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## Views and Opinions.

### The Blasphemy Bill.

The Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws came before the House of Lords on Tuesday, May 29. It was introduced by Earl Russell in a temperate and well-reasoned speech on a motion that the Bill be read a second time. There was a very thin House, and when the voting came eight voted in favour of a second reading and sixty-eight against. The names of a number of well-known legal peers do not appear on the division list, and one would have liked the expressed opinions of such men as Lord Buckmaster, Lord Birkenhead, and others that one might name. The result would not, I expect, have been different from what it was, but there would have been a larger number of votes on either side, and we should have known better where we stand. As it is there is nothing to be depressed over concerning the result. It is much what we said it would be, it has given us an amount of publicity, and there now remains the House of Commons, when Mr. Snell is given a chance of bringing his measure forward. There, however, the measure is persistently blocked, the bigots fearing a discussion in the more popular House, and one fancies that a great many who would not care to vote against the Bill are rather glad they are not asked to record an opinion one way or another. It is an awkward question for the politician. It involves a principle and raises an issue that cannot gain votes, and may lose some. Meanwhile every bit of publicity we can get is so much to the good. Truth and justice benefits every time that is achieved.

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### Slander by Inuendo.

In another part of this issue we print the first half of a full report of the discussion on Earl Russell's Bill, and readers may judge for themselves the quality of the opposition. My duty is to offer a few words of criticism, and there is one general feature of all the speeches made against the Bill. All the speakers were clearly ashamed of what the law of blasphemy is really intended to effect, and all were constrained in consequence to claim for the law against blasphemy things which it does not and cannot do. To take Lord Phillimore's speech first. Lord Phillimore is himself a judge; he has tried at least one case for blasphemy, and may try more. Quite correctly Earl Russell

pointed out that the law of blasphemy does not protect all religions, but only the Christian religion, and, strictly, only the Church of England. Lord Phillimore, with all the authority of a judge, meets that with a direct denial, and says that:—

There is in the laws as they are now worked with regard to blasphemy and blasphemous libel nothing but a protection of *decent* people, not necessarily members of the Church of England, but decent Christians of all kinds, from having their ears and eyes offended by horrors which to them are much worse than assault and battery.

I have underlined the word "decent" because it stands as part of the slimy Christian suggestion that they who attack Christianity must be more or less tinged with indecency. But in the first place it is noticeable that Lord Phillimore is content that there should exist a law which is strictly sectarian in character—it is Christians who are to be protected. No one else matters, the feelings of Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, do not count. It is towards Christianity alone that the law says you must behave in such and such a manner. It is a law for the protection of a single sect. The feelings of people outside that sect—no matter how decent they may be must take care of themselves, or get no more protection than is given them in connection with all other subjects.

\* \* \*

### What is Blasphemy?

But let us look a little closer at Lord Phillimore's contention which, as a lawyer, he may or may not himself believe. There is one sect in England which calls itself Christian Scientists. Members of this sect claim that they are the only genuine Christians. There are Christadelphians who come forward with a fantastic interpretation of the Bible, and claim that they are the only true Christians. Now suppose that I were to write or speak against either of these bodies of people in such a way as would not merely outrage their feelings, but a way in which ninety-nine genuinely decent—not sectarianly decent—people would declare to be coarse, vulgar, obscene. Lord Phillimore must know as well as I do that there is not a judge in Britain who would hold that in that case a charge of blasphemy could be sustained. I might be indicted for tending to a breach of the peace or for downright indecency, but not for blasphemy. Why not? The reason for this is that it is the Christian religion that is being protected, and the only form of Christianity which the law fully recognizes and proclaims as true is that which the law itself has established. It is true that other Christian sects share the protection given by the Blasphemy laws, but that is because these other sects share to a very considerable extent the teachings of the Church of England. But the fact that one can revile the mass—the most sacred of the Roman Catholic institutions—as coarsely as possible without running the slightest danger of being charged with blasphemy is enough to prove Lord Phillimore to be wrong, and it is almost unbelievable that he should not, as a judge, know he is wrong. But to admit that the law, as it stands is merely a Church of England law would be



likely to bring against it all Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, hence the hiding of a fact on which Churchmen once prided themselves.

Ignorance in Office. \* \* \*

The Earl of Onslow (Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education) acted as spokesman for the Government, and he managed to add another legal inaccuracy to the case. He was surprised that such a Bill should be introduced, because the only form of blasphemy punishable by the civil court is "where there is an intention of abusing, insulting, or misleading others by means of contumacious abuse of the Christian religion." We may kindly put this down to the customary ignorance of the Government official defending his brief. For the truth is that the question of intention has never figured in the conviction of any "blasphemer," and for the obvious reason that it would be almost impossible to prove there was an intention of abusing or insulting Christians. Lord Phillimore could have enlightened him on this point from his own summing up, when he was careful not to put this point before the jury. The Earl of Onslow said that he had the notes of the Gott trial before him. In that case it is a pity that he did not read them, or if he read them did not get someone to explain them. For not only was the question of intention one which Justice Avory kept from the jury, but there was a special rider from the jury when the verdict of guilty was returned to the effect that the prisoner did not appreciate what he was doing—in other words, there was no intention to wound or abuse. The ruling of Justice Avory was that all the jury had to consider was whether the language used would excite Christians to such a pitch as to cause them to commit a breach of the peace. That was also the judgment of the Court of Appeal, presided over by the warming-pan Lord Chief Justice who made history by his declaration that blasphemy was a dangerous crime. But here is a pretty picture. A prominent judge who, in the interests of bigotry misreads the law, introduces the classification of decent and indecent people as covering Christians and those who oppose them, and declares blasphemy to be the sight or hearing of anything offensive to Christians. He is followed by a Government official who misreads the very notes of the case on which he claims to rest his plea and contradicts the judge who said that it is really the likelihood of a breach of the peace which is the main thing. And the one thing that emerges from all this is that any excuse is good enough so long as Freethought can be slandered and Christianity maintain its position of privilege and power.

\* \* \*

A War on Opinion.

But if there is no question of intention to be coarse, or abusive, or to intentionally insult and wound the very delicate nature of Christians—and judges have often gone out of their way to point this out in the course of various trials—what remains? Clearly there is nothing that remains but the offence against an opinion. The Freethinker is punished because he talks about religion in the same way in which he would be permitted to talk about any other subject without the slightest interference on the part of the law. The Marquis of Salisbury substantiated this by saying:—

There is undoubtedly a kind of expression of opinion on religious matters which is profoundly offensive to persons whom we are bound to protect—to all sorts of people who look to the law to protect them against what they regard as outrages, just as they are protected in other matters that have to do with decency.

The closing words of this passage are worth noting in view of Lord Phillimore's artful attempt to confuse the

question with one of decency. There are some people who want to be protected in the matter of religion as they are protected in matters of decency. The two things are distinct. It is religion after all that is protected. But who are the people who look to the law for protection? It is useless Roman Catholics doing so. I might call the Pope a charlatan, or a swindler, or a scoundrel, or I might allege that every Roman Catholic nunnery in the world was nothing more than a brothel, I might revile every peculiarly Roman Catholic institution in the way beloved of the most rabid Kensitite, but there could be no charge of blasphemy. It is useless the members of other religions asking the law to protect them as it protects them in matters of decency. The ones protected must be Christians. The Christian—substantially the Church of England Christian—is the only person whose feelings are not sufficiently robust to withstand any sort of criticism, his religion being the only one that is afraid to face the world without a policeman ready to close the mouth of the too forceful critic. Nor can it be that these laws are kept in force merely because there is a fear that the aggrieved feelings of Christians would vent themselves in a breach of the peace. So far as my memory serves there has never been any sign of this. The usual procedure has been for some officious bigot to get a policeman or someone else to buy a copy of the "blasphemous" publication. It is the Christian who has sought for the "offensive publication," not the offensive publication that has been thrust upon him, and this exposes the real spirit behind it all. It is the spirit of the Christian bigot, one of the ugliest, the narrowest, and the most disastrous things that the history of the past eighteen centuries has to show.

\* \* \*

I will deal with other aspects of the matter next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Olive Schreiner's Posthumous Works.

*Stories, Dreams, and Allegories*, price 6s. net.

*Thoughts on South Africa*, price 21s. net. Both published by Fisher Unwin, Ltd.

AMONG the books by which Olive Schreiner won immortal fame are *The Story of an African Farm*, *Dreams*, *Trooper Peter Halket*, *Dream Life and Real Life*, and *Woman and Labour*. All these were published prior to her lamented death some three years ago. This year two posthumous works have just appeared. The first, entitled *Stories, Dreams and Allegories*, contains five stories of great beauty and charm. "Eighteen-Ninety-Nine" gives an unforgettable picture of incidents in the life of a Dutch family which in its hatred of British rule fled from the Cape Colony to Natal. When it started the family consisted of husband and wife, a baby in arms, a very young daughter, and a grandmother. Like thousands of others who set out on the trek northward this little family travelled by an ox-wagon. One day, while still pressing on, the wagon was outspanned under the trees, the little girl and a boy-cousin of her own age went to play among the bushes on the bank of a stream. Fifty years later, "she remembered how, suddenly, as they looked through the bushes, they saw black men leap out and mount the ox-wagon outspanned under the trees; she remembered how they shouted and dragged people along, and stabbed them; she remembered how the blood gushed, and how they, the two young children among the bushes, lay flat on their stomachs, and did not move nor breathe with that self-preserving instinct found in the young of animals, or men who grow up in the open."



For the two young cousins there was absolutely nothing left, not even a scrap of anything to eat. Fortunately they were rescued by "some men with large beards and large hats who rode up on horse-back." One of these men tied the girl "close to him with a large red handkerchief," and this man "took them back to his wagon, and he and his wife adopted them, and brought them up among their own children." When both were eighteen years old they were permitted to marry, and after a few years they "gathered together all their few goods and in their wagon, with their guns and ammunition and a few sheep and cattle, they moved away northwards to found their own home," not far away from where Johannesburg and the great mines are situated. "Those were brave, glad, free days to the young couple." "Then in time three little sons were born to them, who grew as strong and vigorous in the free life of the open veldt as the young lions in the long grass and scrub near the river four miles away. Those were joyous, free years for the man and woman, in which disease and carking care and anxiety played no part."

It is at this point that the real story begins, and a more fascinating short story was never published. It grips us like a vice, and we cannot get released until we have finished it, and then it haunts us like an inescapable memory. It is a story of cousinly affection maturing into passionate love, the love of woman as sweetheart, wife, mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother. It is a story of brave men, who lived and died fighting for truth and freedom, and of women who had the courage to be beautifully and wholeheartedly loyal to them and what they did or attempted to do. It is simply told, without a single comment or reflection. Alas, the tragedy overshadows the comedy in it. Husbands and sons are all cruelly slain, and wives, mothers, and the grandmother are left to mourn. And with the South African War of 1899-1902, the whole family ceased to be. We repeat that "Eighteen-Ninety-Nine" is a perfect gem, a masterpiece of a master mind. "The Buddhist Priest's Wife" is of a completely different character, inferior as a mere tale, but superior as a product of imaginative subtlety. The problem is who and what this woman was. She was a superbly beautiful woman whom most men loved but who apparently returned no man's love. We know her only through a remarkable conversation with a man whom she had sent for. He accused her of having entirely disappeared from civilized life, and he wanted to know what was taking her to India now. Was she going to "marry some old Buddhist priest, build a cottage on the top of the Himalayas and live there, discuss philosophy and meditate?" He wanted to get married and beget children, and at her advice he resolved to go to America in search of a suitable wife. Of herself she simply said:—

I'm very happy. You see, what matters is that something should need you. It isn't a question of love. What's the use of being near a thing if other people could serve it as well as you can? If they could serve it better, it's pure selfishness. It's the need of one thing for another that makes the organic bond of union. You love mountains and horses, but they don't need you; so what's the use of saying anything about it! I suppose the most absolutely delicious thing in life is to feel a thing needs you, and to give at the moment it needs. Things that don't need you, you must love from a distance.

Did she find the one who needed her, and did she give herself to him and find satisfaction in his service? When we next see her she is dead, and someone says, "Cover her up! I do not think she would have liked us to look at her. In one way she was alone all her life; she would have liked to be alone now!.....Life

must have been very beautiful to her, or she would not look so young now. Cover her up! Let us go!"

There are two most charming stories, obviously for children, "The Wax Doll," and "Master Towser," which are equally interesting to older people.

We have no space to dwell at any length on "Dreams and Allegories," which form the second and smaller portion of this book. Most of them are brief but of most exquisite beauty. In some the supernatural is treated, not only as if it has, or can have, no value, but also as non-existent. Take "A Soul's Journey—Two Visions," in which a soul is depicted as having been born in a cavern under the earth. Soon after its birth it creeps along the floor, and begins to run after things. The first thing it sees is a glow-worm, and it goes after it till it reaches the door of the cave where it puts out its hand to take it; but the glow-worm vanishes into a hole in the ground. So disappointed is the young soul that it sits down in the dark at the door of the cavern and cries. The next moving light it follows turns out to be a firefly. So the soul climbs and climbs in the hope that every light it follows will prove to be the reality it craves for until it makes a discovery, saying: "There is now no light more. I have reached the last height. There is now no light to strive for!"—

And it lay still with its face on the ground. And after a while the soul looked up. And over its head were the stars, they that neither rise nor set, that shine not for the individual, but for the whole; they looked down on it.

And the soul rose to its feet.

It knew why it had climbed.

The whole of this allegory is an illustration of the truth of the lines that follow:—

There is no light in earth or heaven,  
But the cold, white light of the stars.

In the other work, *Thoughts on South Africa*, published on the 24th day of May, Olive Schreiner is presented to us in a totally new light. Here she shines neither as novelist nor as dreamer, but as a philosophical sociologist, dealing with peoples and problems in exceptionally masterly style. As her devoted husband, Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner, informs us in the Foreword, most of the chapters composing this book were written upwards of thirty years ago and appeared as articles in the *Cape Times*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Cosmopolis*, and the *Cosmopolitan*. Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner tells us that "all the articles were carefully revised" by the author, except Chapter VIII, and that she fully intended to publish the book in 1896. In a Prefatory Note written in that year, Olive Schreiner stated that the time to publish it had surely come, saying: "The Boer has been struck a sore blow by the hand that stroked him; and again it is necessary that he, with his antique faults and his heroic virtues, should be shown to the world as he is." Although the Jameson Raid was a powerful inducement to publish the book at once, yet other interests intervening which appealed to her more powerfully, caused the publication to be postponed. British intervention in Matabeleland and Mashonaland resulted in the horrible wars which eventuated in the conquest of the two territories and their becoming British possessions under the name of Rhodesia. This forced Olive Schreiner to write *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, which, when finished, she and her husband came to London to get it published. As Mr. Cronwright-Schreiner explains: "Not long after our return we went to Johannesburg and lived there until some little time before the Boer War started. Subsequently on account of bad health, her doctor ordered her to leave. The Boer War and the distressing state of things in South Africa resulting therefrom, coupled with her



ill-health, and then the European War and the almost complete breakdown of her health, account largely, no doubt, for the non-publication of these *Thoughts on South Africa*. But now at last it is in the hands of the public and open to critical reviews. What are its teachings, and of what interest are they to Freethinkers?

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Concluded.)

## The Shadow of the Sabbath.

John P. Robinson, he  
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee.

—Lowell.

Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall  
be no more cakes and ale?

—Shakespeare.

PUBLIC attention has again been called to the question of Sunday relaxation. There can hardly be any doubt but that public opinion is changing rapidly for the better, and that there is a decay of that reverence for the old Puritanical view of Sunday which has cast a gloom over the national life since the far-off days of what is called the Reformation. It may not be long before the tide turns; but in the meantime the evil, for evil it is, has to be reckoned with. So far from the old Acts of Parliament dealing with the Sunday question voicing the national will, they no longer represent the views of more than five per cent of the population. This breeds hypocrisy and a general dissatisfaction. Rich people still give lip service to religious prejudice, but it is on Sundays that they give their choicest parties and entertainments. Poor people use the day as best they can, but they do not attend churches and chapels, which the clergy complain are the scenes of beggarly arrays of empty benches. At present, Sunday is a bastard sort of day. It is neither a working day nor a holiday, so numerous are the meshes of the antiquated Acts of Parliament. In fact, Sunday is emphatically not a day of amusement, and that this is so is due less to public sentiment than to the state of the law, which is a bad heirloom from the Ages of Faith.

Curiously, this fanatical view of Sunday is confined to the United Kingdom, and English speaking peoples. In the New England Settlements of America, Puritanism had untrammelled sway, and Sunday became a veritable nightmare. If a descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers had his hat blown off by the wind on his way to church he was permitted to run after it, provided that he ran reverently and decently. No wonder that Robert Ingersoll said that it would have been better for America that, instead of the Pilgrim Fathers landing at Plymouth Rock, the same rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers.

Yet on the question of Sunday amusements England has not always taken her weekly holiday and made it the gloomiest day of the week. Under the reign of James I people were permitted to indulge on Sundays in dancing, archery, leaping, May games, and other amusements. Under Queen Elizabeth the theatres were open upon Sundays. Both these monarchs were Protestants, but the prohibition of amusements on Sundays was an innovation that developed in the Puritan triumph in the seventeenth century. These fanatics buttressed their extreme views by Acts of Parliament, which enforced a custom which few were strong enough to resist. There was even a time when, in Edinburgh, whistling on Sunday was an offence, and when men thought it necessary to spend the hours with drawn blinds, as though in every house lay a corpse. Even to-day, men and women are fined in country towns for selling sweets and newspapers on Sundays, and seldom a week passes without a conviction.

The education of public opinion in the right direction is necessarily a slow process. It is over sixty years ago since Charles Dickens, as good a Radical as Cobbett, pleaded for a brighter and better Sunday for Englishmen. It is more than half a century since a handful of Freethinkers started the Sunday League with the same humanitarian ideas. For more than fifty years the National Secular Society has had the matter in the forefront of its aims. Yet the dead Puritans hold the field because the Sabbatarian Acts of Parliament are still upon the Statute Book of a civilized country, and are always supported by 50,000 priests, and a bigoted Bench of Bishops in the House of Lords. This state of affairs is directly due to the action of Puritan fanatics, yet Puritanism has never represented England as a whole. It was once strong enough to lay a mailed fist upon English social life, embody that brute force in Acts of Parliament, and make that ironical institution known as the English Sunday a thing at which intelligent foreigners raise their eyebrows and smile.

The working people of this country fight for shorter hours and better wages, but take little notice that one-seventh of their lives is filched from them in the name of an outworn Oriental superstition. A working-man's Sunday is too often a day of idle loafing, or of drunken rowdyism. Unlike his Continental brother, he is compelled by law to take his pleasures sadly. Some day he should wish to return to the happier conditions which once obtained in his own country before the nightmare of a fanatical Puritanism darkened the face of the sun. Nothing but good can come from rational amusement on the weekly day of leisure. Even in Anglo-Saxon days, the laws commanded the abstention of work on Sundays, but not the giving up of amusements. That was over a thousand years ago.

MIMNERMUS.

## Richard Carlile.

(Concluded from page 332.)

### VIII.—CLOSING YEARS.

IN 1829 Carlile celebrated Robert Taylor's release from prison by establishing Sunday morning adult Bible discussions at the Fleet Street "Temple of Deism." His colleague established the Christian Evidence Society. Both institutions have been travestied since by Christians.

Carlile and Taylor now made an Atheist missionary tour through the north of England. On their return to London they opened up, on May 30, 1830, the Rotunda—the one-time famous music-hall in Blackfriars Road, or Great Surrey Street, as it was called—as a Freethought Coliseum. Seven months later Carlile founded his *Prompter* because he thought the nation needed a prompter! This was on November 13, 1830. Two months later he was incarcerated for a period of thirty-two months for sedition. This charge was based on his defence of the agricultural labourers whose quarrel was the want of the necessaries of life in the midst of abundance. Six months later Robert Taylor was imprisoned a second time for blasphemy.

In November 1831, Carlile separated from his wife Jane, with whom he divided his publishing work. The following year he settled on her an annuity of £50 a year for life in addition. He kept the debts and the business, and she opened a rival office opposite his, and remained on terms of absolute friendship. Friendliness was possible where constant amicable contact was not.

During the joint visit of Carlile and Taylor to Bolton in 1829 their meetings had been attended by Eliza Sharples, the daughter of Richard Sharples, a Bolton manufacturer of quilts and counterpanes. She had



been a close sympathizer with Carlile's writings for some time prior to this, and had seen him a few years before when he visited Liverpool. In December, 1831, she communicated directly with Carlile through A. Hardie, a Freethought bookseller of Bolton, and journeyed to London the following month to assist in his propaganda. She interviewed Carlile in the Compter on January 12, 1832, and reopened the Rotunda. Seventeen days later she delivered her first lecture there as "The Lady of the Rotunda," and established her journal, *Isis*, in February, 1832.

Carlile was released from prison in 1833. He had refused to find either sureties or fine, and the Government surrendered on both points. With Robert Taylor he spoke at the Rotunda the Sunday following his release and received a tremendous ovation. He now formed a union with Eliza Sharples. The following year he was arrested for refusing to pay Church assessment rates, fined, sentenced to three years' imprisonment, and ordered to find sureties for a further three years in £200. He refused either to pay a fine or find sureties and was released from the Compter after four months' imprisonment.

With Eliza Sharples he now made a lecturing tour of the country, on their return from which they settled in Enfield. Here they lived for seven years. Carlile often visited London in connection with his publishing or for the purposes of lecturing. But his health was giving way and the poverty of the hungry 'forties was affecting his activity. It was a terrible struggle for existence he now passed through, and the worry hastened the decline in health his imprisonments had induced. The Enfield lease ran out and Carlile returned to Fleet Street to live as well as to work, and also to die. He returned to London in November, 1842, and died there on February 10, 1843. His last words were: "I am the same man I have always been. I have gone neither to right nor to left. My aim has been to accomplish one great purpose."

He bequeathed his body to science.

Eliza Sharples survived him eighteen years, devoting herself to the education of their daughters and the foundation of a Hall of Science near the Warner Street Temperance Hall, and assisting in the conversion to Freethought of Charles Bradlaugh.

GUY A. ALDRED.

## Blasphemy Laws Amendment Bill.

(House of Lords, May 29, 1923.)

EARL RUSSELL: My Lords, the Bill which I have to ask your Lordships to read a second time this afternoon deals with the question of blasphemy in its criminal aspect. The criminal aspect of blasphemy rests upon many Statutes, some of which are old and quite out of date in their language and are such as are never applied in these days. There is also a Rule of Common Law against blasphemy. I think I may summarize the present position of the matter by saying that it amounts to this—that blasphemy is very rarely prosecuted as such. Actual prosecutions for blasphemy under the head of blasphemy are very few, and when they take place they take place almost invariably—I think it would be fair to say as regards the last thirty or forty years quite invariably—in respect of some attendant circumstance, such as violence of language, or language likely to promote a breach of the peace, or language so offensive that it is felt that it should not be tolerated.

It should be remembered that blasphemy is an ecclesiastical matter, and that the jurisdiction in respect of blasphemy was originally in the ecclesiastical courts and was only transferred to the secular courts at a later date. In 1883, Lord Coleridge, then Lord Chief Justice, laid down a rule of Common Law that the fundamentals of religion might be attacked provided that the decencies of controversy were observed. That, of course, is by no

means the scope or tendency of the earlier Statutes against blasphemy. Their objection was to attacks upon the fundamentals of religion. There is another curious fact about it which, I think, it is worth your Lordships' while to bear in mind. That is, that it is not an offence to attack the Christian religion alone as such, but the offence is limited to that religion which is held by the Church of England. There is nothing in the Blasphemy Laws or in the Common Law which makes it an offence to speak as disrespectfully as you like of the Roman Catholic service of the Mass. That, obviously, makes the law partial in its application and difficult to justify.

The present position in regard to blasphemy is that prosecutions are very infrequent. It may, therefore, be asked: Why is it necessary to repeal these laws? We do not in this country imitate the example of the United States where they put a great many laws, sometimes of an excellent character, upon their Statute Book and never enforce or act upon them. We like the laws that we have upon the Statute Book in this country to be enforced and obeyed, and I think it is unfortunate to retain upon the Statute Book a large number of Statutes which are, in effect, dead letters and to keep in existence laws which are not operative.

It may well be asked, and it is the question that I put to myself when I was asked to take charge of this Bill: "If you do away with prosecution for blasphemy, what protection have you against the use of language of a most offensive character?"—language which all your Lordships would deprecate. The answer to that question is simple. You have the protection of the existing law. If the language is used by a public speaker in a public place and is of so violent a character as to be likely to provoke a breach of the peace he already commits an offence whether the particular thing he is attacking is religion, or the Prime Minister, or the Soviet Government; and you can proceed against him in respect of that. If his language is abusive and indecent you can, again, get him irrespective of any attack upon religion or any question of blasphemy.

I think it is worth noticing that there is also a growing dissatisfaction with the existence of this law. There has not been a single case of prosecution in recent years in which numbers of clergymen among others, while not in the least upholding the opinions of the person indicted, have not protested against the existence of such a law. They resent the imputation that their religion needs some other form of protection. I am sure that I should have the most rev. Primate with me when I say that he does not desire to rely upon the secular arm to maintain the truths of the Christian religion, and does not desire to punish people for questioning those truths. All the essentials of the Christian religion are, and may be, daily questioned. They are so questioned by books and pamphlets whose circulation runs into thousands and tens of thousands, and are questioned in their essence and attacked in every possible way without any prosecution ensuing, because the thing is done in a way which is regarded as decent.

I think it is undesirable that the test of an offence should be whether the person who commits it has a sense of literary values or not. Merely because he is an ill-educated man and puts his opinions badly and crudely he ought not to be liable to prosecution from which an educated man escapes because he is able to use language almost of a dignity suited to your Lordships' House. A deputation upon this matter waited upon Mr. Asquith when he was Prime Minister, and I should like to read to the House a word or two from the reply Mr. Asquith made to that deputation. He said:

As regards the Statute Law, I have been looking at this Bill of Mr. Holt's, and I do not imagine that there is anybody who would dissent from the statement that most of these Statutes are altogether obsolete. I do not think any of the recent prosecutions have taken place under them, and I agree with you in thinking they might all be swept off the book with very great advantage, or at least with no real hurt. In fact, the real difficulty is the Common Law—not the Statute Law made by Parliament, but the Common Law as made by the Judges.

Then he went on to deal with it, and after doing so, said:

That shows, of course, a tendency—I do not say it is other than a very beneficial tendency—on the part of the



Judges to restrict the scope within which this doctrine can be applied. Now, I understand your desire to be that we should go a step further, and that even this attenuated fragment, or relic, of the old Blasphemy Law should altogether disappear. And I confess, speaking for myself, and only for myself, I am in sympathy with you. I can see no good object—certainly no object which is bound up in any way with the cause of religion—in the maintenance and enforcement of these laws.

I think that is rather strong support for the view I have been urging upon your Lordships—that these laws are partial in their operation, that they are merely a relic of laws which are no longer in consonance with general public opinion, and no longer in consonance with the desire we all have to promote speech which is free as possible so long as it is kept within reasonable and decent bounds.

When you come to reading I do not believe people have the same right to complain of being offended, because it rests with them whether they should buy or read the book or pamphlet in which the words objected to are contained. When you have the spoken word you have full powers to deal with it now under the existing law without treating it under this relic of Ecclesiastical Law which always causes a disturbance in the public mind. I think, therefore, we should be well advised, and bring ourselves more in consonance with modern views and opinion if we were to do away with it.

The Bill of which I move the Second Reading consists really of only one operative clause to the effect that "after the passing of this Act no criminal proceedings shall be instituted in any court against any person for schism, heresy, blasphemy, blasphemous libel, or atheism." I have not thought it necessary to include in the Bill by way of schedule the Acts whose repeal is involved in the passage of this Bill, because they will be impliedly repealed by the Bill. I ask your Lordships this afternoon to say that you cannot properly produce any reasonable or logical justification for maintaining this little remnant of an old law which was, in fact, the law of persecution of the public at large by one religious sect. Many things are said which I find very offensive, connected not with blasphemy, but with other subjects, but I have never desired that the people who said them should be put in prison merely because they hurt my feelings, and I do not think that members of the Church of England are entitled to any special protection of that sort. The books which are already published freely, and which circulate without hindrance, must be of a character, if they were read by believers, which, I should think, would be very painful to their feelings, but they are not suppressed because they have a certain literary quality about them. I cannot think that anyone who values his religion would care nowadays to have it supported by the secular arm, and I cannot think that your Lordships are so out of touch with public feelings as to wish to maintain any longer these rather archaic methods and proceedings.

I have pointed out to your Lordships that nothing will be lost in public decency by the passage of this Bill, and I think much will be gained in avoiding disturbances of the public mind. If I may, I will give your Lordships an instance, particularly as the man concerned is dead. A man called Gott, whom many of your Lordships may remember, was prosecuted, under the Blasphemy Laws, I think, and his was a case which no one could possibly have wished to support. The language he used was of a kind we should all deprecate, and one felt it was proper that he should be prevented from using it. But one also felt, all those whose opinions are similar to mine felt, that it was impossible, or very difficult, to refuse in some way to offer him support when he was prosecuted under this law; whereas, if he had been prosecuted under the ordinary law, we should have been quite pleased to see he was dealt with and so prosecuted. For these reasons I commend this Bill to your Lordships' notice, and I hope your Lordships will think fit to give it a Second Reading. I beg to move.

Moved, That the Bill be now read.—(Earl Russell.)

LORD PHILLIMORE: My Lords, I do not think those who entrusted the noble Earl with this Bill have been very clever in their drafting of it. As it stands it would prevent all prosecutions against clergymen in the Church of England who, holding office and deriving revenues

from the Church of England, were to preach doctrines entirely contrary to Christianity, and, if I am right in thinking this Bill will refer to Scotland as well as to England, it would equally prevent prosecutions in the Established Church of Scotland against any minister who taught something contrary to the faith that he was paid to teach. That is a criticism on the form of the Bill. I cannot think that those who drew it knew very much about that with which they were dealing.

With regard to the rest of the Bill, I venture to suggest to your Lordships that since the decision of Lord Coleridge in 1883—which I had to follow and apply in a case which is referred to in the little pamphlet from which the noble Earl has been quoting, the case of a man named Boulter in, I think, 1910, and which has been applied by Mr. Justice Avory in a later case—there is in the laws as they are now worked with regard to blasphemy and blasphemous libel nothing but a protection of decent people, not necessarily members of the Church of England, but decent Christians of all kinds, from having their ears and eyes offended by horrors which to them are much worse than assault and battery. That decent men and women should be obliged, as they pass along the street, to see offensive pictures or placards, or to hear orators in Hyde Park shouting the sort of offensive thing which has been the subject of prosecution in all the modern cases, is to interfere with the ordinary comforts and decencies of civilization with regard to those people.

I am not accepting the view of the noble Earl that that would be sufficiently prevented by saying that the language tended to a breach of the peace, and I cannot conceive how it would apply to placards or to circulars thrust into people's hands which they would have to read before they could reject them. I venture to suggest that as the law now stands it is not a protection to the Church of England, not an enforcement of Christianity or of the Christianity as taught in the Church of England, but a protection to the comfort and ordinary life of ordinary men and women, and that it is very undesirable that it should be interfered with.

THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY: My Lords, the noble Earl who introduced this Bill referred to myself as likely not to desire to come forward to seek for secular support in defence of the doctrines of organized Christianity in this country of which I may be supposed to be, at least in some measure, the spokesman. The noble Earl is right in supposing that the last thing I should think of doing would be to come here to deprecate the passing of a Bill like this because the passing of it would be likely to be a serious detriment and harm to organized Christianity in this country. But there may be other very good reasons why the passing of a Bill like this would be misleading in a high degree and to the detriment of the public good in an indirect way.

The noble Earl quoted words used by Mr. Asquith, when he was Prime Minister, to a deputation which waited upon him to urge the necessity of such a measure as this and said he thought he could quote Mr. Asquith as having given support to the proposals of the deputation. What Mr. Asquith did say was that these things were an anachronism, and might be swept away with advantage; then, apparently, Mr. Asquith corrected himself, and said, "or at least with no real hurt." That is precisely what a great many people would say. It will make no practical difference to organized Christianity in this country whether such a measure as the noble Earl proposes were passed into law or not. It would have no appreciable effect whatever.

But that does not cover all the ground. Whether its passage might have an indirect effect is another thing altogether. If no laws were in existence, no Common law, declaring the necessity to protect the religious life of this country against occasions of indecent and gross profanity, I should not come here and ask for the enactment of such a law. To do so would be to proclaim that we were in need of such protection. We are not, and the last thing I wish is the buttressing of our religious and ecclesiastical position by an artificial fence of this kind. To take an overt step in order to repeal offences which, by the noble Earl's admission, do not exist to an appreciable degree, for which he is not able to give any historic examples of the least importance and which he says would be regarded as inoffensive unless they were accompanied



by offences and outrages of another sort, would be to mislead the public altogether. It would be believed that we required some protection which we do not require; we should be supposed to be calling for the protection of the public from wrongs and grievances which were pressing on many subjects of the Crown and to remove which required some definite action on our part. But that would be interpreted as meaning some change of judgment on our part. It would be misleading to say that because certain parts of our existing Common Law, and certain parts of our Statute Law, can be found that are not practically operative they ought to be repealed. It would do harm and not good in this country at this moment.

For these reasons I think it would be undesirable to take this step. There are many anachronisms in our law at the moment, many things which are out of date, which we should not enact now if they were not already on the Statute Book. There are things in our Common Law which no one would desire to make part of our law to-day. But it does not follow that we ought to ferret these things out and bring in a Bill to repeal them, unless some definite grievance is shown of a specific kind, a grievance which can be proved to be pressing hardly upon certain people at the moment. Not a vestige of evidence is brought forward to show that anything of the kind is taking place to-day, and while I should not be afraid of the practical and direct result coming from the Bill, I believe that indirectly it might be extremely mischievous, and I shall vote against the Second Reading.

(To be Concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

Canon Barnes possesses what are usually called scientific attainments. That is he has a knowledge of a considerable number of facts which form the material for the more important task of scientific thinking, and which facts in the absence of the right kind of thinking are about as useful as money is to the man who buries it in his back garden. And the Canon's capacity for thinking is shown in a recent article on "Is Man a Special Creation?" Canon Barnes believes in evolution, and also that man is derived from the other animals; but he believes that man is a special creation in the sense that he has received special endowments which make him generically different from the other animals. These endowments are the capacity for abstract ideas, and for the knowledge of God. All of which strikes us as not even first-class rubbish. It is only a repetition of some very ordinary items from the theological nonsense bag.

For example, "Man," says Canon Barnes, "has intellectual powers which no other animal possesses. Could a group of monkeys build a Westminster Abbey or work out the dynamics of the solar system?" Which is just the nonsensical chatter that tickles the mind of uneducated people. For does it not strike Canon Barnes that if man showed no marked differences from other animals he would remain like them, and if he remained as they are there would be no need to classify the animal world as sub-human. What Canon Barnes is really saying is that man cannot be derived from the animal world unless he remains identical with it. But you cannot have your cake and eat it in biology any more than elsewhere. If this appears too stupid a position for an educated man to take up, we advise anyone to analyse the Canon's position and see if he can make more of it.

"Could a monkey build Westminster Abbey?" The answer is no, not if he remained a monkey, although the Abbey happens to be dedicated to ideas that are, fundamentally, not so far above those of which the higher apes are capable. But after all, some of the simians do build rough shelters, and if Canon Barnes really appreciated evolution instead of—as is the case with so many—merely knowing what the theory says, he would appreciate the fact that even buildings like Westminster Abbey can trace

a direct descent from the rude shelters built by our sub-human progenitors. Neither is it clear that animals cannot show indications of what we call the religious feelings. They certainly exhibit fear in the presence of the unknown, and the feelings that a dog has towards his master are probably not so very much unlike those which a savage has towards his god. Abstract ideas are built up gradually from concrete experience, and a dog that has learned to rush in at the sound of clattering plates has already some kind of an abstract idea. The sound of the plates rouses the idea of food—not a particular food, but food in the abstract.

One further example of the Canon's nonsense. Man is not derived intellectually from the animal because he forms abstract ideas—"Beauty, goodness, truth.....have a value in themselves." Now what is a thing that is good, or truthful, or beautiful, in itself? We haven't the ghost of an idea. It is the kind of stuff that emotional ethicists, and those who yearn for a new religion to talk about, but what does it mean? Let anyone think of goodness that is not good for something, truth that is not true of something, or beauty that is not related to something. I fancy I know what the Canon means, but that is not what he says, and if he means what I think he means it does not in the least support his position. What is apparently fogging him is the fact that experience becomes generalized into abstract formulas, just as we can discuss the qualities of trees without dealing with a particular tree. But to assume that "tree" has a value apart from a particular tree is absurd, and in human life the means to an end tends to become an end, just as the pursuit of gold for that which gold brings may with some become an end in itself, and we have the miser as a result. Things in themselves are just bugbears. Things are what they are to us. It is human society which creates values, and it is in human society alone that they have any intelligibility.

Finally, we may cite Canon Barnes as a very good illustration of a common fault. We have always warned young men, and we think we shall keep on warning them, not to be led away by the idea that any amount of information about the size of the stars, or their distance, or the age of the earth, or things of that kind constitute a scientific education. All the knowledge required in that direction can be acquired quickly and at very little trouble, and it is just as well not to lumber one's mind with too much of it. It is all there in any text-book, and it can be reached down for verification whenever required. You may learn all there is to learn in this direction and still remain scientifically ignorant—a fool is made more hopeless in his folly because obsessed with the notion that he is full of the best kind of knowledge.

The one thing that is of real value in this world, and the thing which so few people acquire is an appreciation of scientific method. That is the only thing that is worth bothering about, and once that is got it will keep one mentally straight and clean where no amount of collecting facts will. It is astonishing, when one looks over the history of science, how many of the great discoveries of the world have been made by men who were not actual working scientists. Moreover, in our education of the young we tend to commit the same mistake with regard to science that religionists do with regard to education. We cram the mind of the boy and the girl with a given number of facts and tell them that is exact science and the exact truth, when we should be all the time telling them what is the meaning of science, and using our facts only as so many illustrations. One result of this is that even in the world of working science we are continually coming across instances of men, lauded as scientific leaders and teachers, who are quite at sea when it comes to realizing the scientific application of the facts they are daily handling. In this direction as in others the truest and best education is to teach people *how* to think. What they think about is important, but not so important. In any case it is only conclusions that are reached by personal effort on these lines that are of genuine intellectual value.



Slowly but surely we are getting down to brass tacks. One does not need to use spectacles or the differential calculus to discover the direction in the address delivered at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, by Miss Helen M. Sturge. Her subject was entitled, "Personal Religion and the Service of Humanity." The supernatural element in religion is evaporating; the limitations of the deity make him more and more like a man every day. It will be possible that the same fate will befall him that finished the career of Sologub's "Tiny Man." This unfortunate creature became smaller and smaller until one day, just as he was putting on some new trousers he became excessively minute. He tumbled out of the trousers. He had already become like a pin's head. A slight draught was blowing. He was twirled round. He mingled with the cloudlets of dust gamboling in the sunbeams. He disappeared.

It is a pretty study in psychology. If Revelations should be nothing more than man talking to himself we can place the first commandment on more solid ground than it now occupies. Swinburne has set this to music; listen, and make your choice between, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," and—

This thing is God: to be man with thy might,  
To go straight in the strength of thy spirit,  
And live out thy life in the light.

The Rev. H. B. Chapman, of the Chapel Royal, Savoy, has contributed an article to a daily paper on the subject, "How to Select a Wife." There is one method, to which, curiously enough, no reference is made, namely the method adopted by King David to select Bathsheba.

It is curious that in spite of the Bishop of London's assertion that the clergy are actually starving, scarce a week passes but the list of wills includes the names of parsons for solid amounts. A recent list has the names of the Rev. F. H. Hall, Oxford, £21,867; the Rev. J. G. Chester, Richmond, Yorks, £99,436; the Rev. F. C. G. Cass-Tewart, of Glauton, Northumberland, £66,775.

Mr. Cairns, the Thames Police Court magistrate, described some prisoners as "dangerous revolutionaries," and added "with the ideals of a world without poverty and without distress." Justice is never so blind as when she does not want to see.

St. John's Church, East Ham, disused, but still consecrated, is being used for theatrical shows, music-hall turns, and boxing displays. Some conversion!

In reply to the Bryanite group of cave men in America who are conducting a campaign against evolution, a statement has been issued by forty "distinguished Americans" to the effect that in their opinion science and religion are not antagonistic. The purpose is to remove the impression that religion stands for mediæval theology and that science is materialistic and irreligious.

So far, good. Now what we should like this group of distinguished Americans to tell us is what amount of Christianity would be left if all the mediæval theology, and still more primitive rubbish, were discarded, and also what kind of science is it that does not put religion on one side and which is not thoroughly materialistic? Of course, we are speaking of materialism, and not of the curious thing which Christians are in the habit of labelling as such. A science that is not materialistic is not science at all. It is a sheer parody of the word and the thing for which it stands.

It seems we were misled by the *Daily News* in stating that the educational scheme for soldiers—now discarded—provided such books as Owen's *Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance*. The *Daily News* is naturally relieved that our Army educators were not sufficiently enlightened to

set soldiers reading such books. It would prefer the money should be spent on religious tracts. For our part, we took it as the best thing that the educational council had done, but as they have not done it, we must even keep on with our work at trying to make people think without the assistance of the Council or even of the *Daily News*.

There is a place in Cheshire named Buglawton. It is a nice name and the inhabitants are evidently nice people, for the Urban Council has decided that for the future all its meetings shall be opened with prayer. Well, if the Lord doesn't smile when he hears the prayers assembled labelled Buglawton, Dean Inge must be wrong when he says God has a sense of humour.

The Free Church Committee on Religion and Morals protests against concerts, and other opportunities for "secular" enjoyment on Sundays. It says, "One day in seven is not too much, surely, to devote entirely to the worship of God." But no one has the least objection to anyone who feels so disposed spending the whole of Sunday on his or her knees worshipping God—although it is puzzling for a reasonable man to see why a god wants people to spend their time worshipping him. It would be quite sickening to any human being, and if God likes that sort of thing he must have curious tastes. But our objection is not to the Christian worshipping either God or the Devil. What we object to is his pestilential desire to prevent other people spending Sunday as they feel inclined. Not being able to do this is what the Christian understands by the "persecution of religion."

The Rev. B. Cornford, Vicar of St. Matthew's, Southsea, writing in the local parish magazine, says that at the Christening of the Lascelles' baby General Higginson, aged 96, was one of the sponsors for the child. The vicar adds caustically, that when the child is four years old the general will be a centenarian; and yet no bishop noticed the farcical nature of the proceedings.

Kenya, in addition to having a political problem, is further oppressed by the Christian missionaries who, according to the *New Age*, have been tempted into the racial crusade by the prospect of establishing a Christian civilization. Is it possible that Christianity has to keep the old firm going at home by sending bagmen abroad?

The Church of Scotland Assembly is very much concerned over what it calls the menace of Roman Catholic immigration from Ireland. The fears appear to rest upon the fact that these are Roman Catholics with a larger birth-rate than is common among Scottish Protestants. If these people were Protestants no objection would be raised, but as they belong to another branch of the Christian brotherhood the Assembly thinks that the Government should be approached with a view to the "protection of Scottish nationality and civilization." If some Christians had their way no one would be permitted to live in a country but the members of their own particular sect. And yet these are the people who are always talking about human brotherhood, and of how much Christianity does to bring peace and harmony to the peoples of the earth.

Respecting our note on the protest of the Harvard students against the building of a college chapel on the ground that the students have, in the majority of cases, no interest in religion, a correspondent of the *Yorkshire Observer* writes that the protest of the college paper no more represents the spirit of Harvard than the *Freethinker* represents the spirit of England. We are abashed. But we would timidly venture to enquire how the *Observer* comes to know the "spirit of Harvard" better than the students themselves? Of course, the chapel may be built, in spite of the protest. The cave-men are in the places of authority, and they will probably have their way.



## To Correspondents.

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

MR. C. HARPER writes calling our attention to the interesting fact that a whig paper called the *Freethinker* was started in 1718 by Ambrose Phillips in conjunction with Hugh Boulter, who afterwards became Vicar of St. Olave's, Southwark. Needless to say this had no such purpose as the present *Freethinker*. As a matter of fact more than one journal was started during the eighteenth century under that title. There is little new under the sun, but old things are constantly being put to new uses and the titles of papers illustrate the truth of the old adage.

J. COLLINS.—We do not see what we can do in the matter. But you and others can help by bringing whatever pressure you can to bear on newsgagents to act fairly towards this paper.

T. R. SCOTT.—Thanks for verses, but they are hardly up to standard.

A. M.—Thanks for descriptive report of Conference, but we did not get it in time for last issue, and it would be rather out of date by the time we could get it in. Glad you enjoyed your trip south.

J. E. FISH.—Very pleased to hear from you, and to know that all is well. The enclosure for 4s. is quite out of date, but don't trouble about that. The books have been sent you as desired.

E. ELIOT.—The only way we can see to get out of the difficulty would be for your newsgagent to get a supply direct, or to tell his wholesale agent that as the office supplies the *Freethinker* on sale or return they must be supplied to him on the same conditions. Will he do this?

E. A. PHIPSON.—We have not inserted previous letters because your remarks we know do not apply to elementary schools as a whole, and your letters lacked discrimination. We are quite opposed to corporal punishment, but statements as to flogging should be supported by documentary evidence. We insert your letter, but you appear to be quite oblivious to the much better spirit that prevails in the majority of elementary schools.

D. W. ALLAN.—Thanks for addresses. We already act as you suggest. We find the sending of the paper for a few weeks very often leads to new subscribers. Hence our urging it upon readers. It is a very effective form of advertising.

W. REPTON.—We have not seen the play. Our time for amusements that take up a good many hours of the twenty-four is very limited.

V. M.—Hope to see you one day—either there or here. The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Truth, like the *Venus de Medici*, will pass down to posterity in thirty fragments; but posterity will collect and recompose them into a goddess.—Richter.

## Special.

THERE was one item which appeared in the report of the N.S.S. Conference—published in last week's issue—which has brought me several letters to which I purpose replying here. I have a further reason for so doing as others may also feel a little concerned in the matter.

I refer to the question raised by the delegates from Manchester as to payment of the expenses attendant upon the office of President. That office is an unpaid one, and in my opinion should remain so. Nevertheless no man can hold that office without being exposed to an incidental expenditure which is considerable to anyone whose income is, because he is what he is, of a limited and precarious character. This was felt to be so during the latter years of Mr. Foote's presidency, and he received an annual honorarium in consideration thereof. There was in addition an honorarium of £300 per year subscribed by readers of the *Freethinker* as the paper was unable to pay anything in the shape of salary.

When I was elected President eight years ago I declined payment of either kind, and ever since I have gone on paying whatever expenses were incurred—even to postage, which is no inconsiderable item—out of my own pocket. Apparently this was not realized by the members. Hence the matter being raised at the Conference. I declined to accept any vote on account of expenses when the question was raised thus suddenly, and it was finally resolved to remit the matter to the Executive.

That is the long and short of the matter, but I feel I ought to say a word further, both on my own behalf and on that of any other occupant of the office of President.

I have already said that the office ought to remain an unpaid one. But it should not involve expense. The members of the Society know that I have never made any financial demands upon the party during my thirty years connection with it. I have taken a little when it was there and gone without cheerfully when it was not. But there are limits. I have no other income save that which is derived from my lecturing and writing. From the *Freethinker* I am supposed to draw a small regular salary to cover my work as editor, contributor, and manager, but that has never been fully paid, and for some nine or ten months, owing to the state of trade, I have drawn nothing whatever. I am not complaining, I am only explaining, and do so to avoid all misunderstanding. It is better to be frank while one is about it, and I am afraid that because of my small demands, and my life-long habit of independence, the impression has got abroad that I have some private income from which party demands may be met. I wish that were true. But it is not. I have simply gone on making the best of things, and I shall continue so to the end.

Now I trust this makes the matter sufficiently plain both to those who have written me and to those who have not, but who may be wondering. I have not yet made up my mind on the question of accepting an honorarium, even if it is offered. I should much prefer to continue paying the expenses of the office, but, as I have said, there are limits, and circumstances do not always permit one to gratify one's inclinations. And I now understand, more clearly than ever, the circumstances why all the leaders of Freethought in the past were dogged and clogged with a heavy burden of personal debt.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

At certain times, the way to be right in the future consists in knowing how to resign ourselves to being out of fashion in the present.—Renan.



## Sugar Plums.

We note that the *Times* and *Telegraph* are raising their price one halfpenny per copy. The *Times* explains that the costs of production are still almost what they were at the highest point during the war. "Paper still costs more than it cost in 1914, there has been no reduction in the war-time rate of printer's wages, and carriage and distribution are items which stand at more than double the pre-war figure." When we add to this the incidence of bad trade and the fact that a number of papers have recently ceased to appear, the kind of struggle through which we are passing may be imagined. If we were given to worry we have plenty of opportunities.

The Glasgow Branch has arranged for a Sunday excursion to-day (June 10). Those taking part in it will meet at Burnside car terminus at 12 o'clock. The destination will be Caithkin Loch. We understand that summer has made its appearance in the north, so we in the more wintry south can safely wish the trippers a good time. We are rather more interested in the price of coals.

We are not sure if this is a case for the critic or the pathologist. Arthur Russell, in his book *With the Machine Gun Corps*, after finishing some four years of fighting, makes this statement at the conclusion: "I gave thanks to my Maker for His kind preservation of my youthful life, with limbs intact and health and strength unimpaired by the rigour of heavy and dangerous campaigning during the Great World War." To say the least, we trust Arthur Russell's Maker was greatly flattered on the receipt of his thanks, and that the two million dead will not be attributed to God's negligence. The piety in this book appears to ascend to the level of a Boy Scout's knees.

The speech of Mr. Ayles (Bristol) at the Hamburg Socialist Conference won applause from the delegates when he stated that education should be unburdened of religious dogma. This ought to cause the fraternity to use the religious broom more vigorously to sweep back the sea of disbelief in abstractions. As a result we expect to see divines coming out in print in the sporting editions as well as the evening papers.

Mr. Bernard Shaw appears to have been lucky in the choice of his father. At an early age in life, the playwright was told by him that statements and legends in sacred books were "a damned parcel of lies." This, in itself, has saved G. B. S. a lot of the trouble of unlearning.

Mr. Whitehead finished a very successful series of open-air meetings in Leeds, where his lectures had the effect of bringing out the Christian opposition in the shape of a rival platform. Local Freethinkers gave him very hearty support, and were well repaid by the result. From Leeds Mr. Whitehead went to Stockport, where he is spending a fortnight. We hope to hear of good results from there. Later in the summer Mr. Whitehead hopes to visit Hanley and Preston. Helpers are wanted in these places as no Branch of the Society exists there at present. Will those who are inclined to give a little assistance in conducting these meetings please write to the general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

In the North Mr. Atkinson will be dropping his regular Freethought lecturing for a time, but he will lecture occasionally, and we hope to see him doing more later. He believes that Tyneside ought to be one of the strongest Freethinking centres in Britain, and in this we quite agree with him.

The meetings are now proceeding regularly at Finsbury Park. Mr. Corrigan is speaking there for several weeks in succession, and a debate is arranged for June 17 between himself and a local Christian speaker.

## Rationalism and Teleology.

THE idea of an end, purpose, or design in Nature seems to be as persistent and as elusive as the sea-serpent, for, like that mysterious beast, it has a trick of popping up at unexpected times and places to startle the mariner navigating his frail bark over the troubled sea of philosophic controversy. Its latest appearance occurs in a thoughtful and suggestive article in the June number of the *Literary Guide*, so it would appear that there still remains something to be said on this well-worn subject.

Perhaps the following little anecdote may help to elucidate the matter:—

A thoughtful child once remarked to her father, "How fortunate it is for us that the colour of the grass and leaves is such a lovely green. How horrid it would be if they were all bright scarlet or yellow. Our eyes would be so dazzled that we should have to wear smoke-coloured glasses."

"I don't think it would have made a bit of difference," he replied.

"How is that? I'm sure that if all the fields and woods were bright scarlet it would hurt our eyes, and perhaps blind us in time."

Whereupon, assuming that air of wisdom which the occasion seemed to demand, the parent replied as follows:

"No doubt it would hurt our eyes as they are now, but it would probably not affect the sort of eyes the human race would have had if it had come into existence in a world of scarlet vegetation. You see, the grass and leaves existed millions of years before human eyes, and if the vegetation on this earth were of such a kind as to reflect red rays instead of green ones, then our eyes would probably have developed the power of seeing and enjoying the beauties of a scarlet landscape just as they now enjoy a green one."

"Yes, I think I see that," said the young philosopher after a pause, "but it's rather funny all the same. So everything would look beautiful to us, however ugly it really was!"

"Quite so—if you like to put it in that metaphysical way."

And that is just the trouble. We are too apt to state the problem in a metaphysical way, and the supposed difficulty involved in it will probably never be got rid of until its metaphysical character is clearly recognized. What is meant when it is stated that the order of Nature must be regarded as the product of intelligent design? It must mean that the *idea* of the natural order existed in some intelligent mind prior to the evolution or creation of that order, and that the order was produced in accordance with that idea, just as with the works of man, say a picture, a building, or a machine, the idea or design of the work must necessarily precede its execution. But with the order of Nature, according to the modern evolutionary view, nothing of the kind takes place. Indeed it would be nearer the truth to say that the process is reversed. If all life and mind be products of cosmic evolution, as every Rationalist would agree, then our idea of the cosmic order is itself a product of that evolution, and is merely a subjective aspect of the real order. The "design" exists within our minds only. Our perceptive faculties have grown up step by step through infinitesimal gradations, in strict relationship and conformity with the cosmic process, and have become inevitably attuned and responsive to that process as function must inevitably be conditioned by the functioning reality. Thus, to revert to the subject of the child's inquiry, the human eye which now rejoices in the verdant beauty of a country landscape, and the mind which sees in such beauty an evidence of "design" might have become just as susceptible



to these influences *whatever order of Nature had been followed*. And the metaphysical root of the fallacy is found in the child's naive conception expressed in the words, "however ugly it really was." For this assumes that the purely subjective ideas of beauty and ugliness have some real counterparts independent of our own minds, and hence arises the notion that the cosmic process has proceeded under the operation of such ideas.

In its practical aspect the fallacy is at once apparent if, instead of considering the natural order as a whole, we consider it in some definite relationship to organic life on the earth. For instance, no one would maintain that because the earth's atmosphere consists of just the constituents suitable for the maintenance of terrestrial life, or because the earth's distance from the sun is such as to afford it just the amount of heat suitable to the needs of its inhabitants, these adaptations are the results of "intelligent design." In these cases it is readily admitted that the adaptations are simply due to the circumstance that had these particular conditions of life been absent these particular forms of life would not have appeared, while other conditions might have given rise to other forms exhibiting equally efficient adjustments in their mutual relations.

The apparent strength and cogency of the argument from design is solely based on the notion that the beauty and orderliness which we ascribe to the mutual inter-relations of the cosmic process represent but one actuality emerging from many—perhaps an infinity—of potentialities. But once we grasp the idea that any form of actuality thus emerging would necessarily have assumed an appearance of order in relation to a consciousness itself cosmically developed, this basis disappears.

But apart from the "orderliness" of the process there remains a further question, or rather two questions, one relating to the origin of the process and the other to its end. It is sometimes asked, "Why should the order of Nature have begun at all? Does not the very initiation of the world process imply an initiator—some form of intelligence which has set the process going?" But this question seems to be only another instance of our anthropocentric way of looking at the problem. After an engineer has designed his machine the construction of the machine is begun, and so we assume that the cosmic machine must similarly have had a beginning. But in truth the notion of a beginning has no justification at all as applied to Nature. We have no experience whatever of beginnings in the world of process, and hence the idea of a beginning is, in relation to it, quite unwarranted. Indeed, when closely considered it is inconceivable. The entire order of Nature is a process of transformation of energy—a succession of changes without beginning or end, a world not of entities but of activities, and these activities are supposed to be manifestations of some primordial "substance" containing potentialities of both mind and matter, though this psycho-physical relationship is of a nature utterly beyond our comprehension, as it necessarily must be. But analysis on the physical side seems to suggest a condition of kinetic instability passing into a condition of stable equilibrium (which we call "matter") through a series of proto-material transformations. If this be so the question as to the "beginning" of the process seems to be satisfactorily met.

But the most important and baffling question of all is supposed to be the one which inquires, "What is the final end and aim of the whole process?" and demands its moral significance and justification, or as the writer of the article referred to puts it, "Might we not still ask in regard to the whole thing, *cui bono*? Surely there is still a mystery to be solved." One is

disposed to think, however, that the mystery, if there be one, is of our own making. Have those who ask the question ever tried to picture to themselves this final moral consummation of the cosmic scheme which they consider ought to be achieved? What constitutes the "far off divine event" which they would regard as the fitting goal of man's upward struggle and the fitting reward of his endeavour? Surely this can only be conceived in terms of those moral and intellectual values which we already recognize. It can only be conceived in terms of happiness, virtue, wisdom, knowledge, and all the other moral and intellectual qualities of mankind, each term being assigned its *highest ideal value*. The ethical end must be conceived as a condition of "perfect" happiness, "perfect" virtue, "perfect" wisdom and so on. But here again we come upon the fallacy of mistaking a subjective idea for an objective reality. The ethical idea of "perfection" is a purely subjective idea, and is akin to the intellectual idea of "infinity." As infinity merely means "the greatest conceivable," so perfection means "the highest attainable." And if this be so it follows that "perfection" needs not to be relegated to any mystically conceived "divine event," but is a condition definitely and practically realizable. That mankind may attain to such a degree of happiness, virtue, wisdom, or knowledge as he is capable of reaching is quite within the bounds of possibility—indeed we might even say probability, for science suggests that the whole course of human experience is but a fleeting episode of cosmic history—a transient ripple on the ocean of existence. Hence we may expect that, as an order of nature favourable to the existence of the human race must have prevailed on the earth for ages before man's physical course began—for otherwise he would not have appeared at all—so an order of Nature favourable to his existence will continue to prevail on it for ages after his moral and intellectual progress shall have reached their limit.

Here the teleologist will ask, "And what then?" If the inevitable end must arrive, however long delayed, and man and all his achievements must pass away to extinction leaving no trace behind them, does not the same eternal question recur—*Cui bono*? What is the good of it all? But such a question assumes that the "goodness," the full ethical significance of life depends on its eternal continuance. Cannot "the good" be an end in itself? Is the beauty of human virtue, the glory of human reason of no account unless conceived to be unending? Do all moral and intellectual values disappear unless they are eternally perpetuated? Surely the ultimate good is a good in itself, and happiness, virtue, and truth have their intrinsic values whether they endure for a limited time or for an eternity. These values depend on their qualities, their fullness, their completeness, their degree of achievement, and not at all on their duration. The good man, lying on his death-bed after a life spent in the practice of virtue and the service of truth, need feel no regrets. His life has been its own reward. So also the human race, passing serenely on to its euthanasia, need feel no regrets if it has but fulfilled the promise of its awakening, and realized those grand and vast, though necessarily limited, potentialities with which it was primordially endowed. Its "ethical end" will surely then have been attained.

A. E. MADDOCK.

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The clergy are "male old maids," often very clever, charitable, and of good intention, but totally devoid of real wisdom or force of mind or character, and capable on occasions of any amount of spite, falsehood, and "gentle cruelty." It is impossible to accept the claims of the priesthood to supernatural authority.—*Life of James Fitz-James Stephens* (p. 373).



## The Shakespeare Problem.

IN relation to the problem of "Shakespeare" authorship the only questions that matter are whether William Shakespeare of Stratford did or did not write the plays and poems attributed to him, and, if he did not write them who did? It is a matter of no consequence, then, whether this or that disputant is the most scholarly or entertaining, or which controversial method we may happen to like best. The one important question is: Who comes nearest to the truth?

Setting aside, then, those parts of George Underwood's very interesting article in the *Freethinker* of May 20 that deal with matters irrelevant to my immediate purpose, I propose to offer some kind of an answer to his support of the Stratfordian case. After admitting that much of Shakespeare's biography is "conjectural reconstruction from the shards of record and anecdote," he continues:—

It is true that all we *know* about Shakespeare can be written on a sheet of note paper. But surely the obscurity that veils his personality does not warrant us in dethroning him. A like obscurity surrounds Fletcher and Marlowe.

Other illustrations are given but these will suffice.

The general implication, of course, is that there exist parallel or nearly parallel cases of obscurity, about which no reasonable doubt can be entertained. If the cases submitted are not sufficiently analogous, or if there might be reasonable grounds for extending the scepticism to some of the cases quoted, the argument lacks validity. The latter possibility we may, however, forgo; though, if it were once demonstrated that any one man in that age had been induced to accept responsibility for another's work, the credentials of others besides Shakespeare might be suspected. I shall, however, confine myself to the question of whether there exists another case of obscurity at all resembling his.

This is not merely a question of whether we actually know more or less than the others, but of the relationship of that knowledge to the actual facts of the situation. It may mean nothing that contemporaries saw little of a *literary* man; it may mean much that they saw little of a reputed *actor*. Obscurity may not mean much if that actor belonged to an inferior company, it may mean very much if his name figures prominently in the foremost company of the country, and in association with the names of the great actors who regularly entertained royalty and the nobility. It has one significance if he confined his activities to a small sphere; it has another if he is reputed to have shone in several; it means one thing if he passed away young and in poverty, it means another if he ended his career in retirement and affluence after enjoying his fame for a whole generation; one thing if all his associates were humble people whose records have perished, and another if the highest in the land were supposed to have been his friends and patrons, and his most intimate colleague a man whose biography is full and substantial.

It is therefore only when the whole of the essential facts of the supposed career have been brought together and compared with the *known* facts that can be "written on a sheet of notepaper," that the significance of the immeasurable silences can be judged; and, from this point of view, I make bold to say that not only is there not a single parallel case amongst those cited by George Underwood, but there does not exist a parallel case in the whole of modern history.

Take Shakespeare as a poet. "Venus" appeared in 1593, and contemporary allusions began immediately. By 1602 there had been no fewer than six

editions, and "Lucrece" reached its fifth edition in the year of Shakespeare's death.

Take him as a dramatist. The first plays published with his name did not appear till 1598, and not till then was there a single contemporary allusion to him as a play writer. After that the allusions were frequent, and before Shakespeare died some of the plays had run through four or five editions.

Take him as a reputed actor. An unofficial hand entered his name after date, in the accounts for 1593, coupled with the great actors Burbage and Kemp. On the accession of James it was again entered twice in official documents of the Lord Chamberlain's company.

In 1616 Jonson published the folio edition of his own plays, and placed the name of Shakespeare twice, in foremost positions, in lists of the Lord Chamberlain's actors; and in the Shakespeare Folio his name heads the list of the principal actors in all the plays.

Take him as theatre shareholder. For the last seventeen years of his life he was part owner, first of the largest theatre, and then of the two largest theatres in London. Albeit, his will contains no mention of these interests, whilst at the Globe they seem not to have heard of his death; for, as Sir Sidney Lee puts it, the records "kept alive the memory of the dramatist in his capacity of theatrical shareholder after he was laid in the grave."

Take his supposed association with royalty and the nobility. The long poems are dedicated to the Earl of Southampton of whom he speaks in 1594 in terms of intimate affection. When thirty years later the Folio was published, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery were spoken of as having favoured him during his lifetime, and Queen Elizabeth and King James as having delighted in his plays; he, as we have seen, being one of the principal actors. In this connection we recall that the Earl of Southampton arranged for Queen Anne's entertainment (1604) a special performance of *Love's Labour Lost*.

Take his association with Jonson. Although Shakespeare's place in the Lord Chamberlain's company had been established for years before Jonson's entry into court circles, Jonson is the dominant figure in court theatricals from the accession of James I onward. For the last thirteen years of Shakespeare's life, the two men would have been in the very closest of professional co-operation, and Jonson's aggressive personality had the knack of drawing his associates into the limelight. Is it possible, then, to imagine two such men in frequent contact without heat of one kind or another being generated, and sparks flying? Yet the one figure that makes no contemporary appearance in the life of Jonson is Shakespeare. The publication of the Shakespeare Folio, unless the thing was to be a palpable imposition from the outset, made Jonson's co-operation imperative, but every one of his Shakespeare allusions is posthumous.

Compare then with all this the dead silence of the contemporary records so far as concerns a visible personality. Not a single incident or interview; no conversation, correspondence or obituary notice. So marked is it that when that stalwart Stratfordian investigator, Dr. Wallace, discovered a reference to Shakespeare bearing the date 1612, although it had nothing whatever to do with literature or drama, he exclaimed, here "we have for the first time met Shakespeare in the flesh." Yet according to the prepared documents he had been a famous man in association with the highest in the land for the past twenty years. Well might Dickens exclaim, "It is a great mystery, and I tremble every day lest something should turn up." There exists nothing like it in literary history.

Can it, for example, be claimed that there is the



remotest parallelism between this and the career of the writer Marlowe who died under most ignominious circumstances before he was thirty years of age? It is no mere surmise that places Marlowe at the King's School, Canterbury, or at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. We see him in definite relationship with Kyd, Nash, Greene and Chapman, but only "probably" Shakespeare, as the Dictionary of National Biography puts it; whilst in 1593 Gabriel Harvey refers to his death as one of the events of the year. Of Shakespeare it is only surmise that owes him any education or, beyond the formalists, puts him into personal association with any writer or actor. And when he died no single syllable showed that anyone was aware of the fact. In that very year Jonson, the inveterate writer of complimentary verses and obituary eulogies, published his own Folio, and included Shakespeare's name in his lists, but gave no sign that Shakespeare himself was dead. Three years later he met Drummond of Hawthornden and discussed Shakespeare, amongst other writers; but still no reference to the death.

The comparison with Fletcher is singularly inappropriate. He comes before us purely as a *writer*, and, even as such, with his personality merged in a collaboration: "Beaumont and Fletcher." In his case there is no necessary implication of appearing before the public, or in association with aristocracy or royalty. The meagreness of the records is in strict harmony with the seclusion and unobtrusiveness implied by the work. Yet even he receives mention in Beaumont's versified letter to Jonson, referring to their wit encounters at the Mermaid Tavern. Needless to say Shakespeare's name is not there.

Comparing then the contemporary claims, implied by the published works and in certain business formalities, with the silence of what we may call the living records, only one explanation seems possible, namely, that false claims were entered on his behalf, and very deliberate steps taken to back those claims with fictitious credentials. The English mind does not take kindly to plots, and therefore finds it difficult to believe in successful plotting. Our intelligence is affronted at the suggestion that we, at any rate, could be imposed upon—and by our own greatest writer himself—but sooner or later we shall have to face the facts and swallow our humiliation with as good a grace as maybe.

I hold, of course, no brief for Sir Sidney Lee, far from it; but he seems to me to be much more logical than the Stratfordians who accept his premises and quarrel with his method and his inferences. If we grant the Stratfordian data: that William Shakespeare of Stratford was the actual author of the writings attributed to him, that the First Folio statements are accurate, and that the contemporary records which give him a foremost place amongst the actors who regularly entertained the Court, are in order, and are set forth in good faith, then it seems to me that almost every "doubtless" in Sir Sidney Lee's *Life* introduces a perfectly legitimate inference.

It would be irrational for anti-Stratfordians to object to the inferential method of historic reconstruction, with its "doubtless," "probably," etc., and George Underwood recognizes that we do not shirk it in our own particular researches. Our criticism of the work of Sir Sidney Lee is that he is driven to it too frequently, by the actual situation, when in ordinary cases biographers would have been able to work upon objective records, and that the conclusions arrived at in this way are so inadequately supported by, are in fact so often in apparent conflict with the contemporary records, as to bring his data under suspicion. His error, then, lies in being so consistently logical as to reduce his premises, in the eyes of some,

to absurdity. The rational course with his critics would be to reject his data and not his method.

In respect to the more important question of who *did* write the plays I hope to have an opportunity of addressing the readers of this journal at an early date.

J. THOMAS LOONEY.

(Author of *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.*)

## Correspondence.

### CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You inserted several letters recently denouncing Capital Punishment, but the question of Corporal Punishment in our elementary schools is from some aspects more serious and important, inasmuch as, while cases of the former occur only very rarely, the latter is inflicted thousands of times every day. And while there is a prodigious outcry among sentimentalists if the person of the vilest criminals is proposed to be touched, indeed the Act permitting it was well-nigh defeated by them (and even now it is seldom if ever put into force), and the criminal has every chance given him of obtaining acquittal or mitigation, our little helpless children can be arbitrarily thus punished at the absolute caprice of the schoolmaster, who is alike, judge, jury, and executioner, any attempt at exculpation being often not only suppressed, but even made a pretext for additional torture, as in the case recently tried at Usk Assizes. This cowardly brutality, which even decent slave-owners would hesitate to exhibit towards black niggers, and has long been totally abolished in countries which we consider far less civilized than our own, is a barbaric anachronism of the most atrocious kind, and a disgrace to the nation, or rather the officials, tolerating it. These cowardly attacks, even on boys, are quite unjustifiable and needless, as the experience of private and Sunday-schools shows, but for girls to be thus assaulted by male teachers is nothing less than a revolting outrage, which no gentleman, no man worthy the name, would bemean himself by perpetrating. The only offence for which flogging is justifiable is cruelty to weaker boys, or girls, but there is no logical connection between being late (usually the parents' fault), failing in a sum, or inability to understand the raucous words of the teacher, and personal attacks, which transgress the first rule laid down by Herbert Spencer, that educational methods should conform to those reigning in the outer world. Yet whereas no disputes among adults are allowed to be settled by physical violence, this is practically the only, or at any rate the ultimate, criterion in schools, the natural consequence being the reluctance of children to obey their parents or oblige anyone else without the use or threat of corporal penalties. The electors, and particularly parents of children attending the public elementary schools, should lose no time in demanding the total suppression of the physical correction, or even handling, of so-called freeborn British children by their so-called mentors (or rather tor-mentors), as a diabolical outrage unworthy even of a nation of savages, much less the self-styled most civilized in the world.

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

### "THE HOLY GHOST."

SIR,—I shall be obliged if you will let me make a few remarks on Mr. Lloyd's article of June 3. He argues that Acts ii and S. John iii go to prove that "spirit" is a personification of wind. On Acts ii, 2-4, he says, "In the Greek text there is no change of word at all." That is not so. The word for wind is *puoe*, the second word is *pneuma*.

It is true that in Greek *pneuma* may mean wind or spirit. But S. John iii, 8, is the only place in the New Testament where it is used for wind. In all other places it means spirit; the usual word for wind is *anemas*. And in this verse of S. John, even anyone who only knows English need not be puzzled if he looks at the whole passage. In verse 6, "born of flesh" is contrasted with



"born of *pneuma*." Clearly *pneuma* means spirit here, for that and not wind is the opposite of flesh. This fixes the meaning in verse 8, where the same phrase, "born of *pneuma*," occurs. But in the phrase "the *pneuma* blows," it is wind, for we hear wind but do not hear spirit.

There is no personification at all, but a comparison. Power and fervour of spirit are compared to wind and fire, so these were fitting outward signs that the Spirit had come. His felt but unseen influence is compared to wind in S. John iii.

S. Mark's Vicarage,  
Old Street, E.C.2.

T. HANDS.

#### BLASPHEMY LAWS.

SIR,—I fear what I am about to suggest may sound rather mean, and possibly not practical. But it does seem to me that until these laws are repealed Freethinkers would be perfectly justified in withdrawing their support from all charities or reforming movements organized or patronized by the Churches, or any religious sects that wish to retain these laws. These people revile and slander us, and would like the community to do the same, yet have no scruple in demanding and accepting our financial assistance. It is a truism, yet one that will bear reiterating, that there is just about as much honest religion in the action of our opponents as there is in the tail of my cat. Religion, above all, the State Church, is a most valuable buttress of imperialist policy—it is an instrument of coercion, that is why they cling to this vestige of mediæval tyranny.

The one religious sect in favour of whom I would make an exception is that of the Quakers, whom I honour for their splendid work, who have never persecuted, but have themselves been persecuted, time after time. And it cannot be too often emphasized that is the poor man, the "bottom dog," who suffers under these cowardly laws; the hypocrisy of the whole thing is nauseating.

C. M. RENTON.

#### THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

The government of God has been tried. It was tried in Palestine several thousand years ago, and the God of the Jews was a monster of cruelty and ignorance, and the people governed by this God lost their nationality. Theocracy was tried through the Middle Ages. God was the governor—the Pope was his agent, and every priest and bishop and cardinal was armed with credentials from the most high—and the result was that the noblest and best were in prisons, the greatest and grandest perished at the stake. The result was that vices were crowned with honour, and virtues whipped naked through the streets. The result was that hypocrisy swayed the sceptre of authority, while honesty languished in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

The government of God was tried in Geneva when John Calvin was his representative; and under this government of God the flames climbed around the limbs and blinded the eyes of Michael Servetus, because he dared to express an honest thought. This government of God was tried in Scotland, and the seeds of theological hatred were sown that bore, through hundreds of years, the fruit of massacre and assassination. This government of God was established in New England, and the result was that Quakers were hanged or burnt—the laws of Moses re-enacted and the "witch was not suffered to live." The result was that investigation was a crime, and the expression of an honest thought a capital offence. This government of God was established in Spain, and the Jews were expelled, the Moors were driven out, Moriscos were exterminated, and nothing left but the ignorant and bankrupt worshippers of this monster. This government of God was tried in the United States, when slavery was regarded as a divine institution, when men and women were regarded as criminals because they sought for liberty by flight, and when others were regarded as criminals because they gave them food and shelter. The pulpit of that day defended the buying and selling of women and babes, and the mouths of slave traders were filled with passages of scripture defending and upholding the traffic in human flesh.—*Ingersoll*.

#### 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.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. William Platt, "Has Science a Gospel?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, "Utopia."

###### OUTDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6-8.30, Mr. Keeling, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Hyatt. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Finsbury Park): Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture every Sunday morning in June at 11.15.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Modern Thought."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Mr. E. Baker, a Lecture; 6.30, Mr. Hyatt, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. C. White, "The Happy Freethinker."

##### COUNTRY.

###### OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. OUTING.—Members and friends are invited to meet at New Street Station at 2.30 p.m. The party will travel by train to Marston Green, then walk to Coleshill where tea can be obtained. The cost of tea and railway fares will be about 2s. 6d.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday, June 16, Free-thought Tea on American lines at Mrs. Mapp's.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Hut, Madras Street, Simonside): 6.30, Mr. Atkinson's Campaign; Future Propaganda.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mersey Square): 11 and 7, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture.

TYNESIDE LECTURES (Mr. R. Atkinson).—Friday, June 8, at 7 p.m., Wallsend-on-Tyne. Sunday, June 10, at 11 a.m., Hotel Corner, Chopwell; 7 p.m., Town Moor, Newcastle.

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