

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER.

Full and Complete Exposure.

The Lie Nailed Down at Last.

INTRODUCTION.

MR. HOLYOAKE has not favored us with another line on this Atheist Shoemaker story. We sent him a copy of last week's *Freethinker*, containing our criticism of his report and the series of questions which we thought he was bound to have answered, but he has not, to our knowledge, taken a single fresh step in this "investigation." Possibly he thinks he will let the matter rest where it is. This is unfair, however, both to the Freethought party and to Mr. Holyoake's own reputation as "the Father of Secularism." He must surely be well aware that his handsome testimonial to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes will be used by the Christians for a long while as a weapon against the Secular party. They will not reason upon the evidence; in fact, they have a marvellous power of blinking facts. They will even overlook the most complete refutation. They will go on declaring that Atheists all turn to Jesus at the last, and they will instance the case of that converted Atheist lecturer, who was brought to Christ by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and whose conversion is vouched for by that veteran and universally respected Secularist, Mr. George Jacob Holyoake.

I am aware that Mr. Holyoake has just buried the last of his brothers, and I tender him my sympathy in his bereavement. But a personal grief should not be a total barrier to the performance of a public duty. I should be satisfied if Mr. Holyoake had only said that my questions should be considered, and the investigation continued, as soon as he was able to face the task.

MR. HUGHES'S POSITION.

Mr. Holyoake explained that he had approached Mr. Hughes. He spoke of the Wesleyan preacher as "learning that I wished to investigate the facts." Mr. Hughes, on the other hand, explains that "it did at last occur to him" that Mr. Holyoake was the man for the job. After several handsome compliments, to which we cannot take the slightest objection, the *Methodist Times* adds—"Here, then, was the man who could investigate without prejudice and without passion."

Here is a flat contradiction, and a good deal hangs upon it. If Mr. Holyoake approached Mr. Hughes, without any suggestion or incitation, it is difficult to see why he did not also approach the President of the National Secular Society. If Mr. Hughes approached Mr. Holyoake, it is obvious that he had a special

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motive in doing so. He admits that many Christians had appealed to him to publish the name of his convert from Atheism, and though he calls them Christians "deficient in the ever-blessed sense of humor," and refers to those who were perplexed by my pamphlet as "Christians of a feeble and melancholy type," it does appear that he was goaded into taking some kind of action. But here comes a dilemma. Which is to be believed? I prefer to believe Mr. Holyoake, but Mr. Holyoake tells me that Mr. Hughes is "entitled to be believed implicitly upon his word." It is a very awkward fix. But this at least is certain. Mr. Holyoake allowed himself to be beguiled. He simply asked the concoctors of the story whether it was true; this he supposed to be an "investigation," and upon the strength of it he wrote out a splendid certificate for Mr. Hughes to carry about with him for the rest of his natural life.

BACKING OUT.

Mr. Hughes declares it was never asserted that "Herbert" was a lecturer of the Secular Society, and says that this is "a point on which there has been much misrepresentation." Very likely. But who is guilty? Who but Mr. Hughes himself? He is an adept in the art of insinuation. Throughout his story, as in his defence, he leads his readers to believe what he dares not plainly assert. He does not say, for instance, that "Herbert" ever lectured at the Hall of Science, but he uses language incapable of any other construction, as I proved by several quotations in my last week's article.

AN EXPLANATION.

Let me pause here to make an explanation. Mr. Holyoake interviewed certain "sisters," and some have supposed that they were "Herbert's" sisters. They were nothing of the kind. They were ladies belonging to the Sisterhood in connexion with the Wesleyan Mission in West London—the "Sisters," in fact, who took part with Mr. Hughes in "Herbert's" conversion.

MR. FOOTE'S APOLOGY.

Mr. Hughes does not like "Freethinkers of Mr. Foote's type"—which is natural. Still, he is ready to "make every allowance for one who has suffered as he has." "He has been very badly treated by some Christians," Mr. Hughes says, and adds that, "We wholly disapproved of his legal prosecution some

years ago"—which *may* be true, though we never heard it before. Finally, Mr. Hughes hopes that "Mr. Foote will now, for his own sake, handsomely withdraw his accusation." And coupled with this request for an apology is the expression of an "earnest" hope that "this incident" will "teach" Mr. Foote a lesson. Well, it has not *taught* Mr. Foote a new lesson, but it has *enforced* an old one; namely, that Christians are never to be believed without absolute proof, when they talk of converted Atheists. As for the "apology," it is tendered in the following complete exposure of Mr. Hughes's story.

MY INVESTIGATION.

Mr. Holyoake's investigation satisfied Mr. Hughes. My investigation will scarcely satisfy either of them. It shows that I was right in surmising that Mr. Holyoake had "walked into a snare." It also shows that my instinct was sound in declining to trust Mr. Hughes, even as the bearer of Mr. Holyoake's certificate. Of course I am very sorry to demonstrate that Mr. Holyoake has been sold. His personal character and intellectual reputation are alike precious in the eyes of all Secularists. It is painful to feel that he has allowed himself, by a want of proper caution, to help the enemy in re-establishing a discredited lie. But I must do my duty, and it must be remembered that Mr. Holyoake intervened in this matter on his own responsibility. It would be idle, however, for me to pretend to any consideration for Mr. Hughes. He chose to shout in a dangerous pass, and has brought the avalanche on his own head. I feel no pity for him. He has invited his calamity.

HOW IT HAPPENED.

Mr. Hughes states in the Preface to his story of the Atheist Shoemaker that fictitious names are used because some of the characters "shrink from publicity." If this applies to the "Sisters" it is sheer nonsense, as they are well-known agents of the West London Mission. If it applies to "Herbert's" relatives it is a sheer falsehood—as I will prove. If it applies to "Herbert's" wife it is no doubt true, for she has every reason to "shrink from publicity"—at least in relation to the story of her husband.

"Herbert" was a real personage, but he was not the personage described in Mr. Hughes's book. The young man's relatives—his father and his two brothers—all live at Northampton. They had long wished to unburden themselves with respect to "The Atheist Shoemaker," and at last they communicated with me. Of course I did not communicate with Mr. Holyoake. He had not consulted me, and I did not feel disposed to give him (as a friend of Mr. Hughes) any wind of my discovery. I first heard from "Herbert's" relatives on Saturday, January 20. On Tuesday I went to Northampton to see them, and they gave me documentary evidence of "Herbert's" having been a member of their family.

ANOTHER EXPLANATION.

It may be asked why they never communicated with Mr. Hughes. The answer is, that they tried to. "Herbert's" father went to one of Mr. Hughes's meetings at Northampton, and said he wished to speak with him on the subject. Mr. Hughes replied that he was in a hurry. He gave "Herbert's" father his card and said "Call on me." I have seen that card, and the address on it is in London. Now, "Herbert's" father is a working-man, with a very modest income, and Mr. Hughes's "call on me" (in London) shows how anxious he was to be well-informed.

"HERBERT'S" FAMILY.

"Herbert's" father is a devout Christian, though he was a political supporter of the late Charles Bradlaugh. He is a man of simple, honest manners, and I should say of strong feelings. He abominates lies, and that is his motive in supplying me with information. He is prepared to state in public, if necessary, that the major part of Mr. Hughes's book is utter falsehood. "Herbert's" brothers are also Christians. They were never anything else. There was never a Freethinker in the family. "Herbert," the dead brother, never had any Freethought leanings, to their

knowledge; on the contrary, he was opposed to Freethought ideas when they arose in conversation. The last time they saw him, in the father's house at Northampton, he knelt down and prayed in the passage. I was shown the family Bible in which the births and deaths, and other matters, were entered. I am also assured by a leading Freethinker in Northampton that he has known the father for many years—not, of course, as the senior "Herbert," but as a politician and a Christian.

"HERBERT'S" REAL NAME.

Mr. Holyoake admitted that "Herbert's" real name was disclosed to him, and that he had never heard it before in connexion with Freethought. It has been disclosed to me, and I never heard it before. I shall be surprised if *any* Freethinker ever heard of it before. I have had the National Secular Society's books examined, and "Herbert" was never a member. His real name shall now be disclosed to the world. It was CHARLES ALFRED GIBSON. That is enough. The name of this "well-known Atheist" is entirely unknown at the headquarters of the Secular party in London. Mr. Hughes held it back out of respect to no one's feelings. He held it back because he knew, or feared, that its disclosure would damn his story—and spoil a very pathetic appeal for funds for the West London Mission.

WHAT I WILL PROVE.

As I have only just obtained my evidence, which has to be well digested, I cannot possibly complete the exposure in this week's *Freethinker*. I must therefore content myself with an outline of what I will prove. I will not state, but demonstrate, that (1) the Gibsons are "Herbert's" relatives, that (2) Mr. Hughes's book is stuffed with lies, that (3) the Wesleyan "Sisters" took the word of *one person* for very many of the statements about Charles Alfred Gibson, that (4) they retailed this to Mr. Hughes (adding something themselves) as facts of their own knowledge, that (5) Mr. Hughes retailed it again (adding something himself) as facts of *his* own knowledge, that (6) one part of the story is beyond all doubt a sheer invention on the part of Mr. Hughes, (7) that the *one person* at the bottom of the lie is Charles Alfred Gibson's widow, and (8) that she is a person not entitled to be believed without corroborative evidence—which, alas! is entirely lacking.

It will take several columns, perhaps pages, of next week's *Freethinker* to complete this exposure. I wish it to be distinctly understood that I promise *proof* of all these eight positions. G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded).

SCRAPS FROM PHILOSOPHERS.

All our perceptions are dependent on our organs and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits.—*David Hume*.

The social factor is the real cause of the elevation of animal psychology into human psychology, the sensible into the ideal world, knowledge into science, emotion into sentiment, appetite into morality.—*George Henry Lewes*.

Science is the getting of knowledge from experience on the assumption of uniformity in nature, and the use of such knowledge to guide the actions of men.—*William Kingdon Clifford*.

The old maxim, "A sound mind in a sound body," becomes, in modern scientific language, "A vigorous discharge of the mental functions has, for its immediate physical basis, a healthy and well-nourished condition of the brain."—*James Sully*.

Knowledge of every kind is useful in proportion as it tends to give people right ideas, which are essential to the foundation of right practice, and to remove wrong ideas, which are no less essential foundations and fertile mothers of errors in practice.—*Thomas Henry Huxley*.

What we call laws of nature are not objective existences but subjective abstractions—formule in which the multitudinous phenomena are stripped of their variety and reduced to unity.—*G. H. Lewes*.

THE BOARD SCHOOLS.

THERE is every indication that Freethinkers must be ready for a full re-opening of the question of religious education in State schools. Churchmen and Nonconformists alike are preparing to make the London November elections subservient to their interests. Both the *Religious Review of Reviews* and *The Review of the Churches* are already filled with controversy on the subject. The Catholics are busy petitioning that a portion of the rates may be devoted to their schools, and, though the Church is at present divided in its councils, all sections urge the archbishops and bishops to close up their ranks by an authoritative pronouncement. The clerical majority of the London School Board are quite prepared, in face of the Act of 1870, to introduce theology into the Board schools, to insist that orthodox Christianity shall be taught there, and to scrutinise the theological antecedents of all the teachers, to ensure that they are of the true orthodox faith, ready to teach the children the doctrine that two and one make one, in the morning, before teaching them the multiplication table. They will pursue their old policy. Under pretence of economy, the ratepayers are to be induced to let reactionaries on the School Board, whose real object will be to cripple the Board schools to the advantage of the clericals. The Church schools are declining before Board school competition, so something must be done to maintain clerical dogmas, and the problem all the bishops and ministers are bent on is how to get hold of the ratepayers' money without admitting the ratepayers' control. This can only be done by breaking the compromise of 1870.

This compromise was not one to which Freethinkers were a party, for the sufficient reason that they had no voice representing them in the House at the time. It was a compromise, not between Christians and non-Christians, but between Churchmen and Dissenters. In speaking on the celebrated 14th clause—"No religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school"—Mr. Forster said: "It was not so much on account of the actual words of the catechisms and formularies, but because the putting of them into the hands of children appeared to be like claiming those children as belonging to a particular church."* The compromise had no basis on principle. Assert the right of the State to teach religion, and you admit its right to teach creeds, catechisms, and formulary in which its doctrines are embodied. Mr. "Athanasius" Riley sees this, and in the *Religious Review of Reviews* says: "To teach the principles of the same religion to the children of Churchmen, Dissenters, Roman Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, and Secularists, is the most preposterous humbug invented by the wit of man." Bible reading is really as sectarian as creed teaching. It is as much a violation of liberty and justice to levy a rate to employ officials to teach the Bible in State schools as to levy a rate for the teaching of the Athanasian Creed. Without explanation the Bible is but a mass of oriental legends and teachings, some of them very crude and barbarous. With explanations the children are launched on a sea of controversy upon which few indeed of the teachers have the preparatory training to enter with advantage.

Sooner or later the compromise will give way. When it was effected the leading Churchmen and leading Dissenters were nearer together than they are now. Lord Palmerston and Earl Shaftesbury made the Evangelical Low Church dominant. Since then Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury have combined to support the High Church, whose voice is now in the ascendant. The Church has been getting more sacerdotal and Romanising, while Dissent has become more rational. The acknowledged efforts of Mr. Athanasius Riley and his party are directed towards the reunion of the three great churches—the Roman, the Greek, and the Anglican, and they have no more heed of the Nonconformists than Mr. Hughes has of the Unitarians.

The Nonconformists, in making the compromise, deserted the safe ground upon which they had suc-

cessfully combatted the imposition of church-rates and Tests at Universities, the broad principle that the State has nothing to do with the teaching of religion. In the present question, the only position we hold in common with them, is that the religious opinions of teachers should be subject to no inquisition. For the rest, while we feel the oppressor's heel we cannot be sorry if they also are made to share the tyranny.

Men like Mr. Hugh Price Hughes have no principle in this matter. They build on a broken compromise, and seek to patch up a new one. They only want as much liberty as will include themselves, whoever else is excluded. Mr. Hughes, in his paper in the *Review of the Churches*, calls for a conference of religious leaders to discover their points of agreement. He would not include Unitarians or Theists, reckoning them too small a minority to be worth consideration in the final settlement. Mr. Hughes may find in this, as on other matters, that he has reckoned without his host. He is quite sure that "three-fourths of the people of this country are strongly opposed to secular education." This, if true, has nothing to do with the question, since no one has ever ventured to propose that those who desire religious education for their children shall not have it; but only that they shall not have it at the public expense. But if the people come to see that the only way to stop the incessant wrangling of the sects is to let each teach their own doctrines in their own schools, or in their own time, at their own expense, perhaps it will not be so very long before there is a majority in favor of secular education. Sensible people will soon begin to say to Dissenters and Churchmen alike, "A plague on both your houses." What Mr. Hughes wants is an agreement of clericals to stave off this, to us, devoutly to be wished for consummation.

Secularists, we shall be told, have the conscience clause. We are grateful for nothing. The clause is worse than nothing, for it means persecution. To put children apart for an hour, is to subject them to indignities. Sensitive parents rather risk their children being taught to regard themselves as deadly and dangerous heretics, than make the children the object of possible persecution, consequent upon withdrawal from religious instruction. But, even were all Secularists such Spartans of Freethought as to avail themselves of the conscience clause, to be compelled to contribute towards the religious instruction of other people's children is still as much an injustice as for the Dissenter to be compelled to pay church rates to support an establishment he does not believe in. If parents wish their children to receive religious education, there are the denominational schools, or they can be taught at home or in the Sunday-school. But school hours, in schools supported by taxpayers and ratepayers of all creeds and of no creed, should be confined to secular instruction. Secular teachers should teach secular subjects. Religious education, if desired, should be given by religious teachers. This is the common sense of the matter that has been accepted in the leading States of Europe, and among the majority of our own kinsmen in the colonies. And there, where there is the least admixture of religion, education is the most effective, as in France and Australia. An hour out of every day of a child's school life amounts to an enormous item of time abstracted from more profitable studies.

If every Freethinker will do his best to see that the principles of secular education are laid before the people, we shall have no reason to regret the stir and threatened upset of the compromise. Archdeacon Sinclair, writing in the *Religious Review of Reviews*, considers Mr. Athanasius Riley's attempt "artificial, needless, impolitic, and disastrous." I trust the Church will find it prove so. J. M. WHEELER.

* Verbatim Report of the Debate in Parliament during the Progress of the Elementary Education Bill, 1870, p. 343.

The consciousness of having reflected seriously and conclusively on important questions, whether social or spiritual, augments dignity while it does not lessen humanity. In this sense, taking thought can and does add a cubit to our stature. Opinions which we may not feel bound, or even permitted to press on other people, are not the less forces for being latent. They shape ideals, and it is ideals that inspire conduct."—John Morley, "On Compromise."

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION.

It would be difficult to select two other words which are used as extensively as "Christianity" and "Civilisation," about which there are such vague and conflicting notions as to their meaning. If we ask Christians for a definition of their faith, it will be found that the answers given are as varied as they are numerous. The reply of a Roman Catholic will differ widely from that of a Protestant, while the meaning given to Christianity by a member of the Church of England would not be the same as the one furnished by the adherents of the many dissenting sects. A decided lack of harmony would be perceptible between the definitions offered by Unitarians and Trinitarians, by Quakers and Salvationists, by Swedenborgians and Christadelphians. The expounders of what is termed the "higher criticism" present a conception of Christianity the very opposite to that taught by the school represented by Dr. Talmage and by the late C. H. Spurgeon. The same diversity as to the nature of the Christian faith obtains among nations. In Spain it has proved a cruel oppression, in Rome a priestly domination, in America a commercial commodity, in Scotland a gloomy nightmare, and in England an emotional pastime. This dissimilitude as to the character of the "new religion" appeared immediately after the alleged death of Christ. According to the New Testament, Paul preached a system of a philosophical character compared with that of Jesus. The Christianity of Paul was widely different from that of his "divine Master." The character of Christ was submissive and servile, that of Paul defiant and pugnacious. We could no more conceive Christ fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, than we could suppose Paul submitting without protest or resistance to those insults and indignities which are alleged to have been heaped upon Christ. Neither could we for one moment imagine Paul advising his disciples when anyone smote them on one cheek to offer them the other. Paul introduced by his personal character a certain amount of boldness and energy into the Christian propaganda, and by the character of his mind he largely modified the Christian system. In fact, each successive age has left its mark and impress upon Christianity. No system was ever less rigid and more plastic. It has certainly come up to the injunction of St. Paul "to be all things to all men." Persons of the most contrary dispositions and of the most opposite natures have been its great illustrators, expounders, and living representatives. It has found room for all temperaments; the ascetic and the luxurious enjoyer of life; the man of action and the man of contemplation; the monk and the king; the philanthropist and the destroyer of his race; the iconoclastic hater of all ceremonies, and the superstitious devotee. All these opposites have found refuge within the pale of Christianity. But this heterogeneous family is by no means the result of any all-embracing comprehensiveness in the system of Christ, but rather the effects of a theology characterised alike by its indefinite, incomplete, and undecisive principles.

These different and contradictory views which are entertained as to what Christianity really is, prove that its truths are not self-evident, but that they depend, for their interpretation and manifestation, upon the education and surroundings of their professors. This deprives the faith of any just claim to infallibility and to a "divine origin." For, if the reason of man has to decide its meaning, one uniform conception of what it teaches is impossible, and the criterion by which its claims are tested is a human one. The term "Secular Christianity" we regard as a misnomer, for the system has no consistent signification if the notion of what is called the supernatural is ignored. The inspiration that induced Christ to say and do what is ascribed to him in the four gospels, was considered to have emanated from above. The power that moves and regulates the whole system of Christianity is designated by its believers as supernatural. Christ did not teach from purely secular motives, but through the belief that he was doing the will of his "Father in heaven." The leading features of the teachings of the New Testament are: reliance upon a supernatural power, faith

in Christ, belief in the efficacy of prayer, and in the immortality of the soul; also that poverty is a virtue, that submission is a duty, and that love to man should be subordinate to love to God. These principles, however consoling they may be to some, must, from their nature, check the progress of civilisation. The extent of their retarding influence depends upon the degree of veneration in which they are held by their professors. With some Theists and Unitarians these theological notions are less dangerous, because such Christians are less dogmatic and less orthodox. But with a Wesleyan, a Baptist, or a member of the Salvation Army, such notions frequently lead to conduct antagonistic to general improvement. With these latter Christians, Christ is "all in all," and they are ever ready to exclaim:

No foot of land do I possess,
A stranger in the wilderness
I all their goods despise.
I trample on their whole delight,
And seek a city out of sight,
A city in the skies.

For—

Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies.

Such is the complex character of the Christian religion, which its enthusiastic devotees boast has been the cause of modern civilisation. "See," they exclaim, "how it made men free, established liberty, abolished the corruptions of Rome, liberated the human mind from heathen darkness, gave peace to the world, and introduced a new and pure religion." To put the matter mildly, all this is pure assumption and nothing more, and this we hope to show beyond all possible doubt. We shall endeavor to prove that Christianity does not contain the elements which have produced civilisation, but that modern progress is the result of agencies the very antithesis to New Testament teachings. Before doing this, however, we ask, when and where did Christianity cause the changes above mentioned? What we call civilisation means a condition of society where movements are in operation that will banish barbarism, and in its place establish culture and the right of personal freedom. Now, in what nation has Christianity accomplished this result? It is no credit to any faith to have destroyed Roman learning, and then to have plunged Europe into a state of mental darkness. Yet this is what the early Christians did, as the history of the Middle Ages amply testifies. The monuments of Christianity are huge buildings erected at the expense of the blood and muscle of unrewarded laborers. True, Christianity produced architecture, and so it did monkish lying chronicles. It incited Europe to a state of ferment, and also inspired the Crusaders to wage their unholy wars; it lighted the fires of Smithfield and Oxford, and it established the holy Inquisition and the Star Chamber, wherein human beings were tortured and cruelly put to death. The adherents of this "new religion" have spread war, strife, and desolation among nations in their attempt to subdue races who were no more savages than were the Christians themselves. This was the work of the promoters of the "new and pure religion." Christianity was erected upon the ruins of Greek and Roman philosophy, but it failed to give birth to principles that could be practically carried out in daily life. All that tends to produce a state of civilisation and to supply the needs and ensure the refinement of a people, does not date its inception from the introduction of Christianity, for that is not only minus of any scheme of education, but much of its teaching encourages want and favors despotism.

We are told that the Christian clergy were the scholars of the nation for a thousand years, although the Christian Mosheim says, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, that "The bishops in general were so illiterate, that few of that body were capable of composing the discourses which they delivered to the people." Even the clergy, who were comparatively learned, kept all their knowledge to themselves, while the general masses were steeped in ignorance and moral degradation. Christianity has established churches, but when did it give the artisan any owner-

ship in them? For centuries the Christian Church has been the persistent opponent of all literary, political, and social advancement. It did not found mechanics' institutes, free schools, or unsectarian universities. But it did close the avenues of learning against those who did not swear by its faith. Its Protestant supporters argued against giving Roman Catholics and Jews their civil rights. Henry (afterwards Lord) Brougham, once asked in the House of Commons how the bishops could condemn perjury, when they declared before God that they were moved by the Holy Ghost to accept many thousand pounds a year for preaching "Blessed be ye poor?" The fact is, money is at the root of religion, as established in England, and we see in every cathedral pile an emblem of a petrified faith. CHARLES WATTS.

(To be continued.)

THE "INSTINCT OF THE SUPERNATURAL."

IT is marvellous what nonsense educated and professional men will write upon religious and philosophical subjects. The Sydney *Morning Herald* of November 4, for example, issues a leading article upon the Chicago Congress of all Religions. I had intended to quote rather largely from that article and prepared a few notes thereupon on the voyage to Wellington; but, unfortunately, I have lost the cutting and cannot procure the paper in this city; therefore I must make a note or two on the main points in the article and let that suffice.

The writer speaks of the "fundamentals of religion" with all the innocence of a child, and seems to think they might easily be discovered, tabulated and agreed upon by the assembled delegates! He seems oblivious to the one patent fact in religious history, namely, that the various sects and bodies split and remain in bitter and lasting antagonism because they cannot decide which is the fundamental element of religion or what are its several fundamentals. No fact is so prominent as this in religious history; no fact is more universal in that history.

Who shall say what are the fundamentals of Hinduism? Probably no student will feel competent to say. What is the fundamental element in Mohammedanism? What in Paganism?

Leaving those, let us turn to the conglomeration known under the general name of Christianity—which are its fundamentals? Is God or Christ the foundation of Christianity? Is it God the three-in-one, or God the one and only one? Is it God embodied, or God in loose, undefinable vapor, gas, or spirit? Is it God a substance, or God the most abstract of abstractions?

The Papist and Protestant differ essentially *re* the fundamentals of Christianity; and the Ritualists and Evangelists not less so. And similar differences prevail among all the sects.

When Archbishop Laud went to Scotland, in the reign of Charles I., he could find no religion in that country. Scotland was just then boiling, bubbling, blazing with religious fervor; given over to fanaticism and religious practices. Upon all that Laud looked with contempt; he was a semi-popish ceremonialist, and what he regarded as the essence of true religion, the Scotch abhorred as rank superstition and popery. Yet those antagonistic parties were both earnest, fanatical Christians, and quite ready to burn as martyrs or to roast each other in defence of the fundamentals of religion.

The essence of religion lies as much, if not far more, in the bitter hatred of other creeds and practices as in fondness for one's own. This is apparent everywhere. One half of man's religion is gone completely as soon as he consents to tolerate another religion and to mix on terms of real friendship with an alien religionist. And if mankind should ever come to agreement upon the fundamentals of religion, it will be an agreement to drop it altogether as mere superstition. Sentiments and emotions, bad, good and indifferent, constitute the real essence of religion. When man is wise enough to understand that all these sentiments and emotions are purely and exclusively human, and have arisen from human circumstances, and have no connection whatsoever with anything *supernatural* or unearthly,

then religion will cease to trouble our race and the priest will cease to trade upon human credulity.

The writer of the *Morning Herald* article also refers quite innocently and confidently to the "instinct of the supernatural." I should like an hour's conversation with him in order to discover what he means or whether he means anything in particular. I suspect he never asked himself what he meant by the phrase; I feel sure he could afford no rational explanation.

If men had an instinct of the supernatural, there could be no doubt whatever that the supernatural existed—the instinct would settle it. But if men are blest or cursed with this instinct, they no more need to be missionised, preached at, bribed or intimidated to induce them to be religious than ducks require such treatment to get them into the water. Priests, Bibles, and religious books and missionaries would certainly never have been known, if religion had been instinctive.

As for the supernatural, the word is without meaning. Man has an instinctive fear or dread of certain things in Nature: storms, floods, fires, earthquakes, lightning, fevers, plagues, wild beasts, venomous reptiles and insects, etc. He has also an equal or greater dread of dream-beings, ghosts, shades, etc. But dreamland and its denizens are no more supernatural than mud or stones.

Besides, how grotesque it is to speak of a natural instinct for the supernatural! Or will the leader-writer contend that the instinct itself is supernatural? If so, let him explain how the supernatural can communicate with the natural, and how a natural being can be the subject of a supernatural instinct or feeling of any kind?

There is nothing supernatural; and we have the right to say that, until our opponents give demonstration of something beyond or above Nature, or that is non-natural. Those who preach the supernatural must be pressed to explain what they mean. I deny their right to use the expression; and they can establish their right by nothing short of proving the supernatural to exist.

Why, when they think they have found the supernatural they will probably begin to expound its *nature!* And I would ask, first, Can there be a thing which has no nature? and secondly, Does not its *nature* prove it to be part and parcel of Nature? Let the reader work out that to its logical issue, and he will never again speak of the supernatural—which is a name and nothing more, the name of a blunder.

Let me say in conclusion that I am glad the Chicago Congress was held, for when the various religions can meet in peace, it is proof positive that its victims are getting sobered and becoming rational. In other words, it is a proof that they have ceased to be believers and become rational investigators. When a man can patiently study the religion of his rival he has ceased to be religious and become a philosopher. The spell of his superstition is snapt, and he is now free to roam amidst other gods and alien saints without any dread of being damned for so doing. While a man is devoutly and solemnly pious, he is a bond-slave to his own superstition; and to show any tolerance to another creed would be to prove false to his own.

The more Congresses the better. Religion must die; and nothing will kill it so rapidly as mutual discussion between its professors. Let the gods meet and openly face each other, and they must die. No god is safe in the open; to preserve them, you must keep them closely veiled and boxed-up under the lock and key of mystery. Let them face the daylight, and they must soon reach the auction room, and then retire to their last temples, the museums, where for ages they will tell what fools both we and our fathers were when we "worshipped we knew not what."

—*Liberator.*

JOS. SYMES.

THE DEISTS.—The Deists retrench from religions what annoys them, but they will on no account purge out the principal, the eternal, source of superstitions, of spoliations, and of tyrannies. They want no worship, no mysteries, and no revelation. But do not touch their God. They will accuse you of parricide. So superstitions, usurpations, pauperism, pullulate and thrive like tapeworms. And these people pretend to govern.—*Proudhon.*

RELIGION IN RUSSIA.

C. B. LANIN, who may be fitly denominated the Russian scourge, gives numberless instances of the power of gross superstition in his *Russian Characteristics* (Chapman and Hall; 1892), from which we extract the following:—"The peasants of Tshoodnova and several neighboring hamlets and villages were expecting, for several months, with fear and trembling, the visit of a terrible plague; and their apprehensions were based on the threat of the highest possible authority in such matters—the Creator of heaven and earth, who himself foretold it to them. And it came about in this way. In the village of Bezeemovlea, a peasant noticed one day in the forest a hut which had never stood there before. He communicated his discovery to a rich squire of the district, and they set out together to examine the hut, which was quite empty. The peasant, for a consideration of fifty roubles, consented to pass the night in the hovel, to see whether anyone would enter; and, the better to carry on his observations, hid himself under the stove. At twelve o'clock sharp three persons came in, God, Jesus Christ, and Sunday.* The last-mentioned personage complained that in Russia Sunday was never kept holy, quite as much work being performed on that day as on the other six; whereupon Jesus Christ suggested that a murrain be sent to destroy the cattle. God, however, objected that not all the peasants would be reached by a cattle plague, seeing that some possessed numerous herds while others had none at all. He proposed, in consequence, that a plague be let loose against the people; and the humane proposition was unanimously agreed to. The council over, God said to the peasant: 'Crawl from under the stove, and say what thou art up to there!' And the peasant crawled forth and related why it was that he had come hither. Thereupon God gave him fifty roubles in gold; but his wrists grew into, and became one mass with, the gold."—(*Odessa News*, Sept. 16, 1887).

This is not a satire on religion, but a plain statement of what are believed to be facts, translated literally from the report published in the Russian press. Hundreds, nay thousands, of men and women, discerning nothing in all this contrary to their religion, honestly believed it, as they believed in their own existence; and they would certainly seem, from their own account, to have had equally convincing grounds. "Many of the inhabitants saw with their own eyes the peasant with the gold grown into his wrists."—*The Week*, July 1891.

THE NEW CRITICISM.

THE Very Young Men's Christian Association held its first meeting last night of the debating class, and feel sure the full discussion of the difficult parts of the Holy Book will make the Christian faith clearer to inquiring minds. The subject on the paper last evening was, "Did Joseph Keep a Carpenter's Shop?" and proved most interesting. The affirmative was taken by that rising young member, Crookshanks, who, I think, pulverised the puerile arguments of the member who took the negative, his great objection being that the boy Christ, wearing an incandescent nimbus amongst shavings would have been impossible, and also that Joseph could not have avoided utilising the brilliant fiery halo to heat his glue-pot, to the danger of scalding the youthful god, and perhaps producing permanent baldness.

The affirmative member pointed out that the nimbus was only given to our childish deity by artists who painted the holy domesticity of the household of Christ. Still the opposing member contended it was difficult to imagine a god, young or old, using a jack-plane or rip-saw. The meeting, after some very fine speeches on this grand subject, broke up about 8 so that the members' might not be out late.

Next week the subject for debate will be "What objurgation did Joseph use when the hammer hit his thumb?" This will be very interesting from a philological point of view, as the familiar exclamation "O Christ" could not then have been evolved.—F. A.

"I believe the Rev. Longbref's sermon on Charity this morning was most exhaustive?" Aunty: "Yes, it was; I feel I haven't been to sleep for a week."

* Sunday, Monday, and Friday, are persons as well as days in Russia. They are a cross between angels and gods.

ACID DROPS.

Mrs. Besant is in India, preaching Theosophy, and being entertained by princes and saluted by sacred elephants. If she were not of the wrong sex, she might almost set up as a new avatar. Meanwhile, at home, Mr. Robert Buchanan uses Theosophy rather roughly in his new play "The Charlatan," the hero of which plays nasty "occult" tricks, and is in league with a Madame Obnoskin, a thorough-paced adventuress, who discourses on "the effulgence of spirit life" and has matrimonial designs on a widower earl.

Mrs. Besant has given out that in India she desires to be known, not by the name she took at marriage, but as Annie Bai, which is equivalent to Sister Annie.

Soldiers are very frequently superstitious. Napoleon himself was tainted with the malady. We are not surprised, therefore, that a smaller personage like Lord Wolesley declines to join the Thirteen Club, and says of his superstitious, "I hug them with the warmest affection." He believes in ghosts and amulets, and in many more absurdities. But the absurdest thing of all is that he believes it is such nonsense which links him with "a glorious and artistic and picturesque past."

Destructive earthquakes have occurred in Mongolia. Hundreds of the nomads, with their flocks, herds, and horses, have been swallowed up. "He doeth all things well." "His tender mercies are over all his works."

William Grinyer, a young gardener, who committed suicide at Broadwater, entertained some very curious commercial ideas. In a letter which he left behind him in the world of which he was tired, he said, "I owe lots of money about, but I have asked God to pay my debts, which I know he will, but indirectly." To borrow the title of a fine old drama, this is certainly a new way to pay old debts. A good many people would find life easier if the Lord would pay their bills for them. We should like to hear whether William Grinyer's creditors have received a call from the Lord's financial agent.

Interviewed on the Higher Criticism at Sunderland, Dr. Parker remarked: "Tom Paine was a higher critic one hundred years ago. In the *Age of Reason*, in the second part of that book, he lays down the very doctrine and criticisms which are to-day set forth as results of the Higher Criticism. The higher critics have not advanced one step upon Tom Paine as to substance of criticism upon the Bible. What was once infidelity outside the church is now the Higher Criticism inside the church." Dr. Parker may fancy this is a disparagement of the Higher Criticism, but it is only a disparagement of the churches, which, persecuting Paine a century ago, are now being forced to accept his conclusions.

There has been a lively correspondence between the Bishop of Winchester and the Rev. L. Young, vicar of St. John's, Portsea. The bishop admonished Mr. Young that taking communion at a Presbyterian church was an infraction of the Church law. The vicar replied that the bishop was prompt to interfere with his Christian liberty, while himself patronising promoters of Masses, which, "in common with myself, you have sworn to be 'blasphemous fables and dangerous deceit'." Mr. Young went to the meeting he was admonished not to attend, and read his correspondence with his bishop.

What idea the Japanese delegates derived from the Parliament of Religions may be surmised from their published report upon their return that "the Parliament was called because the Western nations have come to realise the weakness and folly of Christianity." How sadly the Christian promoters must be deceived in their expectations. From personal observation, the Buddhist bishops came to the conclusion that Christianity in Chicago was merely a fashion and not a faith. They say, "Christianity is merely an adornment of society in America. It is deeply believed in by very few."

The Rev. Darlow Serjeant advertises in the *Daily Telegraph* as under: "Persons in Spiritual Difficulty and Trouble may see by appointment, in camera and confidence, matured Christian ladies and gentlemen, at 17 Beaumont-street, Marylebone. Five minutes' walk from Baker-street Station." It is a fine idea, and we should not wonder if spiritual lavatories got set up in all parts of the metropolis by "matured Chris-

tian ladies and gentlemen" anxious, for a while, to personate the easy rôle of the Lord God Almighty.

It is not generally known that the lamented Jabez Balfour was once on the eve of becoming Liberal candidate for Northampton. Before the election of 1880 he went down to interview the local liberals with that view. Among others, he had a conversation with the Rev. F. Aveling, then a minister at Northampton, to whom he confided that though he had personally no qualms in regard to becoming associated with Mr. Bradlaugh (whose election was a foregone conclusion), he was apprehensive of the effect at Croydon, where he was sure that the Tories would make much capital out of the conjunction of "Balfour the Deacon and Bradlaugh the Atheist." The whirligig of Time has brought its revenge very swiftly. Bradlaugh's name is now honored and respected by men of all parties and all sects, and the Deacon is at last arrested for fraud.

Lobengula does not seem to have been a success as a Sunday-school scholar. The missionary who gave him his Bible lessons says that he went through the Old Testament time after time with the king, but when it came to the peaceful teachings of the New Testament Lobengula would not listen. The great Metabele king rejoiced in the victories of the Israelites, he revelled in the accounts of the chariots and horses, and the captains with their thousands and their tens of thousands, his eyes sparkled when he read of the enemy being utterly defeated and brought low, and of the numbers left slain upon the field of battle. But when the missionary tried to interest him in the New Testament the great warrior grew impatient and insisted on turning back to the sanguinary records of the Old.

In *Glimpses of Our Sussex Ancestors* there is an apt illustration of the old-time mixture of piety and worldly indulgence. The Rev. Giles Moore was the rector of Horstead Keynes (Oanes at that time), and in an entry in his diary of February, 1668, there occurs the following passage, immediately after a notification of what the rev. gentleman had expended in wines: "This evening, between nine and ten o'clock, when I had begun prayers with my family, I was so overpowered with the effects of some perry I had taken, not knowing how strong that liquor was, that I was obliged to break off abruptly. Oh, God, lay not this sin to my charge."

The British and Foreign Unitarian Society seems to us in rather a muddled state of mind with respect to religious instruction in public schools. Its memorial to the London School Board against the Trinitarian teaching, which the Management Committee is asking the Board to enforce is of course couched in a Unitarian vein. It denies that "the Bible can only be truly taught in a Trinitarian sense." And no doubt the denial is just, for the Bible can be taught in almost any sense, if you only select what suits the teacher's convenience. But what we want to ask our Unitarian friends is this—Is it right to teach children from a book which can be "truly taught" in so many different ways?

The Unitarian memorial says that Unitarians object to being called upon to "pay for the teaching of doctrines from which they conscientiously dissent." Well and good. But why do not our Unitarian friends go a step farther? They say it is an "injustice" to make them pay for what they disapprove; but is it not an equal injustice to make Secularists pay for what they disapprove?

When the Unitarians talk about "religious liberty" they really mean nothing of the kind. What they mean is an extension of the area of religious privilege. They wish to be included themselves in the little arrangement that is made at the expense of all non-Christians. Provided everything "distinctive" is eliminated, they are more than willing that Christianity should be taught in Board schools at the public expense. Surely this is a singular way of respecting "the great principle of religious liberty." But the cream of the joke is this. If everything "distinctive of any particular section or sections of the Christian Church" be eliminated, the result is pure and simple Unitarianism; and, with a most solemn air, in the name of the great principle of religious liberty, our Unitarian friends say that is what they want taught in the State and municipal schools.

The Bishop and clergy of Calcutta have presented a memorial to the Opium Commission, asking that there shall be no change in the present arrangement. They do not state if, in their opinion, financial advantage compensates for moral deterioration in those who take the drug to excess.

In the new edition of the *Clergy List*, published by Kelly and Co., the editor has, with a view of minimising Dis-establishment arguments, sought to obtain a more satisfactory return of clerical incomes than formerly. He has to acknowledge that, in very many cases of the alterations made in the present issue of the *Clergy List*, the information furnished by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners has rendered it necessary to make increases in the value of the benefices, though, of course, in the cases of a large number in rural districts very material reductions have had to be made.

The *Church Times* is highly offended that "a collection of Scottish immigrants and settlers, most of whom have probably 'come south' in search of money, work, or office," should dare to call themselves "The Presbyterian Church of England," and condemn the polity and religion of the Romanising section of "the real Church of England."

At the Society of Antiquaries were exhibited a collection of Psalters, and the owner called attention to the illuminations in three copies of Psalm xiv.—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." One made the fool a raving lunatic dancing about. The next made him Goliath, marching with his head lifted, evidently shouting defiance. The third represented the Almighty God in a vesica in the corner of the picture, while the fool is, what schoolboys call, "taking a sight" at him. As the Deity in a vesica represents a reality, though something very different from the Christian three-in-one nondescript, the fellow who said there was none must have been what the Psalmist called him.

The name of the Rev. David L. McCanally is added to the list of clerical bankrupts. He occupied the post of chaplain at Hampton Court Palace. His accounts show liabilities £2,176, assets 33s.

John Wesley Willis, of Bristol, is another saintly bankrupt, who had large dealings in religious and philanthropic matters. Several of his creditors were women from whom he had borrowed money.

The woman who accused herself of matricide at Wandsworth had, it appeared, suffered from religious mania, and previously made two attempts at suicide. Religion, like rum, is a blessed thing if taken in very small doses. At its full strength it is the worst of all intoxicants.

What hinders the approach of the Millenium and the long delayed second coming, with a shout, of Jesus Christ? Satan, so the papers report, is safe. They have him fast in a strong cage, which may or may not last for a thousand years. "Satan," as perhaps we should have mentioned at first, is the name of a black leopard newly brought over to the Zoological Gardens. Good Christians may go to Regent's Park and defy him whenever they like.

A storm raging in the Black Sea has wrecked ten sailing ships, two being lost with their entire crews. Besides these a Greek steamer is missing.

By a recent earthquake near Hong Kong, 804 houses were destroyed and 220 persons lost their lives. Our heavenly Father has so much regard for his offspring that he tumbles their houses on them whenever he takes the fit.

The champion soporific sermon for 1893 was preached on Sunday evening, Dec. 31, by the Rev. O. E. Wilkinson, of Evanston. During its delivery, Frank Wilson, a member of the congregation, fell asleep, and in spite of the tin-horn salutation to New Year's Day, and many other noises, he slept continuously for sixty hours. The case is exciting some psychological and physiological curiosity, but, up to the present moment, the preacher has not been arrested.

The *Church of England Messenger*, the ecclesiastical gazette for the diocese of Melbourne, in its number for Dec. 8, differs from the fatuous persons who would fain see in the cessation of a Freethought paper the end of Free-

thought. It says: "The *National Reformer*, with the class to whom it spoke, has done its work only too well. The working men who read it have come to take Atheism for granted, and have no care to hear it preached to them weekly. Since there is no God, let there be an end to the subject. Religion is folly—that is agreed; then what more is to be said about the matter? The disappearance of the organ of aggressive Atheism, so far from being a sign that Atheism is on the wane, is rather a sign that the Atheism of the people has got beyond the stage of argument and discussion, and has become the settled habit of the masses."

Rev. Vernon Olyphant, a Presbyterian clergyman, and a graduate of Princeton College, shot himself in his room at the residence of his father in New York. A double-barrelled rifle was the weapon used.

They have an old-fashioned little Hill Sanitarium in the Madras Presidency somewhere up in the Nilghiris. The cemetery is the least occupied spot on the plateau, and contains some curious epitaphs. A correspondent sends the following to a Madras editor, who says that "they sound to me slightly extraordinary, but my trust in the veracity of said correspondent is boundless":—

- (1) Here lies the body of one named Flo,
Whose ghost e'er wanders here below;
She never will to heaven go,
Because her wings refused to grow.
- (2) Here lie the bones of Georgie dear,
Who died from drinking canteen beer.

From Islington comes another converted Atheist story. A member of the N.S.S., who some years ago lived in Riverton, South Australia, informs the secretary of the Islington Branch of a very glaring case of "lying for the glory of God." While at the antipodes, says the member—who is now 81 years of age—he had a serious illness, and one of his friends who sat with him was a Presbyterian. Long after his recovery a leading tradesman of the town, and lay reader of the church, who shortly after became, and is now, a member of the Government of Australia, promulgated the story that this Presbyterian had been so influenced by the Atheist's arguments that he gave up his religion and embraced Atheism. Further, that the Atheist one night got out of bed, and, kneeling down, implored forgiveness of God and confessed the errors of his ways, this conduct so disgusting the Presbyterian with Atheism that he returned to Christianity.

Now this Atheist was clerk to the magistrates and registrar of the civil court; and, being well known as an Atheist, such a story was calculated to injure him. He therefore communicated with his Presbyterian friend, to know if he had originated the story. His reply is still in the Atheist's possession. It says: "I say most distinctly that I never at any time wavered in my faith or belief. I have no recollection that you ever tried to lead me astray in any way, and I might add here that I can remember often receiving good wholesome advice from you, and know that it would have been better for me if I had accepted it. . . . As for saying that you recanted, I can safely and positively deny it." The moral is that a person's religious status and his social elevation is no guarantee of his veracity.

The Rev. Mr. Kennedy, vicar of Plumpton, speaks out direct what is in him. In the *Penrith Observer* he is reported as saying: "As a rule, religious people were a bad lot. They bore the Devil's sneaking brand upon their brow. For my own part, I am always suspicious of the man who carries a Bible on his tongue. I have met hundreds of them, and where the rope was long enough, invariably found them to be crafty, canting hypocrites." Deacon Balfour, ex-M.P. for Burnley, and E. de Cobain, ex-M.P. for Belfast, are notable instances in point.

House-to-house visitation is now the great method urged to compel the lapsed masses to come in. If Freethinkers proposed anything of the sort it would be pronounced "unparalleled impudence." These busybodies should be politely told that their attentions and dogmas are not wanted.

And has it come to this? A "Christian" journal offers Mrs. Besant £1,000 for a Mahatma. To be the scoff of the hypocrites she was wont to expose "with eloquent and

unanswerable arguments! The delusion under which this gifted and most lovable woman is laboring is one of the saddest spectacles in my experience. She has sought peace, she says, after storm. But will that restless soul ever be at peace? And is it necessary or desirable? "To live," said one of the ancients, "is to fight." Who was the ideal of our younger days?—Jack the Giant Killer. And what is every stalwart Democrat but a giant killer? Buckle on and buckle up, then, for there are hordes of loathsome giants still to be slaughtered.—"Dodo" in *Reynolds's*.

A divinity student, who sedulously sat under Bishop Westcott, said he "was deriving incalculable benefit from his lucubrations, though it would be repulsive to his feelings, and, indeed, almost profane, to attempt to understand them."

Talmage has given his irrevocable decision to discontinue his pastorate at Brooklyn. The Jabbernacle, which was rebuilt for him, is heavily in debt, and this probably accounts for the gushing orator's resolve. He says his plans for the future are not yet developed. Probably he is waiting for a loud call from the Lord.

Conway Scott, in the *Vegetarian* (Jan. 20), commends "the methods by which Moses solved the problem of restoring the national health of a diseased, degraded, and miserable people." Well, here is one of the methods, given in Deut. xiv. 21—"Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it to an alien." How highly commendable, and how much must the true vegetarian rejoice in the sacrifices of rams, lambs, and doves ordained by holy Moses!

William Tallack, of the Peace Society, writes to the *Times* that Britain is guarded by Providence. He believes the British and Foreign Bible Society is worth any number of first-class line of battle ships. If Mr. Tallack is right, we ought to be able to effect a great saving in our national expenditure. The people at large, however, fancy Napoleon knew rather more of the ways of Providence when he remarked that "God was on the side of the big battalions."

A *Times* correspondent points out that the Thirteen Club do not really touch even the thirteen superstition, for believers in the ill luck of the number only believe it is unlucky when it occurs accidentally and not of set deliberation. The superstition is, after all, comparatively harmless. Just look at the Sunday superstition, or the belief in wiping out sins by blood, and consider how many honest men have been burnt and are even yet ostracised for difference of belief. There are plenty of pernicious superstitions afloat if only the Thirteen Club would tackle them.

Le Jour, a sober French paper, tells a story of the seduction of one of his girl confessors by the abbé of the village of Olivet, near Orleans. The municipal council demanded his retirement, but he was upheld in his office by the préfet.

The arrest of Deacon Jabez recalls the highly pious and philanthropic character of his career. When the "Liberator" premises in Walbrook were opened, the first resolution passed was a pious one. It was proposed by Mr. Freeman, and seconded by the Rev. Dawson Burns: "That on the occasion of taking possession this day of our new premises, the directors desire to record their own sense of thankfulness for the prosperity with which, as they believe, God has hitherto blessed their efforts in the establishment of this business."

Messrs. Glen and Hall, a new publishing firm, issue a circular calling for pecuniary support to establish a new church paper for church defence. It may be doubted if any of the church papers, with the exception of *The Guardian* and the *Church Times*, are paying properties. The financial success of *The Christian World* stimulates the Churchmen, but they dare not follow its policy of abandoning the old theology and going for the general religious public.

If we could only see, in one view, the torrents of hypocrisy and cruelty, the lies, the slaughter, the violations of every obligation of humanity, which have flowed from this source [the Christian tendency to oppose truth] along the course of the history of Christian nations, our worst imaginations of hell would pale beside the vision.—*Huxley*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, Jan. 28, Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, South-sea:—11, "Christ and Democracy"; 3, "Hamlet: its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons"; 7, "A Search for the Soul."

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Jan. 28, Hall of Science. Feb. 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.

W. D. sends 10s. for the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund, and 10s. for the Hall scheme.

W. WHITNEY.—Kindly see that your lecture notices are in by the first post on Tuesday. We are glad to hear of Mr. Watts's success at Derby, and hope the projected debate will assist the cause of freethinking there.

B. WATERHOUSE.—Your subscription is evidence of your belief that "every blessing we enjoy comes to us from Freethought." We wish all who think so would give the same substantial proof.

T. HILLMAN, newsagent, Bath, complains that our statement that newsagents who charged threepence for the *Freethinker* of January 14 were dishonest. He says that he could not possibly know that the price was not threepence as printed. "I do not get my price order list," he says, "until the following Monday (in this instance, papers of Jan. 11, on list Jan 15)." Mr. Hillman is clearly right in his own case, and in all such cases we withdraw any shadow of imputation.

THERE was a mistake in our last week's answer to W. Board. Strauss's *New Life of Jesus* is, as we said, quite a distinct work from his first *Life of Jesus*, but it was not translated by George Eliot. She translated an edition of the latter work in three vols. It was long out of print, but a new edition in two vols. was published in 1892 by Sonnenschein.

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges the following subscriptions paid on cards filled in at the annual dinner:—E. O. Furby, £2 2s.; Mrs. L. McKirdy, £1 1s.; P. J. Packham, 10s.; E. A. Forder, 5s.; Mrs. G. Rogor, 1s.; W. C. Hockey, 5s.; E. Hamilton, 2s. 6d.; Philalæthes, 2s.; C. Oarwardine, £1 1s.; Miss B. Bowden, 5s.; L. Smith, 10s.; C. B. Hyde, 5s.; G. Ward, £1; Miss Robins, 5s.; Mrs. Hancock, 5s.; W. Heaford, 5s.; A. J. Marriott, 5s.; J. West, 2s.

G. PAINTER.—We hope you will be none the worse for the action of your bigoted neighbors.

ERNEST SIMS.—We don't wonder at your not recognising "Herbert" as a lecturer in Victoria Park. The whole yarn is an absurdity.

HORACE JONES.—Certainly the incident is "not regrettable." It has enabled us to fathom the story to the very bottom. Had we not done this, we should have printed your excellent letter *in extenso*.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN.—Delighted to have the sympathy and support of a veteran like yourself. We note that after reading Mr. Holyoake's report you came to the conclusion that it had not been proved that "Herbert" was an Atheist at all.

J. G. DONSON.—The subscription is not too late. We are keeping the fund open a little longer for the "slow coaches."

A. H. HUNTER.—We believe we may, as you think, rely on "the united support of the Freethought party."

J. F. HAMPSON.—See paragraph.

E. C.—Glad to have your thanks. The exposure now seems pretty complete.

E. S.—You must form your own judgment on the facts, not take Dawson's opinions. The sociological work you mention has no sort of connection with the Secular party.

A. LEWIS.—We have succeeded in "getting the matter further investigated." The fat is in the fire.

T. FISHER.—Thanks for kind letter.

J. ELIAS.—See our paragraph.

L. N. CLIFTON, sec. Wolverhampton Branch, has removed to Parkfield-road.

J. K. SYKES.—You must always make some allowance for the bad training of the pulpit.

C. DOEG.—See this week's exposure.

J. READ.—No need for the letter now; still, thanks.

J. LONG.—We did what we were bound to do in the circumstances, and with as little harshness as possible.

G. JACOB.—Mr. Fagan denies all knowledge of anyone like "Herbert."

H. ROBERTS.—Agnostic is only a new name for Atheist. The distinction is merely verbal, and a concession to respectability.

W. JOHNSON.—See special paragraph. Thanks.

O. N. WELD.—It is all out now.

J. WILLIAMS.—As you say, Mr. Holyoake has done a grand work for the Secular cause, and nobody can regret more than we do the necessity of opposing him in this particular matter.

WALTER PAYNE.—Done as desired.

J. HUGHES.—Your compliment is too handsome.

H. E. SMITH.—Your letter is first-rate, but the matter is now beyond mere discussion. Thanks all the same.

B. LEO.—Of course it is painful to see such a grand old veteran so grossly imposed upon.

K. A. G.—Yes, Mr. Wheeler's note was very opportune.

W. H. MORRISH.—The "mystery" is cleared up now. Thanks.

R. E.—We are sure you are doing the best you can.

A. C.—The minimum subscription to the N.S.S. by members is one shilling per year, but those who can afford it are expected to give more.

T. BRIDER.—Your criticism is good, but now unnecessary.

G. CROOKSON.—You are quite right. See paragraph.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks for cuttings. Not a single letter has reached us attaching any value whatever to the "investigation."

W. J. STERN, who romits himself, says the New Year's Gift Fund should be kept open for a month "to give the lazy ones (like myself) the time to make the effort."

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear of your capital meeting at Bermondsey. So you also have found Mr. Hughes a man not to stick at trifles!

J. HUMBLE.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

R. CHAPMAN.—The Shields friends will be glad to read our exposure of the concoction.

J. BARRY.—See our note headed "Special," and call the newsgagent's attention to it.

J. WHITELOCK.—Alfred Johnson has no relationship or connection with Professor Johnson.

MICKLEY.—If you were satisfied last week, you will be more than satisfied this week. No doubt you will take more extra copies for distribution.

W. SHIPLEY.—As you say, it would never have done for Mr. Hughes to submit the case to the keen eye of Charles Bradlaugh.

J. FAGAN, who is so well known at our London open-air lecture stations, and has been connected with our party so long, besides working as a shoemaker in Soho for twenty-five years, thinks he ought to know "Herbert" if he had any genuine existence, but J. F. is unable to call anyone to mind at all answering to the description.

JOHN PROCTOR.—Your name ought, as you say, to have been printed in full in the Almanack. This first name must have been omitted by the Federation secretary.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance, sec., acknowledges:—U. T. Proserin, £1.

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.

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—Shafts—Newcastle Leader—Isle of Man Times—Morning—Crescent—Islamic World—Le Jour—Le Soleil—Birmingham Argus—Penrith Observer—Reynolds's Newspaper—Church of England Messenger—Southern Cross—Puck—Twentieth Century—Truthseeker—Light—Echo—Monist—Leeds Mercury—Watts's Literary Guide—Fritankaren—Bolton Evening News.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stoncutt-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*:—(Narrow Column) one inch, 3s.; half column, 15s.; column, £1 10s. Broad Column—one inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. 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.

WE very much regret having thrown a suspicion on some of the newsagents who charged threepence (as printed by a very stupid blunder) for the *Freethinker* of January 11. Several have written to us, saying that they did not know but this was the *real* price, as

their account from the wholesale agents is not received until some days after the paper reaches them. This fact, of course, throws a new light on the situation. We tender our sincere apology to the newsagents, who are a very useful and hard-working body of men and women. As it also appears that the wholesale agents were misled by the blunder when dispatching their parcels, we beg to extend the apology to them also.

NEW YEAR'S GIFT TO FREETHOUGHT.

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

Henry Thomas 5s., H. Kent, R. Daniel 2s. 6d., J. Downs 2s., G. Bowerman, C. C. Cattell, John Proctor £1, H. Mainwaring 5s., R. Waller 2s., W. Hopper 2s. 6d., J. D. £1, Muller 2s., Tom Beach 5s., Young Freethinker, B. Waterhouse 5s., Holloway 2s. —Per R. Forder: Volo 2s., Schafer, J. W., E. J. 2s., J. France 2s., J. Payne 1s. 6d., Mr. Baker, H. Towers, C. McGairie 2s. 6d., B. Dundas, Mr. Rao 2s., W. Balch, H. Leggett, F. Warwick, E. Cottrell, N. Were, Alpha.—W. J. Stern 5s., J. Humble 2s. 6d., J. Eccles, O. R. Featherstone 3s., L. Featherstone, Martin Weatherburn 3s., W. Cliffe 5s., Once a Baptist 2s. 6d., K. A. G. 2s., W. H. Morrish 10s., A. B. 10s., W. Barrow, R. E. (Douglas) 2s., Old Prudential Agent (York) 2s., J. Hughes £1 1s., A. Powell 3s., T. E. Green £1 1s., Redland 3s.

SUGAR PLUMS.

We are sending a copy of this week's *Freethinker* to every newspaper in Great Britain and to some in Ireland, in order to disabuse editors (and readers) who have been imposed upon by last week's *Methodist Times*. This involves a certain expenditure, and perhaps one or two of our wealthier friends would like to share it.

Mr. Foote lectures for the Portsmouth Branch to-day in the Wellington Hall, Southsea. If the police really mean to prosecute on account of the charge for admission, this will give them an excellent opportunity. Before the evening lecture Mr. Foote will "name" a child on the platform.

Mr. Foote had excellent meetings on Sunday at Manchester, the hall being crowded in the evening, and the proceedings enlivened by a good deal of discussion. Mr. Walter Payne, who presided in the morning, stated that he had written to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner on the subject of Mr. Holyoake's report, and the lady had replied that it was most unsatisfactory. With respect to her acting as a second investigator, she replied that she was very busy over her father's biography, but she would set it aside for the time if there was any general desire that she should be associated with Mr. Holyoake in the investigation.

We may add that the Manchester friends were unanimous about the value of Mr. Holyoake's report, and great surprise was expressed at his not consulting Mr. Foote.

The Bolton Branch unanimously disapproves the method of investigation set forth in Mr. Holyoake's report, and considers that an extra chapter has been added to "The Lie."

The Dundee Branch tenders Mr. Foote hearty thanks for the stand he has made over the Atheist Shoemaker story, and hopes he will long live as a champion of Freethought.

The South Shields Branch sends us a resolution, expressing its view that Mr. Holyoake's report contains nothing to make it doubt the strict accuracy of our criticism. Mr. Hughes's defence, it says, only strengthens our position, and the Branch resolves to distribute another ten shillingworth of *A Lie in Five Chapters*.

Press references to the "Atheist Shoemaker" discussion show that the matter is not without interest to the general public. The *London Daily Chronicle* does not commit itself to either side. "Mr. Holyoake," it says, "appears to accept the conversion of the unfortunate man placidly enough, in spite of the fulminations of Mr. Foote, who declares the whole story to be absurd." The *Chronicle* opines that "the public will be more interested in the spectacle of Mr. Price

Hughes going to Mr. Holyoake as referee in a matter of this kind than in the religious aspect of this singular post-mortem." Perhaps so. But is not "referee" inappropriate. A referee is generally named by both sides.

The *London Morning* devoted a leader to the subject, and concludes as follows: "Mr. Holyoake's report explains nothing. It merely states an opinion. If the point is ever to be cleared up, it must be by proper and rigorous investigation. Mr. Hughes has involved the whole case in unnecessary mystery, and he cannot surely expect Mr. Foote to 'handsomely withdraw his accusation' merely because Mr. Holyoake says that Mr. Hughes is a highly respectable man. Why does not Mr. Hughes convince Mr. Foote by giving him, even in confidence, the name of this distinguished Atheist? Mr. Holyoake's report leaves matters where they were."

The *Bolton Evening News* says that "The point at issue is not exactly whether an atheistical shoemaker was converted by some of the sisters in Mr. Hughes's congregation, but whether the convert was a leading luminary among the Secularists." This hits the nail precisely on the head. We note the view of our Bolton contemporary that "the Secularist champion" had "goaded Mr. Hughes into action."

The *Westminster Gazette* says that Mr. Foote's answer to Mr. Holyoake's report is "lively reading," but it does not express any opinion on the point at issue. It simply (and fairly) refers its readers to the sources of information which they may consult for themselves.

The *London Star* thinks Mr. Foote's question, why the name of Mr. Hughes's convert was not given to Mr. Bradlaugh, is a "pertinent" one. "The man was dead when the story was published," the *Star* says, "and Mr. Bradlaugh, as the elected chief of the Secularist party in England, had surely a better right to know it and to investigate the truth of the story than anyone else." It is also pointed out that the convert's status is of the highest importance. Mr. Holyoake, who now knows the man's real name, admits," the *Star* says, "that he never heard of him before, so it is difficult to see how he could have been at all prominent." So far from thinking Mr. Holyoake's report final, the *Star* remarks that, "Mr. Foote asks Mr. Hughes a number of pertinent questions, which he will do well to answer if he wants to have the matter thoroughly cleared up."

"Urbanus," who writes the weekly article on "The Churches" in the *London Echo*, writes as follows: "Really, I fail to see what there was for either side to fight about. There is nothing inherently improbable in a conversion of this kind. Mr. Foote would have taken firmer ground if he had said, After all, if it is true, what does it prove? There have been plenty of conversions both ways." All this is true enough, but it does not cover the whole of the ground. Mr. Foote is quite aware that conversions have taken place, and he has said so plainly. But this is no reason why falsehoods or exaggerations should go unchallenged. Many men have been thieves, yet "Urbanus" would hardly like to be called one on that account. It must also be remembered that it was Mr. Hughes who made "John Herbert's" conversion a matter of great importance by writing an eighteenpenny book about him.

The *Essex County Standard* thinks Mr. Holyoake's report—which of course it has seen in the *Methodist Times*—a marvel of judicial and unbiassed labor, which has "completely vindicated the preacher and crushed the criticisms of Mr. Foote." Our eastern contemporary is somewhat "previous." The editorial face will be rather blue at the sight of this week's *Freethinker*.

The *Inquirer* (Unitarian) says that "Mr. Holyoake completely exonerates the story from the charge of falseness." We wonder what the *Inquirer* will say after the exposure in this week's *Freethinker*.

Our readers should see from this Atheist shoemaker story, and all that has happened in connection with it, how necessary it is that the National Secular Society should be accorded the utmost possible financial support. It is only by a strong organisation, with a responsible President and other officers, that the impudence of the clericals can be kept in check. We are asking nothing for ourselves personally,

but we do beg our readers to lose no time in subscribing to the New Year's Gift Fund, every penny of which goes to the work of the movement.

On Tuesday Mr. Foote took the chair at the Hall of Science, where a large audience assembled to listen to an address by the Rev. Fleming Williams, who took as his subject "The Ratchet of Industrial Progress." He advocated the "living wage," supported by the moral sentiment, as a means of preventing a lowering of the standard of life. The address was thoughtful, well delivered, and full of earnest sympathy for the workers. Mr. Williams was "heckled" considerably at the close, and Messrs. Moss and St. John spoke in opposition. Good temper prevailed throughout, though time limited fuller discussion. Possibly the reverend gentleman may be induced to come among the infidels again.

The Huddersfield Branch of the N.S.S. have arranged for a Supper, Ball, and Entertainment in the Large Hall of the Friendly and Trades' Society on Tuesday, Jan. 30, to commence at 8 p.m. Supper 11, dancing till 2 a.m. Tickets are only 1s. 6d. each, and the proceeds go to the funds of the Society.

At Sunderland the friends are, like the Methodists, giving their experiences. Last Sunday Mr. Weightman narrated his pilgrimage from Christianity to Atheism, and this Sunday Mr. Oxley tells "How I Became an Atheist."

Mr. J. Grange, of Bradford, who is a special lecturer of the N.S.S., will lecture in the Cloth Hall, Colne, next Sunday morning, afternoon, and evening. We hope the Colne and Nelson friends will find him a good audience.

Our paragraphs on the revenues of the Established Church were copied into last Sunday's *Reynolds' Newspaper* with acknowledgment. We are always pleased that our writings should be reproduced if the source is stated. The latter condition is by no means always complied with.

The *Twentieth Century* (Jan. 11) is to us chiefly interesting for an article on its founder and former editor, ex-Rev. H. O. Pentecost, who, after being offered the New York assistant attorneyship, has not got it in consequence of the outcry against him in the press. Mr. Pentecost seems to have sold his birthright, and not got his mess of pottage. He says, now, that three years study of the law has shown him "how foolish I was to think that anything could be done for the betterment of the working people, for which every tender-hearted person hopes, except through that process of evolution which goes on daily and hourly with resistless energy."

Mr. Charles Watts had capital audiences in Leicester last Sunday; in the evening the hall was crowded in every part. The singing before and after the lecture was, we are informed, exceedingly good. This evening (Sunday, Jan. 28) Mr. Watts will lecture at the Hall of Science, London, taking for his subject "A Draft on the Bank of Credulity." During the lecture special reference will be made to the Rev. H. P. Hughes' Story of "A Converted Atheist Shoemaker."

Mr. Charles Watts's recent lecture at Derby is very favorably noticed in the local *Daily Telegraph*. It is allowed that he handled the question of a future life "with considerable ability," and that "even the strongest opponents of Secularism present were fain to admire his eloquence and courteous bearing." Opposition was offered by the Rev. James Hyde, the Swedenborgian minister, who spoke after Mr. Foote's lecture at Derby a few months ago. Mr. Hyde agreed to meet Mr. Watts in a set debate on the question of his lecture. From what we know of Mr. Hyde we should say that a debate with him will be a pleasure.

Puck, of New York, Jan. 3, has a capital series of "Pictures Without Words." The first represents a youth being taught by Liberty in a book labelled "Public School System." Beside is what looks like a kitten with a ribbon, "Roman Influence," lapping from a dish of toleration. In the succeeding pictures the kitten grows till it assumes the dimensions of a Bengal tiger, with Liberty and the child prostrate at its paws.

"Jandee," in *Daylight*, says:—"The *Secular Almanack* for 1894 is quite up to the standard of any previous issue. Mr. G. W. Foote, as President of the National Secular Society, writes on the Past, Present, and Future of the Movement. . . The Calendar is smartly brought up to date, and contains the names of hundreds of workers in the sacred cause of the emancipation of humanity from the bonds of tyranny and superstition."

Of *John Morley as a Freethinker*, *Daylight* says:—"Mr. Morley is a leading member of Mr. Gladstone's Government, and all publications regarding him are eagerly consumed by the people, though few, relatively speaking, have read Mr. Morley's works in the originals. . . Mr. Foote has performed his task very conscientiously, his quotations are numerous and attractive, and his pamphlet is worth more than reading."

The Buddhist cult has many votaries in Paris, thanks mainly to M. Leon de Rosny, Professor at the School of Oriental Languages, who has ever kept its claims to the front. Great interest is taken in the Japanese Buddhist priest, Hoxion-Joki, who attended the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and is now at work in the Musée Guimet at Paris.

Mr. William Watson, who is perhaps the best of our young poets, contributed to the *Daily Chronicle* a fine sonnet to Aubrey de Vere, the Catholic poet. Two of the lines show that Mr. Watson is not a Christian.

Not mine your mystic creed; not mine, in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel.

THE SILENCE AND THE PEACE OF NOTHINGNESS.

[To the memory of a little child, P..... S....., who ceased to be
January 13, 1894.]

Thou hast gone, little soul, to thy rest,
Thou art done with the struggle and strife,
The care and the worry and battle,
The stress and the strain of life,

Peace, sweet peace, thou hast won, dear;
Not a life of idle bliss,
Where a round of dull and dead pleasure
Would pall even more than this.

But the stillness and silence and calm,
The freedom from pain and sore—
This, thou hast purchased through Death, dear,
Because thou thyself art no more.

FREDERICK RYAN.

A MILITANT BISHOP.

Only the other day we heard that a Bishop Hills, not long ago entrusted by the Church Missionary Society and the Archbishop of Canterbury with the care of all converted souls among the negroes of West Africa, died of yellow fever, and his wife with him. The C.M.S. has lost no time in selecting a successor, who, if he consents, will as soon as possible be ordained by the Archbishop. This bishop-designate is the Reverend H. Tugwell, a missionary who has worked long enough to be disliked in the field of his ministrations. He was a prominent instigator of one of the most wanton and wicked of the little wars in this part of the world which England has lately been engaged in.

Near the end of 1891 or quite early in 1892, Mr. Tugwell wanted to pass through the Jobu country on his way from Lagos to Ibadan, a district with whose people the Jebus were at feud. Permission was not refused to him, but he was told that he must first conform to the rules of the country in asking and obtaining the King's permission. Incensed thereat, he went out of his way to insult the King, and to abuse him before his subjects. To save him from the rage of the people, the King sent him back with an escort to the Lagos frontier. Thus his life was saved; but, instead of being grateful, he appealed to the Lagos Government for "redress," and it was largely by way of "redress" that an expedition was soon afterwards sent up to the Jebu country, with the result that some six or seven hundred Jebus were slaughtered. Is this the sort of man for the Church Missionary Society and the Archbishop of Canterbury to select as a "Father in God" for West Africans?—*Weekly Despatch*.

Although the true end of all knowledge is action, and it is only for the sake of action that knowledge is sought by the human race, yet, in order that it may be gained in sufficient breadth and depth, it is necessary that the individual should seek knowledge for its own sake.—*W. K. Clifford*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S REPORT.—THE POINT AT ISSUE.
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Perhaps an outside view of Mr. Holyoake's report—the view of one who can fairly claim to look at the matter without any passion or any predilection—may not be unprofitable at the present time. And at the outset let me remark that of course the whole discussion is of very secondary importance. Suppose Mr. Hughes established his case to the hilt—a point with which I shall presently deal—it would only mean that one Atheist out of thousands (and that one a man in whose character it is admitted the emotions over-balanced the reason) was won back to the creed of his youth. But thousands of Christians are won over to Atheism, and the Freethought leaders hardly ever dream of spinning an eighteen-penny volume on the subject.

But now we come to the report and its value. And it is in this connection I should like to insist on one point. There is one pivot on which the whole discussion turns, and that point is, the *status* of "Herbert." That, at bottom, is the entire question in dispute. That an obscure, or at least little known shoemaker of alleged Atheistic views was converted is a trivial point which is not worth much attention at all. But that a prominent Atheist—one of remarkable eloquence, one so eminent that his name was coupled with Mr. Bradlaugh's—that is a very different and more important point. Hence it will be seen, as I have said, that the whole question at issue is the *status* of "Herbert." And what does Mr. Holyoake's report say on this point? In so far as it touches the matter it is to the effect that Mr. Holyoake never heard of the man before and did not recognise the name. Now it is to be presumed that if "Herbert" were the prominent person Mr. Hughes sought to make out, Mr. Holyoake would at least have heard of him. It is admitted then that "Herbert" was not such an eminent individual, and it will be noticed that Mr. Hughes is now seeking to minimise his importance. Then it has only to be said that if Mr. Hughes merely meant that an unimportant Atheist had been converted, he was guilty of exaggeration which was so gross as to be very near misrepresentation in his book. As for the investigation, it seems to me to have been unnecessary, if Mr. Hughes's word is to be implicitly believed. And for the rest I think Freethinkers need not grumble at a document like Mr. Holyoake's report—containing as it does a few sound, wholesome truths—being given whatever extra circulation the *Methodist Times* may be able to secure for it.—Yours etc. FREDERICK RYAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER"

SIR,—That was a remarkable story in last week's *Freethinker*, about an alleged Freethinker having embraced the faith of Methodistic Christianity on his death-bed, probably the faith in which, as a child, he had been trained. Cases of the kind are so exceedingly few, that "when caught," the clergy "make a note of it." Such is a great compliment to Freethinkers—that is, assuming, as Mr. Holyoake does, the truth of Mr. Hughes's pamphlet as also the conviction it has brought to the mind of Mr. Holyoake, that the case is really a genuine one. Yet it is such a rare one that too much cannot be made of it, that it is pamphletted and advertised and editorially written on even now—five years after the alleged event; another party, too, only a respectable one, of the million, and his name even now, after the recent revival of the dispute, is still a mystery. I didn't know before that live Christians were ashamed to publish the names of dead ones; and this mysterious keeping back of the man's real name throws doubt on the whole story.

Clearly the evidence adduced is not such as would be accepted in a court of law, in even a case of petty larceny. A cross-examination by a barrister would knock the bottom out of it in two minutes. Mr. Hughes has, however, got a testimonial from Mr. Holyoake. I should like, however, before taking any of Mr. Hughes's pills on that recommendation, to see how Mr. Holyoake succeeds in proving that the defunct was the prominent man held out by Mr. Hughes. The matter was not worth naming, even to Mr. Hughes, I would have thought; but as it has been, let it be sifted, and if Mr. Hughes's story be an exceptionally true one, what then? Is it not a Secular doctrine that man is a creature of circumstances? Is there anything strange, then, that one who has been brought up a Christian, though he may have lapsed from it in a few years of his manhood, may have relapsed back to the early teaching he had received at his mother's knee when a child, when his powers of body and mind were attacked by the disease that ended his life, surrounded mayhap by hell-believing Christians.

Quacks of all kinds fatten on decrepit humanity. While in health how we can laugh at the pill or the electric belt advertisements; but when one's liver or digestion gets out of order how ready we are to "just try them, you know"; and we will give hundreds of pounds—aye, thousands if we have it—to just linger on a few more years, on this "dark

spot called earth," quite regardless of beginning the ascent to the realms of bliss.

Supposing the story to be true, I can account for it in a more rational way than it has been treated. Here was a loving, generous freethinking husband, married to an active, practical Christian wife: she going to her religious meetings, he going to fetch her home of an evening. Doubtless she has lamented her husband's mode of thought to her theological intimates. At last he falls sick; probably he is tormented by both his wife and her friends. He sees his wife unhappy about him, which adds to his misery. He lets her think he has become converted that so he may lessen her misery. This view is consistent with the general character given of the man; but whether it be correct or not is of little consequence. The whole story is trivial, and shows what small things have to do duty in religious papers such as Mr. Hughes's. GEORGE ANDERSON.

MOSES.

We read that midst the reeds of Nile,
Where saurian life reposes,
A bulrush ark enframed the smile
Of dimpled baby Moses.

Old Pharaoh's daughter came to dip—
As Holy Writ discloses—
And found the reedy cradle-ship,
All ballasted with Moses.

She made herself his foster-dam,
And, soon, in crescent doses,
With all her country's lore did cram
The artful youngster Moses.

The rascal grew, as rascals will,
Till Jah—who Jewish Joss is—
Commissioned him to steal and kill,
And made him Gen'ral Moses.

He led a brutal savage mob,
He led them by their noses,
And taught them how to slay and rob,
Did bloody Gen'ral Moses.

He marched them dry right through the sea,
Which, ev'ry person knows, is
As big a lie as ever we
Have read, apart from Moses.

He up a cloudy mount did plod,
And, thence, two slabs discloses,
With laws engraved thereon by God—
The God was Gen'ral Moses.

All through the storied Pentateuch
This artful savage poses
As special spokesman of a spook—
The spook that spoke was Moses!

A Christian, by divine decree,
The friend of all his foes is—
As anti-Christian as could be
Was God's vicegerent, Moses.

If anything's by Christ proscribed,
The policy of blows is;
But that's the very thing proscribed
By God for holy Moses!

Where Moses *lies*, the scriptures show,
But not where he reposes—
Unless to hell all liars go,
If so, then, *there* lies Moses!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

As there is plenty of nothing outside this universe, so there is still enough material out of which Christian theology may construct several more worlds of the same kind.

The missionaries sent to the heathen always object to being eaten by the objects of their solicitude, when, really, it would seem to be the quickest way of getting the spirit of Christianity into them.

Countless falsehoods have been circulated about all the opponents of superstition. Whoever attacks the popular falsehoods of his time will find that a lie defends itself by telling other lies. Nothing is so prolific, nothing can so multiply itself, nothing can lay and hatch as many eggs, as a good, healthy, religious lie.

In view of the fact that Monday is the Greek Sunday, Tuesday the day of rest among the Persians, Wednesday among the Assyrians, Thursday among the Egyptians, Friday among the Turks, and Saturday among the Jews, it is plain that the man who has conscientious scruples against working on Sunday can't do anything else than join the noble order of the sons of rest.

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

This annual festival at our Hall takes place on Wednesday next, when we hope to give an evening's amusement to about four hundred little ones. Friends desirous of seeing the fun will be admitted to the gallery on payment of threepence. An excellent program has been prepared, and we only want a few more pounds to make it a great success. The final meeting of the committee will be held at the Hall of Science on Sunday evening next, after the lecture. The duties of the committee will be then determined, and no other persons will be admitted to the large hall on the evening.

I have to acknowledge the following sums since my last list: Collected at Mr. Foote's lecture at the Hall of Science, £2 18s.; per J. Burrell, 2s. 6d.; A. Marsh, £1; J. Hayes, 1s.; R. T. Jones, 2s.; W. Caisey, 4s.; Mrs. Cowell, 2s. 6d.; per Mrs. Hamilton, 4s. 3d.; J. France, 2s.; Mr. Baker, 1s.; per Master Shepherd, 3s. 6d.; C. Shepherd, 5s.; J. Potter, 1s.; W. J. Cone, 1s. 6d.; B. Dundas, 1s.; per Mrs. Fincken, 11s.; N. Were, 2s.; R. Malster, 2s. 6d.; per Mrs. Fisher, 4s. 3d.—R. FORDER, Treasurer.

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, G. Standing, "The Church and the People" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "A Draft on the Bank of Credulity" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, J. L. Blanchard, "The Economics of Labor as Presented by Professor Brentano" (free). Wednesday, Children's Party. Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing classes; 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, free entertainment. Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, E. Alvert, "Is the Bible Reliable?" (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30 (small hall), debating class, opened by J. B. Coppock, F.C.S. (free); 7.30 (large hall), Dr. T. R. Allinson, "How to Live Long and be Happy." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Feb. 1, at 8.30, C. J. Hunt will lecture.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, Miss Agnes Henry, "Subjects and Crime" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Meaning of Secularism" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

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

COUNTRY.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, members' special meeting.

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, J. Hacking, "The Ethics and Economics of Industry."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, A Member, "Was Jesus Christ Divine?"

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, discussion, "Is Tobacco Smoking Necessary or Useful?" opened by J. J. Taylor; 7, T. Crisfield, "Hypnotism: what is it?"

Derby—41 Copeland-street (off Traffic-street): 7, a meeting.

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class, Anthony Smith, "Light"; 1 to 2, music class (free); 2.30, an afternoon with Burns; 6.30, debate between Messrs. Wilson and Davie on "Are there Historical Evidences that Biblical Prophecies have been Fulfilled?"

Failsforth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6, teachers' half-yearly meeting.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, selected article from the *Free Review*; 6.30, social meeting in commemoration of the anniversaries of Burns and Paine (6d.).

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, a reading, "Ingersoll's *The Clergy and Common Sense*." Thursday at 8, improvement class.

Huddersfield—Friendly and Trades Societies' Club (large hall), Northumberland-street: Tuesday at 8, entertainment, supper, and ball (tickets 1s. 6d.).

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, B. Billany, "The Hull Press and Freethought."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 7, T. Arthur, "The Solar System," with lantern slides.

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 6.30, Mr. Doeg, "Socialism and Liberty," music by the band (free). Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing (6d.).

Nelson—Barrowford Liberal Club: P. Walley, 2.45, "Does Science Teach Evolution?"; 6.30, "How to Solve the Labor Problem."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, monthly business meeting; 7, R. Mitchell, "Why I Ceased to be a Christian."

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BOOK CHAT.

Poet Lore, a magazine published at Boston, prints some early letters of George Eliot, the great novelist. They were addressed to a girl friend in 1840, when the writer was herself a rather romantic "miss." She was pious then, and evidently living an intense internal life. Carlyle, however, was one of her grand favorites. "I should observe," she says, "that he is not orthodox." The time was not far distant when George Eliot's heresy had come to be of such an extreme character as to throw Carlyle's mild heterodoxy into the shade.

The veteran Dr. Ludwig Büchner writes in the *Freidenker* on the "Natural Development of Human Intelligence."

The *English Illustrated Magazine* has an interesting, well-illustrated article on "The Buddhist Confession," by the compiler of "The Imitation of Buddha." Mr. Bowden had the opportunity of listening to the public confession of Buddhist monks in Ceylon. He says: "No doubt the proceedings at times would have sounded, at a short distance, very like the confession in a Christian church." As early Christian confession was public, it is quite possible the Buddhist practice is the original.

Number ten of the Humanitarian League's publications is on "The Extermination of Birds," by Edith Carrington; price twopence. We are glad indeed to find a woman writing against "murderous millinery," and the cruelties of fashion as well as of sport. On this matter evil is wrought by want of thought far more than want of heart. The facts brought forward by Miss Carrington ought to be brought before the attention of every woman wearing aigrette plumes or dead birds as part of her personal adornment.

A *Noviciate for Marriage* is proposed by Mrs. Havelock Ellis, who wishes the institutions to become truly monogamic, and not "a leap in the dark with no honorable return-path." That a married woman writes in the fearless style of Mrs. Ellis is, quite apart from her proposal, a notable sign of the times. By a noviciate of marriage, she says, "I mean exactly what a nun means when she takes a white veil."

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In the *Rauzat-Us-Safa*, by Mirkhond, we have the Mohammedan account of the Jewish and Christian heroes, as well as of the rise and spread of Mohammedanism. Mr. F. F. Arbuthnot, of the Royal Asiatic Society, deserves great credit for making the translation of E. Rehatsek accessible to English readers. The last of the five volumes, just issued, deals with the lives and achievements of the immediate successors of Mohammed, Abu Bekr, O'mar, O'thman, and Ali, and brings the story down to the tragic death of Ali, A.D. 661. The chronicle is full of the noise of blood and battle, but lets us see the wonderful enthusiasm and impetus of the early followers of Islam. In the preceding volumes there is very much of interest in regard to both the Jewish and Christian legends, and these will be noticed at length at an early opportunity.

Canon Body has put out a book on *Life Lived Under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit*. Body trots out the Spirit on every available occasion, but the Spirit seems nothing better than an embodiment of Body.

Open Court (Jan. 4) has an interesting article on Professor Tyndall, by Dr. Felix L. Oswald, who knew him in Switzerland. He says: "Tyndall held with Arthur Schopenhauer, that philosophy should not be fettered down to an alliance with gnosticism, deism, nor even with the established system of ethics, but only with truth, and that if rightly understood, the uncompromising cultus of that truth, can never be unmoral. Though liberal to a fault, he was not fond of parading his philanthropy, and refuted the charge 'agnostic egotism' in his own way, by donating the entire proceeds of his American lecturing tour—some thirteen thousand dollars, I think—to the promotion of scientific studies in the United States."

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