "Saviour" of mankind be really founded on the New Testament narratives, all I can say is that the English language has a different meaning for me than for the majority of Christians and "reverent" Agnostics.

Some years ago, in a discussion I had with a Christian, he not only brought up Gladstone, and Kelvin, and Newton, and with Christian scorn asked if I considered my puny little intellect could in any way be compared to theirs, but also quoted Paine, Strauss, Mill, Lecky, Voltaire and finally Ingersoll, and, amid a roar of laughter, asked whether I dared to come before intelligent people to oppose the views not only of the greatest of Christians but also those of the greatest of Rationalists in their magnificent eulogies of Jesus. He correctly quoted Ingersoll as follows:—

And let me say here, once for all, that for the man Christ I have infinite respect. Let me say, once for all, that the place where man has died for man is holy ground. And let me say, once for all, that to that great and serene man I gladly pay the tribute of my admiration and my tears. He was a reformer in his day. He was an infidel in his time. He was regarded as a blasphemer, and his life was destroyed by hypocrites, who have, in all ages, done what they could to trample freedom and manhood out of the human mind. Had I lived at that time I would have been his friend, and should he come again he will not find a better friend than I will be.

This extract from *What must we do to be Saved?* was greeted with a round of applause and was supposed to "settle my hash"—once for all. But my opponent forgot to mention—perhaps he did not know it—that this particular lecture, though a very brilliant one, was also one of Ingersoll's earliest, and in spite of the reiteration of "once for all," he changed his opinion pretty considerably as he studied more and found out

at last what the legend of Jesus was founded on. Let me quote from *About the Holy Bible*—a lecture well worth reading and re-reading in this connection:—

Christ cared nothing for painting, for sculpture, for music—nothing for any art. He said nothing about the duties of nation to nation, of king to subject; nothing about the rights of man, nothing about intellectual liberty or the freedom of speech. He said nothing about the sacredness of home, not one word of the fireside, not a word in favour of marriage, in honour of maternity.....Was he kinder, more forgiving, more self-sacrificing than Buddha? Was he wiser, did he meet death with more perfect calmness than Socrates? Was he more patient, more charitable, than Epictetus? Was he a greater philosopher, a deeper thinker, than Epicurus? In what respect was he the superior of Zoroaster? Was he gentler than Laotse, more universal than Confucius? Were his ideas of human rights and duties superior to those of Zeno? Did he express grander truths than Cicero? Was his mind subtler than Spinoza's? Was his brain equal to Kepler's or Newton's? Was he grander in death, a sublimer martyr than Bruno? Was he in intelligence, in the force and beauty of expression, in breadth and scope of thought, in wealth of illustration, in aptness of comparison, in knowledge of the human brain and heart, of all passions, hopes, and fears, the equal of Shakespeare, the greatest of the human race?

It will be seen from this short extract that Ingersoll did change somewhat in his estimation of Jesus, and he gives us his reasons—unlike a good many other Rationalists. And it is to the great American Freethinker's credit that he never shirked saying straight out what he thought about Jesus—a very difficult thing to do in the bigoted America of his day.

The fact is, there seems to be an unusual timidity in a good deal of Freethought criticism of the character and teaching of Jesus. Time after time I have met articles by Freethinkers in which Christianity is bitterly attacked, but Jesus and his religion eulogized sky-high. Only the other day I was looking at an old number of the *Tatler*—I mean the modern society weekly—a paper in which attacks on the Church, one would think, would not be tolerated. Yet Richard King, the writer of its literary page, did his best to abolish "Christianity" in a trenchant article; but when it came to Jesus it was quite a different matter. People, he said (I am quoting from memory), though indifferent to the Church, followed the teaching of Christ in their daily lives—the philosophy of conduct, in fact, is comprised in one word, Christ. And not to go further than the pages of the *Freethinker* for 1921 (page 150), we find such a severe opponent and critic of Christianity, the clergy, and religious hypocrisy generally as G.O.W. actually saying (without, as far as I know, a word of protest from any reader), "I greatly admire Jesus of Nazareth, as a Freethinker and social reformer....." Of course, G. O. W. is at liberty to admire whom he likes for whatever reasons he likes, but it is quite another matter to call the Christian deity a Freethinker—unless he has another meaning for the word "Freethinker" than most of us. If Jesus was a Freethinker then so were Luther and Calvin and Joe Smith and Madame Blavatsky—in fact, anybody and everybody who differs from somebody. But the generally accepted meaning of the word which most of the readers of this paper subscribe to is something quite different, and I think it would pay G. O. W. to find it out. That he should admire Jesus as a social reformer is his own affair, but some of us are still curious to know which are the social reforms Jesus alone accomplished or wished to accomplish. Does G. O. W. agree with Sir Alfred Smithers who, in an address on "Christianity in Business and Industry," said that in all trades' disputes if both sides were animated by the spirit of Christ the settlements would inevitably be satisfactory, and he appealed for the

pouring out of the "Blessed oil of Christianity" by both the masters and the workers (*Morning Post*, October 28, 1921). It is a common-places that Jesus as a social reformer has ludicrously failed, unless G. O. W. imagines that if masters and men went about doing the work Jesus did, that is, addressing multitudes with, for the most part, silly parables, Europe would immediately recover from the havoc of the late war, houses would spring up everywhere, work would be provided for teeming multitudes, exchanges would righten themselves, and the lions of Ireland and India lie down joyfully before the tender British lamb!

(To be Continued.) H. CUTNER.

### "The Other Side of Death."

IN *The Other Side of Death* Mr. Cohen has dealt with the question of survival from many points of view. It may safely be said that at this date no one believes in immortality on intellectual, objective grounds alone. The nearest approach to such a position that I can recall is that of an Oxford don, a philosophic reactionary of the Cartesian persuasion, who contended that mind was a substance, and, as such, indestructible. This necessarily involved belief in existence before birth, as well as in existence after death. The logical conclusion would appear to be that, as we know nothing whatever of our existence, if any, before we were born or procreated, so we know nothing of our existence, if any, after death. If all believers contented themselves with such modest assumptions we could perhaps afford to let the matter rest there.

Unfortunately, the believer drags in sentiment, and claims that his view is "nobler" and "higher" than that of the unbeliever. This prejudice finds various degrees of expression, ranging from the dignified plea of Kant that "if our wills are not free, and the soul is divisible and subject to corruption just like matter, the ideas and principles of morality lose all validity," to the undignified screech of Dr. Horton that "men who do not believe in their immortality are a public nuisance." Mr. Cohen does well to point out, in his first chapter, that so far as the belief in immortality has had any effect, it has been demoralizing and degrading, and to support this conclusion by quotations from such eminent divines as Augustine, Jeremy Taylor and Jonathan Edwards.

The chapter headed "Is there a Desire for a Future Life?" should clear up a lot of confusion. We nearly all of us object to dying; and this obvious fact has been made the basis of an alleged "universal longing for immortality." Not only is there no universal longing for immortality, but it is pretty certain that if most people grasped the meaning of the word—if, that is, the average human mind could take in the significance of such an appalling conception as endless self-identity—the universal longing would prove to be the other way about. That few people like dying just when they do is, no doubt, a fact. We have most of us heard the story how Huxley expressed dismay at the prospect of knowing no more in 1900 than he had known in 1800. What we desire, however, is continued existence on earth. We want to go on enjoying the best things of life, and to see how the world fares after our natural term is finished. To offer the man, who knows that he cannot expect this, life in another world as substitute is shabby treatment; and apart from a handful of saints and mystics, no one cares or has ever cared a brass farthing about heaven. Belief in hell has had a considerably greater influence; and a vile influence it has been. On the whole, however, reflecting people to-day, as it has been well expressed, "do not fear death so much as dying."

The inseparable connection of the human mind with

the human brain, as Mr. Cohen points out, is a fact to which every-day experience and the discoveries of science increasingly point. The nature of their relation, however, is an ulterior problem which neither the methods of physiology nor those of psychology can be expected to solve. Mr. Cohen's answer is that mind is a "function" of brain, in the same sense that contraction is a function of muscle, or digestion of the stomach. Personally, I should not put it in that way. The answer seems to me to ignore the real difficulty. In dealing with a muscle and its contraction, or the stomach and digestion, we are dealing with physical changes in a physical substance, which can be observed as such under suitable conditions. Mind cannot be observed as a physical change in a physical substance. It can only be either inferred from physical changes, or observed by introspection. There is, therefore, some justification for saying that neural action and thought "belong to two different orders of existence." As phenomena they do. Mr. Cohen, I think, gives the true answer when he suggests that "the bodily and the mental phases" are "two sides of the same thing," which "under different conditions may present different aspects. The psychic fact is not merely the equivalent of the physical one, it is the same fact viewed now objectively and now subjectively." But this is not the same as to make one a "function" of the other.

After reviewing in succession the singularly feeble arguments for immortality put forward by William James, Mellone, Schiller, Martineau and others, and surveying the findings of Frazer and Tylor on primitive animism, Mr. Cohen concludes with two valuable chapters on Spiritualism, which steer a happy mean between the superstitious credulity of the Spiritualists and the hard-shelled obscurantism of those critics who find in "fraud" a sufficient explanation of all the alleged phenomena. He points out some objections to the Spiritualist theory which are often overlooked, e.g., the contradictory character of the "messages."

On the Continent it is common for the spirits to assure us that reincarnation is a fact. In England the information is to the contrary. In Italy it is not unusual for the spirits to profess Atheism; in England a wishy-washy Theism is the rule. The spirit world is all around us, or above the earth, or in the Milky Way. It is a real and tangible existence to one spirit; it is a creation of the mind to another. The spirits have a vocal language as we have; they have no vocal language, but communicate by a species of celestial telepathy. Spirits grow, or do not grow, or, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells us, they grow both older and younger till they all stop at about thirty years of age, which, curiously enough, is the age at which most of us would like to stop if we could manage it.

The important bearing on "psychic" phenomena of modern discoveries respecting the subconscious is also pointed out. This is valuable criticism, and considerably more to the point than the controversies about "ectoplasm" and performing furniture and trumpets, with which we are too often wearied. I shall be interested to see what Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle have to say about Mr. Cohen's book.

ROBERT ARCH.

In view of all that the last decade has taught us about the origin of Greek art and its Oriental bearings, one is tempted to wonder whether Greece may not perhaps have represented the perfect equipoise of East and West, containing both elements in her intellectual as well as in her artistic life, an equipoise of which the world in our day stands in great need, but which it may take us some time to find. If such a theory of equipoise be true, it would account not only for Greek art but also for the Greek ideas of salvation by reason. Jesse Benedict Carter.

## Acid Drops.

According to the New Testament Jesus advised his followers not to pray in public and thereby publish their piety to the world. But Jesus was evidently a very poor advertiser. His followers know better than to pray in private. Thus, Mr. Joseph Banks, Liberal candidate for the Parliamentary division of Chester held a meeting on the 18th at Mickle Trafford and his chairman asked the audience to bow their heads with him in prayer before listening to the candidate. The chairman had a perfect right to pray as long and as often as he liked, but it should have been done before the meeting. As it is it looks very much like an electioneering dodge that may well rob the candidate of the votes of all who do not care to have religious cant mixed up with their politics.

There has been a violent earthquake on the Island of Cebu, one of the Philippines. Many buildings collapsed in the city of Cebu, including the Episcopal Church, the Bishop's Palace, and the Recoleta Convent. A number of people were killed or injured. Providence's care for sacred buildings is not conspicuous in this instance any more than its solicitude for human life.

A friend has sent us a cutting from the *Nottingham Evening News* which contains a leading article criticizing what it calls the "clever and specious address" delivered in Nottingham by Mr. Cohen in opposition to the maintenance of the Blasphemy laws. The article is unsigned, and we congratulate the writer as being one of the very few who will to-day endorse the maintenance of these stupid and unjust laws. And one may be distinguished in stupidity and intolerance as well as in other things. It is a pity that newspaper articles are so often unsigned. It enables a writer to say things that may be the very opposite of what he believes, or a very ignorant man to pose as an oracle, or a very cowardly one to escape all public responsibility for his utterances. So we regret that we are unable to give the name of this defender of a law of which even self-respecting Christians are heartily ashamed.

Anonymity gives a cover to slander and untruthfulness, and it certainly does so here, for the writer is quite clearly either very ignorant or very untruthful. Thus, he says that "actually," the Blasphemy laws are "directed to the simple task of preserving order and preventing the average citizen from being unreasonably offended"; "the average citizen is repelled and disgusted by blasphemy just as he is by obscenity," and to suggest that free speech is restrained is "as absurd as to argue that a person who mouths foulness as he walks along a public thoroughfare should not be interfered with." We are sorry we cannot compliment the leader writer of the *Nottingham Evening News* on being original even in his untruthfulness and slander. For it is such an old trick to pretend, without the slightest possible doubt, that the "blasphemer" voices either foulness or obscenity. The reader of the newspaper does not know precisely what the language is and so has to take the writer's word for it. And the writer may not know what the language is either, but he knows what will go down with his public, and so says it. That is the duty of the ordinary journalist—to write, not what he knows to be true, not what he understands, but what he thinks will suit the readers of his particular column of variegated nonsense.

In the last trial there was no claim by even the prosecution that the language used was either foul or obscene. All that was claimed was that it was not the right kind of way to talk about religion. The language would have been all right in connection with politics, or any other subject—at least, it would not have been legally wrong, but it was indictable when used with regard to religion. And even a newspaper writer ought to be able to see that this gives religion a special measure of protection, and makes conduct in relation to religion punishable when it is not punishable in connection with any

other subject. And if that does not amount to persecution for opinion we should dearly like to know what does. Still, we congratulate the *Nottingham Evening News*. The Dark Ages have few defenders to-day; and if one does not possess the requisite mental equipment to become distinguished for enlightenment, one must achieve distinction as one can.

The *Western Morning News* (March 14) contains a report of a meeting of the Plymouth Town Council, at which a proposal to allow the public tennis courts in Plymouth to be open on Sunday afternoons was discussed at considerable length. Though the proposal was defeated by 27 to 19, several of the minority Councillors gave expression to some very straight talk on Sabbatarianism. Alderman Woolcombe found nothing in the Bible, or "in any other book worth reading," against recreation on Sunday. Alderman H. Stoneman had neither time or patience for one-day-a-week piety. Alderman L. R. Dunstan appealed to the Council not to "let Plymouth be painted as forty years behind the times." It is worth noting that the majority, who opposed Sunday tennis, saw in the proposal "the thin end of the wedge" of the complete secularization of Sunday—exactly the "argument" used in 1855 against the opening of museums and picture galleries.

Shelley was expelled from Oxford University for writing *The Necessity of Atheism*. Nearly half a century previously—in 1768 to be exact—six students were "sent down" for being too pious. The charges against them were that, "though they were bred to trades," they "presumed to preach and expound the Scriptures," that they met in "barns and other illicit conventicles," and they listened to "extempore prayers offered up by laymen." We reproduce the actual wording of the indictment against Thomas Jones, one of the six: "Bred a barber, he hath lately followed that low occupation. He hath expounded the Scriptures at Wheaton Aston, although a layman." The students aggravated their offence by "replying that Jesus Christ was a carpenter, Paul a tent-maker, and the apostles fishermen." The University has undoubtedly been the "nursing mother" of some typical Anglican divines, and we are told that to-day it numbers among its undergraduates Christian Socialists. On the Isis, then, piety is still a fine thing in its way, but it must be the *Pietas Oxoniensis* to pass muster there.

Worthing Town Council has approved by 17 votes to 9 a proposal to allow lawn tennis in two of the public parks on Sundays. So far outraged Providence has not visited the town with a tidal wave, or killed any of the town councillors with lightning. However, we are watching the newspapers.

The Bishop of Liverpool has been complaining of the worldliness of the Church, and declared that he trembled to see sales of work made the occasion for raffling. The Bishop never trembles when he hears that clergymen have had a little flutter on the Stock Exchange.

A newspaper paragraph states that the Paris clergy are endeavouring to revive old-fashioned dances. Let us hope, prayerfully, that they are not thinking of David's dance before the ark, which would make even Parisians blush.

Military men appear to neither learn nor forget—they learn nothing that is really useful and they forget nothing that is best forgotten. For instance, one of our leading militarists informed the House of Commons on March 15 that the state of Europe to-day was less peaceful than it was in 1914. This was not because of the danger of a German army, that he quite ruled out of account, and apparently thought little of it as a cause of our own armaments. But he pointed out that the number of men under arms in Europe to-day exceeded that of 1914 before the outbreak of hostilities, and that these troops belong to the allied nations. We do not, of course, dispute the

correctness of the statistics, the speaker, Sir Henry Wilson, was in a position to know the facts, and so far we believe he stated them.

We are only concerned with the inference drawn from them. Everyone ought to know by this time that the war came as one of the consequences of the competition of armaments that had been going on, and as a result of the foolish saying that the way to keep peace was to get ready for war. Well, we all got ready for war, and war came, not peace. And we know the war was fought to the cry of "never again"; we had it drummed into us that the root cause of the arming of Europe was the militarism of Germany. Now the militarism of Germany has been destroyed the number of armed men is greater than ever, and with the exception of just over 130,000 all these soldiers belong to the Allies. The conclusion of sensible people, those who are willing to learn from experience, would be that the past policy of arming to prevent a war that might come is one very good way of seeing to it that it shall come. But Sir Henry Wilson does not see that. His advice is that we must still keep on arming ourselves against certain undefined, but at present unindicated, enemies, and then, when we have excited the war fever to breaking point, he, and others of his kind, will take the explosion they have themselves prepared, as proof of the justice of their counsel. That is why we say that the militarist neither learns nor forgets. The first step in his education will be for him to recognize frankly that however necessary he may be at times, he is at all times something to be got rid of as quickly as possible. And the next is for him to keep his mouth shut on the conduct of national affairs.

A Sunday newspaper states that Mr. G. S. Montagu, the ex-Secretary of State for India, made a romantic marriage. His father, Lord Swaythling, a Jewish nobleman, left a will disinheriting any of his children who became a Christian, or married one. Mr. Montagu became engaged to a daughter of Lord Sheffield, but the lady had then become a convert to Judaism. Another member of the family became a Mohammedan, and another was domestic prelate to the Pope of Rome. What excitement there will be in that family on the Day of Judgment.

The Vicar of Hainpstead told a Manchester audience the other day that, in his opinion, the only way to save the (religious) situation is to revive the office and function of the lay evangelist. There was a shortage of clergy, and the clergy there were had lost much of their influence. So they must get laymen to do the work of evangelization. This means, we take it, that the layman is to do the work while the clergy take the pay. It is a fine confession of the failure of the clergy, but Mr. Mouchier must be very simple if he imagines that the situation will be saved by laymen. For a time the more simple and the less educated of the laymen may feel flattered by being called in to do the work of the clergy, but that will not stop the disintegration of Christianity. For it is precisely because the laity are losing faith in Christianity that there is a shortage of clergymen, while those that are there are losing their power. It is the time-spirit that is fighting against Christianity, and it is that Mr. Bouchier has to kill if he is to really stop the religious rot that has set in.

Misprints are responsible for some amusing sentences. The other day the *Times* headed an account of an explosion "Hell Explosion at a Factory." Someone had dropped the initial "S." But it sounded all right.

This is the season of Lent. Ecclesiastical dignitaries are now sending their pastoral letters to the papers. Side by side with these letters one should note the voluminous references in the religious journals to Principal Major's heterodox theories of the nature of the resurrection body. Some are born to a great name, others acquire it slowly and laboriously. Mr. Major's name has travelled as far afield as Christchurch, New Zealand, where there has recently been a prosecution for blasphemy. The *Press* (December 17, 1921) informs its readers that the Rev.

Henry Dewsbury Alves Major, B.D., formerly of New Zealand, and now Principal of Ripon Hall, is the editor of the *Modern Churchman*. If a man with such a name as that slips off the rails of sound doctrine, what is to be expected from Bill Smith?

From the advertising columns of the same issue of our Maoriland contemporary we cull the following tit-bit:—

"He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh." Is God laughing at the Irish Peace, the Pacific Pact, the League of Nations, and Professor Henderson Pringle's speech? Armageddon is prophesied. Mr. Walter Marks says it will be here in 1934. Must it be fought? Does it not seem that we are the playthings of a blind destiny?

The holy spirit undoubtedly moves men and women to write and speak some very queer things; but this zeal which is prepared to warn a stiff-necked generation of troubles ahead, and to pay for the privilege of doing so, puts to shame the apathy and unbelief of some of our own defenders of the faith.

As a charge for admission to oratorio services is made at York Minster the officials have been informed that the building is liable to be taxed as a place of entertainment. "O! the sorry trade!"

The Bishop of Liverpool declares that the Church is being given over to "worldliness," and that parish halls are being let for dances, whist-drives, and bazaars. In plain English, church-people worship both God and Mammon.

A Southampton reader sends us the following: "Last New Year's Eve, a party of medical students and theological students, joining forces, proceeded down the Brompton Road chanting the following up-to-date parody:

A few more years shall roll,  
More rates and taxes come,  
And we shall be with those that dwell  
In their cold work'us home.  
Then, oh, my Lord prepare  
Some oof for quarter-day,  
Or wash me in thy bankrupt's court  
And take my debts away!

My informant was one of the party, and he tells me that the police made no attempt to check them, much less charge them with the "dangerous crime" of blasphemy. Students are gregarious, and the police are chary of interfering with them. It is much safer to drop on a solitary individual who hasn't many friends. Nevertheless, the hymn thus parodied is one taught by the Church "as by law established"; therefore, the whole party certainly qualified for nine months' hard labour."

It is very easy to say the wrong thing when one does not start an investigation with correct ideas of things. Thus, looking over a recent work on the antiquity of man (*The New Stone Age in Northern Europe*, by J. M. Tyler), we came across the following: "Man is incurably religious, always feeling after the powers in or behind nature." That is quite a wrong view of early mankind, and is bred of the religious theorizing of those who start with preconceived notions on the subject. It is only in the later stages of human history, and even then it is not true of the majority of people, that there is any "groping" after the deeper aspects of nature. The supernatural is not sought by early mankind, it thrusts itself on him, and his chief desire is to get rid of it. The picture of man hunting for God is wholly false. Early man no more hunts for God than modern man hunts for the tax-collector. Both are faced as unpleasant facts that must be met and dealt with. Man's desire for knowledge, which lies at the root of the "groping" to which Mr. Tyler refers, has no direct connection with religion at all, and before man is far advanced along the road to civilization the two are in direct conflict.

A Lombard Street church boasts of a choir composed of employees of insurance companies. Doubtless, the choristers consider that they are insured against fire here and hereafter.



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 26, Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool; April 9, Huddersfield.

## To Correspondents.

A. BOSTLEMAN.—Pleased to learn that we have so many interested readers in Chicago. The old paper gets well over the world. There is, we think, scarce a country where it does not find its way.

G. BROWN.—Thanks. Sorry we are unable to use.

R. W. (Ilfracombe).—The Moabite Stone is so called from its bearing inscriptions which purport to be by Mesha, king of Moab, about 850 A.D. But its authenticity has been questioned and has been placed by some scholars at some five or six centuries later. You will find some statistics regarding the number of slaves held by Christians in *Slavery and Christianity*.

R. S. ASTBURY.—Certainly, the *Clarion*, with hundreds of other papers received copies of the pamphlet on *Blasphemy*. They, therefore, had the chance of noticing it if they had cared to do so. But we have never noticed the *Clarion* anxious to review Freethought publications. And there are always thousands of gallant warriors—outside the range of the fighting. We are glad of what you are doing to recommend this paper to new readers. The struggle is still very hard, and every fresh subscriber helps to make the burden lighter.

MRS. OR MISS CLARA E. KING writes us that someone has been sending her the *Freethinker*, but since getting it her eyes have been opened to the truth of the Bible. If that is so, she, presumably, owes the *Freethinker* something, and we suggest that she pays for it to be sent to other darkened minds. If we do actually convert people to Christianity, Christians can no longer find fault with us for our wicked work. The *Freethinker* ought to be advertised from the pulpits. We should not raise the least objection.

C. THOMAS.—We did not say that Christians knew their religion to be false. The statement is only true of some. But we should never dream of accusing the average believer of being sufficiently well informed to know the truth about his own religion.

R. P.—We are delighted to hear that the sales of the *Freethinker* are increasing in the direction indicated. Some time ago we approached the firm you mention but without success. All that can be done at present is to continue on the lines you are working, and then we may be in a better position to re-open the matter. If a fair proportion of our readers would do as you are doing we should see a very material increase in our circulation.

R. MOWBRAY.—Your conclusion seems to us to rest on a fallacy. We know of no good reason for concluding that "upper" and "lower" classes mean any more than a social or economic distinction. It is not a biological one. Biological and psychological degenerates or undesirables are common with the "upper" classes, and if we were to take a thousand children from the slums, soon after birth, and bring them up in a better environment, there is no reason that we know of for assuming that they would show any lower measure of ability than a thousand children born under more favourable conditions. You appear to us to be confusing nature with nurture.

J. BOSTON.—Letter received. There seems no end to the stupidity of some religious people.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—W. E. Rhodes, 5s.; R. Richards, 1s. 3d.

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

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## Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 26) Mr. Cohen has the unusual experience of lecturing in Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, at the invitation of the Deacons and the presiding minister, Mr. J. Vint Laughland. He is taking for his subject "Freethought, its Meaning and its Aims." The proceedings will commence at 6.30, and there will be questions and discussion after the lecture. These are quite unusual proceedings in a Christian church, although we gladly welcome the departure. Indeed, if other churches and chapels are agreeable Mr. Cohen would gladly devote the whole of next season to visiting them in order to lay the case for Freethought before audiences that do not usually hear it. We have no doubt but that the local Freethinkers will make the most of the chance of hearing a discussion in the present instance. They may rely upon Mr. Cohen giving plenty of material for debate.

The Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws was introduced into the House of Commons on March 16 by Mr. J. F. Green, member for Leicester (W), and is now in print. The Bill is backed by Colonel Wedgewood, Will Thorne, A. R. Atkey, and Captain Wedgewood Benn. It is expected to come on for second reading on April 5. It will be seen that the newly formed Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws has lost no time in getting its measure before the public, and we now appeal to every Freethinker in the country to be equally diligent in worrying their member to give his support to the measure. They should be equally energetic in asking questions of candidates, and let us know the result as soon as possible. We hope then to publish a list of those who are "sound" on this subject, and those who are determined to keep these infamous laws alive if they can. But it is important that Freethinkers should everywhere show themselves alert and active in this direction. We must prove to those who are lukewarm that we really mean business. The Bill will certainly meet with strong opposition, and as much as can be done to discount that must be done.

The other day, in company with Miss Kough, we paid a visit to Wormwood Scrubbs prison to see the latest prisoner for blasphemy. We found that Mr. Gott was still in hospital, where, owing to the nature of his complaint, he is likely to remain. Otherwise, he was as cheerful as ever, and naturally pleased to see someone from the outside world. He informed us that the only labour he had performed was dusting the pulpit. There is evidently a humourist in that prison. After being imprisoned for "dusting" parsons, he is set to work dusting pulpits.

For obvious reasons we are pleased to see the *Manchester Guardian* reprinting in its weekly edition the lengthy review of Mr. Cohen's pamphlet on *Blasphemy* which appeared in its ordinary issue. It will in that form reach a wider audience both at home and abroad.

The *Japan Chronicle* prints a very faithful summary of our report of the first trial in the recent Blasphemy case. We wonder what intelligent Japanese think of the proceedings? We imagine them quietly smiling at the absurdity of it all.

The Birmingham Branch brought its season's meetings to a close with a first-class gathering on Sunday last to hear a lecture from Mr. Lloyd. The address was very highly appreciated by all present, as was seen from the applause both during and at the conclusion of the address. The Branch proposes undertaking propaganda work during the summer in connection with its periodic "Rambles." We commend this idea to other branches. A great deal of useful work can be done in this manner.

## Violations of "Good Form."

PEOPLE are no longer greatly perturbed about their immortal souls. The churches say so, and they ought to know. The late Mr. Samuel Smiles proved convincingly, at least to any reasonable mind open to conviction, that worldly prosperity does not necessarily endanger one's eternal salvation. How far the profession of religious beliefs still promotes such prosperity is a moot point; but there is little doubt that avowed antagonism to them is not conducive to good business. Those acquainted with our provincial centres of population will not, I feel sure, challenge this statement. Perhaps, however, I ought to warn the readers of the *Freethinker* that, where Christianity is in question, active opposition to religion must not exceed certain limits. Otherwise the policeman may be called in to re-establish the Faith's dignity.

This conception of dignity is at once attractive and persuasive. It is also in accord with our national character. The English people believe in "good form," and lack of outward decorum towards sacred things has never been their besetting weakness. Our philosophers, scientists, schoolmasters, and, above all, our statesmen, invariably pay homage to the current creeds, as long as they are really current. We are not scoffers like the French, nor materialists like the Germans. On the other hand, we have little sympathy with the superstitious folk of Roman Catholic countries, where the worship of externals is carried to extremes. I am aware, of course, that both pew and pulpit in England are sometimes occupied by men (and women?) who are reputed to be more or less familiar with modern thought; but no English moralist—and we have a goodly number of him—would hurt the feelings of those worthy people. Conduct of this kind he commendably avoids by earnestly trying to understand their motives, though he may give mild expression to an occasional complaint about the prevailing hypocrisy. I am told that in circles which are orthodox in the strict sense it is a breach of "good form" to take even religion very seriously. Some of our readers will call to mind Mr. Somerset Maugham's play, *The Unknown*, and the Press comments thereon. One character in the play asks another, "Who will forgive God?" Lady Henry Somerset is, or was, of opinion that so profound a subject should not be treated on the stage at all.

Some misguided individuals do not readily feel themselves members of a given order of things—an established Church, an established opinion, or even an established hat or coat. "Good form" does not appeal to them. But they are at a great disadvantage. Where there is a definite standard of values at hand ready-made it is a culpable waste of mental energy to create new ones. Even those worshippers who prefer their religion free of intellectual stimulants altogether cannot well dispense with a conscience. It is part of every English gentleman's equipment, and here, again, it is advisable to practise economy.

Why some things are regarded as "good form" and others as highly disreputable is a very delicate question. The ground of distinction is sometimes found in the measure of respect, or disrespect, shown to other people's feelings. It is really a problem in practical ethics. A great English theologian once declared that some of the early Christians said the worst things they could of heretics because they reckoned that they had a perfect right to do so. Despite their appreciation of "good form," English Christians, on occasion, can also attack with characteristic power where they have a right to do so. Dr. Van Mildert, Bishop of Llandaff before he was transferred to the much richer see of Durham, said that the fact of the populace reading Paine's *Age of Reason*

"spoke the innate depravity of their minds." I like the word "innate" in this context; it would have been decidedly bad manners to threaten such people with eternal torment. The Rev. Hugh James Rose, M.A., was a professor of divinity and a man of considerable reputation as a classical scholar. He had little difficulty in summing up the moral case against the infidels of his day. "The recent avowed opponents of Christianity have no claim to consideration by reason of their characters." The suggestive word here is undoubtedly "avowed." One of his biographers says that the reverend gentleman was a "cautious high-churchman." He certainly seems to have been well aware of the value of caution. At any rate, he stood on a higher plane than our degenerate Modernists who invite questions and opposition. The Rev. John Pye Smith, D.D., was a Nonconformist. He accomplished the rather formidable task of reconciling Genesis and geology, but by the stiff-necked generation of to-day his work in this field is quite forgotten. He is only remembered for his discovery of the fact that "nearly all the Atheists upon record have been men of extremely debauched and vile conduct."

Those utterances, it is true, go back to the early decades of last century; but within our own memory the Christian warrior has often felt an imperious call to gird on his sharpest sword, especially when he has seen infidelity prompting its votaries to a life of self-indulgence. Dean Wace was such a warrior. He thought it right and proper that those who attack the Christian religion should be made to feel uncomfortable. If this was not a very original idea, still the Dean must be given credit for clearness of perception. According to the Rev. George Body, M.A., with the sceptic in religion it is never "first doubt and then sin, but first sin and then doubt." Which, again, is wonderfully in harmony with both the traditions and the proprieties of the Faith. The Rev. John Stoughton, D.D., once announced that "Christians are sure" that "infidelity is immoral." In this case, assurance is much more than a Christian virtue, it helps to keep the religious conscience pure and self-satisfied. As recently as December 8, 1921, Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall, D.D., writing in the *Record*, said that no such noble object as the search for truth "animated the mass of the assailants of Holy Scripture." They are men "whose yearnings are downward to the darkness." Here, once more, we meet a very old acquaintance. Only the adjectives "blatant" and "vulgar" are required to complete the picture. Indeed, not only infidelity but all false religions—and this term includes some which claim to be Christian—have to submit with a good grace to the exposure of their pretensions. Masses, for instance, have been declared—in public, too—to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous conceits." This, I wish to point out, is no violation of "good form." We must regard the intention rather than the mere words, and bear in mind that no divinely inspired faith can be expected to play fast and loose with its own privileges.

How, then, should one regard a faith which one feels obliged to reject? This is a momentous question. There is room for considerable difference of opinion in regard to it. Some sceptics are said to be gay, if not flippant, others are intensely serious. Perhaps the reverent Agnostic should be classed with the latter rather than with the former type. He is "pious" in its original sense of "dutiful." Where religion is concerned he believes that reverence is a good thing on the whole, and I am not at all sure that he is wrong. There is not too much reverence in circulation anywhere, and in England it is a very poor asset unless it is directed to the right quarter. I am inclined to regard our Agnostic friend as the crowning glory of

"good form," for he has the instinctive refinement to see that any coarse-grained reactionary can help ideas to survive when the reason supports them. It is when the reason has left them that it needs a real gentleman to keep them alive.

A. D. McLAREN.

## Matter and Energy.

WE may conveniently describe our knowledge of the material world in terms of two entities, matter and energy. The two are only separable in thought; in reality they are indissolubly joined together. Leaving the metaphysician to addle his brains seeking to determine what matter is, in and by itself, we may accept as a working definition of matter: "*That which possesses weight, and occupies space.*" Such things as heat, light, electricity, and magnetism, which are excluded by this definition are forms of energy; colour and odour are merely specific properties of forms of matter.

Energy can be defined in a variety of ways. That which will suffice for our present purpose is that *energy is that which has the power of changing the conditions of bodies.* Whenever a body is changing its condition energy is being expended. But, like matter, energy is indestructible. No gain or loss of energy has ever been detected in an isolated system, and, as Maxwell says in *Matter and Motion*, "The transactions of the material universe appear to be conducted, as it were, on a system of credit. Each transaction consists of a transfer of so much credit or energy from one body to another. The act of transfer or payment we call work."

But, whilst energy cannot vanish, it can appear to do so by being transformed into other forms, and all machines are ultimately devices for achieving such such transformations. If one expends mechanical energy rubbing a piece of metal, or sawing a piece of wood, the materials used become warm. Some of the muscular energy has been turned into heat. Experiments show that a given amount of mechanical energy, transformed into heat energy invariably produces the same amount of heat. On the other hand, in various types of engines heat energy is converted into mechanical energy. But not only are heat energy and mechanical energy mutually convertible; mechanical energy and electrical energy are also convertible, the one into the other. If the reader has an ebonite fountain pen, and cares to rub it for some time with a piece of flannel or silk, he will probably be able to produce electrification in it, and by passing it across a few small scraps of paper cause them to be attracted to it, as a magnet attracts iron filings or pins. And, as everyone knows, electricity can be readily reconverted into mechanical motion.

Again, much motive power is derived from the chemical action between coal and oxygen in the furnace of the steam-engine, whilst heat and electricity are also well-known as concomitants of chemical action. In brief, then, *heat, electricity, mechanical motion, and chemical action are all different forms of one distinct entity, which we call energy.*

The scientist distinguishes two types of energy, which he terms *kinetic* and *potential*, respectively. *The energy which a body possesses in virtue of its motion is called kinetic.* Thus, a bullet fired from a gun has a definite amount of kinetic energy due to its motion. When impact with a target stops this motion, the kinetic energy of the whole bullet is transformed into heat, both the bullet and the target being heated by the impact. Interpreting this in terms of the kinetic theory with which I have dealt in previous articles, the movement of the bullet as a whole is stopped, but the movement of its molecules is increased,

this increased molecular movement being appreciated as heat.

*But a body may also possess energy in virtue of its position. This energy is termed potential energy.* Water in an elevated position can do work in virtue of the law that "all liquids will flow to the lowest level that circumstances will permit"; a bent spring, a raised hammer, compressed air, and a piece of iron in the neighbourhood of a magnet all possess potential energy. Moreover, "substances which in virtue of their relative condition, or the motions of their molecules, are capable of entering into chemical actions, are also said to possess potential energy. Such is gunpowder, a mixture of metallic zinc and sulphuric acid, etc. The heat, light, and sound, and mechanical motion which attend the explosion of gun-cotton are equivalent to the chemical energy stored in the explosive."

Now,—

just as water will always run down from a high to the lowest level that circumstances will permit, so in all processes with which we are acquainted, every known form of energy at a high potential always runs down to energy at the lowest potential circumstances will permit, and one of the most interesting facts in connection with all natural changes is this constant running down or degradation of energy. Energy becomes less available for doing work (*Modern Inorganic Chemistry*, Dr. Mellor).

This raises an interesting speculation. Will this process continue until all energy has run down to a common level—a kind of sea of waste energy of uniform temperature? One can do nothing but speculate concerning this problem.

A far more practical problem is that dealt with by Professor Soddy in his entrancing little book, *Matter and Energy*. "The primary sources of natural energy," he writes,—

by virtue of which the universe keeps going over immense periods of time, are to be sought not in the great masses of glowing matter dotted about the heavens, nor in their motions under the action of gravity, nor in any of the grosser relations between energy and matter in bulk, but in the individual atoms out of which it is made up. No other source is at once sufficiently abundant and sufficiently lasting, probably, even for a single geological age, the period, that is, since the ocean condensed and rain and rivers began their work of denudation and upbuilding. Only a beginning has so far been made into the study of these new unsuspected forms of energy, but enough is known to make it clear that.....radio-activity alone, including in that term processes involving atomic transformations, is competent to be regarded as the mainspring of the universe.

And he discusses the possible exploitation of atomic energy by mankind.

Along with the discovery that a pound of uranium contains and evolves in its changes the same amount of energy as a hundred tons or more of coal evolves in its combustion, is the knowledge that little more than 1/10,000,000,000 part of this is given out every year.....We are no more competent to make use of these supplies of atomic energy than a savage, ignorant of how to kindle a fire, could make use of a steam engine.

And yet, to-day, civilization is not living on its annual revenue of solar energy, but upon the vast, but fast-dwindling savings of past ages, embodied in the form of coal. And what is to happen to our civilization when this hoard of past solar energy is expended? "It looks.....as if our successor would witness an interesting race between the progress of science on the one hand, and the depletion of natural resources on the other." "Sooner or later, but certainly not indefinitely later, nothing known will remain to supplement the natural rate of supply of "solar energy but the primary stores of atomic energy. When the world's

coal has been squandered, "either science or the atom will have been tested to destruction, and one or the other will be the arbiter of the future."

Without attempting here to go very deeply into the subject of radio-activity, it is sufficient to say that within the atom is a store of energy which dwarfs everything with which mankind is familiar. This "primary energy of the universe" is evolved slowly during the slow breaking down of the atoms of certain elements into simpler atoms, and the energy evolved by an ounce of radium in the course of its life equals that evolved from the burning of ten tons of coal. But the spontaneous changes which the radio-active elements undergo is a slow process, and the period of average life in the case of radium appears to be about 2,500 years. Hence the energy within the atom is not available in any quantity until a method has been found for accelerating this process of breaking down. But what "has an atom to fear from the utmost that can be done to it in the laboratory? Has it not been subjected in the laboratory of Nature to temperatures immeasurably higher and to pressures of which science has no conception? Its simple existence is eloquent of its fitness to survive." Yet, if some day the scientist learns how to split up the atom and liberate the energy it contains, then he will place at the disposal of mankind such a store of energy that no physical poverty of Nature will bar humanity's way to further development.

For "the world is great enough and rich enough to supply human aspirations and ambitions beyond all present dreams. But the human intellect must keep pace in its development with the expanding vision of natural abundance." W. H. MORRIS.

### Glasgow and the Preaching of the "Word."

ABOVE the platform of the City Hall Saloon where Mr. Cohen and others have so often spoken on behalf of the Glasgow Secular Society is painted the arms and motto of the city. The motto is, "Let Glasgow Flourish." In time gone by the words "by the preaching of the Word" formed part of the motto, and in the eyes of our ancestors gave it that appearance of piety so much desired.

To assist in getting back to that time, the Golden Age of Piety and Intolerance, the Libraries Committee have more than once refused to put the *Freethinker* on the tables of the magazine rooms, and only last week refused to allow some Communist papers to be placed there.

There is an outcry by a number of No-popery folk, mainly clergymen, about the possibility of the Catholic and Labour parties getting control of the Glasgow Education Authority at the coming election. Laymen of all denominations are being asked, nay, ordered, to give the matter "prayerful consideration," whatever that means. We are being told of some Edinburgh minister who has been predicting—perhaps I should say prophesying—that in twenty or thirty years Glasgow will be a Catholic city. Ma Conscience! if my worthy father the Deacon had leaved to see the day. Ma Conscience! Yet, somehow or other, people are refusing to get worried about it. There is no excitement about it. People who take any interest in these elections know that at the last election the Roman Catholics organized their vote and polled its full strength. Their opponents admit that, and yet the total poll was about thirty per cent. Where were the Protestants? But the Roman Catholics gave their surplus votes to the Labour candidates! They had a right to, of course, but what an unholy alliance it was. Roman Catholic and Labour! But what did they

expect? Did they want the Roman Catholic surplus to go to the Rev. D. Mess, of Orange Grand Lodge fame, or the Rev. J. Brisby, or to some of those who speak in pulpits and other coward's castles about the Scarlet Woman, the Harlot of Babylon *et hoc genus omne*? That would have been a Holy Alliance.

And the magistrates of Glasgow have taken a hand in the game of preaching the word. On March 5 the Westbourne Church had Bailie Rosslyn Mitchell speaking on "Why I come to Church," and it was very interesting. But what has been worrying Church people for a long time now is why people *do not* come to church. They have told us so often. They have tried shorter sermons, evening lectures, organ recitals, services of praise, and so on, yet on the above Sunday in the People's Palace, Mr. Henry Farmer conducted the Symphony Orchestra before good audiences, not so fashionable as the other, perhaps, not so highly cultured, *perhaps*, but it wasn't a church. It was a Sunday concert, or rather two concerts which the Churches and the Presbytery had tried to stop. And if the Westbourne minister and his Kirk Session invite Mr. Cohen or Mr. Lloyd to lecture on "Why I don't come to Church" they will get a bumper house. I could suffer the hymn singing, the praying, and the other outward and visible signs of unctuous rectitude in order to see and hear how it went down.

But I have wandered from the magistrates. The Corporation halls can only be let on Sundays for meetings of a sacred or religious character except with the permission of the Magistrates' Committee. And here we have another example of the bumptiousness of the Elected Person. The gods seem to have conferred a kind of immortality on this spirit of bumptiousness. One of the Glasgow papers told us recently how Dickens had, by inventing *Oliver Twist*, destroyed Bumble. A day or two later the same paper reports that Mr. De Valera has been refused the use of the St. Andrews Hall for a Sunday afternoon meeting. They don't have to give a reason, and don't. Not so very long ago an Archbishop (Roman Catholic) wanted to speak on Irish affairs and was banned. What happened? Meetings were held in every little town round Glasgow, attended by Sinn Feiners, etc., featured in the picture papers and shown in the Picture Houses in the city. The Glasgow papers reported his speeches and there was an end. Possibly something similar will take place this time, possibly not.

But if the friends of Mr. Michael Collins or Mr. President Griffiths hire the hall will they be refused a permit? One can only say Wait and See. But while waiting we ought to be thinking. We have travelled far towards freedom, but it is still true that New Presbyter is Old Priest writ large. Any of the religious bodies can get the use of the halls no matter how narrow their views, but let any other body hire a hall, and the magistrates' permission must be got, this, that and the other regulation must be obeyed. The question for the citizens is how long must we tolerate this interference with Freedom? and the answer is, just as long as we like. Let the citizens get on their feet, cease to look up at the magistrates, and the magistrates will perforce cease to look down on them.

AUTOLYCUS.

Old creeds end in being dead formulas, which no longer aid but distort and arrest the general mind; while the State-churches administering them, come to be instruments for subsidizing conservatism and repressing progress. Old schemes of education, incarnated in public schools and colleges, continue filling the heads of new generations with what has become relatively useless knowledge, and, by consequence, excluding knowledge which is useful.—Herbert Spencer, "Manners and Fashion."

## A God in a Box.

## II.

(Concluded from page 189.)

Most fetishes are used for divination, and Jahveh was no exception. He piloted the Jews about the wilderness, and with such extreme accuracy that it took them forty years to do a month's journey. The priests carried him in front. When he stopped, all the people halted and pitched their tents until he chose to move on again. Sometimes he rested a couple of days, sometimes a month, and sometimes a year. Except when engaged in bloodshed, he was the laziest god that ever lived. Moses had to excite this drowsy deity with shouting. When the ark set forward, he cried, "Rise up Jahveh, and let thine enemies be scattered"; and when it rested he cried, "Return, O Jahveh, unto the many thousands of Israel."

This God in the box was of great service to the Jews in crossing Jordan. The river was swollen with the spring freshet, and the question of transport was very difficult. But Jahveh was equal to the emergency. The priests marched boldly along with the ark, and when their feet touched the brim of the water, Jordan parted, the waters that poured down from above standing up in a heap. They held Jahveh in the bed of the river until all Israel had crossed safely, after which they followed suit, and Jordan flowed on as before.

Savages frequently take their gods into battle, and so did the Jews. General Joshua found old Jahveh of immense aid in the conquest of Canaan. The priests carried him for a whole week round Jericho, which so weakened its walls that, when the Levites trumpeted and the people shouted, they fell down flat—as flat as the fools who believe it.

There can be no doubt that the Jews relied on their fetish for victory. When the men of Ai repulsed their attack, Joshua rent his clothes and prostrated himself before the ark, where he remained for many hours, until the Lord revealed the secret of their defeat. On a previous occasion, during the lifetime of Moses, a detachment of Jews were smitten and pursued by the enemy, because they went up a hill while Jahveh stayed at the bottom.<sup>10</sup>

When Canaan was conquered, Jahveh's tent was set up at Shiloh, whence he was fetched to Eben-ezer in the days of Eli. Whether the ark remained there all that time is an open question. We read of a place called Bethel in the Book of Judges, and Bethel means the "house of God."

The adventures of Jahveh and his box in the war with the Philistines under Eli are very lively and amusing. He appears to have been neglected by the Jews, and not without reason, for his virtue was temporarily exhausted. But after their heavy defeat by the Philistines they resolved to fetch the ark from Shiloh, and give old Jahveh another trial. When the fetish arrived, they made the earth ring with their shouts, on hearing which "the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp." Being a warlike race, however, they soon regained courage; and acquitted themselves so well in the next battle that the Jews were utterly routed with the loss of thirty thousand men. The Philistines found plenty of loot, and amongst the spoil of war was old Jahveh in the box.

When Eli, the aged high priest, heard that the ark had fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised, and that his two sons, its custodians, were slain, he fell from his seat backward and broke his neck. When Phineas' wife, Eli's daughter-in-law, heard the news, she was seized with sudden travail, and died after giving birth to a son. Her last words were, "The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken." The fetish was their palladium, and with it disappeared all their hopes.

Being strangers to the bigotry of monotheists, the Philistines treated old Jahveh with great respect. Although a foreigner, he was still a god, and they were ready to adopt him. Savages often act in that way. Waitz tells us that the Fantees, for instance, even purchase gods that have acquired a certain celebrity.

Jahveh was taken on trial. The Philistines put him in their joss-house with their own god Dagon, a composite deity, whose upper part was human, and his lower part

fishy.<sup>11</sup> It was a dangerous experiment, for two of one trade seldom agree. During the day Jahveh behaved himself decently, but in the night he assaulted Dagon, who had literally not a leg to stand on, and was soon sprawling on the floor. Jahveh crept into his box again, where the Philistines found him placidly reposing in the morning, with a smile of conscious innocence.

They were mightily puzzled, but they set Dagon up again. The next night, however, the Jew God once more assaulted his Philistine rival. This time he was in deadly earnest. He broke Dagon's head off, amputated his hands, and left nothing but the stump. Yet in the morning, while the Philistines witness this doleful spectacle, old Jahveh lay stone-still in his box, as childlike and bland as ever.

But this did not suffice. Old Jahveh's blood was up. He smote the men of Ashdod with emerods. The most superficial readers of the Bible, when they remember what a dirty victory the Lord gained over the magicians of Egypt, will readily conceive that this was a very filthy disorder. It was the bleeding piles or worse.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the sweet Psalmist had this incident in mind when he sang that the Lord "smote his enemies in the hinder-parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach."

The Ashdodians were disconcerted by this attack in the rear, and at a public meeting on the question, they decided to pass old Jahveh on to the next city. But the men of Gath fared no better, for they had "emerods in their secret parts." The Ekronites also had a turn, and after great suffering and loss of life, they sent old Jahveh and his box back to the Jews with their compliments, and a peace-offering of five golden mice and five golden emerods.

The Philistines wanted no more traffic with this pestilent deity. "From this time," says Warburton, "we hear no more of any attempts among the Gentile nations to join the Jewish worship to their own. They considered the God of Israel as a tutelary Deity, absolutely *unsociable*, who would have nothing to do with any but his own people."<sup>13</sup>

Parallels to this story exist in Pagan writings. Herodotus says that Venus afflicted with "emerods" the Scythians who plundered her temple. Grotius relates a similar fiction as to the institution of Phallica. When the Athenians ridiculed some images of Bacchus, the god sent them a genital disease, and to prevent its depopulating the city, they received his images with pomp, and displayed Thrysi with figures of the afflicted parts bound to them. The men of Beth-Shemesh, where the ark first stopped on Jewish soil, welcomed it piously; but they were rash enough to look into it, and their profane curiosity so outraged old Jahveh that he "slew fifty thousand and seventy of them."<sup>14</sup> This is a good illustration of the idea of *tabu*, and a signal instance of Jahveh's love of butchery.

They passed the ark on to Kirjathjearim, where it remained for twenty years, until David ordered its removal to Jerusalem. But its journey to the capital was arrested at Nachon's threshing-floor. Just there the oxen shook the ark badly, and a man called Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. His object was to save Jahveh from the ignominy of being tossed out in the dust. Nevertheless the fetish took it as an insult, and immediately killed poor Uzzah, either by a kind of torpedo shock or by a blow on the head.<sup>15</sup> Which is a further illustration of *tabu*.

David was highly displeased with the Lord for this "breach upon Uzzah"; and being afraid that his turn might come next, he left the ark at the house of Obed-edom, and went to Jerusalem alone. But when he heard that it brought a blessing to its lucky guardian, he fetched it away to the capital, and put it in a brand-new tent.

<sup>11</sup> Calmet, "Dagon."<sup>12</sup> Milman (p. 117) is content to call it "a loathsome disease." Josephus (*Antiq.*, bk. ii., ch. i.) calls it "a dysentery and a flux," the victims of which vomited up their entrails (a difficult operation!) before the breath was out of their bodies.<sup>13</sup> Bishop Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. ii., p. 270.<sup>14</sup> See 1 Samuel vi. 19. Josephus (*Antiq.*, vi., 1) gives the number struck dead as only *seventy*. His editor, Whiston, wonders how "such an incredible number as fifty thousand in this one town or small city" crept into the Hebrew text.<sup>15</sup> 2 Samuel vi. 7.<sup>10</sup> Numbers xiv. 44, 45.

Indeed, the pious king was so overjoyed that he danced naked before the ark, and his wife rebuked him for his indecent exposure.

Soon afterwards David resolved to do the Lord a good turn. Here am I, said he, dwelling in a fine cedar house, while dear old Jahveh lives in a tent. It isn't fair; I'll build him a house. But the Lord declined the offer. No, no, said he; don't you go building me a new-fangled shanty; I've lived in a nice, airy, well-ventilated tent ever since I can remember, and I mean to go on living in one; just mind your own business and let me bide.<sup>16</sup> Yet the Lord relented in Solomon's reign, and allowed himself to be placed in the temple, although he insisted on being supplied with exact copies of his old furniture.

When the priests opened the ark, in the reign of Solomon, they found nothing in it "save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb."<sup>17</sup> The fetish had disappeared. Perhaps they had grown ashamed of it; yet they kept the box, called it the ark of the covenant, and used it as an oracle. Many years later, in the days of Jeremiah, the ark itself had become an opprobrium.<sup>18</sup>

What became of the ark is unknown. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have conveyed it to Babylon, but according to one of the Jewish books it was hidden by Jeremiah in a cave of Mount Pisgah, where it was to remain unknown until the regathering of Israel.<sup>19</sup> The Jews still believe it will come with the Messiah. Let us hope he will bring it in its original state with Jahveh inside. Archæologists would be delighted to examine such a famous fetish, and the trustees of the British Museum would pay a high price for such a relic of antiquity, unless it should be snatched up by the trustees of the Guimet Museum of Religions in Paris, where thousands of *bonâ-fide* gods are elegantly arranged in glass-cases. G. W. FOOTE.

## 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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Mr. W. Siddle, "A Critical View of Christian Ethics."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, B. Dunlop, M.B., "The Birth Control Movement." Discussion Circle meets every Wednesday at 7.30, "Coronet" Hotel, Soho Street, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Robert Harding, "Cosmo-theism."

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. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Buddha and Christ."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Dr. John Oakesmith, "Æschylus at the Chiswick Empire."

### COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds, Youngman's): 6.45, Mr. Ben Goldberg, "Anarchist Communism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry Snell, "American Life."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Pembroke Chapel): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, its Meaning and its Aims."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Street, Manchester): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3, "Christianity and the Labour Movement"; 6.30, "Is Christianity in Harmony with Science (Astronomy)?"

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Samuel vii. 1, 7.  
<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah iii. 16.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Kings viii. 9.  
<sup>19</sup> 2 Maccabees ii. 1, 7.

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