

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## PRICE HUGHES'S FORMER MISFORTUNES.

THE REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES resents being called a liar, even when he is proved to be one. He thinks himself entitled to stand upon his "dignity." His veracity and integrity are so well established, and indeed so famous, that he has only to plead them as a sufficient answer to any charges of falsehood and dishonor.

Ridiculous as such an attitude would be, on the part of the most accurate and punctilious of men, it is doubly ridiculous on the part of a man like Mr. Price Hughes. He has been found out before, and compelled to confess his error and tender an apology.

On October 12, 1889, he attended a great meeting at St. James's Hall, held under the presidency of the Bishop of London; the object of the meeting being to strengthen the hands of the London County Council in controlling the entertainments at music halls. In the course of his speech, Mr. Hughes was reported to have said the following words:—"He had undoubted evidence that a young girl who had recently visited the Royal Aquarium with her father had placed in her hands a card asking her to accept the escort of gentleman on leaving the place. Such things were not of rare occurrence and should no longer be tolerated." (Cheers.)

This statement was obviously absurd, but Mr. Hughes had "undoubted evidence" of its truth. He always has such evidence, until he is required to produce it, when it is very rarely forthcoming.

Captain Molesworth, the chairman of the Royal Aquarium Company, wrote a letter to the *Times* of October 15, challenging Mr. Hughes's allegation, and calling upon him to "produce the young girl with her father," to "give the day on which it happened, and also the card." Captain Molesworth very justly remarked how strange it was that the father did not complain to the police, or the other officers in uniform, numbering no less than thirty.

Mr. Hughes had "undoubted evidence," but he could not produce the girl, her father, or the card. In the *Times* of October 18 he had to make this ignominious confession:—"In conversation with the writer [of his letter of information] I discovered for the first time that the incident took place two years ago." This was what he called "recently" on the platform of St. James's Hall. He had evidently taken what suited his purpose as gospel, just as he did in the case of the Atheist Shoemaker. Nevertheless he declared that he had not attacked the Aquarium. "I never accused anybody," he said, "except immoral men." The reverend gentlemen has "immoral men" upon the brain, and is reckless in his methods of running them down.

Captain Molesworth was naturally dissatisfied, and called attention to the "Purity" advocate's endeavor to shirk responsibility. "Mr. Hughes at first," he wrote, "denied the accuracy of the report, but the shorthand verbatim reports, and the oral testimony, are too strong for him to sustain his denial." And in

the course of the reverend gentleman's explanation the father had disappeared, while the young girl had blossomed into a woman. Captain Molesworth ended by saying that the matter "must be settled by a higher legal authority than mine."

Mr. Hughes did not like the look of this intimation. He referred to some other "shorthand writer's verbatim report" which gave "a totally different version of what I really said." But in view of the hint about legal proceedings he made a prudent disclaimer—"I did not intend to make any attack upon the Royal Aquarium or any place in particular"—which was accepted by Captain Molesworth.

The whole incident shows that Mr. Hughes is such a lover of truth that he objects to seeing it wasted. When he is brought to book his brave words begin to tremble; his "recently" is a long while ago, and his "undoubted evidence" is nothing but the loosest hearsay.

The year 1889 seems to have been a bad one for Mr. Hughes's veracity. The reverend gentleman got into trouble with his own body. In company with his friend Dr. Lunn he made certain charges against the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in India. A sub-committee was appointed to examine into them, and the results of the investigation were published in a volume in 1890 under the title of "The Missionary Controversy."

The Rev. George Patterson, who opened the case on behalf of the missionaries, said that "the mode of elucidating the truth adopted by the *Methodist Times* has consisted chiefly in the deliberate suppression of everything on the other side." This has been the policy of Mr. Hughes in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker. It is the Atheist who has shown a sense of fair-play. Mr. Holyoake's "vindication" was printed in full in the *Free Thinker*, and Mr. Hughes's letters have been printed as well as Mr. Foote's; but not a word of the other side has appeared in the *Methodist Times*.

Dr. Lunn cut a very sorry figure in the investigation. The sub-committee found that his record "teemed with misstatements," and added, "our patience is justly exhausted." Yet it was upon these "misstatements" that Mr. Hughes founded his attack.

Mr. Holyoake has said that some parts of the Atheist Shoemaker story are "ideal," and Mr. Hughes appears to accept the description. In the same way he sought to evade responsibility for some of his observations on the Indian missionaries by describing them as "rhetoric." But the sub-committee was indignant at this, and here are the words from its report.

"What his definition of rhetoric may be we know not. But we presume that even rhetoric and illustrations have a purpose; they are meant to produce an impression, and to help the imagination to obtain a clear and complete picture. And if the impression produced and the picture painted are false, we do not see how the rhetoric and illustration are to escape the condemnation that would attach to the most literal and unvarnished utterances."

The sub-committee gave Mr. Hughes credit for "sincerity in his professions of confidence and love," but remarked that he had to "deal with a public more

logical than himself." Whatever else might be the shortcomings of the missionaries in India, the sub-committee emphatically exonerated them from all the charges preferred against them in the *Methodist Times*; and this was done after a long, patient, and careful investigation, conducted openly, with a verbatim reporter present to take down everything that was said by all the parties concerned. The finding of the sub-committee was accepted by the general committee. Mr. Hughes was then called upon to say whether he also accepted it, and his answer was of course ambiguous. Mr. Allen then rose to complain. He was afraid that Mr. Hughes's attitude was this—"Well, I accept the decision of the committee, but I have my own convictions still." He also ventured to point out Mr. Hughes's weakness. "In many of the statements made," said Mr. Allen, "he has exaggerated to an enormous extent, and, if he will allow me to say so, *this is characteristic of the man.*" Finally, the general committee passed a resolution, for which every member but one voted, expressing "profound regret that charges so grave and so unsustainable" should ever have been brought against the Wesleyan missionaries by a Wesleyan minister. Mr. Hughes was also given to understand that he might expect something worse if the controversy were re-opened.

Here then we have the official declaration of the Wesleyan Methodist body, preserved in a special volume, that Mr. Hughes published in his journal what he could not sustain under investigation; and this is precisely what he did when he published in that same journal the story of the Atheist Shoemaker. Here also we have the openly expressed opinion of a brother minister that enormous exaggeration is "characteristic of the man." Yet when the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is charged with having been guilty of "enormous exaggeration"—which is tantamount to positive lying—in the case of the Atheist Shoemaker, he presumes to stand upon his "dignity," even in face of the most overwhelming evidence of his guilt.

Captain Molesworth was able to make the reverend gentleman climb down, for behind the Chairman of the Aquarium Company there was the law with all its terrors. The Wesleyan Methodist body was also able to bring him to trial, because it had the power to deprive him of his position for contumacy. But no one can compel him to submit to the adjudication of a Court of Honor in respect to his story of the Atheist Shoemaker. All that can be done is to bring him, in his own despite, before the bar of public opinion.

G. W. FOOTE.

### THE BIBLE AND THE CHILD.

No subject is of more importance than the influences brought to bear on childhood. The politician is mainly significant from his helping to shape the conditions of the citizens of the future. But the mother, the home, the parents, and the school-teachers, serve to mould the very material of those citizens at a time when they are either made or marred. The mystery-mongers know that if their absurd dogmas are to be impressed on men, it must be done when their minds are too soft to resist. Hence the anxiety to force teachers to teach the nonsense of an indivisible God divided into three—a doctrine well calculated to make the children fools, or liars and hypocrites if they pretend to understand it. Many who see the absurdity and wickedness of forcing creeds and dogmas upon the innocent minds of children, yet think a good compromise is made in permitting the reading of the Bible. On this I venture to offer a few plain words. To me the Bible is indeed a precious collection of books which I have studied in many versions for years. Read in the light of ancient history and human evolution, there is very much in it of great interest and value. But emphatically it is not the

book for a child. To bring it at all into infantile training is, I am convinced, wrong in method and disastrous in its results.

It is wrong in method, because the Bible is pre-eminently a book of controversy. Every verse it contains has been the subject of argument and dispute. Much of it is obscure. Much can only be understood by those acquainted with oriental life. Even its history and geography is uncertain, and little related to the child's needs. They learn the distance from Dan to Beersheba without knowing the situation of their own kidneys. They are taught that woman was made from man's rib, without knowing their own anatomy, and can tell you the name of David's captains more easily than that of the inventor of the telegraph.

The results are as disastrous as the method is faulty. In the Bible the child reads how Abraham was ready to slay his son, and this is given as a lesson in the virtue of faith; how Jacob prospered by cheating his brother and that "the children being not yet born," God said "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." They read how Moses slew an Egyptian and buried him in the sand, and how the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and then plagued the Egyptians because he would not let the Israelites go. They read the Lord's direction to spoil the Egyptians and to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan and possess their land. What stories are more calculated to call into play low greed, predatory instincts, revenge and cruelty? They read how Ehud assassinates Eglon and is made judge over Israel; how Jael treacherously kills her guest and is extolled as "blessed above women"; how the man after God's own heart put his enemies to death, cutting some with saws and axes, and putting others into the brick-kiln. What effect can such records of barbarism have on the child's mind? The only lesson it can learn is that God chooses cheats and assassins for his favorites.

People who will not let their daughters read Shakespeare, place in their hands, as the word of God, a book which contains some of the filthiest stories ever printed. The girl who may not read of Miranda, Imogen or Desdemona, may gloat over the stories of Onan, Judith and Tamar, Lot and his daughters, Amnon and his sister, Absalom and his father's concubines; or revel in the erotic Song of Solomon, or read how the Lord commanded Hosea to commit adultery. Parents may fondly fancy their children only read the chapters and verses selected for them. What a mistake. The indecent passages are pointed out in school, church, and playground, and are usually more familiar to the children than the Sermon on the Mount. The men of God rail at the sensuality to which their Bible ministers. This is their favorite charge against infidels. Yet they teach from a book full of filthy stories and in which a text declares "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink." Do Christian parents really prefer this teaching to that of Shakespeare?

What is a man,  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast no more.

Even the gospels teach very questionable morality. Much is impracticable or pernicious. What result can be expected from children being taught to "resist not evil," to pluck out the offending eye, and to "make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness"? Which is most likely to impress him, the doctrine of forgiving enemies, or the dogma that God punishes his enemies for ever?

Without explanation, these old books are simply distracting. With explanation, their teaching takes the bias of the individual teacher, and we cannot wonder at the majority wishing that the teachers shall be exactly of their opinions. An hour daily out of a child's limited school time is a large item to be devoted to controversial matters, and taken from subjects over which there is no dispute. The only fair and common

sense solution of the question is that adopted in the colonies, to confine the teaching by public teachers in public schools to questions about which there can be no dispute or wrangling.

J. M. WHEELER.

## WHY CHRISTIANITY IS STILL PROFESSED

IN estimating the position that a system occupies in a community, it is necessary to distinguish between its profession and its practice. It must be evident to the impartial observer, that while the name Christianity is still retained in our midst, its essential principles have become impotent as a factor in daily life. As James Cotter Morison observes, in his *Service of Man*: "There seems to be no exception to the rule, that the older religions grow, the more infirm do they become, the less hold do they keep on the minds of well-informed and thoughtful men. Their truths, once accepted without question, are gradually doubted, and in the end denied by increasing numbers. . . . All the chief dogmas of the Christian. . . . Creeds have been for several centuries before the world. They were once not only believed, but adored. Now the numbers who doubt or dispute them are increasing every day. Time has not been their friend, but their enemy. . . . Religious truth begins with undoubting acceptance, and after a shorter or longer period of supremacy, with the growth of knowledge and more severe canons of criticism, passes gradually into the category of questioned and disputed theories, ending at last in the class of rejected and exploded errors." The proceedings at recent Congresses and Conferences amply justify the truth of the above statements. At the present time the Churches are rent by intestine divisions, and assailed on all sides from without by all that is vigorous, intelligent, liberal, free, and progressive in our modern civilisation. Christianity stands now as the mythologies of Greece and Rome stood at the period when it arose. The gods were more numerous than ever before, the temples more magnificent, the sacrifices and festivals more splendid, the priesthood more arrogant; but living faith had deserted them, the intellect of the age despised them, and its loftiest morality condemned them; therefore, despite their wealth, pomp, and power, they were irrevocably doomed to destruction.

History repeats itself, hence a similar state of the decay that marked the career of the religions of Greece and Rome, has characterised the history of Christianity. The truth of this allegation will be obvious to those who study the variety of stages through which the faith has passed. True the name has been retained, but not the faith the name was once supposed to represent. People in different nations and different ages have accepted the term Christianity, and applied it to a theological and ceremonial system arranged in accordance with their education and their habits. The Christianity introduced into this country by Augustine in the sixth century, was not the Christianity taught in the East. The faith of the Middle Ages was not the faith that is professed in the nineteenth century.

Dean Milman, in his *History of Christianity*, observes: "Its (Christianity's) specific character will almost entirely depend upon the character of the people who are its votaries. . . . It will darken with the darkness and brighten with the light of each succeeding century." Lord Macaulay says with no less truth than brilliancy: "Christianity conquered Paganism, but Paganism infected Christianity. The rites of the Pantheon passed into her worship, and the subtleties of the Academy into her creed." Francis William Newman, in his *Phases of Faith*, also remarks: "I at length saw how untenable is the argument drawn from the inward history of Christianity in favor of its superhuman origin. In fact, this religion cannot pretend to *self-sustaining power*. Hardly was it started on its course when it began to be polluted by the heathenism and

false philosophy around it. With the decline of national genius and civil culture it became more and more debased. So far from being able to uphold the existing morality of the best Pagan teachers, it became barbarised itself, and sank into deep superstition and manifold moral corruption. From ferocious men it learned ferocity. When civil society began to coalesce into order, Christianity also turned for the better, and presently learned to use the wisdom first of Romans, then of Greeks; such studies opened men's eyes to new apprehensions of the scripture and of its doctrine. By gradual and human means, Europe, like ancient Greece, grew up towards better political institutions and Christianity improved with them."

Thus, according to these authorities, it will be seen that the adherence to Christian theology which was observable in its primitive history is no longer perceptible. The aim and desire of modern reformers are to base morals, politics, and commerce on the principles of utility. Human instincts are found to be too strong, the necessities of life too potent, the exigencies of existence too imperative to allow the standard of two thousand years ago to regulate the actions of to-day. The political world is now conducted on secular principles; scientific research is unfettered by theology, and is therefore secular; and the practical ethics of modern society are utilitarianism and are therefore secular. Our civilisation is indissolubly connected with these three important facts.

So extensively is the change—produced by the sceptical tendency of the age—progressing that we are continually hearing of some avowal either upon the part of a prelate, a clergyman, or a learned professor, of a new view of the Christian faith, or of a modification of the once popular theology. The nature of the new departure depends, of course, upon the intellectual status and the social positions of those, who either give up altogether the profession of their old beliefs, or who so modify those beliefs that they may be considered more in harmony with the requirements of the age. But a general agreement appears to exist amongst the more intelligent expounders of Christianity that the ideas that were for centuries entertained as to the character of their faith, and of its sanctions, can no longer be supported in the face of modern criticism. It cannot be doubted that many of the new views that are now being promulgated as to what Christianity really is, strikes at the very root of the system as it was taught in former times. Still, despite this fact, there is such a manifest desire to retain the name of Christian upon the part of a large section of society, that it may be useful to inquire what the magic influences are that impel so many persons to tenaciously cling to a name that represents no practical principle in the actions that govern the well-being of the community.

It has been frequently urged by orthodox believers, that if all the facts of Christianity could be disposed of Christian experience would still remain, and that it is this which gives consolation that no criticism can destroy. Probably this will explain why a large number of persons continue to adhere to the profession of Christianity. It, however, reduces the basis of their faith to the level of fanaticism, for the same reason could be given with equal force in justification of the manifestation of the wildest enthusiasm associated with the worst form of superstition. It is the old idea that a thing is true because one feels it to be so. This is an assumption that assuredly should find no support from thinking persons, inasmuch as it could be cited to prove the truth of the greatest errors that have ever degraded the human mind. The savage, who worships his idol of wood and stone, derives consolation from his abject prostration. Why should Christian missionaries seek to rob him of his source of supreme comfort? The answer is, because the poor savage is thought to be mistaken in his useless and humiliating devotion. For a similar reason we remind the orthodox professor

that the consolation experienced from a faith destitute of any practical value, and which consigns the majority of the human race to everlasting torture, is unworthy of man, and would be a disgrace to any God. Besides, the probability that such consolation is based on fiction is not very complimentary to the power of truth. The lesson of experience is, that it is more serviceable to the world to revere what is true than to sacrifice the general results of reality for the selfish satisfaction of personal consolation.

It is, however, impossible to argue profitably with people who do not use their mental faculties, and hence the greatest delusions that take possession of the human mind often remain unchecked and irremovable. On the other hand, where the intellect is brought into play, the result is the growth of new ideas. The attempts made by many of the clergy to explain away the objectionable features of certain doctrines are prompted, possibly, by their desire to retain their position in the Church, which is their only means of obtaining the necessaries of life. Those who have qualified themselves only for the theological profession know the difficulties that beset them when doubts enter their minds as to the truth of the creeds they profess. They may preach "Blessed be ye poor," but personally they dread poverty, and they do their best to avoid sharing its "blessings." They may advise their congregations, in the words of Jesus, to "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." So far, however, as the clergy themselves are concerned, they find it necessary to be at times exceedingly anxious for the morrow, and, rather than having faith that their "heavenly Father" will feed and clothe them, their concern is how to get cash to purchase food, drink, and clothes. It is not surprising, therefore, that clergymen and ministers with more than "a living wage" hesitate to give up the name by which they live. A change would perhaps mean ruin, and self-preservation is the first law of nature even among clericals, where personal and family interests are concerned. Besides, every man has not the courage to sever his connections with old institutions, old friends, and the comforts of life. Thus a second reason is discovered why many persons remain professors of Christianity. They see no chance of providing for their daily bread outside of the Christian body, and consequently they prefer to bear the ill they have—in clinging to an empty name—than fly to others they know not of.

In some cases men remain Christians in name because they persuade themselves that they can harmonise their new departure with modern discoveries. It has been so with astronomy and geology. At first these sciences were denounced as being heretical, now they are accepted as agreeing with Christian teachings. It was the same with that terribly destructive agent Evolution, which to theology meant revolution. The only way a man could remain in the Christian ranks, and agree with Darwin's theory, was to contend that it agreed with the Bible, and, as a sort of final indication of friendship for the distinguished sceptic, they buried him in Westminster Abbey. It is remarkable how easy some people find it to rest under false convictions, particularly when such convictions are backed by pecuniary gain and found to be in accordance with fashionable opinions. Then people become like Goldsmith's vicar in his "Deserted Village," who,

Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

He: "Women are too fond of fruit. It was Eve, you know, who ate the fatal apple." She: "Yes, but it was Adam who peached."

## IS THERE A SUPREME GOOD IN NATURE?

If we answer the above negatively, we virtually concede there is no supreme good apart from nature, for how can that which is wholly good make evil? Nature, meaning the totality of things, seems to be *both good and evil*, which gives and gave color to that form of belief that supposed there is a presiding genius of both good and evil; which is much less absurd than that evil came into the world by man's disobedience, prompted by a fallen angel, who had become evil without any obvious cause.

"Looking through nature [astronomically] up to nature's God," some strange things are revealed to us. Fire seems the generally vitalising principle; yet, in excess, is destructive to life; and cold, its opposite, which may be only the absence of heat, is equally destructive. How great and how numerous these natural fires are we will pause to consider. First, our own sun, the dispenser of light and heat to us, is so large a ball of fire that if the orbit of the moon was filled with glowing fire, including our earth, it would be only about half the size of this huge bonfire; and an eighteen-foot telescope reveals about 43,000,000 of these fires, which, by analogy, we may conclude have been burning for millions of years. Dante's *Inferno* is but a child to one of these—so far does reality exceed the liveliest imagination!

As we "can but reason from what we know," we may conclude that all these fires, like that of our sun, are good and evil: good and productive of life, health and happiness, when not in excess, and evil when by their power they scorch up and destroy. Yet even here their evil is but temporary; for life, as we know it, can only be productive of happiness or in the highest possible state of health except by renewal, and we see by the laws of reproduction it is not death but life that holds the mastery. Long before the period of decay, or even old age, most plants, insects, and animals, including all forms of infusoria, have powers of reproduction, so that life is made perennial in its best form: and though the thought of losing our own life is painful, retaining it after all sense and power of enjoyment is past would be, and is more painful still. Nature, in its entirety, cares no more for our desires in this matter, than any other wish of ours which runs contrary to natural law.

No doubt the love of life exists in all living things, including man; none, except in an abnormal state, part with it willingly; and if immortality is given to one because of this desire, why not to all? Is it because "we look before and after," and have, therefore, longer memories than the lower forms of life, that other advantages are to be awarded us? This looks a little selfish. Why should those, who have been shorn of Nature's fairest proportions, suffer other deprivations? Our fellow-creatures, after being eaten by us—for without the least remorse we cut short their "little life" to gratify our carnivorous appetites, while prating of our superior spirituality—would protest against this other injustice had they the power of speech, and if not so much under the shadow of their own vanity, men would see the justice of *their* claim to live again, if any claim there be.

But there is no such claim. To be contented with the life we have, and so improve it that it shall be as much as possible a source of good to ourselves and others, is much better than whining and pining after an immortality in the land of shadows, ourself a ghost among others "revisiting the pale glimpses of the moon." Better to hope that when the forces of nature remodel our minds and bodies again, it will succeed in eliminating some at least of our imperfections rather than perpetuating these in some imaginary world beyond the stars.

That intelligence exists in nature we are certain of, our own being but as a drop to the ocean, and a belief in its supreme wisdom, inasmuch as it contains all the wisdom there is, is therefore warranted, and as it appears to contain all, no limit can be assigned to it. It asks for worship only for what is good within itself, and this it commands with no uncertain voice, and needs the poet only for its high priest and interpreter. Nature, then, may be said to be the only supreme good, and, from our partial conception, the supreme evil also, the same things being at once good and evil to many of us; and as our partial eyes are the only ones we have, we must perforce look with them.

The whining discontent which asks "Is this life all?" is, with all its professed sentimentality, for the most part

only disguised selfishness, which, not content with a certain measure of good, craves for an indefinite prolongation, and at the same time, in its discontent at the present life, exaggerates the evils, thereof thinking, perhaps, it honors God by defaming his so-called creation. Like the Jews of old, who thought they exalted Jehovah by abusing the highest effort of his supposed creation on this earth, which would be about like saying of a watchmaker that, "although the best of all workmen, his best watches are all defective and continual deceivers," which would be a rather backhanded compliment to a workman, yet is deemed to be high praise to a god. C. S.

#### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION; OR, BUNS AND OYSTERS.

[At the recent late sitting of the London School Board the Religious Party sustained themselves with oysters and Chablis; the Progressists went in for buns and oranges.]

THE London School Board "took the cake,"  
When Fact, on buns, a stand did make  
'Gainst those who stood for Fiction's sake  
On oysters and Chablis.

Said Fiction's faction: "We can boast  
Of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
And help from all the heav'nly host—  
Plus oysters and Chablis.

"'Gainst godless men who 'take the bun,'  
We'll stand and fight till all is done!  
Our trust is in the Mighty One!—  
And oysters and Chablis.

"From God comes ev'ry perfect gift;  
Our foes, with buns, perforce, make shift;  
But, heav'n to us vouchsafes a lift  
With oysters and Chablis!

"The 'rule of three' a curse will be,  
Unless you teach what *God* and *we*  
Call 'three in one' and 'one in three,'  
The blessed Trinites!"

The "Bun-men" wish, a child, to teach  
The facts, within its mental reach,  
That science proves to all and each  
Undoubted facts to be.

The "Oyster-men," in "doctored" schools,  
Perceive potential dupes and tools,  
Who'll help their "golden" rule of rules,  
The rule of £ s. d.!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

#### A SNAKE STORY.

Here is another snake story, of course from America. One of a wild family in Henry County, Illinois, who were the pest of the neighborhood, was bitten by a rattlesnake. The alarmed family sent for Elder Braywell, who laid before the Lord all the circumstances of the case, in the meantime portraying the atrocious character of each member of the family, after which he made use of the following feeling, affectionate language in tones of thunder: "O Lord, send more rattlesnakes; Joe has been bitten, and it has brought him to repentance and to thee. O Lord, send more rattlesnakes. Let them bite John, let them bite Dave, let them bite the old man and the old woman, for thou knowest who and what they are. O Lord, send more rattlesnakes, for then, and not till then, will they return to thee. Amen."

#### HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forde will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, a public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (6) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in th window.

#### ACID DROPS.

Mr. Gibson, the father of that converted "Atheist Shoemaker," is already experiencing some of the effects of orthodox charity. One of the leading Wesleyans of Northampton, who had long ago been told that Mr. Hughes's book was stuffed with lies, happened to meet Mr. Gibson the other morning, and remarked, "Ah, I see they are still making a bother about that book." Mr. Gibson said he was going to circulate copies of Mr. Foote's pamphlet as soon as he could get them, and this leading Wesleyan exclaimed, "Oh, you won't do that, will you?" Mr. Gibson said he would. He was going to support the truth anyhow.

One of Mr. Gibson's near kinsmen says it will "hurt the cause of religion" to have the lie exposed; which is about the meanest position it is possible to conceive. Other bigots are saying that Mr. Gibson only communicated with Mr. Foote for the sake of a day's outing. Preposterous slanderers! Mr. Foote went to Northampton himself in the first instance. The bringing of the Gibsons up to London was an afterthought, a sudden happy inspiration. They came up on Sunday afternoon and went back on the Monday, after spending the morning with Mr. Foote in making fresh investigations. And it was raining all the time. What a magnificent outing, to be sure.

Mr. Foote warned the Gibsons that they would in all probability incur the hatred of a certain set of religious bigots; but they decided to run the risk. They were Christians themselves, but they preferred an Atheist who told the truth to a Christian who told lies.

We shall hear presently that the Gibsons made "a nice little thing" out of Mr. Foote. We shall hear of five-pound notes flying about like snowflakes. It will not matter that Mr. Foote has no five-pound notes to shower. "Charity" that originates the libel can easily manufacture the flimsies.

Mr. Foote wishes to put it on record that the Gibsons have acted in this matter like gentlemen. He is confident that they would have paid their own expenses had they been able to do so. As it was, they had their expenses paid—third class fare, etc. Mr. Foote took them away from their work on the Monday to assist him in fresh investigations, and he could not do less than recompense them for their loss of wages, especially as Mr. Gibson senior had been out of work on the sick list for many weeks, and had only just resumed his employment. They hesitated to take anything at all, but Mr. Foote insisted that they should not be absolute losers. The upshot was that they are no better off in any way than if they had never seen Mr. Foote at all. Of course it is not to be expected that the bigots will believe this—or admit that they believe it. Some of them, no doubt, will give an inventory of the new furniture in Mr. Gibson's house. Still, it is well to put the facts on record, so that Freethinkers, at any rate, may have a perfect assurance that the Gibsons are actuated entirely by the most honorable motives.

We unwittingly did the *Leeds Mercury* an injustice, for which we express our profound regret. We had not been furnished with its issue containing the reference to Mr. Foote's letter in the *Chronicle*. Having it now before us, we withdraw the charge of unfairness. We even wish to say that the *Mercury* has shown a strong sense of fair play in inserting the letters of Mr. John Routh on the controversy. The fact is, we are not like Mr. Hughes. We don't pretend to infallibility. We make a mistake sometimes, and when it is pointed out to us we are more than ready to publish a correction.

There was an excited meeting at Buxton over the question of consecrating the cemetery. Churchmen and Dissenters went at it hammer and tongs, and the police were called in to remove an excited magistrate. It was a pretty spectacle for a Freethinker to contemplate.

The Dean of Rochester is a good-natured man, almost too kindly for a Christian, and one might take his speech at a meeting of the Rochester S.P.C.A., as a satire on the faith. He said "it always seemed to him to be one of the saddest thoughts with reference to the fall of man, that the whole creation should groan and travail and suffer with it; that the animals which had lived in Eden in perfect peace should

suddenly, in consequence of their disobedience, take to rending and tearing each other, and that from the moment sin came into the world the lion should go roaming after its prey, and the eagle swoop down upon the dove." How, in face of the evidence that carnivorous animals lived long before man, anyone can credit such nonsense, is a proof of the stultification induced by the Bible.

Sir William Dawson is always pushed forward by our Christian want of evidence friends as a Christian scientist. The *Popular Science Monthly* speaks of him as "A scientist, but no philosopher," and says he "allows himself to speak on philosophical subjects, with altogether too slender an equipment of necessary knowledge."

The "converted infidel" dodge is apparently a good line of business. More than one person is working it with profit who would otherwise find it difficult to get a tolerable living. We see that a Mr. Reader Harris, who is billed as "barrister-at-law and editor of 'Tongues of Fire,'" has been holding forth at Bristol on "How I Became a Sceptic and an Agnostic and how God Saved Me." Mr. Reader Harris may have been known as a sceptic to the God who saved him. That is a matter on which we have no wish to dogmatise. But was he ever known as a sceptic to anyone else? We pause for a reply.

How necessary it is to nail down lies wherever found, appears from the constant repetition of falsehoods concerning the infidels of the past. Here is the Rev. H. J. Alcock, vicar of Wellington, writing to the *Wellington Journal* against his brother in God, the Rev. E. Myers, and declaring that his religion is no better than that of Tom Paine, "the avowed infidel." The Rev. Mr. Alcock then goes on to dish up the old yarn that Paine said of his *Age of Reason*, "If the Devil has ever any agency in any work, he has had it in my writing that book." The absurdity of the story will be seen by anyone conversant with Mr. Conway's *Life of Paine*, or, for that matter, with Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*.

The spirit of inquiry is, indeed, reaching to the churches. A Scottish minister recently invited questions to be handed to him on Sundays, and he would answer them from the pulpit. The first question proposed by his anxious congregation was the momentous one, "Who was David's mother?" The man of God had to "give it up."

It was amusing at the meeting of the London School Board to hear Mr. Benson Clough give the lie to Dean Gregory. He observed, "Dean Gregory has said that the education in the Board schools of London was godless, but that was absolutely untrue."

While the poor Catholics are complaining in the *Catholic Times* that they cannot buy good fresh fish, an American hotel advertises that it has imported a chef "who has made a special study of delicious Lenten dishes." Fasting implies no asceticism in the wealthy.

Cardinal Logue devoted his Lenten pastoral to inveighing against pernicious literature. Yet the Pope has recently been recommending the sacred scriptures to the study of the faithful, and it will be hard to match that volume for savagery or obscenity.

Mr. Libouchere has for a long time past kept in *Truth* a pillory of unjust, inadequate, or cruel sentences. His opinion, therefore, on magistrates and justices of the peace should be of some value. In his last number he says, "The parson usually makes the most wrong-headed and least compassionate of magistrates. His disappearance from the bench is certainly desirable in the interests of justice."

John Wesley Willis is another religious humbug, who at length has received a sentence of nine months' imprisonment for misappropriating trust money. Of such are the kingdom of heaven!

George Thomas, recently executed at Carmarthen for the murder of Mary Jane Jones, went to chapel on the night of the murder with the razor in his pocket to commit the crime. Evidently there is nothing like religion to save a man from wickedness.

Poor men of God! How they are persecuted! The Rev. W. E. Lynn, Baptist minister, of Gunnersbury, has to pay £50 damages to Elizabeth Elmonds, servant to one of his deacons, for slander. The sky-pilot pleaded "privilege." He was of opinion that men of God have a license for defamation.

George Edward Beagley, of Gloucester-crescent, Regent's-park, was charged at Marylebone with wounding his wife. He was committed for trial with an intimation that he was to be carefully looked after. His complaint is "religious mania."

"Depravity and Secularism" is the heading of a leaderette in the *Christian Commonwealth*. Underneath are some foolish remarks about Secular Education in Victoria. The headline is spicy, but the reader who looks for something spicy below it will be disappointed.

Strange! is it not? that the Christians, who are so shocked at our speaking of a "lie" told by a minister, should themselves talk about "Depravity and Secularism" Their "feelings" must be "respected," but other people's feelings are of no account.

The *Christian World* is a paper for which we have always expressed a certain respect. We are not astonished, therefore, to find that it is about the only one in the religious fold that says an honest word about the Atheist Shoemaker controversy. It does not say much it is true, but what it does say is tolerably fair. At any rate, it does not conceal the fact, as other Christian papers have done, that Mr. Foote's investigations go a good deal farther than Mr. Hulyoake's.

Manx Nonconformist ministers have been discussing the "hindrances" on their tight little island; hindrances, that is, to their own business. One of the sky-pilots denounced the licence which prevailed at Douglas during the season, and another suggested the early closing of all places of amusement. But a sky-pilot named Weare, with a little honesty about him, remarked that entertainments held in Nonconformist chapels on the island were often prolonged till two or three o'clock in the morning, and young men and women walked home together after that time. Much indignation was aroused by this remark, which was declared to be untrue, but it was corroborated by at least one minister. "Physician heal thyself!" will be exclaimed by the owners of places of amusement, if the sky-pilots proceed any farther in this business.

An exhibition of ugly men is to be held in Belgium, and a prize will be given to the ugliest. By and by there may be an exhibition of liars, and the first prize would probably go to the Rev. Ananias Hughes.

Bishop Moorhouse, who when he was Bishop of Melbourne took a considerable sum from the colony, is now reviling its institutions. The *Catholic Times* quotes him as urging that secular education is the cause of the increase of crime in the colony. If crime has increased within the past few years in Australia, the cause is quite different. The adoption of secular education was followed by a decrease in juvenile crime. But a period of commercial depression has passed over the colony. Scoundrels in high places—all of them pious—have misappropriated funds; banks have failed; thousands are out of work, and Providence has sent bad seasons for the crops. The natural result is an increase of crime, and greater stringency has led to more convictions, which are absurdly quoted as a result of secular education.

Since writing the foregoing we have seen some statistics which show that, while the number of offences in Australia have increased, the number of serious crimes has diminished. We shall devote an article to the subject of "Secular Education and Crime" shortly.

The Nonconformists Ministers Association has had a house to house visitation at Leeds. Out of 50 000 visited, 10 000 attend no church. Some excused themselves on the plea of "Want fresh air, and get it on a Sunday, and want Sunday as a day of rest." But "Those who go to church are no better than those who don't" was a popular facer. The intruders asked if a visit from a man of God would be welcome? One replied, "Oh, yes, I might be able to teach him something." Another said his church was the co-operative stores. Another claimed that "he regularly attended nowhere."

But the most philosophical, perhaps, was he who was "too much occupied with the dog." Altogether, the sage who observed that there was one pleasure that never palls—the pleasure of not going to church, seems to have a number of comrades at Leeds. May they increase.

The Parliament of Religions took a number of strange religionists to America, some of whom are staying there to propagate their views. Two Hindoos named Siddhu and Jinda Ram, are now preaching the doctrines of the Arya Samaj, which includes a belief in the Vedas as a divine revelation.

Three hundred years ago they were discussing "Is the Bible infallible?" The Protestants said it was; the Catholics said it wasn't. It is now admitted that the Catholics were right. More recently the question has been discussed "Is the Bible Inspired?" A positive answer is given by both Catholics and Protestants. Still, the matter does not rest there. The *Christian World* is printing a general correspondence under the heading, "Is the Bible popular?" Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen! Before very long we may see a discussion in a Christian paper on "Is the Bible worth keeping?"

The *St. Pancras Guardian* is a funny paper; at least it is a funny man who writes its editorial notes as "Invisible." Some one has called his attention to the appearance of the Gibsons at the Hall of Science, and asked him what he thinks of that—which is a very pertinent question after his previous effusions on this subject. "Well," he replies, "I confess that Mr. Hugh Price Hughes or Mr. Holyoake ought to speak now." So far so good. But "Invisible" is not going to score up one for Mr. Foote, however well earned, without chalking two against him. He therefore repeats his old complaint of Mr. Foote's "methods," and gravely informs his readers that, "Anybody who does not belong to the Secular Society, or who is a Christian, is either a liar or a hypocrite in Mr. Foote's opinion." What everybody? Well now, that is strange, when Mr. Foote actually picked out two Christian ministers to act if possible as intermediaries between himself and Mr. Hughes in this Atheist Shoemaker business—the Rev. C. Fleming Williams (Nonconformist) and the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam (Church of England)—both of whom he knew to be gentlemen.

"Invisible" is obliged to confess that Mr. Foote wrote in praise of Cardinal Newman, but then "Newman had a brother who was an Atheist." Well, the man who can imagine this to be an explanation of the praise, is like Habbakuk in Voltaire's epigram—*capable de tout*. As a matter of fact, Mr. Foote knew nothing about the Atheist brother of Cardinal Newman until that brother's death, when an article appeared upon him in the *Athenæum*; and the most glowing eulogy he ever penned on the Cardinal was written in the *Freethinker* as far back as 1882.

Not a word about the Atheist Shoemaker case appears in the *Methodist Times*. Mr. Price Hughes's policy is to say nothing in his own journal. His one object now is to keep his own readers from learning the extent of his crime.

Ananias has been giving an address at Wesley's Chapel on "How to Fill a London Chapel." The Rev. Allan Rees has already taken a hint from Ananias on that point. A good whacker concerning a converted Atheist is hard to beat for chapel-filling.

The Leeds unemployed are not much in love with the vicar, Dr. Talbot. They say it is rubbish for a parson, with £1,400 a year and a rich wife, to lecture working-men on thrift. Begging their pardon, it is nothing of the kind. If the workers were not thrifty enough to consume a good deal less than they produce, there would be nothing left for parsons.

A pious man figured in a recent breach of promise case—*Faulkner v. Turnpenny*, in which the jury gave the plaintiff £150 damages for assault. The defendant gave the plaintiff a foul disease after seducing her, but "he was a religious man, and talked in the most beautiful way about religion."

Jehovah was rough on his gospel-shops in the late gales. St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, was partly blown down; the English Presbyterian Chapel at Holywell was seriously damaged, a large portion of the roof being blown off; an

ornamental pinnacle of Chester Cathedral was thrown down upon the roof; a similar accident befel the south-east pinnacle of St. John's, Peterborough; a chapel was demolished at Lye, near Stourbridge; considerable damage was done to the parish church at Fleetwood; an iron church was blown down at Teignmouth; there was a disaster at Hull, and—he doeth all things well!

The Rev. R. Hobson, of St. Nathaniel's, Liverpool, who gave a Christian Evidence lecturer a testimonial as an adept at the *argumentum ad hominem*, has been preaching on Socialism. He disputed the claim of some Socialists that they had introduced the sentiment of brotherhood, pointing out that it was of Bible origin, and began with Cain and Abel! The rev. gentleman is evidently an unconscious humorist.

The Rev. H. S. Lunn, Mr. Price Hughes's colleague who was implicated with him in the charges brought against their brethren in India, sends a letter to the *East and South Devon Advertiser*, and we believe to other papers, calling attention to Mr. Holyoake's "strikingly impartial" vindication of his colleague. He is apparently unaware that the father of the "converted Atheist" has demolished the story, and with it Mr. Holyoake's vindication. That is an element in the case to which he cannot be expected to pay attention.

The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* hopes Mrs. Besant will not come home by way of Turkey, lest she should turn a Mohammedan. "It is a matter of chance," our contemporary adds, "whether she will find herself next in a convent or a harem."

In the last volume of his *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel* the brilliant Renan, in speaking of the time and place of the first Christians, says that, "There never was an age so naively credulous, and this was exactly the age of the great outburst of faith. The faculty in the human spirit which reasons seemed extinct; infantine folly was the common atmosphere. It is in this kind of *milieu* that religions are founded. People lie, and then believe their lie."

Before the Opium Commission at Bombay, on Feb. 17, Mr. Plunkett, a city magistrate at Poona, said he had made inquiries about the anti-opium petition from that town purporting to bear the signatures of 73 opium smokers. He had traced 54 signatories, and found that only three were real. The others said they had been visited by "two clergymen, who wrote their names down." The clergymen did not tell them what their names were wanted for. At this rate, there seems a good opening for Ananias Hughes in India, when he wears out his welcome in England.

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#### POOR ABRAHAM.

In prime of life  
Tom lost his wife;  
Says Dick, to soothe his pain,  
Thy wife I trow,  
Is long ere now,  
In Abraham's bosom lain.

His fate forlorn  
With grief I mourn,  
The shrewd dissembler cries,  
For much I fear  
By this sad tear,  
She'll scratch out Abraham's eyes.

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Clergyman (to street urchin): "My dear young friend, where do you think you will go to when you die?" Boy: "Madame Tussaud's, in course."

Cannibal (to missionary): "Would you like to say anything before I eat you?" Missionary: "Yes, I should like to point out to you the benefits of vegetarianism."

An Italian boy was exposing a basket of ornaments for sale on Westminster Bridge. One of his figures fell upon the pavement, and he began to cry. A passer-by asked him what was the matter, and was told that the fallen figure was Jesus Christ, whose arm was broken off. "Never mind," said a bystander, "don't cry over Jesus Christ; knock his eye out, and sell him for Nelson."

## MR. HOLYOAKE NOT READY.

DAY after day I looked for Mr. Holyoake's promised communication. On Tuesday morning I received the following:—

DEAR SIR,—It was Petrarch, I think, who said he had written a long letter because he had not time to write a short one. I am not a poet, but I have the like difficulty. Desirous of fulfilling my promise of sending my letter in time for your next number, I did dictate one, but when it was done it seemed out of proportion to the requirement of the case, and would encroach upon your pages more than you might think necessary. So I resolved to condense it, but this being Committee week with me, and I must be in London to-day and Wednesday, I could not possibly get it done in time for your convenience of printing. Another week I hope to be more successful.—Very faithfully,  
G. J. HOLYOAKE.  
Brighton, Feb. 19.

Hitherto I have addressed Mr. Holyoake as a younger man addresses a veteran. I must now speak as the President of the National Secular Society. Mr. Holyoake does not appear to understand the gravity of the situation: He has had more than ample time to speak to the Secular party. When I returned from Northampton, after interviewing the Gibsons, I telegraphed to him that he had been grossly imposed upon. I gave the name of Mr. Hughes's convert, and regretted that I should have to make a full exposure. That was on Tuesday, January 23. On Sunday evening, February 4, Mr. Holyoake had the matter forced upon his attention again. Lecturing in the Secular Hall, Manchester, he was questioned by members of his audience, in reply to one of whom he admitted that the real name of Mr. Hughes's convert was "Gibson." It is within my knowledge that Secularists have written to Mr. Holyoake since then, urging him to confess the mistake of his vindication of Mr. Hughes, or at least to make a fresh statement on the altered conditions of the case. I wrote to Mr. Holyoake myself on Wednesday, February 14, stating that there were some things I could not put in writing, but which I would be happy to tell and show him in an interview. But he did not answer that letter, as he did not answer my telegram. Eight days have elapsed since he wrote that he was reading my articles in the *Freethinker*, with a view to sending me his judgment upon them. Now he puts me and the Secular party off for another week, and only "hopes" to send his communication then.

Why all that ardent devotion to the honor of Mr. Hughes, and all this delay in satisfying the just expectations of Secularists?

The Secular party does not require a piece of exquisite composition from Mr. Holyoake. It does not even require a judicial delivery. The facts of the case are before the readers of the *Freethinker*, and they can form a judgment for themselves. What they ask from Mr. Holyoake, now that the investigation is completed, and Mr. Hughes declines the adjudication of a Court of Honor, is a letter to rectify the "vindication" he gave Mr. Hughes while in ignorance of the facts I have been able to disclose. Twenty lines would suffice, but if Mr. Holyoake had written a thousand I would have found room for them, at the sacrifice of other matter.

I can wait no longer. The promised pamphlet will be issued immediately. It will be in circulation by the time this meets the eyes of the last readers of the *Freethinker*.

I shall decline to discuss anything with Mr. Holyoake but the evidence. His opinion of Mr. Hughes, or of

myself, as a controversialist, is a personal matter, and there is no profit in disputing about taste.

Mr. Holyoake may suffer by appearing in my pamphlet as the vindicator of Mr. Hughes. But the fault is his own; at least it is not mine. I have waited long enough. Mr. Holyoake must look after his own reputation. I do not say it is not precious to me. It is. But there is something still more precious—the honor and welfare of Freethought. I should betray the cause if I hesitated, out of regard for Mr. Holyoake, to hunt down the unabashable author of "The Atheist Shoemaker."  
G. W. FOOTE.

## THE PAMPHLET.

MY readers know that I want £100 at least for the effective circulation of the pamphlet I have written on the Atheist Shoemaker story and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Up to the present I have received about £65. No doubt the remainder will come in during the next week or ten days. I shall need more than £100 to send the pamphlet out by post to Nonconformist ministers, the Church clergy, members of Parliament, etc. The number of these is many thousands, and a halfpenny stamp will be required for each. While the thing is being done it may as well be done thoroughly.

My readers should remember the saying, that he gives twice who gives quickly. Those who intend to give at all should give at once.

Orders for the pamphlet should be sent to Mr. Forder, not to me. Copies will be supplied at one penny per dozen, but this does not include carriage, which will vary with the size of the parcel. Those who fetch copies from the shop will pay the nominal price of one penny for twelve. Those who order by post or rail had better send a certain sum—anything from fourpence upwards, leaving Mr. Forder to send them as many copies as he can for the money, postage or carriage paid. Branches remitting £1 10s. to me will have a thousand copies forwarded to them, and so on in proportion. Special applications for large quantities will be considered on their merits. As the orders may come in more rapidly than Mr. Forder can execute them, they will be taken in the order in which they are received—first come first served.

G. W. FOOTE.

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

H. M. Ridgway 3s., G. Thwaites 10s., Froccoat and Me 2s., Lucifer 2s. 6d., Edward Brooks £1, J. H. Whitham 4s., Mr. and Mrs. Fisher 5s. 5d., M. Jones 1s., Manchester Branch N.S.S. £1, J. Glodhill 1s., A. Dawly 10s., Atheist 10s., Tutor 5s., W. Snooke £1 1s., A. O. 10s., T. Ollerenshaw 2s., G. Morris 4s., Jas. Crabtree 2s. 6d., John Crabtree 2s. 6d., X. Y. 2s., W. Watson 2s., J. Cowley 1s., G. Brown 1s., R. Bull 1s., A Friend of F. S. 10s., Richard Hinge 10s., Ryhope Branch 5s., J. McLeish 2s. 6d., Three Manchester Secularists and a Methodist Sunday-school Teacher—collected by Walter Payne £1 12s., John Eccles 2s. 6d., M. F. 5s., R. F. 5s., Nemo 2s. 6d., West London Branch 10s., B. T. Munter 2s., Four Saints 2s., C. Hoyle 1s., W. Elder 5s., Daniel Gow 10s., A. J. Lovell 10s., Mr. and Mrs. Ashworth 2s., J. Marchant 5s., R. Waller 2s., Nelson Branch 9s. 6d., F. W. Langridge 10s. 6d., R. Joslyn 5s., R. Turnbull and Friends 4s., W. Hardiman 1s., J. Robertson, 5s., Martin Bell 10s., J. Bevins 2s. 6d., J. H. Starling 2s. 6d., J. Robinson 2s., J. L. Schaefer 2s. 6d., E. Winning 2s. 6d.

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### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

*Sunday*, Feb. 25, Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool:—at 11, "What has Become of the Devil?"; at 3, "The Atheist Shoemaker and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes"; at 7, "The Pillars of Priestcraft."

March 4, Nelson; 11, Glasgow.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Feb. 25, Hall of Science; 28, Battersea; 27, 28, and March 1, Bristol; 2, Chatham; 4, Hall of Science; 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.

N. M. X.—Thanks for your promise to send the Hughes pamphlet to the clergy and others in the Yarmouth district. Copies will be forwarded for the purpose. No doubt the circulation of the *Freethinker* in the Norfolk villages would be useful, but how is it to be done?

G. THWAITES.—Will send parcel, etc. Thanks.

P. T. WHITLAN.—Accept our thanks.

J. WHITE.—See "Acid Drops."

FROCKCOAT AND ME.—No, he can hardly love us, though he is bound to love his enemies.

E. BROOKS.—Thanks. Shall be sent as desired.

J. W. BEETON.—It must be unpleasant for Mr. Hughes to receive such a letter from a man in your position. Still, we have no belief that he will be stung into action. He cannot afford to move. His only resource is to stand upon his dignity, as Jabez Balfour is doing already.

WILSON PAUL.—"Instinct" is a much abused word. As used by Mr. Wheeler it simply means consolidated or inherited habit.

J. H. WHITHAM.—Thanks for your cordial and interesting letter.

A. & M. JONES.—An oversight. Have put it down to the Lie Fund this week. The Secular party will be the medium for circulating the pamphlet.

WM. BROADBELL, dating from New York, sends 8s. towards the expense of mailing the *Freethinker* of Jan. 28 to newspaper editors. He wants fifty copies, or more, of the pamphlet for distribution in America, and ends by saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." We hope it will be some time before the rest of the text would be at all appropriate.

H. JONES.—Will offer fresh date shortly.

J. GLADHILL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. DAWLY.—We hope we have your name right. Anyhow the 10s. is.

ATHENIST.—Glad you think we have "done the work splendidly."

TUTOR.—You see the hall was a small one, and Mr. Foote's voice is exercised in bigger buildings. Thanks, still, for your friendly advice. You shall have the hundred copies of pamphlet. Glad to know they will be distributed among Board School teachers.

H. GUTHRIE.—It is an old bill. We published it many years ago. Thanks all the same.

J. O.—The *Freethinker* tract "The Bible and Teetotalism" will give all the information you desire. Look up Deut. xiv. 26 and Prov. xxxi. 7.

JAS. AND JNO. CRADDOCK.—Our love to such ardent young Freethinkers!

W. WATSON.—It is all very well to say "Don't over exert yourself." But certain things have got to be done. Mr. Foote keeps in excellent health. Thanks.

FRIEND OF F. S.—We appreciate the compliment. F. S. did not give his name in full, so we do not print it so in connection with your subscription.

A. C.—Thanks for your kind letter. Such communications are a great encouragement to us in our rather uphill work. See "Sugar Plums."

JOHN ECCLES.—We also are very sorry to see Mr. Holyoake in such a position; indeed, we seem to feel it more keenly than he does himself.

FLORA MAX MANN.—Well done!

E. H.—(1) If a Christian told us we blaspheme, we should ask him to define blasphemy. (2) How do we "speak evil" of Christ? We never accused him of any offence. We merely exercise the right of criticising his teaching. (3) The Bible god may be denied as safely as the gods of Homer.

R. F.—Have put it to the Lie fund, as we conclude you intend. Shall be pleased to see you at Glasgow.

A. ARNSBY.—Thanks for catalogue.

R. H. (Prestwich).—We hope we have your name right in the subscription list.

J. RICHARDS.—"Fight on!" as old Sir Richard Greville said. Miss Vance will forward you the receipt and certificates.

J. MCLEISH.—Glad to know you will have the pamphlet circulated in that way in Edinburgh.

CHARLES JOHNSON, 2 Horton-street, Lewisham, invites the Secularists of the district to meet at his house at seven on Sunday, March 4, for the purpose of forming a Branch of the N.S.S.

W. PAYNE.—See list. Many thanks.

W. B. NICHOLS.—*La Bible Amusante* fetches a high price now. Mr. Forder might be able to obtain you a copy. There is nothing illegal in what you propose to do.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance, sec., acknowledges:—A. J. Larkin, 2s. 6d.

C. STOCKER, the veteran Liverpool agent for Freethought literature, has removed to 55 Vauxhall-road, a few doors from his old shop.

NEMO.—Glad you are "delighted."

J. W. GOTT.—Received with thanks. See "Sugar Plums." It was a capital move.

E. D. H. DALY.—Cuttings received with thanks.

G. HERBERT, 7 Dorby-road, S. Wimbledon, appeals to local Freethinkers to join the newly-formed Branch, which intends to push Freethought well forward in the district. Pleased to have the thanks of the Wimbledon friends. We have not printed collecting-lists. Apply to Mr. Forder for copies of the pamphlet.

W. ELDER.—You shall have the pamphlets.

H. W. JONES.—Spencer's *Man v. State* can be purchased for a shilling. Read also the debate between Mrs. Bosant and Mr. Foote (1s.) Larger, yet moderate-priced works, are Schaffle's *Impossibility of Social Democracy*, Beaulieu's *The Modern State*, Naquet's *Fallacies of Socialism*, and the recent book of Yves Guyot.

C. HOYLE.—The approximate numbers in round millions are: Buddhists, 490; Christians, 360—divided into Catholics, 175; Protestants, 110; Greek Church, 75—Hindus, 210; Mohammedans, 180; Taoists, 12; Jews, 9; Fetishists, 7; Sikhs, 2. Of the English speaking population, according to *Whittaker's Almanack*, Episcopalians are 28; Methodists, 18; Catholics, 15; Presbyterians, 11; Baptists, 9; Congregationalists, 6; Unitarians, 2.5; Freethought, 4.5, and Of No Particular Religion, 15 millions. We guess this last is under estimated.

H. THORPE.—Too late for this week. Next.

H. G. S.—What was the letter about? Your postcard does not say.

V. PAGE.—Thanks. You shall have the pamphlet for distribution at Mr. Foote's lectures.

F. W. L. (Ilfracombe).—Always glad to receive such letters. Delighted to know that you and your wife both find the *Freethinker* a tonic. Right or wrong, there's a good deal of phosphorus (as Vogt would say) put into it.

A. ADDY.—Pleased to have the sympathetic resolution of the Barnsley Branch, and its approval of Mr. Foote's policy as President.

A. J. LOVELL.—Obliged for your good wishes. Hope to see the Sunderland friends before long.

E. YEAXLEE.—Portsmouth Branch shall have pamphlets for the £1 forwarded. The exposure is sure to be well circulated; splendidly, if we only get the full £100.

W. HARDIMAN.—You say justly that Mr. Holyoake's action has made our task more difficult.

W. HOLLAND.—Lists of newagents take up a lot of room, and are of doubtful utility except in occasional instances.

P. W. CRALLAN.—Commonplace objections.

J. H. STARLING.—Thanks for your cordial letter.

ALPHA.—All that can be expected, alas!

J. ROBINSON.—The "masterly exposure," as you call it, should now be circulated all over the country.

A. BAXTER.—No more room at present.

A. ANDERSON (Liverpool).—For which fund was it? Let us know.

M. G. (South Shields).—Your first letter got mislaid, and has not yet turned up. May we ask you to give us fresh instructions about both subscriptions? Sorry to trouble.

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—Froidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—St. Pancras Guardian—North-Western Telephone—Leek Post—Isle of Man Times—Twentieth Century—High Peak News—Warrington Guardian—La Verité—Glasgow Herald—Echo—Straits Times—Leeds Mercury—Shrewsbury Chronicle—Chatham and Rochester Observer—Surrey Independent—Morning Star—South Devon Advertiser—Eastern Daily Press—Morning Advertiser—Standard—Wellington Journal—Paddington Times—Kensington News.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

There was another fine audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Lying for the Glory of God: with Illustrations from Christian History." The applause at the end was markedly enthusiastic. In the morning Mr. Foote lectured to an unusually good audience on "Socialism and Common Sense." His discourse was followed by much questioning and discussion, and several critics could not speak for want of time. Mr. Foote promised to give a Wednesday evening very shortly to the subject, and to allow extra time for discussion by limiting his own speech to half-an-hour. This announcement was received with cheers, and the Wednesday evening in question is likely to be an interesting occasion.

The Sunday morning audiences during Mr. Foote's three weeks at the Hall of Science steadily increased, and the collection for working expenses increased with them. There can be little doubt that these Sunday morning meetings might, with a continuous policy, be worked up into a great success. Mr. Foote himself, however, cannot devote the whole of his time to London. He is now booked for several weeks in the provinces, and will not be at the Hall of Science again on a Sunday till April.

Mr. Foote lectures at Liverpool to-day (Feb. 25). His afternoon subject is "The Atheist Shoemaker, and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes." Liverpool Freethinkers should make a special effort to bring their Christian friends to this lecture.

Last Sunday afternoon Mr. Watts had a capital audience and an enthusiastic reception at Bradford, when he lectured for the Sunday Society on the French Revolution. The Temperance Hall was filled in every part. Friends were present from all the surrounding districts. In the evening Mr. Watts lectured for the local Branch of the N.S.S. in their hall, which was crowded. There was a great demand for *Freethinkers*, an extra supply was on hand, and every copy was sold.

This evening (Sunday, Feb. 25) Mr. Watts lectures at the London Hall of Science upon "Education and Theology: the Present Struggle." The subject is a good one, and should draw a large audience. Our colleague intends to deal with the conduct of the religious party on the London School Board in their efforts to impose a religious test.

A report of Mr. Watts's lecture for the Sunday Society was reported in the *Bradford Observer*, which says it was "marked by much eloquence." The "large audience" is also noted.

Mr. Watts will have a busy time during the coming week. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday he lectures at Bristol, and on Friday at Chatham.

Wednesday evening next (Feb. 28) is the date of the "monthly social" at the London Hall of Science. Mr. Foote will be present and will give a reading. Vocal and instrumental music will be provided, and the evening will conclude with a dance. The tickets are only sixpence, and there should be a large gathering if the weather is at all favorable.

Our friend, Mr. W. Platt Ball, sends us two pamphlets which have been reprinted from *Natural Science*, published by Macmillan and Co. One is entitled *Natural Selection and Lamarckism*, and the other *Neuter Insects and Lamarckism*. They are really replies to Herbert Spencer's articles on "Inadequacy of Natural Selection," and like all Mr. Ball's writings, are well thought out. In the case of neuter insects, who, of course, cannot transmit acquired characters to posterity, Mr. Ball contends that natural selection has actually effected results for which Mr. Spencer would call in the aid of supplementary inheritance. Mr. Ball's pamphlets deserve the attention of all interested in the important subject of heredity.

A female Freethought orator has appeared at Portland, Oregon. Her name is Katie Kehm Smith. The local friends speak of her as "the woman Ingersoll of the world." She is married, and not likely to budge from Portland, where she is doing good work. There is plenty of room for more of them.

The *Two Worlds* says, "The *Freethinker* has our thanks for supplying the words missing from the quotation from John Wesley's journal, printed in the *Two Worlds* on p. 53." But it questions our surmise that Wesley would probably ascribe Modern Spiritualism to the work of evil spirits. At least, it says, "Perhaps so, and perhaps not." We cannot controvert so modest a statement. But it is certain "witchcraft" bulked largely in his eyes, and of Swedenborg he says (*Journal*, Dec. 8, 1777): "I cannot but think the fever he had twenty years ago, when he supposed he was 'introduced into the society of angels,' really introduced him into the society of lunatics." This is not the modern spiritist way of looking at Swedenborg.

Mr. J. Routh sends a timely letter to the *Leeds Mercury*, calling attention to the red herring Mr. Hughes seeks to trail across the path in saying that since Mr. Holyoake's inquiry, nothing has seen the light which impugns the substantial accuracy of his story—a statement worthy of the rest of his tergiversations. Mr. Routh remarks that Mr. Foote has been guilty of calling a spade a spade, and Mr. Hughes takes refuge behind a supposed breach of etiquette.

Chinon is a little town in old Touraine, now the department of Indre et Loire, France. It will ever be celebrated as the birthplace of the great Freethinking wit, François Rabelais. There is at present a Freethought society in the town. They call themselves *Les Enfants de Rabelais*. A recent funeral of one of their members was attended by more than three hundred persons, and the proceedings gave great offence to the clericals.

There seems to be plenty of Freethinkers in New Zealand; but they are of the easy-going kind, I fancy, who think that as they are free, nobody can be in bonds. If all the Freethinkers here would unite, they would be found more numerous than all the rest. The census of 1891 showed, Spiritualists, 339; Buddhists, Confucians, Pagans (not including Maoris) 3,928; Freethinkers, 4,475; Agnostics, 322; Deists, etc., 51; doubtful, 405; no denomination, 2,999; no religion, 1,558; unspecified, 1,288; "object to state," 15,342. These figures show nearly 1 in 20 to be outside of Christianity. If all the merely formal adherents of the churches, all who adhere merely to keep peace at home, all who so enrolled themselves for trade reasons, for mere social or political reasons, were to declare themselves honestly, how many followers would Jesus have in New Zealand?—*J. Symes*.

Mr. Touzeau Parris took the chair at Mr. Foote's lecture for the West London Branch on Thursday evening, Feb. 15, and a very excellent chairman he made. Some chairmen speak like undertakers at a funeral. Mr. Parris was the opposite of this. His face alone was enough to put the audience in a good temper. Outside the hall there was a Christian Evidence man haranguing an open-air meeting in a fashion which suggested that he had recently escaped from a menagerie. The object of this person was apparently to keep people from hearing Mr. Foote; but, as a matter of fact, the hall was crowded almost to suffocation.

On Friday evening, Feb. 16, Mr. Foote lectured in the neat hall of the Chatham Branch at New Brompton. Mr. Thompson, the ever zealous secretary, was unfortunately absent through illness in his house. One of his children was given over by the doctor, and the Chatham friends, to whom Mr. Thompson has so thoroughly endeared himself, were full of sympathy with him in the distressing circumstances. Mr. Boorman took the chair at Mr. Foote's lecture, and as two reporters were present we presume there has been some notice of it in the local press. At least a few Christians in the audience had been tempted to come in order to see the dreadful man who had denounced the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. They expected to find him a reckless, insulting, blackguardly speaker, and of course they were disappointed. The lecture seemed to be thoroughly enjoyed all round.

The *Paddington Times* thinks that the conversion of Charles Alfred Gibson was "not worth all the printer's ink that has been wasted upon it." We think so too. But why did Mr. Hughes write an eighteenpenny book about it, and stuff it with falsehoods? It was Mr. Hughes who wasted the printer's ink in publishing lies. Mr. Foote had to use more ink simply to correct the reverend gentleman's "indiscretions." Our *Paddington* contemporary also remarks that

"the only strong point for Mr. Foote is that Mr. Hughes's 'Herbert' was said to be a well-known lecturer, which Gibson was not." The *only* strong point! But is not this the point of the whole matter? It is not denied that Mr. Hughes and the West London Mission were brought into friendly contact with Charles Alfred Gibson. So far the story is true. But the actual truth of it would not have been enough to give zest to a halfpenny tract. It was the alleged distinction of "John Herbert" which gave Mr. Hughes's book its whole interest and importance. Mr. Foote's "only point" is therefore fatal to the Atheist Shoemaker story.

"Mr. Foote seems to have scored in the matter of argument," says our Paddington contemporary, but it censures him for calling Mr. Hughes "a liar in face of the world," since the reverend's "actions are probably guided by the best of intentions," and he "may have been imposed upon." Yes, but Mr. Hughes is not imposed upon now. The truth is out. Yet he still sticks to the lie, and is circulating Mr. Holyoake's vindication of it. This is worse than his original offence. It shows him to be an obstinate double-distilled liar.

The Rev. Dr. Peake, of the Lord's Day Observance Society, having threatened Mr. Grein, of the Independent Theatre on account of his Sunday Popular Debates, the London *Star* gave prominence to the matter and published an "interview" with the reverend gentleman, who intimated that he was on the war-path. Mr. Foote wrote a letter to the *Star*, headed "Will Dr. Peake Fight?" ending as follows: "The London Hall of Science, the headquarters of the Secular party, has been open since 1869, and there has always been a charge for admission to the Sunday lectures, although of late we have thrown a part of the hall open free. Why has Dr. Peake never molested us, then? Is it simply because Freethinkers are an awkward lot to tackle? I invite this cocksure clerical fanatic to try his hand at a prosecution. He thinks he knows the law through and through. Well, I believe I know it better than he does; and if he chooses to play the game, I feel sure that he will learn two things—first, that the game itself is a pretty long one; and, secondly, that his last card will be taken with the ace of trumps."

The committee of the Manchester Branch sends the following resolution (with remittance):—"That this Committee heartily congratulates Mr. Foote on the completeness of his exposure of Mr. Hugh Price Hughes's falsehoods, and hereby contributes £1 towards the cost of publishing the proposed pamphlet."

The Portsmouth Branch "desires to place on record its appreciation of the masterly manner in which Mr. Foote has brought to light the truth respecting Mr. Price Hughes's converted Atheist Shoemaker story, and is pleased to hear that Mr. Holyoake is reconsidering his verdict." It also considers Mr. Hughes's conduct in refusing to go before a Court of Honor as "cowardly and dishonest."

The Glasgow Branch sends a resolution approving of Mr. Foote's action in the Atheist Shoemaker matter, and a cheque for £1 10s. for a thousand copies of the pamphlet exposure.

Hugh Price Hughes is speaking at Newcastle on Monday, March 5, and the local Freethinkers are anxious to give him a special treat. They propose to let it take the form of a distribution of the Lie pamphlet amongst his audience. By way of organising this benefit to the reverend gentleman, the Newcastle Branch will hold a special meeting this afternoon (Feb. 25) at 3 o'clock in the Eldon Hall. No doubt there will be a large attendance, and plenty of volunteers for the distribution business.

The West London Branch unanimously resolves—"That we compliment Mr. Foote upon his action in reference to the Atheist Shoemaker story, and his complete exposure of Mr. Price Hughes's falsehoods." The Branch subscribes 10s. towards the cost of the pamphlet, and promises to distribute copies outside St. James's Hall.

Hugh Price Hughes went to Bradford and addressed a thousand people. Of course he did not refer to the Atheist Shoemaker. Nevertheless the audience was reminded of it very forcibly. Mr. J. W. Gott distributed 600 copies of the *Freethinker* at the door. Afterwards he went inside and

beheld a most unusual sight in a Methodist chapel. Quite three hundred people were reading the *Freethinker*.

A medical man in a northern town, in sending us a contribution to the fund for nailing down the Atheist Shoemaker lie, says that he has been a Freethinker for some years, but he now sees the necessity of supporting the organisation. He will therefore subscribe to the *Freethinker*, and he adds—"You may reckon on a modest subscription (to be increased in time, I hope.) whenever funds are urgently wanted."

Noticing the coming bi-centenary of Voltaire's birth (Nov. 21, 1694), the *Daily Chronicle* says: "The story that he took leave of the world in an agony of despairing doubt has been long since discarded, as for some days he had been in a state of semi-insensibility, and breathed his last without attaining full consciousness."

It is calculated that from 220 to 240 of the French deputies are Freethinkers.

To a new American edition of Professor Huxley's *Essays upon Some Controverted Questions*, Mr. W. V. Byars, of St. Louis, contributes a personal sketch. Professor Huxley will be sixty-nine on May 4. In youth he desired to be a mechanical engineer, and when he became a medical student instead, cared most for comparative anatomy and physiology as the "mechanical engineering of living machines."

Mr. Lawson Tait writes an interesting letter on the proposed memorial to Charles Darwin at Shrewsbury. He says: "Now even parsons talk evolution in the pulpit without recognising the fact that the words they use as everyday expressions and the views they promulgate are precisely those concerning which their predecessors fulminated against so late as twenty years ago, and for which they condemned those of us who accepted them to all the penalties of 'infidels' in this world, and condemned persons in the next." Mr. Tait's acceptance of Darwin's principles brought on him the anger of the authorities, and drove him from his native city of Edinburgh, in 1866.

The Ryhope Branch is fighting gallantly against long odds. Bigotry has now even denied it a meeting-place. Still, the members are carrying on the battle as they can. They are pushing the sale of the *Freethinker* in the colliery, and giving their own copies away when they have read them. We tender these brave men our warmest sympathy.

The *West London Observer* briefly reports Mr. Foote's lecture at Hammersmith. In referring to the "anti" meeting outside, it states that "one of the speakers declared himself to be a converted infidel." Good old Converted Infidel! Was it the ghost of the Atheist Shoemaker?

Mr. E. Truelove, the veteran publisher, wishes it known, that although he has given up his shop in Holborn, his old stock can be procured from Mr. Forder, or from his present address, 17 Alexandra-road, Hornsey.

To-morrow evening (Monday, Feb. 26) Mr. Charles Watts lectures at the Battersea Secular Hall, on "The Bible Up to Date"; admission 3d. and 6d. Complimentary tickets have been sent to several local clergymen, and probably there will be some discussion. Freethinkers in south-west London should muster in strong force.

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

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

J. McLeish 2s. 6d., Flora M. Mann, Fanny Kingsnorth, Mr. Mann, Mrs. Mann, J. Martin, R. W. Hearnden, J. B., G. Pierson, Nemo, Barnsley Branch 12s., A. J. Lovell 10s., W. O. Pearson 2s.

In proportion as we love truth more and victory less we shall become anxious to know what it is which leads our opponents to think as they do. We shall begin to suspect that the pertinacity of belief exhibited by them must result from a perception of something we have not perceived. And we shall aim to supplement the portion of truth we have found with the portion found by them.—*Herbert Spencer*, "First Principles," part of § 3.

## Independent Department.

## IS THERE A GOD ?

THE article on the above question by N. M. X. in a recent issue, is possibly as good as can be expected from the Theist's standpoint, and yet, after carefully reading it, one is bound to conclude that the writer *assumes* a great deal, and *proves* nothing. On one thing, at least, he is very plain, for in replying to his own question—"What do I mean by the word "God"—he says, "By the word 'God,' is meant 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.

In so far, then, we are at no loss to understand the point at issue, though it brings us no nearer the solution of the difficulty.

N. M. X. also leaves no doubt as to the way in which he uses such words as "being," "creation," "created," "made," etc., which is evidently the old theological one, for speaking of the heavens, the earth, and living beings, he says: "For that they were made in some way or other, is certain." And again, "If, then, organic matter must have been created, it follows that there must have been a creator"; and he asks, "Who was it made these wondrous bodies? who launched them into space?" etc. "How, then, were they made, and who was it made them?" For he says: "They could not have made themselves," nor has "Nature," in his opinion, had anything to do with it. His words are: "Nature does not create anything"; "Nature" implies nothing of the kind; "Nature is not God—is not the first cause"; his quotation from Huxley, therefore, is in direct opposition to the meaning he attaches to such words and phrases.

Now, if "science has exploded" anything, it certainly has exploded such an idea as the use of these words in this unscientific manner; for there is not the smallest scrap of evidence, nor even the shadow of the shade of a fact at present within the view of scientific research, to justify "such an assumption." N. M. X. says he is "a thinking, reflecting, reasoning creature"; more or less, we all possess these faculties; but one feels tempted to ask how far he has used them in the direction to which his question tends? He might begin by "reasoning" on an uncaused "cause," and it will possibly end in one of two effects; either he will be able, logically, to prove to us that such a thing can be, or he will lose his reason and launch himself into a lunatic asylum. If he survives this ordeal and keeps his reason intact, he might then reflect on this "being whose existence had no beginning," and after disposing of the contradiction in terms contained in the sentence, might find a solution to the question, where was this "being" when this creating and making, and launching, took place? He could not have been in "space," for he "launched" all "these wondrous bodies" "into space," and therefore "must have been" in some other locality to perform this creating business. N. M. X. might, then, by "reflecting," find an answer to another question. When did this peculiar operation take place? or what were the materials used in its performance?

By this time he will possibly realize that he has only begun to think, reflect, and reason, on the question at the head of his article, but if he continues the investigation he will assuredly find himself "face to face" with two positions, which are these: either it is true, as science every day more positively demonstrates, that the material universe, of which we are cognizant, is eternal, and as a consequence, indestructible; and that, therefore, such words as *created*, *made*, *beginning*, or *ending*, in the sense implied by N. M. X., are not only out of place in the argument, but against all known facts. Or, it is true that "there must have been a creator," "they were made in some way or other—by someone or something," and this in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

In the first of these positions, thought, reflection, and reason, says plainly—

There is no God! infinity within,  
Infinity without, belie creation.

In the latter position, blind faith only, is necessary; for, "they were," or, "they must be," or, *there must have been*, are not the conclusions of "thinking, reflecting, reasoning creatures."

The absurd contradictions involved in sentence after sentence of N. M. X.'s article, which arise in one's mind on perusing it, suggests more than one cares to write, but to deal with the matter in a spirit of levity or sarcasm merely, would be by no means the best way of arriving at "such proof as

will satisfy his mind," either for or against the question he asks, but till something better than mere questions asked, or assertions made, are given to support the affirmative, we must conclude the question not proven, and refuse to "extinguish ourselves" by unjustified belief. Let us try to reduce the inquiry to a crucial and testing point. N. M. X.'s "God" is certainly, as I understand his argument, outside space. Now if, in his next excursion "into space," he will endeavor to fix the point at which *space* ends, and give us some scientific fact to prove that such a point exists, we may possibly conclude he has, at least, one reason for asking—"Is there a God?"

Thanking you for introducing into your columns such subjects of controversy, which doubtless will increase its popularity and help its circulation. VINCENT VERITAS.

N. M. X. tells us (pars. 6 and 11) that God "exists"—has life, that is; and that "where there is life, there must be a life-giver." To the God of N. M. X., then, there must have been a life-giver. Call this life-giver God II. By the word "God" here is *not* meant (see par. 6) "the being of all beings, the cause of all causes," but the being who gave life to "the being of all beings, the cause of all causes." As God I. (N. M. X.'s God) exists, *a fortiori* must God II, exist—have life, that is. "Where there is life, there must be a life-giver." Call this third life-giver God III. By the word "God" here is meant the being who gave life to the being who gave life to "the being of all beings, the cause of all causes." How many more stories shall we put to this "house that Jack built"? From (God I.) an "unknown and unknowable, but all powerful something" (par. 14), we have got through a (God II.) more "unknown and unknowable, but all powerful something," to a (God III.) most "unknown and unknowable, but all powerful something," "mysterious and omnipotent" (par. 11), in the superlative; and so we may go on *ad infinitum*. What has N. M. X. to say to this? I simply present him his own argument.

H. W. L.

IN answering N. M. X.'s arguments in favor of the existence of a God—that is "the being who according to the Bible 'created heaven and earth'; the being of all beings; the cause of all causes; the being whose existence had no beginning and shall have no end"—let us first consider his objection to the word "Atheist," which he terms a misnomer.

N. M. X. states that "the word 'Atheist' in modern language implies one who disbelieves in a future state and ignores the existence of a God," and therefore comes to the by no means obvious conclusion "that he who can say with Ingersoll 'the grave may be the door to another world,' and that 'there may be a God,' cannot be truthfully classed an Atheist.

Unbelief through lack of evidence does not preclude a man from stating a possibility. I do not believe that there exists any water on the surface of the moon since I have no evidence of any such existence, yet I would not allow that to prevent my granting the possibility of such an existence.

The thoughtful Atheist of the present day is no dogmatist. He does not definitely assert that there is no God. To be negatively dogmatic is as much of an assumption as to be positively emphatic.

The word "Atheist" is derived from the Greek "Atheos," and means simply and literally "without God." Not having any evidence on the point, the Atheist ignores the existence of such a being. By admitting, that it is within the range of possibility such a being *may* be, he in no way renounces the principle of Atheism; and until sufficient evidence be brought to command his belief, he must remain "without God," ignoring at the same time, as a necessary result, any such existence.

N. M. X.'s whole argument in favor of the existence of a God, put in a few words, is this: Something exists; therefore there must have been some being to bring that something into existence. This is a fair argument. Let us consider it. If the argument is reasonable it will bear following to its logical conclusion.

The universe exists, and since we cannot conceive it as self-existent, God must have created it! Is the difficulty removed? If God created the universe, he must be infinitely more wonderful than that which he created. How, then, did he come to exist? If for every effect it is necessary to imagine some cause, would we not have to people space with more gods than there are stars in the profound depths of the infinite?

Does not this argument, thus logically concluded, annihilate itself?

If it be not possible to conceive the universe as self-existent, would it be less difficult to imagine a being—possessing the necessary power to call into creation the innumerable and wonderful worlds which fill the immensity of space—as self-existing.

The late Charles Bradlaugh stated that he could prove the universe not to have been created by an intelligent power extraneous to itself. Let me give you his exact words: "The fact I start from is the fact something exists. Now this existence is either infinite in duration—that is unlimited in duration, that is eternal—or else it has been created or brought into existence. If created, then it must have been by some existence the same as itself, or different from it, but it cannot have been created by any existence the same as itself, because that would have been but a continuation of the same existence; and it cannot have been created by any existence differing from itself, because things which have nothing in common with each other cannot be conceived in relation to each other, and cannot be the cause of or affect one another." Few things could be more logical; none more decisive.

Scientists all recognise the indestructibility of matter, and the necessary corollary to this is that it has always existed. Having no end, it could have had no beginning.

Previous to asking our belief, you must place before us an argument which will enable us to form some conception of the thing to be believed in. Previous to imagining God it is an indubitable necessity to be able to conceive the annihilation of matter, or the creation of matter, from absolute nothingness. Is the human mind capable of forming any such conceptions—an absolute necessity before any belief in a creator be possible? For my own part it is an utter impossibility.

You do not solve the mystery by attributing all things to God; "you do not," to use the words of Ingersoll, "even exchange mysteries; you do but add one more." Nay even more than this. Having accounted for one existence by an existence antecedent to it, it becomes, by the same process of thought, necessary to account for the antecedent existence, and so on until the argument would become infinite in its absurdity.

Let us acknowledge our ignorance. Let us admit with Herbert Spencer that "the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."

Can we not tell the truth, and say we do not know? Let us be honest—not because honesty is the best policy, but because honesty should be, and ought to be, a principle with men of all nations at all times.

H. C. S.

### BIBLE GEOGRAPHY.

ACCORDING to the veracious 2 Chronicles xiii. 17, Abijah, King of Judah, with his army, slew "five hundred thousand chosen men" of Israel in a single day. Now the territory of Judah and Israel combined is less than that of Wales, and instead of flowing with milk and honey, is even more sterile than that of our principality. How is it possible it could have supported such immense armies?

The Red Sea, from the point where it strikes the northern boundary of Egypt, to the point where it divides into the two gulfs of Suez and Akaba, is nowhere less than one hundred and thirty miles wide. Twenty miles is considered a good day's march for an army. Therefore, it would require not less than six days for Moses to get his followers from the Egyptian side to the shore of Asia.

The distance from the wilderness of Shur, where the Israelites landed, to the borders of Canaan, is less than two hundred miles. Yet with an army of 600,000 fighting men, Moses took forty years traversing this distance. Must he not have been an energetic leader? A snail would have got over the ground in less time.

According to Matt. xix. 1, "He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan." The Jordan itself was the eastern boundary of Judea, and there were no coasts of Judea beyond it.

John i. 28 (Revised Version) says, "These things were done in Bethany, beyond Jordan. As Bethany is not beyond Jordan, someone kindly revised the old manuscripts, altering Bethany into Bethabara, as in our Authorised Version.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

### A CHINESE ON MISSIONARIES.

THE Vancouver correspondent of the *Toronto Mail* has been interviewing Mr. Toi Lal, an educated Chinese gentleman, on the subject of missionaries. This is what he said: "A certain English statesman, whose name I have forgotten, having been twitted of his Jewish origin by his political opponent, is accredited with the retort: 'Sir, my ancestors were a civilised people, living in houses and wearing clothing, while yours were yet naked savages, running howling through the woods.' I know of no expression which more truthfully conveys the average Chinaman's opinion of the Christian missionary and his work than this. Realising that he is the inheritor of scores of centuries of civilising influences, of education and refinement, he usually greets with mild amusement the advent of these apostles of a race, the fathers of which were but yesterday barbarians; a race which, while we were at the zenith of our national evolution, had not yet, if your own scientific men may be credited, succeeded in obliterating the last remaining traces of their simian progenitors by an over-indulgence in sedentary habits."

"The idea of atoning for sin by adopting the Christian belief," said Toi Lal, "receives, perhaps, the same degree of credence which would be accorded by your average Canadian, should some uneducated Indian take his stand in the streets of Toronto and proclaim that by his savage ghost-dances alone could man obtain salvation." The Christian schools, he says, are attended to learn the English language and ways for commercial purposes. "That a genuine conversion to the theory of Christianity arises from such efforts, other than very few isolated instances, I certainly doubt. Reduced to a commercial basis, I think it is not putting it too strongly to state that every Chinese convert to Christianity represents to the missionary societies an expenditure of a round million dollars in hard cash."

At this rate, what will it cost to bring the whole Chinese nation to the feet of Jesus?

The doctrine of evolution stands to-day for the scientific view of life; and the more that view can be brought home to the masses, the surer will be the foundations of the state, and the more rapidly and happily will the stages that yet separate us from a condition of perfect social health, be accomplished.—*Popular Science Monthly*, Nov. 1893, p. 123.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

ANIMAL TREATMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I apologise for trespassing on your space with my juvenile sentiments (I use the term in the sense that I am only a junior in the Freethought ranks), but the above article, by Mr. J. M. Wheeler, certainly does show, to an observant eye, that Christianity is not, by any means, the only promoter of a kind and tender heart.

Indeed, since my attention has been turned to Freethought (through the perusal of scientific literature), it has certainly evoked in me a feeling of deeper sympathy and affection for those less perfected members of the animal kingdom to which we belong, than was ever instituted in me during my orthodox days. So much so, in fact, is this the case, that I take nothing whatever to satisfy my hungry stomach, that needs or necessitates the brutal destruction of some, maybe? happy animal, that roams about in Nature's garden and wallows in the summer sun.

There is something grander and nobler in the "condition" of life than was ever pictured to me before, and it is passing strange, that with the decline of Christianity (which is becoming more and more patent every day), the advance in the "quality" of human knowledge should be so great, for it conclusively shows that it has been a tremendous hindrance to the progress of humanity, and ever will be, so long as it is maintained in any form.

There was a time, not very long ago, when I would walk (or rather did walk, many a time) from Hastings to St. Leonard's before 6 o'clock in the morning and take Communion, and come back and do a hard days work of twelve hours in a stuffy office—and at that time, too, I would pass, with a shudder, a man whom now I would be only too pleased to shake hands with—in the name of "Toby King," whose excellent likeness appeared in a recent issue of the Freethinker. The thought of being in the presence of an Atheist was awful to me then—and why? Because I knew none, and neither had I known or heard anything of any, and as a consequence of this it has suggested the following "text" to me, viz.:

A man is not my enemy who cannot see as I see. But the man who is my enemy, is he who condemns me when he knows nothing of me. A HAPPY THINKER.

HER NEW AVATAR.

MRS. BESANT'S English friends, it seems, were too hasty in contradicting the report that she has again added to her creeds. Colonel Olcott has publicly announced that "Mrs. Besant has declared herself to be a Hindoo," and the latest of her lectures in Calcutta, of which a report has come home, shows that she had already not only given in her general adhesion to the idolatry elaborated from the teachings of Brahma, but felt herself competent to "explain the hidden meanings of many symbols," and to prove that "the Hindoo religion is the only one which is good for the most philosophical as well as the most childish-minded men and women"; and, besides much else, "she gave some of the underlying meanings of the idols" whom she urged all honest Hindoos to continue worshipping.

It is true that an Indian scholar, writing in the last number of the Calcutta Statesman which is to hand, warns the "sober reading public, and even the undisciplined student," to "hesitate before accepting the hysterical utterances of a woman, not known as an Oriental authority, against the plain teachings of written history, archæology, and ethnology," and that a leading Theosophist in Bengal has called on Colonel Olcott to "repudiate her Indian lecturing as an expression of Theosophy." But Colonel Olcott is loyal to his other half in the newest incarnation of "the Aryan god"—as it is only decent that he should be—and asserts that "the Theosophical Society is so eclectic as to religious belief as not to interfere with that of any member, whatever may be his or her creed."

Before Mrs. Besant leaves India she will have time to add Mohammedanism to her already accepted religions; and, as she is soon to pay a visit to Australia, she may be expected to pick up there some other and more barbaric creeds. Then she ought to travel in Africa in order to absorb the cult of Obiism and all the phases of fetish worship.—Weekly Dispatch.

"Surely, if anyone is persuaded, whether rightly or wrongly, that his fellows are expending the best part of their imaginations and feelings on a dream and a delusion, and that by so doing moreover they are retarding to an indefinite degree the wider spread of light and happiness, then nothing he can tell them about chemistry or psychology or history can in his eyes be comparable in importance to the duty of telling them this."—John Morley.

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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, E. T. Slater (London Reform Union), "The Government of London: what it is and what it should be" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Education and Theology: the Present Struggle" (admission free, reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Wednesday at 8, social party, music, readings, dancing (tickets 6d.)

Battersea Secular Hall (opposite Battersea Park Station): 7.45, free musical and dramatic entertainment. Monday at 8, Charles Watts, "The Bible Up to Date" (3d. and 6d.) Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free) Thursday at 8, dramatic club.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, C. Cohen will lecture. Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, March 1, at 8.30, St. John, "The Modern Savage" (free).

South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 6.30, annual meeting.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, a lecture (free).

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Secularism and Christianity" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

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

## COUNTRY.

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, John Grange, "Thought: the Great Want of the Age."

Brighton—Star Athletic Club, 6 Whitecross-street: 3, T. Read, "Monopoly"; 7.30, Mr. Heins, "The Tendency of Democracy" (free). Wednesday at 8.30, debating class.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, readings from favorite authors.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, debating class; 7, A. Westcott, "A Modern Inquisition; its Victims, and how they are Tortured," illustrated by lantern.

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

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class; 1 to 2, music class (free); 2.30, concert; 6.30, W. Ogilvy, "Christianity and Science."

Fairworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "Positivism and Secularism."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, selected article from the *Free Review* 6.30, Zosimus, "The Arts of Pleasure," with special lantern slides.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, "What did Jesus Christ Teach?" Thursday at 8, improvement class.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, J. Sketchley, "Socialism Impracticable."

Liverpool—Oudretowns' Hall, St. Anne-street: G. W. Foote, 11, "What has Become of the Devil?"; 3, "The Atheist Shoemaker and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes"; 7, "The Pillars of Priestcraft."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 8.30, Mr. Wainscott, "Land, Labor, and Capital."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Good Templar Hall, 2 Clayton-street, East: 7, R. Mitchell, "Evolution, the Evidence from Palaeontology."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Read, "Anarchy."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, I. Slyfield, "History of Religion."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 3, Ernest Evans, "Science and Socialism: a Challenge to Socialists"; 5, tea; 7, Ernest Evans, "The Solar System and what we Learn from it," with lantern illustrations. Wednesday at 8, dancing class.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 6.30, ethical class; 7.30, W. Cook a reading.

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

## LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Feb. 25, m., Battersea; e., Camberwell. March 2 to April 14, Portsmouth; April 15, m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Camberwell; 22, m. and a., Victoria Park.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—March 4, Camberwell. April 1, Camberwell.

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