

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## MR. PRICE HUGHES IN TROUBLE MR. HOLYOAKE TO THE RESCUE MR. FOOTE'S REPLY. THE LAST ACT OF THE PLAY.

### THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER. ITS TRUTH STILL ADMITTED

BY G. J. HOLYOAKE.

As I did my former paper, I make this in the form of a statement as being neither personal nor partisan.

When I undertook to read Mr. Price Hughes's book on "Herbert" the Atheist, I was incited mainly by curiosity to learn whether it afforded any foundation for Mr. Foote's description of it. I found no justification whatever of the wholesale accusation of untruth brought against the narrative.

What has subsequently been published on the subject has not altered my opinion (1). I am under no obligation to say Mr. Hughes is wrong where I think him right—nor under any obligation to think Mr. Foote right where I think him wrong. All my preferences are on the side of the Secular party. But truth is higher than preference where error is concerned.

In a letter Mr. Foote sent me, before he had seen my former statement, he said I had "fallen into a trap." But if so, it was he who set the trap (2). He read Mr. Hughes's book and gave his opinion upon it. I did but follow his example. If it was right in him to do what he did, it was right in me to do the same. Had Mr. Foote never given his opinion, I had never given mine. My doing so, he confesses, "fell upon him like a bolt from the blue"—which shows that he must be less familiar with independent opinion (3) than I took him to be.

So little impatient was I to cause Mr. Foote disquietude or surprise, that I let his opinion have a four years' run before mine set out (4). He complains that "I did not consult him" before I wrote. Why should I? He had published all he knew—and more than he knew, as was evident in his epithets—and there was no more to learn. Besides, he did not consult me (5), which he might have done with seemliness, before advancing hateful accusations which compromise the Secular party of which I was the advocate and defender before he was born. Of his not consulting me I make no complaint, and only refer to the matter to show that I omitted no courtesy which he observed, and showed little precipitation in what I did.

No. 653.]

Only because it may conduce to right understanding do I notice the assertions that I "approached Mr. Hughes" in this matter (6). The truth is, that after not seeing him for more than a year, I think, I was in his company last December, when he asked me whether I had read the story of the Atheist shoemaker. I said "No, nor Mr. Foote's pamphlet either." On hearing my saying I was willing (or wishful) when opportunity offered, to know the facts on both sides, he said "I might see the ladies and the widow of the person named in his story if I pleased." There the matter ended with Mr. Hughes. No suggestions were made, no conditions were made; I was left quite free (7) to mention Gibson's name or anything I might see fit. It was my own act to write my impression, which some four weeks later I did, and sent it to Mr. Hughes to print if he pleased, with request if he did to furnish Mr. Foote with an early proof; and lest what I had written should be too long for his paper, I made an abstract and sent it to him at once. Further, it is said "it must be remembered that Mr. Holyoake intervened." An intervener is one who puts himself forward or interrupts. I did neither. I neither "intervened" nor "approached" in the matter (8). Of like nature is another allegation that "I asked the concoctors of the story whether it was true." This was in no wise so, for nothing I had read or knew had raised in my mind any question of untruth. In his paper of Jan. 28 he says he sent me the previous number. He never did. I had to write to London for it. That Mr. Foote believes what he says I have no manner of doubt. But the reader would regard me as a very ill-conditioned controversialist if I described these misapprehensions as the natural aberrations of "Ananias" Foote (9).

Mr. Foote has made a complete change of front—that has changed the whole case (10). He says now he is not concerned to dispute that Mr. Hughes converted an Atheist (11). Then what need was there to call him a liar for saying he had? Mr. Foote denied that "Herbert" represented a "real person" (12). Now he knows that he did. He ridiculed as an artful and mendacious invention that "Herbert" had a brother in Northampton (13). Now he has to admit that he had.

When it is remembered that Mr. Foote declared "there was no 'substratum' of truth in the book," and



that he "unhesitatingly called it a lie from *beginning to end*." It does not, he says, "contain a *mixture of truth, it is pure unadulterated falsehood*." The wholesale charge against Mr. Hughes disappears in face of Mr. Foote's own admissions (14).

It is nothing to the purpose to say that Mr. Hughes did not convert "such an Atheist," as Mr. Foote now goes upon. He denied that there was any real Atheist at the bottom of the story, or any real person converted. He was wrong in that (15). That is all I said. In his new contention I have no interest and no concern (16).

It is owned, now, that a certain volume was not "given by the father to the dead son" (17), as Mr. Foote had said, and that "Herbert" did not "kneel down and pray in the passage before leaving his father's house" (18). Who gave Mr. Foote the information about the book and the prayer on which he relied? Were they liars? Might the account of this Northampton investigation, seasoned with appropriate epithets, be published as "Two Lies in One Chapter?" Mr. Foote explains these mistakes airily as "a little blunder in chronology not worth mentioning." I agree the blunders are trivial, and such as any honest man may fall into. But why should he call upon me to regard such errors as "little blunders" in him, and rank mendacity in Mr. Hughes?

A saying of Bishop Butler is a favorite motto of Mr. Gladstone: "Probability is the guide of life." Is it probable that Gibson could have become an Atheist and repented of it while in London, and his father not know it (19)? I see nothing improbable in it. Some years ago, when Secularism first attracted public attention, three young gentlemen came to me after a morning lecture at the John-street Institution, offering their services as Secularistic advocates. One, I knew to be an Atheist, who afterwards became an author and political writer of authority. Another became a professor of European reputation; the third was the son of the best known Christian of that day, and afterwards wrote for me in the *Reasoner* under an assumed name. Of the sincerity and determination of his convictions, there was no doubt. Subsequently he underwent conversion, and became an earnest preacher. Yet his family, I believe, never heard or suspected the extremely heterodox opinions he entertained and volunteered to advocate in London, and would have denied the possibility of it had they been told.

Gibson's landlady is represented as saying he "believed in God." But is her interpretation of his mind conclusive? (20) She appears not to know that he had defended Atheism in argument. She had heard him say "I'm not against Jesus Christ." This implies that there was something greater which he was against. Thomas Cooper, and a greater than he, John Stuart Mill, were both enamored of Jesus Christ, when both were arguing fiercely against the God of the Christians.

Gibson worked with "a member of the National Secular Society" in London; so he was likely to hear of Atheism. Besides, he was, on the testimony of his comrades, "rather fond of arguing and taking all sorts of sides in opposition to the person he was arguing with." If he took "all" sides, then he must have taken the side of Atheism among them (21), though "he was always hostile to Atheism in conversation," so far as his shopmates knew; but there is his own statement that he did become quite of an atheistic way of thinking. His wife (22) is the most likely person to know what his views really were, and she, on first knowing a Sister of Katherine House, told her that her husband was an Atheist. It was entirely against her interests (23) to say so; but she knew that on visiting her husband the Sister would soon learn it. Being a Catholic, it was not a thing she would wish to be true, and it shows her candor and truth alike that she gave the information when, for all she knew, it might tell against her getting the assistance she sought. After

he was seen by his visitors of the West London Mission, his Atheism no longer depended on the testimony of his wife. He made that plain to others with a violence of speech which passes with some for strong language, not knowing what others perceive, that "nothing is so deadly as moderation." There is no evidence that Gibson was never an Atheist, and there is evidence that he was. That Gibson was a ready and forcible speaker no one denies who knew him. His father says his son "was intelligent and fond of arguing." As the father had "never heard from his son for two years and a half prior to his death," what could he know of his mind or the changes of conviction he may have underwent in that time? It was during that time, when his father knew nothing about him, that he was known to those who attended him at the commencement of his last illness as a bitter Atheist. It seems strange that though the father had known Mr. Hughes several years, he had never intimated to him (24) that there was anything in the story he had published to which he had the least objection. A copy of the "Atheist Shoemaker" was given to him four and a half years ago, and from that day until this he had never complained to the author of anything in it. When Mr. Hughes went to Northampton, Mr. Gibson (the father) came into the vestry—a gentleman being present—and thanked Mr. Hughes profusely for his kindness to his son. He also called at Katherine House (which was then another house near the British Museum) and, in the presence of another person, with tears in his eyes thanked Sister Lily for her kindness to his daughter-in-law. All this was honest, manly gratitude which did him great credit. Had father and brother mentioned these things, and others relevant, to the audience at the Hall of Science, where they appeared, those present had been better informed than they were (25).

It is instructive to see how docile Mr. Foote is with respect to his own evidence. He puts no questions—he has no misgivings—as to whether other facts exist. Those whose words he cites he regards as faultless in memory—perfect in capacity to observe and errorless to report. I did but venture to believe in the personal integrity of an eminent Wesleyan minister in London, and here is Mr. Foote standing up for the infallibility of members of the Salvation Army in Northampton (26). This remarkable concurrence between us, of belief in Christian credibility, should go far to show all concerned that Secularists can divest themselves of hostile prejudice.

Though, as I have said, I let four years pass before writing a word upon his pamphlets, Mr. Foote has been for several weeks seeking information (27) to support charges he made without it. Every week he has been calling upon me to give an opinion on his case. Could I do less, in courtesy to him, than wait until he had completed his statements? He calls this "strange silence." Would it not have been more strange still had I replied before I knew what about? He is good enough to publish a special letter, to warn me that my "honor" and what he is pleased to call my "reputation" are in peril, and that some of my many "thousands of admirers (I am glad to hear I have so many) are shaking their heads" because I do not hurry up to confirm what he has said. What? I confirm odious accusations? I endorse the introduction into Secular controversy of the infamous term of "liar" and its application to ladies whose character malignity might assail but could not assail. I own to feeling respect for the ladies of the Mission (28), though I do not share their faith. They minister to the outcast and helpless in their last extremity, even when suffering from loathsome or infectious diseases, bending over them to bathe the fevered brow of the dying. Possessing refinement and choice of pleasanter pursuits, they engage in this perilous work of mercy, often weary but never flinching. Their profession and their character should protect them from the charge of being conscious



participants in a confederacy of falsehood (29). It is of no use asking me to join in this imputation. As I grow older I grow more tolerant of the method and manner of others, but grow more careful what I say or do myself.

My friendly and impatient importuner has sent me letters, telegrams, and a registered missive, warning me how I am losing my friends, and "my friends are losing their tempers" at my lack of promptitude in concurring with him. But I shall lose no friend by standing up for truth and courtesy, and should deserve no friends if I did not. Of any reputation I have, I value most that which relates to the Secular party of which I am a member, which is pledged to the policy of reason and personal fairness.

Those who, like myself, lack the faculty of alarm, have been told for their instruction that at my recent lectures in Manchester I was subjected to a "fusillade of questions" on the subject. Only three or four questions were put, and those at my instigation—I asking the president of both meetings to say I would readily answer any inquiries. Only two were relevant. One was, "Was Gibson the name given to me?" I said "Yes." To another querist I said: "A leader was responsible for the manners of his party so far as his example was followed." I have always found the Manchester Secularists earnest, self-respecting, and level-headed. I never heard them apply to any adversary a term that could only be met by a blow or a duel or contempt.

I regret that Mr. Foote professes indifference when "Christians leave off calling Atheists scoundrels" (30). I have a different opinion. I think it honorable in Mr. Hughes that he did not do so—that he had it not in his mind to do so, and that he did the contrary. It is a triumph of discussion which we have maintained, that the churches begin to recognise that absolute difference of belief as to the origin of the universe is no proof of personal depravity—which is the prelude to the concession, by their consent, of equality of civil rights to heretics.

The reader will, I hope, pardon this array of words spread before him. But I was unwilling to treat with seeming disrespect, any persons who take interest in my statement of opinion on this matter, made some time ago. It still appears to me that Secularists should withstand the errors of theology—treat adversaries with the respectfulness they look to be shown to themselves—and avoid that language which would lead the public to regard Secularists as ruffians of progress. I have encountered ruffians of Christianity, but they did not commend their faith to me. I belong to that party whose motto is, "We seek the Truth." I go further and say, with Professor Tyndall, "I *covet* the Truth," and wish it to prevail. Therefore, I am solicitous that it be maintained with fairness, lest it become repellent. To make Truth repellent, is to betray it.

[Had I seen the menace in your last number, before I promised to send a communication, I should have preferred waiting to see what that meant, as I never write under menace from anybody—G. J. H.] (31).

#### MR. FOOTE'S REPLY TO MR. HOLYOAKE.

MR. HOLYOAKE is, as I expected, very strong on the question of "manners." But a discussion upon it is a waste of words. Different temperaments will follow different methods, and there is room for other varieties of advocacy than Mr. Holyoake's.

"Liar" sticks in my colleague's throat, but he does not object to "ruffian." His devotion to Mr. Hughes is amazing. The "eminent Wesleyan minister" is still a perfect gentleman, and I am almost bidden to imitate his example.

Let us look at the *facts*, instead of discussing *words*. Who has respected fair-play, Mr. Hughes or myself? I have printed Mr. Holyoake's communications in full,

and Mr. Hughes's letters as well as my own. They have been allowed to speak for themselves (as far as I could induce them to speak) in the *Freethinker*. I have suppressed nothing, and snatched at no mean advantage. I have also offered to submit the entire dispute to the adjudication of a Court of Honor. And what has Mr. Hughes done? He has refused to go before a Court of Honor. He has suppressed everything that tells against him. Not a word as to my discoveries, evidences, and charges has been allowed to appear in the *Methodist Times*. He pretends that the case closed with Mr. Holyoake's "vindication." Such are the *facts*, and it is upon *them* that Mr. Hughes and I will have to be judged. It is not etiquette, but honor, that makes the gentleman.

A soldier in the thick of the fight may sometimes use hard expressions; harder, perhaps, than he would use in a pleasant retreat at Brighton. Mr. Holyoake, however, has a certain gift in that line himself; only he has an ugly knack of exercising it at the expense of his own party. I do not recollect that he ever paid a living Freethinker such compliments as he has showered on Mr. Hughes and other "eminent" Christians. As the French say, this is one of the defects of his qualities.

It is hateful to me, however, to wrangle with Mr. Holyoake. I know that he advocated Secularism before I was born. It is for that reason I have restrained myself and curbed the indignation of our party.

There is not a Secularist in England, or elsewhere, who is not as able as I am to judge of the value of Mr. Holyoake's communication. But courtesy demands that I should say something, and in the rest of my remarks I shall try to confine myself to the actual points that are raised, with a view to correcting mis-statements. With this object I have inserted numbers for reference in Mr. Holyoake's communication.

(1) Mr. Holyoake says his opinion has not been altered by anything published since his "vindication." He regards my "wholesale accusation of untruth" against Mr. Hughes as unfounded. Would it not have been more pertinent to condescend to "retail" business? Evidence has been given of a number of specific untruths.

(2-3) The "trap" was not set by me. It was set by Mr. Hughes. Nor was it right for Mr. Holyoake to carry on a hole-and-corner inquiry after the challenges of one Secretary and two Presidents of the National Secular Society. "Independent opinion" is a euphemism for playing into the hands of the enemy.

(4-5) Precisely because my pamphlet had been long and widely circulated, and precisely because Mr. Hughes had been challenged as to his accuracy by leader after leader of Freethought, Mr. Holyoake was bound to consult me. For all he knew, I might have been in possession of important information. In any case, my honor was concerned as well as the honor of Mr. Hughes. The rest of this paragraph is far-fetched, and needs no reply.

(6) Mr. Holyoake has himself to thank for the statement that he "approached Mr. Hughes" in this matter. He said nothing of Mr. Hughes's approaching *him*. What he wrote was—"Learning that I wished to investigate the facts, Mr. Hughes frankly gave me the opportunity of doing it."

(7) Mr. Hughes left Mr. Holyoake free to give the real name of "John Herbert." Why, then, did he keep up the mystery? Was he afraid the disclosure would spoil the "vindication"?

(8) Words, words, words! Mr. Holyoake did intervene. "Intervene" is to "come between." If Mr. Holyoake did not come between me and Mr. Hughes, what did he do?

(9) I am not responsible for a paper not reaching Mr. Holyoake. He admits having received letters, telegrams, and a registered copy of the *Freethinker* containing my Open Letter. But he never answered



one of my communications, and how was I to know of a miscarriage?

(10—11) I am said to have changed front. Yes, with the facts. But they make no impression on Mr. Holyoake. I do *not* say I am not concerned to dispute that Mr. Hughes converted an Atheist. I *did* say so in my letter to the *Chronicle*, when Mr. Holyoake allowed me to learn from the public press that he was going to send something to the *Freethinker*. But I do not say so *now*. I have learnt the facts of the case since then, and I dispute that Charles Alfred Gibson was ever an Atheist.

(12) I did not *deny* that "Herbert" represented a "real person." I only gave my opinion that he did not. I now know that he did. There was a little fire to all that smoke. That is all.

(13) The "brother" at Northampton is nothing. Mr. Hughes is pledged to the "Atheist brother." It does not prove the truth of Jonah and the Whale to establish the identity of Jonah.

(14) So much of Mr. Hughes's story was obviously false, and his attitude was so suspicious, that one could not believe him at all. It was in the second edition of my pamphlet, after Mr. Bradlaugh's challenges, that I used the words quoted. Substantially they require no alteration. There is no "truth" in the story. It is a solid mass of falsehood. There is a *fact* in it—the existence of Charles Alfred Gibson. So much I admit because I have found it—no thanks to Mr. Hughes or to Mr. Holyoake either.

(15) I was not "wrong in that." I still challenge the "real Atheist."

(16) Mr. Holyoake has "no interest and no concern" in my "new contention." That is, he has no concern in the truth or falsehood of a circumstantial story of which he has written a "vindication."

(17—18) All this is sorry trifling. I made two slight errors in reporting a long interview with four people, and I corrected them without a moment's delay. Is this the work of an "Ananias"? With respect to the book and the prayer Mr. Holyoake has blundered. The book exists. I have it. Whether it was given to Charles Alfred Gibson by his father, or whether he bought it, does not matter a straw, except for the sake of absolute accuracy. It is the book mentioned by Mr. Hughes. Nor was there any "lie" in the "prayer." Charles Alfred Gibson did kneel down and pray in his father's passage, only the incident took place three weeks before he left Northampton instead of on the very day. The blunder was not substantial, but chronological. Yet I corrected it. What has Mr. Hughes corrected? He floats all his "mistakes" still, with Mr. Holyoake's flag at the masthead.

(19) I only used the testimony of Mr. Gibson senior to prove that young Gibson was a Christian up to his leaving Northampton. For the subsequent period of two years and a half I cited other witnesses. Twelve months before his "conversion" he was in the Church Army at Paddington. Thence I followed him to his workshop in the Gray's Inn-road, and his lodgings in the Caledonian-road, and still no sign of his Atheism. Of the rest of the paragraph I can only say it is pointless. A pseudonymous writer can veil his identity, but how can a public speaker do so? Could he wear a mask and speak in falsetto?

(20) The landlady's "interpretation of his mind" is not "conclusive," but it agrees with other interpretations. "I'm not against Jesus Christ" simply meant that he was against common Christianity because his wife had not been visited in her illness.

(21) This is casuistical. And where is young Gibson's "own statement" that he was of an "atheistic way of thinking"? In Mr. Hughes book. Thank you!

(22—23) Yes, his wife was a likely person to know his opinions. She also knew the opinions of that

"brother at Northampton," and how did she represent them? The question is, Was she a likely person to tell the truth? It was not "entirely against her interests" to say her husband was an Atheist. Quite the contrary. The joy in Christian circles is over the infidel who repenteth. Christian Missions are always on the look out for such a catch.

Now I have a serious word for Mr. Holyoake. He has evidently consulted the "Sisters," and perhaps Mr. Hughes, before writing this communication. Why did he not also consult me? I wrote him a letter on Wednesday, February 13, stating that some of the information I possessed was at his service, and offering to see him at Brighton, where I would have taken the documents left in my custody by the Gibsons. That letter of mine, like all the rest, was not answered or acknowledged. Mr. Holyoake does not want to learn unpleasant truths, and the reader will know the value of his panegyric on Julia's veracity.

(24) Mr. Gibson senior did approach Mr. Hughes, as I have related, and Mr. Hughes was in too great a hurry to listen. How was Mr. Gibson, a poor Northampton shoemaker, to expose the falsehoods of an "eminent Wesleyan minister"? He had not seen my pamphlet. A copy of it only fell into his hands after the publication of Mr. Holyoake's report. Then he knew where to apply, and he applied at once.

(25) I also have admitted the "kindness" of the Sisters to Charles Alfred Gibson. But kindness does not involve every other virtue.

(26) I don't understand this. Who are the "members of the Salvation Army in Northampton"? Whoever they are, a poor Salvationist is as likely to be truthful as a well-paid Wesleyan. The Gibsons are not Salvationists. They are Methodists. Nor do I stand up for their infallibility. Their word is supported by documents.

(27) This is chaffing or petulance. I am sorry that Mr. Holyoake resents my caring for his reputation.

(28—29) Mr. Holyoake has said all this before. But who is concerned to dispute the eulogy? Kindness to the sick and suffering is displayed by Secular women too, though they are never lauded in this way by the father of Secularism. It is Mr. Hughes that I have branded as a liar. The talk about "ladies" is borrowed from the liar himself. I have mentioned only one Sister in my exposure. I have said she was easily imposed upon, and I have proved it. This, and nothing more. Where, then, is the "malignity"?

Mr. Holyoake is really *too* innocent. Why, three-fourths of the longest-lived lies in the world have been told by respectable people. The history of religion is full of well-meant mendacity. Who told all the lies about Paine and Voltaire? Respectable people. Not the men and women in the street, but ladies and gentlemen of "education" and "refinement." Who told that lie about Charles Bradlaugh's wavering in his Atheism at the approach of death? A respectable gentleman, a Wesleyan minister, a colleague of Mr. Hughes. There are certain things in which "good" Christians are not to be believed, and one of them is the conversion of infidels.

(30) I said I was not "thankful" to Christians who refrain from calling Atheists scoundrels. Nor am I. But this does not prevent my being glad that they find the calumny no longer profitable.

(31) Mr. Holyoake was not "menaced." What does he take me for? I spoke as President of the National Secular Society at last because I thought my position entitled me to consideration. I now close with an expression of profound regret at Mr. Holyoake's attitude. I have had to reply to him hurriedly, for his communication only arrived on Tuesday, when I was in the thick of my work. But I have replied with substantial carefulness, and I leave the matter to the judgment of the Secular party.

G. W. FOOTE.



## THE BIBLE AND THE MONUMENTS.

"THE Tract Committee of the S.P.C.K. wish it to be understood that, in publishing this work, which throws so valuable a light on much of the Old Testament, they do not commit the Society to an agreement with all the opinions expressed in it. The author, alone, is responsible for them." Thus significantly opens the preface to the most recent book by the Rev. A. H. Sayce.\* The "Higher Criticism," which is simply the method of Freethinkers from the days of Spinoza, has played such havoc with the old beliefs in Bible infallibility and inspiration, that something had to be done to bolster up the old faith. To have put forward an orthodox man of God like the Rev. S. Kinns, would have been to make the S.P.C.K. the laughing-stock of critical Europe. In selecting the Rev. A. H. Sayce, they have a person of some reputation, who can continually remind his readers that he writes "as an archæologist, and not as a theologian, and that, therefore, all questions of inspiration or revelation lie quite outside his province." None the less, Mr. Sayce is a reverend theologian, and his publishers are the S.P.C.K. They cannot be surprised if some people look at the book, not merely from the archæological standpoint, but observing how far it affects the theological questions of inspiration and revelation. If, for instance, in the stories of Creation and the Flood, an Almighty God has given us a revelation of himself, it is a most momentous and appalling fact. If, however, these are but Hebrew versions of Babylonian legends, as Mr. Sayce treats them, one can only wonder at the effrontery of the men who continue to speak of such stuff as "the word of God."

"We are," says Mr. Sayce (p. 24), "but just beginning to realise that the fragments of Hebrew literature contained in the Old Testament are the wrecks of a vast literature which extended over the ancient Oriental world from a remote epoch, and that we cannot understand them aright except in the light of a contemporaneous literature of which they formed a portion." If Mr. Sayce means that the Hebrew prayers to Jehovah are of much the same value as the Assyrian ones to Ishtar, and that each may throw light on the other, I have the honor to agree. Yet there is a very important difference, and one never mentioned by Mr. Sayce, though it is fundamental. The prayers to Ishtar are on baked-clay tablets, which could not be altered. Those to Jahveh are on manuscripts, the oldest of which do not date earlier than the ninth century of the Christian era, and which may have been altered and interpolated. The substitution of Manasseh for Moses in Judges xviii. 30, to escape the evidence that the descendants of Moses were idolators "until the day of the captivity of the land," is a sufficient evidence of what could be done in this direction.

With Mr. Sayce's defence of the "lower criticism," by which he means textual criticism, I am entirely in agreement. In fact, talk of higher and lower criticism is bosh. All criticism should have a solid foundation in accurate learning and wide comparison. Without such critical apparatus, the judgment of the critic, whether he be called higher or lower, reflects little better than individual opinion. But judgment is necessary as well as learning, and I am bound to say I consider Mr. Sayce's judgment so warped by his profession that, taken alone, it is not worth a rush. Take, for instance, his identification of Ebed-tob with Melchizedek. Ebed-tob says in a letter: "Behold, neither my father nor my mother hath exalted me to this place." The anonymous author of the epistle to the Hebrews, writing 1,800 years after the presumed date of Melchizedek, speaks of him as "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." And this, with the fact that Ebed-tob,

like other early rulers, was priest and king, suffices for their identification by this critic of the higher criticism!

An important contradiction between the monuments and the narrative is that they prove that Ramses III. conquered Canaan. Among the places taken we find Rosh Kadesh, Gaza, Hebron, and Salem, *i.e.*, Jerusalem. Of this important conquest the Jew books make no mention, though it is likely the formula Amen of both Jewish and Christian liturgies has come from Amen, the god of Egypt.† Mr. Sayce seeks to minimise the difficulty by asking, "Can this mean that the Egyptian army encamped in the territory of Jerusalem and at the famous springs of Hebron, but left the cities unassailed?" The query shows more ingenuity than ingenuousness. In such a case the only question is, What was likely? and to suppose that a great warrior like Ramses marched to Syria and left the cities unoccupied, needs the faith which Mr. Sayce tells us is better than scepticism.

When we come to the Moabite Stone, Mr. Sayce gives us another specimen of his ingenuity. The story of the stone is in flagrant contradiction with the book. It tells how Mesha revolted before the death of Ahab, not after it, as stated in 2 Kings i. 1, and that he gave Israel a good thrashing, dragging the altars of Jahveh before the rival God, Chemosh. Says Mr. Sayce (p. 379): "We must suppose that the campaign recorded in the second book of Kings, and the successful war of independence waged by Mesha, belonged to different periods in the life of the Moabite king." He goes on to say: "To expect from a Jewish writer of the sixth century before our era the same strict historical methods as those which we require from a historian of to-day . . . is entirely to mistake the conditions under which ancient history was written." This is, indeed, to give up inspiration and revelation altogether.

In all the early narratives Mr. Sayce is hard put to it to discover confirmations of the biblical statements; but when he comes to the latter ones, to the books of Ezra and Daniel, he fairly gives up the case. Where the historic evidence begins to get clear, there the Bible records are most certainly wrong. Yet we are to give them all credit where there are any points of obscurity!

But Mr. Sayce's own admissions must be cited. They are notable not only as being written by a clergyman, but as being published by the S.P.C.K., though with a disclaimer of responsibility. In regard to Daniel's yarn of Belshazzar's feast and the cylinder records of the taking of Babylon, he says (p. 526):

"Here, then, the account given by the Book of Daniel is at variance with the testimony of the inscriptions. But the contradictions do not end here. The biblical story implies that Babylon was taken by storm; at all events it expressly states that 'the king of the Chaldeans was slain.' Nabonidos, the Babylonian king, however, was not slain, and Cyrus entered Babylon in peace. Nor was Belshazzar the son of Nebuchadnezzar, as we are repeatedly told in the fifth chapter of Daniel. He was the son of the usurper Nabonidos, and Nabonidos did not even belong to the family of Nebuchadnezzar."

As to the time of the building of the second temple, he says (p. 548): "Darius I. and Darius II. are confounded with one another, just as in the Book of Daniel the siege and capture of Babylon by Darius Hystaspis is transferred back to the reign of Cyrus, and the place of Cyrus is accordingly usurped by Darius the Mede." He says (p. 474), "the historical character of the Book of Esther is invalidated," and p. 475: "Only one conclusion seems to be possible: the story of Esther is an example of Jewish Haggadah which has been founded upon one of those semi-historical tales of which the Persian chronicles seem to have been full." So much for Bible history where it can be tested. If even the unmiraculous story of Esther is little better than fiction, what shall we say of crossing the Red Sea, the swimming axe, the speaking

\* *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, by the Rev. A. H. Sayce. Published under the direction of the Tract Committee, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1894.

† It would appear, from an inscription given in the Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement, April, 1892, that the worship of Osiris, Horus, Isis, and Pasht, flourished in Palestine down to the third century B.C.



donkey, and the voyage in the whale? I hope the S.P.C.K. will give Mr. Sayce's admissions a wide circulation, for readers will draw their own conclusions.

J. M. WHEELER.

## ACID DROPS.

Archdeacon Farrar belongs to the same school of sentimental Christianity as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and we suppose we ought to criticise him with bated breath and whispering humbleness. But somehow the honest old Adam in us will take a different turn. It impels us to say that Archdeacon Farrar, in his unctuous little way, can be just as fair (in the Christian sense of the word) to infidels as his stern old predecessors who used to roast them for the glory of God. In a recent sermon on "The Epicurean and the Christian," he remarked that "all history proves that when disbelief triumphs virtue goes by the board." But *all* history is a very large order. We wish the Archdeacon would be more precise. Will he give us a single instance? When he does we will examine it. Until then we shall save our ink. Life is not long enough to prove universal negatives.

"Is it not notorious," asks Archdeacon Farrar, "that every one of those Anarchists with the very devilishness of reckless malignity is an infidel?" What, *all* of them? Was it not a Christian Anarchist who tried to orate over Bourdin's grave? Still, we admit that most of the Anarchists profess irreligion. But it is a curious fact, which we ask the Archdeacon to ponder, that all the worst of them—the Ravachols, Vaillants, the Henris—have had an exceptionally pious training. They appear to have been spoiled before Atheism got hold of them. It was too late then to do them any good.

According to Archdeacon Farrar, the Atheist soon loses "the haunting sense of right and wrong." Well, it doesn't seem to "haunt" the Archdeacon very badly. He preates about the Sermon on the Mount, and takes over £2,000 per annum to preach "Blessed be ye poor." There is no fear of his turning Anarchist on that income. Ravachol or Vaillant would probably have roared like sucking doves with such a powerful inducement.

"Christ told us that we cannot serve two masters—God and Mammon. So says the Archdeacon. But Christ was mistaken. Dr. Farrar serves both very comfortably.

The Christian Evidence Society, under date of Feb. 26, is appealing for funds to send "competent lecturers" into the provinces under the "direct control of the committee." The necessity must be very urgent, for one of the secretaries, the Rev. C. L. Engstrom, offers to give up £100 of his salary for a year if £900 is subscribed by other contributors. We hope the money will be raised. There is nothing like plenty of Christian Evidences for promoting Freethought.

The Christian Evidence Society *ought* to flourish. Its president is now the Archbishop of Canterbury, its vice-president is Sir George G. Stokes—science waiting on the theology; while its Chairman of Council is Lord Salisbury's faithful dog, Lord Halsbury. These gentlemen ought to push the Society along, and when it is short of funds the Archbishop will write out a handsome cheque. Surely.

Tom Mann is not taking a curacy. He is taking the secretaryship of the Independent Labor party instead. Query—Did he ever intend anything else in that "holy orders" affair but a good advertisement?

Mr. George Anderson sends us a pretty cutting from the *Times* of an advowson for sale in Lincolnshire. The income is £200, and the village is "cheerful and healthy," with a population of 400. "All the advantages held out," says Mr. Anderson, "are of the world—worldly. Nor have the 400 parishioners any more voice in the matter than would a flock of sheep in the transfer of a farm."

Mr. James Marchant debated at Jarrow with Mr. Charles Watts, and made himself a pitiable spectacle. He is now thirsting for the controversial blood of another "leader," and modestly mentions Colonel Ingersoll. The local Secularists at South Shields put forward Mr. Cohen, but the illustrious Mr.

Marchant does not consider him sufficiently distinguished. He has had one encounter with Mr. Marchant, however, and we can quite understand that the Christian champion does not wish to renew the experience.

Shrewsbury is getting up a memorial to Charles Darwin; St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, has also been damaged by a storm; and the former, says the Rev. N. Poyntz, is the cause of the latter. He calls it a clear case of Providence. In that case old Jahveh must be stark mad. Sceptics and heretics memorialise an "infidel," and he takes his revenge by half-wrecking one of his own establishments. Yes, old Jahveh is mad, or Parson Poyntz is. We haven't time to settle which.

"A Christian Anarchist" attempted to orate at Bourdin's funeral. It is marvellous what multitudinous opinions take shelter under the authority of Christ. His seamless garment is a more curious patchwork than Joseph's coat of many colors.

Deacon Laurence has been fined heavily at Croydon for breaking windows at the Kings' Arms, Mitcham. The prosecuting counsel said, "He lives on religion, and a very good thing it is."

John Y. McKene is an American millionaire. He was political boss of Gravesend, New York, and ruled supreme in the town where he was a Methodist deacon and leading religious light. He has been sentenced to six years imprisonment for conspiracy to violate the election law.

Christianity stands for anything you like. If you believe Dean Stubbs, Paul was a first-class democrat in exhorting every soul to be subject to the higher powers. Christianity, says the new Dean of Ely, abolished slavery. Well, it took a precious long while about it, since it lasted to our own time, being mainly upheld by the authority of the Bible. Dean Stubbs says God's method is slow. It does not compare favorably with the French infidel revolutionists, who decreed the abolition of slavery in France and all her colonies.

There was a nice Christian squabble at the chapel in Foxton, Leicestershire. The Rev. Mr. Peden has been superseded by Mr. Seemark, of Kibworth, but he interrupted his successor, and refused to leave until his money was paid. A policeman was sent for, and the matter is likely to come before the magistrates.

There is a church at Alton opposite the police-station. It was therefore a safe place to "burgle." Anyhow thieves got in and stole the contents of the poor-box. Old Jahveh can't even look after the tills in his gospel-shops.

The newspapers are making an awful fuss over the "disappearance" of the Rev. W. Pedr Williams, a popular Non-conformist minister of Lower Clapton. The disappearance of Jesus Christ himself could not have been discussed more affectingly. Yet it appears to be a very commonplace affair. Pecuniary embarrassments, funk, and bolting.

The Guild of St. Matthew tells the Bishops that they are "making the Church hateful to the democracy." True, but not new. The Guild of St. Matthew also says that the "parish priests are regaining the people's love." New, but not true.

Ben Tillett is understood to be a religious man. He has, however, been letting out his opinion of the Church pretty plainly. He is reported as saying at St. James's Hall, Manchester, last Sunday, that the Church had hindered every reform of any significance. "The Church was a sweater—Lord Salisbury and the Church were about equal in that respect. They were both owners of slum property, and were both rack-renters. To-day, as of yore, the Church was the friend of the powerful. It was a capitalist organisation, a commercial protection society, a property aid committee, a slum and squalor maker. That was what the Church was." It does not look as if Alderman Tillett intends to take holy orders just yet.

Emperor William spends a lot of time in giving away his own photograph, and a lot more time in boasting about his navy. One of his ships, the "Brandenburg," was the scene



of an explosion, in which over forty men were killed. The dead presented a horrid spectacle. Their flesh hung in rolls, and a thick foam was on their mouths. But the Emperor's piety is not at all disturbed. According to his telegram he still has a "firm trust in God." Oh, yes! He is not among the wounded.

Don Andres Gomez, a learned priest with Republican tendencies, and also a Freemason, was called upon by the Bishop of Segovia to make a public abjuration. He obeyed the order, and was afterwards taken into an inner room, where the Bishop flogged him while the priests chanted a Miserere. This is the sort of thing to look for where Christianity is supreme.

At a British and Foreign Bible Society meeting, in Chobham, the Rev. C. Tait Scott closed his speech by relating "his own experiences in visiting an island inhabited by cannibals." Mr. Scott's "experiences" were not very striking, for he is still undigested. He omitted to state the market price of fresh missionary on that island.

Emmanuel Church, Green-lane, Birmingham, has fallen into the hands of the auctioneer. The communion table went for 6s. 6d. and the pulpit realised half a sovereign. A gentleman claimed that he had only lent the organ to the church, but as there was no stamp on the hiring agreement, the auctioneer proceeded with the sale.

Argyle Free Gaelic Church, Glasgow, is turned into a distillery store. The building is still devoted to the spirit trade.

Dr. Clifford, the Christian Socialist preacher, is foolish enough to talk about "Adam"—that is, the first gentleman of that ilk, who never had a surname, as he was an orphan from birth. Adam toiled before he fell, says Dr. Clifford, and the curse lay in the fact that his sin impressed itself on his work, and made it a drudgery. Indeed! And does Dr. Clifford really believe the truth of the Creation Story? Does he believe that the Adam of Genesis ever existed? If he does, he is no safe guide in labor problems. If he does not, why does he talk about Adam at all? Is it a sop to the fools in his congregation?

The canting crusaders of the Lord's Day Observance Society will not venture to attack anyone likely to give them a fight. They leave the Hall of Science, to instigate prosecutions against poor newboys and provincial barbers as recently at Basingstoke.

Mr. H. Seebohm, secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, lecturing on "Siberia" at Liverpool, said, "As a Christian, it is very deplorable for me to state that the town marked by the sign of the Cross, and inhabited by Christians, was the abode of idleness, intemperance, filthiness, licentiousness, gambling, ignorance and superstition, while in those that were ornamented by the Crescent and Star, and were inhabited by Muslims, the inhabitants were devout, industrious and thrifty, and distinguished by their steady perseverance and perfect sobriety, and entire freedom from gambling." The one divine religion shows badly beside that of the "impostor," who, at any rate, prohibited drunkenness and gambling, the cause of so much vice among Christians.

Miss Kate Absolom, an assistant mistress at the National Schools, Wallingford, and organist and choir leader at Mongewell Church, committed suicide by drowning herself in the Thames. Her friends denounce Dr. Hughes, the rector of Mongewell (who is a married man with children), as the cause of her ruin, and he has placed his resignation in the hands of his bishop. Her brother says: "I wish it to be widely known that the poor girl's relations, one and all, feel that Dr. Hughes has shamefully disgraced his sacred office, and, under the pretence of religion, has been instrumental in bringing her to her tragic end."

City consciences are apt to be strange articles. Here is a case in point. At St. Edmund's, Lombard-street, the Rev. J. Carter read an extract from a "professing Christian's" letter, in which he says that he gives his clerk certain things to do that he would hardly like to do himself, but he "leaves it to their consciences," and adds, "I cannot afford to lose a good customer." Wretched "professing Christian"! It would be far better to do your dirty work yourself. Then you would be pitiable. Now you are only despicable.

There was a free fight at the steps of the altar in St. Paul's R. O. Church, Brooklyn on Feb. 11. The Rev. Father McDonald knocked the Rev. Father Hill, his superior, down the altar steps and considerably disfigured his appearance. It appears the men of God had been on bad terms for two years, and at length, whether from partaking too fully of the sacrament or not, the unholy spirit took possession of Father McDonald. There was a panic in the church, women fainted, and the police were sent for. The assaulter is very popular, and Father Hill very unpopular, with the congregation.

Sebastian Faure, known as "Father of the Anarchists," is said to be deeply religious. He was educated by the Jesuits, and taking Loyola as his model, wore his flesh away with fasting and vigils. This training resulted in producing a mystical revolutionist.

At Rekesly, in Hungary, they obey the Bible injunction, "Suffer not a witch to live." Therèse Kleitsch, an old woman who lived in poverty, was thought to possess the powers of a witch. An epidemic among the cattle was attributed to her spells, and the poor woman was seized, gagged, and, after being flogged, was crucified by the enlightened Christians of Hungary.

The S.P.G., to which the young man ascribed sundry items in his accounts, and which turned out to be "Something Probably Grub," has a diminished income. In 1892 the Society had over £127,000 wherewith to propagate the gospel in foreign parts. Last year its income fell to £113,000.

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, who carries on the West London Mission in conjunction with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, preached at Eastbourne on Tuesday, February 20, and in the middle of his sermon he stopped to deliver a story which he alleged was a true one. Previous to commencing the narrative, however, he appealed to the reporters not to publish what he was about to say, and added that there were thousands of stories he could tell of the West London Mission, only the reporters were so assiduous in printing them in the papers. It may be surmised that the anecdote was not one about a converted Atheist; it was one of those effeminate little recitals which so admirably correspond with the mental calibre of a Methodist congregation. Probably the Rev. Mark Guy has taken a hint from his confrère's present discomfiture.

Hugh Price Hughes is not alone in having a convert from Atheism who was "one of the best types of the British working man." This little game is being played by others. The public has found out that Atheists are not bad men, so they must now be depicted as good fellows who find Atheism unsatisfactory. We have before us one of the Religious Tract Society's leaflets, the hero of which is James Duncan, who of course "is no longer an inhabitant of earth." He was "a fine specimen of an artist" with "a keen eye and a thoughtful brow." His scepticism was disturbed by a bad accident, then his eyes were opened by God's spirit, and finally he died a true believer. He is now in heaven, and the sooner he is joined by the gentlemen who are responsible for the tract the better.

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

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

Per R. Forder: S. H. Munns, J. Pygott, J. Fox, Mrs. McM. 7s. 6d., A. Anderson 2s. 6d., Admirer (S. Shields) 2s., W. Mumby 10s., James Moffat 5s.

#### OBITUARY.

It is my painful duty to inform you of the death of one of our respected vice-presidents, William Hudson, formerly of H. M. S. Cornwallis and latterly of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, from which he retired on account of blindness. For the last two years he had been suffering from heart disease, and knew death might come at any moment. He was strictly conscientious, and his Freethought views never altered. We buried him on Sunday, during heavy rain, and he was followed to his grave by his sorrowing family and about forty members of the Branch, including the president (Mr. Munro) and officers. The Secular service was read over his grave, by request of his widow, by our respected vice-president, Mr. N. B. Billany, our oldest "Freethought veteran."—R. DAVISON.



## THE "LIE" PAMPHLET.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S communication makes it evident that the "Lie" pamphlet must be extensively circulated. There is no other way of exposing Mr. Hughes and counteracting Mr. Holyoake's "vindication." All who have written to me regard the pamphlet as complete and overwhelming. I believe it will settle the Atheist Shoemaker story with those who are open to conviction, and I believe it will tell against Mr. Hughes even amongst Wesleyan Methodists. He has enemies as well as friends in the body to which he belongs, and some of them will press this matter to his disadvantage at the first favorable opportunity.

Judging from the present applications, I should say that two or three hundred thousand copies of the pamphlet will be required, and perhaps more. We are printing as fast as possible, but it is impossible to keep pace with the demand. Some persons, ignorant of the printing business, were annoyed because there was not an unlimited supply last Sunday. The formes were only on the machine on Friday evening, as much of the contents of the pamphlet is fresh matter, and the portions that appeared in the *Freethinker* had to be revised and compressed, in order to present a well-arranged picture to the general public. Saturday, of course, it is a short working day, and as every copy of the pamphlet has to be folded, it was impossible to do more than distribute a few thousand copies among the most pressing applicants. I took six hundred copies to Liverpool, and they were snapped up greedily. A similar quantity went to the London Hall of Science, where, by the way, there will be some thousands of copies this evening (March 4).

The extraordinary demand for the pamphlet has upset all my calculations. I must, in consequence, continue my appeal for funds. We must let this exposure go as far as it will. It will damage the Christian cause and be a splendid advertisement for Freethought. Directly the first big rush is over I propose to send out ten, twenty, or even thirty thousand copies by post to Church clergymen, Nonconformist ministers, members of Parliament, British newspapers, Liberal and Radical Associations, Workmen's Clubs, etc., etc. This alone will be a very expensive item. How far it is carried out will depend on the resources put at my disposal.

By the "free circulation" of the pamphlet I meant that the money sent to me should be entirely used to distribute the exposure. That is the essence of the matter; the rest is mere detail, which must be left in my hands. At the finish I will publish a statement of what I have received from all sources, what has been done with it, how many copies have been circulated, and in what direction they have gone.

The "penny a dozen" arrangement has broken down already in presence of the enormous demand, and I am not going to make fresh "rules and regulations." Branches that send me £1 10s. will have a thousand copies sent direct from my office, at 14 Clerkenwell-green. But for the rest I have left the distribution at the discretion of Mr. Forder. I have absolute confidence in his honor. He will keep a separate bowl at the shop for the pamphlet money, as accounts are out of the question. And he will supply applicants as he thinks fit. Some for nothing, some at a penny per dozen, some at twopence, and others for what they like to give. The money he thus receives, less expenses, will be added to the *Freethinker* subscription list, and I shall go on printing to the last penny in the exchequer. To work the problem out in any other way would

require the mathematical head of a Colenso and the foresight of a prophet.

In addition, as there are some persons who will order copies through general newsagents, I am printing a small edition for sale at a penny, which will only be supplied when specially ordered.

I am delighted at the way in which my appeal has been responded to. Up to date I have acknowledged the receipt of £90. If we all pull together for another two or three weeks we shall make the "converted infidel" dodge a far more difficult one for the mystery-men of all denominations. G. W. FOOTE.

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

Simeon Smith 10s., Mark Nixon 5s., La Lanterne 5s., J. Chamberlain 2s. 6d., Truthseeker 1s., P. Hull £1, R. Davison, Hull, £1 10s., for one thousand copies, K. A. G. 2s., Collection in C. T. O. 6s. 6d., Two Prudential Agents 4s., Few Hanley Friends 5s., Goodwin and Sons 6s., W. Mumby 10s., R. E. 5s., Blyth Branch 5s., A Friend 1s., J. B. (Gateshead) 5s., A Friend (Gateshead) 5s., Joseph Taylor 5s., T. Lewis 1s., J. Lewis 1s., E. Jaques 1s., W. C. Johnson £1, Railway Travellers 2s. 6d., Toby King £3, J. H. M. and Wife 2s. 6d., Friend (per J. H. M.) 2s. 6d., T. W., H. T., A. H., 10s.; W. C. Pearson 2s., T. Warwick 2s., R. Farrow 2s., T. Hibbott 2s., W. Carter £2 2s., W. and G. Asplin 5s., Hugh Irving £1, Few Members of Marylebone Radical Club 4s., — Barker 2s. 6d., Jas. Gale 2s. 6d., Frazer 1s., W. S. Redland 10s. 6d., A. Button 1s. 6d., H. S. £1, N. B. Billany 5s., Jas. and Mrs. J. Clarke 2s. 6d., J. Kennedy £1, Cobbler's Ghost 2s., C. Heaton 2s., Mr. Sims 5s., Walton-on-Hill 2s. 6d., J. Pruett 2s. 6d., R. F. 4s.

*Per R. Forder:* C. Bemrose 2s., S. H. Munns £1, E. R. Shaw 2s. 6d., A. Jones 2s. 3d., Collected at Mr. Cohen's lecture at Manchester 14s., V. Caunter 5s., Mrs. McM. 7s. 6d., W. Lake 2s. 6d., D. Young 1s., W. Caisey 2s., W. Franklin 1s., C. Kingston 2s., G. S. Ryder 2s., H. Guise 2s. 6d., J. Clarke 1s., W. Stuart 10s., B. L. Coleman 10s., Veracity 2s. 6d., T. D. Harris 2s., W. Mack 1s.

*Luton, per W. Rudd:* M. P. Collings 2s. 6d., C. Haines 1s., W. Brown 1s., F. Rudd 1s., A. Allen 1s., W. Allen 1s., H. Dimmock 2s., W. Wesley 6d., H. Cooper 1s., P. Rudd 6d., W. Rudd 1s., W. P. Rudd 6d., F. Plater 6d., H. Webster 1s., L. Boressoff 6d.

*Correction.*—Richard Hughes 10s. last week should have been Richard Hough.

(Some receipts stand over till next week for acknowledgment.)

## DEATH OF MISS ROBINS.

CHRISTIAN rowdies, who think any treatment good enough for "infidels," are responsible for accelerating, if not for causing, the death of one of our most active and devoted London workers, Miss Mary Ann Robins, who expired on the morning of February 27. On September 11, 1892, when Mr. Heaford was lecturing in Finsbury Park, Christian roughs, incited by the aspersions of Christian Evidence lecturers, made a rush at the stand and violently struck Miss Robins in the breast. A tumor gathered, and in November she entered the Gray's Inn-road Hospital, where she had a breast removed. The operation was not completely successful, but on coming out she was as active as ever, both in the park and at the Hall of Science, where she took charge of the bookstall. But another tumor was gathering, and again she had to attend a hospital—this time St. Bartholomew's, where she had the other breast removed. All this suffering was borne most bravely, but alas! in vain. The second operation has been followed by paralysis and death, after laying a complete wreck. Miss Robins was forty-one. She was a remarkable woman, strong in mind and body, firm in will and adherence to duty. She had a fine head, and was a good critic of lectures. She worked freely, not from love of prominence or praise, but from devotion to the Freethought cause, and was one of those invaluable members who are ever ready to do whatever is necessary. She was a prominent figure and willing worker at every important gathering of Freethinkers in the metropolis, and she attended the last Conference of the N.S.S. at Hanley. Her services are greatly missed, and will not soon be forgotten. To her devoted sister, who nursed her during her last illness, we tender our deep sympathy. This sad case is one that should incite all Freethinkers to band themselves to prevent a recurrence of the Christian brutality to which Mary Robins is a martyr. The funeral will take place at St. Mary's Islington Cemetery, Finchley, on Tuesday, March 6, at 4 o'clock. Mr. Foote will be present.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 4, Albert Hall, Nelson:—at 11, "Christ and Democracy"; 3, "The Doom of the Gods"; 6.30, "A Search for the Soul."

March 11, Glasgow; 12 and 13, Aberdeen; 14 and 15, Dundee; 18, South Shields.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—March 2, Chatham; 4, Hall of Science; 11, Liverpool; 12 and 13, Derby (debate with Rev. Mr. Hyde); 18, Nelson; 25, Hall of Science.—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.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—They are not worth your notice.

MAURICE RUSSELL.—See paragraph. It is excellent work.

H. LEWES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. BROADBENT (New York).—See "Acid Drops." Always pleased to receive American papers.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMSON.—We hope the new Swedish Free-thought organisation under the presidency of Mr. Janson will steer clear of the rocks of political and socialist partisanship. All good wishes to yourself and the cause in Sweden.

H. C.—Read Tylor's *Primitive Culture* and Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*. We always seek to help our readers "as a matter of course."

TRUE BELIEVER.—Certainly a penny per dozen does not amount to thirty shillings per thousand. But who said it did? The 30s. is a sum that Branches can send as a subscription, and have 1,000 copies in return for distribution. Branches that are too poor to raise 30s. will have the copies they want all the same. This is a case for a little communism. It is not a commercial venture anyhow. The penny is only a fraction of cost price; at that rate the pamphlet is not really sold, it really given away, the penny being merely a security of some serious interest on the part of the distributors. It is rather hard when we take so much trouble, and make the best arrangements we can, to hear grumbling over such trifles.

T. HIBBOTT.—Order handed to Mr. Forder. Pleased to hear the Ramsbottom friends are "in raptures."

R. HOUGH.—Correction made.

J. LEE.—Letters are always welcome from our own converts. Parcel of one hundred pamphlets forwarded.

E. A.—Voltaire's last words were an adieu. See *Infidel Death-Beds*. The words you quote are a pious invention.

T. O. NEWTON.—We don't mean to spare him.

J. A. WILLIAMS.—Shall appear.

D. KAY (Rochdale) writes:—"It is only once in a lifetime that such splendid sport can be had, and it should be made the most of. Hughes should be followed everywhere, and the pamphlet distributed among his audience. I earnestly hope you will not take the slightest notice of remarks about your 'methods.' You are doing splendid work, and the *Freethinker* (of which I have long taken two copies weekly) is the most readable paper I ever came across."

J. H. S.—Acknowledged as desired. We hope to continue the "yeoman's service."

TONY KING.—Delighted to have your warm approval. It is an honor. We note that you "deeply regret the attitude of my old friend Mr. Holyoake." Also that you hope the gentleman who mentioned you in last week's *Freethinker* will come up and shake hands the first time he sees you again at Hastings or St. Leonards.

W. O. JOHNSON.—Glad to have your opinion that we have won "all along the line" on this Atheist Shoemaker dispute. The attitude of the ordinary press is what might be expected.

S. C. CARTER.—Mr. Anderson's report was already in type. The new name does not strike us as happy.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks.

E. YEAXLEE.—You will have had the pamphlets by this.

O. FEATHERSTONE.—Glad you regard it as "a brilliant stroke for Freethought."

J. STEWART.—Please let it stand now. Mr. Foote doesn't keep a secretary or a clerk, and has to do everything of the kind with his own hand. Thanks for your promise to have the pamphlet circulated in your district.

O. B. HYDE regards our exposure of Mr. Hughes as "thorough and complete." So does every Freethinker we know except the veteran at Brighton.

R. JOHNSON.—We have always tried to sustain the "fearless manner," and of course we have earned the hatred of many Christians.

ADMIRER (S. Shields).—It is all right. See list this week. The other sum shall be acknowledged in total. Glad to have your approval of our Atheist Shoemaker campaign.

A. A. W.—Kindly convey our thanks to the subscribers.

X.—The "Tripoli" is in type, and waiting for insertion.

J. R. CAMPBELL.—Mr. Harrison's grammar is bad in the quotation. "Were" should be "was."

W. H. MORRISH.—Pleased to hear from you. Thanks for enclosures.

M. F.—It was published at 1s. Apply to Mr. Forder. The debate between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Holyoake took place at the Hall of Science, London, in 1870.—*Bible Romances* will be finished, we hope, in April or May.

T. E. MAYNE.—Shall appear. Your former article appeared in the issue for Feb. 11.

J. SYFIELD.—Too busy to write at length upon it just now.

T. MAY.—Great demands on our space at present.

W. MUMBY.—See the veteran's communication. We fear you will be disappointed.

J. HEWITT.—Thanks for your cordial letter.

A. ANDERSON.—See this week's lists.

S. HIGGINGBOTHAM.—We have handed your card to Mr. Forder O. DREWELL.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. CABELL.—Shall appear as soon as we find room. The text you quote is the original of the parody—obviously.

JOSEPH TAYLOR.—"Congratulations" come from every point but one.

T. LEWIS.—There will be plenty of copies at the London Hall of Science this evening (March 4).

J. MUNTON.—Cuttings are always welcome.

C. DOEG.—Have lumped them all in your Branch remittance. Hope this will do.

F. RADFORD.—Mr. Foote will write you.

J. DOMINEY.—Mr. Bradlaugh did not alter his attitude towards Perpetual Pensions. Your informant is mistaken.

F. R. BIRD.—We hope the London Secular Federation's new course of free lectures will do you good at Walthamstow.

A. W. OXLEY.—The paper was destroyed. You can get a copy easily. It was the week's previous to our paragraph.

J. M.—Rather too long for its substance. Three or four telling verses might include it all.

TRUTHSEEKER.—We hardly expect subscriptions from working men only earning eighteen shillings a week. Pray don't tax yourself again. In cases like yours we take the will for the deed. Those who are better off must supply the finances.

W. RUDD.—Thanks to Luton friends.

C. HEATON.—As an ex-Methodist lay preacher, you could of course give Mr. Hughes material for another conversion story. But he won't write it.

E. H.—"Blasphemy" is an impossible crime to an Atheist. When we write of the Bible God we write of an imaginary being like Jupiter. Can you blaspheme Jupiter? With regard to what the faith of Christendom is responsible for, we believe we have already referred you to the Preface of *Crimes of Christianity*. Our position is there made as clear as we can make it. Argument is out of place in this column.

W. DAVEY.—Have passed your note to Mr. Forder.

TRUTHSEEKER (Birmingham).—You have simply to give three week's notice at the Registrar's office, after which the marriage can take place there. It is very simple.

JAS. GALE.—We note your belief that it will "do a great deal for Freethought."

N. B. BILLANY.—Mr. Foote will pay Hull a visit shortly. Kindly see whether the Alhambra can be obtained for "free admission." The bigots must not stop our propaganda.

J. KENNEDY.—Pamphlets sent. Glad you think we "deserve every credit."

COBBLER'S GHOST.—Not a bad idea. We may find space for brief accounts by readers of their conversion to Freethought.

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

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

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—Twentieth Century—Independent Pulpit—Islamic World—South Shields Free Press—Sunday Chronicle—West Sussex Gazette—Lincolnshire Echo—Kettering Leader—Rochdale Observer—Birmingham Daily Post—Berks and Oxon Advertiser—Birmingham Daily Mail—Wellington Journal—Eastbourne Observer—Eastern Daily Press—Cambria Daily Leader—Manchester Guardian.

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.

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



## SUGAR PLUMS.

Liverpool is like Manchester in one thing—it is a good place for rain, and it kept up its reputation on Sunday. Mr. Foote's morning audience was more than a fair one for such weather. The sun peeped out a little in the afternoon and there was a large meeting in the Oddfellows' Hall to hear the lecture on "The Atheist Shoemaker." Before the evening lecture the rain came down as though old Jahveh were starting another Noah's flood. Still, the hall was filled right away to the door. Had the weather been decent the hall would hardly have been large enough to hold the people. Prior to the lecture Mr. Foote "named" a baby boy—Clifford Carrol, and the ceremony seemed to "catch on." The lecture itself was very enthusiastically applauded. Friends came in from Chester and other places; and one dear old lady, eighty-three years of age, attended in the evening in spite of the rain. She hardly knew if she would be able to come again, and she was resolved to see Mr. Foote and shake hands with him, as it might be her last opportunity. Women, as a rule, make very staunch Freethinkers when they take to our movement. Mr. Price Hughes would have all his work cut out to convert one of these "weaker vessels."

There was a great demand at Liverpool for the "Lie" pamphlet. Six hundred copies were cleared out in no time. The Branch will want two or three thousand, which will be well distributed.

Mr. Charles Watts had a large audience last Sunday evening at the Hall of Science, when he lectured upon "Education and the London School Board." The audience showed their appreciation of the lecture by repeated and enthusiastic applause, and at the close our colleague received quite an ovation. Mr. R. O. Smith presided, and announced that the lecture just delivered would be issued shortly in pamphlet form. This evening, Sunday, March 4, Mr. Watts will again occupy the Hall of Science platform, taking for his subject "Death and Eternal Judgment."

The final meeting of the Children's Party Committee, to receive report and balance-sheet, will be held at the Hall of Science on Sunday next, after the lecture.

It is proposed to form a Dramatic Class at the Hall of Science. Friends desiring to join are requested to forward their names, either to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecatter-street, or James Anderson, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street.

Mr. A. B. Moss had good and sympathetic audiences at Bolton. His lectures gave great satisfaction to the local Secularists. There was a good sale of literature and especially of the *Freethinker*.

Colonel Ingersoll is described by the Hon. A. B. Richmond in the *Progressive Thinker* as "the greatest living orator." But he is not a Spiritualist, and Mr. Richmond criticises at great length his Oration on the Gods. The article is illustrated with platform-sketches of Ingersoll.

Lewisham Secularists are invited to meet at 2 Horsham-street on Sunday evening (March 4) for the purpose of forming a Branch of the National Secular Society.

Freethinkers in Coatbridge and the district willing to join in forming a Branch of the N.S.S., are requested to communicate with Mr. Joseph McGuckie, 203 Bank-street, Coatbridge.

A small club in a village not far from Edinburgh is causing quite a commotion. All sorts of subjects are discussed at its meetings, and several of its members are staunch Freethinkers. Much amusement was caused at a recent meeting by the reading of two of Mr. Foote's *Comic Sermons*, which is to be followed by further samples from the same budget.

The annual meeting of the South Essex Secular Society was held last Sunday evening in the Enterprise Club Hall, Stratford. Mr. Maurice Russell (West Ham School Board) was in the chair. The Report was considered a highly satisfactory document, and the accounts showed a balance of cash in hand of over £5. Mr. Anderson has resigned his office, and Mr. G. C. H. Carter (a gentleman engaged under

H. M. Board of Customs), 107 Ham Park-road, Stratford, is now acting as secretary.

A class has been formed in connection with the Liverpool Branch for the study of scientific and literary subjects. The meetings have been arranged for eight o'clock on Tuesday evenings, at the Oddfellows' Hall. The class is not restricted to members of the N.S.S.

The Queensberry Rowing and Athletic Club will celebrate their first year by having a supper at the Hall of Science (Minor Hall), on Tuesday, March 13, at 8.30. Tickets, 3s. each, can be obtained from J. Anderson, at the Hall.

The *Independent Pulpit*, of Texas, which in March enters on its twelfth volume, keeps up the war on superstition in excellent style. The articles by J. P. Richardson and D. W. McCourt are pointed, and the magazine continues a credit to its conductor, Mr. J. D. Shaw.

The Cincinnati *Phonographic Magazine* for February contains a portrait and sketch of Mr. W. Henry Barr, author of *Thomas Paine Vindicated*, *Thomas Paine was Junius*—an answer to Father Lambert on Ingersoll, and other even more important Freethought works published anonymously. Mr. Burr is one of the oldest stenographers in the States, and is much respected in his profession.

Manxland led the way with female suffrage, and it is quite possible it may lead the way with Disestablishment. The Nonconformists are largely in the majority in the island, and their apathy on the question of Disestablishment is breaking down. It is quite possible the House of Keys may some day ask the Bishop of Sodor and Man to kindly remove to Sodor.

Mr. Maurice Russell, of the West Ham School Board, moved a resolution—"That the school management committee be requested to draw up a code or syllabus of moral training to take the place of Bible teaching in the schools of the Board." Mr. Russell made an excellent speech in support of his motion, though amidst considerable interruptions. The first interrupter was naturally a clergyman—Canon Stevens, who was as naturally succeeded by a military man—Major Banes. Mr. Bignell seconded the motion, which was of course lost by ten votes to three. A victory was not to be expected on the first attack, but it is something to make a beginning, and we have no doubt that Mr. Russell will obtain more votes for his motion on future occasions.

The *Buddhist Ray*, which comes to us from Santa Cruz, California, reprints a paragraph on Christian missions from the *Freethinker*. It is conducted by genuine Buddhists, who laugh at the sham esoteric Buddhism of the Theosophists. There is an amusing precipitated letter in the *B. R.*, dated from the Himalayas, Thibet, warning American Theosophists that the life of their Society depends on keeping W. Q. Judge as their Boss Chela. "William Q. is the golden link between the two Manas: the Yankee and the Thibetan."

The editor of the *B. R.* quotes letters from Buddhists abroad, quite in the style of Christians to missionaries. Thus one writes from Japan: "Work for the heathen Christians in America who are enshrouded in darkness, and your good Karma will certainly bring you rest and happiness."

The Leyton and Walthamstow Branch has been carrying on its work amidst many difficulties. Things would go better if a place could be obtained for Sunday evening meetings. The outdoor meetings and the collections have both shown an improvement, which is so far gratifying. We hope the Branch will have the hearty support of all Freethinkers in the district.

The Blyth Branch sends a resolution in approval of Mr. Foote's action in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker story, and undertakes to have the pamphlet well distributed in that district.

The Ipswich Branch sends us its annual balance-sheet, showing an income of £55 and an expenditure of nearly the same amount. There are forty-five paying members on the books. We hope the number will be increased this year. The Ipswich Branch has been well managed, and deserves the strong support of all the local Freethinkers.



## WHY CHRISTIANITY IS STILL PROFESSED.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE tendency at the present time within the Churches is to raise new theological ghosts as fast as the old ones are laid. We are now face to face with a fresh enemy to the long cherished notions of the Christian profession. It is a movement that commenced years ago outside of the pulpit, and it bears the high and dignified name of "The Higher Criticism." Looking at the results already achieved by this destructive criticism, the question again arises, Why do men remain professors of Christianity? The answers that we have already given explain why some of the clergy continue in the fold, but what are the reasons that so many of the laity linger therein? The reply is in the first place, because they are too intellectually indolent, and they find it more convenient to accept things as they are than to examine and study the value or otherwise of what they are asked to believe. If we look at the attendance at an ordinary church or chapel, who do we discover occupying the pews? Mostly women and children, who do not concern themselves about criticism, either higher or lower. In fact, the indifferent section of believers constitute the large majority of professors of Christianity. Such persons never doubt and never inquire. Changes of opinion are the result of causes that seldom affect the intellectually lazy. With them it is not a question of mental honesty, but a case of inactivity of mind, which results in a deep slumber, that only ignorance induces. To excite the general mass of mankind to any perceptible degree of serious thought, a volcanic eruption in the intellectual world would be required. So long as persons are contented to "shut their eyes and open their mouths," or while they are too idle to use their faculties in thinking for themselves, they will probably remain Christians in name. Orthodox folks are too prone to rely upon others as to what they shall believe; it saves a degree of mental exercise for which the many have but little taste or inclination. This seems to account for the persistence of belief in all ages and in all countries, whether Christian or not. Hence millions of our fellow-mortals remain in the faith and follow the customs of their forefathers, having no desire for, or conception of change. In all the great religious communities of the world we find that men adopt a faith; it is not really a belief at all, for the road to intelligent belief is through the portals of doubt and investigation, in the absence of which true belief is not formed.

As a further illustration that indifference is a prominent cause of the name of Christianity being perpetuated, we may mention the case of shopkeepers and commercial men, whose indifference is intensified by self-interest. They attend church either to please their customers or to gain some relief from the anxieties pertaining to their weekly labors. They listen to the sermons, but they pay little or no heed to what they hear. It is the fashion to attend "a place of worship," and they consider that their business success depends upon their going with the multitude, at least outwardly. The clergyman or minister is too shrewd to talk to such persons about the grave discussions going on in popular reviews, or new books of heretical tendency. And if the preacher does allude to the subject, it is for the purpose of showing that if his hearers have heard that anything has gone wrong with the faith or the Church, they need not be alarmed. It is only the spite of "infidelity," and he will see to the matter and put all things right. Supposing the educated, reading young men of his congregation express any doubts, the minister may deliver a course of sermons, not allowing any discussion, in which he boldly asserts that the Bible and the Church still rests on an impregnable rock, against which many sceptics have been dashed to pieces in trying to blast it with "infidel" powder. He concludes by urging that the faith of Jesus has its hold upon the human heart, satisfying all its desires and longings, and that to yield up this faith would be followed by consequences appalling to contemplate. These appeals to ignorance and uncontrolled emotion succeed, for a time, in suppressing doubt, stopping inquiry, and securing a

profession of a faith in the acceptance of which reason and investigation have had no part.

In addition to those who remain professing Christians from interested motives, from aversion to change, or through inheriting the belief of their parents, there are others who have what they term "intelligent convictions" of the truth of the faith they avow. They believe in Jesus as a historical character, whose life is truly recorded in the gospels. Conflicting texts may be found in the scriptures, doubts may be expressed by Bible critics as to the genuineness of the gospels, it may be found difficult to explain many events described in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the professors of Christianity from "conviction" accept the declaration that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Believers of this class are easily made professors of Christianity, and are as easily kept so, for they feel sure that their belief secures for them safety in "the world to come." The doctrine of rewards and punishments has always been a powerful factor in the promulgation of the orthodox faith. The Devil has been the clergymen's best friend, and now that it is acknowledged that the belief in the existence of such a being was a delusion, and that hell was a fiction. Christianity is losing its former influence over the human mind—the faith has to be reconstructed to suit the requirements of this sceptical age. Of course those who believe "in Christ and him crucified," have only an ideal founded upon an imaginary Christ. They ignore the elementary facts of nature, for in the constitution of man and of nature in general there is going on a perpetual struggle for existence, which does not harmonise with the alleged love of God for the world.

It may be said that the existence of so much suffering and misery in the world is to us a mystery; but if this is so, it does not dispose of the fact that such drawbacks to man's happiness are here, and no God of love is apparently disposed to remove them. Besides, it is difficult to believe that "God so loved the world," that he sent his son to be tortured on the cross to achieve a purpose which God, if he were all-powerful, could have accomplished without this exhibition of cruelty and injustice. Those persons who remain Christians because of their desire to believe that Christ was really their crucified Savior, can never fully recognise the horrible nature of "the agony and bloody sweat," the sufferings endured by the man of sorrow and grief, and the sadness experienced by him when abandoned by his God at the hour of death. They also ignore, in the person of Christ, the scientific fact that death is the termination of life, for he is supposed to have performed more wonderful things after his death than he did before. Those believers who still think that they will not perish, but have everlasting life, must indulge the thought independently of knowledge and reason. Certainty is not deemed by them as essential in this matter; on the contrary, it is held that a belief in things doubtful is a higher kind of spiritual excellence than a knowledge of things certain. This theological notion is condemned by the lesson of experience which proves that to accept pure and unadulterated truth is best for the human race.

Briefly stated, it may be said that the thoughtless multitude adhere to the profession of Christianity because they are either too indifferent to oppose it, or they cling to the belief through fear of punishment hereafter; or still further, they adhere to the old faith in consequence of their inability to understand what is to replace the orthodox belief. Among persons of intellectual ability there are two considerations that principally induce them to favor the continuation of the profession of the Christian name. They suppose that it is to their interest to be thought in accord with the fashionable belief of the day, and they are impressed with the idea that the masses are kept in check by believing that the doctrine of hell-fire is a true one. Thus the profession of Christianity is perpetuated through mental laziness, lack of intellectual capacity, consideration of self-interest, or through the notion that fear, even if based on fiction, is necessary to



keep the uninformed in order and subjection. While the triumphs of political and scientific inquiry, in dismissing from men's minds despotic and erroneous views, have been numerous, theology is still making desperate struggles to cling to its old positions. It will require, probably, more than one generation of educated persons to eliminate from the human mind the ideas that cause men and women to remain professors of Christianity. Although we may believe, with Shelley, that the evil faith will not last for ever, it dies hard nevertheless. In the persistent warfare with this evil, supported as it has been by so many varying interests, many brave reformers have exhausted their energies, while other toilers have had to give up the battle. The magnitude of the undertaking to reform the religious world reminds us of Butler's lines:—

Reforming schemes are none of mine,  
To mend the world's a vast design;  
Like little men in a little boat,  
Trying to pull to them the ship afloat.

CHARLES WATTS.

### A CONVERT FROM CHRISTIANITY.

CONVERTS from Christianity are legion, but the story of my renunciation of the theology of the Christian Church may have a special interest, inasmuch as my change of belief was due, not to either the personal or the literary influence of Freethinkers, but solely to the development of new ideas within my mind while I was conscientiously endeavoring to make my duties as a Christian pastor harmonise with the convictions resulting from my continually increasing knowledge. I passed slowly, reluctantly, step by step, from the pietistic extreme of orthodoxy to the position of the freest Freethinking; and yet I claim to be, in the best sense, one of the most religious of men.

I began my theological career when I was a lad, in a distinctly pietistic communion. Brought up as an attendant at the Church of England, I voluntarily and without solicitation, left the services of the Church and became a member of a Dissenting sect. In course of time I was ordained to the ministry, and for many years occupied a number of pulpits in the same sect. A difference of doctrinal view upon a comparatively unimportant point sent me into another and broader sect, in which I was minister for several years more. My views were continually broadening; and though my hearers would gladly have kept me among them as a man who "thought out his subjects in the pulpit" and made the endeavor after a good life the only bond of church union, yet as there was a Trinitarian trust deed under my feet I resigned my charge. I next accepted a co-pastorate in a Unitarian Church, which in turn I relinquished when I found that my colleague and I were preaching widely different doctrines from the same pulpit. It was evident to myself that, while my opinions were in a fluid state, it was impossible to preach with satisfaction to myself or edification to my hearers, to say nothing of the inconsistency between some of my views and the ritual part of our services.

This is, in brief, the story of my theological exodus, as seen by the public. My own private experience was what I indicated in the first paragraph. Though my first theological confession was that of a pietist, and though I went through all the phases of a conscious conversion, there were influences at work that saved me from the narrowness of view from which so many pietists suffer. It was my good fortune to be born and to live in the midst of books and of literary surroundings. As a child and as a youth, I was often the charmed listener to the genial gossip and sometimes the heated discussions of men of education, of travel, and of a broad culture. My mental world was a great deal wider than that of most of my fellow-pietists. Unconsciously, this fact, though it did not diminish my zeal, must have toned my thoughts and made me more susceptible than my fellow worshippers were to the force of fresh facts. I could not help seeing my creed in the light of a wider range of knowledge than was to be found at chapel. I knew enough of men and books to discover that what I had heard from our preachers was—I hardly know what better word to use

—fractional. I involuntarily placed the sermons I heard in a setting of broad knowledge of the world; and, more than I was at the time aware of, I must have interpreted the teaching of my sect by the aid of this knowledge.

The consequence was that, as a pastor, I gradually dropped out of view what was not in harmony with my tone of mind, thought out difficult points for myself, and such points as still seemed essential I interpreted as freely as the case permitted. I seldom then read the books of Freethinkers, and when I did the result at first was to send me back with renewed faith to my comparative orthodoxy. But the works of such men as Robertson of Brighton, Maurice, and the Broad Church generally—not omitting Hutton's *Spectator* of that day—were always welcome reading.

The straining after a harmony between my theology and the wholesome and inspiring influences of nature must always have been strong in me. I can remember that even when I went to deliver pietistic sermons in village chapels, I sometimes longed to stay out under the blue sky or under the mysterious stars, rather than enter the chapel and talk of things that often appeared to me rather unnatural than merely supernatural. And later, when I had a broader pulpit, I delighted to get alone in the country or by the meadow, to shake off for the time all the little dogma that still clung to me, and to revel in an untrammelled communion with nature, to feel that I was a part of nature, and that no necessity then and there compelled me to define that nature, or any personal and spiritual relations with it.

The ultimate result was inevitable. I tried to keep my conscience uninjured; but I found that to do so I must leave all the pulpits of all the organised churches.

My experience is that human nature is about the same in all the churches. I still have intimate and dearly cherished friends in all the communions through which I have passed. I am not sorry to have had my varied experience. I can understand and sympathise with, and be tolerant towards, men of all creeds. I know their views and feelings, their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows. The humanity of them all is, to me, much more than the differences in opinion between them and me, or between themselves. I cannot scoff at them or their dogmas; but they must not scoff at me. Some of my associates pity me, and think I cannot be happy. They do not reflect that I, too, have the happiness of being devoted to what seems to me to be the truth; and that I have the advantage over them in having got rid of much blighting and narrowing superstition.

I cannot understand how a man who has followed the path I have followed can ever go back again to the dogmas he has left. When I contemplate those men who, after years of Atheistic propagandism, have again become Christian apologists, I am simply puzzled. I should as soon think of going back to the astronomy of the ancients.

SENEX.

### THE PESSIMIST.

He walks the world with ever-darkened eye,  
And speaks of all its emptiness and woe,  
A calm, though cold, philosophy below,  
To guide his stoic heart where sorrows lie;  
No visions haunt him from the mystic sky,  
For him no cloud-throned angels trumpets blow,  
To warn those minds where demon-passions grow;  
He, proud Agnostic, to no God will cry.  
And yet his life is filled with deeds divine,  
That make the earth more noble, pure, and good.  
He loves his fellows fervidly and deep,  
And links them each to each in brotherhood.  
He scorns the heaven which maddest angels keep,  
And humbly lets his lofty actions shine.

ARTHUR J. WILLETTS.

### THE DUKE OF ARGYLL ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION.

I look upon the right of every individual mind to an exclusive property in its own spiritual operations and convictions, to be the most absolute and the most sacred of all human rights; and I consequently regard the tyranny involved in pure religious persecution as the most wicked of human tempers, and the most atrocious of human crimes.—*Irish Nationalism*, p. 211; 1893.



## Independent Department.

### IS THERE A GOD?

"N. M. X.," says Atheos, "offers us words instead of facts or ideas." Indeed he does not. "His God," he says, "is merely a may be." But this also is incorrect. It is the so-called Atheist who admits that there "may be a God." I spoke of God as "the mysterious and omnipotent something" which creates and governs all things; and I used the word "being" merely for convenience—much in the same way as the word "egg" is scientifically employed. This "mysterious and omnipotent something" must, at all events, represent an "idea," even if it does not demonstrate a "fact."

Why cannot we "imagine a time when the universe was not"? According to astronomical science, this earth, and all the other worlds that we see in space, had a *beginning*. If that be so, there must have been a time when they were created, no matter how gradual the process may have been; consequently it is not impossible to "conceive of a time when God over all was God over nothing." "One phenomenon," we are told, "gives rise to another; that, in turn, to a third; and so on—every cause becoming an effect, and every effect a cause." But as this earth had a *beginning*, as science tells us that it had, the *first* phenomenon must have been produced in some way or other, and by something. That something I call God, your correspondent, A. Liddle, terms it the infinite, whilst others designate it the first cause. This latter phrase is not "a contradiction in terms"; for, as this earth had a *beginning*, there must have been a first cause to have produced the first effect.

These may be only "ideas," and therefore it was that I contented myself with "two facts which are crucial points"; and which facts your correspondents have quietly ignored. And in order to simplify the matter, I confined myself to the production of *organic* matter, to which "spontaneous generation" more particularly applies. I wrote "there is no such thing as spontaneous generation, for science has exploded such an assumption." "Atheos" says I did not mean this; and that I "might as well argue because there is no natural formation of diamonds *now*, that therefore they were never naturally formed, but needed some god to put them there." All which is simply fallacious. The spontaneous generation of organic matter is a widely different thing to the natural formation of inorganic matter, for the intense heat and tremendous pressure which would be necessary for the latter would be absolutely destructive of the former. Diamonds, I presume, are being naturally formed *now* in the earth, as they have been in past ages; and if spontaneous generation were *once* a power in the world, how comes it that it is not in existence *now*?

Science teaches that all inorganic matter is absolutely inert, and that any motion with which it may be endowed is due to some extraneous "force" acting upon it; but whence that motion is derived, or how or when the original impulse was given, it does not pretend to teach. As to organic matter, science teaches that life can only come from life; but it is silent, absolutely silent, as to that "vital spark" which has vivified all creation. Science admits one assumption—only *one*—with which all phenomena must agree, and to which all phenomena must point—that of uniformity and continuity. Uniformity and Continuity! Are not these the special characteristics of that being "with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning"? Science points to but one unknown ultimate, and therefore inexplicable, "force", for, in scientific language, "ultimate" and "inexplicable" are synonymous terms. Is not the incomprehensible being called "God" ultimate-inexplicable? Is he not in reality this "force"? Who is able to deny it? Why, then, to use the words of Professor Tyndall, "should we not, by an intellectual necessity, cross the boundary of the experimental evidence, and refer the mystery of the supernatural, the mystery of motion, the mystery of the origin of life, the mystery of matter being acted upon even from a distance by will, and all other such perpetual miracles to the one only God"? Atheos asks: "Why add another mystery to those we have already"? I reply: "Why not prostrate ourselves before the one incomprehensible mystery which swallows up all the other mysteries before which we bow down?"

Your correspondents—not excepting H. C. S., whose observations have interested me most—have, consciously or unconsciously, ignored the *facts* upon which I based my conclusion. These facts are—that "there is no such thing as spontaneous generation"; that "there was a time in the

history of our planet when life upon it was impossible, and therefore when it was non-existent"; and that "we are in utter darkness as to when and how organic matter first appeared upon the earth." These *facts* are not to be gainsaid, and therefore they must not be ignored. Redi, Spallanzani, and more recently Pasteur, have demonstrated the first fact; astronomy, geology, and physics prove the second fact; whilst, as to the third fact, all the knowledge surrounding the subject that we possess shows that the statement made is the absolute truth.

I purposely confined my observations to the origination of living or organic beings in order to enclose the question in the narrowest compass. For I take it that, when it is remembered that the original pair from which all the living beings that are included in any one species are descended, *could not have been evolved from a burning inorganic mass*, but must have been formed or created by some outside omnipotent intelligent "force," my argument is conclusive, and my logical position unassailable. If organic beings existed from all eternity there could, of course, have been no creation; but if organic beings had a beginning, it follows, equally of course, that *as the first pair could not have produced themselves*, they must have been made or created—how or when does not affect the question in any way—by a being or something whose mere designation—whether God, or First Cause, or what not—is of no importance. To my mind the proposition is self-evident. But I am no dogmatist; I am open to conviction. I pause for a reply.

N. M. X.

### A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE MANUFACTURE OF RELIGIOUS TRACTS.

THE following interesting, if brief, treatise was picked up the other day not a hundred miles from Piccadilly Circus. It is given as discovered:—

1. Get a basis of fact with which to start your story. This is not an absolute necessity, however, and may, in certain cases, be dispensed with altogether. But in some cases, a little truth at the bottom is advisable, as enabling you—if challenged or discovered—to play a game of "bluff."
2. Build on this basis of fact—which of course may be as slender as circumstances necessitate—a super-structure of fancy. To *what is* add *what might be*, or *what ought to have been*. This can be attributed—if the occasion arise—to the working of a "vivid imagination."
3. Be careful not to give the least clue to the particulars of the story. The non observance of this rule has been the rock on which many a good religious ship has been wrecked.
4. When challenged for details refer the inquirer to the notice which you ought to prefix to your story, that the details cannot be given. [You can reserve to yourself the right to break this rule, if you think it expedient to do so.]
5. When the story is criticised, ignore the criticism.
6. When it is proved to be a lie, and branded as such, stand loftily on your "dignity," and declare that the use of the word *lie* precludes the possibility of your answering your critic, and clearing your own character. It is here you will find the utility of having a *little* fact at the root. If you are astute you ought to be able to make a good deal out of this point.

If you observe these rules carefully you may become proficient in the art of tract-writing. It is well to say, however, for the benefit of those contemplating that calling, that it is an over-stocked labor market, and that with the spread of Freethought amongst the people, the prospects are not likely to improve. But for those who do contemplate this mode of life, the observance of the above rules is absolutely essential to their professional success.

F. R.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE MEETING held at Hall of Science, Jan. 25; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. Chas. Watts, S. Hartmann, R. O. Smith, G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler, C. J. Hunt, J. E. Brumage, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, G. J. Warren, E. Bater, E. Quay, T. Gorniot, G. Ward, G. Steel, G. H. Baker, Mrs. Thornton Smith, and E. M. Vance, asst. sec.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed, and those of Organisation Committee. Cheques were ordered to be drawn for rent, office, printing, etc. Mr. C. J. Hunt was appointed to audit the New Year's Gift Fund.

The position of the Society in regard to the question of Secular Education was then discussed. The President's view was that the matter had better be put before the public in pamphlet form, and advised the meeting to resolve upon some definite course of action. Some discussion followed, in which the President, Messrs. Hunt, Watts, Wheeler, and Steel took part. Mr. Hunt moved and Mr. Watts seconded, "That this Executive calls upon the Progressive party to stand by the great historic principle of religious liberty and equality, under which it is wrong for the State to meddle in any way with the religious opinions of citizens; and the Executive further calls upon the Progressive party to support the only proper and equitable solution of the 'religious question' in Board schools by working for the return of candidates pledged to secular education—that is, to the absolute exclusion of theology from all such institutions."

Mr. Hartmann desired to see a separate fund established, and offered to head the list with £5. It was then moved by Mr. Hartmann, seconded by Mr. Wheeler, "That a special effort be made by this Executive to obtain Secular Education candidates in the forthcoming School Board elections, particularly in London, and that a special fund be started for this object."

The secretary received instructions upon various small matters of business, and the meeting adjourned.

EXECUTIVE MEETING, held Feb. 22; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. S. Hartmann, R. O. Smith, G. Standing, J. M. Wheeler, C. J. Hunt, J. E. Brumage, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, G. J. Warren, E. Bater, E. Quay, T. Gorniot, G. Ward, G. Steel, G. H. Baker, Mrs. Thornton Smith, and E. M. Vance, asst. sec.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, and cash statement received.—An invitation from the National League for the Abolition of the House of Lords for the Society to be represented at the forthcoming Conference was received, and Mr. G. W. Foote, A. B. Moss, and Mrs. Thornton Smith were elected as delegates. It was then moved by Mr. Steel, seconded by Mr. Warren, "That the N.S.S. become affiliated with the League"; carried.

Permission was given for the formation of a Branch at Rylhope Colliery, and £1 was granted in appreciation of their efforts.

The President reported that the New Year's Gift Fund had been audited and found to have realised £60.

The action of the President in connection with the Hugh Price Hughes's story then occupied the attention of the Council, several of whom desired to move laudatory resolutions; finally it was moved by Mr. Standing, and seconded by Mr. Brumage, "That this Executive desires to express its warm approval of the President's action in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker story, published by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and hereby subscribe the sum of £5 towards the circulation of the pamphlet containing its refutation and exposure; and this Executive further expresses a hope that Mr. Holyoake will see his way to send a communication to the President that will satisfy the expectations of the Secular party"; carried unanimously. A resolution commending the President's action was also received from the Glasgow Branch.

A circular was ordered to be sent to Branches, inquiring which amongst them could make the necessary arrangements for the Conference.

E. M. VANCE.  
Assistant Secretary.

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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, A. B. Moss will lecture (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Death and Eternal Judgment" (admission free; reserved seats 3d, and 6d.) Wednesday at 8.15, A. B. Moss, "Practical Work for Radicals" (free). A general meeting of the Finsbury Branch, in the minor hall, on Sunday at 11.30.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, H. Snell, "The Conquest of Truth," and dramatic recital (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bermondsey — Gladstone Club, 43 Grange-road: Thursday, March 1, at 8.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith, "A Plea for Atheism."

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30 (small hall), debating class, W. Vogel, "Shakespeare's Religion"; 7.30 (large hall), A. B. Moss, "The Gospel of Evolution." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, March 8, at 8.30, Touzeau Parris, "Man: whence he comes and how" (free).

Islington—Milner Lodge, 18 Waterloo-terrace, Upper-street: 3.30, quarterly meeting.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, Stanley Jones, "The Christian Religion" (free).

Wood Green—Star Coffee House, High-street: 8, T. Crisfield, "What is Hypnotism?"

**OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.**

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, P. Haslam, "Thomas Paine, the Greatest Man that Ever Lived" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

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

**COUNTRY.**

Bath—Corridor Rooms: 8, Mr. Keast, "The Saviors of Man-kind."

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, a meeting.

Chatham — Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: W. Heaford, 11, "Christian Evidences: what are they worth?"; 7, "Religion and Insanity: a Study in Sacred Psychology."

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

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, members' monthly meeting; 1 to 2, music class (free); 2.30, Mr. Gilmour, "The Religion of Burns"; 6.30, "The Struggles and Triumphs of Secularism."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, D. G. Lindsay, "N.S.S. Principles and Objects: a Criticism"; 6.30, P. Shaughnessy, "The Defects of Materialism."

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

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, a lecture.

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

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 10.30, L. Small's class; 7, J. W. Haydon, "The Ethics of Walt Whitman"; committee meeting after the lecture.

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 6.30, W. K. Hall, "Political Quackery."

Nelson—Albert Hall: G. W. Foote, 11, "Christ and Democrazy"; 3, "The Doom of the Gods"; 6.30, "A Search for the Soul."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Good Templar Hall, 2 Clayton-street, East: 7, A. W. Oxley, "The Necessity for Atheism."

Portsmouth — Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 11, C. Cohen, "Crimes and Criminals"; 3, members' special meeting; 7, C. Cohen, "The Failure of Christianity." Tuesday at 8, C. Cohen will lecture.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, vocal and instrumental music, etc. Wednesday at 8, literary and debating class, W. Dyson will give an address.

South Shields — Free Library Hall, Ocean-road: Touzeau Parris, 11, "How we Obtain Knowledge"; 3, "The Genesis of Life"; 7, "Christianity a Form of Devil Worship."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, G. Selkirk, "Has Man a Soul?"

**LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.**

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—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 Creden-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—March 4, Camberwell. April 1, Camberwell.

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