

THE PHANTOM ATHEIST.

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

The Phantom Atheist.

THE business of a parson is, on the one hand, to teach religion; on the other hand, to refute Atheism. And the curious thing is that he understands neither. He knows nothing of either because his whole training prevents his knowing. He is educated as to what he must profess to believe, and what he must teach others to believe. If he happens to understand religion, or to see what Atheism really is, the usual result is that he does not pursue his clerical studies, and another man is lost to the pulpit. The consequence is that the pulpit acts as a selective force, eliminating men of first-rate intelligence with a capacity for independent thinking, or a desire to get at the truth concerning what they believe. That is one reason why the general level of the pulpit sinks generation after generation. Men are now occupying leading positions in the theological world who, a few generations ago, would have been relegated to quite subordinate posts. Others, who in the open market would remain unnoticed, find themselves in positions of importance, elevated above their fellows—not because of their own loftiness so much as in consequence of the diminutive stature of their brother believers. All that is required is a certain glibness of speech, a capacity for turning out platitudes as though they were profound truths, and a carefulness to offend none of the interests that supply the pulpit with its income. Given these things, and there is no other occupation where mediocrity is promised such a golden harvest as the pulpit offers.

* * *

A Sample from Bulk.

The Rev. Dr. Norwood is the minister at the City Temple, just a stone's throw from the *Freethinker* office. To the *Sunday Herald* he recently contributed an article entitled, "How if Atheism were True?" And beyond the bare fact of knowing that

Atheism is without belief in a God, he appears to be as ignorant of the Atheistic point of view as I am of Choctaw. Of course, Dr. Norwood is quite safe in saying what he does. He knows that he is writing in a paper in which the Atheist is not allowed to talk back, and anything he says, either there or in his pulpit, remains uncontradicted because no contradiction is permitted. There is nothing unusual in this, but one wonders how some of these people would fare if they ever summoned up enough courage to deal with Atheism under conditions where the Atheist had the right of reply? In the *Sunday Herald* Dr. Norwood is concerned with the "Problem of Evil," and evidently prides himself on his originality in dealing with the subject. It is time, he says, that the centre of gravity was shifted from the problem of evil to the problem of good. If there is no "divine superintendance," there is no problem about evil; but if there is no "directive intelligence," then we should cease to wonder about disaster and evil and death. It is the difficulty of accounting for "good" without "God" that confronts us. "Without goodness evil would not be so much as known to exist." The Atheist ought to submit to evil things in life, but the theist is bound to resist them. So to the triumphant conclusion that "The man who denies God has at least not stabilised his position until he has explained 'the problem of good.'"

* * *

An Apology for God.

Now, there are some arguments so hopelessly confused, and so essentially silly as to almost defy argument. And this is certainly one of them. It may surprise Dr. Norwood to discover that to the Atheist there is no problem of good in the non-human universe any more than there is a problem of evil. Both arise from the irrationality of the beliefs of men such as Dr. Norwood. There is a problem of evil, because, if there is a wise and good Creator, one cannot see why evil and suffering should exist at all. It is a difficulty created by the primary belief in a God. But it does not exist for those who do not so believe. Perhaps I ought to explain, for the benefit of Dr. Norwood, this does not mean that the Atheist is not aware of a number of (to him) quite unpleasant things in the universe, but only that he accepts them as facts of existence, to be explained as other facts in natural science are explained. Dr. Norwood, in his confusion, next assumes that the existence of things pleasant in relation to us is a problem that cannot be explained without a God who so arranged them. In other words, he must have a God of some sort, and if he has a God he must find him something to do. Which is quite reasonable in its way—so long as one refrains from asking, Why assume a God at all?

Although, if one permits Dr. Norwood to switch off the problem of evil on to the problem of good, the old question still remains. It is quite idle to say that we ought not to bother about the number of painful things in the world because there might have been so many more of them. The Atheist asks, If there is a God of the kind believed in by the Christian, why did he not arrange things better? Dr. Norwood replies that we ought not to ask that question, because God might have made things so much worse—that is, he might have blundered more than he appears to have done. Granted. Dr. Norwood might have put forward a more stupid argument than he has done. But that is hardly justification for our hailing the one he does produce as a miracle of philosophic wisdom.

* * *

"Good" and "Bad."

The difficulty with Dr. Norwood is that one has to instruct and argue at the same time. For instance, he says that an Atheist ought not to complain at disaster, or sentimentalise over pain. I can assure Dr. Norwood, and he may take this as his first steps in learning what Atheism is, that the Atheist does not complain of disaster, as a natural fact, nor sentimentalise over pain. They are both natural facts in relation to sentient existence, and the task of the Atheist is not to complain about them but to understand them. I do not suppose for a moment that Dr. Norwood ever reads the *Free-thinker* or any authoritative exposition of Atheism, and it may be useless to advise him to do so. But I may, perhaps, be permitted to suggest that the thoughtful reading of a good text-book on general evolution, with particular attention to the development of social life, may enlighten him as to the light in which a scientific thinker regards the existence of "good" and "bad." Even the words themselves ought to suggest their significance. A thing that is good or bad must be good or bad for something. It is neither the one nor the other, considered by itself. A knife is a mere piece of steel, with a wooden or a bone attachment. It is a good or a bad knife only in relation to the act of cutting. An action is good or bad in relation to my own comfort and health, or in relation to the comfort and health of other people. When I was quite a boy I learned from Spinoza the folly of thinking of the universe, apart from our own conveniently created standards, in terms of either good or bad, and I do not know of any really efficient thinker in modern times who has reached any other conclusion. Dr. Norwood, as a Christian, is bound to think of the universe as created by God for a special purpose, and he is therefore bound to consider it in terms of "good" or "bad" as it realizes, or fails to realize, this assumed purpose. But the trouble here is his, not that of the Atheist. The Atheist, in common with the scientific evolutionist, knows that to speak of the universe as either good or bad is just meaningless theistic jargon. And Dr. Norwood, having got himself into a quite unnecessary state of confusion through having adopted a stupid theory, calls upon the Atheist to explain the difficulties created by his own action.

* * *

A Lesson in Evolution.

Here endeth the first lesson. Now for the second. A stone exists, as such, in virtue of the cohesion of the particles composing it. If it could reason on the lines that does Dr. Norwood, it might marvel that with so many possibilities of the particles fly-

ing asunder they still cling together. And a more intelligent stone might retort, that if the particles did not cling together, the stone, as such, would cease to exist. Cohesion is, for the stone, the condition of its existence. Now man, as a mere animal, can exist only so long as he acts so as to preserve life. If he persists in performing actions that destroy life, he soon disappears. Socially, too, he can only live so long as his conduct makes corporate life possible. If he persists in acting otherwise he is soon eliminated. And, as a matter of fact, myriads of animals and of human beings do disappear because they do not act so as to persist. The continuance of a balance of forces is the condition of the existence of every object in the physical world. The continuation of a *moving* balance of forces is the condition of existence of all forms of animate existence. There is no miracle here, there is no supernatural action required, all that is needed is the understanding of a few elementary scientific truths, and a working knowledge of the general principles of evolution. With these to hand, I do not think that Dr. Norwood would go about the world marvelling at the wisdom of God, who designed that death should come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it, or that great rivers should so often flow past great towns.

* * *

The Coward's Castle.

About two hundred and seventy years ago—in the days when the Christian Church could still command the services of men of ability, the English Church was honoured by the presence of one, Ralph Cudworth. Cudworth was a very great scholar, and a thinker. Like Dr. Norwood, he disliked Atheism; like Dr. Norwood he wished to refute it; but, unlike Dr. Norwood, he tried to understand it. So he set about his really great work, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (the first edition, in a great, thick folio, lies before me as I write), by collecting nearly everything that had been said in favour of Atheism, in order to reply and to refute. But the setting down of Atheism was so fair, the reply was so obviously inadequate, that poor Cudworth got into trouble. He was accused of being an Atheist in the book and a Christian in the pulpit. Since then Christian clergymen have taken no risks. Hundreds of them have dealt with Atheism, but they have avoided the danger of understanding it. And Dr. Norwood certainly does not belong to the Cudworth type. Beyond the bare fact that the Atheist does not believe in a God, he really seems to know nothing whatever about it. It is safer for him not to know. His congregation would not wish him to know. He is quite safe in not knowing. He can talk about it in places where his want of knowledge will not be challenged. His own pulpit will protect him, and will not permit discussion. The papers for which he writes will protect him from criticism. But if ever he summons up courage enough to attack Atheism in conditions where the Atheist has the right to reply, then, may the Lord help him!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Undoubtedly the influence of Mr. Arnold did not make for good entirely. He discouraged—without in the least meaning to do so, and, indeed, meaning quite the contrary—seriousness, thoroughness, scholarship in criticism. He discouraged—without in the least meaning to do so, and, indeed, meaning quite the contrary—simplicity and unaffectedness in style.—*Professor Saintsbury* ("History of Nineteenth Century Literature").

Soul-Saving.

THEOLOGIANS persist in regarding man as composed of two entirely different entities, called body and soul. The body is physical and doomed to perish at death, but the soul is spiritual, destined to exist for ever. The body is the home in which the soul dwells during its life on earth. This is what preachers emphasize as a vital truth. What renders their profession indispensable, however, is the belief that the soul is in a lost condition, and stands in dire need of salvation through faith in Christ crucified. On a recent Sunday morning, Bishop Gore, a distinguished Anglo-Catholic leader, preached a notable sermon on this text: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The Bishop says: "My soul is not a fixed quantity. It is a capacity, a power to become something which I am not yet. That is the thing that I must save—my soul, as it is in the mind of God." That is a mistaken statement. Surely the soul, "as it is in the mind of God," cannot need saving. "As it is in the mind of God," its glory must be its perfection, its unsullied purity and beauty. Bishop Gore holds a sublime view of his own origin, saying: "I have been born in the mind of God to be something glorious; but whether I shall save my soul, whether I shall become what God would have me become, depends on myself, on my own choice, on my own will, on my attending to the things that matter." That is what constitutes the great adventure of life for every human being born into the world—the saving of his soul, the making of his soul, the realizing of his being by becoming that of which he is capable of becoming." Those variations of the Scriptural soul-saving phrase so appositely introduced clearly indicate that to Bishop Gore's mind soul-saving really signifies making the best and most of life, or, in other words, a purely natural process, within the capacity of a most human beings.

This is a vastly important as well as interesting point. His lordship dwells upon it with evident delight. He says:—

It is surely true that there are two kinds of self struggling within us. We are not all good and not all bad. There is a conflict within us, and the issue of that conflict lies in one supremely important fact, that men and women must depend for the saving of their souls on themselves. I have the making of my own soul. Humanity is not a monotonous grey. If you judge it according to its issue, it is either very white or very black. We contain within ourselves the making of our own heaven or our own hell, a heaven much whiter than we should naturally dare to aspire to, a hell much blacker than we like to imagine. Within me there is the making of my own heaven and my own hell, and the issue depends on my own choice. That is what constitutes the adventure of life.

That whole paragraph might easily have fallen from the lips of a Freethinker. The supernatural is conspicuous only by its absence, and this is true of nearly the whole discourse. Dr. Gore believes that man is either his own maker or his own destroyer. Everything depends on himself, on his character.

In the larger field of human relationships we are continually confronted with the worthlessness of activity unless behind it there is character. We are continually being brought into contact with people who have a mass of good intentions and high ideals, but without the character to support them. And so their schemes break down and their committees break up, perhaps because they are quarrelsome, or because their reputation suffers by their exhibited character.

That is common sense in all its majesty, which but seldom finds expression in the pulpit. In this quaint sermon it is the supremacy of reason that strikes us at every point. Reason shines, like a sun, in almost every sentence. We read:—

We cannot help other people ultimately or on a large scale except by being something which men aspire to imitate. We cannot help other people to save their souls unless we are ourselves real Christians, and are making serious efforts to save our own souls. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What shall it profit a man if he would do good in the world and has high ideals, unless he sets himself to save his own soul, his own self, and unless that self shows that it is worthy to be called a man? That is it—the great adventure of life—and its issue depends on ourselves.

It is not often that such noble and rational sentiments are proclaimed in the Christian pulpit, and we welcome them all the more cordially because they are uttered by a celebrated Anglo-Catholic. The following is a highly instructive passage dealing with the difference between a man and an animal:—

In the case of an animal you can tell what it will become if you know its nature, which it inherits, its breed, and its nature, that is, the influences from outside to which it is subject. It depends on nature and nurture, nothing else. But with man there is an inscrutable something besides, and that is what he himself chooses to be. It is the action of his own free will and of his reason. Reason is the power within us which enables us not merely to produce intellectual reactions against experiences, but to form general ideas, and these general ideas supply the motives by which the will judges. The will can attach itself to one or the other set of motives, the higher or the lower, and so results in this or that action. Man is always choosing, and what he chooses depends on what he is thinking about, what his ideas and general principles are.

Up to this point Dr. Gore has been guided by enlightened reason. In two-thirds of his sermon he might have been an Atheist, for what he gives is Secularism pure and simple—a natural philosophy of human life. No appeal to the supernatural occurs at all, and God's name is not once mentioned. And yet we were all the time aware that the preacher is an ardent theologian, who believes that without God's grace in Christ this world is utterly and hopelessly lost. All of a sudden he breaks out in the following purely dogmatic style:—

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." There is a God, and his purpose dominates the whole course of events. There is a God and there is a kingdom of God which he is fashioning, and in which he calls me to co-operate. But this is a larger and a hidden world, and I may forget it; only, in the long run, it matters more than "all that is in the world," of which the New Testament writer speaks, the world that men fashion for themselves by leaving God out of sight.

Now we contend that God is a wholly imaginary being, for whose existence only fancy can be offered as proof. Nature knows him not, and man has neither need nor use for him. As a philosopher we gladly sit at Dr. Gore's feet, for his knowledge of ethical science is both wide and deep, but as a theologian we completely repudiate him. Christianity's day is past. The bulk of the people quietly reject it, and live without any reference whatsoever to it. Neither the Anglo-Catholics nor the Modernists exert any influence whatever over them. Many of them love music and art and are zealous students of science, but they have flung superstition down the wind, and in their conduct as members of society are solely guided by the still small voice of reason and conscience.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Blunderland of the Bible.

In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

—*Shakespeare.*

Learning is good, but common-sense is better.
—*G. W. Foote.*

THOMAS CARLYLE, probably prompted by an unusually severe attack of dyspepsia, once drew upon his recollection of Shakespeare, and described man as a "two-forked radish." The term was more satirical than scientific, and it would scarcely have won the approbation of Darwin or Huxley. Yet Carlyle erred in most distinguished company, for if the Christian deity, who, it is alleged, inspired or wrote the Christian Bible, could not recollect accurately such an elementary fact as that the whale is a mammal, and not a fish, there is every excuse for the irascible sage of Chelsea.

Curiously, the writers of the Christian Bible were most inaccurate, and as careless of facts as politicians and Christian Evidence lecturers. They frankly contradicted themselves, and, when bankrupt of ideas, simply copied a passage written elsewhere in the same book and filled the vacancy. Not only were they fluent liars, but their crowning glory was their abyssmal ignorance of all matters scientific. Their mathematics would disgrace schoolboys, their history was almost entirely pure fiction, but their excursions into zoology were almost too funny for words.

Wordsworth has told us that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." And this reminds us that there is such an astonishing discrepancy between the conclusions of earnest students of zoology and the view-point of the Oriental writers of the Bible. In natural history proper, not the veriest tyro, the most myopic bungler, would confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet the dear clergy would have us believe that the creator of Linnæus blundered about the hare chewing the cud, and leads us to imagine that the maker of Cuvier wrote delirious jargon concerning clean beasts and dirty beasts. As a fact, it was actually reserved for mere worms of the dust, like Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin, to clear out the Augean stable of the divine ignorance, and to create the science anew in the face of the most determined opposition by priests.

Æsop and Bidpai, Phædrus, and La Fontaine have smilingly assured us that everything talks from a potato-bug to a hairdresser. Even the taciturn tape-worm unfolds itself when in liquor. From their animated descriptions there appears to be an international Esperanto. Surely the writers of the Bible could have effected the capture of the various animals as simply as sparrows are said to be captured by salting their tails. A few minutes' private conversation would then have verified the accuracy, or otherwise, of their very entertaining unnatural history, and thus saved theological commentators much ink and more headaches and bad language.

"Wild animals used once to roam through the whole of England, but now very wild beasts are only found in theological gardens," wrote a student at an elementary school. And "very wild beasts" are to be found in the sacred volume. Where else can you find a talking snake, a whale with a bed-sitting room in his tum-tum, or a pigeon co-respondent? In what other volume are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrice, and the worm that never dies? Where, other than in the sacred zoological gardens, are the bedevilled pigs, the four-legged fowls, the unicorn, the cherubim, the ventriloquial donkey of Balaam, and the menagerie of the Apocalypse? Even the so-

called "human beings" in the Christian Bible act in a manner calculated to startle Alice in Wonderland. Adam and Eve, for example, start life at full-age, and popular prejudice runs in favour of infancy. The lives of the Old Testament patriarchs are said to run into centuries, and some lucky prize-winners had two funerals apiece. It is as exciting as if a boy went to school at the time of the Norman Conquest, and was walking about to-day with white whiskers sweeping the ground. Among such a collection of freaks, it is remarkable that cats are nowhere mentioned. Maybe the third person of the Trinity, that sacred dove, had an objection to that animal. The Bible menagerie likewise boasts of horses of fire which carried Elijah to heaven. There is also Aaron's rod that turns into a reptile and swallows other reptiles. The leviathan, mentioned in "Job," is a wonderful creature, with its comely proportions, its firework "neesings," and organs of vision "like the eyelids of the morning." And what is to be said of the philanthropic raven who brought sandwiches to the famished Elijah? The Biblical menagerie is unique, there is nothing like it on earth.

These fantastical ideas emanate from the Christian Bible, and of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books which have issued from the brains of theologians, this volume is one of the most remarkable. The work which Freethinkers have set themselves is that of freeing their fellows from the absurdities and barbarities of pre-scientific times, which are perpetuated by this fetish-book, and propagated by fifty thousand priests in this country alone. To class the Christian Bible as a book of ordered and sober knowledge is the last word in absurdity. It is a Salmagundi of riotous, exuberent, Oriental imagination, in many respects similar to the "Arabian Nights." If people would only read the volume instead of regarding it as a fetish book, such complete and servile veneration would be impossible. The first stage in the religious road to ruin is to regard such a comedy of errors as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If the Bible had not been associated with a heavily endowed priesthood, it would, centuries ago, have been consumed to nothingness in the echoless temple of universal silence.

MIMNERMUS.

The Lesson.

OUR destiny, a glorious trust to keep,
An Empire with the seal of Heaven—and more—
With attributes like pebbles on the shore ;
Imperial mission, home upon the deep
We've often heard of—and have gone to sleep,
To wake to something tangible in store :
So much the mind creates in counting o'er,
So much so oft repeated. Thus we reap
An overwhelming pride of place and home,
And in the fulness of Imperial sway
See not the process of a dull decay ;
Nor hear the pioneers across the foam :—
" We came, and saw, and conquered, on a day."
And built a nest to serve the bird of prey."

W. J. LAMB.

The Christian Churches are assimilating as rapidly as their formulæ will permit, the new light and the more generous moral ideas, and the higher spirituality of teachers who have abandoned all churches, and who are systematically denounced as enemies of the souls of men.—*Lord Morley.*

The Dead Horse.

THE railway journey across country, from Darlington to Tebay is perhaps one of the dreariest train rides that a lone traveller can undertake. Except on market-days, there will be a few stray passengers to alight at the stations as far as Barnard Castle; but, beyond that, one is usually left to view the endless miles of bleak Yorkshire moorland all alone.

On entering the train at Darlington, some time ago, it looked as if I was destined to repeat my previous experiences; but, at the last moment, another passenger, a lady, entered the carriage and seated herself at the far end of the compartment. I usually carry a few sandwiches with me, as it is a long stretch to Morecambe Bay, but on this occasion I felt a little shy of attacking them in the lady's presence. However, we had not long started on the journey, when the lady herself opened her satchel and spread some eatables on her lap. Thus encouraged, I followed her example, and we ate our repast in silence, with all the solemnity of two primitive Christians breaking bread. After we had finished, the lady opened a newspaper, and settled down to read, while my thoughts began to wander among the ruins of those well-intentioned schemes of mice and men, which (we are told on good authority, and history amply confirms it) "gang aft agley."

My reverie was shortly interrupted by the rustling of the lady's newspaper, and by some evident signs of her mental distress. This appeared to be due to something she had been reading, as she exclaimed: "These Bolsheviks ought all to be deported; they will bring about the ruin of this country." This was the first time she had spoken; and it seemed a strange kind of introduction. The exclamation seemed like an appeal to my chivalry; and I felt in duty bound to try and allay the lady's fears, and calm her troubled spirit.

"Madam," I said, "it would be useless to deport these people; they would only swim back again across the North Sea under cover of the darkness; and probably disturb some peaceful fisher-folk. All these social stormy-petrels are like that—at the beginning. But, as for ruining the country, don't you believe it! Our industrial population, whatever its faults, is not of the same breed as the ignorant peasantry of Russia; or, as the excitable, fanatical, Chinese populace.

"Besides, we have an institution in this country that knows its book, and keeps its eye on these social outbursts. The Church has never failed us yet in drawing the teeth of any movement that was likely to be a menace to the religion and stability of the country.

"Curiously enough, I was just now thinking of some of its past exploits. For instance, in the days when there were no schools, and education was the monopoly of the Church and the rich, a very foolish young man conceived the idea of educating the children of the poor. But, of course, the Church very soon took the wind out of his sails. The only day available for his purpose was the Sunday; so the Church opened "Sunday" Schools for the children, where the useful knowledge, which this young man had intended to teach them, was excluded; and, instead, their minds were doped with religion.

"The Church, which before, had neglected the children, has kept its eye upon them ever since; and, although it could not suppress the demand for popular education which sprang up, it has always fought to maintain religion in the State schools.

"To see how far the Church has been successful in side-tracking this educational movement, one

has only to examine the products of the modern school system. Notwithstanding the huge sums of money that this system swallows annually, education, as many of the examination papers show, is very largely a farce; and, the joke of the thing is that the Church gets credit for a genuine interest in education.

"Take, again, the Temperance movement. The Church looked askance at the efforts of the early Temperance reformers, and had nothing good to say of them. As many of its clients were wealthy brewers, who usually remembered it in their wills, the Church could not, very well, oppose the interests of its best supporters; but, despite all the ignominy that was heaped upon its early advocates, the movement grew in popularity; and, therefore, could not be ignored. So, the Church started what it called "Gospel-Temperance Missions"—for the poor; and, without offending its rich clients, got credit for a zealous interest in temperance reform. Thus, once again, a purely Secular movement was surreptitiously annexed as a religious one.

"Another movement, which throws a good deal of light upon the methods of peaceful penetration pursued by the Church in dealing with objectionable movements, is that of Socialism. This, as you may know, had its rise in the ideals and labours of the Atheist, Robert Owen; although it was influenced later by the Continental importation.

"It was, of course, at first, denounced by the Church as wicked and unchristian; but the rapid spread of socialistic ideas soon gave cause for alarm. Its phenomenal success may be accounted for in this way: while the modern Communist hangs his tale of woe upon an economic string, the earlier Socialist stressed the ethical aspect of his message.

"Economics, you see, appeal to the head and the understanding; but ethics appeal to the heart and the sentimental feelings; and the emotions are more easily stirred than the intellect.

"It was this ethical aspect that gave the Church its cue; and it very soon found means to put a spoke in the wheel of this advancing movement. It discovered that 'the ethics of Christianity and Socialism were identical,' and blamed the worldly Socialists for filching its ideal teaching. Then, many Christian clergymen paid visits to the camp of the worldly Socialists to explain the Christian ethic in its bearing upon industrial subjects; and many of the unwary Socialist leaders were invited to address religious gatherings; thus it came to be a game of 'you pat my back and I'll pat yours.'

"The wave of enthusiasm that passed over the country, at one time, was so great, that I once heard a well-known optimistic Socialist orator assure a packed theatre of eager listeners, that Socialism would be established in this country within twenty years. But the time-limit of the orator has long since passed; and Socialism seems further off than ever. Indeed, as a movement, it seems to be almost 'played out'; and the Church appears to have, quietly, let the matter drop."

"But," said the lady, "I thought we were all Socialists now; at least some eminent person assured us that we were."

"Oh, yes! in much the same way that we are all Christians, although none of us believes in the theological nonsense taught by the Church. You see, the Church was wise enough to get the definition of Socialism so enlarged and revised, as to include all those who felt a pang of pity or regret at the sight of a starving cat; and, in doing this, it gained its end.

"I might instance another movement, of Atheistic

origin, which the Church ultimately took under its wing, and 'Christianized' out of all resemblance to its former self. Socialism, as a theory, was the outcome of Robert Owen's teaching; while co-operation was an attempt to reduce the theory to practice in the industrial world. The innovations of Owen were anything but acceptable to the Church; and, when some fifty of these co-operative manufacturing ventures went smash, and all the workmen lost their capital, I have no doubt the Church 'laughed up its sleeve.' Then some cobbler, or somebody, whose ideals reached the length of soap and candles, conceived the idea of combined buying and selling, and of calling it—co-operation. The idea took hold; and these trading establishments sprang up all over the country. They began to combine, and, like other bodies, to hold their annual conferences. This was the bishops' opportunity. Of course, the bishops knew that the old cobbler had not appealed to any altruistic sentiment, but had simply struck the sporting, speculative instinct of human nature, which is the basis of the popularity of football competitions and cross-word puzzles; but they had more sense than to say so. So, they got themselves invited to address an annual conference, and assured these 'co-operators' that they were only putting into actual practice the social ideals of Christianity. The movement was, thus, inoculated with religion. I might mention that, some time ago, an applicant to the C.W.S. for a situation was put through a regular religious catechism; and, when it was found that his views were the same as Owen's and Holyoake's, he was gratuitously treated to a homily on the follies of unbelief. Indeed, it is a question whether any of these religiously-doped co-operators knows anything at all of the social theories and labours of Robert Owen. Half the movement is a political organization; while the other half believes in the soap and candle idea. Some are good Christians; some are Freethinkers; but the only unanimity that appears to exist among them is in reference to that high ideal which finds its realisation in the drawing of quarterly dividends. I don't know whether the C.W.S. meetings are opened with prayer or not, but I would not be surprised to find that they were; or, perhaps, it is left to the bishops, in their private devotions, to call down heaven's blessing on their competitive efforts.

"What has happened to the foregoing movements, believe me, will also happen to these Bolsheviks, of whose noise you seem to be afraid. One of them, some time ago, was advertising the fact that two theological scholars had discovered that the teaching of Jesus Christ was practically the same as that of Karl Marx, whose disciples they profess to be. The poor fellow seemed quite pleased to have a Christian sanction to these economic doctrines; and seemed blissfully ignorant of the fate of those movements I have mentioned. What, of course, will happen will be this: Very shortly, if the Communist movement makes any headway, the number of theological scholars who see a similarity between Christian and Marxian teaching, will have increased to—six. And then, we shall find some Christian clergymen on the Communist platform giving a Marxian interpretation to Christian teaching, and assuring the Communists of the Church's sympathy. Then, if I am not much mistaken, a Christian bishop will be the chief speaker at a congress of the Third International. After that—well, after that—the 'Reds' will be as tame, and as docile, and as lamb-like as the Socialists, and as the Co-operators.

"There is only one little band of Secular workers, so far as I have been able to discover, that refuses to

have any dealings with the Church. Curiously enough, both its friends and its enemies are constantly accusing it of 'flogging a dead horse'; but it sticks to its whip, and proves itself a most formidable flogger."

By this time, the lady was nearing her destination, and, preparing to depart. "I must really thank you," she said, "for your very illuminating remarks. I had no idea of the extent of the Church's secret activities in keeping down the bottom dog and protecting our privileges. If I might enquire to whom I am indebted—"

I handed her one of the cards I usually carry, which describes me as the editor of that high-class publication, *Go easy and mind the step*. She looked at it, and smiled. "Well," she said, "if this *Go Easy* thing is as racy and entertaining as your conversation, I think you may count upon me as a prospective, regular reader. Good-bye, and again, many thanks." JOSEPH BRUCE.

Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* finds no fault, save one, with the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill. This is, that to the framers of the Bill, Blasphemy is the lesser "sin." It complains that to create disaffection to the Crown and Constitution is considered a lesser offence than to speak disrespectfully of God Almighty. The whole thing is ridiculous, but, after all, we do know there is a King and Constitution, we do not know there is a God. The policeman may protect the King, but it is queer to see God Almighty taken under the sheltering protection of a bobby. But the poor *Church Times* cannot lift itself out of the atmosphere of the Middle Ages.

For our part we can only repeat what we have said as to the evil of the maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws. So long as these are in existence they will be used as a cover for all sorts of attempts to prohibit freedom of thought and speech. If in no other way they keep alive the belief that it is wrong to permit certain opinions to find expression, merely because a number of people happen to think they are wrong. Had this Bill been proposed fifty years ago, there would have been a great outcry from one end of the country to the other. To-day, the main object of most organizations, political and otherwise, appears to be to suppress, so far as they can, anything like genuine independence of expression. And that policy is certain to bring its consequences sooner or later.

If ever the world knows peace, it will have learnt it at the altar of the Christian Church, says Mr. F. B. Smith, a representative of the Peace Council of the American Churches. Perhaps Mr. Smith will be good enough to explain why it is that, although Mistress Church has dominated the world for nineteen centuries, she has failed to get her pupil to learn the Peace lesson. Perhaps she didn't know enough about the lesson to be able to teach it properly. Or, maybe, she has been too busy blessing war-banners to trouble overmuch about it.

Professor Carnegie Simpson contends that the Evangelicals, and not the Anglo-Catholics, are the full Sacerdotalists and also the full Sacramentarians; the Anglo-Catholics are, quite literally and simply, elementarians. If the Professor is seeking for a comprehensive term describing the two Christian species mentioned, we suggest "primitives" will suit better than any other. And it has the advantage of covering, without stretching, all the rest of the Christian fraternity.

The last war was a war to end war. We know that that is so because the politicians and the parsons said so. The British Army, Navy, and Air Force estimates total £115,000,000. As the politicians and the parsons must be right, the Chancellor of the Exchequer must have quite absent-mindedly slipped in these estimated millions for armed power from force of habit.

Captain Miriam Booth of the Salvation Army has issued a Birthday Book. It is, we are told, the result of meditations during a long illness, and will be a very acceptable souvenir of a bountiful character. The book should enjoy a large sale. The meditations of a sick woman are just the kind of things likely to appeal to the followers of a mentally sick Saviour of mankind.

The Medical Research Council's Report on the causes and the cure of rheumatism declares that overcrowding and insanitary social conditions are a fruitful cause of the complaint. The Report states that social reform, in the wider sense, including a high standard of food, clothing, housing, and general care, do much to lessen the likelihood of the complaint being contracted. If the Council are right, there doesn't seem much room for the Christian nostrum, prayer, as a preventive and cure of rheumatic disease. The horrid thought arises—Is it any use in other disease or illness?

Is Prayer merely Auto-suggestion? was the topic discussed by the Rev. Francis Underhill, at Christ Church, Westminster. His reverence's answer was, of course, an emphatic "No!" His line of refutation appeared to be that, for his part, he found it far more difficult to believe that he did things by auto-suggestion than to believe he received the help of God. It was most depressing to be haunted by a suspicion that there might be nobody at all at the other end. If one could not believe prayer to be more than self-suggestion, he declared, there was an end of the Christian God. Mr. Underhill's refutation is not particularly convincing. It merely beds down on his personal belief. All it amounts to is, that he has always believed there is a God and that prayer is communion with God, and he refuses to credit an explanation which robs him of the one and denies the other. Well, belief may be an excellent thing in religion, but it doesn't carry much weight in psychological discussions.

Principal Garvie declares that equality interpreted as justice, based on sympathy, conserves liberty and secures fraternity. We wonder just how far Mr. Garvie is prepared to apply to Freethinkers the principles involved in his statement. Christians have always been ready enough to pay lip-service to justice, liberty, and fraternity; but their practice has invariably been quite different. Freethinkers have had to fight hard for the right to sit in Parliament, to hold office under the Crown, to be guardians to a child, and to be administrators of a will. Until quite recently their Society was denied the right to receive a legacy. To-day, Blasphemy Laws are still operative which withhold from Freethinkers the right to freedom of speech. In short, Freethinkers have been, and still are, engaged in a struggle with the Christian to secure for all classes equality, justice, and liberty. Now, Principal Garvie has been in the public eye for some few years, but we have never noticed any eagerness on his part to help Freethinkers gain equal rights of citizenship with Christians, or to defend or advocate complete liberty of speech for all citizens irrespective of their beliefs. In the fight for liberty and justice, Mr. Garvie has been a looker-on. It is, we suppose, his religion that blunts his sense of justice and robs him of sufficient courage to practise in every direction the Principles he commends.

Religious freedom in Sweden has, we learn, made a notable advance. Hitherto, no legal burial was possible without the attendance of a clergyman of the State Church and a pronouncement by him of the Church's

formula. Now, however, Free Church ministers can bury their own dead without any other service beyond that conducted by themselves. If that has been the case, we cannot help wondering how the poor Freethinker has been, and is still, treated. The chances are that the "new freedom" doesn't apply to him. We suspect that Freethinking mourners have still to submit to the insult of hearing the Church's mumbo-jumbo formula, with additions for the benefit of a poor, lost soul, chanted over the grave of one who had rejected the Christian superstition. Perhaps some reader acquainted with the facts of the matter will be good enough to let us know what freedom Freethinkers are permitted in regard to burials.

In regard to the subject of divorce, the Rev. Frank L. Jennings thinks the Church is wrong. By holding blindly to the letter of Holy Writ, he says, she is in grave danger of losing its spirit of generosity, freedom, and tolerance. We are afraid the aforesaid danger is not quite so grave as the rev. gentleman imagines. The Church cannot very well lose what neither she nor Holy Writ ever had.

As a side-note to the reiterated assertions of our newspapers that the man-in-the-street is pining for the Christian religion, comes a statement by the Rev. Frederic C. Spurr to reveal another side of the tale:

The sense of God is dying out in multitudes of souls. Religious thinking is at loose ends. There is a restlessness in Christian circles which advertises an uncertain mind, an indefinite faith, a lack of certitude. In other words, not only have multitudes ceased to believe in a God, but the Churches' regular clients are doubting their Faith. Evidently the good Christian seed, so carefully scattered over so great an area, has fallen on barren soil. It hasn't converted the indifferent, nor has it persuaded away the doubts of professing believers. All the resources of the Lord of the Heavens and the newspaper Lords couldn't make it grow. Their spiritual farming seems to be an abject failure. And it is not we who say it, but the Rev. F. C. Spurr. The Churches' advertising experts will need to think out another bright wheeze.

At the Wesleyan Youth Conference, Dr. Russell Maltby was asked by a young enquirer what ought to be done where consciousness of a sense of sin was lacking. The rev. gentleman replied: "If you haven't got a sense of sin, don't try to get it—go to God and ask him to give it to you." This enquirer, we fancy, is at present in a healthier mental state than he is likely to be after the Lord God has favoured him with "a sense of sin." He is probably not deficient in a sense of right and wrong. But he lacks that unhealthy or morbid sense of sin which the parsons strive to engender in order to make him value their entirely fictitious services to society.

At the same Conference a question set for reply was: "We perish if we cease from prayer"; what does happen to us if we cease from prayer? What was the answer to this we are not told. Our reply would be—nothing very dreadful happens. The Churches merely lose some clients. And the late prayer-mongers discover that, for whatever they desire in this world, they must depend upon their own efforts and the help of their fellows to attain.

Dr. Russell Maltby says God and man have worked a long while together—a strange partnership. A million men lay at the bottom of the sea before they learned to sail; countless numbers were blown to atoms before they conquered nature's secrets. Everything has been won at a price. It's just blasphemy to live anyhow. Believe, he says, in a Sacramental world—all about us is significant and there are countless messengers of Grace. As the Doctor says, God and

man working together is a strange partnership. Man does all the hard graft and suffering, and the senior partner takes the credit. It's just blasphemy to man to praise and worship a monster who could plan the scheme of things depicted by Dr. Maltby.

His Grace of Canterbury said recently: "There rang out from the earliest Christian days the note of what Christianity might and could mean in the brightening and sanctifying of the home in the relations of husband and wife, mother and children, and of the whole household." We like that bit about brightening and sanctifying the relations of husband and wife. What the Christian teaching of St. Paul did was to turn the wife into the husband's serf, and to sanctify the enslaving process. Nowadays, modern women are saying that the note struck by Christianity from earliest times sounds like discordant clatter, and their more cultivated musical ear is rejecting it. They think comradeship a better basis for the matrimonial relation than is Pauline serfdom.

We noted with satisfaction the recent protest, with which the famous authors, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, and Mr. John Galsworthy associated themselves, against cruel sports. It was, we believe, of Mr. Galsworthy's books that a pious reviewer said he regretted not being able to find in them any trace of the Christian view of looking at life. The same pious regret could well be expressed of the other two authors. And since these non-Christian writers are now revealed as being more sensitive to suffering than are the rest of their Christian contemporaries of the pen, the regret may be regarded as a high compliment.

Liverpool Sunday evening concerts have been banned by a committee of justices. The concerts were organised by religious and benevolent institutions and were in aid of charities. The pious organisers appear to have been made to swallow a dose of their own favourite prohibiting medicine. We hope they appreciate the flavour of it.

One hears a lot about the large number of road accidents caused by motorists, and many are the suggestions as to their causes. As a contribution to the discussion, the suggestion we make is that the presence of alarming notices, boldly chalked up on every gate and post by the roadside—notice such as "Eternity!" "The Lord is at Hand!"—may have some bearing on the matter. A nervous motorist seeing these is quite likely to get flurried and wallop into something or someone. The cheerful lunatics responsible for the notices might bear this in mind when next they go a-chalking. It seems a pity that a good Christian man should have the death of a fellow-creature on his soul through zeal for the Lord.

What a profound faith in the stupidity of its supporters has the Salvation Army! In its usual attempts to enlist public support, "Brigadier" Harry Gordon informs the world that he has over 5,000 letters a year from people who intend committing suicide, but who give it up after he has fixed up an interview with him. People who are silly enough to swallow this kind of thing are silly enough for anything. But the *Sunday Express* gives it prominence, although it may see through the game as clearly as we do. But the notion that when a man intends committing suicide he sits down and writes asking the opinion of the Salvation Army about it, and then meekly gives up the idea when he has had a nice friendly talk about Jesus, is surely the last word in foolishness. Meanwhile, we note that the proportion of suicides does not decrease. Which means that efforts of the Salvation Army leaves things where they were—except to bring a little more cash into the coffers of the Army.

Jesus Christ has appeared in many guises, but certainly one of the most peculiar is that provided for him by Canon Peter Green. The Canon is disturbed at Bishop Barnes disbelieving in the stories of the infancy of Jesus, and suggests that we ought to think of Jesus as he would be if he came to Manchester to-day, going down Oxford Road, and joining with the students on a Rag-day celebration. The picture of Jesus with his nose reddened, and wearing a wig, blowing a tin trumpet or firing crackers, is quite interesting. If we had drawn a picture of Jesus in that guise it would have been called blasphemy. But so long as one is a parson anything seems permissible, and the rule with them also appears to be, "We don't care in what kind of a guise people have Jesus, so long as they have him. Whether as a mountebank, or holligan student, or an emaciated preacher, matters not a jot. The great thing is for us to keep the business going."

One wonders what other interest than that of trade is the reason for Bishops taking part in the Newton celebrations. When we remember that the chief charge against Roger Bacon was that he had offered natural explanations of the rainbow, and that he was twice imprisoned for periods of ten years each, one may cheerfully kick in the gutter the blubber about the reconciliation of science and religion. Newton's discovery was impious according to religious standards; it was one aspect of mentality at work, the critical faculty, which is the Church's deadliest enemy. And so one wonders what in common with Newton have the Bishops? Applying Newton's law it illustrates the loving care at the back of a system of bumps and broken noses that children must experience in learning to walk. And Newton had to face much the same kind of religious opposition that befel Darwin, and for exactly the same reason, he did away with God.

The *Daily News* in publishing a message from Dr. Wellington Koo, Foreign Minister in the Peking Government, provides an endorsement of the recent remarks on missionaries, by Lord Inchcape:—

A new basis for China's relations with foreign Powers must rest on the principles of equality and mutual respect for each other's territorial sovereignty and sovereign rights.

The lay reader will perhaps not be able to see a direct reference to missionaries but it is there nevertheless. Chinese converts to Christianity were outside Chinese jurisdiction, and, as we wrote some time ago in the *Freethinker*, our Government must seriously think whether missionaries are an asset or a liability in the Empire's balance sheet.

A German in Italy has received 30 days' imprisonment for publishing a photograph of Mussolini sowing his political wild oats. There is not much of the spirit of Garibaldi at work here, but Italy will have to pay dearly for its great man as will any other country that thinks the twentieth century is the twelfth.

The Rev. William Bloomfield Sleight left £10,823. This is rather awkward when taken in conjunction with the text in St. Luke, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," but Freethinkers have long ceased to look for consistency in a creed that is a nose of wax.

There is hardly the thin partition of vaneer between the doctrines of the Church and belief in ghosts. An interesting side-light on the ghost business is revealed in the following *Daily Mail* report from an estate agent:

Ghosts when they are believed to be associated with houses are valuable to-day. There are many people who are willing to make special offers for "haunted" houses, and this sort of property is never empty long. A traditional ghost gives a peculiar and—by some people—greatly appreciated distinction to a house.

Oscar Wilde did this thing better in his tale *The Canterville Ghost*, but the glimmerings of our savage ancestry would appear to be getting somewhat frayed at the edges in this "matey" feeling with ghosts...

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.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Bayliss, 5s.; H. Onslow, 10s.; Dinah, 2s. 6d.; C. Bradsworth, £1 1s.; Miss E. L. Ward, £1; A. Stobart Jones, 2s. 6d.; A Medical Priest (2nd sub.), £1 1s.; G. Boll, 5s.; J. M. A. Spence (Chicago), £1; Mrs. J. Wright, 5s.; E. L. Bishop, 1s.; Ernest, 10s.; H. A. Armstrong, £10; R. A. Dixon, 5s.; Rayne Adams, 5s.

S. DOBSON.—We are pleased to have the endorsement of your Branch over the attitude taken up with regard to the Canadian Blasphemy case. We have no further news, save that contained in a press telegram to the effect that Mr. Sterry was found guilty. That, one might expect. So long as Christians try Freethinkers for blasphemy there is never likely to be any other verdict save that of "guilty."

C. HARRAP.—Sorry to hear of your brother's death. Hope the service reached you in time.

RAYNE ADAMS (New York).—Thanks for good wishes for the *Freethinker*. We have many appreciative readers in the United States.

L. G. ATKINS (Washington).—Have acted as you desire. Obligated for remittance.

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

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 "Midland Bank, Ltd.," 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.

Sugar Plums.

We call the special attention of all our readers to the back page of this issue of the *Freethinker*. The Secular Society Limited is offering Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* at the phenomenally low price of 2s. The work is cloth bound, and extends to nearly 400 pages. The book is indispensable to all Freethinkers and an eye-opener to all Christians. When this edition is exhausted it is unlikely to be reprinted at this price, and we advise every reader to secure at least one copy. Most should get two, as it is a handy volume to lend or to give to enquiring friends. This is the unabridged edition of Draper's great work, and the standard price is 7s. 6d. None should miss getting a copy.

To-day (March 27), Mr. Cohen lectures in the Gaiety Theatre, Union Street, Plymouth. The meetings will commence at 3 and 7. Admission will be free, and we hope to hear of good audiences.

In spite of the burst of summer weather there was again a good attendance to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on Sunday last. The hall was comfortably filled, and the address was met with evident and expressed enjoyment. Mr. Campbell Everden again occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal on behalf of the new West London Branch. We wish the new Branch all success.

The Secular Society has in the press, and will be issued shortly, an important booklet by Mr. Walter Mann, on *Christianity in China; an Exposure of Foreign Missions*. It is impossible to get the truth of Foreign Missions from any of the ordinary papers or publishers; the strength of organised religion is too strong. Mr. Mann traces their influence in China since their establishment in modern times, and enforces his statements from unquestionable authorities. While the China question is to the front, the work will be found useful to all. The price of the pamphlet is sixpence.

The Canadian Blasphemy trial has brought the usual result in such cases—a conviction of guilty. We say the usual result, because when Christians are permitted to try the question of whether a non-Christian has attacked their religion in a manner with which they find no fault, only one result is likely. If Christians were otherwise inclined, the Blasphemy Laws would be abolished. They are maintained in order to permit Christians to indulge their bigotry under cover of legality. Mr. Sterry was sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment, and was recommended for deportation. As he is English born, that means that he will be sent back to this country.

Mr. H. G. Wells' lecture on "Democracy Under Revision," delivered before the Paris Sorbonne, on March 13, has been published by the Hogarth Press (2s. nett), and, like most of this author's writings, is provocative. He believes that Parliamentary Democracy is on the decline, its chief work, that of the breaking down of controls and obstacles in the way of social action having been accomplished, Governments have shown themselves sadly inadequate to take the proper steps for the safeguarding of society against some of the most glaring evils, while the attitude of the "common man" towards public affairs is one of indifference, apathy, and ignorance. "Faced with gigantic constructive needs of ever-increasing urgency, political democracy fails. It cannot produce inventive and original governments; it cannot produce resolute governments; it cannot produce understanding, far-thinking governments. Its utmost act of will is the capricious or peevish dismissal of governments by a general election."

These are serious charges, and if the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill becomes law, must not be taught to children under sixteen, and, inferentially, to members of Parliament who have not (mentally) reached that age. It clearly incites disaffection to the constitution of the United Kingdom, and is therefore forbidden. Mr. Wells looks forward to a new phase in human affairs in which a "serious minority" will take charge of human affairs. This would probably not be so great a change as Mr. Wells appears to think, for it may be argued that a serious minority have always directed affairs, even though it has been under the guise of general consent. Even in a general election it is active minorities who force majorities to vote in this or that direction, and great changes in other directions have usually been brought about by the same means.

But Mr. Wells appears to overlook the fact that for these serious minorities to be really effective, their action must not be avowed, nor their influence generally recognized. A people that are really apathetic, indifferent, or ignorant, are not likely to support the intelligent minority consciously, and in a way that will perpetuate their rule. On the other hand, a minority that seizes power by sheer force is, in the long run, likely to degenerate into a mere tyranny, while if it does the work of vivifying the social sense of masses of the people and so destroys indifference, ignorance, and apathy, the minority finds itself faced by a majority which demands, and will have, political power. The problem is not nearly so simple of solu-

tion as Mr. Wells appears to imagine. But he does raise a very real question, even, if he does not supply a quite satisfactory answer.

We have also received from the Hogarth Press Mr. Braithwaite's essay on *The State of Religious Belief* (4s. 6d.). This deals with the Questionnaire, recently issued by the *Daily News* and *The Nation*. We hope to notice this at length in an early issue.

An attempt is being made to form a Branch of the National Secular Society at Llanelly. There are, we know, a large number of Freethinkers in that district, and the endeavour should meet with success. Those willing to help, please write to Mr. D. P. Evans, Brynifed, Llanelly Road, Gorslas, Llanelly, or to Mr. J. Greenwood, 26 Council Houses, Upper Tumble. We shall be glad to give any assistance that is within our power.

One of our friends, who frequently appears in our subscription lists as "John's Granpa," makes the following offer in aid of the Endowment Trust. He offers to send a bag of Shallots, each bag containing about 100 lbs., suitable for either preserving, or for the garden, to the first forty persons who apply. All he asks is that each one will give what they please in return, and as payment for the bag, to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust. All applicants have to do is to send in their names and addresses to the *Freethinker* Office, and the bags will be sent, carriage paid. The forty bags should soon disappear.

Commenting on the ridiculous Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill, the *New Statesman* remarks:—

The difficulty is to discover where these alleged blasphemies and seditious are actually being practised. The blame used commonly to be laid at the doors of the Socialist Sunday Schools, but these turned out, on investigation, to be teaching severely ethical doctrines, which would pass unchallenged in a boys' club or a mothers' meeting. The blame was then transferred to the Communists, who are doubtless ready to be as blasphemous and seditious as anyone can wish them to be. But the trouble is that they are so few, and so fully occupied elsewhere as to have little energy left for teaching the young idea how to blaspheme. . . . Are these places numerous enough to warrant the raising of the exceptionally dangerous and ill-omened question of legislative suppression? Is the whole case for freedom of speech to be argued out again because a few hole-and-corner propagandists are talking unpleasant nonsense to which hardly anybody listens? Doubtless, this Bill has its value as Conservative propaganda, but has it any other conceivable use?

We think it very likely that the case for Freedom of Thought will have to be brought more prominently before the public than it has been of late. Practically, the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker* are alone in standing for freedom of thought and speech, careless of whether the speech be wise or unwise, and even when the persons attacked are such as they entirely disapprove. As we say elsewhere, if political parties had been more concerned with freedom of thought and speech than they are with having all sorts of ideas forced upon the people by legislation, the general public would by this time have been so educated that Captain Holt's ridiculous Bill would never have appeared. As it is, most appear to be under the impression that the validity of suppression is to be decided by determining whether the ideas attacked are right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant. And this has nothing whatever to do with the case. The situation is made the more difficult by the fact that, with nine persons out of ten, the ideas that are to be suppressed need only be labelled "dangerous," or "indecent," or "unpleasant," for them to fight shy of the matter altogether. That is a consideration to which opponents of free speech are quite alive. To our mind the fact of a teaching being silly or wrong is a reason for giving it every publicity, not for treating it as something of which we are in deadly fear.

The Messianic Parables.

(Continued from page 182.)

ANYONE acquainted with cases of religious delusion will easily admit the possibility, or even the probability, of this explanation, taking the disposition and circumstances of Jesus into account. It is, as I say, a theory; but there are some facts that support it; and in turn it explains many facts. The history of religion affords examples beyond number of persons whose belief and conduct were determined by applying to themselves passages which they read in the Scriptures, and which they interpreted according to their own circumstances and the views of their time. Now, the Jews accepted the efficacy of vicarious suffering. Moses, for instance, is reported to have asked God to "blot" him out of his "book" to expiate the sin of the Israelites in worshipping the Golden Calf; and the Rabbins held that this request being fulfilled by his death, which occurred just outside the Promised Land, he became the suffering "servant" of God to whom Isaiah refers, saying, "He hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."¹⁰

Ezekiel says that, at the command of the Lord, he had to bear the iniquity of the House of Israel by lying upon his left side for three hundred and ninety days; and that of the House of Judah by lying upon his right side for forty days.¹¹

The "servant" mentioned in the long passage of Isaiah from which I have just quoted actually represents the Jewish people whom "the nations" therein acknowledge to have suffered for their sins, and to have borne their chastisement. Such a passage, however, lends itself very readily to a personal interpretation; and if, as is probable, Jesus applied it to himself, he would derive from it not only the idea of vicarious expiation, but also that of resurrection, for, after describing the endurance of the "servant" even unto death, "the nations" go on to foretell that "he shall prolong his days." There are other passages which persons with such illusions would find no less suggestive. Thus, one of the Psalmists, praising the Lord for past favours, and encouraging him to future benefits, exclaims:—

My flesh also shall dwell in safety,

For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol;

Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.¹²

Another of the Psalmists describing the triumph of the Lord, says:—

Thou hast ascended on high

Thou hast led captivity captive.¹³

Acts reports that Peter who, according to Paul, was the first to witness an apparition of the risen Jesus,¹⁴ quoted the former of the above passages as foretelling "the resurrection of the Christ";¹⁵ and Paul himself applies the other to Jesus in one of his epistles.¹⁶ But Jesus might apply these sayings to himself, and teach the application to his disciples. This would account for their belief of having seen him after his death, for the surest way to see a ghost is to expect it.

These are surmises, but there is direct evidence. Papias, bishop of the Phrygian Hierapolis in the second century, states that Mark was the amanuensis of Peter; and students know that Mark is the only evangelist whose arrangement

¹⁰ Exodus xxxii. 32.

¹¹ iv. 4-6.

¹² Ixviii. 18.

¹³ ii. 27-31.

¹⁴ Iiii. 12.

¹⁵ xvi. 9, 10.

¹⁶ I Corinthians xv. 4.

¹⁷ Ephesians iv. 8.

permits us to trace the ideas of Jesus in their historical order. Now, Mark relates that when Jesus had finished his *public* ministry in Galilee, he left the district for a brief excursion on the north-eastern side in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and that when there he asked his disciples, saying: "Who do the multitudes say that I am? And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others Elijah; and others one of the prophets. And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth, Thou art the Christ."¹⁷

Matthew¹⁸ and Luke¹⁹ repeat the story in evident dependence on Mark's narrative, though with certain deviations; but, like him, they make Simon Peter the first person in the world to confess Jesus as the Messiah. Here it should be observed that none of the three evangelists places within the period preceding Peter's confession, any parable mentioning the Messiah's advent, except the *Tares* peculiar to Matthew, when the personage is indistinguishable from the traditional figure. Indeed, it is not until the brief residence of Jesus at Jerusalem immediately before his death, that Mark and Matthew credit him with parables alluding to his return from heaven; but Luke inserts between Peter's confession and the above residence some of the Messianic parables which Matthew inserts during the latter period. Finally, as to Mark's own opinion of the effect which Peter's confession had upon Jesus, there is a piece of very striking evidence. For, although in the sixteen chapters of his work, the phrase "son of man" (always as coming from Jesus) occurs fourteen times; yet only two of these references²⁰ precede Peter's confession; whilst the next follows it immediately, and the remaining eleven occur before the last two chapters. Besides this, in the two references preceding Peter's confession the phrase appears to mean nothing more than "man," as it does in the passage, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent,"²¹ whereas in all the references succeeding that confession it certainly means the Messiah. Thus the evidence of Mark, confirmed, but not slavishly repeated by Matthew and Luke, tends to prove the persistence of a tradition, that, although from the first a Messianic prophet, Jesus did not until near his end proclaim himself as the Messiah; and that he was led to do this by the confession of Peter, which brought to a climax what he was thinking of himself and his mission in the light of his experience and prospects. All the Synoptists agree that Jesus ordered his disciples to keep silence upon the subject; but Matthew alone makes him acknowledge Peter's perspicuity. Of course, it is impossible to think either that Peter spoke without having heard previous discussions on the subject among the disciples; or that no one in the crowd had ever hailed Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, according to Mark himself, certain persons, then regarded as possessed by devils, but now considered as religious maniacs, had at the beginning of his ministry described Jesus as "the holy one of God,"²² and even as "the son of the Most High God,"²³ which are plainly Messianic titles; but probably such utterances were very exceptional, and had little influence, unless it were upon the mind of Jesus, which seems to have been highly impressionable. The query of John the Baptist²⁴ should be added to the above examples, for it must have had still greater effect. There is no doubt that long before the confession of Peter, Jesus had come to regard himself as the Messiah, and to

conceive his Messianic destiny as including his suffering and death. The satisfactory answer to his tentative question would confirm him in his views. Mark reports that upon the confession Jesus "began" to foretell his tragic end; and Luke has the same connection; but Matthew with still greater precision, says, "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer.....and be killed." This explains why he ordered the disciples to conceal his Messiahship, for when "journeying on unto Jerusalem" to meet his fate he is reported to have said, "I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."²⁵ Certainly the first thing that he did when entering the city was to behave in a way likely to occasion his death by provoking the authorities to suppress him with violence as a public danger. Ezekiel had introduced the Lord God saying of his people Israel: "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall have one shepherd.....and David, my servant shall be their prince forever."²⁶

Zechariah, another prophet of the Captivity, had exclaimed: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass."²⁷

Fully aware of these predictions, Jesus, when a short distance from Jerusalem, made his disciples find him an ass, set him thereon with solemnity, and then celebrate his progress by strewing garments and leaves along his path. The accompanying multitude cried lustily: "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh the *kingdom* of our father David: Hosanna in the highest."²⁸

On reaching the city, Jesus went straight to the temple and drove out of its precincts those who were allowed to trade there for the benefit of the worshippers.²⁹ Even the children saw in this the hand of the Messiah, for with joy they exclaimed: "Hosanna to the son of David."³⁰ According to Mark, "the chief priests and the scribes" thereupon sought the destruction of Jesus, because they saw that he was upsetting the people; whilst, according to Matthew, it was the very next day that they demanded from him in the temple the source of his authority, an event described by all the Synoptists, who likewise agree that he skilfully evaded the question. The Church, relying upon a notice in the Fourth Gospel,³¹ teaches that Jesus entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before the Friday on which he died. But Luke seems to imply a somewhat longer period between the entry and the death, for he says of Jesus at that time, "he was teaching daily in the temple";³² and again, "Every day he was teaching in the temple, and every night he went out and lodged in the Mount which is called the Mount of Olives."³³

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Concluded.)

²⁵ Luke xiii. 22-23.

²⁶ xxxvii. 24, 25.

²⁷ ix. 9.

²⁸ Mark xi. 9, 10.

²⁹ Matthew and Luke make Jesus to cleanse the temple on the very day of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; but Mark says that after entering the city in triumph Jesus simply looked round and then returned to Bethany, coming back next day to cleanse the temple. It is, however, far more likely that he availed himself of the enthusiasm raised by his first appearance than that he took the risk of rekindling it twenty-four hours later.

³⁰ Matthew xxi. 15.

³¹ xii. 1.

³² xix. 47.

³³ xxi. 37.

¹⁷ viii. 27-29.

¹⁸ xvi. 13-16.

¹⁹ xii. 18-20.

²⁰ ii. 10, 28.

²¹ Numbers xxiii. 19.

²² i. 24.

²³ v. 7.

²⁴ Matthew xi. 3; Luke vii. 19.

In Quest of the Beautiful.

PRELUDE.

WHAT is the purpose of your life? Has it a purpose? Or, again, have you created a purpose for it? Perhaps you have reached the goal of your desire, and found it as empty as all the illusions of Ecclesiastes! Or, perhaps, you have rested in your poverty, with the illusions of riches yet to come. Or, again, in a fit of despair, you have said that there is no purpose to your life. Whatever your conclusions, who am I to judge you, or anyone else? Let me stand in the shadow of Flaubert, and let him speak: "The sight of a man daring to judge his neighbour would send me into convulsions of laughter, if it did not arouse my disgust and pity." With the Confucian doctrine of "fraternal deference" we will each go our own way—or ways.

Astrologers state that, when a human being is born, a chord is struck through heaven and earth. As far as I can discover, they do not explain, or define, the phenomenon attending the birth of consciousness. I do not blame them for this or any other omission. They will not want to burn me, or ostracise me, for this difference of opinion with them. They will not look on me as a lost soul if I actively oppose them. The birth of consciousness is nothing to those who are only capable of seeing with the eye instead of through it.

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to
Myself in a dark wood, where the straight way was lost.

If I have lost the straight way at the zenith of my life, I have the memory of it. With the birth of consciousness, about the age of five, I had a glimpse of the Beautiful; and in many protean shapes I have seen it since; and, if my body has been over many crooked paths, consciousness and its proximity to the Beautiful have traced a straight road in my lonely quest. There are compensations for the responsibility of living; there are quiet consolations which are our very own property; and both may be claimed, if life is regarded as a gift held for a little space in eternity. There may be aims more noble, more lofty, and even more clearly defined than that of my quest. An individual may dedicate his life to the service of others in science, or, like the giants of history, in leading an unpopular cause, that, a hundred years later, is quietly absorbed and taken for granted by society with scarce a "thank you." But, in a quest of the Beautiful the following over the hills and dales of advancing years, yields a satisfaction, not of the spectacular, or vehement, kind that satisfies for a time, but of that kind, rather, which is continuous. There is a reward for the watcher and the searcher—not in the tradesman's gold, but, rather, in the reflection and satisfaction of having given a purpose to one's life. In the periphery of the Beautiful we, helped, not a little, by poets in their uncommon treatment of things, shall find common objects that, in daily life we only superficially notice. Browning's foolhardy sunbeams, caught with a single splash from Pippa's ewer

One splash of water ruins you asleep
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counter-wheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling.

Wilde's definition of the searchers, "Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things, for these there is hope; but the elect are those who find in beautiful things nothing but beauty"; these are my finger posts on the journey at the beginning. But, on reaching the destinations indicated by singers, the Beautiful appears again in another form; and there is no rest or looking backwards. My wanderings may be yours,

O, reader! If not, we will share them, for these are not adventures that come within the circle of the novelist dealing with his creations, but rather they appear on the records of the memory.

I.—NATURE BEAUTY.

In the county of Staffordshire I was born; and the northern part of it, bordering on the county of Derbyshire, was my home between the age of five and fourteen. With my grandparents I lived in a little thatched and whitewashed cottage, in Sandy Lane. The lane was true to its name. Wintry rains brought down sand from the hills and the moors. A few houses at the foot of the hills were named Baddeley Green; and the Green itself, a large open space, was used for free grazing by gypsies and small farmers. In this part I lived for many years, having little or no contact with the outside world; happy, peaceful, and contented. Winter would find me snaring birds—and releasing them again. Yellow-billed blackbirds, blue-tits, greenfinches, goldfinches, and chaffinches—these did I catch; but, without any instruction from my old guardians, were set at liberty; as I had an idea that they wanted to "go home." Then would come the Spring—and bird-nesting. There was dancing round the maypole at the nearest village of Milton; and once only did I see the well-dressed with flowers. It seemed quite natural to me that it should be dressed in that manner; it was the cause of much trouble if the well ran dry.

The woods and the fields enchanted me. Anemones, ferns, cuckoo flowers, the wild rose and honeysuckle drew me with their beauty; and my love for them was akin to worship. In solitude would I walk forth—yet my solitude never troubled me. The trees, the grass and the flowers were my friends. From my grandfather, I had heard the tale of Robin Hood. The most striking part of it, to me, was Robin Hood's fight with Little John; and, to this day, I do not forget my admiration of the bold outlaw who took from the rich to give to the poor. It seemed so natural—as natural as dressing the fountain of life.

The fresh Spring winds would blow across the newly ploughed fields, bringing with them the cry of the lapwing. Cloud-shapes would flit across fields, like shadows from some overhead giant. There would be green brook-reeds to be gathered for thatching our hay-ricks; and life was a perpetual delight. Honey from our own beehives; bread of our own making and baking; cowslip and elderberry wine; thus did I live, after the birth of consciousness, next door to Nature, as it were. When the meadows were ready for mowing, I would weep a little for the buttercups, the lady smocks, and the sorrel to be laid low by the scythe. The sharpening or whetting of a scythe, even now, recalls all those memories; and the sound of church bells in the distance always carries me back again to the days of youth. It is not that the bells impress me; it is that associations are recollected through their sound. Bells were not needed to call me to admiration, or worship, of the beauties of the woods and the fields; and, to this day, there seems to me to be something wrong if it is necessary to remind people to worship. But I am only speaking of what naturally fell on the waxen tablets of my youthful consciousness. It is a serious matter to settle the kind of unnatural teaching that shall be written on the plastic mind of the young.

TRISTRAM.

(To be continued.)

There must be a great many dishonest folk among you civilized people, for you can do nothing without the aid of witnesses, a signed contract, an oath, a priest or a lawyer.—An Iroquois Red Indian.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

Mr. E. G. Smith's illuminating address on "The Abolition of the Death Penalty" was listened to with closest attention by, unfortunately, a very small number, last Sunday. It was interesting to note that the most strenuous opposition to the sweeping away of this relic of barbarism came from a Christian! though, to be quite fair, there was a certain amount of disagreement with the lecturer shown by a Freethinker also.

It is to be hoped sincerely that a better audience will gather to-night to hear Mr. Cutner, Mr. Ratcliffe and Mr. Rex Roberts recite their political creed, "How I Vote and Why."—K. B. K.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

There was a good audience on Sunday last to hear the debate, "Is Evolution True?" Mr. Raeburn being unable to appear, Mr. Hale, at somewhat short notice, took the affirmative, the negative side being represented by Mr. W. Munro Thom.

In much condensed fashion, because of the limited time, Mr. Hale sketched the Evolutionary process in Astronomy and Geology. Then, briefly, the Descent of Man was surveyed, and the Universality of Evolution emphasized.

Mr. Thom denied that a single "fact" had ever been adduced in favour of Evolution. Spines are fundamental and not variable. Einstein explained the whole thing by a mathematical formula. And there is such a thing as a Creative Life force, but no one knows what it is. In the morning, Mr. W. H. MacEwan lectured to the pupils of the Govan Socialist Sunday School. This was the third of a series of Freethought lectures by representatives of the Glasgow Branch. Mr. MacEwan secured the attention of the children at once, and held it throughout his lecture, which was described by one of the School Supervisors as the best they had received that session. It is a pity Mr. MacEwan's ability and experience of school teaching cannot be used in a Secular Sunday School. If Secularist parents in Glasgow would promise support, such a school might soon be started.—F. M. & G. B.

Correspondence.

RE FRANCISCO FENER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I took a great interest in this case, and collected a large amount of information on the subject at the time, and I consider Mr. W. P. Mara's letter in your issue, dated March 20, to be a misrepresentation of the facts of the case.

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

Halesburn.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING, HELD ON MARCH 17.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Coles, Moss, Quinton, and Samuels, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Monthly financial statement was submitted and adopted and the Pass-book produced.

New members were received for Chester-le-Street, North London and Shotts Branches, and the Parent Society.

An application for permission to form a Branch to be called the West London Branch was before the meeting, and, the conditions having been complied with, permission was granted.

Correspondence was read from Birmingham, Shotts, Chester-le-Street, South Shields, Swansea and Bolton, and instructions taken, and it was agreed that the completion of the arrangements for Mr. Whitehead's Summer Tour be left in the hands of the Secretary.

Replies to the preliminary Conference Circular not being yet due, it was agreed that any matter of urgency in this connection be dealt with by the President and Secretary.

The President reported that since last meeting an opportunity had occurred of securing the Portman Rooms for two Sundays in lieu of week-night lectures previously suggested. The first of these Sunday lectures had been delivered to a good audience.

The Executive learned with regret of the continued indisposition of Mr. James Neate, who would be unable to inaugurate, personally, the open-air season at Victoria Park. It was resolved that the meetings should be carried out under the supervision of Headquarters and, if possible, with the kind assistance of the West Ham Branch.

The President reported that correspondence and cables with the Rationalist Society of Canada had unfortunately crossed, but acting upon information received and the Executive's instructions, he had agreed that a donation per cable be made in consequence of their appeal for funds. The Committee for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws and the Rationalist Press Association, contributing equal amounts.

From the public press it was gathered that the trial had taken place, but as no official information had been received, the Secretary had sent a cablegram of enquiry.

It was further reported that the Liverpool Freethinkers desired an address from Mr. Cohen, at Picton Hall, on April 10, and that the advertising for Plymouth for March 27 had been already sent out.

Obituary.

MR. W. H. HARRAP, MANCHESTER.

We regret to record the death, in his seventy-first year, of Mr. W. H. Harrap, who was for many years a member of the Manchester Branch. From 1880 onwards, Mr. Harrap and his brother were actively associated with the old Manchester Branch, and were contemporaries of Charles Bradlaugh.

He has been in this district for many years, and was the head of an engineering firm and well known to the textile trades throughout the country.

During his life he was a sufferer from asthma, although his end came very suddenly.

He leaves a widow and four sons to whom we extend our sympathy in the loss of a devoted husband and father.

A Secular Service was conducted at the Manchester Crematorium on Friday, the 18th, by Councillor George Hall, in the presence of a large number of mourners.—W.C.

MR. ALEXANDER WRIGHT, KILSYTH.

On March 11, there passed another Soldier of the Army of Freethought, Mr. Alexander Wright, Kilsyth, aged 37 years. Joining the N.S.S. at Headquarters five or six years ago, he knew what it meant to pay the price of Freedom. Social ostracism in a small place like Kilsyth is a pretty heavy price. Suffering from Tuberculosis, he was in three Sanatoria in recent years, and was fully convinced that his stay there was shortened by his outspoken opinions on religion.

Mr. Wright left instructions that his remains were to be cremated and his ashes scattered, and the Glasgow Society have to thank his relatives—who were strongly opposed to his opinions—for having carried out his wishes. At the funeral, on Tuesday March 15, Mr. W. H. MacEwan, Vice-President G.S.S., conducted an impressive Secular Service. Besides a large number of his relatives, to whom we offer our respectful sympathy, there were present, representing the Glasgow Society and the N.S.S., Mr. T. W. Ewing—always loyal and constant friend to Mr. Wright—Mr. J. W. MacLean and the President.—E. H.

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 postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.5) : 7.30, "How I Vote and Why," Messrs. H. Cutner, Rex Roberts and C. E. Ratcliffe.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.) : 7.0, Mr. Heath, "Facts and Fallacies."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.) : 7.0, Mr. John Katz, B.A., "What is Civilization?"

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101, Tottenham Court Road) : 7.30, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, Lecture and Demonstration, "Physical Fitness." Thursday, March 31, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park) : 11.30 and 3.0, Speakers—Messrs. Botting and Hart.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common) : 11.30, Mr. Leonard Ebury.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Borough Hall, Corporation Street) : Monday, March 28, 7.30, Mr. Geo. Whitehead, "The Religion of Bernard Shaw."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street) : 6.30, a Musical Evening, under the direction of Mr. Handel Lancaster. All friends cordially invited.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints) : 3, Mr. Geo. Whitehead, "The New View of Organic Evolution: Post Darwinian Factors"; 6.30, "Some Important Lessons from Evolution." Will members note the Annual Meeting on Saturday April 9, at 3.0 p.m., in the Engineers' Hall.

PLYMOUTH (Gaiety Theatre, Union Street) : 3.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" 7, "If Christ Came to Plymouth."

SHORTS BRANCH N.S.S. (Public Hall) : 7 p.m., Mr. Fred Mann, "Adam's Rib." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Collection.

OUTDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Hall Steps) : Saturday, March 26, 7.30, Mr. Geo. Whitehead.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY—A Grand Carnival Dance will be held at the Queen's Gate Hall, 40a Harrington Road (near South Kensington Station), Thursday, March 31, 7.30 until 11.30. Admission by ticket, price 2s. To be obtained of Mr. J. Jones, 9 Victoria Grove, Kensington, W.8 All Freethinkers cordially invited.

BOOKS.—List of books for sale, the property of the late LAWRENCE SMALL, of Liverpool, free on application. Many scarce Freethought items.—Address Mrs. L. Small, Rockcliffe, Abbey Road, Llangollen, N. Wales.

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AS a means of benefiting the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, a friend of the paper is prepared to send, carriage paid, forty bags of shallots, one bag per person, each containing about 100 lbs., quite free. All asked is that the recipient shall send a contribution the Endowment Trust as an acknowledgement. The shallots are in good condition, and are suitable for either preserving or for garden use.—Apply, "Shallot," *Freethinker* Office.



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