

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Converted Atheist Shoemaker.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes on his Defence.

Mr. Holyoake's Investigation.

Mr. Foote's Answer.

READERS of the *Freethinker* must be familiar with the name of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. He is the author of the story of a converted Atheist shoemaker, who was brought to God, Jesus Christ, and Wesleyan Methodism by means of the West London Mission. This story was first published in the *Methodist Times* in the summer of 1889. It was afterwards published in a volume at the not too modest price of eighteenpence. Before being issued in book form it was severely criticised in the *Freethinker*. This criticism was subsequently issued, with some additions, in the shape of a penny pamphlet, which has had a wide circulation. Its title was a pungent one—*A Lie in Five Chapters*. But the leader of the West London Mission had only himself to thank for this. His story, as it stood, was demonstrably false, whatever elements of truth it might possibly contain. At first I said that Mr. Hughes was perhaps mistaken, and I gave him an opportunity of setting himself right. But he stuck to his position in sullen silence. Even when he was invited by Charles Bradlaugh (then President of the National Secular Society) to substantiate his narrative, he made no response. I had no alternative, therefore, but to publish my exposure as Mr. Hughes had published his story, leaving the issue to the public judgment.

Charles Spurgeon, who was a straightforward man, whatever else may be said about him, gave Mr. Hughes a friendly hint in the *Sword and Trowel*. The great preacher did not doubt the truth of the story, but he deprecated its air of secrecy, and said there could be no valid reason against giving the real names of its pseudonymous characters. This hint, however, was lost on Mr. Hughes. Some time afterwards, in a letter to a correspondent at Nelson, he stated that the actual details would be published "shortly." They have not been published yet. Mr. Hughes discreetly played a game with time. The longer he could hold out, the better his chance of pulling through an investigation if it were ever inevitable.

Not knowing any reason why Mr. Hughes should break silence I was naturally astonished at reading the following announcement in the *London Daily Chronicle* of Thursday, January 11 :—

Some time since we referred in these columns to Mr. G. W. Foote's attack in the *Freethinker* upon Mr. Price Hughes for his publication of a small book called *The Atheist Shoemaker*. Mr. Foote's attack was styled *A Lie in Five Chapters*.

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At that time we urged Mr. Hughes to give the Secularists an opportunity of investigating the facts of the case. We are glad to say that, after a lapse of some considerable time, Mr. Hughes has acted on our suggestion. An announcement appears in to-day's *Methodist Times* to the effect that Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, the first President of the National Secular Society, has read the book and Mr. Foote's pamphlet, and has interviewed the two "sisters" to whom reference is made in the book, and the widow of the deceased shoemaker, and has embodied his investigation in a document which is to appear simultaneously in the *Methodist Times* and *Freethinker* next week. Methodists and Secularists will await its publication with great interest.

This fell upon me like a bolt from the blue. I had not had so much as the faintest premonition. Not a whisper had reached me of Mr. Holyoake's "investigation." It seemed only natural that he should take me into his confidence. But he had not done so, and here was a circumstantial announcement. Presently I looked at the *Methodist Times*, which contained a flaming advertisement of Mr. Holyoake's "report." It was to appear in the next issue, and readers were invited to "order at once." It was also to appear in the *Freethinker*—of which I knew absolutely nothing.

January 11 was my birthday. I had been forty-four years in this world of trouble, and had seen a good many ups and downs. Still, I hardly expected such a birthday present.

Later in the day I received the following letter from Mr. Holyoake :—

MR. PRICE HUGHES'S STORY OF "THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Though I had often seen in the *Freethinker* mention of the story of the Atheist Shoemaker, by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, accompanied by remarks that I looked at but was reluctant to read, I never thought of getting your pamphlet on the subject until a few weeks ago. Then, as I had never seen Mr. Price Hughes's book, I obtained that, and read both; and the impression Mr. Hughes's narrative gave me was very different from that you appear to have received. I read the *Story of the Atheist Shoemaker* with great respect, and was surprised how much you had overlooked. In all the annals of conversions and death-bed scenes, I have never met with anything so fair, and even generous, to one of a different way of thinking, as is Mr. Hughes's story. Though the converted man was a somewhat fierce Atheist, no imputation is made upon his moral character, and his disinterestedness, kindness, and uprightness are unreservedly admitted. I have never seen on the part of any preacher such frank and important testimony to the co-existence of Atheism and high personal morality. The truth of this in daily life must be known to

most Freethinkers, and no one can impugn, in that respect, the truth of a writer who bears testimony to it.

Learning that I wished to investigate the facts on which the story was founded, the truth of which you have questioned, Mr. Hughes frankly gave me opportunity of doing it. I saw the two ladies upon whose reports Mr. Hughes wrote. The real name of Herbert was given me. The original diaries, made at the time of what took place with regard to Herbert, were shown to me. They entirely agreed with what Mr. Hughes has stated. The ladies were persons of manifest good faith, of cultivation, of perfect candor, and entirely free from exaggeration. I was told that I could see Herbert's widow (if I wished), who is now married again. I did so. She answered my questions with evident truthfulness and intelligence, and with true wifely indignation when naming the assaults made upon Herbert by the police at the times of the Victoria Park discussions. Herbert's memory seems to me entitled to honor for his manly, self-sacrificing vindication of his atheistic opinions. Of the substantial truth of Mr. Hughes's story there is in my mind no doubt whatever. I felt it to be but fair to Mr. Hughes to give him a statement of the grounds of my belief, which he might, if he pleased, insert in the *Methodist Times*, where the story of Herbert first appeared. I am told my letter will appear in the number for January 18. Believing you would like to lay before your readers the other side of the case (if there be a valid one), I send you, at once, this brief statement, and will send you next the full details (given in the letter to Mr. Hughes) on which my conviction is based, as you will wish to give it a place in the *Freethinker*. The right of individual judgment is a cardinal Freethinking principle. In the exercise of this right you have given your opinion. In the exercise of the same right I have given mine.—Very faithfully yours,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

The first part of Mr. Holyoake's letter seemed to me irrelevant. I am perfectly indifferent to Mr. Hughes's opinion of Atheists. I feel no gratitude when Christians leave off calling Atheists scoundrels. I have long outgrown that form of humility. Besides, it would not have suited Mr. Hughes's purpose to represent "Herbert" as a bad fellow. It was his very point that a good fellow yearned for something that Atheism could not supply, and found it—under Mr. Hughes—at St. James's Hall. As for the "cultivation" of the "sisters," I could not see that it was at all to the point. Persons of "cultivation" had concocted all those lying stories about Voltaire and Thomas Paine. Nor could I believe that the ladies were "entirely free from exaggeration." Personally, I never saw such a lady. I will add that I never saw such a man either.

What was I to do? Well, *this*, at any rate. Readers of the *Chronicle* and the *Methodist Times* would imagine that the "investigation" had been carried on with my knowledge, and that the publication of the "report" was an amicable arrangement. *That* impression I was bound to destroy. I therefore sent the following letter to the *Chronicle*:—

MR. HUGHES'S "CONVERTED ATHEIST."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE DAILY CHRONICLE."

SIR,—You announced this morning that a certain report by Mr. G. J. Holyoake would appear in next week's *Freethinker*. I am the editor of that journal, but the announcement was news to me. Later in the day I received a letter from Mr. Holyoake, addressed to me as editor; but Mr. Holyoake knows the *Freethinker* is published on Thursday and goes to press on Wednesday, and consequently that his letter was too late for insertion. He refers in the letter to a report he is going to send me, and, as this communication is the very first I have received from him on the subject, you may imagine my perplexity. I was not aware of any investigation being conducted, nor has Mr. Holyoake ever made any inquiry of me as to my statement in contradiction of other statements in Mr. Hughes's narrative. The investigator has examined one side. He has never approached the other. I await his report with interest, but I am puzzled to know what it can really be worth. It seems that Mr. Holyoake is under a misunderstanding. I am not in any way concerned to dispute that Mr. Hughes converted an Atheist. What I dispute is, the conversion of *such* an Atheist as the one in his story. And that is a question which cannot be settled without a reference to the heads of organised Freethought in London and to the list of lecturers at the Hall of Science. Mr. Hughes was challenged by Mr. Bradlaugh to furnish the proofs of his story when it first appeared in the *Methodist Times* several years ago. He has stood on his "dignity" ever since, and now he relies upon a hole-and-corner investigation by one gentleman, who has examined but one side of the case. The result is advertised in Mr. Hughes's paper as a "careful report." It may be careful, but it cannot be adequate. In conclusion, let me correct the statement that Mr. Holyoake was "the first president of the National Secular

Society." It is a post he has never occupied, and I am not aware that he ever wished to. I make the correction in the interest of accuracy, and not out of any disrespect to Mr. Holyoake, whom I hold in the highest esteem. It is only his *judgment* that I question in this instance. He appears to have walked into a snare.—Yours obediently,

G. W. FOOTE.

14 Clerkenwell-green, E.C., Jan. 11.

I thought it also necessary to write to Mr. Holyoake, regretting that he had allowed an announcement, in which I was so much interested, to be made in Christian journals, without giving me the slightest hint on the subject. I told him plainly that his investigation was incomplete, and that I could not regard it as in any way decisive, although I had the highest—indeed, an invincible—respect for his integrity. In conclusion, I promised to insert his "report," but, I added, "I reserve my right to criticise it freely." "I have seen enough," I said, "of Mr. Hughes's shuffling over this matter to make me very sceptical of anything he may say about it now."

After penning this letter I settled down to wait for Mr. Holyoake's report. Up to Monday evening it had not arrived, and I telegraphed to Mr. Holyoake at Brighton. I telegraphed to him again at midday on Tuesday. A few minutes afterwards it was brought to me in the shape of slip proofs by a messenger from the *Methodist Times*. Mr. Holyoake informs me that there was "no intentional delay" on the part of the *Methodist Times*. Perhaps not. All I know is that it reached me inconveniently late.

G. W. FOOTE.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S REPORT.

Some time ago, as I have since learned, chapters appeared in the *Methodist Times* entitled "The Atheist Shoemaker." They never came under my notice. Afterwards I saw it mentioned that the chapters had been printed separately, with the name of "Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A.," as the writer. Some friends of my way of thinking generally—in the exercise of that right of individual judgment which all persons of my persuasion maintain—took a very adverse view of the reality of the narrative. In the exercise of the same right I, in my turn, give my opinion upon it. As I have long maintained that it is the duty of everyone to think for himself—and when public interest or justice requires it—it is also a duty to make known his thought. If I am open to reproof, it is that I have not, on my part, done this before. But claims upon my time, which seem to increase with years, have engrossed my attention elsewhere.

It was not until near Christmas (December 16, 1893) that I first saw Mr. Price Hughes's book, *The Atheist Shoemaker*, and at the same time, and for the first time, read Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *A Lie in Five Chapters*. Dismissing, as far as I could, any prejudice that may have been put into my mind, I read *The Atheist Shoemaker* on its merits—no one would like a book of his own read—and I read Mr. Hughes's book with interest and respect. As I once saw things as Mr. Hughes saw them, I was not surprised at much which he very naturally says, in which I cannot now concur. But it is the duty of a reader, as it is of a critic, to search for excellences before he enters upon defects.

Why I read the narrative with respect was because of its singular fairness. For instance, Mr. Hughes says of "Herbert [the Atheist], he was a typical representative of the noblest type of English working men." His wife testifies that "he is so kind and good." "It was a characteristic indication of the nobility of Herbert's character that he never resented the step his wife took in publicly confessing Christ. He always argued that everybody should have full liberty to obey his own conscience and to do what he thought was best." "When the work of the day was over, he would walk, however weary, the long mile and a half from his lodging to Lincoln House and wait patiently outside until Sister Beatrice's class was over, that he might escort his wife home." "It would be difficult to find a more beautiful illustration of true magnanimity than this aggressive Atheist assisting and protecting

his wife in her weekly attendance at a Methodist class-meeting." But Herbert was one of Nature's gentlemen, and he did "instinctively what no amount of social privilege and training ever enable some men to do." On one occasion he is related as saying, "Ah, well, I don't expect ever to get better. For myself I don't mind, but I am troubled about my wife. She is very young to be left alone in the world." "Nothing was more beautiful in this man than his chivalrous and romantic love for his wife, which overflowed into a tender solicitude for the rights and happiness of her sex." Elsewhere Mr. Hughes speaks of Herbert's "eloquent tongue, inspired by a keen intellect and a tender heart." As this testimony will be read in "all parts of the world," thousands of Christians will learn on Mr. Hughes's competent authority that a man may profess the extremest tenets of heresy, and yet retain the manliest attributes of truth, courtesy, and kindness. From the days of Paine until now, if the heretic escaped outside reproach his landlady was always brought forward to testify against him. Mr. Hughes reverses all this, and tells us that "Herbert's landlady was loud in her praise of his sobriety, his quietness, his promptitude in paying his accounts, and his kindness to the poor when he had a few shillings to spare." "'Often and often,' she said, 'he has gone without a scrap of food himself to get one of his mates, who was out of work, a bit to eat.'" "She was perplexed by the fact that one whom she was compelled to regard (in a religious sense) as so wicked a man could at the same time be so good." In other places Mr. Hughes writes to the same effect.

In all this Mr. Hughes writes like a gentleman. These passages are frank and unusual admissions which would not be made save by one who cared for the truth as well as for his own belief. An Atheist is commonly described as a person with a coarse, imputative tongue, and whose life is as bad as his language.

Neither the "Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge" nor the "Religious Tract Society" ever published a conversion fair, unimputative, and discriminating as is Mr. Hughes's "Atheist Shoemaker." Had I Mr. Hughes's felicity of speech and vivid imagination, I could write the "Last Days of a Secularist Cordwainer Converted from Christianity," which, though it would lack some graces of belief Mr. Hughes would deem essential, would not seem so bad as "Last Days" go.

The striking description of what may have passed in Herbert's mind when misgiving beset him is necessarily ideal, and does not purport to be otherwise. The color is brilliant, and such as Bunyan used. But this is not inconsistent with the actuality of Herbert's existence. In Bunyan's day hundreds of persons in Bedford knew the originals of the characters in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, though none of them spoke or confessed themselves as Bunyan's Shakespearean imagination depicted them as doing. Yet Bunyan went on facts, as Mr. Hughes has done.

This is evident in the qualities he found in Herbert, which it could not occur to him to invent, and which he did not lessen or belittle when he found them. Mr. Hughes is entitled to handsome acknowledgment from those who differ from him in opinion for the utter absence from his pen of any moral imputations on one who lacked altogether the belief which Christians regard as the very foundation of right conduct. The Rev. Robert Hall counted it a form of sin in Maria Edgeworth to draw characters who were estimable in their days and to the end of their lives without the aid of Christian convictions. Even W. J. Fox, of South-place, foremost among preachers for liberality of sentiment, in one of the last works on "Religious Ideas," regarded Atheism as a form of disease of the understanding. Paley, who had many virtues, had none of Mr. Hughes's respect for the convictions of those of a contrary way of thinking. Paley held that no one had choice save to be a believer or a fool. The Rev. Dr. Campbell, editor of *The British Banner*, was very kind to me on several occasions; but he had, as a rule, a poor opinion of unorthodox persons. Of Charles Hennell, author of the *Origin of Christianity*, a gentleman of known purity and honor of character, Dr. Campbell said he was "a somewhat dangerous

neighbor," meaning that he might be expected to develop a tendency to petty larceny.

Why it is that Mr. Hughes, with more fervor of piety than most clerical adversaries of scepticism, is more discriminating and tolerant than they, I do not understand; though I have esteem for him on that ground. As respects his account of the shoemaker's atheistic and converted days, I do not doubt the substantial truth of it. As soon as he knew that I was wishful to investigate the facts, he placed at my disposal the means of doing so, and volunteered the real name of Herbert. I have seen and conversed separately with "Sister Beatrice" and "Sister Ethel," from whom Mr. Hughes derived many of his statements. I was shown the private Diary of "Sister Beatrice," giving contemporary documentary evidence of the minute accuracy of her statement. Their entire veracity seems to me unquestionable. They had not only sincerity, but that cultivated sincerity which is without exaggeration. They said Mr. Herbert had a vivid faculty of speech and a brightness of conversation which compelled interest and attention. Of that they must be good judges, for their own grace and precision of speech showed that they understood those qualities. Opportunity was given me of seeing Herbert's widow, who has since married again. She appeared an interesting person, clear, frank, and decisive in her statements. She said she had been with Mr. Herbert, her former husband, to the Hall of Science, but had never heard him speak there; in Victoria Park she had often heard him. She had been with him there six hours at a time, he speaking at intervals to groups of persons all the while. He had sometimes been met on entering the park by persons who would say, if he seemed to wish to pass them, "Come, give us a few words." She had seen him kicked on the shins by policemen, whose object was to cause resistance, that they might arrest him; and on one occasion two gentlemen gave him their names and addresses, saying if he brought an action against the police they would give evidence on his behalf. He was very earnest in his opinions, and had little meetings of persons at his house, to whom he would produce books and facts in defence of the opinions he then held. He was very ardent for what he then thought to be the truth. His wife said he disbelieved in Christianity because of the cant and, as he said, "the humbug of those who preached one thing and did another." It is clear to me that Mr. Herbert was for truth and proof, and was not only ready to offer it when asked, but made occasions to present it. He was an enthusiast, entitled to the respect of his former colleagues, since he shortened his life by zeal which exceeded his strength.

The shoemaker of Soho, of whom Mr. Hughes inquired whether he knew Herbert, gave an enthusiastic account of him, no doubt exaggerating his conspicuousness and feats of speech, as is common with hearers of a favorite speaker among partisans of all opinions, Christian as well as Secularistic. Though Herbert's real name was repeated to me (by the Sisters who ministered to him in his needs), it was not known to me. But many persons appear at Freethought lectures, taking with applause the same side in discussions, whose names I never know. It has been assumed that Herbert was a recognised lecturer at the Hall of Science and elsewhere. Mr. Hughes does not say anything of the kind. Doubt has been thrown on the testimony of the Soho shoemaker, the man of the same craft (an informant of Mr. Hughes) who said he knew Herbert, and that he and other comrades of the same opinions wanted to get up a discussion between Herbert and Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Foote thinks this "so ineffably preposterous" and absurd, that Freethought partisans should attempt to promote a debate between two lecturers on the same side. Yet this is precisely what happened to me. In 1870 my brother Austin informed me that many Freethinkers were desirous that I should meet Mr. Bradlaugh in discussion in the Hall of Science upon the question "Is the Principle of Secularism Atheistic?" Mr. Bradlaugh and the Bishop of Peterborough were then the only two persons, much known to the public, who asserted that the Secular principle was Atheistic. I always held this to be an untrue and most disastrous

opinion, calculated to create distrust of national education, and prevent the working-class from obtaining that instruction in the affairs of this life so necessary to their welfare and good citizenship. This debate took place for two nights. In a work (published by Bradbury and Evans) entitled *A Little Book about Great Britain*, by Azimat Batuk (then a writer of repute on the *Pall Mall Gazette*), an account of the discussion may be read.

John Herbert was not so reflective an Atheist as he ought to have been. He said he "hated" God. Since he could know nothing of the purpose or nature of the alleged Divine government of the universe, hatred was a feeling as foolish and presumptuous as it was revolting. Then how could he logically hate a Being whom he said did not exist? True, John Herbert was a sentimental Atheist. He gave no reason for his Atheism except his pain at witnessing the hard and hopeless lot of Labor, which a Providence of humanity should prevent or terminate. I inquired of the Sisters as to whether he gave any intellectual reasons for his unbelief. The answer was he gave none save the success of oppression and prevalence of unrelieved misery among his class. This does not prove any unreality in Mr. Hughes's story. I have known many such cases. One well-known to the public was that of my friend Thomas Cooper, for whom for forty years I had unchanging regard and visited him in his last days. His disbelief was once vehement, founded, like Herbert's, on the existence of wrong and misery; and, like Herbert's, inconsistent, and, like him, he became converted; and being always manly and honest, he came to the Hall of Science and elsewhere and told us so, and invited our attention to the arguments which had wrought the change in him. Had he not done so, had he died soon after his change of opinion, many of his Freethought friends would have found it difficult to realise the truth of his conversion, had it been told in print. Who could readily believe the story of Mrs. Besant going over from defiant Atheism to Mahatmaism had she not told it herself? Who could foresee that her apparently well-anchored, resolute understanding would one day lose itself in astral planes? Mr. Hughes' narrative is neither incredible nor uncommon. Mrs. Besant's story is incredible and without precedent, and yet is true.

In the conversion of John Herbert there was nothing inconsistent with my experience or that of others. For myself, I have no objection to persons being converted who have sufficient reason for it. I care more how people live than how they die. It is life and rarely death which makes desert. I have known persons towards the end of their days grow more convinced that the convictions acquired in the day of strength were true; and I have known others whose views have undergone change as death approached. To such I have said, "Be true to yourself if your belief has changed. In life or in death there is no salvation outside sincerity."

The strangest of all the objections I have seen to the truth of Mr. Hughes's account of Herbert's conversion is Mr. Foote's reiterated accusation that he does not give the real name of the convert. I have been in a similar case many times. Persons have communicated to me that an entire change from the orthodox opinions they had held had come over them, and asked, Could I introduce them to some new vocation where church belief was not a condition? But for their own sake, for their mothers' or their families' sake, I was besought on no account to make their names public. I have related such cases without names. Doubting Christians in the audience have at times demanded that I should give names. To this demand I never acceded, and said I could count only on credence from those who thought there was inherent probability that such cases do occur. If anyone said "he did not believe me, and I knew that what I had stated was not true" (which sometimes occurred in the crude and coarse days of controversy), I thought it a breach of self-respect to give any explanation to him. I remember, in 1853, Rev. Dr. Rutherford, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, of whom I had some knowledge and regard, invited me to breakfast one morning, when who

should join us at table but Rev. Brewin Grant, whom I would not meet in private, because he had charged me with untruthfulness. Mr. Grant put to me some questions, when I said, "I was precluded from answering him, since on the platform the previous night, as oft times before, he had said I was 'a liar,' and if he believed what he had said he could not believe what I said, and no profitable conversation could take place between us." And I spoke to him no more while the breakfast lasted. I thought it on Dr. Rutherford's part a breach of courtesy to a guest to subject me to Mr. Grant's presence, and not forewarn me. Many years elapsed—fully thirty—before I entered Dr. Rutherford's house again. Knowing how Mr. Hughes has been assailed in Mr. Foote's pamphlet, I do not wonder he has refused any details, which, indeed, if inconvenience resulted to anyone concerned, he is bound as a man of honor not to give.

In my opinion, Mr. Price Hughes, who is known to thousands, including the most eminent men of the day, as a man of good faith, is entitled to be implicitly believed on his word. I first knew him by being introduced to him at a co-operative assembly at Lady Aberdeen's. From interest in him I went to hear him at the St. James's Hall Conference and elsewhere when he preached in my neighborhood. I have visited the Mission House in Greek-street, Soho, and Katherine House in Fitzroy-square, where, without regard to denominational opinion, the human needs of poor people are accorded relief. This secular side of Christianity I had always advocated, but it was unknown, or little known, in my Christian days. How could I, who had so long maintained that human sympathy and service is the bright, unfading flower of piety, which bears the richest tint and yields the sweetest fragrance, refuse it recognition? How could I fail to respect a manifestation of human solicitude which I had, as far as I had influence, commended? Where our Secular societies have funds we offer similar aid to the helpless, without regard to their opinions, or attempt to influence them. Every year at Christmas-time, as in Leicester, the aged and the poor are entertained with good dinners and music in our Secular Hall. The inspiration of Mr. Hughes and his friends is Christianity; our inspiration is Secularism. We cannot do much because the law forbids bequests being made to us. But if from motives different from ours, others, with better opportunities, do on a larger scale what we would, why should we not regard such acts with esteem? Whether Secularism is an adequate inspiration is another question; but it has one maxim of no mean advantage—namely, that every one should think for himself, since he has to answer for himself here or hereafter—or in both spheres. Thus, if truth, after due inquiry, shall justify it, I am free to differ from colleague or friend, as I have here done, as to the veracity of Mr. Hughes's book—without risk or charge of unseemliness or reproach. Like Dr. Watts, we seek the truth

Where'er 'tis found,
On heathen or on Christian ground—

and when found acknowledge it, and, if necessary, vindicate it.

MR. FOOTE'S ANSWER.

A great deal of Mr. Holyoake's report calls for very little comment. I do not dispute his right to pay Mr. Hughes any number of handsome compliments. The report is rather overloaded with them, but I let them all stand, so as to avoid a charge of mutilation. There are some points, however, which I must notice, and I take them in the order of their occurrence.

(1) Mr. Holyoake says he does not "doubt the substantial truth" of Mr. Hughes's story, but he does not say how much he regards as "substantial." That is, he overlooks the most important feature of the case, as we shall see presently.

(2) "Herbert's" real name was given to Mr. Holyoake. I presume it was given to him in strict confidence. Why was it not given in confidence to Charles Bradlaugh nearly five years ago? He was more entitled to it than Mr. Holyoake is now, for he was the elected chief of the Secular party in England.

(3) "Herbert's" real name was not known to Mr. Holyoake. Does not this dispose of all the laudation of "Herbert" in Mr. Hughes's story? Supposing him to have been a real personage, could he have been the distinguished orator that he was represented?

(4) Mr. Holyoake complains of my thinking it "ineffably preposterous" that Secularists should think of getting up a debate between "Herbert" and Charles Bradlaugh. He says that he himself debated with Mr. Bradlaugh in 1870. True. But "Herbert" was not G. J. Holyoake. If my friend will look at my pamphlet again, he will see that the ineffable absurdity was the getting up of a debate between "Herbert" and Charles Bradlaugh "chiefly for the fun of the thing." Mr. Hughes represents a Freethinking journeyman shoemaker in Soho as saying, "Ah! it would have been a fine game if we could have made these two argue with one another." This is really too absurd for description, when we remember the position occupied at that time by Mr. Bradlaugh. That is why I called it "ineffable."

(5) "Herbert's" conversion is "nothing inconsistent" with Mr. Holyoake's experience. If this means that an Atheist may turn Christian, I agree. There is no miracle in conversion. I have myself converted many Christians. But the consideration is purely *à priori*. It is like the "possibility" of miracles. What has to be established is *the fact*.

(6) Mr. Holyoake says he has in former years given instances himself of persons who had changed from Christianity to Freethought, and he felt justified in withholding their names. But did he describe them so minutely, and give such details of time and place, that those who knew them were bound to identify them? Mr. Hughes gave everything *but* the name. He should have said less or more. London Freethinkers had a right to say, as they did, that none of their advocates tallied with the description. Does Mr. Holyoake mean that if *he* had gone so far he would have held his tongue *at that point*? When a statement is not merely suspected, but disputed, is it not usual to furnish substantiation?

(7) Mr. Holyoake says that Mr. Hughes "is entitled to be implicitly believed on his word." That settles the value of this investigation. No wonder Mr. Holyoake is easily satisfied when he begins with such a prepossession. The man never existed who was entitled to implicit belief when his allegations were contested. Certainly no Christian minister is entitled to implicit belief when writing about Freethinkers. Men as "eminent" as Mr. Hughes, and as "good," have palmed upon the world the most abominable forgeries. The zeal of God's house had eaten up all their natural honesty. Mr. Holyoake allows that a part of Mr. Hughes's account of "Herbert" is "ideal." Many persons would give it a different name.

(8) "It has been assumed," Mr. Holyoake says, "that Herbert was a recognised lecturer at the Hall of Science and elsewhere. Mr. Hughes does not say anything of the kind." I affirm that he does. He uses what the lawyers call "words to that effect." Mr. Hughes makes the Devil say to "Herbert"—"What you used to say in the Hall of Science and on Clerkenwell Green is quite true." It seemed to Mr. Hughes of "immense importance" that he should accompany "Herbert" "to the Hall of Science, and to Clerkenwell Green," where he might "with his own lips tell the story of his conversion." If this does not mean that he was a speaker at the Hall of Science, I say it would convey that impression to any ordinary reader. Why did not Mr. Hughes correct that false impression, if it be false, some years ago? "Herbert's" importance, in Mr. Hughes's story, arose from his apparently distinguished position. "Why, everybody knows Herbert," exclaims the Soho shoemaker. It was on this ground that Charles Bradlaugh asked for evidence. It was on this ground that I wrote my pamphlet. If "Herbert" was not an eminent advocate, but a mere obscurity, the whole discussion is the paltriest storm that ever raged in a dialectical teapot.

QUESTIONS FOR MR. HOLYOAKE.

Mr. Holyoake has the real name of "Herbert," and he admits he never heard of him before. All the rest of us have to go by the description. Mr. Bradlaugh read it and did not recognise "Herbert." I could not recognise "Herbert." Mr. Robert Forder, our old secretary, who knows everybody, could not recognise "Herbert." Our lecturers on Clerkenwell-green and Victoria Park could not recognise "Herbert." Not a single Freethinker, as far as I know, was able to recognise "Herbert." He is the great unknown. He was a shoemaker by trade, and about thirty years of age, or twenty-eight (Mr. Hughes says both); he was exceptionally bright and intelligent; he lectured amidst tremendous applause, if not at the Hall of Science, yet at other famous places; and he died in the spring of 1889. All this is precise enough, yet "Herbert" is beyond identification. I have said this, in other words, in my pamphlet. It is enough to stagger an impartial investigator. But it does not appear to give Mr. Holyoake a moment's apprehension. In spite of it, or in neglect of it, he is satisfied of the "substantial truth" of Mr. Hughes's story.

Mr. Holyoake will admit, I presume, that *other people* require to be satisfied. He has only *begun* the investigation. I ask him to *complete* it. And I will enumerate a few questions, which I think he should try to get answered.

(1) Was "Herbert" ever a member of the National Secular Society? Or of any of its Branches? Or of any other Freethought Society?

(2) Was he known to a single Freethinker in Islington, where he is said to have lived?

(3) Who were his "comrades" with whom he sometimes went on "a day's excursion"?

(4) Can a single Freethinker be named in the whole metropolis who was acquainted with this "well-known Atheist"?

(5) Did his name ever appear as a lecturer in the *National Reformer* or in the *Freethinker*? (During all the time when "Herbert" was lecturing in London, if he lectured at all, a Guide to the indoor and outdoor Freethought lectures appeared every week in the *N. R.*)

(6) If he lectured entirely on his own account, apart from any organisation, have the old members of our Finsbury Branch, which conducts our propaganda on Clerkenwell Green, any recollection of any Atheist free-lance who used to discourse there in rivalry of their efforts?

(7) Is "Herbert's" wife able to name one of the Freethinkers who met at his house, or one of the Freethinkers with whom she accompanied him on excursions?

(8) Can this one Freethinker be discovered, and is he known to any other Freethinker in London?

(9) Is it possible to have another Secularist (of course not myself) associated with Mr. Holyoake in the completion of this investigation, for the satisfaction of Secularists who are of a judicial turn of mind, and believe that two heads are better than one?

(10) Is there any valid objection to disclosing "Herbert's" real name in strict confidence to a second Secularist, who is not a personal friend of Mr. Hughes?

CONCLUSION.

As the case at present stands, I am bound to say that Mr. Holyoake's report does not satisfy me. It remains to be seen whether it satisfies other Secularists. I say the matter is not sifted to the bottom. The real question at issue is not approached. The "Herbert" I am after is the "Herbert" of Mr. Hughes's story. If *that* "Herbert," with all his main features intact, cannot be substantiated, it is idle for Mr. Hughes to call his friend's report a "vindication." Of course it may be difficult to make a thorough vindication *now*. But whose fault is that? No one but Mr. Hughes is responsible for all this delay. Let the vindication be a real one—satisfactory, if not complete—and I will do what I promised in my pamphlet. I will then "confess my mistake, and apologise for throwing a doubt upon his honor." *Until* then I say that Mr. Holyoake's report, instead of vindicating the truth of Mr. Hughes's story, only vindicates the "substantial" soundness of my criticism.

G. W. FOOTE.

MR. HUGHES'S VERACITY.

MR. HOLYOAKE thinks the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is entitled to be believed implicitly on his word. Well, at the meeting of the Christian Evidence Society in Exeter Hall, May, 1887, in my hearing the Rev. gentleman stated as a fact, within his own knowledge, that a lady Freethought speaker undertook at Rochdale, twenty years previously, to give three lectures on the subject, "Christ a Myth." She was, he said, met at the first lecture by a person who said he had been converted by Christ from a drunkard to a sober man, and how could this be explained if Christ was a myth? The lecturers was so nonplussed, he said, that the second and third lectures have not been delivered to the present day. I reported this at the time in the *Freethinker* of May 29, 1887. Now that the gentleman is vindicating his veracity, perhaps he will kindly inform me who the lady Freethought speaker was.

J. M. WHEELER.

THOSE ATHEISTS.

A REV. MR. MOORE, being advertised to refer to the dying testimony of a recently-converted Atheist, at his chapel in Bedmington, Bristol, last Sunday, a Freethinker turned up to hear the story. After referring to Atheists in general as fools, with the customary courtesy of the sky-pilot, and having shown his profound acquaintance with the philosophy of Freethought, by saying all Freethinkers vote the Bible "a pack of lies made up by a foreigner," his reverence proceeded to read from notes an account of his "Atheist's" conversion. He had written down the facts, he said, to prevent his making a misstatement. Careful man! He has evidently benefitted by the lessons taught to some pious concoctors.

The age of this convert was twenty-two. He had been a Sunday-school scholar and attendant at the chapel. Then he went to the "Freethinkers' hall," and called himself a Freethinker. Finally, he was dying of consumption. Pious people, burning for a conquest, forced themselves upon him, but he repulsed them. The preacher, however, did the trick. By dint of repeated attack he wore down the dying youth's opposition, and so worked upon his fears that, weakened by disease, he gave in, returned to the fold, and died a believer.

Here Mr. Moore should have left the story. But he spoilt it in the climax, foolish man. He said his convert told him he "never was more than a half-hearted Atheist—he could not have been otherwise." What a glorious victory, to drag back to his old superstition, one who had gone but half-way to mental freedom, and had not even enrolled himself a member of the N.S.S. Well, Christians have to be thankful for small mercies in these sceptical days.

The sermon was not, however, without one ray of brightness. This eleventh hour soul-saver declared, that in the streets around that chapel, there are "scores and hundreds" of young men who make a boast of their Atheism. This is good news indeed—if true.

A. GUEST.

The Labor Church is not novel enough for some enterprising spirits. We now hear of the Ideal Church. It is not said whether there will be smoking pews and communion port for the weaker brethren.

Those black-garbed celibates who affect to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and who live in "retreats," and "monasteries," after all seem to keep a sharp lookout for the main chance in this wicked world. Just lately fourteen members of the Passionist Order, living at St. Joseph's Retreat, Highgate, claimed as voters, and were placed on the Islington Parliamentary Register. There were twenty-eight of the Brethren already on, so that there are now forty-two of the kidney, all dwelling under one roof, subject to one will, and who look upon politics primarily as it affects the the papacy and their Church, ready to possibly decide an English election solely on such very questionable considerations. Forty-two votes might just as well have been placed at the disposal of their spiritual superior. It would have simplified the matter.—*Daylight*.

The young clergyman had consented at the last moment to act as substitute for the venerable man who was accustomed to go to the bridewell Sunday morning and preach to the prisoners. "My friends," said the embarrassed young man, as he rose up and faced the assembled toughs and vagrants, "it rejoices my heart to see so many of you here this morning."

BOOK CHAT.

Dr. Augustus Jessopp is about the only man of God who also has claims to be considered a man of letters. His new book, *Random Roaming*, is adorned with a portrait, and will be appreciated by all lovers of good essay literature.

The New Gospel of Interpretation, by Edward Maitland, seems a concatenation of mystification. The chapters are entitled—(1) The Vocation, (2) The Initiation, (3) The Communication, (4) The Antagonisation, (5) The Recapitulation, (6) The Exemplification, and (7) The Promulgation. What the reader is likely to end with is Anathematisation.

Williams and Norgate have published a handsome five shilling volume, Mr. M. D. Conway's *Centenary History of the South Place Society*, based on discourses which have already been noticed in our columns. The volume is adorned with eight illustrations. There is also an appendix, containing an address by W. J. Fox in 1842, an original poem by Mrs. Adams (1836), and a discourse by Mr. Conway.

Messrs. Sonnenschein and Co. this year issue a neat little book on Richard Jefferies, by Mr. H. S. Salt. Its chapters are on Jefferies as a Man, As a Naturalist, As a Poet-Naturalist, As a Thinker, and As a Writer. We hope to give it further notice.

Mr. Hugh Hastings Romilly, in his *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland*, gives an eye-opener as to the ways of the missionaries. In one island he says the pastor is the virtual king. "Having made a rule that every one should wear a coat and trousers under a heavy penalty, he proceeded to import these articles, retailing them, at a large profit, to the natives. There was a fine for making native cloth, and a fine for any one seen smoking. Of course nine natives out of ten have not got wherewith to pay, and in default of payment they have to work for the King for six months."

At Rotumah, says Mr. Romilly, "They are just recovering from a religious war, in which the Wesleyans kicked out the Roman Catholics. The missionaries so thoroughly entered into the spirit of the thing that the Wesleyans circulated a picture representing all Roman Catholics being tormented in Hell fire, while a crowd of Wesleyans, with an accurate portrait of the head missionary in the middle, dressed in his usual costume, with merely the addition of a halo, are seated in Heaven, apparently much enjoying the scene below. These are the sort of devices which some of the missionaries use in this part of the world."

In the same work is an amusing picture of a pious Fijian: "Old Ratu Osea, whom I picked up at Rewa, was a most amusing old man. He was a tremendous hand at praying, and could not bear to hear a hymn being sung in another house without starting an opposition one himself. On one occasion, going in the boat from Wai Levu to Soso, I hooked a forty-pound fish, and just as I was lifting him into the boat the line broke. Old Osea at once began to pray, saying we had two things to be thankful for—we had a fair wind and had had a good breakfast, and it was too much to expect a fine fish as well. He then prayed for all the boat's crew by name, and tried to pray for me; but my name was a little beyond him, and he compromised it by calling me Misa Potam. How he manufactured that name out of mine I know not. For a long time I thought him the most religious man I had ever met, but I heard afterwards that in a moment of mental aberration he had knocked his wife on the head with an axe, after which my confidence in him was much shaken."

Macaulay's well-known picture of the New Zealander standing on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's, may have been suggested by the reference to the ruin of St. Paul and the piers of Waterloo Bridge in Shelley's *Dedication to Peter Bell the Third*, and there can be little doubt that Shelley's reference was suggested by the passage in *Volney's Ruins*, in which he says: "Who knows but that hereafter some traveller, like myself, will sit down upon the banks of the Seine, the Thames, or the Zuyder Zee, where now, in the tumult of enjoyment, the heart and the eyes are too slow to take in the multitude of sensations,—who knows but he will sit down solitary amid silent ruins, and weep a people inurned, and their greatness changed into an empty name." That Shelley had read and profited by his reading of Volney, is also evident from his *Queen Mab*.

The Clergyman: "And why should little boys say their prayers every night?" The Good Boy: "So's the Lord can have a chance to get what they want by morning."

"Now what are the peculiar distinctions of the Quakers? For instance, how do they speak differently from you and me?" "Please, sir, they don't swear!"

ACID DROPS.

In our last week's issue we noted the death of a Free-thinker at Hanley, and the fact that the local *Sentinel* reported *in extenso* the funeral service at the graveside. This report stirred up the pious zeal of the Rev. A. Holden Byles, who preached a sermon upon it to a "crowded congregation." In the course of this shallow effort the reverend gentleman spoke of the "vile, scurrilous, uncharitable attacks upon Christian men and women that were too often found in the pages of the *Freethinker*." Perhaps this paragraph will be included in the category. It is about as "vile, scurrilous, and uncharitable" (what an anti-climax!) as our usual comments.

Mr. Byles wanted to know what Secularists meant by saying they had no *knowledge* of a future life. Did they "know" that there was this life? Did they "know" that the earth was round? All they had was a "belief." Such is the twaddle with which Mr. Byles hopes to keep people within the Christian fold! He seems to think that one "belief" is as good as another. But it isn't. A man may believe that the moon is made of green cheese, but his belief would hardly rank with the teaching of Sir Robert Ball. Mr. Byles believes in a lot of "green cheese" doctrines, otherwise he would never argue in this ridiculous fashion.

"Let the Secularists," Mr. Byles exclaimed, "bring out a book to beat the Bible." Well, in some respects it is very hard to beat. Its blue tales and childish absurdities may be allowed to take the cake. Its poetry and morality can easily be equalled, and often surpassed. Bring out a better book than the Bible! We don't need to. We have a better one already in the works of William Shakespeare.

The *Daily News*, in mentioning the late Mr. Waddington, tells a good story of a relative who said, when Dean of Durham, "They propose to desecrate my kitchen by turning it into a chapel."

Our old story of the boys definition of faith as "believing what is not true," turns out to be a true one. The Rev. T. F. Dale, of Bledhoe Vicarage, Bucks, late chaplain at Lahore, writes to the *Spectator* to say it was given him by a European boy in an Indian school. "What do you mean by Faith?" was the question. "Please, sir, when you believe anything you are quite certain is not true," was the prompt answer. "But the story on this subject I delight in," says Mr. Dale, "was that of the little boy who asked his mother what faith was, and received the not very judicious reply that faith was believing in something you could not see, but which was told you by a person whom you could trust. 'For instance,' she continued, 'if I told you there was a chair in that corner, you would have to believe it, though you could not see it.' 'Yes, mother; but should I be bound to sit in it?'" Mr. Dale thinks it would be curious to discover how many people do really think that faith is believing something that they know is not true. "More," he fancies, "than we imagine."

The Rev. C. L. Marson, of St. Mary's, Soho, writes to the *Daily Chronicle* in favor of secular education. He calls the existing compromise "unjust, absurd, and impossible." He denies that the Church is built upon the Bible, and declares that the Bible is built upon the Church. It is the business of the Church to give religious instruction, but not in the public schools. "Do stick to your guns," he says, "and insist that the School Board is not a theological academy for any side."

The anti-infidel campaign at Brighton proved a frost. The week-night meetings were poor, and the Sunday meetings in the Circus were abandoned. No doubt this was owing to the neglect of the Secularists. "Anti-Infidels" are not generally great draws as lecturers, and the public won't run after them unless the Secularists provide a fight.

The Duchess of Sutherland inveighs against the undisciplined rich and the undisciplined poor. Even in the Protestant Church there is a want of discipline, says her ladyship, and "the reason that they were so far from unity, so slow of making Atheists believe and mockers silent, was because within the fold itself there was wrangling and bitterness over the very body of Christ." True, and her ladyship

must be a sanguine person to expect any alteration at this time of day. Atheists are not likely to believe, anyhow. Even the pleading of a pretty woman can't make them see black as white.

They've been playing the same old game in Uganda. It is known as "Christian Civilisation, or Heads I Win and Tails You Lose." Captain Macdonald, on behalf of the Protestant community, invited the Mohammedans to lay down their arms, just to prevent disputes. They refused, and fighting ensued. The Protestants took a large number of prisoners, including 1,500 women and children. Four of the Protestants were killed and several wounded. On the Mohammedan side the losses were heavy, over thirty being killed, including some of their bravest leaders. The upshot is given in the following words: "The Mohammedan country has been nominally divided into three parts—the Katambola being assigned to the Mohammedans, the Kitunzi to the Protestants, and the Kisuji to the Roman Catholics." The Lord's doings in Canaan are being repeated to-day in Africa.

Last week there were two deaths in chapels, Mrs. Smith expiring in a Wesleyan chapel in Hackney-road, London, and Mr. Worsfield at Crickfield Congregational Church, near Brighton. Had such occurrences taken place in Secular halls, we should have heard a cry of "Judgment!"

The rev. editor of *Great Thoughts* inserts in his number for Jan. 20, under the head of "Voltaire and Pope," a scurrilous story of Voltaire having lampooned Pope's mother and blackmailed her with the threat of publishing it. We invite the reverend editor to state the source of the story. Mr. Collins has devoted a book to all connected with Voltaire in England, and other biographers who have gone over the whole ground reject this impudent and late fabrication. It should be beneath the dignity of a reverend Protestant editor to dish up Catholic canards in order to sully the fame of Voltaire. Will the Rev. Mr. Smith investigate and explain?

In America, as at home, the powers that be soon "noble" or seek to enlist on their side the best men. When the Rev. H. O. Pentecost left the Church he was considered a dangerous Anarchist and Atheist. He took to the law a year ago, and has already been offered a district attorneyship at a salary of 7,500 dollars a year. We wonder if he ever regrets the editorial chair of the *Twentieth Century* or recalls Browning's poem of "The Lost Leader."

St. Matthew's Church, Leeds, has lost £1 15s. 1½d. It was a collection, and was stolen by a thief who knew where to find it. The guilty party has not yet been discovered. Would it not be well to consult Mr. W. T. Stead, who gets "tips from God"?

Tit-Bits offered and gave a "Fifty Pounds Distress Prize." It was won by a clergyman. The Bishop of London was asked to certify the receipt, but he declined to do so, on the ground that he did not think it "wise or right to encourage a competition between those who have suffered misfortune." *Tit-Bits* is indignant at this, but for once we side with the Bishop.

Le Soleil, the Orleanist organ, is of course in favor of religious education. M. Yves Guyot points out, however, that "the Anarchists have up to the present all received Christian training."

The Dundee Presbytery have been discussing "The Apostles' Creed." Many of the ministers object to the statement that Christ descended into hell, and when the Rev. Mr. Grant explained it as meaning "the invisible world of punishment and reward" there was laughter. The Rev. Collin Campbell said: "The Westminster explanation of the descent into hell would, if carried logically to every article of the creed, prove that every article in its explanatory range was an article that had been forged in the defence of the Roman Catholic position. It was no use explaining the descent into hell in any other way than into purgatory or the estate of the damned. To go back to the Apostles' Creed or any other creed was returning to a state of bondage," etc. To see sky-pilots, who have solemnly swallowed the Westminster Confession, choking over the Apostles' Creed, reminds us of the young lady who was too tired to go across the road on an errand for her mother, but went out and danced for four hours at a stretch.

The Glasgow Free Presbytery has taken fresh alarm at the recommendation of a sub-committee of the Town Council that the City Hall should be let for Sunday evening concerts, and a proposal that Kelvingrove Museum should be opened on the Sabbath. A conference of the Presbytery has been held on the subject of Sabbath observance. The Rev. Mr. Smith, convener of the Synodical Committee, opened matters by stating "it was perfectly clear that if they allowed this matter simply to drift, they were losing the whole battle," and the possibility of losing their monopoly of the Sabbath seems to have set them in dismay. For what can they do to mop out the Atlantic? Said the Rev. Mr. Brunton: "The Presbytery's Committee on Sabbath Observance regularly sent a recommendation to superintendents and teachers of Sabbath-schools and conductors of Bible classes to instil scriptural views of the Sabbath in the minds of the children," but he and the Rev. Mr. Rennie concurred that "Scotland was drifting away from its old traditions in this matter." And no wonder, for Scotland is getting some other light than the feeble glim that was offered by the kirk.

The other Scotch Presbyteries have also had their jeremiad over the decline of Sabbatarianism. The Established Presbytery very modestly submitted a memorial to the Glasgow Town Council, praying that the public should be given a choice—a limited Sunday car service (say, morning and evening), or no cars at all between Saturday night and Monday morning. This was denounced by the stricter men of God as paltering with the divine commands. The blackbeetles may do their worst to stop Sunday trams, but they cannot stop Sunday traffic. If trams don't run, buses will. Nothing but the public needs will get much consideration in the long run.

What Christianity has done for the Catholic population of Ireland may be gathered from the following paragraph:—A brutal outrage has been perpetrated near Charlestown, county Mayo. A donkey which was found trespassing on some fields was seized by some ruffians, who saturated the animal's head with paraffin oil, and then set fire to it. The donkey received dreadful injuries and had to be shot.

The *Financial Reform Almanack* gives the total revenue of the Church of England as £5,753,557. We are persuaded it is a good deal more, and our reason is a very simple one. The clergy always resist an inquiry into the actual amount of the Church revenues, and the only explanation is that they know the figures which are current are far too low.

These figures are the same as given in the *Secular Almanack*, being the only ones available. To this sum, however, must be added £962,262 of the tithes owned by proprietors and colleges, bringing the property up to £6,715,819 per annum, and this takes no account of the annual value of the residences of the bishops and clergy, the rateable value of which is at lowest £548,133 per annum.

Branches of the National Secular Society cannot be too jealous of the honor and reputation of their platforms. They should remember that their negligence or blunders will necessarily bring discredit on the whole party. It is not pleasant to read in the papers "A Freethought Lecturer charged with Arson." The person in question seems to be insane, and we believe he has been previously under restraint. His real name is Stahl, but he has been lecturing in South London under the name of Alfred Johnson. Branches were cautioned about him under Mr. Bradlaugh's presidency, and more than once a broad hint has been given since to the Branch with which he was particularly associated. We know of nothing against his moral character. The act with which he is charged was one of sheer lunacy, without any kind of intelligible motive. He took a room at an hotel, and proceeded to set the furniture on fire. His conduct under arrest was that of a madman. We hope he will be dealt with leniently, and that he will recover his reason, but a man laboring under such an infirmity should not be encouraged upon Freethought platforms.

"Religion," says a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "is a very second-class affair in China. The priests of two sects often live together in the chummiest way." If priests of different sects lived together in England there would be an awful lot of inquests.

J. D. Pullett, sometime vicar of Helpston, who was called upon by his bishop to resign his living for neglect of duty, has had to apply to the Peterborough Board of Guardians for pauper relief.

James Pettitt writes to the *Castleford Gazette* that at the funeral of his child, the Rev. Mr. Blair, vicar of Allerton, who attended, was so helplessly drunk he could not stand upright, and mumbled the service in a way "nothing less than shocking." He gives as a sample of his jumble: "Be ye therefore steadfast, abounding in the corruption the Lord."

Welsh ministers are in the habit of boasting that the Lord pours fire or fervor upon them. He has been doing so with a vengeance recently. Wenvoe Chapel has been burnt down; an explosion of the heating apparatus took place at Pentre Chapel, Rhondda Valley, and a similar explosion at Pontypridd wrecked doors and windows wholesale.

Thirty-five Chicago ladies assembled recently to await the coming of their Savior. This is the way in which the matter is noted by a New York journalist: "Last Sunday was selected by their leader, the pastor of a little Swedish church, as a good day for heavenly excursioning, and that is why thirty-five of 'em expected to board the Interstellar and Golden Zion Limited Train for the Jasper City, but the train was behind time, and the heaven-seeking tourists are still waiting and wondering who has monkeyed with the timetable. They are foolish girls. In the first place, they don't know anything about heaven, whether strawberry ice-cream is cultivated there or five-o'clock chewing gums are in vogue. In the next place they are not posted on the adolescent male census of the happy land, and can't tell whether there are enough young men to go around or not, and what can heaven or any other place be to Mary if there isn't a John on the premises for her? Then and finally, she ought to understand that she has no show of getting to heaven from Chicago; *the denizens of the Windy City and the inhabitants of heaven are not on visiting terms; there is not even an extradition treaty existing between the two places.*"

According to the Vienna correspondent of the *Daily News*, a young nun escaped last week from the convent of "The Heart of Jesus" by jumping out of the window. She had long said she was unwilling to remain a nun, and would work hard for a living if she might be allowed to go. Some of the nuns went round to the newspapers to ask them not to report the case. We should like to know how many of the brides of Christ are as much compulsory slaves as were the concubines of Solomon.

Under the heading "A Terrible Judgment," the *Western Mail* gives currency to an American yarn of one John Simpkins of Pennsylvania, who was a very profane man, and when angered would vent the most fearful invocations. One day, when indulging in more sulphurous language than usual, he suddenly dried up, and, aghast! he discovered he was deaf and dumb. After a while he attended a religious revival at a Methodist church and speech returned, and he has since occupied himself in exhorting his fellows to cease from wickedness. However, his speech has again failed, and he is "almost entirely blind in addition to being deaf and dumb." The question is whether his last state is another terrible judgment for having attended a religious revival.

It is refreshing to see in such a paper as the *Christian World* a letter from "A Mother's Son" against the common clerical nonsense about the religion we learn at our "mother's knee." He puts the very pertinent query, whether women who happen to be mothers have "any peculiar light on such questions as the Trinity, Atonement, Inspiration, the origin of man, and the final destiny of the unconverted." Besides, as he points out, there are mothers of all sorts of theology. They cannot be all right, and what becomes of their special authority on religious matters?

Religion doesn't seem to have much effect on politics after all. Mr. Torr, the Liberal candidate for Horncastle, was denounced as unsound by the Liberation Society, and by Christian representatives like Hugh Price Hughes. Nevertheless, as the poll showed, the Dissenters gave a strictly party vote, and the balance of Tory and Liberal is quite unaffected.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, Jan. 21, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: 11, "What has become of the Devil?"; 3, "Sceptical Dynamite in Christian Churches"; 6.30, "The Daybreak of Humanity."

January 28, Portsmouth.

February 4, 11, 18, Hall of Science; 25, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—January 21, Leicester; 22, Rushden; 28, Hall of Science, London. February 4, Glasgow; 6, 7 and 8, Dundee; 11, Edinburgh; 18, Bradford; 25, Hall of Science, London. March 4, Hall of Science, London; 11, Liverpool; 18, Nelson.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

J. W. MEIN.—It was too late. Notices cannot be inserted that arrive on Wednesday.

G. BRADY.—Thanks for your good wishes for Mr. Foote's health. He is in fairly good form at present, but his position entails many worries.

H.—Better late than never. In one sense a subscription is always in good time.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—Glad to hear from you.

J. G. DOBSON.—Mr. Foote will write.

RAMO, having had an advance in salary, sends another subscription, and will soon join the N.S.S. This correspondent wishes the address of a newsagent in Coventry who sells this journal. Can any of our readers oblige him?

V. PAGE.—Mr. Foote will be happy to meet the Nelson friends at Manchester and arrange for an early visit to their town. He did not care to increase his engagements until his health was thoroughly restored.

MICKLEY.—Glad to hear of progress in your locality, but you don't give the name of it.

W. C.—We should like to find the pious scoundrel and let him read your letter.

F. A. BEARE wishes to see our letter to the Bishop of Winchester printed in pamphlet or leaflet form, "as it was rattling."

R. JOHNSON sends a subscription to the New Year's Gift fund "as a token of my appreciation of your great efforts to 'keep the old log a rolling.'"

J. NOWELL.—Thanks for good wishes. Mr. Foote is nearly himself again.

J. POTTER thinks the New Year's *Freethinker* the best he has ever had.

J. HENSON.—"Is the Bible the Secret of England's Greatness?" is a suggestive title. We may write under it when we have time.

G. W. B.—You appear to be a Spiritualist, but of course you must find your own designation. We have never seen any evidence of the supernatural.

J. H. SUMMERFIELD.—Received. Await statement at convenience.

D. F. GLOAK.—Pleased to hear the discussion at Dundee was so friendly and profitable, and that the Branch continues to make great progress.

J. DRUMMOND.—We sent the Bishop of Winchester a copy of our letter, but we did not send him an autograph communication, and do not mean to.

H. SEYMOUR.—We may open an "Independent Department" in the *Freethinker* before long, in which rational discussion of interesting questions might be carried on.

W. OLIVER.—Acknowledged this week. Thanks for your kind remembrance.

YIDDISH FREETHINKER.—Pleased to hear from so old a friend of the cause. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

W. P. REDFERN.—Your verses show promise, but the workmanship is faulty. Some of the lines do not scan accurately, and some of the lines want mending. "Drawn," for instance, does not rhyme with "born." We advise you to practise more, and to study a good model—say Tennyson. His thought is not often profound, but he is a thorough artist.

P. W. BALDWIN.—Your lines on the Violet contain matter, but the form is somewhat crude, and there is a lack of melody.

W. J. FORD.—Pleased to hear you secured the better room for Mr. Watts' lecture. It is a mark of progress. With respect to the publications, you should insist on being supplied at the printed price. A fair allowance is made for trade profit.

C. J. GRANT.—The "threepence" was a nasty mistake, but the newsagent knew he had only paid at the twopenny rate, and was acting unfairly in charging you as he did. See our notice headed "Special." It is a compensation, in its way, to learn that there are some Freethinkers in Torquay.

M. L. B.—Mr. Foote hopes to visit Plymouth and other southern places in April or May.

C. MCGAVIN.—You are in one of the dark places of the earth. Do what you can, but be discreet.

E. TENCOLLE (Jersey).—Mr. James Sully, in a paper on G. H. Lewes, in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, Oct. 1879, is the authority for stating that he was in part educated in Jersey. He gives no particulars.

H. F. S.—Glad you have thought it your "duty as a Freethinker" to subscribe to the New Year's Gift fund. That is how the matter should be regarded.

W. BOARD.—Strauss's work translated by George Eliot, was "The New Life of Jesus." It is not the same as his original "Life of Jesus," which was also translated into English in four vols., and is sometimes, though rarely, to be met with second-hand. The first work was more critical; the second dealt more with the mythical elements of the Gospel story.

C. LONG.—Mr. Spencer used "the unknowable," but his opponents have turned it into a personality.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Freedom—Singapore Free Press—Truthseeker—Monist—Secular Thought—Isle of Man Times—Northampton Daily Reporter—Staffordshire Sentinel—Watts's Literary Guide—Dundee Advertiser—Dundee Courier—Castleford Gazette—Ironclad Age.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC., should be written on postcards or the envelopes marked outside, and be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

IT being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

SPECIAL.

LAST week's *Freethinker*, by a stupid printer's blunder, was priced threepence. It was sold to the trade from our publishing office at the usual twopenny rate, but we learn that some newsagents had the dishonesty to charge their customers threepence. Those who paid that price were grossly imposed upon, and should demand restitution. Our readers may depend upon it that the mistake shall never occur again. We perceive that even the most mechanical part of a printer's work must be watched by the editorial eye.

This week's *Freethinker* is one of special importance, and, despite last week's unfortunate accident, we venture to ask our readers to give it the widest possible circulation amongst their friends and acquaintances, and even in some cases amongst the general public.

NEW YEAR'S GIFT TO FREETHOUGHT.

[Where not otherwise marked the subscriptions are one shilling.]

Per R. Forder: W. Harrison, E. Athersych, S. Newson 2s., W. Horrell 2s., R. Kitching, W. Pike, A. Marsh £1, E. Ayre, T. Holstead, G. Wemborn 2s., J. Denham, J. Hayes, W. R. Munton 5s., G. Thomson 2s. 6d.—J. Gordon 2s., W. H. Putz, T. J. and G. Brady 7s. 6d., Two Converted by a Christian Evidence Lecture 2s., J. Fulton 5s., J. M. Griffiths 2s., H. 10s., G. W. B., E. Calvert 1s. 6d., B. S., W. Oliver 2s. 6d., Yiddish Freethinker 2s. 6d., H. Butcher 2s. 6d., W. J. Ford, M. L. B., L. B., G. C. F., G. W. Balchin 2s., G. Balchin, R. Neilson, M. Loafer, J. H. Lee and T. B. 3s., J. B. H., N. M. X. 4s., G. Thwaites 5s., H. F. £1 1s., K. and W. C. Taylor 2s. 6d., J. Raltray 2s., R. Johnson 2s. 6d., J. Nowel 5s., W. C. Dorking 10s. 6d., J. Potter, H. G. Shepherd, M. Bywater, D. and A. M. Baker 5s., Ramo 3s., J. Guy.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Our New Year's Gift Fund is earnestly commended to the attention of our readers. A generous response on their part to our appeal will enable the propaganda of Freethought to be carried on with new vigor and effectiveness. It only requires a small contribution from each to make up a splendid total. This is particularly a case in which union is strength. We venture to put the matter *personally* to all earnest Freethinkers. Some cannot afford to give anything. We are quite aware of that. But a good many can afford to send something, and we entreat them to do it. They will never miss their donations, and every penny they send us will be devoted to the best interests of "the good old cause." We really ought to have a thousand subscribers to this fund, and we shall keep it open all through January so that they may have ample time to remit.

There was a beastly fog again in London on Sunday morning, but a very fair audience assembled at the London Hall of Science, where Mr. Foote lectured on "What is Anarchism?" Several Anarchists were present, including Miss Agnes Henry, and the lecture was followed by plenty of questions and discussion, which was fortunately good-tempered. It was worthy of note that not one of the Anarchists ventured to *defend* violence. In the evening, Mr. Foote lectured to a large audience on Mr. Le Gallienne's "Religion of a Literary Man." A collection was afterwards made for the approaching Children's Party.

Funds are still wanted for the Children's Party at the London Hall of Science. The collection at Mr. Foote's lecture on Sunday realised £2 18s. Mr. Forder or Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street, will be happy to receive further contributions. Gifts in kind will also be welcome for the party, such as sweatmeats, buns, cakes, oranges and apples. Little time is now left, and we beg our friends to be generous at once.

Mr. Touzeau Parris lectures at the Hall of Science to-day (Jan. 21), both morning and evening. We wish him good weather and good audiences. Those who go to hear him will be sure of an interesting and profitable hour.

On Tuesday evening next (Jan. 23) the Rev. C. Fleming Williams, alderman of the London County Council, lectures at the Hall of Science. Mr. Foote is to take the chair. Mr. Williams, who is a man of ability, eloquence, and reputation, has always been courteous to Freethinkers, many of whom will remember his friendly debate with Mr. Foote last year. He should therefore have a bumping audience on the occasion. His subject is a particularly interesting one, and the lecture will be followed by discussion. The admission is free to all parts of the hall.

Mr. Charles Watts had three large and enthusiastic meetings last Sunday at Nottingham. The morning audience was exceedingly good, and in the afternoon and evening every seat was occupied, and quite a hundred persons had to stand throughout the lectures. Friends were present from Beeston, Trent, Derby, and other surrounding districts. There was a great demand for the *Freethinker* and general Freethought literature. Mr. Watts writes us that he was exceedingly pleased with the warm reception given him by his many Nottingham friends.

To-day, Sunday, January 21, Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening at Leicester; and to-morrow, Monday, he will speak for the Rushden Liberal Club, upon "The House of Lords."

The West London Branch continues to make steady progress. At the half-yearly meeting, held recently, the balance-sheet was presented, which showed receipts to be £74 11s. 1½d., and expenditure £62 9s. 9d., thus leaving a balance in hand of £12 1s. 4½d. The Branch owes much of its success to its vigorous outdoor propaganda, and to the energy of Mr. Munton, who devotes a great deal of time to selling literature, the whole of the profit from which is given to the Branch.

Mr. Cohen lectures at Liverpool to-day (Jan. 21) for the first time. We hope he will have good meetings.

Friedrick Nietzsche, who is much influencing present-day German philosophy in his cynicism and anti-Christianity, reminds us of Schopenhauer. "Christianity is the Devil's metaphysics," he declares; "it has been hitherto the greatest misfortune of humanity."

The pious *régime* in Germany has led to the milder forms of Freethought assuming a somewhat religious tone. In addition to the Freethinkers there are the Free Religious Congregation, the Ethical Culturists, those of the New Religion without dogmas, and others who call themselves "Christians Only," but who hold no orthodox beliefs.

De Dageraad, of Amsterdam, continues its valuable papers on Mithraism and translates a paper on Taboos from Mr. Wheeler's *Bible Studies*.

We are glad to see that Mr. T. Fisher Unwin repudiates the statement that he is among the recent converts to Rome. Mr. Unwin declares that the statement is "untrue, uncalled for, and has no foundation."

In the *Islamic World*, Mohammed Gheira-wani gives "Twelve Reasons for Being an African Muslim." He finds in the Koran nothing contrary to reason, but cannot swallow that a woman was the mother of God, "that this woman was a Hebrew, and white, and therefore God in Christ was a white man." He commends Islam for prohibiting liquor, "which is the curse of those parts of Africa near the coast where Islam does not exist," and points out that "many of my countrymen who have embraced what they believe to be Christianity, suffer from the evils of drink and gambling, and other vices of civilisation."

Mr. A. B. Moss lectures on Thursday (Jan. 18) at the Bermondsey Radical Club, 43 Grange-road, S.E., on "The Drift of Darwinism." Admission is free and discussion invited.

The Sunderland Branch held its half-yearly meeting on Sunday. The following officers were elected:—secretary, A. W. Onley; treasurer, Mr. Lovell; librarian, Mr. Bowie. Mr. Onley is also delegate to the N.E. Federation. Mr. Weightman undertook to prepare a lecture for to-day (Jan. 21) on "A New Pilgrim's Progress from Christianity to Atheism."

The South Essex Secular Society is making progress. Last Sunday evening two lectures were delivered under its auspices. At the Gladstone Club, Harrow-green, the new hall was well filled, and Mr. Woodward's experiments in electricity highly appreciated. The sale of literature shows signs of continued improvement, Mr. Foote's *John Morley as a Freethinker*, and other publications, having a good sale. The funds of the society are now flourishing, and several new members have been lately enrolled. Mr. Maurice Russell, the chairman, is locally a popular gentleman. He was lately elected to the West Ham School Board on the secular ticket, and has already made his presence unmistakably felt.

Fritankaren has taken to illustrations. The January number has one representing the head of Freethought placed between the shears of Church and State held in the hands of the priest. It gives its Swedish readers a translation of Mr. Foote's article, "How to Treat Anarchists."

Freethought is having a boom in the Republic of Peru. There are now three Peruvian Freethought journals—*La Razon*, *El Independienta*, and *El Roseate*. The priest is fast losing his hold on South America.

Progress, edited by E. dos Santos, a member of the N.S.S. at Port of Spain, Trinidad, has reached its second volume, and has certainly improved in appearance, printing, and matter. Long may it uphold the Freethought flag in the West Indies.

We are pleased to note in Howe's *Classified Directory to the Metropolitan Charities*, that while the income of the hospitals, dispensaries, and nursing institutions is on the increase, that of the missionary societies is steadily decreasing. Last year their income was less by £700,000 than previously.

ONE WORLD AT A TIME.

MANY Christians are brought up to regard all those who reject their faith as wretches who have thereby put themselves outside the pale of all that is good, and discarded the very foundations of morality. When, however, they mix in the world; when they study its history; when they read its best literature; they discover what a petty item even the widespread Christian faith appears. They find that noble lives have been lived where it was never heard of, and that even in Christian nations some of the brightest minds reject the Christian faith. If they come into intimate contact with unbelievers, they discover they are no whit worse than their neighbors; nay, that they are among the most earnest in seeking to improve the common lot. And this is after all only what is reasonably to be expected. Morality is not dependent on the will of an arbitrary being with "right divine to govern wrong," but has its natural foundations. It is based on the relations of man in society. It implies recognition of reciprocal rights and duties. These relations remain, whatever views may be held concerning our origin and end.

The Freethinker, as much as the Christian, recognises the value of love, sympathy, and mutual helpfulness. The elements which have given vitality to the old faiths have all been human, and in discarding supernatural dogmas we by no means throw away anything that gives life its dignity and value. Take God away, the universe remains. Cease to regard Christ as divine, you still have the heroes of entire humanity. Have no special reverence for the Virgin Mother, and there is still womanhood to evoke love, tenderness, poetry, and chivalry.

The Freethinker can, and does, accept all of worth in the Bible, as in any other book. But he also knows that it contains much that is barbarous and false. Viewing its books as human products of the past, they have a new significance and value from the light they throw on past history, anthropology, and human evolution. But he knows the world has outgrown the polygamy, slavery, witchcraft, intolerance, persecution, and superstition sanctioned by the Bible, and he refuses to treat as divine that which but represents a lower phase of humanity, and objects to such a dogma being thrust on the plastic minds of innocent children.

History proclaims that those who have most concerned themselves with celestial business—priests, monks, and inquisitors—have been scourges of humanity. The ages of faith were ages of darkness. The Church has had its chance. It set itself in opposition to the happiness and welfare of this world, which it held to be doomed to speedy destruction. Its theory of endless futurity elsewhere necessarily dwarfed all mundane duties. Yet, does anyone now suppose the eternal salvation of any being was assured by the ascetic, ignorant faith and misrule which prevailed for a thousand years in Europe when the Church was supreme? No; the world is becoming secularised, and the Church with it.

It is learning that it is better to make a clock than to go in search of perpetual motion; better to dig up coal than seek to transmute iron into gold. The poorest hut gives better shelter than the finest castle in the air. So the Freethinker loses not, but gains by giving up some cherished illusion to concentrate his effort on the actual and the real. By resigning the vain hopes of alchemy, valuable effort was saved, and true science advanced. A like gain is made when human intelligence ceases to concern itself with a miraculous hereafter, but turns its attention to realising a better life here and now. Concentration on the attainable is the secret of success. The present age is literally full of important secular problems pressing for solution. Its progress is only hindered by what George Eliot called "that impiety towards the present and the visible which flies for its motives, its sanctions, and its religion to the remote, the vague, and the unknown."

This world is our home. Who is likely to make the best of it—those who regard it as such, or those who sing, "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home; Earth is a desert drear, Heaven is my home"? Here at any rate for a while we may live. Let us make the

best of it. We cannot sow and neither can we reap in the skies. This earth may be a desert drear to many of us, but it is at least improvable. If we cultivate our garden we may reasonably expect a few blossoms. The worst scourges of mankind—poverty, crime, war, slavery, oppression, and much of disease, are removable evils. Here is something definite. There is no limit to *may be's*. We may have pre-existed; we may be in purgatory now. This at least is certain, if we waste our thoughts on unverifiable speculations and our energies in seeking to serve a being who can have no need of our services, we shall be in danger of missing the plain duties nearer hand. One at a time is good fishing, and one world at a time is a very good motto to ensure right living.

J. M. WHEELER.

 SECULAR VIEWS WITH RESPECT TO
 AFTER DEATH.

[CONCLUDED.]

It is alleged that the "soul" is the "thinking principle." If this be so, wherein is man's superiority over the lower animals, so far as immortality is concerned? Herbert Spencer, Dr. W. B. Carpenter, and many other eminent writers, have contended that the reasoning powers in man differ only in degree from those in the general animal kingdom. In other words, if the above allegation be correct, the lower animals, as they possess the "thinking principle" have "souls," and will live for ever. Indeed, Bishop Butler granted this, for he assures us "that there is no true analogy in all Nature which would lead us to think that death will prove the destruction of a living creation." Moreover, we read in the Bible: "For that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity." Besides, the thinking principle, so far as we know, depends upon a material organisation for its manifestation; is it, therefore, not reasonable to conclude that when the organisation is destroyed the principle will no longer exist? When the cause is gone, the effect must cease.

Those persons who dogmatically assert that there is a future life, erroneously confound something they call a "soul" with the mind, and they then assert that the mind is a distinct entity. Now, as Dr. Wigan observes: "The mind every anatomist knows to be a set of functions of the brain, differing only in number and degree from the intellect of animals. Of the mind we know much, but of the soul we know nothing. Can the mind, then, be a thing *per se*, distinct and separate from the body? No more than the motion can exist independent of the watch; and all the arguments of theologians and metaphysicians on this subject are founded on the confusion of terms." It is said that a future life is proved by the fact that development has been always taking place in the organic kingdom. First came animals low in the scale, then of higher and higher type, and so on up to man. Why then, it is asked, may not man pass at death into a still higher condition? Now the merest tyro in logic can recognise that there is no analogy whatever in the two cases. The higher animals are not the lower in another stage, but an improvement upon them, a new individuality. The only argument that could logically be drawn from the development theory on this point is that after man beings of a still higher order might make their appearance, but then they would no more be individual men of a previous age than we are the Iguanodons of the "age of reptiles." Besides, all the changes that we know of in the organic kingdom have taken place upon the earth, whereas the condition which believers in a future life contend for is to be in some far-off land of shadows occupied by what is termed "disembodied spirits." The case of the caterpillar is frequently given as an illustration of changes from a lower to a higher state of existence. But the caterpillar becomes transformed into the butterfly before our eyes; we can see it in both conditions, and can observe the process of change going on. The butterfly is an improvement upon the caterpillar in point of organisation, but in every other respect they are both similar. Both are

material, and each is liable to destruction and decay. The spirit, however, that is supposed to be evolved from the human form at death, is said to be immaterial and immortal, and therefore totally unlike that material organisation from which it has escaped. The change is not observed. The body dies and the elements of which it was composed pass into other forms—this is all that we see and all that we know. Beyond this everything is mere conjecture and vague speculation.

As to how the belief in a future life originated, the statement of Professor Graham is a pertinent explanation. He says: "A strange and extravagant fancy that arose one day in the breast of one more aspiring than the rest, became soon afterwards a wish; the wish became a fixed idea that drew round itself vain and spurious arguments in its favor; and at length the fancy, the wish, the idea, was erected into an established doctrine of belief. Such, in sum, is the natural history of the famous dogma of a future life. Not by any means, however, was it a primitive and universal belief of all nations. Arising probably at first with the Egyptians, it was only after a long time taken up by the Jews, then, or possibly earlier, by the Greeks, with whom, however, the life held out, thin and unsubstantial even at best, was far from being desirable. It was only in the Christian and Mohammedan religions that the notion of a future and an eternal life was fully developed, and that the doctrine was erected into a central and an essential article of belief."

We now come to the third query—Is the Secular position a safe one? Our answer is, Yes; for by making the best of this life, physically, morally, and intellectually, we are pursuing the wisest course, whatever the issues in reference to a future existence may be. If there should be another life, the Secularist must share it with his opponent. Our opinions do not affect the reality in the slightest degree. If we are to sleep for ever, we shall so sleep despite the belief in immortality; and if we are to live for ever, we shall so live despite the belief that possibly death ends all. It must also be remembered that if man possesses a soul, that soul will be the better through being in a body that has been properly trained; and if there is to be a future life, that life will be the better if the higher duties of the present one have been fully and honestly performed. Secularists are, therefore, safe so far, inasmuch as they recognise it to be their first duty to cultivate a healthy body, and to endeavor to make the best, in its highest sense, of the present existence. Now, in reference to the supposition that we may be punished in case we are wrong. Our position is, that if there be a just God, before whom we are to appear to be judged, he will never punish those to whom he has not vouchsafed the faculty of seeing beyond the grave, because they honestly avowed that their mental vision was limited to this side of the tomb. Thus the Secularists feel quite safe as regards any futurity that may be worth having. If the present be the only life, then it will be all the more valuable if we give it our undivided attention. If, on the other hand, there is to be another life, then, in that case, we shall have won the right to its advantages through having been faithful to our convictions, just to our fellows, and in having striven to leave the world purer and nobler than we found it. As to the feeling of consolation, which is said to be derived from the belief in a future life, we are safe upon this point also. For if there be a life beyond the grave, we have the conviction that our Secular conduct on earth will entitle us to the realisation of its fullest pleasure. Moreover, this conviction is not marred by the belief that the majority of the human race will be condemned to a fate "which humanity cannot conceive without terror, nor contemplate without dismay."

Finally, Secularism asserts that if we are to have an immortality, it ought to be one in which we can mingle with the purest of the earth, for the anticipation of it would fill our minds with delight and would afford us the assurance that in quitting this stage of life it would only be an exchange for one purer and loftier. But pleasing as this ideal may be, consolatory as it would undoubtedly prove, it is useless to forget that our present knowledge teaches us that such hopes are only poetical, such anticipations only imaginary. We there-

fore sternly face the truth, and as some of us cannot believe in a future life, we seek to realise the worth of this one by striving to correct its many errors. And in so doing we are achieving the safest of all rewards—the consciousness that while here on earth we are working with sincerity and fidelity to secure that heaven of humanity, the comfort, happiness, and welfare of the human race.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE LESSON OF EXPERIENCE.

It's curious how strangely things turn out—
So different from what you would expect 'em—
A duke displays less manners than a lout,
And heavy swells prove clerks when home you've tracked 'em.

The man who's thought to be a millionaire,
Turns out to be a bankrupt and a forger;
The ascetic priest, abstemious and spare,
In private is a gross and greedy gorgier.

The statesman—save the mark!—whom multitudes
Look on as laboring for a nation's glory,
Betrays it, and his followers deludes
For some vile whim or passion transitory.

That pious preacher, with the upturned eyes,
Famed far and wide for goodness superhuman,
Turns out to be, by dint of fraud and lies,
The base betrayer of a helpless woman.

Then there's that Atheist Jones, whom you would think,
Must be a very devil of a fellow,
Of all iniquities a very sink,
(For so of such as he street-preachers bellow):

He ought the widow and the poor to rob,
And from their tears and sighs distil his nectars,
But as a fact he leaves that kind of job
To pious knaves and reverend directors.

In short, he's just an honest genial chap,
Who's much beloved by friend and wife and neighbors,
Who always puts his mite into the cap
Of want, and helps all good and useful labors.

Thus is it with most things we see and hear.
On all sides we must guard against delusion
If through the world in safety we would steer,
And run no risk of wreckage or confusion.

'Tis not by what he says, but what he does
That we should judge a man or else a woman:
Distrust all those who make a mighty buzz—
This is advice I'm sure you'll never rue, man.

TOUCHSTONE.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

ANNUAL MEETING, Jan 4, 1894. Present: Mrs. Fisher, Miss Vance; Messrs. G. Standing, Bonn, Ward, Dowding, Schaller, Baker, R. O. Smith, J. Anderson, and G. W. Foote.

The President (in the absence of the secretary) read the minutes of the previous meeting and made a general statement of the position of the Federation. The balance-sheet was then read and passed; and after a resolution of the Battersea Branch was ruled out of order, the meeting proceeded to the election of officers for the ensuing year. The President, vice-presidents, and Treasurer were re-elected, and on the proposition of Mrs. Fisher, seconded by Mr. Baker, Messrs. Cohen and Snell were added to the list of vice-presidents.

Mr. E. Pownceby having resigned the secretaryship, the election of his successor was postponed to the next meeting, Mr. J. Anderson being requested to act *pro tem*.

Branch secretaries are reminded that the new council will meet on the first Thursday in February, and names of delegates should be forwarded as early as possible to Mr. J. Anderson, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.

"Who was the wisest man?" asked the Sunday-school teacher. "Solomon," promptly replied a little girl. "And who was the holiest?" "Moses." "Moses! What makes you think so?" "Because I often hear papa speaking of 'Holy Moses!'"

"A fascinating profession yours," simpered a popular preacher, to a lawyer in large practice, "a very fascinating profession." "Yours is better," replied the man of law, somewhat gruffly. "Why do you say so?" asked the reverend gentleman. "The opposite party hasn't got any right of reply."

OBITUARY.

I DEEPLY regret to record the death of Mr. W. H. Haigh, stonemason (a member of the Newcastle Branch), who died from heart disease at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Jan. 6, and was buried at Jesmond Cemetery on the 9th inst. Deceased was 43 years of age, and leaves a wife and six children to mourn his loss. In him Secularism has lost an ardent and unceasing advocate of its principles. It is claimed by those who have worked with him, and knew him most intimately, that no man in his sphere of life made more converts to the cause than he. Being fully aware that his end was near, he desired to have a Secular funeral, and his wish was duly carried out by Mr. R. Mitchell reading the Secular Burial Service in a most impressive manner, amidst a large number of friends.—J. W. MEIN.

DIED at Colwell, Herefordshire, Jan. 5, Edward Self (son of Edward and Mary Self), of Sudbury, Suffolk, aged 29 years. Interred at Malvern Wells Cemetery. Deceased was a member of the Ipswich Branch of N.S.S., and of the Bradford Naturalistic and Microscopical Society.

I REGRET to have to record the somewhat sudden death of Mr. T. Loasby, which took place on Sunday morning from asthma. He was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, and previously of the *National Reformer*. He was visited shortly before his death by a so-called Christian, who desired to pray by him, but our friend assured the interloper that he did as he had lived, an unbeliever.—ALPHA.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, Touzeau Parris, "The Overthrow of the Privileged Classes" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Touzeau Parris, "Some Religious Ideals of the Past and Present" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, G. Standring, "Is Conservatism in Politics Consistent with Freethought?" Tuesday at 8.30, Rev. Fleming Williams, L.C.C., will lecture, G. W. Foote in the chair (free). Wednesday at 8.15, R. Forder, "Odds and Ends of the Bible" (free). Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing class; Friday at 8.30, athletic class. Saturday at 8.30, in the minor hall, social evening.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, A. Westcott, "A Modern Inquisition," with limelight effects (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, O. J. Hunt, "The Inquisition" (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30 (small hall), debating class, Arthur Hickmott (S.D.F. and Fabian), "The Cause of Hard Times" (free); 7.30 (large hall), Richard Russell, "The Foundations of the Faith Laid for secularists and All Men from the Beginning of the World." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 7, C. Ivatts, "Free Trade v. Protection" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, F. Haslam, "God Save the House of Lords" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30 and 3.30, J. Rowney will lecture.

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: Mrs. Frederika Macdonal, 3, "Ekoteric Profession and Esoteric Doctrine"; 7, "Mahatmas and Occult Phenomena."

Brighton—Star Athletic Club, 6 Whitecross street: 3, Mr. Read, "What is Anarchism?"; 7.30, Mr. Simpson will lecture; 8.30, social.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, sharp practice. Derby—41 Copeland-street (off Traffic-street): 7, members' meeting.

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class, Anthony Smith, "Light"; 1 to 2, music class; 2.30, concert; 6.30, debate on "Is the Bible True?"

Fairsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "Confucius and Mahomet." Saturday, Jan. 20, dramatic performance. "The Dream at Sea."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, D. G. Williamson, "Shakespeare's *Macbeth*"; 6.30, Zosimus, "Ancient Science and Art," with special lantern slides.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, readings from the *Freethinker*. Thursday at 8, improvement class.

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Hall (No. 9 Room), Northumberland-street; Tuesday at 8, business meeting.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, Mr. Monroe, "Woman and her God."

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall, Cox-lane; 7, members' meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: C. Cohen, 11, "Evolution v. Special Creation"; 3, "Christianity and Morality"; 7, "Is there a God?"

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: G. W. Foote, 11, "What has Become of the Devil?"; 3, "Sceptical Dynamite in Christian Churches"; 6.30, "The Daybreak of Humanity."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, W. R. Stansell, "Moral Precepts Before Christianity."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, chess club; 7, B. Feinstein, "The Struggle for Social and Political Freedom."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 3, members' annual meeting; 7, W. A. Lill, "Ideal Commonwealths. Ancient and Modern." Wednesday at 8, literary and debating class, G. Weston, "Astronomy."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 6.30, ethical class; 7.30, business meeting.

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, R. Weightman, "A New Pilgrim's Progress; or From Christianity to Atheism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Jan. 21, Liverpool; 28, South Shields. Feb. 4, South Shields; 11, Sheffield; 18, Manchester; 22, Hammersmith.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Jan. 21, Chatham; 28, Nottingham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Jan. 21, North Camberwell Progressive Club. Feb. 18, Bolton.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Jan. 21, Hall of Science; 28, Swansea. Feb. 4, Camberwell; 8, Hammersmith.

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This is answered by saying "that nothing was said by the most virulent enemies against the personal honesty of the Evangelists." How is this known? If Christ performed the miracles recorded in the New Testament, why would the Jews put to death a man able to raise their dead? Why should they attempt to kill the Master of Death? How did it happen that a man who had done so many miracles was so obscure, so unknown, that one of his disciples had to be bribed to point him out? Is it not strange that the ones he had cured were not his disciples? Can we believe, upon the testimony of those about whose character we know nothing, that Lazarus was raised from the dead? What became of Lazarus? We never hear of him again. It seems to me that he would have been an object of great interest. People would have said: "He is the man who was once dead." Thousands would have inquired of him about the other world; would have asked him where he was when he received the information that he was wanted on the earth. His experience would have been vastly more interesting than everything else in the New Testament. A returned traveller from the shores of Eternity—one who had walked twice through the valley of the shadow—would have been the most interesting of human beings. When he came to die again, people would have said: "He is not afraid; he has had experience; he knows what death is." But, strangely enough, this Lazarus fades into obscurity with "the wise men of the East," and with the dead who came out of their graves on the night of the crucifixion. How is it known that it was claimed, during the life of Christ, that he had wrought a miracle? And if the claim was made, how is it known that it was not denied? Did the Jews believe that Christ was clothed with miraculous power? Would they have dared to crucify a man who had the power to clothe the dead with life? Is it not wonderful that no one at the trial of Christ said one word about the miracles he had wrought? Nothing about the sick he had healed, nor the dead he had raised?

Is it not wonderful that Josephus, the best historian the Hebrews produced, says nothing about the life or death of Christ; nothing about the massacre of the infants by Herod; not one word about the wonderful star that visited the sky at the birth of Christ; nothing about the darkness that fell upon the world for several hours in the midst of day; and failed entirely to mention that hundreds of graves were opened, and that multitudes of Jews arose from the dead, and visited the

Holy City? Is it not wonderful that no historian ever mentioned any of these prodigies? and is it not more amazing than all the rest that Christ himself concealed from Matthew, Mark, and Luke the dogma of the atonement, the necessity of belief, and the mystery of the second birth?—*Ingersoll*.

THE O. T. GOD AND THE N. T. GOD.

The God of the Old Testament rewards and punishes visibly and signally here; he terrifies often by his anger; he reforms sometimes. The God of the New Testament makes little difference here between those whom he approves and those he disapproves; so little that he is charged with injustice for it; but he lies in wait to punish the latter hereafter with unrelenting vengeance and eternal torments, when it is too late to terrify because it is too late to reform.—*Lord Bolingbroke, Works, vol. v., p. 533.*

HEAVEN AND HELL TUMBLE TOGETHER.

Some amiable and heterodox sects retain heaven and abolish hell. A kingdom in the clouds may, of course, be portioned off according to pleasure. The doctrine, however, is interesting in an intellectual point of view only, as illustrating in the naivest fashion the common fallacy of confounding our wishes with our beliefs. The argument that because evil and good are mixed wherever we can observe, therefore there is elsewhere unmix'd good, does not obey any recognised canons of induction.—*Leslie, Stephen, "Essays on Freethinking," p. 336.*

THE METHOD OF MATERIALISM.

The language of the Materialist must always be preferred by science, because (as Huxley has judiciously observed) connecting the phenomenon of life with other phenomena, it invites the thinker to make researches into the physical conditions which accompany life, contributes to the progress of positive knowledge, and tends to make us exercise over the moral world a control analogous to that which we exercise over everything which is in relation to the physical world.

Edith is at an age when the problems of kingdom-come are as interesting as those of the world that is. "Mamma," she said the other day, "what colored clothes do the angels wear?" "White, my dear, I suppose." "Well, I wonder who does all the laundry work?"

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