

THE FREETHINKER

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

Views and Opinions

A Blasphemy Prosecution and its Sequel

SELECTIONS from a life of the late Justice Avory have appeared in the *Evening Standard*, and the first instalment contained a lengthy account of the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, in 1883, for the "Crime" of Blasphemy. Three men—G. W. Foote, H. A. Kemp and W. J. Ramsey, were charged with the committal of this priest-made offence. In this trial, which the *Standard* describes as "one of the most amazing trials ever held in an English court, Foote and Ramsey defended themselves, while Mr. Avory defended (?) Kemp. Avory's part in the case was a very minor one—the case was dominated by Foote—and Avory appears to have thought more of his own future than he did of the interests of his client. The writer of the account of the trial—a very fair one as a whole—says "there was a fund of astute advocacy" in Avory's defence of his client. Avory said to the Judge, "I shall not address the Court on behalf of Kemp, as I cannot contest the fact that copies of the publication were sold by the defendant, but the share he took in it will rather be one for the consideration of your lordship." This was not "astute," and it told against the defendants as a whole. It was not what any of the defendants desired. It was a plea for mercy, and Freethinkers charged with blasphemy are not in the habit of asking for forgiveness. The fact is that Avory was not the man who, in the interests of a client, would risk offending a judge. He knew the bullying bigotry of Judge North who was trying the case, and he knew that, as the writer of the account says, the Judge "had no sympathy with the defence," and a counsel with his future in mind knows it is costly to set a judge against him. Besides, it is not the function of a judge to be in sympathy with or to be antagonistic to the defence. It should be his business to hold the scales level. But in this case North was both judge and prosecutor, and Avory apparently took this course out of consideration for his own interests and not for those of Kemp. To have put in a

defence, as he might have done, would have placed him in antagonism to a Judge who was not likely to forget, and he was too "astute" to overlook this. Many years later, in 1921, I saw Avory in another blasphemy case, that of J. W. Gott. He was then judge, and he had before him medical certificates showing that Gott was in an advanced diabetic condition. But the sentence of nine months was passed with evident satisfaction, and the comment on the medical testimony was, "He will get excellent attention in the prison hospital." So excellent was the attention that when Gott came out, he came out to die. I raised money enough to send him away to the seaside, but he did not live long enough to spend what had been provided. The small balance was paid over to his daughter.

I formed a poor opinion of Avory when I read the Foote trial, and my opinion of him was confirmed from what I noted afterwards. He may have been a good lawyer, his knowledge of the law may have been exact, on that I am incapable of forming a judgment that would command attention. But in some of the cases I watched I saw evidence that he was a fundamentally ignorant man in directions other than the law. In at least one case, where the sentence should have been confinement to a criminal asylum, a sentence was inflicted with the certainty that the prisoner would be released no better than when he was locked up. Lack of wide understanding prevented his seeing before him anything but a man who had broken the law, and for that there was but one remedy—prison.

Something more than a knowledge of law and legal procedure is necessary to make a man a great judge—at least, to make him worthy to stand by the side of some of the great judges of whom England can boast. Avory lacked humour, he lacked real culture, and he lacked that sympathy with erring human nature which indicates a great man. And a man who is not great in his humanity can never be great in whatever line he works. He may be clever at his trade, and one must let it go at that.

* * *

A Bullying Bigot

The account given of the Foote trial is, as I have said, a fair one, but it will be the better for annotations. For instance, of Sir Hardinge Giffard, who conducted the prosecution, it is said that, "confident in the righteousness of his cause, he intimated that he would not exercise the right to final speech." There was no need. With a Judge like North, whose conduct caused even some of the law journals to protest, there was no necessity for him to speak. He could safely leave the case to the Judge, who had done what he could to hamper the defence. Sir Hardinge Giffard's description of the "loathsome ribaldry" of the *Freethinker*, was in striking contrast to the handsome compliment paid by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge to Foote when he came before him on a similar charge.

Coleridge went out of his way to press upon the jury the consideration that however guilty of blasphemy Foote might be, he could not be accused of pandering to the baser passions of mankind. I do not think that Coleridge would have paid the same tribute to Giffard, whose whole speech and attitude was that of one who meant to make the most of whatever intolerance and religious bigotry there was active among the jury. But even then the jury could not agree upon a verdict; but North, who had determined on getting a verdict of guilty by hook or by crook, would give the prisoners no rest, and ordered a new trial for the following Monday, refusing even to permit the prisoners to be at liberty in the interval. Foote could well write, "There may have been some bad criminals in Newgate when I entered it, but I would rather have embraced the worst of them than touched the hand of Judge North."

In the second trial no mistake was made. It is certain that had there been one liberal-minded man on the jury there would have been another disagreement. But "Providence" looks after these things, and had watched over the selection. This time a verdict of guilty was secured, and Kemp received three months imprisonment, Ramsey nine months, and Foote a full year. The verdict brought an outcry in the court, as the writer says, "such as has seldom taken place in an English court of law," and it was Foote who quelled it. As soon as quiet was restored, there came the retort that has now become historic, "My Lord, I thank you. Your sentence is worthy of your creed." It was the prisoner branding the Judge as the real "criminal."

* * *

A Great Trial

The writer of the account is, of course, concerned mainly with Avory and not with Foote, but he does pay due regard to the power, the eloquence and courage of the latter. He says that the speech of Foote had a far greater effect on the jury than had that of Sir Hardinge Giffard. The truth is, as I have said on other occasions, and speaking with a knowledge of nearly every trial for blasphemy that has taken place during the past two centuries, Foote's speech, for eloquence, for power, for a complete survey of the subject, legal, literary, and historic, stands far above any other speech ever made on a similar occasion. He brought to this trial as keen a brain, as encyclopedic a knowledge of the subject of blasphemy, and as great a power of presentation as had ever before been exhibited in such circumstances. And to this was added a fine literary judgment, which in the later trial before Coleridge so evidently impressed a judge who was himself no mean judge of literary quality. Those who repeated the Christian slanders of ribaldry, coarseness, etc., were simply rationalizing their own timidity. They not only lacked Foote's ability; they were wanting also in his superb courage, and excused themselves as they best could by repeating the slanders as an excuse for standing aloof.

And this leads me to the one part of the *Standard* article to which serious exception may be taken; not so much on account of what it says, as for what it implies. This is the passage:—

For some time a journal called the *Freethinker* had delighted a certain section of the community with ribald and irreverent caricatures of the Christian religion and the Holy Scriptures. Heartened by good sales and the inactivity of the police, those in control of the journal brought out a particularly audacious and impious number for the Christmas of 1882.

One cannot, of course, expect an ordinary writer to be conversant with the inner aspect of the matter, although the suggestion that the *Freethinker* was ever

a paying proposition, and that this encouraged those responsible to continue with it, and that the activity of the police would have prevented its appearance, needs correcting. It may surprise the writer to know that the *Freethinker* during the whole of its existence, from 1881 until the present moment, has never paid its way, and has never given to those responsible a payment that the veriest scribbler in Fleet Street would consider adequate for his work. And as to the police, well, the fact that the paper was kept going right through Foote's imprisonment, and that when he was released he continued the illustrations, and left with his card and compliments a copy of the *Freethinker* at the house of Judge North, showed how terrified the *Freethinker* was of the police. A knowledge of the Freethought movement would have enabled the writer to realize that real Freethinkers are not so easily cowed.

But the policy of the *Freethinker* was laid down in the first number. It was designed on a set policy, and that policy was continued so long as it was thought necessary. It was the savagery of the attack on Bradlaugh which taught Foote that, as he said, "the Bigots needed the lash," and they got it from the hands of a man who not only knew how to wield the weapons of learning, satire, invective, ridicule and sarcasm, but had also the courage to use each and every one of these weapons as occasion demanded. No-one could make Christians love Freethinkers, no amount of persuasion would make them treat a Freethinker with decency and fairness. But they could be made to dread what they could not suppress, and to fear what they could not dispose of with reasonable argument. Naturally they replied with slander, with lies, with a pretence that their religion could not be hurt by such attacks. That was the way they met Paine and Owen, and Carlile and Hetherington, and scores of others. It is the way they meet real, unafraid, uncompromising Freethought to-day. The Freethought that is timid, that is apologetic, that is respectable, they can tolerate; they can even give it some sort of a welcome. It enables them to cover their real bigotry with a semblance of liberality. The policy of the *Freethinker* has always been plain and avowed. It plays to none; it panders to none; it is never afraid to say what it means, and it means what it says. Its enemies may not love it, but we know that most of them respect it. In any case we respect ourselves.

* * *

The Fight for Freedom

Foote's attitude was in complete accord with the best traditions of the Freethought party in this country. When Richard Carlile came into conflict with the Government it was largely because he insisted on publishing things which the authorities said should not be issued—at least, at a popular price. When Hetherington and his colleagues fought and broke down the tyranny of the newspaper security laws, they were working on the same lines. When Bradlaugh issued the *Fruits of Philosophy*, it was mainly because there was an embargo on placing certain knowledge before the "common" people. Foote planned the *Freethinker*, because he saw that the kid-gloved method would not serve. It was good enough to solace timid souls who, while giving up the more objectionable features of the current religion, yet lack the firmness to join in an out-and-out attack on the master-superstition. But more was required, and Foote meant to be in front clearing the ground. He did that splendidly, leaving it for others to come along and occupy territory from which the wild beasts had been driven. Pioneer work; never claiming to be all, but always proving its value and calling for the rarest type of courage, that which can be exhibited in the face of great odds, and with very few to cheer one up.

But that kind of courage belongs to the finest type of men and women. Many can fight for a good cause with a crowd. But the path-finder, the pioneer, must be of the kind that will go on, may-be, with a few, but in solitude if necessary. It was in that spirit that Foote did his work for Freethought; and his trial, one of the most important in the history of blasphemy trials, incidentally led to the frustration of those laws which had for so long prevented legacies being paid for Freethought purposes. The trial before Coleridge, which ended in a disagreement of the jury, and which was presided over by a *man* instead of a religious lully, led to a restatement of the law of blasphemy, a re-statement upon which it was possible to establish the right of bequests for anti-Christian organizations. It was a great fight and led to a great step forward. The *Freethinker* has made history.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Common Sense

COMMON SENSE has fallen upon bad times. Once it was regarded as an asset to thinking; but now it has gone quite out of fashion and become rather Philistine. It has a world of its own, but it is an under-world—a world of sturdy, well-meaning yokels who have missed the educational boat. Those who formerly attributed Dr. Johnson's kicking of the tree to ignorance now hold that it was due to an excess of common sense. In short, common sense has at last become—common.

I think that the decline and fall of common sense has been chiefly due to the rise of a quality called uncommon sense. The owners of uncommon sense hold that common sense has its eyes fixed on the ground, and in any case cannot see beyond its nose; whereas the uncommon variety of sense looks not at but through things, turns its eyes aloft towards vistas of ulterior discovery. To common sense a table is something from which to take one's breakfast; to uncommon sense it is a collocation of atoms; and to uncommonly uncommon sense an event in a time-space continuum. To common sense you eat your breakfast before you digest it, but to uncommon sense this sequence depends merely upon the fact that your stomach happens to be in the same part of the universe as your mouth. But for this happy coincidence you might digest it before you had eaten it, or at least you could not feel assured as to the order of events. So hold the owners of uncommon sense.

But are we satisfied to be judged only by our betters? Those who look upon us as inferior will easily find reasons why we should appear so, and it behoves us as good democrats to contest with them their exclusive rights of definition. Let me come into the open and say here and now that I am on the side of common sense, but it is not the sort of common sense that the Uncommonsensibles would have us believe. Consider.

In the first place common sense is not a sixth sense. It is not that sort of a sense at all. There are no sense organs to common sense. It implies no common sense impression. We hear constantly of the

"world as it appears to common sense," but this is an abuse of words, none the less because professional philosophers have fallen into this loose phraseology. Common sense is not a sense you *perceive* with, it is a sense you *understand* with. It is practically another name for good sense. Thus the world does not "appear" in any way to common sense. It may be explained in this or that way, thought of, understood, interpreted by common sense, but not *perceived*. The breakfast table does not "appear" to my common sense; it "appears" to my visual sense. So be it.

Once we have got rid of mere punning on the word "sense," we are in a position to proceed. We must now ask ourselves what is this good sense, and why is it called common sense. Good sense is simply the power to think logically. It implies nothing more than sound reasoning, a robust and reliable judgment. We call it common sense perhaps because we flatter ourselves a little. It is the sort of reasoning we expect from the average man, and we delude ourselves into believing that it is uniformly displayed. Surely that is all.

Common sense has, therefore, nothing to do with how a thing *looks*. It may look anywise. Common sense begins to be exercised when we begin to *think* about it. The next point to remember is that common sense has likewise nothing to do with how much we *know* of a thing. The Uncommonsensibles supply us here with another false distinction. They speak as if common sense were another name for common ignorance; as if common sense implied a view taken by the uneducated man—the ill-informed view, the philosophy of the yokel. Actually common sense takes no particular view, and therefore may take any view. It may operate in a state of relative ignorance or relative knowledge. It will base its conclusions on its premises, such as they are, and build them logically. If its premises are scanty or dubious it will take a diffident, a tentative view. If the premises are full and authoritative it will pronounce with proportionate confidence. But merely as common sense it is not committed to any particular type of view.

Why then should common sense belong to a particular world? Why should it operate only on a single plane of knowledge? Why, to be for a moment technical, should empiricism mark the confines of its energies and powers? When common sense applies itself to the impression of a breakfast table, why in the name of all that is commonsensible should it not employ such knowledge of physics as may be at its disposal? It was never at cross-purposes with knowledge; rather is it the seed awaiting only the light and warmth of knowledge to bear the rich fruits of science. There can be no antipathy here. Why should common sense declare, "I shall *look* at the table, but please only a glance. I am forbidden the microscope. I may weigh the table, but only by the same calculations which the greengrocer uses to weigh potatoes. I may touch the table, but my hands must contain no instruments. I may think; but I am not allowed to *find out*."

That is not common sense but nonsense. Why is it sponsored by reputable men? Only because they have permitted themselves to fall into loose ways of talking, and thence into loose ways of thinking. They have been content to take their terminology from the bottom of the class. When John Citizen, emboldened by a whisky and soda, has just proved an irrelevant conclusion from a false premise, he thumps home his point by saying, ". . . and that's what I call common sense". He is everywhere. He is vocal. He infects us. He says things so loudly and so many times that we begin to accept him. Thus common sense becomes a dog with a bad name. It becomes the

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trade mark of the man who is too lazy to read and too stupid to think, the man who "knows it all." Then arises an aloof set, a set with minds in the clouds and noses in the air, the intelligentsia. The trouble about common sense is just that it is so—common. And before long we learn that a mathematical formula is more "real" (whatever that may mean) than a pound of cheese; and that the cheese merely belongs to the world of common sense.

Let us rebel against this jerry-built thinking. Let us remember that common sense has as much room for the formula as for the cheese. Common sense knows that the formula will greatly facilitate, even modify, our management of the cheese, but that all the formulae in the world do not lessen the amenities of the dinner table. Common sense is quite impartial. It takes up a position of complete neutrality as between the mathematics and the maggots. Far from blinding us to one world by looking too closely at another, it is the binding medium which links together all possible worlds, and by its very ubiquity keeps us constantly reminded of the relationship between them. It reminds us that all worlds are ultimately worlds of experience, and that our universe is found only by correlating these. In the light of that we shall cease to compare things in degrees of reality, but shall talk rather of analysis and synthesis, or again of permanence and impermanence. And ultimately we shall gain, instead of losing, respect for the mundane world; for we shall realize that of all worlds it is the nearest to direct access, and is, therefore, and will remain the world against which all others must in the last resort be tested.

MEDICUS.

Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity

II.

No one—not even Christians—can deny the plain fact that Christianity *did* borrow from Paganism. But it is not so often stressed how much the Pagans borrowed from each other; or, at least, admitted each others' gods and customs. Herodotus, for example, gave Greek names to Egyptian divinities. He called Osiris, Bacchus; Apis, Epaphus; Isis, Ceres; Mendes, Pan; Bubastes, Diana; Horus, Apollo. He was not right, of course, but the ancients never seemed to deny each others' gods. The worship of a Goddess-Mother seems to have been one of the most popular of all cults, going back as far as history; and she has almost as many names as there were nations who worshipped her. Venus is Astarte, Ashtoreth, Cybele, and even Juno—the universal Mother, Nature, or the cause which produced the seeds of things from humidity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Christianity had to submit to the worship of a goddess, the Mother of God, just like all other nations. Judaism did its best to lower the status of woman, and refused any worship to female deities. But the people who were converted to Christianity bought this worship back; and it must be obvious that the whole story of the Virgin Mary is analogous to the stories of the Mother-Goddesses of pagan antiquity, and without them could never have been invented.

Christians, of course, try to make out that, in their religion, Mary was a "virgin," and that this is not the case with the other female deities. But as John M. Robertson points out (in *Pagan Christs*), "the title of 'Virgin' was categorically given in antiquity to Mother Goddesses and Goddesses of many amours.

The essence of the idea lies in the item of supernatural birth—birth without male congress, which is asserted by Hesiod in the case of Hēsē." We all know that Jupiter took the form of a swan in his famous adventure with Leda—the result being that she brought forth two eggs, from one of which sprang Pollux and Helena, and from the other, Castor and Clytemnestra. The details of the impregnation of Mary are very vague, and nobody seems to know exactly what the "Holy Ghost" really is; but he is credited often with the form of a dove, and there seems little difference between a dove and a swan as far as these supernatural and paternal adventures go.

Buddha's mother, Maya, was supposed to be a virgin, and Devaki, the mother of Krishna, was another. Devaki was represented as *black*, and the curious thing is that many statues of Mary are also black. This may have been due to the stone which was sculptured originally being black; or it may be because the statue really represented Isis, the mother of Horus, and became Mary and Jesus when it passed through Christian hands. The story of Isis is a great thorn in the mind and heart of a devout Christian. She was, like Mary, called by all sorts of pious names; some of them being, "Our Lady," the "Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," "Intercessor," and "Immaculate Virgin." As Isis is supposed to have lived many centuries before Mary, how can Christians explain why Egyptians addressed her exactly in the terms Christians use for Mary, except by admitting, not only wholesale borrowing, but also that the *type* is the same?

Moreover, many of the famous artists employed by the Church to paint religious pictures three or four hundred years ago, make Mary stand on a crescent moon. The crescent moon, as a symbol for Isis and Juno—and the *Yoni* of the Hindus—must have been known to them; and it seems extraordinary that they should have used it when representing Mary—unless they realized that she was just another of the ancient Mother-Goddesses. It is, of course, almost impossible to trace the story of the Mary-fable to its source. Perhaps the sign in the Zodiac known as *Virgo* has something to do with it—the sign of the month of August, when the fruits of the earth are literally brought forth.

As Robert Taylor puts it:—

Hence though a pure virgin—that is, most literally, a *fire* virgin—that is, a virgin whose form is made up of those bright fires, which stud the starry bosom of the night—she is yet the tender mother of all animal life, who provides the food on which we are to be sustained throughout the year—that "openeth her hand and filleth all things living with her plenteousness." Thus all is beautiful, all is magnificent, harmonious and intelligible; elegant as art, and convincing as science, when interpreted by the true key of astronomical allegory.

Ceres is the goddess of corn and harvests, and other names for her are Rhea, Cybele, and Bona Dea as well as "Mother Earth"; and the fable connected with her and her daughter Proserpina is the allegory of the creative and destructive powers of nature. But it must surely be obvious that all these stories belong to the same kind of thought, the symbolism which the ancients used to describe the mysteries of nature. And in this Christians borrowed from Paganism. As for the actual Virgin Birth, that surely can be paralleled throughout almost all pagan religions. Indeed quite a number of famous men were fabled to have had gods as fathers. The story of Plato is one of the most famous, for he, born in 429 B.C., is said to have had as his mother, a pure virgin called Perictione, and a god, as his father. Draper, in his *Religion and Science*, says:—

The Egyptian disciples of Plato would have looked with anger on those who rejected the legend that Perfectione, the mother of that great philosopher, a pure virgin, had suffered an immaculate conception through the influences of (the god) Apollo, and that the god had declared to Aris, to whom she was betrothed, the parentage of the child.

This looks suspiciously like the story in Luke (i. 26-35).

The mother of Pythagoras, the famous philosopher, is said to have been impregnated through a *spectre*, and Æsculapius is also said to be the son of a god. Simon Magus, the opponent of Paul, was also believed to be a god. Both Julius and Augustus Cæsar were credited with gods as fathers; and naturally, such a great man as Alexander was also said to be of divine birth. His father was supposed to be Jupiter and his mother Olympias. In any case, as Draper points out, he signed his decrees, etc., "Alexander, son of Jupiter Ammon."

Thus the idea of a divinely born god or man, or both combined, seems to have been a fairly common one all over the ancient kingdoms. That Jesus was obliged to share this honour with other deities came as a matter of course. The only marvel is that such a belief should have persisted to this day.

H. CUTNER.

A Bishop and his Problem

"The problem of evil is much older than the Garden of Eden."—Bishop Barnes (*Scientific Theory and Religion*.)

VERY much older, in fact, for certain fungi parasites alone date back over 300 million years in pedigree. What Dr. Barnes finds most perplexing is "the odious parasitism, the carnage of the struggle, microbic diseases," the waste and cruelty in nature. But this is no new discovery; this stumbling block to belief has troubled the clerical conscience for centuries. Roughly five types of reply have been offered:—

1. God permits evil for a purpose.
2. God is thwarted by wicked man's free will.
3. God is limited in power.
4. Evil is negative.
5. It is a Mystery.

* * *

1. Bishop Barnes, among others,¹ takes the first line. When we consider the pain and evil in nature, we must suppose, he says, that "its apparently non-moral character must be with His permission." (*Ibid.*)

Only "apparently" and "non-moral"! We must go to another Theist, W. H. Mallock, for a more candid opinion:—

"When we come to consider these processes (of nature) in detail, and view them in the light of the only purposes they suggest, we find them to be such that a God who could have been deliberately guilty of them would be a God too absurd, too monstrous, too mad to be credible," so that "he is, instead of a holy and wise God, a scatter-brained monster,"² while another, Dr. Schiller, points out that "it is absurd to ascribe imperfection as a secondary result to a power which can attain all its aims *without* evil."³ The fallacy of this purposive view of evil is dealt with at some length in *Theism or Atheism* (C. Cohen.)

2. The view that all would be right if it were not for man using his "free will" to thwart God, and that evil is therefore attributable to this source,⁴ is popular among the Student Christians, but I cannot find many churchmen of standing¹ committing themselves to it.

For about 500 million years before man evolved the earth was the stage for cruelty, suffering and carnage. Was this due to the "free will" of man? For millions of years it was a battlefield in which great carnivores preyed upon each other and upon their vegetarian contemporaries. Was this the fault of man? What of the bloody combat of Pleiosaur and Ichthyosaur, Pteranodon and Pterodactyl? Or, in more recent times, the eagle descending on the lamb, the gazelle clawed by the tiger, the roar of the hungry lion, the silent agony of the giraffe, the painful dental maladies of helpless animals, the perishing bird, etc., etc? Is all this due to man thwarting God's divine purpose? What of the innumerable species living a parasitic or predatory life at the expense of others? What of the deaths that result from inanition, disease and violence? The great majority of animals are either killed by others or by extreme changes in the environment. Others suffer a parasitic death, and the remainder undergo senile decay.

How can this stupefying scene, this story of carnage, be attributed to man thwarting God? It was in process long before man appeared, and exists outside his domain of action. Thus, both in time and space, is man removed from responsibility. And on the theistic assumption it is all created and supervised by God.

3. Let us now suppose God to be limited in power, a position held by such as the late L. T. Hobhouse and F. C. S. Schiller. Remember, however, this cuts out the Article of the Faith pertaining to Almighty God: it is thus non-Christian.

The God we are now considering is a good fellow and means well, but he is often frustrated by being only finite. Let us now see what God, Limited, makes of his chances:—

"Now it is perhaps the most striking characteristic of an intelligent being that he learns from his mistakes," writes J. B. Haldane (*The Causes of Evolution*). "On the hypothesis of an intelligent guidance we should therefore expect that when a certain type of animal had proved itself a failure by becoming extinct the experiment of making it would not be tried repeatedly. But this has often happened. Both reptiles and mammals have on numerous occasions given rise to giant clumsy types."

Doubtless during their life they were useful in squashing numbers of their contemporaries, including some of your, and my, ancestors.

"Two or three such attempts," continues Haldane, "would have convinced an intelligent demiurge of the futility of the process." (*Ibid.*) Even a modern politician might plan better. If repeated aimless proliferation of doomed and futile forms, useful for no purpose save cruelty and destruction, are the mark of the Great Evolver, surely he is shorn of all that would make him an object of respect.

4. The theory that evil is only negative is championed by Inge (and, incidentally, warmly denounced by Tennant, another equally ordained spokesman of God).

W. R. Inge regards evil as "a negative value—below freezing point." Now this assumes the absolute status of Values (Goodness, Truth, and Beauty), as infallible principles of reference; that is, "Goodness" is regarded as something established, enduring, unconditioned and unaffected by change; not as something arising out of the needs of the time, but as something existing in its own right; a self-existent principle, not an analysable concept; something imposed on us from a transcendent realm, which we must serve and live up to; not as something which shall serve us because it conforms to our requirements.

¹ e. g., *Philosophical Theology*, by Tennant.

² *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*. ³ *Riddles of the Sphinx*

⁴ Except Mathews (Inge's successor).

Let us consider the Problem of Dirt. Dirt is matter. Matter is composed of atoms. Atoms are neither dirty nor clean. They just are. Combined in certain ways, these individually inoffensive atoms may produce the most displeasing odours which can assail the human olfactory system. Combined in other ways, they produce the smell of the rose. Dirt is simply matter out of place according to human standards, i.e., inimical to the welfare of certain other living matter. These considerations do not make dirt less real, but they do prevent us from idealizing it as a self-existent. It is the same with evil, good, beauty, etc. We analyse. We praise. We condemn. We do not idealize.

5. Lastly, we have the assurance of many like the theological professor, Webb, that evil is a mystery, "an indication that we are in the presence of a problem beyond our powers to solve" (*God and Personality*). This excellently illustrates the remarkable advance in modern church opinion since the time when Calvin said, "The procedure of divine justice is too high to be scanned by human measure, or comprehended by the feebleness of the human intellect." (Farnell, *Attributes of God*; cited).

For the scientist, evil is no mystery. The difficulty is one for believers only. It is created by the type of hypothesis employed, viz., that there is a God, and that he controls the universe for a purpose.

G. H. TAYLOR.

The Divine Care of Animals

The Birth at Bethlehem

Oh, wherefore did that Mother mild
In rustic stable house her child?
Was it that there, before His feet,
She deemed those kindly Beasts would meet,
Of whom our talk is yearly heard;
Albeit the text says not a word?
Nay; but because she'd failed to win
More pleasant lodging at the Inn.

Luke ii. 7.

Christ's Care of Animals

On love of animals intent,
With sympathy divine,
Fierce devils from the tombs He sent
Into a herd of Swine:
And still our gossellers relate,
How kind a deed the Lord did;
But what the Pigs thought of their fate
Goes unrecorded.

Matthew viii. 32. Mark v. 12, 13.

The Falling Sparrows

Alas! those Falling Sparrows! Facts are grim:
They do fall rather;
Accompanied, if so you will, by Him
Their omnipresent Father.
But does He stay their fall, or lighten it?
I much misdoubt Him.
They fall, still fall; nor matters it one whit—
With or without Him.

Matthew x. 29, 31.

Christ's Vegetarianism

You claim a vegetarian Christ?
But think what dubious dish
Was served Him, and ('twould seem) sufficed,
An honeycomb—and fish!
From such queer text you turn your glance:
He must be no flesh-eater.
You'd swear it, though by some mischance
He'd swallowed Simon Peter.

Luke xxiv. 42-43.

The Sum of It

In brief, He lived in bygone years,
When Man was the sole number,
Nor vexed himself with hopes and fears,
That modern hearts encumber.
Whether the lowlier kinds than men,
Be sacrificed or spared,
Was question unconsidered then—
He neither knew nor cared!

HENRY S. SALT.

Acid Drops

The Bishop of Winchester, in addressing the Winchester Diocesan Conference, has raised a very vigorous protest against the various faith-healing missions that are being carried. He hints, and might have said it much more plainly, that many or most are carried on by people who are simply trading upon the ignorance of their followers. He says their claims are justified neither "by Christian teaching nor by actual results." There is a note of caution in the statement that expectations may be aroused that will not be fulfilled, and will do harm to religion. The Bishop also declares that, "We no longer hold that sickness comes from God." We have always said that much, but the point is, does *healing* come from God? It would have been too daring for the Bishop to have said, No, to that question, so he leaves it unasked and unanswered. But all the time the prayer book of his own Church says that *every* disease comes from God, and if "we" no longer believe this to be the case, why does the Bishop remain in a Church which teaches the contrary?

One other point. The Bishop says there is nothing in the New Testament which gave Christians the right to assume that "the healing powers exercised by Christ and his disciples were for all ages to be possessed by accredited ministers of his Church." But the casting out of demons, whom Jesus Christ believed were the cause of all disease, was one of the signs that certain men were his disciples, and for long enough the power to cast out devils was one of the chief signs that they were "of God." We leave it to the Bishop to straighten the matter, and also to explain why it comes that Jesus was such a terribly bad teacher, that those whom he taught altogether misunderstood the nature of his message. What a pity that Jesus did not have someone with whom he could put his message into language that men of ordinary intelligence could understand! He really appears to be the world's champion bungler as a teacher. If his modern apologists are right no other teacher has so persistently meant one thing and said another.

The *Church Times* is impelled by a high sense of duty sternly to lecture Canon "Dick" Sheppard. It seems that he arranged to attend a meeting of the Brotherhood Movement, which was advertised to commence with "Holy Communion," and which the Canon was to conduct. Unfortunately all that was really intended was a "Fellowship Meal," which these "Dissenters with their vague idea of the character and significance of Holy Communion" thought was the same. Anyway, "the assembly of the Brotherhood passed round bread and wine" much to the horror of all Anglo-Catholics who are terribly "distressed." The Canon "has been guilty of one of those well-intentioned eccentricities, in which a certain type of clergyman delights, which puzzle the friends of the Church and vastly delight the critics." We agree; but whether the fun is at the expense of the *Church Times*, or at Canon "Dick" Sheppard, or at both, we leave the highly indignant and pious journal to discover. At all events, the Canon is quite unrepentant, "and would gladly do the same again." It is really too bad.

Some details of the mysterious way in which God moves is provided by accounts at hand of the recent Quetta earthquake. At 3.0 a.m. everybody was more or less

happily and peacefully asleep. A moment later thousands of people were immersed in terrible death traps, or hurled into eternity with frightful suddenness. Thousands of children were orphaned, women widowed, almost all destitute and homeless. Truly God doth move in a mysterious way. But what we want to know is—why? There is no answer.

Dr. Rewcastle, speaking, the other day, in Southend, as a Catholic, a citizen and a doctor, made the usual violent attack on Birth Control and Sterilization which one expects from a Catholic, but not from a citizen, or a doctor. Bishop Doubleday thanked her for speaking so boldly. According to Dr. Rewcastle, it seems that if a woman is too ill to have children, and practises Birth Control, "she will increase her illness in several ways, and eventually probably lose her life much sooner." We wonder how many doctors will agree with this? We wonder how many sick women statistics show have died "sooner" through using contraceptives? It seems remarkable that nearly all these prognostications of evil seem to come from women doctors, who generally speak first as Catholics, second as citizens, and thirdly as doctors; and we think that the "Catholic" part completely overshadows the "doctor" part in all these pronouncements against Birth-Control. And that explains a deal.

That Right Honourable Local Preacher of the Methodist persuasion, Arthur Henderson, is not wholly lacking in a fairly good opinion of himself. Speaking in the congenial atmosphere of the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, he assured his congregation that "So long as Henderson is in the chair there will be no European War," and he added, "Mr. Henderson is only too happy to be in the chair." He pleaded with his fellow Methodists to preach peace. We hope he will succeed.

A Reverend Pessimist must be the description of Professor J. G. Riddell, M.A., of Glasgow. He wants to know why the Holy Ghost doesn't demonstrate like He (or It) used to do in days when Hugo's Easy Guide to Foreign Languages was unnecessary to true believers. "Why is the Power of The Spirit less evident in our midst?" is his plaintive cry. He is in despair. "God, we say in effect, is not likely to do much for this generation," he says, and attributes the Divine Unemployment to the fact that we can expect nothing better in our day, "when there is so much indifference and unbelief." It reads like sheer lunacy, as one might say "there is no need for any medicine in a world where there is so much disease." If God can only demonstrate His existence AFTER His existence has already been demonstrated, His demonstrations become a trifle belated.

The *British Weekly* publishes a special four-page Supplement with some statistics relating to the population and number of churches in London to-day. The figures are valuable as far as they go, and may even be accurate, but it is admitted with regret that the *British Weekly* had no support from the denominations, and publishes no figures as to the probably gigantic diminution in church attendance and still more in church membership during recent years. The figures given show that church building has not kept pace with growth of population. Although the present semi-census was intended to disprove a recent book called *Britain Without God*, it does nothing of the kind. That book declared that only five per cent of London's population ever attends a church. That statement awaits some more definite answer than the *British Weekly* can supply. It is probably not far from the truth.

Another venerable Christian doctrine is attacked by a Christian minister. This time it is the Second Coming which, if we can believe the Rev. John Bevan of Balham, is postponed again, this time permanently. He calls this famous belief "obsolete" and, worse still, "discredited." Jesus evidently exaggerated when he said, "I come quickly," and was a long way out when He told the crowd that some of them would be still living when He had His Second Innings on earth.

Eighty-three clergymen in Manchester signed a manifesto that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching of Jesus Christ." How very wise and how very assuring! England, by conquest—that is, by war—gains a fat slice of the earth, and when some of the other countries object or want a bigger share, our high-minded parsons, who would loathe the idea of giving up any of the conquered countries, calmly tell everybody else that war is very wrong and quite "incompatible" with the teachings of Jesus. We wonder how many of these meek and humble followers of the Christian deity ever raised a voice in protest while England was roping in Canada, Australia, India and South Africa? The "foreigner," when contemplating our huge Empire, must smile to himself when told we don't want war—now. He would not, either, in the same boat.

Here is a specimen of the kind of language that is still being used in our sermons:—

This is the Feast of Pentecost. We have in memory that great day, nineteen centuries ago, when to the Apostles came as it were a rushing wind, with vividness like burning tongues of fire, the gift of God the Holy Ghost, and the Church on earth began. Jesus the Incarnate God, Jesus the King, had taken our mortal flesh upon him in the womb of Lady Mary, had lived and suffered and died, was alive again and had gone from the sight of man.

It may be possible to write bigger drivel, but it would be rather difficult. Yet it was delivered to a modern audience, presumably educated, at Westminster Abbey, the other Sunday, by the Rev. B. Iddings Bell, D.D., Litt.D., U.S.A. And the rest of the sermon was on a par or even sillier. Yet there are people who think that our work in Freethought is almost over!

A glance at the numerous advertisements of "Holiday Hotels and Boarding Houses," in our religious contemporaries, convinces us that their pious readers are very much like other people in the kind of catering they require. Scarcely any of the advertisers imagine that a visitor wants to know where the churches are. Not one we have read offers any "Facilities for prayer." "Bibles in every Bedroom" are no more seen than are "Libraries of Liturgical Literature" as an inducement. The usual "Advantages" are "Near the Amusements," "close to the theatres," "facing the sea," and above all and outweighing all "Excellent Cuisine." Human nature comes to the top after all.

"God is short of Man-power," is the explanation of the Rev. H. B. Rattenbury as to the dearth of money hitherto subscribed for foreign missions. "The spectre of retrenchment" is to be traced to this divine lack of human machinery. The truth is that man is ceasing to desire the possession of useless and often highly undesirable "God-power" in our relations with far distant races. In many parts of the world there is substantial ground for suspicion of the white man who came with his religion to kidnap black natives for Christian slave-markets.

A plentiful lack of humour betrayed the Rev. W. E. Tomlinson into boasting that in some Indian villages where Christian missionaries, under the impression that Christ was unknown, found to their astonishment that the natives knew all about it. Of course Mr. Tomlinson thinks it is a miracle: "The Creator Spirit goes before us." Yes, and Indian villagers read not only the Missionary tracts, but papers like the *Freethinker*, and books which explain how little Indians have to gain by following the white man's uncivilizing religion.

"One half of me wants to be gay and worldly, but the other half longs for God," was the unhappy "confession" of a girl convert, at a Methodist meeting. Unfortunately the "God"-half won. She has ceased to be gay, and has become what George Eliot called "other-worldly." While she has lost her joy in life, she has

gained nothing, and contributed nothing to man's happiness. It is quite probable that beneath these harmless epithets "gay" and "worldly," the narrator of the story intended to convey vile innuendoes; more's the pity—to degrade love of gaiety and the world in which we live so that these words convey disgrace and unpleasantness is one of "the fruits of the Spirit" we hear so much about.

The Rev. Teewyn Evans, preaching in Central Hall, London, said about the proposed uniting of the various churches: "You cannot make the Church one, because it is one already." Why didn't they think of that before? How is it that Saint Thomas More was executed under the impression that King Henry the Eighth was creating a new and different church from the one More believed in? Why did Torquemada and all his Catholic friends torture and murder fellow members of Mr. Evan's "same" church? Like many things said in the Christian pulpits, Mr. Evans's remark was meaningless nonsense.

Bishop Shine does not like the New Paganism in Germany and elsewhere. Speaking, the other day, in Scarborough, he said:—

This new paganism is certainly worse than the old. The old paganism had religion. It believed in a supreme being, but the new paganism is Godless and thinks only in terms of this life. The old paganism, after all, did yield to Christianity. It made progress. It went up higher. The new paganism makes no progress.

And he deplored the fact that even in "our own country for a long time there has been going on a silent change away from Christianity towards a new paganism." So in spite of the wonderful advancement of his Church, the wholesale conversions, the new churches being built, and the marvellous religious processions in which the chief feature is almost unlimited grovelling, the good Bishop has to admit "a silent change" away from Christianity.

But it is amusing to find him so pathetically finding in the old paganism, which up to yesterday, was the work and worship of the devil, a belief in a "supreme being," and which, therefore, made it so very superior to the New paganism. Of course, the old paganism did worship Jupiter, or Zeus, or Osiris, and some of us feel there is precious little difference between one of these gods and the gods of Christianity. The only thing which makes a god tolerable these days is the social advancement of the people who are apt to credit their better civilization to their particular god; when, as a matter of fact, the god had nothing to do with it. What Bishop Shine is seeing is *Secularism* growing from strength to strength; with people rightly thinking "only in terms of this life." It is the only life we know and that, at least, is something in its favour.

"Public Saviour No. 1," is the title of a new play recently produced at Birmingham (Prince of Wales Theatre), and said to be coming to London immediately. Jesus Christ is the hero—not, of course, played in person, nor mentioned by His Right Name. As a matter of fact, He is disguised as Mr. Christopher Smith. Instead of being born in a manger, Smith is born in a garage. Three wise guys worship him, He argues in the University at the age of twelve, and instead of a Mary Magdalene, we have a Cabaret girl in a cocktail bar. In the end He is mistaken for a gangster and shot dead by the police. The play lacks actuality, as there are no miracles, no resurrection and no ascension. Jack Buchanan in "The Flying Trapeze," is more attractive.

The terrible railway tragedy at Welwyn has not called forth quite the usual amount of rejoicing, and thanks to God for sparing some individual who might have been killed but wasn't. On the other hand, some Christian journals are saying that it is so far satisfactory that such accidents are now rarer than they were. We do not follow the argument. Do they mean that God is getting more civilized, but that it takes time, and we must be contented with these occasional outbursts of old deistic savagery? And that some day God Himself will be as humane as an ordinary mortal?

In the *Christian World*, Mr. E. H. Jeffis writes tolerantly, if a trifle patronizingly of humanists. He deprecates the usual Christian methods of approach to humanism. He says: "We have neither to refute the Humanist, nor to come to terms with him." He does not think that Christians should be "too nervously anxious to point out that the prevailing decency has its roots in Christian teaching and example." He admits that "there is in human nature a spring of natural goodness which has nothing to do with such teaching and example." We have no desire to sneer at an obvious desire to be tolerant, but we cannot avoid raising our eyebrows in amazement at the idea that mankind owes any sort of debt to Christian humaneness. The long history of Christianity is full of bloodshed, torture and outrage. It is as unjust to-day as it is allowed to be.

Some admirable advice is given by the *British Weekly*, in the course of an article on Civilization. The article emphasizes the importance of mankind bringing all his energies to bear on solving the problems of daily life in the place where he finds himself. In other words, it is a direct contradiction to the "Follow Me" business, and an indirect condemnation of those who "forsake all and follow Me." But being in a religious journal, it all has to fit into Christian teaching. Accordingly, it tells us that this was Christ's own idea. "He sent a group of men back to their work" . . . He commanded, Go Home, No, not to China or India or to some far-off place, Home! Back to yourself! Back to your own problem." What a "nose of wax" is this "Gospel."

Professor J. A. Findlay recognizes a fact which few ministers and editors seem to realize: that ministers represent nobody but themselves, "each minister may take his own line; consequently we have crowded churches where the minister's line happens to appeal to a section of the public, and empty churches where it is not so." There would be less harm in this, if it were not that the incurable conceit of the minister makes him claim that he is speaking as the mouthpiece of a supernaturally wise deity instead of only Mr. Jones. We see no remedy for it except the growing disbelief in all forms of supernaturalism.

A "Rabbi" writes to the *British Weekly* from Palestine, stating from personal experience that "Rome is engineering to make Palestine an appendage of the Papal State," and adds that Papal intrigue is seething in schools, hospitals and trade there. We should like to hear of some popular movement directed, not only against Popery, but against all religion. It is little use making credal distinctions. Bradlaugh's warning is still timely; if any religion at all survives it will most probably be the worst—the Catholic.

Madagascar is celebrating the centenary of Christian Missions in that island. There are now no fewer than seven rival missionary societies gathering in the "harvest." Statisticians may calculate how much "harvest" accrues to each sect—remembering that the entire population is about that of a small London Borough. The British and Foreign Bible Society boasts (if that is the right word) of possessing a Bible which was hidden for years in a Madagascar Small-pox lazar-house. We hope that the paper and cover at least have been disinfected.

In the story of his Methodist childhood entitled *The Mistletoe Child*, Mr. Herbert Palmer admits that "threats of Hell-fire tormented the minds of many children." He says that at the age of thirteen he remembers hearing a Methodist parson crying out in his sermon, "Friends, if I thought there was no Hell, I'd hold a prayer-meeting to-night and beg God to make one!" A far cry from many "Modernist" Methodists who have given up not only Hell but Heaven—except as "states"—and also miracles, virgin births, resurrections and instantaneous cures. But they do agree on one thing; they are both "Christians."

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOZE.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. MARLING.—Of course religion is the outcome of the "social forces," so is everything else in human society. The point is just what is meant by "Social forces." The statement itself has been quite common with the better class of writers on sociology and philosophy for at least seventy years, and implicit among them for almost a century. We may notice the book to which you refer as soon as we have space for it, but we do not want to make the *Freethinker* a one-man paper.

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

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.

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

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

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.

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Sugar Plums

From the *Church Times*:—

The Bootle Town Council has quite properly decided to permit games to be played on Sunday afternoons in the public parks, and the "Council of Christian Churches" is vehement in most un-Christian protest. On Monday a meeting was held in the Town Hall, at which the speakers showed a pitiful ignorance of the significance and the purpose of Sunday and of the character of the Christian religion. The Bishop of Warrington was pre-eminent in silliness. He is reported in the *Liverpool Daily Post* to have said that "what the Roman Catholic Mass is to our Roman Catholic friends, the observance of Sunday is to us!" Even a Suffragan-Bishop might be expected to know that Sunday cannot be "observed" by members of the Church of England without attendance at Mass, and that the dull, idle, listless Puritan Sunday is opposed to Catholic tradition and entirely out of accord with the Spirit of Christ. After the Bishop, a Congregational minister, declared that the people of Bootle do not want to go to church, and that they do not want Sunday games. They ought to want both, and there is obviously scope in Bootle for missionary work. We have no doubt that the publicans are strong supporters of the Puritan critics of the Town Council.

We commend the above to those denizens in that backwater of civilization, Wanstead and Woodford, who recently voted—4,753 against 3,253—against Sunday Cinemas. The victorious ones sang the doxology when the figures were announced, and the clergy of the district were jubilant. Luckily for the inhabitants of this dis-

trict, they have only to take a little walk in almost any direction, or at worst, a little 'bus ride to be able to spend their Sunday evenings in a reasonable manner, instead of thanking God for his help in preserving a savage taboo.

Mr. Beverley Baxter, in the *Sunday Referee*, cites the following:—

The Pilgrim Fathers landed on the shores of America and fell upon their knees. After that they fell on the aborigines.

Mr. Baxter asks who said this, and says that it smacks of Dublin. We do not know why Dublin, as it has not even an Irish sound about it. As a matter of fact, the first part belongs to Ingersoll, who said that the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, but it might have been better had Plymouth Rock landed on the Pilgrim Fathers. But one does not expect Mr. Baxter to know anything of Ingersoll. The second part belongs to Mark Twain, and it was said not of the Pilgrim Fathers at all, but of white settlers in general and of English settlers in particular. It had no reference to America. The literary education of our modern newspaper stars is very scrappy. That is because they write for a scrappily educated public.

Our old friend, Mr. Sydney Gimson, writes of *Letters to the Lord*:—

The first comment that rises to my mind is that it is devastating. I am quite unable to understand how anyone reading the book can have a vestige of belief in "The Lord" left in them. Yet one knows that things do not work out like that. The old superstitions are so ingrained that most people are only annoyed when their beliefs are shown to be ridiculous, and shut out from what they are pleased to call their minds all new ideas, however true.

Apart from the devastating arguments, I have enjoyed many chuckles at the wit on every page. It is a delightful addition to my treasured volumes of your writings.

We value this opinion from one who has spent the whole of a long life in the Freethought movement.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Stockport this week, commencing to-day (July 7), and in our Lecture Notices column will be found full details of the meetings to be held. The local Branch will co-operate at all meetings, and Pioneer Press literature will be on sale. We understand that Councillor George Hall, of Manchester, will take the chair at the opening meeting. The local saints are busy behind the scenes, and a series of good meetings should result.

We note that the Bethnal Green and Hackney Branch has formed a Discussion Circle. The first meeting, which took place on July 1, was a great success, and was attended by a good number of members and non-members of both sexes. Future meetings will be held every Monday evening at 8.30 p.m., at the Independent Labour Party Hall, 375 Cambridge Road, E.2 (opposite the Museum Cinema). All are cordially invited, including non-members. The Secretary is Mr. C. Samuels, 436 Hackney Road, E.2.

The General Secretary of the N.S.S. will be on holiday for a short period from July 13. During his absence only matters of urgency will be dealt with. Will Branch Secretaries and others with communications for the Head Office please forward them in time to be handled before July 13, or retain them until the General Secretary's return, according to the importance of the matter.

Most murderers die in a very pious frame of mind, expecting to go to glory at once; yet no man believes he shall meet a larger average of pirates and cut-throats in the streets of the New Jerusalem than of honest folks that died in their beds.

The Professor at the Breakfast Table.

The "Ascension" Absurdity

"He ascended into Heaven!" It is difficult for ordinary human beings to understand the importance which Christians attach to this most ridiculous of all incredible stories. That God was immortal, and therefore could not be held in any grave is, one might think, sufficient of a portent to satisfy the greediest of miracle-mongers. That a God should dwell for ever in some unearthly "heaven" is what one might expect. But to get the God across the border, going and coming, necessitated a Virgin Birth at one end, and a "cloud of glory" at the other.

Christian theologians have recognized—if reluctantly and half-heartedly—that there is no "news value" in a God who stays in his heaven ("where He belongs," as Americans say), they have persistently claimed that somewhere, somehow, God is on earth, here and now. They call Churches "His House," and (more appropriately) Cemeteries "God's Acre." And to overcome the difficulty expressed by Lord Dundreary that only a bird can be in two places simultaneously, doctrines have been invented to meet the case. The Trinity, the Personality of the Holy Ghost (nicknamed the "Comforter"), and the Immanence of Christ: were all attempts to overcome men's natural indifference to an "absentee" God.

All religions have had their "Ascensions." It is a great help to us in studying mythology to know on the authority of St. John that the first true story of any such miracle relates solely to his own hero, Christ. "No man hath ascended up to heaven," he categorically states, "but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man" (John iii. 13). We need not therefore trouble ourselves about Enoch and Elijah and other Old Testament worthies.

Freethinkers, of course, are glad to accept St. John's repudiation, but it would have been interesting to hear that at least two foreigners, even if as unrepresentative of humanity as Enoch (or Enos) and Elijah, had some sort of foothold in heaven. It is awkward too that St. John implies that Jesus was humbugging the "good thief" to whom He said, "To-day shalt thou be WITH ME in paradise." Christ's references to Lazarus in heaven are, of course, only a parable (defined by the schoolboy as "a heavenly story with no earthly meaning").

The suspicious circumstances surrounding the death and "burial" of Moses have led to a tradition that he too had an "ascension." St. John's testimony disposes of that myth. The Blessed Virgin Mary's "Assumption," or Ascension, is still celebrated in Catholic circles on August 15. This may be dismissed as on the same level with the seventy "veils" still exhibited in seventy Catholic churches, each guaranteed to have been the one actually worn by the Blessed Virgin Mary (See Kirby Page's *Jesus or Christianity*, which enumerates many equally remarkable duplications of sacred relics). Perhaps the Blessed Virgin Mary was as agile as the house in which she lived. This house (recently copied, as a centre of Catholic devotion, in Walsingham, Norfolk) is "believed" to have come all by itself from Palestine to Italy, taking three "Leaps" over lands and seas, and finally landing at Loreto in Italy where it now stands, just as Mary vacated it, a desirable residence, much like one of the advertised villas familiar in our newspapers to-day. The safe journey of this villa throws a light on what can be done in travel: perhaps heaven is nearer earth than Loreto is to Jerusalem.

St. Paul is said to have had a kind of temporary "Ascension." Paul is very hazy about it, but had a vague idea that somebody, possibly himself, drunk or

sober ("in the spirit or out of the spirit, I know not, God only knows") "was caught up into Paradise" (1 Cor. xii. 3-4), but (as he himself tells the story), he evidently returned (or became sober). Habakkuk too "was lifted up by the hair of his head"—a very indefinite hint; but perhaps he and St. Paul may have had their leg pulled instead of their hair.

Although St. John denies that anybody ever had ascended at the time he wrote, say A.D. 100, we have no information as to whether the law (or whatever it was) was later abrogated. Perhaps Mr. Spurgeon and General Booth really did "ascend" to heaven as the Bulletins said, although in the former case an alleged telegram was posted outside the Tabernacle stating positively, "Charles not arrived—PETER." Apparently ascension nowadays is slower than it was wont to be.

After all, one may *ascend* nowadays to quite a considerable height without arriving in Mars or Heaven or anywhere habitable. On the other hand, we note that St. John does not contradict any of the stories of DESCENTS into hell. Lazarus's quondam acquaintance—the "rich man," called for some unknown reason Dives—was seen and heard by Lazarus in heaven. But this again was a parable. Anyhow, St. John leaves "Hell open to Christians," as Father Furniss desired. St. John only swears that no Christian ever ASCENDED.

On the positive side. St. John and the other "eyewitnesses" leave us very much in the dark as to the one and only "Ascension." So unique a happening deserved more than the scanty allusions of the evangelists who mention it. Their "reports" are meagre, inconsequent and unconvincing. John might be hinting at some remote occurrence ages ago. There is no semblance of news, history or experience in his words, which read more like a Mother Shipton prediction than a statement of fact.

St. Matthew's gospel significantly ignores the whole yarn. In fact the First Gospel ends with Christ's undertaking to remain where He was: "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

In the Second Gospel, "St. Mark" devotes exactly fourteen words to this "Ascension," in a passage regarded even by orthodox scholars as spurious. (Shall we say, more spurious than usual?). "He was received up into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark xvi. 19) is a sentence which raises more questions than it answers. It might imply an excursion lasting a few hours—just as it is said, "He descended into Hell," or was received into Hell, and sat on Satan's grill for a short time.

"St. Luke," in his "gospel" and his "Acts," does nothing more than add five words to St. Mark's brief allusion to so startling and unique an occurrence. Luke xxiv. 51, makes nineteen words of this "news." Perhaps we ought to add verses 52 and 53 as commenting on the same event. If so we should have to say that Christ's disappearance created suspiciously "great joy" in the hearts of His disciples. Moreover, St. Luke leaves much to the imagination. He merely surmises an Ascension in reporting as a fact that "Jesus was parted from" the crowd at Bethany. The *Star* might say much the same about the Prince of Wales when he opens a new soup-kitchen.

It all seems a poverty-stricken basis for so astounding an allegation. The *Encyclopaedia of Religion* regards the "Ascension" as rounding-off the whole business of divine intervention in human affairs. It says: "As Revelation pre-supposes movement from Heaven downward, so Ascension pre-supposes the possibility of movement from earth heavenward." Perhaps this only implies that as the affair is now con-

plete we can expect nothing further of "divine intervention." But even a child sees that it is much easier to fall from a height than to ascend a similar distance, and that while we see for ourselves that people around us are here, we have no proof that one of them came from "heaven." Every schoolboy knows that "there ain't no busses runnin' from the Bank" to Heaven.

(To be concluded)

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Pulse Beats

Who can see the name of Robert Ingersoll without a quickening of the pulses?

This question one of the *Freethinker's* contributors asks.

The sentence set me thinking, then came the desire to express my thoughts, my admiration, my entire emotional, and intellectual appreciation of this great orator, brilliant lawyer, writer, and brave champion of Freethought.

To him I owe a debt of gratitude.

Because, it was through reading his essays, and lectures—those fearless denunciations of phantoms, and mythical gods—their inquisitions—their tortures, and their hells—that my mental horrors, and religious fears were banished. Robert Ingersoll thought that intellectual liberty was the grandest of all ideals—the noblest of life's path to tread. His clarion call throughout America was: "Liberty is the child of Intelligence." Like Shakespeare—he believed that, "There is no darkness but ignorance!"

Looking at a photograph of Ingersoll, one can see his actual character truthfully portrayed—there, is plainly seen, great determination, absolute fearlessness, and immense intellectual power, nobleness and honesty. Undoubtedly his soul shined through his face. By his soul, I mean his conception of his relationship to humanity, and to his whole environment.

Above all, his sensitive lips are a token of his passionate appreciation of beauty. The beautiful in life—in love, in music, in poetry, in the ethical and social ideals of Toleration, Mercy, Justice, and Liberty.

His ideals, his emotions, he expressed in marvellous oratory. There is a Welsh proverb: "A golden tongue is in the mouth of the blessed!"

No purer gold has yet been mined!

By his oratory he could make a desert before the eyes, fade away, revive, and blossom into a fairy glen.

He paints a word-picture of moonbeams shining on a golden shore, inhabited by the lovely butterfly-winged fairies of our childhood, dancing through the fountain spray.

What marvellous prose-poetry are his words—music themselves. He is describing Edward Remenyi rendering a composition upon the violin—"a fairy piece full of wings, and glancing feet, moonlight, and melody, where fountains fall in showers of pearl, and waves of music die on sands of gold."

My pulse beats quicker whenever I read—"how all the countless hands of hate—tortured those who dared to differ from them—persecuted, slandered, and ostracized the Freethinkers, and the iconoclasts—those men who stood so grandly—"

What a fine vindication of Thomas Paine, he wrote.

He wrote of the author of *The Rights of Man*, and *The Crisis*: "Without the name of Thomas Paine, the history of liberty cannot be written."

The Bastille—Tyranny. Voltaire—Toleration!

Robert Ingersoll associated the above. He describes the body of Voltaire resting upon the ruins of

the Bastille. Voltaire was dead, but he had mortally wounded the "Infamous."

"The conqueror resting upon the conquered. Throned upon the Bastille, the fallen fortress of night, the body of Voltaire, from whose brain had issued the Dawn."

One can quote magnificent passages like the above, for hours, until overcome by his brilliance, the pulse gradually becomes slower—and one dreams of:—

A glorious world of bloom,
Where bending flowers gently blow,
And o'er thy breast their leaflets throw
In beauty's soft perfume.

(*The Wavy West*, R.G.I.)

T. E. WILLIAMS.

The Nature of Sex Appeal

SINCE the War the psychology and philosophy of sex have come out of their dark hiding-places into the light of day. Ad nauseam, there has been a plethora of books and films dealing with sexual problems; and whereas our forefathers considered it obscene to mention sexual matters in the presence of a lady, the post-war generation considers sex to be a legitimate subject for frank discussion, even in mixed company. If prompted by the young, some even of the more conservative of the older generation will, with faint blushes and bated breath, make a delicate attempt to probe some of the mysteries of sexual relationships.

One result of this emancipation of the discussion of the subject of sex is the birth of a new phrase, not yet incorporated in standard dictionaries perhaps, but one which, nevertheless, has attained to full recognition in the language of the people, viz., sex appeal. This new phrase is not an ephemeron, its life is permanent: it expresses succinctly that which has not been so well expressed before; it therefore supplies a want and fills a gap in the English language.

What exactly is this subtle thing called sex appeal? It is, in short, individual personal attractiveness of a kind which arouses sexual desire in a member, or members, of the opposite sex (actually the phrase is applied chiefly to the attractiveness of women). But where exactly is the source of this attractiveness? And why does one woman have sex appeal only for the one or for the few, whereas the appeal possessed by others is almost universal?

It is impossible to go further into an attempt to explain the nature of sex appeal before an analysis has been made of the nature of sex; and this is no simple matter. That complicated being, civilized man, has subtilized his emotions to a point beyond the scope of easy definition; and in attempting to define Man's sexual emotion, there is much room for hair-splitting, and it is, indeed, very necessary to observe the nuances of things.

At the outset, it is best to avoid the error of some scientists who dive deep into primordial slime, in the hope of bringing triumphantly to the surface the secret of Man's sexual nature. It is useless to point to the amoeba and its joint processes of nutrition and reproduction, and say that the motive of our sexual desire is a legacy from this early, acephalous form of life, and is, in fact, primarily the motive of reproduction. Equally fatuous is it to say that, as the earliest forms of life were mostly a sexual and reproduction merely a splitting of one into two, so the male and female are but two halves of a whole, the sexual act springing consequently from a desire for reunion and completeness. As a few hundred million years have

elapsed since life began, and Man is the product of these countless æons of evolution, one might as well attempt to explain the existence of a vast pile of leaves by reference solely to the first leaf which went to make the pile as point to the amœba and say "in that lies the secret of Man."

Assertions are also made that the creative instinct, or, that Man's desire for immortality, is the basic emotion in his sexual life. Such philosophical explanations are too limited, like the before-mentioned biological ones, and a man who relies on them is in the position of one who, trusting to Newton's law, shakes an apple tree and finds to his dismay that the apples disobey the law, and, instead of falling into his eager hands, fly off into space in horizontal, upward, and all directions. In modern society the reproductive motive may be present in the one and avoided like the plague in the other; and the desire for completeness or immortality, or the creative instinct, may be present in a varying degree or entirely absent in the motives which impel different men towards the sexual act.

There is, however, one simple common denominator to which all sexual motives may be reduced, and that is, that in all such motives there is the desire for pleasure. This pleasure factor is often overlooked as a starting-point for argument, yet who can deny that, whatever may be the other deep, inherent causes of the desire for coition, the impelling motive of the animal, of the normally sexed human, and of the pervert, is the desire for pleasurable excitation? Nature doubtless intended the pleasure motive to be the servant of a deeper issue, the continuance of species, but the coition of civilized Man, for the sake of the pleasure alone, has become an end in itself, the other issue more often than not being side-tracked. It is also important to note that whereas the sex-pleasure of an animal or of the most primitive types of men may be said to be purely physical, the pleasure of civilized Man partakes of a two-fold nature—it is a pleasure both of the mind and of the body; for if the mind can enter into our simple functions of eating and drinking—otherwise, as an extreme, why the need for exclusive and expensive restaurants?—it must surely enter into the most exquisite of our natural functions, that of sex.

In any case, it is undoubtedly precisely this fact, that sex is a psycho-physical pleasure, that made the birth of the phrase sex appeal possible. The sex pleasure of an animal or of the most primitive type of man can be satisfied by almost any mate of the same species, but the brain of civilized Man causes him to be selective in his sexual activities, and in selecting a partner he has regard to those who will make the pleasure most acute, or to those who have, for each individual, the most sex appeal. It may be mentioned in passing, that even in the "ethereal" act of falling in love, the question of sex appeal, to the everlasting chagrin of idealistic youth, must of necessity enter: but the question of love is not under discussion; the phrase sex appeal does not quite contain the idea of love, it is related to Man's more hedonistic nature.

The nature of sex appeal now becomes more clear. Since sex is a psycho-physical pleasure, sex appeal must consequently depend on a challenge made to both the physical and mental attributes of sexual desire; the pleasure of consummation therefore ranging in different cases from a pleasure as purely physical as Man's sex pleasure can be to one as purely mental as it can be. It will be sufficient to deal with these two extremes, as combinations of the two will then explain themselves.

(To be concluded)

KENNETH S. COX.

Think—to be Free

If we occidentals were not so strongly convinced of our own superiority and rightness, there is much that we could profit by in oriental philosophies. For example, we might learn to acquire a repugnance against violence. Violent and unrestrained emotions express themselves in violent speech, violent writing or violent acts. Science is showing us that the effects of violent emotions are madness, murderous hatred and excessive self-indulgence. The state of the world today reveals great parts of humanity obsessed by violence, noise and speed. Tranquility, silence and deliberately slow movement are the attributes of the true philosopher who is not the blind follower of any "ism"; but who regulates his life in conformity with natural law. Those who transgress *that* law court nothing but defeat, disease and death. Those who go outside Nature to find health or happiness are doomed to bitter disappointment. There is no protection against the cataclysms of Nature outside Nature herself. Man with the degree of intelligence he has achieved can only make his conditions as suitable as possible to enable him to stave off disease or disaster from physical outbursts. That he is now better equipped for this purpose is entirely due to the increase of knowledge—Science—which is just the Latin name for knowledge.

In these days much is spoken and written about rivalry between Religion and Science. It would probably be clearer to ordinary folk if the issue were stated as one between Religion and Knowledge. It is true that some persons with a great deal of knowledge are not wise. But it is also true that without the possession of accurate historical knowledge many a person accepts religious belief in its place. This is not to say that a person with little knowledge may not have a stock of wisdom or "native wit," as we call it—probably inherited from ancestors endowed with a good stock of common sense. One's ancestry has a great deal to do in forming one's opinions about things, past, present and future. The person with a strong religious belief is often a person with a very slight stock of knowledge. He who knows most believes least. But it is frequently found that people who know a great deal about the history of humanity owing to circumstances or strong predilections or inherited religious temperament, maintain a close association with some religious organization however much their knowledge may expose the fallacies of their religious beliefs.

There is in many human beings unaccustomed to think independently for themselves the tendency to follow like sheep the loud-mouthed leader with the persuasive voice, who has already secured a large following. The sheep-like tendency is seen in operation every day: Where the crowd goes I go. What it does I do. What it shouts I shout. This tendency has proved a gold mine for successive evangelists; because it is associated with violent emotions of an indiscriminating kind. It was the means of packing the penitent forms of the Moodys and Spurgeons of the Victorian Era. It made the Salvation Army. It draws flocks of people to hear Gipsy Smith or Canon Sheppard. But to yield without thought, reflection or question to this tendency, is to prove one's intellectual bankruptcy. And it serves to furnish some idea of the intellectual level of the majority of the people. Other tests that may be used are:—

The contents of the most popular daily and weekly journals.

The type of public entertainment which is most in demand.

The recreations most favoured by the majority.

The mental reaction of the majority to the edicts of authority.

When we apply any of these tests we find a lamentable diminution in the numbers of those who are original thinkers. For when some popular craze catches on and becomes fashionable, the vast majority of all sections of the community become its devotees. And a mob is always formidable whether it is pursuing one of its Gods with frenzied enthusiasm; or baiting some wretched sceptic in frenzied wrath.

Calmness and gentleness are ever the attributes of real strength and greatness. Swashbuckling and sabre rattling are the signs of the bully whose "strength" and "greatness" are at the mercy of a fickle mob, which may change its allegiance tomorrow. Public dictators sit on precarious thrones. Why they take on their jobs can only be explained by the infection of a most powerful form of megalomania.

Everyone is at liberty in all circumstances and under all conditions to *think* what he or she pleases. In the realm of thought every one who chooses to think for himself is a monarch, who cannot be swayed by the unthinking mob which has become accustomed to accept and obey the decrees of authority without question. But there are many cunning popular leaders who, while loud in their assertions that people should think for themselves, circumscribe the region of thought: that is to say people may think what they like on any subject except the possibility of Super-naturalism being a falsehood and a fraud. Thinkers must close their ears to any questionings they hear about the existence and power and love of God. Free-thought demands the stopping of all such circumscription: it demands that the mind of every individual shall be free to range over every subject and to arrive at its own conclusions after consideration of all historical and proved *facts*; untrammelled by any mythical bonds. How far has the mass of mankind to move before it reaches the confines of Freedom?

IGNOTUS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

PEACE AND WAR

SIR,—In your issue of June 30, Mr. A. G. Hassell accuses me of saying that those who strive for peace are mere demagogues. I did not. I have been striving for peace all my life. But I know that war will never be abolished until we diagnose the causes of war and abolish them. That is exactly what the Pacifist is never willing to do.

What is the main cause of war? All writers and speakers on war during the last twenty-five years tell the same story. They all say that the aim of war is to acquire the necessary territory for expanding populations. On this point there is no difference between Bernhardt, Bause, the Kaiser, Hitler, Goering, Mussolini, Matsuoka, and any of the other persons who have held forth on the subject.

Does war succeed? Many British and American writers say it does not, but all writers in other countries say it does. They constantly quote Britain and America as the great examples of successful warfare. "England became rich by battles, not by book-keeping," says Oswald Spengler. Foreign Socialists are as convinced of this as foreign militarists. Frederick Engels, writing to Karl Marx, in 1858, spoke of Britain as "a nation which is exploiting the whole world." The same writer wrote to Kautsky in 1882, that "the workers enjoy with them (the capitalists) the fruits of the British world market and colonial monopoly." Lenin, in his book on *Imperialism*, quotes these opinions with strong approval. It is extremely unlikely that all foreign observers are mistaken on this point.

In view of these facts it is perfectly natural that the peoples of Germany, Italy, Japan, and other poor countries with very restricted territory, should desire to raise their standard of life by grabbing land from weaker nations. It is ridiculous for the English and Americans to pretend to be shocked at others for doing the very same things as they have done themselves.

There is a perfectly easy way to get rid of war. All that is needed is for the various countries to restrict their populations and establish an international tribunal for the equitable division of the lands of the world between the different peoples. That is the honest way to deal with the subject. All other ways are shuffling and dishonest.

R. B. KERR.

THE SEVENTH DAY

SIR,—Mr. Cutner asks why Christians abandoned the seventh day for the first, but does not mention the most plausible theory on the subject. It is that the ancient Jews, in counting their sevens, started fresh each New Year, as they certainly did in observance of the "seventh month." This would account for the curious phrase, "the second-first Sabbath," in Luke vi. 1, for a forty-eight hour sabbath would naturally be introduced somewhere to fit the weeks with a 365 day year. Now if the Christians abandoned this forty-eight hour Sabbath when they split off from the Jews, and the Jews did not abandon it till their church organization was smashed in A.D. 70, then the two sects would be nearly sure to have their seventh day on different days.

C. HARPUR.

THANKS

SIR,—I have just now completed the reading of *Letters to the Lord*, and I feel it would be gross ingratitude did I not add my quota to the many congratulations you are sure to get on this brilliant bit of satire. It could not be excelled by a Mark Twain.

H. PURDY.

"ARMS AND THE CLERGY"

SIR,—In commenting on my review of *Arms and the Clergy*, your special-pleading paragraphist does me the great discredit of assuming I have hopes for Christianity. The Church, I am convinced, will remain—

wrapped in the old miasmal mist,

but the much pleasanter materialism of wireless and the Sunday Cinema is rapidly making the "dearly beloved brethren," a voice crying in the wilderness; a voice, I insist, that shortly only the Blimps will follow.

As for clergymen "learning a lesson"—I am told that the Threecinone Trust Inc., disapprove of evening classes because it encroaches on Mumbo Jumbo duties.

W. A. RATHKEY.

[Mr. Rathkey said, as cited, that in his judgment time will "prove this authority of Church's tireless stand against pacifism to have only an antiquarian value." We naturally, and pardonably, took this as indicating that "antiquarian" referred to the church of the future with regard to the church of the past. We are pleased to learn that we were incorrect, and that he is with us in the opportunist character of the clergy and of the Church.—EDITOR.]

Once you thought that God has his finger in every pie, that he directed every sunrise and every eclipse. But science has shown conclusively that the last time his presence could possibly have been felt in the universe was in nebular days, multimillions of years ago. Since then nothing at all has happened—except possibly a few miracles already jeopardized by higher criticism—beyond what can be explained by natural law. God and the universe have for all practical purposes parted company.—John Langdon Davies, "Man and His Universe."

A Nightmare

I HAD a dream last night, so queer
That still it makes me sweat with fear.
You won't believe it . . . nor do I . . .
Why did I dream it then, O why?
I dreamed that I was lost. I found
Myself on strangely hostile ground,
Where people came to stand and stare,
Because (of course) my limbs were bare,
While they were wrapt in deadly black
From head to foot, from front to back.

"Why don't you strip," I said, "and share
The healthy raiment of the air,
The gold brocades of sweeping sun
Ready (unpriced) for everyone,
The ermines of the moon, the pearls
That dawn has stored for early girls?
Why don't you imitate the folk
Who take the whole wide sea for cloak,
And prove that diamonds are cheap
By scattering foamdrops on the deep?"

They screamed with rage and gnashed their teeth.
"But we have nothing underneath!
Black we were born, and black we'll die.
Your devilish notions we defy.
For man it's an enormous sin
To know that trowsers aren't his skin.
You're a disgrace. Your morals fail.
You'd better end your life in jail."

The police arrived, and I was sent
To pine in prison and repent,
While others (in my dream) could go
In swathes of misery to and fro,
And (truly) gain an honoured name,
By fostering disease and shame.

I've woken . . . Have I? Lord, I sweat
With fear . . . Perhaps I'm dreaming yet.

JACK LINDSAY.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JUNE 28, 1935

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, A. C. Rosetti, Clifton, Wood, Saphin, Tuson, W. J. W. Easterbrook, Ebury, Preece, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting of the old Executive were read. The monthly Financial Statement was presented. New members were admitted to Bethnal Green, North London, Birmingham Branches, and the Parent Society. Correspondence was dealt with from Bradford, Leeds, Bethnal Green, Messrs. Brighton and Clayton. The President gave a report of the Annual Conference, noting the well-filled Conference Chamber, the enthusiasm and keen discussion, and the really fine Public Demonstration in the Picture House on Whit-Sunday evening. Motions remitted from the Conference were dealt with and instructions given to the Secretary. Acknowledgments of resolutions passed at the Annual Conference and forwarded to the respective departments were noted from the Board of Education, and the Foreign Office. To meet the convenience of the Executive it was decided that the next meeting be held on Thursday, August 15.

The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Dr. Horace J. Bridges (Chicago Ethical Society)—"The Canonization of Sir Thomas More."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, July 7, Mr. H. S. Wishart. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Mr. P. Goldman. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, July 8, Mr. C. Tuson. Mornington Crescent, 8.0, Wednesday, July 10, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, July 7, Mr. I. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, July 9, Mr. C. Tuson. Manor Street, Clapham High Street, 8.0, Friday, July 12, A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Wood and Bryant. 7.30, Wednesdays, Messrs. Ryans and Tuson. 7.30, Thursdays, Messrs. Saphin and Wood. Current *Freethinker* on sale at the Kiosk.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Human Progress—Towards Atheism."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BLITH (Market Place) : 7.0, Monday, July 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Maxwell Street, City) : 7.30, Friday, July 5, Muriel Whitefield. West Regent Street, 7.30, Sunday, July 7, Muriel Whitefield. *Freethinker* on sale.

HAPTON : 7.30, Tuesday, July 9, Mr. J. Clayton.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Bedford Street) : 7.0, Thursday, July 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders—A Lecture.

PORTSMOUTH (Todmorden Valley) : 7.30, Friday, July 12, Mr. J. Clayton.

QUAKER BRIDGE (Brierfield) : 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, July 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street) : 8.0, Saturday, July 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (Market Place) : 7.0, Tuesday, July 9, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Armoury Square) : 7.30, Sunday, July 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, Chairman Councillor George Hall. Houldsworth Square, Reddish, 8.0, Monday, July 8, Mr. G. Whitehead. Armoury Square, 8.0, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, July 9 to July 12, Mr. G. Whitehead.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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