

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER STORY BLOWN TO ATOMS PRICE HUGHES SNEAKS OFF FOLLOWING HIM UP MR. HOLYOAKE SPEAKS

### Mr. Hughes Shirks a Real Investigation.

We are drawing to the end of this tragi-comedy; tragic, in so far as it is a painful revelation of the methods which are used by Christian advocates to impose on public credulity, for interested and sinister ends; comic, in so far as it displays the amusing contortions of a detected liar seeking to escape his proper and inevitable doom.

When I left off last week I informed the reader that I had written a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, which had not been inserted up to the time of our going to press. That letter appeared, however, on the Friday, and I reproduce it here *in extenso*.

MR. G. W. FOOTE AND THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE DAILY CHRONICLE."

SIR,—As the reputation of public men is of some importance, if only to the world's common sense of self-respect, I venture to make an offer through your columns for the termination of this dispute between the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and myself—a dispute, unfortunately, in which a third public man, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, has become to a certain extent involved.

I am willing to let the whole dispute be adjudicated upon by a Committee of Honor. Two persons might be nominated by Mr. Hughes and two by myself, with a fifth person agreed upon by both sides to act as chairman and umpire.

Should the Committee of Honor be constituted, I undertake to prove (1) that the "John Herbert" of Mr. Hughes's story was Charles Alfred Gibson; (2) that everything is false which Mr. Hughes states about the young man's early training and privations; (3) that there are many similar inaccuracies and exaggerations in the narrative; (4) that Charles Alfred Gibson was never a lecturer on Atheism, or even against Christianity; (5) that he was never a lecturer at all; (6) that he was never an Atheist or any kind of Freethinker; (7) that he had been in the Salvation Army and the Church Army; (8) that he had no "Atheist brother" at Northampton to be converted to Christianity; and (9) that the brother referred to, who has always been a professed Christian, never had any communication whatever with Mr. Hughes or any sister of the West London Mission.

When I say that I will prove these things, I mean that I will produce documentary evidence and the testimony of living witnesses, including the members of Charles Alfred Gibson's family and all sorts of persons who knew him

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intimately while he was working and living in London—the place which Mr. Hughes represents as the scene of his exploits as a propagator of Atheism.

Mr. Hughes must be infatuated if he fancies he can find refuge in the "dignity of silence," and if he declines my present offer I may safely leave him to the judgment of honest and sensible men and women. G. W. FOOTE.

I defy anyone to say that this is not a handsome and satisfactory offer. I did not seek to go before a Committee of Honor with a negative advantage over Mr. Hughes. His reputation was at stake, but I put mine to the same hazard. I undertook to prove certain things, and thus assumed the fullest responsibility. If I failed to prove them, I should be put to public shame, just as Mr. Hughes would be if I did prove them. But I did not for a moment believe that my offer would be accepted, for the simple reason that criminals do not voluntarily submit themselves to trial. I was not surprised, therefore, to read Mr. Hughes's reply in the next day's *Chronicle*. Its character was precisely what I expected. In the whole course of it he never so much as alludes to my proposal of adjudication by a Committee of Honor. With the low cunning of his kind he talks about something entirely different. But before I say anything further I will let the reader have a full relish of this precious epistle.

REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES AND MR. FOOTE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE DAILY CHRONICLE."

SIR,—For some years past Mr. Foote has been trying to force me into a personal controversy with him. If he had simply assumed that I was mistaken, or had been misled, he might have had what he wished. But his carefully-guarded letter to you is not a specimen of his usual style. He has again and again insinuated or asserted that I am a deliberate and systematic liar. With a disputant who assumes that attitude neither I nor any other civilised man can discuss. Even in the brutal prize-ring men are obliged to fight according to the rules.

The time has come to insist that public men can have no dealings with those who violate the elementary laws of courtesy. Quite recently Mr. Foote has grossly exaggerated his offence by offering similar insults to a Christian lady, whose integrity is attacked like my own.

Although it was impossible for me to have any discussion with Mr. Foote, who, I may add, has never suffered the slightest discourtesy at my hands during all these years of insult, I was perfectly willing to invite the utmost criticism of any public act or utterance of mine. It occurred to me that there was a well-known public man of Mr. Foote's way of thinking, a man of unblemished reputation and a gentleman—Mr. G. J. Holyoake. Having a slight acquaintance with Mr. Holyoake, I asked him to read the story of the "Atheist Shoemaker," and Mr. Foote's attack upon it. I gave him all the names, and offered no suggestion as to the method of inquiry. The matter was left absolutely and unreservedly in his hands. From that day to this I have not seen him. He has made what inquiries he liked, in his own way. The result has been published to the world. Since his verdict was given, nothing has seen the light which impugns the substantial accuracy of any statement for which the two sisters and I are personally responsible.

But whatever may be said, no civilised man will expect me to have any communication with Mr. Foote, or with anyone who represents him, or with anyone else who approves of his method of controversy. No one regrets more than I do that Mr. Foote's own gratuitous conduct has made it impossible for me to take notice of him.—I am, etc.,

HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

I wrote a brief reply to Mr. Hughes's letter and sent it to the *Chronicle*, but it was not inserted. I suppose the editor is loth to bring upon himself the enmity of Mr. Hughes and the Wesleyan Methodists.

What could be more despicable than this man's talk of my "insults to a Christian lady"? At one moment he hides behind Mr. Holyoake, and at the next he hides behind a woman's petticoats. I have "insulted" no lady. All I have done is to show that Sister Lily was deceived by Julia Gibson, and that she in turn misled Mr. Hughes. It is simply a question of fact, and to cry out "Insult" is no answer to my charge. It is merely an evasion.

Just as despicable is Mr. Hughes's talk about his "integrity," and his whining about my calling him a liar. The very essence of my charge is that he has foisted a lot of lies upon the public as truth. It is not a question of courtesy but a question of veracity. What would be the use of a prisoner's pleading in the dock that his indictment was an insult? The point to be decided is "Guilty or Not Guilty."

Mr. Hughes lies again in saying I have tried to force him into a personal controversy with me. I want nothing of the kind. I invited him to go with me before a Committee of Honor, in order to have the facts investigated.

It is another lie that I might have had "what I wished" if I had simply assumed that he was "mistaken" or had been "misled." He was approached by Charles Bradlaugh, with what he himself calls "courtesy," and he declined to give him "what he wished," though he asked for it repeatedly.

This lying ostrich imagines that others cannot see what he does not choose to see himself. "Nothing has seen the light," he says, since the publication of Mr. Holyoake's report, which in the slightest degree impugns the substantial accuracy of any statement for which he and the two Sisters are "personally responsible." Who knows what they *hold themselves* responsible for? What man in his senses would meddle with such a subtle point of casuistry? As a matter of fact, *everything* has happened since the publication of Mr. Holyoake's report. To mention only one thing—the Atheist Shoemaker's family have publicly denounced the story of his career and conversion as a lie. The father called it "a damnable lie." And who but Mr. Hughes can be "attacked"? He disguised every character but his own. He alone came before the public without a mask. I therefore attack *him*, and I shall continue to do so. When the story is proved to be a mass of falsehood, those who originated it, dressed it up, and sent it forth into the world, may share the responsibility at their pleasure.

Mr. Hughes's letter to the *Chronicle* amounts to this—"If I am a liar, it is very rude to call me one." He forgets that the word is borrowed from the vocabulary of the Bible. It was patronised by Jesus Christ

and his apostles. "He who speaks not truly, lies," says Shakespeare; and if Mr. Hughes does speak truly, it is useless to look for a liar in England.

"Dignity" is all very well, but it must have a solid background. Pigott himself stood upon his "dignity," and so does Jabez Balfour. It is nothing but a paltry trick when a man is charged with a grave offence, and the evidence of his guilt is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." This same "dignity" would be absolutely useless to the reverend gentleman if he went before a tribunal. He uses it to save himself from being tried, for he knows what would be the verdict.

#### The Badger Drawn by "The Morning."

In his letter to the *Daily Chronicle* the reverend gentleman was particularly careful to let out nothing. He worked on the safe presumption that only a few of the readers of that journal had seen the *Freethinker*, and his policy was to give, not an open, but an implied, denial to all my charges. But soon afterwards he must have seen the news in the *Freethinker* that Mr. Holyoake had publicly admitted "Gibson" to be the real name of the converted Atheist Shoemaker. Accordingly, when a *Morning* interviewer called on the reverend gentleman, and put the pointed question—"Has Mr. Foote got hold of the right people? Is this Mr. Gibson, of Northampton, the father of the Atheist shoemaker?"—he was obliged for once in his life to give a straight reply. "Oh, yes," he said, "it was Mr. Gibson's son, undoubtedly, who was the subject of my book."

This was drawing the badger indeed! The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes confesses that his convert was Charles Alfred Gibson. He cannot go back upon *that*. Yet the confession is no credit whatever to his honesty. He made it under compulsion. It was Mr. Holyoake's incautiousness that precipitated him over the precipice. Yes, the *precipice*. Here, as so often elsewhere, it is "the first step that costs." The admission—so long delayed, and only made when inevitable—that I *have* got hold of "the right people," that Charles Alfred Gibson *was* the hero of "The Atheist Shoemaker"; this, I say, will be enough to satisfy every dispassionate reader that the rest of my exposure is also true, especially when Mr. Hughes dares not face a Committee of Honor, which, if I am wrong, would triumphantly establish his innocence.

#### The Confidence Trick.

"I will tell you some of the real facts of the case, but not for publication," said Mr. Hughes to the *Morning* interviewer. He was "inexorable" that these facts "should not be printed." Yet it is claimed that they "completely altered the complexion of the case" as far as the "Atheism" of young Gibson is concerned. Now I do not dispute that Mr. Hughes is an adept at this "confidence" trick. But every man of sense and honor knows that what is reserved as "confidential" is not evidence, as the witness is not liable to examination, much less to cross-examination.

It is Mr. Hughes's veracity which is at issue, and he cannot close the case by his own private certificate.

#### Lies to Cover Lies.

The whole *raison d'être* of the Atheist Shoemaker story was that the convert was a person of distinction. Take that fact away, and the book is an egregious absurdity. But it is now seen by Mr. Hughes that the pretence of his convert's distinction can no longer be maintained. In this extremity he endeavours to minimise his convert's importance. Will it be believed that he actually had the audacity to tell the *Morning* interviewer that he never described young Gibson as a "lecturer"? The cavil is paltry enough to be worthy of the man. I open his book, and I find him writing of his "John Herbert" as "a well-known London Atheist," of his having been "a ringleader," of his being so eloquent that "when he used to speak in Victoria Park there was such continuous cheering that

you could hardly hear what he was saying," of his happy repartees "in which his public discussions as an Atheist had made him so expert," of his addressing "Atheist as emblems," and of his feeling "the exulting glow of the orator who has conquered his audience." Nor is this all. I find in the *Methodist Times* for the last week in February, 1890, a statement by Mr. Hughes on the subject of the Atheist Shoemaker. He had been goaded into saying something by a writer in the *Daily Chronicle*, whose "motive and animus" he complained of, as he complains of mine now. And this is what Mr. Hughes wrote in conclusion:—"Mr. Price Hughes never said that 'The Atheist Shoemaker' was a professional lecturer of the National Secular Society. He simply said that he had spoken in advocacy of Atheism in public halls and in the open-air, and that he had spoken with great eloquence and effect."

"John Herbert" was not a "lecturer," but he was an "orator." This is the sum and substance of the reverend gentleman's denial; and I ask the reader, Could there be anything more paltry and absurd? It is positively imbecile. We see by it what shifts this creature is reduced to in the effort to save his blasted reputation.

#### Who is the "Savage"?

Mr. Hughes told the *Morning* interviewer that I was "a savage." I will not dispute it just now. We have all, I suppose, something of the savage in us. Mr. Hughes himself displays a good deal of the savage's cunning, especially in confusing his spoor. But I do not want any controversy with him, and I am far from ambitious of his compliments. It is not I who am on trial. It is he. I have offered to go with him before a Committee of Honor, where he might shoot down the "savage" with the Maxim gun of evidence and proof. But he dares not face a real investigation. He knows the weakness of his case. I know the strength of mine, and that is why I made the offer which he declines.

#### Mr. Hughes and Mr. Bradlaugh.

This unctuous charlatan (of course I refer to Mr. Hughes) has frequently beslavered the dead Charles Bradlaugh with his nauseous praise. He has called him "this splendid democrat," "this true friend of the people," and so forth. Now he tells the *Morning* interviewer that Charles Bradlaugh printed "a courteous note" in the *National Reformer*, on the appearance of the conversion story, and "asked for the name of the shoemaker."

Well now, we will look at this "courteous note." Here it is in full, from the *National Reformer* of February 2, 1890.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes publishes, as if true, a story of a converted Atheist shoemaker. As Mr. Hughes repeatedly mentions me by name, and as many of the incidents in his volume are clearly untrue, I invite him in common decency to give me the means of judging for myself how far he has been misled. I hesitate to suppose that he can be the wilful misleader.

In another note, dated February 16, Mr. Bradlaugh wrote of Mr. Hughes's book as a "romance," and also as a "falsehood," and ended by saying, "I challenge the main allegations in his story." A similar note appeared in the *Reformer* for February 23. On March 2 Mr. Bradlaugh wrote—"The story contains some statements which I know to be untrue, and other statements which I believe to be untrue."

This is what Mr. Hughes calls "courteous," and indeed it was more courteous than he deserved. But how much real difference is there between a "falsehood" and a "lie"? Perhaps this. Charles Bradlaugh called the Atheist Shoemaker story a "falsehood" when he saw it was untrue, and I call it a "lie" having proved it to be untrue. *Voilà tout!*

I thank Mr. Hughes for giving me the opportunity of showing what Charles Bradlaugh thought of his story. And now I have to ask the reverend gentleman

a question. Why did he take no notice of Mr. Bradlaugh's repeated appeals? He says he could not give his convert's name. But why not? He gave it to Mr. Holyoake. Does he mean that Mr. Bradlaugh was not "a gentleman," as he calls Mr. Holyoake? Does he mean that Mr. Bradlaugh would have betrayed "confidence"? Oh, no! What he really means is this, though he cannot afford to say it—"Mr. Bradlaugh had too much iron in him and could not be imposed upon; he had also a legal mind, and knew how to take evidence; besides, he was the head of organised Freethought in England, and conversant with the practical details of the Freethought propaganda in London. It would not do, therefore, to take him into my confidence. Mr. Holyoake, however, is a more obliging gentleman; he has a greater knack of seeing the best side of Christianity—and of Christians; he is old, and his eyesight is nearly gone, at any rate for the purposes of investigation, in which so much depends on the expression on the faces of witnesses; besides, he has long been absent from London, and knows nothing of the details of Freethought propaganda there; and to Mr. Holyoake I will go." And to Mr. Holyoake he went. Had he gone to Mr. Bradlaugh, it would not have been reserved for me to expose the Atheist Shoemaker story. As it is, the shade of my old leader smiles upon me, and whispers, "Well done!"

#### What Now?

Mr. Hughes shuns a Committee of Honor, so I am pushing on with my pamphlet, which is nearly finished. I hoped to have it ready for circulation to-day (Feb. 18), but that is impossible. Mr. Holyoake has spoken at last, and I must wait to see what he will send me as the result of his fresh investigation of my evidences. But the pamphlet will be ready, I hope, with next week's *Freethinker*. I can rely upon its being well circulated. I now appeal for the funds to enable me to print a hundred thousand copies, and I believe I shall not appeal in vain.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### MARIA DERAISMES.

THE late Maria Deraismes, who died last week in Paris at the age of fifty-seven, was one of the most remarkable figures in the French capital. She was the acknowledged leader of the women's rights party, and as journalist, conférencière, and woman of fashion, was well known. She first made her *début* in public life as a writer of comedies, but this she relinquished for more serious work. In 1865 she wrote an appeal on behalf of her sex, *Aux Femmes Riches*. Three years later she defended advanced views in politics, religion and sociology, under the title *Nos Principes et nos Mœurs*. M. Dumas, the younger, having satirised the women's party in *L'Homme Femme*, she replied with *Eve Contre Monsieur Dumas Fils*. She edited for some years a journal *Le Républicain de Seine et Oise*, and being a pronounced Freethinker, was president of the French Anti-clerical Congress of 1881. She was an excellent orator, and Mrs. Crawford speaks of her as one of the finest public speakers she had ever heard. She had the distinguished honor of being the first woman ever invited by a Masonic Lodge to become a member. This was done in recognition of her bravery. It is true that in 1735 the hon. Mrs. Aldworth, then Miss Elizabeth Saint Leger, was initiated in the order, having, while concealed in a clockcase, overheard the proceedings at a lodge held in her father's house at Doneraile, Ireland. Maria Deraismes was, however, the first woman to become a mason with the object of breaking down Masonic exclusiveness. On Jan. 1, 1882, she was duly installed in the Lodge du Pecq, under the Grand Orient of France. That body had not the courage to go on, but it is certain that if Freemasonry wishes to substantiate its claims to the principle of universal enlightenment and universal goodwill, it must put aside the barrier of sex no less than of sects. In 1886 Mlle. Deraismes put forward an important work on children's rights, *Les Droits de l'Enfant*. She passed some severe strictures on Zolaismé in literature and art, under the title of *Epidémie Naturaliste* (1888). Her last work (1891) was one of the most important, dealing with the history, claims, and aspirations of her sex, under the title of *Eve dans l'humanité*. Her death will leave a blank among the women leaders of Republican France.

## REVIVED SUPERSTITIONS.

I HAVE before me the Report of Proceedings and Documents in connection with the Congress held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, Sept. 15, 16, 17, 1893. It is both curious and suggestive. The reflections to which it gives rise carry me somewhat far from the text. But this is of little importance. Few of my readers are likely to be deeply concerned in Mrs. Isabel Cooper Oakley's views of "The Cosmos Septenary in its Constitution," and unless they are interested in such high matters the details of the report would be lost on them. One little criticism, however, I must make. The person deputed to make a "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament" was Dr. J. D. Buck. This person is reported as saying (pp. 145, 146):

"Prof. Huxley was right in his book, *The Ancient Religions of the World*. I quote the idea rather than the exact words. On the next to the last page of *The Ancient Religions of the World*, he says that the result of his investigations in these ancient religions is to convince him that they all came from one primeval religion, revealed to man from without. That is the claim put forward by the Theosophical Society and those without the pale of humanity, that also applies to those very Masters, those Mahatmas, those ancient Rishis, those men who have at different times unveiled all the possibilities of human nature, and it was through them that this revelation was made in the first place, by them it is preserved from age to age, and, to quote Prof. Huxley as saying himself (where he got the quotation I don't know), 'that this philosophy was presented to the world by the Masters of those who know.'"

This attempt to make Prof. Huxley an endorser of Theosophy is worthy of Ananias Hughes. The Professor has no book on *The Ancient Religions of the World*. The only thing he has written at all similar is two articles on "The Evolution of Theology," which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, and are reprinted in his volume of *Essays upon Some Controverted Questions*. And the purport of these articles is to show that theology has evolved, not from any primitive revelation from Mahatmas, but from the savage beliefs in ghosts. Such an ignorant or fraudulent perversion of his meaning, before an audience of 3,500, assembled at a Parliament of Religions to hear a statement of Theosophy, sufficiently stamps the proceedings.

The most interesting speaker at the Congress was G. N. Chakravarti, the delegate from India, and his theme, as was natural, was the reaction of the East on the West. The intercourse with the Orient cannot be entirely onesided, and it was to be expected that Hindu thought would attempt to find soil in Western minds. Practical minds, however, will consider what has been the effect of Theosophy in its native land. Has it not left the Hindu supine, believing in Karma, and dreaming of worlds unrealised, while at the mercy of more energetic Europeans and Moslems?

The impinging of Oriental thought on the Western mind is not altogether new. In the Augustan age of Rome, after Julius Cæsar, the foremost man of all this world, had expressed his unbelief in immortality in open Senate, the Eastern superstitions reacted on Western Europe. The Syrian Orontes, it was said, flowed into the Tiber, and Juvenal, in his sixth satire, tells how the little-educated Roman women were the prey of charlatans pretending to Eastern magical lore. In time Syrian superstition conquered, and Roman civilisation was lost in the night of the dark ages, when Christianity triumphed.

We see too the revival of what our grandfathers derided as worn-out superstitions, a belief in "occult science," in diabolism and demoniacal possession; in magic, astrology, seventh sons, palmistry, crystal seeing, psychometry, and every species of fortune telling.\* Dr. Charcot and the hypnotisers are respon-

\* Readers of modern American and French literature, including the works of Randolph, Richmond, Huysmann, Stanislas de Guaita, Encausse, and Peladan, will know this is not over stated. Dr. Garnett tells an amusing story of an old lady who, seeing the students in the B. M. Library, asked him, "Have you anyone here who can raise the Devil?" He could now show her several who at any rate study occult literature with that object.

sible for much. Their experiments on hysterical patients have served to spread an hysterical delight in the abnormal. Sickly neurotics have come to the front in literature and art, and ladies of refinement no more scruple to inquire if you have entered on "the path" than Salvation Sally to ask if you have "found Jesus." Such are the fopperies of this *fin de siècle*. Of course the busy world goes on with its work, unheeding the dreamers and neurotics. It is a true though uninspired text which declares, "Blessed are the sound in mind and body, for theirs is the kingdom of man." But superstition, and love of the marvellous which feeds it, lie deep in the blood. Our savage ancestors were necessarily superstitious, and until science entirely displaces the Bible in the schools we may expect to see recrudescences of the Bible-supported superstitions.

A Protestant clergyman once asked Talleyrand how Catholics managed to get their flocks to believe in transubstantiation, and credit that the sensible wafer, held on the tip of the tongue, was the very body, bones, and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The matter is simple, said the bishop-prince. We first teach them the doctrine of the Trinity. All is easy after that. The mystery-men well know their power is founded on reverence for mysteries. So they are making an earnest endeavor to stultify the minds of even the Board school children by teaching that Father-God, Son-God, and Holy-Ghost-God are not three Gods but one God, before teaching them the multiplication table. Had Mrs. Besant remained on the London School Board, instead of flying off on astral planes after Mahatmas and Dyhani Chohans, the clerical bigots might not have ventured their high-handed attempt to utilise public money and public teachers and public buildings to inculcate their absurd dogmas, an attempt which even yet I should fancy must excite her indignant denunciation.

The lesson to Freethinkers is patent. Steady progress is only made by restricting our efforts within the limits of the practical. To stop the foul current of superstition we must deal with it at its source. We must work to prevent children's minds being warped and stultified by the teaching of stupid dogmas. We must insist that the State has nothing to do with the teaching of religion, and that the precious time of youth shall not be devoted to lunar politics, but to that practical and experimental acquaintance with facts which has been the condition of human progress.

J. M. WHEELER.

## A FREETHOUGHT VICTORY IN NEW ZEALAND.

THE triumphs of Freethought, numerous as they are, are not confined to the mother country. We are constantly reading of its marked success in our various colonies. From papers just to hand, we learn of a noble victory that has been won in New Zealand over orthodox bigotry. At its recent general parliamentary election, the eminent statesman and Freethinker, Sir Robert Stout, who was elected a member of the General Assembly in 1875, and who subsequently became Attorney-General and Minister of Education of the colony, once more presented himself as a candidate, and in spite of a most determined opposition from the Christian party, he has been returned at the head of the poll by 6,200 votes, being a majority of 1,378 over the next successful candidate. The general result of the election was the return of 54 Liberals and of 14 Tories, giving a majority that is strikingly similar to that obtained by Mr. Gladstone at our own last general election. We have nothing to do here with party politics, and if we had our limited acquaintance with the facts and circumstances of the New Zealand contest would prevent us from giving an opinion, or from forming an accurate judgment upon the political issues that were at stake during the political conflict. Our present purpose is simply to record a great triumph of the principle of Freethought over theological prejudice.

Sir Robert had many charges brought against him, but the principal one was that he was a Freethinker. It is always a source of amusement, after any event has taken place, to read the wonderful accounts that wise prophets give beforehand of what will happen. For instance, in this case, it was said that Sir Robert would be sent back to the place from whence he came, a discredited politician, and that he would never again be allowed to take part in any ministry. The answer to this is, that he was returned at the head of the poll. One writer charges him with advocating the levelling process of Socialism, and says of Sir Robert that "since accepting the K.C.M.G., he delights in proving himself worthy of that order." It appears to us that this enthusiastic writer has become sadly mixed in his charge against the Freethought candidate. We fail to see how a man can be a Socialist, and at the same time an aristocrat, the two being thoroughly opposed to each other. A member of our House of Commons once denounced Mr. Bradlaugh as a Socialist, although it was well known that he was thoroughly opposed to Socialism. But it has always been the fate of prominent Freethinkers to be misrepresented. It is a tendency of the human mind, when perverted by theological passion, to imagine things that are not. No charge is too absurd to be made, no position is too inconsistent to be maintained, and no misrepresentation is too unjust to be urged by the unfortunate victims of religious fanaticism.

"Scrutator," who writes the "Echoes of the Week" in the *New Zealand Mail*, referring to the charge that Sir Robert Stout is a Freethinker, says: "And, well, what if he is? Is he the only New Zealand politician who has failed to find comfort and solace in the faith of our fathers? . . . He lives a life which is good and pure; against his personal character not a word can be said; whilst to judge him by his speeches and writings, he possesses a nobility of soul, a breadth of kindly tolerance, a wealth of human charity, of which any professing Christian might well be proud, and which too many professing Christians, alas! do not possess. Was not John Ballance a Freethinker? And will any one dare to say he was not a good man, a true patriot, a consistent friend to the masses, one who lived to better the condition of his fellow-men? Again, are the other candidates all such good and devout Christians that Sir Robert Stout should alone be picked out against whom to hurl this wretched parrot-cry? I could name one other gentleman, at least, who is standing for the city who is a professed Freethinker, and yet we hear no objection taken to him on this score. For heaven's sake let us be tolerant! Sir Robert Stout's Freethought is an honest, heartfelt, genuine lack of faith in the creeds in which the majority believe, but he is surely none the worse for it as a man. Finally, let Tennyson's fine lines be remembered—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

This is a manly plea for justice, a word which we prefer to that of toleration. To tolerate is to assume superiority over those tolerated, whereas in matters of opinion all persons should have equal rights. After dealing with other questions, which we need not enter into, the same able writer of the journal named, explains his attitude towards the Freethought candidate, which makes his defence the more valuable, inasmuch as he does not share the anti-theological opinions of Sir Robert. "Scrutator" writes: "I have written this much (more than two long columns) about Sir Robert's candidature because I love fair play, because I loathe misrepresentation and cowardly slander, because I hold Sir Robert to be a true Liberal, a kind-hearted man, a wise and prudent statesman, and a gentleman in the very best sense of the word." These are very remarkable sentiments and they will be read with interest and with pleasure by our friends throughout the United Kingdom. They were written and published at the time, and on the spot where the contest took place. And it is evident that the electors of Wellington (the place for which Sir Robert was returned) to a large extent endorse the liberal views of the writer. This is clear from the fact that they

placed their Freethought candidate at the head of the poll by an unmistakable majority.

In these days of excitement of thought and the pressing to the front of great principles, we must expect to meet more or less with prejudice, and to have our motives called into question. But there is no need to despair from this fact if the press will only do its duty. We heartily thank the *New Zealand Mail* for its timely and able defence of the great principle of intellectual liberty. This is the more important as it was done in the lifetime of the colonial representative of Freethought, and thereby valuable aid was rendered in securing justice to a man in his endeavors to perform the duties of to-day. In writing upon this subject, it is forcibly recalled to our mind how the great English Freethinker, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, was treated by the British press. For years, during his life, the "conspiracy of silence" was maintained towards him, and even in the latter part of his life he received a "discreet reserve" from the leading papers of this country. But at his death the press almost of the entire kingdom teemed with bursts of admiration for his many excellent qualities, and for the services he had rendered to the advancement of progressive movements. While this was a graceful tribute to consistent work performed in the cause of human progress, it came too late to encourage the worker in his arduous labors. It is to us a melancholy reflection that the powerful writers of this country did not recognise his great ability and his honesty of purpose until the world lost his active services. At the time, we confess to having felt that the leading organs of public opinion either lacked sincerity after his death, or a sense of justice during his life.

To us there is no principle more important than that men of worth should be recognised and supported "while it is called day," for when "the night cometh" the praise of the press is likely to be regarded as but little more than fashionable outpouring of empty verbosity. It is idle to assume that the editorial eye is closed to the intellectual claims of men who live in the public atmosphere and whose every word and act are publicly known and scrutinised. The truth is, that the silence of the press about those who proclaim new and unpopular truths is a humiliating and an undignified concession to the readers of our public journals whose repose, it is feared, would be disturbed by a timely announcement that the reformer had come to attack notions and ideas that have hitherto been regarded as if they were invulnerable.

Sir Robert Stout has long since won a proud position in New Zealand, as a statesman and as an educational reformer, and his name has for years been associated with the advanced movements of the colony, but the fact of his being an avowed Freethinker was deemed sufficient, in the estimation of the theological bigots, to deprive the public of his further services for its welfare. Fortunately the day of theological supremacy is passed, and the people will no longer submit to have their political and social rights sacrificed upon the altar of creeds and dogmas. And as in the mother country, Mr. Bradlaugh overcame the many obstacles which orthodoxy placed in his path, so has Sir Robert surmounted the difficulties with which the bigots of the colony sought to check his progressive career. We therefore most heartily congratulate the friends of mental freedom in New Zealand upon the great and glorious victory they have achieved in the interest of the ennobling principle of Freethought.

CHARLES WATTS.

Foreman—"Old Jones joined the church last night."  
Editor—"Good! Make out a bill for seven years' subscription with interest. He'll surely pay now." Foreman—"You are off there, sir. When I left he was loudly singing, 'Christ Jesus paid my debt.'"

In a small village in the south of Scotland, an elder in the parish church was one day reproving an old woman, who was rather the worse for liquor, by saying: "Sarah, don't you know that you should fly from the tempter?" Sarah (not too well pleased): "Flee yourself." Elder: "Oh, Sarah, I have flown." Sarah: "A wool, I think you'll be nane the waur o' anither flutter."

## THUNDER FROM THE TEMPLE.

MR. RAYMOND BLATHWAYT is an interviewer who has probably interviewed most people whose opinion is worth anything in the public life of England. After working England, he turned his attention to America, and interviewed right and left there. His articles are perhaps the most readable of their class, his only fault being that—as a recorder of other people's opinions—he obtrudes his own personality somewhat on the reader, and peppers his interviews with his own views and criticisms; so that, at times, one is apt to forget whether it is Blathwayt or the person interviewed who is telling the story. However, the supply of first-class "raw material" running short, Mr. Blathwayt has had to fall back on very inferior stuff—and hence probably it is that in the *Idler* for January we get a few pages devoted to a talk with the irrepressible Dr. Parker. The burden of all these interviews is pretty much the same. All of them are interlarded with photogravures of faultless drawing-rooms and studios, and parks and lawns; there is a mechanical air about them all. But we have dealt with this one because the subject on which Mr. Blathwayt asked Dr. Parker's opinion was none other than—Freethought. Parker was requested to say something "about that Freethought which is so characteristic of the young men of the present day." The word was enough to set the oracle on fire; he fumed rather incoherently to the extent of two or three pages, he growled (the word is Mr. Blathwayt's) and thumped and frowned and shook his finger—in short, gave one of those exhibitions of meekness and charity for which professional Christians are renowned.

Dr. Parker began by saying that the rationalist before he enters the argument, "has to account for himself first—who he is, what he is, and where he has come from, what his origin is." He desires the Free thinker to explain. Now that is precisely what the Freethinker wants of Parker. And the Freethinker has the right to ask the query which Parker has not. The Freethinker admits his ignorance—he does not pretend, with his finite capacity, to solve infinite problems. But Parker does. He is an expounder of the "Word of God"; nay, we understand he even alleges he is in personal communication with Omniscience. Therefore it is the Freethinker who can demand the explanation of Parker, which Parker cannot logically demand of him. Of course, as a matter of fact, Parker is merely playing the old trick of making a bogie of the unknown—or what he thinks the unknown. But man's origin and nature *have*, to a considerable extent, been explained, though we can quite understand that Dr. Parker—buried in his collection of "old Puritan divines"—may not be aware of the fact. And the explanation is *somewhat* different from that of Parker's theology. But of course that would not stop Parker's game. He has only to move his tent a little further on—only to frame his questions so that to answer them at present is outside the possibility of human knowledge or experience. Yet it is difficult to see what point Parker makes. Both of us come to the barrier that divides the known from the unknown. Parker asks a question to which we can give no answer. Neither can he. We are level, *with this difference*: Parker dogmatizes in his ignorance and we do not.

And the curious thing is, that Parker enlarges on ignorance in extraordinary style. He says: "No man can have devoted long study to anything; he sows wild oats until he is twenty-five, he is fighting for his living at forty, and at sixty he has to face the grave." Now this is far-fetched, very far-fetched. We do not know whether Dr. Parker "sowed wild oats" until he was twenty-five, but we know there are many young men who do not. But suppose Parker's statement be granted—and we will readily grant that, comparatively, man can know but little of nature in the course of his short life—we want to ask Parker what right he has, then, to pretend to know, to assert dogmatically, and denounce those who question and doubt? Insisting on the enormous ignorance of man, he is yet terribly angry with those who are then sceptical of accepting that ignorance as absolute "divine" truth. Such is religious consistency.

"The word 'sceptic,'" says Parker, "really means 'question-asker.' Now the first question ever asked of mankind was asked by the Devil." Apparently, then, Parker hates questioning. Hence it may be a diabolical thing to do, but we will put one question to him: By whom has humanity and the cause of human well-being, been more advanced—by those who asked questions and sought answers, or those who sat idly by, ready to accept every explanation, and swallow every foolish tale? In other words, who are the more valuable in human affairs—the "sceptics" or the credulous multitude? Why, every single advance in science, in politics, in literature, in art, has come from questioning, from dissatisfaction with the old, from the seeking of the new and the better ideal. Parker—true to the religious spirit which is essentially the spirit of stagnation—turns his back on progress when he condemns the questioner.

Yet with all his condemnation of the practice, Parker actually asks questions himself—yea, doubts and disbelieves, himself. "What," he asks, "is this wonderful thing—Freethought? Am I not free to say there are thirteen pence in the shilling? To put an end to my life? I find I am not absolutely free at any one point in personal and social life. Yet when I come into the region of religion I am told I can play the fool as much as I like." Where, when, by whom, Dr. Parker? What Freethinker has ever said that a man ought to play the fool with his religious opinions? But of course a latitude must be allowed to Christian "veracity." "As for his negations," says Dr. Parker at one point, "I don't believe in your doubters, honest or otherwise, or your Freethinkers, or your sceptics, Mr. Blathwayt." So that—as with all these religious quacks—it turns out that, when they condemn questioning in general, it is questions addressed to themselves they really mean; and when they denounce "doubt," it is doubt in their own creed that they have in their mind. *They* may question and doubt *other people's* creeds, but that is a privilege reserved to themselves alone.

There is one passage in this interview which deserves to be enshrined. Mr. Blathwayt had pointed out that Freethought was largely found amongst scientists. And for reply, Parker delivered himself thus:

"I am astounded that science has not made some critics of Christianity more modest and self-controlled. Huxley, from my point of view, is all hardness; a nature like his cannot enter into the pathos of Christianity, any more than a blind man can enter into the mystery and charm of color. Professor Huxley is a great man, but he is not in this Christian question at all. A foot rule cannot measure the horizon, and even fifty yards of tape cannot go far in that business. I fear he is allowing himself to be so sensitive as to be really hostile to religious conviction and action. So much for the scientists. There is the Freethought of the artisans; as to their antagonism, I believe it arises largely out of ignorance."

Now just consider all the vanity and audacity and conceit, all the pettiness and narrowness and nonsense that is wrapped up in that one paragraph. Fancy Huxley blind to some sense of beauty that Parker possesses, and the proportion between their capacities hinted at as that of a foot to fifty yards. Verily one's indignation at the arrogance, is drowned in laughter at the sublime foolishness of the poor man.

Whatever Parker may be to his inner circle of friends—and Mr. Blathwayt assures us he is kind hearted and generous to a degree, giving away large sums of money of which no one but the recipients ever hear—he is certainly bumptious and over-bearing to the outside world. The whole interview with which we have been dealing breathes malice and uncharitableness throughout; there is not the slightest attempt to grapple with a single point calmly or judicially, and the whole question seems to be viewed from the narrowest of narrow standpoints. If, then, Dr. Parker be a generous and kindly man in private, it is to be regretted that he should think fit to play the mountebank so brazenly and so frequently in public.

FREDERICK RYAN.

## ACID DROPS.

How characteristic is the attitude of the Christian papers in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker story! When the sham vindication of it by Mr. Holyoake was published, they all chuckled and complimented Mr. Hughes; but now that Mr. Foote has published a complete and crushing exposure of the story, and demonstrated it to be a monstrous mass of lies, they are all mum. The fact is, they don't want the truth at any price. However cheap it is, they are not open to buy. They will not even take it as a gift. It does not suit their book to see Mr. Hughes discredited, for impostors must hang together. Accordingly, their watchword is, "Let us protect Hughes, and keep the lie alive as long as possible." And the worst of it is, that a veteran Secularist like George Jacob Holyoake has played into the hands of these deceitful Christians, and helped them to stifle the truth.

What is called "a startling statement" was made by a Young Men's Christian Association speaker at Tunbridge Wells. It was to the effect that there were 4,000 young men in the town, but not more than 10 per cent of them ever went to a place of worship on Sundays. We are glad to be "startled" in this way. It would give us a pleasant shock to learn that the 10 per cent who do go to church or chapel at Tunbridge Wells were cured of their folly.

The Dean of Winchester, in addressing the Christian Social Union, and drawing some lessons for the Church from history, was naturally obliged to say something about the French Revolution. He went so far as to assert that the attitude of the Church in relation to the great movement was one of "absolute imbecility." We are not going to quarrel with Dr. Kitchin on this point, but we should like to know where he learnt that Voltaire ever said that "Christ is to be crushed." Voltaire's famous "Ecrasez l'Infame" did not refer to Christ, but to Christianity; to the system of falsehood, imposture, dogma, bigotry, and repression, which had cursed the world for so many centuries. And what does Dr. Kitchin mean by saying that "not a voice was raised from the Church in reply" to Voltaire? If he does not know better than this, he is singularly ignorant of the controversial history of France before and after the Revolution. Of course it is not a sin to be ignorant; it is only a sin when ignorance indulges in sweeping statements.

Christians have always complained of the "misrepresentations" of their Freethought opponents. These same Christians, however, have been the vilest libellers of every religion but their own. There is no end, for instance, to the lies they have told about Mohammed, some of which are so terribly revolting that we dare not sully our pages with them. Carlyle too politely called it "well-meaning zeal" that heaped the lies around the prophet of Islam. It was not well-meaning at all, but false and despicable. Even the foolish tame-pigeon story was circulated by Christians who knew it to be a lie. "When Poccocke," says Carlyle, "inquired of Grotius, Where the proof was of that story of the pigeon, trained to pick peas from Mohammed's ear, and pass for an angel dictating to him? Grotius answered that there was no proof!" "It is time to dismiss all that," is the dictum of the Sage of Chelsea.

Talmage does not agree with Carlyle. The oracle of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, with his thousands a year for preaching about the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, has the cheek to look down upon the great Arab who founded a world-religion, ruled millions of men, and died poor. "The heaven of the Koran," he exclaims, "is an everlasting Sodom." Everyone who has read the Koran knows it is nothing of the sort, but Talmage is not the man to stick at trifles. He actually calls a "stupendous blasphemy" the cry of Islam—"God is great, and Mohammed is his prophet." Does he mean that the whole of it is blasphemy? If not, why doesn't he take the trouble to say what he means? Or has he any meaning at all, except to talk big, and rake in the shekels from fanatical fools of the Christian persuasion?

The *Pall Mall Magazine* has a paper on "Sir John Maudevil Liar." This is somewhat coarse. Travellers in the days of Sir John were credulous, and thought it proper to embellish their stories with all the wonderful things they had heard. The editor would probably be disgusted if we sent in a paper on Daniel the Prophet and Liar.

Mr. Vance Packman, secretary of the Catholic Truth Society, writes to the *Glasgow Herald* that "two-thirds of the priests in England, Wales, and Scotland, whose names are contained in this year's *Catholic Directory*, are either ex-Anglican ministers or the sons of converts." He states too that, but for their wives and families, the English clergy would submit to Papal authority in vast numbers. Whether this is truth or only Catholic truth, it has some corroboration in the *English Churchman*, which states that some of the Ritualist clergy put up prayers for the Pope.

John the Baptist Freund, preacher of the Lord's return, and denouncer of woe to London, has turned up again, judging by a bill which is sent to us. It is headed: "A Mighty Protest is made by several True Believers against the Anti-Christian Crusade of the following parties:—1. The Sunday League. 2. The Christadelphians; and 3. The Spiritualists and all other infidel and atheistical classes." The body of this curious production is devoted to denouncing "His Reverence the Pope," and it concludes: "We remain, for several faithful members of Christ's body, and church divine of the New Jerusalem in the Everlasting Marriage of the True Bride and True Bridegroom from heaven, to which Marriage-festival we invite you freely, yours faithfully, Percy Henry Freund, Preacher of the Lord's Return." Freund's friends should take care of him. He is evidently still troubled with that old complaint.

The Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, is hardly an authority on the subject of irreligion. No man can be who believes in the Christian Evidence Society and patronises its methods. The reverend gentleman says that men without religion, by which he means belief in God, are to be found "in the lowest grades of savage life" and "in the corrupted purlieus of European civilisation." Perhaps the Hampstead preacher will be good enough to say in what "corrupted purlieu" he found such Atheists as Charles Bradlaugh, Professor Clifford, George Jacob Holyoake, Colonel Ingersoll, and Professor Buchner. We should really like him to give us this information.

Mr. Foote's little volume in reply to Mr. Gladstone is entitled *The Grand Old Book*. We notice that the same title is now given to a volume of lectures by the Rev. A. M'Caig. The two titles are exactly the same, but in the one case it is serious, and in the other ironical.

The wisest punishment we have heard of for a while was lately given by a magistrate in Missouri. He had before him two offenders, one of whom did not know how to read and write, while the other was well educated. He sentenced the former to imprisonment till he had learned to read and the latter to keep him company till he had taught him. After three weeks, they were discharged, having fulfilled their task to the satisfaction of the magistrate.

At the winter fair at Nantes, an adventurous showman, dressed as a monk, invited the people to see the wonderful "religious rarities" which he had collected in his pilgrimages in the East. Amongst other notable objects which had come into his possession were "the apple which tempted Eve," "a bone of the fish which swallowed Jonah," and the like. A number of students from the Roman Catholic High School regarded the whole business as sacrilegious. They stormed the booth, and would have maltreated the owner but for the interference of the police.

The *Leeds Mercury*, so far as we can see, regards it as fair to reprint Mr. Hughes's letter to the *Daily Chronicle* without so much as a word of reference to Mr. Foote's letter which occasioned it. Clearly it is useless to expect a scintillation of justice from the common organs of "Liberalism." Freethinkers have only one remedy. To parody Hamlet—"the pamphlet's the thing."

The *Leeds Daily News*, referring to our heading, "The Damnation of Hugh Price Hughes," says that in later editions the word was altered to "Conviction," and calls it "a wise concession to modern susceptibilities." In reality it was nothing of the kind. We are far more concerned about truth than about "susceptibilities." The fact is, the word "Conviction" was used in one week's *Freethinker* and "Damnation" in the next.

The *Essex County Standard* is a fair specimen of orthodox scrupulosity. In face of the fact that Mr. Foote has asked Mr. Hughes to go before a Committee of Honor, this journal says that Mr. Foote constitutes himself Judge as well as Counsel for the prosecution. It is the opinion of this journal, too, that Mr. Holyoake's vindication is to be believed in preference to Mr. Foote's exposure, because the latter "is naturally interested in supporting his view of falsehood." What logic, to be sure! Mr. Foote doesn't want anybody to believe him. He scorns such a paltry trick as trying to substitute his personal honor for positive evidence. What he asks for is a judgment upon the facts.

Joseph Crookshanks and A. R. Johnstone have been squabbling over a pew in a Greenock gospel-shop, and the case had to be settled in the Sheriff's Court. It is a pity they haven't something better to do. And as they have flouted Saint Paul's orders, in going to law at all, we suppose their squabble over this seat in a church will land them both on a seat—numbered and reserved—in the place which is famous for its fried souls.

Dr. Parker expressed the opinion the other morning in the City Temple that "So far from secular education destroying religious education it would enlarge the sphere of religious education." Well, if Dr. Parker is satisfied, we are. When the day of battle comes, we shall look to see where he stands. We guess he won't be on the side of "secular education" after all.

The Bishop of Winchester, we see, is off to the Riviera, and it is reported that he intends to return before Holy Week. Mr. G. W. Foote would like a week or two in that salubrious locality. But it pays better to get up yarns about Atheist murderers than it does to show up such rubbish.

The sainted Jabez and his pious friends of the "Liberator" have done more mischief than scores who are languishing under long sentences in prison. According to the *Daily News*, six at least of the victims are known to have broken down in mind and gone into lunatic asylums, and fifty are believed to have died more or less broken-hearted, and lamenting the days when they put their trust in pious philanthropists.

The Bishop of Salisbury got a smart rap on the knuckles in the House of Lords last week. He brought a complaint against the Education Department for forbidding payment for books where the income was more than ten shillings for each child. To prove his case he read a section of the Act that had nothing to do with the case. Lord Kimberley characterised his language as "extremely offensive and wholly unjustifiable."

Islington has been much excited over the appointment of a Roman Catholic priest, at a salary of £50, for the parish workhouses and infirmary. At a meeting called in opposition to the appointment the Rev. J. Sinden opened the proceedings with prayer, but they wound up with a free fight between Catholics and Protestants. Even the reporters got black eyes and torn coats in the *melée*, which, we suppose, was an answer to prayer.

Religious riots between Moslems and Hindus have again occurred in India. At Nasick several Hindu temples and Mohammedan mosques were destroyed in the course of the disturbances, and there were many casualties on both sides. Order was not restored until the arrival of troops.

We have heard of a large shirt factory owned and managed by pious frauds who begin and end the day's toil with prayer. The wages earned by the workers hardly suffice to keep soul and body together, but the prayers are thrown in.

Mr. Hall, a Missouri representative in Congress, was recently winding up a fine peroration by referring to the miracle of casting devils into swine. The whole effect was spoiled by Mr. Hendrix, of New York, asking, "When that incident occurred, was there no sympathy for the man who lost the pork?"

Dr. Talbot, vicar of Leeds, attended a meeting of the local unemployed, at which the Chairman uttered the following prayer, in allusion to the City Fathers:—"Our fathers which

art on earth, hated by your enemies, may your end soon come; your will in Leeds be not done; give us this day some work; forgive us our persistence as we shall never forgive you; leave us not in this temptation, and deliver us from this enforced idleness, for yours is the power from now to November—then we shall arrive."

A person calling himself Professor Tyndall, and hailing from America, has applied to be allowed to hypnotise Mrs. Maybrick and establish her innocence. He says a person under the hypnotic influence cannot do other than speak the truth. We could find some excellent subjects for Mr. Tyndall's skill in certain gentlemen of the cloth.

Holy Russia has issued another persecuting edict against the Stundists, enjoining that all their children shall either participate in the orthodox religious instruction imparted by priests or seminarists in the public schools, or be forthwith expelled from those establishments.

The Tottenham Burial Board have resolved to follow the example of the Corporation of Worcester by memorialising the Home Secretary in favor of a repeal of those portions of the Burial Acts which confer upon parochial incumbents the right to receive fees in the consecrated parts of cemeteries, not only for officiating at funerals, but for vaults, grave-stones, etc. Great injustice is done to the ratepayers, who are not only taxed to provide a cemetery, but have to pay an extra tax to the clergy for land which they have not purchased; while no service is rendered for such fees. While it is admitted that existing life interests might have been protected, it is urged that there can be no justification for continuing the right to these fees in perpetuity.

"A Churchman" writes a pointed letter to the *Daily News*, asking how, supposing some future School Board should contain a majority of Secularists, Mr. Athelstan Riley would like to see a circular drafted to the teachers, telling them that while the Bible contains statements which some bodies of professing Christians have interpreted as assertions of His divinity, there are even stronger ones in the opposite direction. "Teachers should be careful to draw special attention to these latter, and to any apparent inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the narrative on this and other points."

A man called Hooper wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* and his letter was inserted right under Mr. Hughes's. He represented himself as an ex-Freethinker converted some years ago by the West London Mission. One of our friends wrote to the man for particulars; and it turns out, of course, that he was never a member of the National Secular Society, but secretary or something of a Democratic Society. Another mare's nest! How the newspapers are taken in by these "converts."

Providence not only allowed one of its gospel-shops—namely, Sowerby Bridge Parish Church—to catch on fire and get half destroyed, but it also allowed a fireman to get killed while extinguishing the flames. Poor old Providence! What on earth is the matter with it?

The Tower of Babel is coming to London; or at least the confusion of Tongues. Seventeen nationalities are to be represented at the jubilee of the Young Men's Christian Association. Of course they will have to employ interpreters. It was only the original apostles who understood every lingo on the face of the earth. Some of their successors don't even understand their own language.

There was a backward student at Balliol who, for failure to pass an examination in Greek, was "sent down." His mother went to see the master, Dr. Jowett, and explained to him what an excellent lad her son was. "It is a hard experience for him, this disgrace," said the old lady; "but he will have the consolation of religion; and there is always one book to which he can turn." Jowett eyed her for a moment, and then answered, "Yes, madam—the Greek grammar. Good morning!"

College President—"All the boys have attended prayers regularly this week." Professor—"Not one has missed for two weeks." President—"Humph! Some infernal mischief is brewing."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Thursday, Feb. 15, Hammersmith Club, The Grove, Broadway, at 8, "A Search for the Soul."

Friday, Feb. 16, Secular Hall, New Brompton, at 8, "A Search for the Soul."

Sunday, February 18, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :—11.15, "Socialism and Common Sense" (free); 7, "Lying for the Glory of God: with Illustrations from Eighteen Centuries of Christian History" (admission free, reserved seats 3d. and 6d.)

February 25, Liverpool.

March 4, Nelson; 11, Glasgow.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—February 18, Bradford; 25, Hall of Science, London; 26, Battersea; 27 and 28, Bristol. March 1, Bristol; 2, Chatham; 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.

C. E. BACON.—(1) Thanks for your cheery letter. Go on. Carry the Gospel of Freethought, as you can, into religious circles. (2) There is something abject in being thankful for Christian compliments.

H. W. LEX.—Shall appear.

T. B.—Acknowledged as "Hypatia." As you surmise, we are a good deal out of pocket, to say nothing of the expenditure of time. Thanks for your 5s. contribution towards the deficit. Every little helps.

E. ANDERSON, Ethel Villa, Goodall-road, Leytonstone, will be glad to know present address of secretary of the Leyton Branch.

J. P. GILMOUR.—Date booked. Pleased to know that you regard "the complete exposure" of the Atheist Shoemaker story as "no mean achievement."

J. W. GOTT.—We hope the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes duly appreciated your distribution of the *Freethinker* at his Bradford meeting.

A. B. MOSS is glad that we have probed Mr. Hughes's story to the bottom, and hopes the exposure will be widely circulated.

V. PAGE.—All right. Send on copy of the bill when printed.

W. A. B. & F. P.—Thanks. Mr. Foote is "quite well," as you hope; in first-rate condition, in fact. He hopes to visit Plymouth in April or May if the "saints" can get a hall there for his lectures.

F. H. H.—The pathetic case of your brother's death is corroborative of our expressed view that Mr. Hughes's convert could not possibly have cried out exultingly a few moments before his death from consumption.

W. H. BAKER.—We think you will be pleased and satisfied with the pamphlet in every respect. We know when to let our pen prance and when to rein it in. If the Camberwell friends subscribe £3 or £4 10s., they shall of course have two or three thousand copies placed at their disposal. Any other Branch that subscribes £1 10s. shall have a thousand, and so on in proportion. Many thanks for your action in the matter.

J. HUGHES.—The quotation from *Othello* is very appropriate.

ANTI-LIAR.—Your protest is unfortunately but too well called for. But patience!

C. C. MONK.—It doesn't pay to spend a lot of time in nailing down every paltry little lie about Secularists, especially when they are told by obscure blackguards who are only seeking an advertisement. You must let us decide when it is worth while to take action. We are quite satisfied with the progress the Cause is making. Certainly we need more money, but more has been raised of late than ever for party purposes.

L. J.—It is, as you say, "sincerely to be hoped that the cash will be raised immediately, so that the iron may be struck while it is hot."

J. HAMPSON.—Yes, that is the worst of Mr. Holyoake's "vindications." Papers like your Bolton *Evening News*, that gave a notice of that sorry document, are utterly silent about the exposure in the *Freethinker*, although they have been furnished with copies. It is for this very reason that the pamphlet exposure is imperatively necessary.

A. G. SCOPES.—We know that you have been a tower of strength to the Ipswich Branch. Send us the report you speak of, and it shall be dealt with. Do you still think a Sunday visit from Mr. Foote would be useful, and possible?

P. E. WHELAN.—Much obliged, but an article on the subject was already in type. Shall we return your copy? If so, please send your full address.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Glad to hear the Huddersfield friends are so satisfied with our action in the matter. We always like to do a job thoroughly. Other faults we have, no doubt, but we never scamped a bit of work.

R. DAVISON.—Your subscription will put several neat little nails in that lie's coffin.

D. CHURCH.—Never fear. We will not spare him one iota.

FLINTWICK.—Your description of the man is good.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—You will know the reason when we tell you that Robert Forder has been very ill. He has been away from business for a fortnight. Happily he is now improving, though he still looks pale and weak.

SHAREHOLDERS in the National Secular Hall Society (Limited), who have changed their addresses during the last twelve months, should communicate with Miss Vance, the secretary, at 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C., so that they may receive the report and balance-sheet.

H. E.—(1) Let the reverend gentleman send the letter you refer to, and if it is not positively unfit for publication it shall be inserted. (2) The debate on polygamy is in Mr. Wheeler's library. It was published at Utah in 1876. (3) It is not exactly for us to say how far Mr. Hughes's lying affects Christianity. Everyone must judge for himself.

ALASTOR.—(1) Shelley's pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, is extremely rare. We believe only two copies are known to exist. Some day we may try to get the owner of one of them to let us reprint it. The pamphlet we have already published is *A Refutation of Deism*, 4d. (2) It is not possible to get a divorce on the ground that husband or wife is an Atheist.

S. THOMPSON.—Glad you think we always get hold of "the right end of the stick." We generally have a good look at it before grasping it.

J. L. S.—We appreciate the compliment.

J. ANDREWS.—Self-restraint is a necessity. Every step of a man in Mr. Foote's position must be like a move in a difficult game. The thing is to win, and if you lose it is a small consolation to know that your brain was obscured by a generous emotion.

A. W. OXLEY.—Sorry we cannot give you the address. The only Frederic Harrison we know of is the Positivist.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks.

H. PORTER.—See our announcement about the pamphlet.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH.—There is no news yet of Col. Ingersoll's coming over to England. We are afraid his English admirers will have to cross the herring-pond to hear him.

H. C. JACQUES.—Yes, the pamphlet will have to do the business.

P. J. WALSH.—Thanks. Bits of that kind go in where they happen to fit.

G. JACOB.—Mr. Gibson could not sue Mr. Hughes for libelling his dead son.

FRANK BULL, who sends his own mite, thinks that the necessity of exposing the Hughes falsehood is "sufficient to rouse every Freethinker to contribute something towards this object."

R. HARVEY.—Mr. Foote has no desire to shirk his full responsibility. He did advise the committee of the Portsmouth Branch not to let their hall to Anarchists or any other body on the Sunday, but to keep it entirely in their own hands on that day. At the same time, he advised them that, if any of their members were Anarchists and wanted an expository lecture on Anarchism, it should be arranged for by the Branch and delivered under their auspices, so that they might be able, if necessary, to prevent their hall being used for the promotion of a policy of violence.

H. WOOTTON.—Capital! See "Sugar Plums."

H. BURCHER.—Thanks. It will do good to circulate the pamphlet amongst the local Wesleyans.

F. SHEPPARD says—"A copy of last week's *Freethinker* which I left at the Battersea Library, has received a considerable amount of attention; whenever I looked in someone was reading it."

D. F. GLOAK.—Thanks for your interesting letter. We are glad to hear you are all so pleased with Mr. Watts at Dundee. Bring the debate off between him and the Rev. David Macrae if you possibly can.

JOHN SANDERSON.—Delighted to hear from you again, and hope you are now in good health.

H. C. LONG.—Mr. Bradlaugh was constantly advising Freethinkers to withdraw their children from religious instruction, but he did not produce much effect, for the simple reason that parents shrink from martyring their little ones. We must fight hard for Secular Education. That is the only satisfactory remedy.

J. T. R.—Mr. Walter Richard Cassells is supposed to be the author of *Supernatural Religion*. A section of the Talmud is referred to. Rabbi Wise endorses the position of Mr. Austin Bierbower in his *Was Christ Crucified?*

C. DOEG.—Glad to hear the Liverpool friends will subscribe.

LOCOMOTIVE.—You shall have some of the pamphlet.

W. H. PHILLIPS.—You will see by a paragraph in "Sugar Plums" that we have heard from Mr. Holyoake at last. We hope to hear from him still more satisfactorily next week.

F. WILFORD.—Hope it is right this time.

AN ADMIRER.—We remember it well. Mr. Hughes had to apologise to the Music Hall management under a threat of prosecution.

J. FRANCE.—See paragraph.

J. H. SUMMERFIELD.—Next week.

JOSEPH BROWN.—Shall have best attention.

A. HOBGEN.—Your name, we take it, means "son of a hog," and your post-card shows that you live up to your name.

W. ROGERS.—Your old friend Mr. Holyoake is now making another investigation, which may supersede the old one.

J. K. SYKES.—Our cat that used to knock at the door has just had to be poisoned. The instance you refer to is not the only one we have heard of.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—We have received: W. C. Hockey, 4s.

J. & J. CHARTREE.—Pleased to hear from such young friends in the movement.

E. A. RYMER.—You see we are going to circulate the pamphlet gratuitously.

W. C. HOCKEY.—Acknowledged this week.

A. ADDY.—Sorry to hear the lock-out so seriously affected the Barnsley Branch, but hope you will soon recover.

FOR CIRCULATING THE *Freethinker* EXPOSURE ARTICLES:—T. Robertson, 2s. 6d.; One Who Knows how Gospel Truth is Manufactured, £1.

M. OMAR BYRNE, secretary of the Liverpool Moslem Institute, advises Mr. Hughes to study Revelation xxii. 16.

IMPRIMATUR.—Your second subscription may be wanted, but it should not be. There are quite enough Freethinkers, who can afford it, to make up the £100.

M. LOAFER.—The statistics of their membership, published by the Wesleyans themselves, show that they are not increasing in proportion to population. A series of articles on the Decline of Methodism has been appearing in the *Liver* of Liverpool.

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—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—Leeds Express—Reynolds's Newspaper—Western Daily Mercury—Essex Telegraph—Financial News—Indicator—Echo—Boston Guardian—Sowerby Bridge Chronicle—Isle of Man Times—Glasgow Evening News—To-Day—Globe—Egmont Star—Buddhist Ray—Abergele Visitor—Crescent—Islamic World—Freedom—Essex County Standard—La Verité Philosophique—Federation Française de la Libre-Pensée Bulletin Mensuel—Twentieth Century.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. *The Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—(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.

## WANTED—A HUNDRED POUNDS.

I AM putting this Atheist Shoemaker exposure into the form of a thirty-two page pamphlet, and I want to see it circulated immediately and extensively. If I publish it at a price to cover the cost, the circulation will be slow and ineffectual. I have therefore resolved to appeal for the sum of £100, in order to get the exposure circulated as it should be. I reckon that I can print a large edition of the pamphlet, at cost price, at £1 10s. per thousand copies. By way of securing a real interest on the part of the distributors, I propose to charge a nominal price of one penny per dozen; while reserving, of course, the right to dispense with this charge in special cases. What accrues in this way, together with the £100 I appeal for, will furnish the

cost of nearly 100,000 copies, which ought to find their way into all parts of the country within the next few weeks. The iron must be struck while it is hot. It should not be difficult to raise £100. Half a-dozen Freethinkers I know of could easily make up the whole sum between them. But others must not rely on that half-dozen. Those who feel the spirit move them should obey the inspiration *at once*. There is really not a moment to be lost. For my own part, I have taken a vast deal of trouble over this matter, and incurred an expense which I can ill afford. I now ask others to take their share of the burden. If they help me as they should, we shall run the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes down, and do a splendid stroke of work for the Freethought cause.

Mr. Holyoake having now broken silence, and promised to send me a letter on the Gibson case, I am holding back the pamphlet for a few days in order to include at least an adequate reference to his communication. My readers may expect it by the middle of the week, with the next number of the *Freethinker*.

Should money enough be forthcoming, I intend to send the pamphlet by post to all the Nonconformist ministers in England, and, if possible, to the Church clergy; also to members of Parliament and other public men whose addresses can be obtained.

G. W. FOOTE.

## FUND FOR NAILING DOWN THE "ATHEIST SHOEMAKER" LIE.

George Anderson £5 5s., F. S. £5, J. Hughes £1 1s., Anti-Liar £1, C. O. Monk 2s., Rubber Stamp Co. (Manchester) 10s., L. J. 7s. 6d., J. Hampson 5s., C. E. Hall 5s., W. H. Spivey 1s., R. Davison £1, D. Church £2 2s., E. V. Storry 10s., Flintwich 2s. 6d., A. G. Scopes 10s., J. D. £2 2s., W. A. B. and F. P. 10s., J. W. Gott 2s. 6d., Hypatia 5s., Bristol Branch 5s., C. E. Bacon 2s. 6d., A. Tarlton 2s., G. Harlow 5s., J. P. Brown 5s., W. Westwell £2 2s., W. Hopper 3s., J. English 2s. 6d., C. Smith 2s., J. Sanderson 2s. 6d., H. C. Jacques 2s., R. R. King 2s., S. Thompson 2s. 6d., G. Simpson 2s. 6d., J. L. S. (Gateshead) 10s., L. W. W. 6d., H. Butcher 10s. 6d., Robinson 5s., J. Camomilo 2s. 6d., W. H. Murton 1s., W. A. Argall 1s., T. Prestwich 3s., J. Jones and S. Jones 1s., M. Christopher 5s., T. Robson 1s., Chester-le-Street Branch 2s. 6d., F. Sheppard 5s., F. Bull 2s., H. Porter 6d., G. Vickers 1s., J. Cherry 2s. 6d., Mr. and Mrs. Samson £1, Dick Edwards 10s., Mr. and Mrs. Mann 10s., W. Larnor Sugden 10s., F. Wilford 1s., K. A. G. 2s., W. H. Phillips 1s. 6d., Imprimatur 10s., J. and J. Crabtree 5s., J. J. Hayes 1s., J. G. Dobson 2s., W. Roger 5s.

*Hall of Science*: Collected by Miss Vance, Feb. 4, £1 2s., ditto Feb. 11, £2 3s., A Lover of Truth £1, Frank Smith 10s., Mrs. Heineman 1s., G. F. Heineman 2s., F. J. Drake 2s. 6d., J. Weir 2s., G. Richardson 1s., Blackett 1s., Boszant 1s., J. Dias 1s., Anon 1s.

*Per R. Forder*: R. H. Side £1, A. Lewis 2s. 6d., Truthseeker (Brighton) £1, S. M. Peacock 5s., A. J. Page 2s. 6d., J. K. Sykes 5s., J. Hogg 2s., W. Wingate 2s., W. Mack 1s., J. H. D. £1 1s., A. J. Larkin 2s. 6d., F. J. Voisey 2s. 6d., We Seek for Truth 5s., A. J. P. 1s., C. J. P. £1, F. S. C. 1s., R. Burch 6d., F. Hayward 1s., E. H. P. 1s. 6d., G. F. Wenborn 5s.

To ask for evidence is not generally regarded as a symptom of a brain diseased. Delusions, illusions, phantoms, hallucinations, apparitions, chimeras, and visions are the common property of the religious and the insane. Persons blessed with sound minds and healthy bodies rely on facts, not fancies—on demonstrations, instead of dreams. It seems to me that the most orthodox Christians must admit that many of the miracles recorded in the New Testament are extremely childish. They must see that the miraculous draught of fishes, changing water into wine, fasting for forty days, inducing devils to leave an insane man by allowing them to take possession of swine, walking on the water, and using a fish for a pocket-book, are all unworthy of an infinite being, and are calculated to provoke laughter—to feed suspicion and engender doubt.—*Ingersoll*.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake has broken silence at last, and we are very happy to inform our readers of the fact. We received the following communication from him on Tuesday afternoon: "Dear Sir,—My engagements in the north, which ended at Leighton on Saturday night, being over, I have a few days at home. I will now look over your recent numbers and send you a reply next week. An appointment to attend the Federation meetings at Portsmouth three days this week I have resigned, or I should have no time to fulfil the promise I now make.—Very truly,—G. J. HOLYOAKE."

There was a splendid audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. Of course it was not quite so crowded as on the previous Sunday evening, but every seat in the hall was occupied, and a good many persons were standing. Mr. J. Brumage took the chair, and filled it well, looking the fine old veteran he is. Mr. Foote lectured on "The Damnation of Hugh Price Hughes," and for nearly an hour and a half the audience was wonderfully sympathetic and responsive. As the saying is, you might have heard a pin drop at the beginning of the final peroration, as Mr. Foote referred to ten years ago, when he was looking forward in a prison cell to his being soon again a free man and a fighter in the great army of Freethought. Christians did not spare him a moment of suffering, and why, he asked, should he spare this Christian utterer of forged tales, this convicted liar, who, with the cant of honor and brotherhood upon his lips, thought any falsehood good enough to serve his pious purpose? At which there was immense applause. After the lecture a good many questions were asked, several of them referring to Mr. Holyoake. One gentleman thought the party should send a messenger to interview him at Brighton, but Mr. Foote begged to have the matter left in his hands, and the audience appeared to think that this was after all the wisest course to pursue.

Mr. Foote's morning audience on Sunday was also exceptionally good, and it yielded a good collection for the working expenses. The subject was "Can Poverty be Abolished?" The lecturer dealt with its principle causes, and suggested certain practical remedies. His address was very closely followed and warmly applauded, and was followed by a lot of questions and discussion, in which several Socialists took part in a tolerant and friendly manner. This morning (Feb. 18) Mr. Foote lectures again on "Socialism and Common Sense." The admission to these morning lectures is entirely free to all parts of the hall, and as Mr. Foote gives his services gratuitously on these occasions he can appeal with a good grace for a liberal collection. It is really worth while to keep a platform open on Sunday mornings for the free discussion of social and political questions.

Mr. Foote's lecture at the Hall of Science this evening will not be on "The Old Redeemer and the New Redemption." It will be on "Lying for the Glory of God: with Illustrations from Eighteen Centuries of Christian History." This lecture should be interesting to others as well as to Freethinkers, and it will afford the defenders of Christianity an opportunity of supporting their faith at one of its weakest points.

Mr. G. W. Foote has got the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes on the hip, and now all that is left for the rev. gentleman to do is to eat the leek. Although Mr. Foote asks for a committee of honor to decide the matter at issue, it is obvious to any one who has followed the dispute that Mr. Price Hughes has been beaten, smashed, and utterly pulverised at every point. The converted Atheist shoemaker retires, like millions of phantoms before him, into the dim shade of pious nonsense. The self-advertising preacher of to-day is ever ready to believe the worst of his opponents. First, try to convict the heretics of immorality, and, if you can't do that, manage a death-bed conversion—that's the whole duty of a preacher. The sky-pilots have always been at this little game. The Roman Catholic priests swear that Voltaire died reconciled to the faith that he sneered away; the Jesuits aver that Pascal repented at the last of his sins against their order; and, coming down to later times, was it not spread abroad that Charles Bradlaugh died a Christian? Moral: Never believe a parson. He may possess the "terewth," but he very seldom deals out any of it.—*Reynolds's Newspaper.*

The Bristol Branch unananimously congratulates Mr. Foote

on his action (and its results) in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker story.

The Jarrow Branch sends us this resolution:—"That we desire to express our approval of Mr. Foote's conduct in disproving the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's lying story of the Converted Atheist."

The Leeds *Evening Express* warns Mr. Hughes that "dignity is sometimes a treacherous foothold," and tells him that he should say, for the benefit of other people, if he cannot reply to Mr. Foote, "whether he was correct or had erred in his original statements." After quoting the reverend gentleman's remarks as to what Mr. Foote "might have had" if he had only talked of Mr. Hughes as "mistaken or misled" instead of lying, the *Express* asks—"Does this mean that Mr. Hughes has been misled? If so, why not candidly say so?"

Mr. Weightman, of the Sunderland Branch, lectured last Sunday on "Lying for the Glory of God," with special reference to the Atheist Shoemaker story. There was a good audience and some discussion. The Christians who were present confessed that they rather pitied Mr. Hughes.

The Chester-le-Street Branch sends Mr. Foote a vote of thanks, and hopes he will raise the £100 to circulate his pamphlet on the Atheist Shoemaker story.

The Finsbury Branch congratulates Mr. Foote on his exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's story, and says he has completely torn the mask of honesty from the reverend gentleman's face. It should be added that the Finsbury Branch conducts the open-air propaganda on Clerkenwell-green, where Mr. Hughes's convert was such an "illustrious obscure" advocate of Atheism.

Hugh Price Hughes was at Wolverhampton on Tuesday, Feb. 6, preaching an afternoon sermon in Darlington-street Chapel. Sandwich men paraded the street advertising his evening meeting in the Agricultural Hall. In the middle of the procession there was insinuated a young fellow sent out by the local Secularists, with a sandwich board containing the *Freethinker* contents-sheet—"Hugh Price Hughes—Atheist Shoemaker—Complete Exposure—The Lie Nailed Down at Last." It was a pretty sight.

Mr. Charles Watts's three lectures last week in Dundee were very successful. The audiences were good and exceedingly enthusiastic. Friends had travelled over thirty miles to be present. Arrangements are being made for a public discussion between our colleague and the principal minister of Dundee. Mr. Watts writes us in the highest terms of the Dundee Branch of the N.S.S., and also of the energetic services of Mr. Gloak as secretary. Several new members were enrolled after each lecture, and there was a large sale of literature.

Notwithstanding the severe storm that prevailed in Edinburgh last Sunday, Mr. Watts had a crowded audience in the evening, a large number of ladies being present. Mr. Brown made an efficient chairman, and the *Freethinker* was in great demand. Several dozen extra copies were ordered, and all were sold. To-day (Sunday, Feb. 18) Mr. Watts lectures in Bradford, morning and evening for the local Branch of the N.S.S., and in the afternoon for the Sunday Society on "The French Revolution."

Barnsley Branch members should notice that the Sunday meetings are to be held at 1 p.m. instead of 7.

Mr. J. Keast is to address the Men's Discussion Class in the Rev. J. M. Logan's chapel at Bristol this afternoon (Feb. 18) at 3, his subject being "The Saviors of Mankind." Mr. Keast is a well-known Freethinker, and it is to be hoped that he will be supported by the presence of a good many of his "co-infidels."

Wednesday evening, Feb. 28, is the date of the N.S.S. social party at the London Hall of Science. There will be music, songs, and readings, one of which will be given by Mr. G. W. Foote; and the wind-up will be a dance for those who have a relish for it. The tickets are only sixpence, and there should be a large gathering. We may add that these

social parties will be continued until the summer comes, on the last Wednesday in each month.

There is a struggle going on in the South Essex Secular Society over the name. One or two members (who, by the bye, have done harm to the cause by making division in the ranks) are going to extremes in favor of the term "ethical." A name is of no good whatever unless it describes that which bears it, and the work of a Secular Society is vastly different to that of the Ethical societies now in existence.

Mr. Foote has booked Sunday, March 11, for three lectures at Glasgow. Scottish friends who want to hear him before he returns south should lose no time in communicating with him.

Mr. W. W. Collins, who went out from England about half a dozen years ago as a Freethought lecturer in Australasia, has for the last four years been located in New Zealand, and has at length received the distinction of being elected to the local parliament under the new universal suffrage. He was elected for the important City of Christchurch, where he received 3,850 votes. The *Egmont Star* gives a sketch of his career.

At Normanby School Board election, the Rev. E. F. S. Besley, late clerical chairman, was defeated, and, better still, Mr. J. Hermison, a pronounced Secularist, was elected on the board.

Something like an exact basis for the early existence of civilised man in ancient Egypt is adduced by Sir Norman Lockyer in his just published work, *The Dawn of Astronomy*. His calculations assure him that the temple at Philæ and other places in Upper Egypt were oriented towards the rising of the star of Canopus so early as 6400 B.C., long antecedent to the biblical Adam, while the great temple of Karnak dates about 3700 B.C.

As a sign of how far Scotland is moving, take the following report of a lecture by the Rev. Mr. Martin, of the Morningside Free Church, on the "Inerrancy of the Bible." "It was now more and more generally accepted, he said, that the Bible did contain historical inaccuracies. Its authority was a varying quantity. Various writers differed considerably. One man stood nearer to God than another, and consequently he had more to declare to the world. The inspired man's writings were not so much to be relied upon as those of the uninspired man, and as all men were fallible so were their writings. In discussing the question as to what portions of the Bible were to be accepted as infallible, he said people could not expect that God was to give them a revelation according their own mind. It was not meant that the matter should be made too easy for them, but that they should work it out according to their faith. Mr. Martin quoted several portions of scripture showing how much the one was at entire variance with the other from a historical point of view." Shades of Drs. Begg and Candlish, what is auld Reekie coming to!

The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, in an article on the Gifford Lectures by Dr. Pfeleiderer, says they have to seek abroad for a lecturer because of the divorce between intellect and the Church. Dr. Pfeleiderer's course it terms an exposition of a distinctly "rationalistic" theory, which rejects one after one as mere "modes of faith" a host of the most cherished dogmas of the orthodox creed. The real wonder, it continues, "is not that our prudent divines have had engagements elsewhere, but that the pulpits of the land have not been thundering forth sonorous denunciations of this 'dangerous heretic.' Scotland must have undergone a marvellous change within the last quarter of a century in matters religious. Not only is she moving, but she has moved, and moved far." If the Gifford trustees would accept a course of lectures, as from the terms of Lord Gifford's will they might, from a reverent Atheist, they might find some at home without having to send to Germany.

February 8 was the centenary of the *Morning Advertiser*, and they issued a facsimile of the first number, for Feb. 8, 1794. One of the most prominent items was on Thomas Paine, who had been arrested at the end of 1793. It detailed how, at the sittings of the French Convention on Jan. 27, a deputation of Americans were introduced. The orator

"requested the pardon of Thomas Paine, that apostle of Liberty, whose arrest was a species of triumph to all the tyrants on earth." The President replied: "You request us to deliver up Thomas Paine. You are anxious to reconduct to your own side the asserter of the Rights of Man. We must applaud this generous devotion. Thomas Paine was born in England—that was enough to subject him to the decree which our own safety demanded by the revolutionary laws. The Convention will take into consideration your demand." Paine was not released till Nov. 3, 1794, after the fall of Robespierre.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway has found a hitherto unknown work of Paine's, written between the dates of the first part of the *Rights of Man* and that of the second part—that is, between March, 1791, and the beginning of 1792. The MSS. was not intended for publication, being answers to questions put to Paine, probably by Condorcet, though perhaps by Lafayette, on the proposed character of the new French Constitution. The MSS. was translated and published by Condorcet in the *Chronique du Mois* (May, June, July, 1792), where it has remained buried since. Much of its substance appears in the second part of the *Rights of Man*.

"An Ex-Methodist" writes a timely letter to the *Western Daily Mercury* (Plymouth), which is a paper that gave long extracts from Mr. Holyoake's "vindication," drawing attention "in common fairness" to Mr. Foote's replies in the *Freethinker*, and asserting that the "complete vindication" is with the latter.

Orthodox persons like the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, who chuckle over their anticipation of the speedy demise of the *Freethinker*, will be shocked to learn that our circulation is improving. The "twopence" that was to kill us in a few weeks hasn't done anything of the kind yet, and doesn't seem likely to unless a special miracle is to be worked to our disadvantage. The journal has a public of its own, and an earnest public too, and we are confident that if some man of capital came along, and put an adequate sum of money into it as a mere business enterprise, he would get a first-rate return for his investment. We calculate that there are at least ten thousand persons in England who would join the ranks of our present subscribers if the *Freethinker* were only brought before their notice and made more easily purchasable from newsagents.

#### NEW YEAR'S GIFT TO FREETHOUGHT.

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

G. Childs 2s. 6d., R. Seago 10s., W. C. Hockey, G. Ridd, L. Fraser, S. Fraser, W. Wasley.

Per R. Forder: G. Lucas 2s., J. Anton, A. Gibson 10s. 6d., J. Morris, J. Wortley, C. Nash, T. Cockburn, O. Channing, A. Lewis (2nd don.) 2s. 6d., J. M. L. 2s. 6d., G. Harlow 10s. 6d., J. H. Toyn, Mrs. Penny, G. F. Wenborn 5s., A. J. Larkin 2s. 6d., T. Bird 2s., D. Smith 2s. 6d., G. Doeg, A. R. A. 2s. 1d., H. Abbott 5s., T. Robertson 2s. 6d., W. Tiffin, W. Macfarlane 2s. 6d.

#### CHILDREN'S PARTY.

Collected in Hyde Park, 4s.; East London Branch, 2s. 6d.; G. Wenborn, 9d.; W. C. (Dorking), 2s. 6d.; J. E. S., 9d.; Mr. Sosemann, 5s.; E. Truelove, 4s. Per J. Fagan: J. Fagan, 1s.; J. Blunt, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Blunt, 1s.; A. Henley, 1s.; W. R. Cobham, 1s.; E. Schoaf, 1s.; Boemer, 1s.; E. Neary, 6d. Per Mrs. Billet, 1s. 6d.; Mrs. Standing, 2s.; A. Wheeler, 4s.; "Seventeen Stone," 1s. 6d.—R. FORDER, Treasurer.

If instead of the "glad tidings" that there exists a being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that "the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving" does not sanction them, convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say, in plain terms, that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do—he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.—J. S. Mill.

## Independent Department.

## IS THERE A GOD?

N. M. X. offers us words instead of facts or ideas. His God is merely a may be. There may be Mahatmas, devils, fairies, imps, gnomes, incubi, succubi, three-headed ghosts, and as many gods as in the Hindu Pantheon. Why believe in words which clear up nothing, and would only add another mystery to those we have already. He says by the word "God" is meant "the being who, according to the Bible, created the heaven and the earth." What does he mean by creation? Can he conceive of a time when God over all was God over nothing? Did he, she, or it, spin the universe out of him, her, or itself, like a spider spins its web? He asks, Who made the stars? without giving any evidence they were made or needed personal makers.

He says, "Where there is law there must be a law-maker." (Why not law-makers?) Again he is playing with words. The term "law," like that of "design," is but an analogy drawn from human works, and strictly speaking, is inapplicable to the operations of nature. I draw my violin bow over a steel plate sprinkled with sand, and the sand arranges itself in "designs." But what relation has this to human designs or human "law"? The phrase applied to natural forces means nothing more than the observed constant sequences of causes and effects. N. M. X. speaks of a first cause. The phrase is a contradiction in terms. Every cause is itself an effect. Observe the consequence of saying God, some personal being exterior to the universe, that is outside everything, made its "laws." He, she, or it, must have done so at some particular time, whether 6,000 or 6,000 billions of years ago. But there must have been unlimited time, prior to the first law, when there was no law. Did God exist for ages in chaos? If law ever existed it needs no law-maker. If the universe has ever existed, it needs no maker. Such a nondescript he, she, or it, is *de trop*. As Charles Robert Newman, the brother of Cardinal Newman, points out in his *Essays on Rationalism*, the Theist confuses two distinct principles of order, the natural and the artificial. Man "designs," Nature *is*.

N. M. X. talks of "chance." Again he darkens counsel by words without knowledge. Does his arbitrary God exist by "chance," and create by chance? or has he, she, or it, perchance dissolved like the baseless fabric of a vision since starting the universe? It would seem so, since it gets along just as well without as with such a being. He says "there is no such thing as spontaneous generation, for science has exploded such an assumption." What he means is the evidence that it takes place *now*. He might as well argue because there is no natural formation of diamonds now, that therefore they were never naturally formed, but needed some god to put them there. N. M. X. writes like a reasonable person, but to me the incomprehensible nondescript he terms God is as much a fetish as Mumbo Jumbo, or "the God of the Jew or the Christian." ATHEOS.

N. M. X. is certainly correct in saying that the Atheist does not deny the existence of a God; for, as I have elsewhere\* shown, to the Atheist the word "God" has no meaning except when used generically, as it is in reference to, say, the deities of the Roman Pantheon. And the trouble is that the Atheist cannot get from the Theist any definition of the word "God" which is not, logically, untenable.

N. M. X. says God is the being who "created the heaven and the earth"; the being of all beings, the cause of all causes; the being whose existence had no beginning, and shall have no end. And N. M. X. tells us further, that this being is *not* nature. But what is meant by a being other than Nature? Just look at the matter in this way. Without any desire or effort of our own we find ourselves here in what we call the universe. Now, when we come to examine the universe in the light of science, we find it impossible, by any effort of the imagination, to assign any limit to it. We cannot imagine a time when the universe was not; nor can we imagine a point where the universe ends and non-universe begins. Neither can we assign any limit to that invariable sequence of phenomena which we call natural law. One phenomenon gives rise to another; that, in turn, to a third; that, again, to a fourth, and so on *ad infinitum*,—every cause becoming an effect and every effect a cause.

So that, being thus unable to assign any limit to the

universe, we are constrained to regard it as infinite, and potential for all phenomena. Well, that is just what the Atheist means by nature or matter. Here is a metal pencil-case. Now, just as, when we speak of the nature of this metal, we mean the total powers and properties of this thing, so by nature—using that word in the abstract—we mean the total powers and properties of all things. Nature means, as J. S. Mill says, all phenomena and all possible causes of phenomena. And Atheism, as Mr. Bradlaugh put it, in his debate with Dr. McCann, is Monism—that is, the affirmation of one existence, of which all phenomena are modes; interstellar space being, I would add, simply a mode of existence less palpable than those we call the liquid, the gaseous, or the solid.

From this it will be seen how absurd it is to suppose, as most opponents of Atheism, N. M. X. *not* included, do, that the Atheist is one who says "there is no God." For, in positing boundless universe, the Atheist affirms the existence of the infinite. And, therefore, if God be defined simply as the infinite, the Atheist does not deny the existence of God, so defined. But N. M. X. speaks of God as a being other than the universe! Well, if God be defined in that way, then the Atheist *does* deny God's existence. For that would imply the infinite plus "a cause of all causes." But to speak of the infinite *plus something more*, is absurd. Therefore the Atheist does deny the existence of God, so defined, as positively as he denies that  $3 \times 1 = 1$ . And for precisely the same reason. The proposition  $3 \times 1 = 1$  involves a contradiction in thought. Therefore, we are perfectly justified in denying it. And so also with N. M. X.'s proposition—Nature plus "a creative and creating being"—that likewise involves a contradiction in thought. Therefore we are justified in positively denying that also.

The truth is, that "God" is a word which expresses only our ignorance of Nature's processes. All that science is as yet unable to explain is attributed to the action of a holy ghost or "spirit," called God. Formerly, the domain of this being was much more extensive than it now is. As, however, science has explained one group of phenomena after another, this God has been pushed farther and farther into the background, until we now have Theists, like N. M. X., clinging to this belief for no better reason than that science cannot yet explain the origin of life. But life is merely one mode of existence, which science may sooner or later explain, as it has explained other modes.

To ask "whence came existence itself?" is absurd. Existence could never have been less, by a single atom, than it is now; else Nothing must have become Something. But *ex nihilo nihil fit*. "An' there's an end on't," as Somersetshire folk say. A. LIDDLE.

[Several other replies remain over until next week.]

During almost a hundred and fifty years Europe was afflicted by religious wars, religious massacres, and religious persecutions; not one of which would have arisen if the great truth had been recognised, that the state has no concern with the opinions of men, and no right to interfere, even in the slightest degree, with the form of worship which they may choose to adopt.—Buckle's "History of Civilisation in England," vol. 1.

Philosophers, poets, historians, novelists, openly or silently disavow Christianity. In palaces, in lovely mansions, in college halls, in secluded homesteads, and here and there in rectory or vicarage, scepticism, if it has not a bold and fearless utterance, at least expresses itself in a guarded whisper. It becomes doubly a duty then, when, notwithstanding the general diffusion of avowed or latent unbelief, we trace everywhere the presence of a conservatism that conceals and hesitates and trembles at the doubts which it cannot suppress, that individual dissentients should candidly disclose their theological divergences.—W. M. W. Call, "Reverberations," p. 37.

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\* See my articles, "Is Theism Reasonable?", in the *National Reformer* for May 7, 14, and 21, 1893.

ANTI-CHRIST.

THE rules of life that tend to raise our lives,  
Are latent in our growing racial store  
Of tested fact, whence valid thought derives  
The countless factors of our ethic lore.

Let none e'er seek to guide his social acts  
By simple predilections and desires;  
Discard the "golden rule," and look to facts  
Impersonal for all that Right requires.

Desires are diverse—good and bad, and worse—  
Whence hurtful and conflicting deeds result;  
But science, guiding ev'ry sense, will nurse  
Ideals born of Reason's noble cult.

Our racial childhood's faith thought earth and we  
Were steadfast in the focus of the sphere;  
Our racial manhood's reason makes us see  
The greater grandeur of celestial gear.

Our appetites and tastes must all be schooled  
To wait on Reason, fed with sifted fact;  
To follow sense would leave us all befooled,  
Mirage-deceived, through life's uncharted tract.

No geocentric universe in space;  
No ego-centric ethics on the earth;  
But concentrated wisdom of the race,  
In which right rules of conduct have their birth.

No cynosure are we of orbs that whirl  
The rhythmic measure of the cosmic hymn!  
No hub are we of heaven's eternal swirl!  
But "unconsidered trifles" on the rim!

The sternest lesson that we learn from life  
Is: Fact is fact, but neither love nor hate;  
Relentless force, but neither peace nor strife;  
Effect and cause, but neither small nor great.

Let, therefore, reasoned facts alone inspire  
The social unit in his thoughts and deeds;  
Nor do what he from others would desire,  
But what he thinks is best for social needs.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

EXPLAINING THE TEXT.

Among the passengers on the "Paris" was a jolly, red-faced Irish priest, returning from a visit to relatives in the old country to resume his charge in Ohio. He was a strong believer in the power of "a drap af mountain dew" to avert the terrors of sea-sickness as well as of most other ills of life, and had to endure a good deal of guying from the boys in the smoking-room on account of this weakness, which he would not acknowledge as in the slightest degree unclerical. Finally, Billy Sherman said to him one morning: "Father Malory, I suppose you could preach on almost any text in the Bible?"

"Sure, yis, me bhoy. Oi can preach on any tixt in the Bible or out af it ayther. Just troy me wanst."

"Well, then, how would you preach on the text, "Look not upon the wine when it is red within the cup?" asked Billy.

The priest's eyes twinkled as he saw the trap.

"Oh, nothing aisier," he replied with a graceful wave of the hand. "Oid tell me congregation:

"Me dear-r-r brothers and sisters, this tixt is wan av the most beautiful and impressive in the whole blissid wur-rd av God. There is more in it than appears on the soorface. "Look not upon the wine whin it is rid within the cup!" That is to say, me dear friends, look not upon it coldly or doubtingly. Look not upon it with the jaundiced eye av prejudice or distrust. Look not upon it with contempt or loathing. But whin the marcifal kindness av the blissid saints in heaven allows yee to partake of the bounteous juice av the noble grape, seize the cup in yer hands, close yer eyes as yez place it to yer mouth, throw back yer head, and thin—shmack yer lips and be thankful!"

During a storm at sea, three sailors, representing England, Ireland, and Scotland, had recourse to very different devotional expedients. The Scotsman offered up an appropriate extempore prayer; the Irishman had his prayers to the Virgin and countless saints by heart; the Englishman wandered through the ship in search of a prayer-book, and did not succeed in finding one until the storm was over.

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**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. W. Foote, "Socialism and Common Sense" (free); 6.30, musical selections: 7, G. W. Foote, "Lying for the Glory of God" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class (free). Wednesday at 8.15, W. Heaford, "Secularism v. the Bible" (free). 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, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "Women and Freethought" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free) Wednesday at 8, Children's Party. Friday at 8, dramatic club (members wanted).

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, H. Snell, "Rousseau and Voltaire." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Finsbury Park Branch, 91 Mildmay Park: 3, members' annual meeting.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Feb. 22, at 8.30, C. Cohen, "The Scientific Basis of Morals" (free). South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 7, G. C. H. Carter, "Secular Ethics" (free).

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, Miss Agnes Henry, "The State and Ecclesiastical Law" (free).

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Problem of Evil."

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

**COUNTRY.**

Bolton—Spinners' Hall, St George's-road: A. B. Moss, 11, "Voltaire and Paine"; 3, "The Drift of Darwinism"; 6.30, "The Evolution of the Devil."

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 85 Sunbridge-road: Charles Watts, 11, "The Church and our Social Problems"; 6.30, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?"

Bradford Sun-ay Society, Temperance Hall; 3, Charles Watts, "The French Revolution"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, Mr. Rogers, "Christianity and Capitalism, the Twin Curses of society."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, debating class; 7 J Hyder (Sec. L.N.S.), "The Upas Tree of Capitalism, and how to cut it down."

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

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30 mutual improvement class, "Light"; 1 to 2, music class (free); 2.30, concert; 6.30, J. Christison, "Intemperance and Morality from a Freethought Standpoint."

Fairsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "Religion and Labor."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, W. G. Unkles, "Dual Consciousness"; 6.30, A. Paul, "God and Man."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, discussion. Thursday at 8, improvement class.

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall, Cox-lane: 7, A. Martinelli, "South-ern Africa."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 3, science class, Mr. Small, B.Sc.; 7, J. W. Bayliss, B.A., "Rousseau."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: C. Cohen, 11, "The Origin of Species"; 3, "Christianity and Woman"; 6.30, "The Failure of Christianity." Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, G. Selkirk, "Social Salvation."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, members' special meeting.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, J. Pearson, "The Origin and Evolution of the God Idea." Wednesday at 8, literary and debating class, Mr. Swinburn, "The Population Question."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 6.30, ethical class; 7.30, D. Bow, "Has Christ Failed?"

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, open debate, "Is there a God?"

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Feb. 18, Manchester; 22, Hammersmith; 25, m., Battersea.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London S.E.—Feb. 18, Bolton. March 4, Camberwell. April 1, Camberwell.

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