

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE  
ATHEIST SHOEMAKER

AND THE

REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES

OR

A STUDY IN LYING

WITH

A FULL AND COMPLETE EXPOSURE

BY

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AND

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## THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER.

### Introduction.

ONE of the leading religious agencies in the metropolis is the West London Mission, and the leading spirit of this mission is the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. The reverend gentleman is specially told off for this work by the Wesleyan Methodist body ; he discourses on Sundays in the great St. James's Hall, Piccadilly ; and the record of his labors is published in a journal which he edits, and which belongs to him, called the *Methodist Times*.

Five years ago the West London Mission was in financial difficulties, and fervent appeals were made on its behalf. Apparently by way of stimulating the generosity of the Wesleyan Methodist public, Mr. Hughes printed in his journal, in the months of July and August, 1889, a long, circumstantial, and vivid story, entitled "The Atheist Shoemaker." It was afterwards published in book-form at the price of eighteen-pence, with a Preface, setting forth that the narrative was "a true story, and not fiction," being indeed "a literal illustration of the spirit and work of the West London Mission."

This "true story" was that of a young shoemaker, who was "brought to Christ" by the said Mission. He had been a famous advocate of Atheism, lecturing to "atheistic assemblies" on Clerkenwell-green, in Victoria Park, and apparently at the Hall of Science. During his last illness, which carried him off at the age of twenty-eight, he was befriended by the Mission, and, under the persuasive influence of Sister Beatrice, he renounced his Atheism, and took the communion,

which was administered to him by Mr. Hughes. Finally, he died in Devonshire, making a most edifying end, so that "the last year of his life was full of instruction for every class of readers."

Mr. Hughes stated that he had been "urged" to publish this story. The convert himself had "willingly consented" to this being done, and there was "no reason for concealment." On the contrary, there were "many reasons for publicity." But the story as presented to the reader was tantalising. The "publicity" was remarkably like "concealment." Mr. Hughes gave his own name, but that could not be avoided. All the other characters were given fictitious names, and no clue was afforded to their addresses. Everything, in short, seemed designed to baffle investigation.

This was strange enough to require an apology, or at least an explanation. Accordingly it was stated that "some of those who must appear on the scene shrink from publicity." Now the only prominent characters were Mr. Hughes himself, whose name is given; the convert, who was dead, and had no feeling in the matter; his widow, who must have furnished many of the details; and the "Sister" of the West London Mission, who was instrumental in his "conversion." It was these two ladies, then, who shrank from publicity; and that they had *strong*, if not *good* reasons for "shrinking" will be seen hereafter. Suffice it to say, for the present, that the convert was called "John Herbert" in the story, while the lady of the mission was called "Sister Beatrice."

### The Story Challenged.

Immediately on the first publication of "The Atheist Shoemaker" in the *Methodist Times* it was criticised in the columns of the *Freethinker*. The present writer (who will henceforth speak in the first person) saw at a glance that the story was very largely fictitious. When a narrative begins with "One dark night last winter," one feels it is not history, but the work of a novelist. But the worst of it was, that no person answering to the description of John Herbert was known to the Freethinkers of London. In one

respect the description was precise enough. John Herbert died in the spring of 1889, at the age of twenty-eight; he was by trade a shoemaker; he had "delicate, intellectual features and deep, inquisitive, penetrating eyes"; he was a person of great natural eloquence; he was "a well-known London Atheist"; he used to lecture on Clerkenwell-green and in Victoria Park, where his voice was drowned by "continuous cheering"; one of Mr. Hughes's informants thought Herbert would get the best of it in a debate with "Bradlaugh," and exclaimed, "Why, everybody knows Herbert"; he was very happy at repartee, in which "his public discussions as an Atheist had made him so expert"; and we are told of "what he used to say in the Hall of Science," where Mr. Hughes hoped to hear him tell the story of his conversion. All this made a very recognisable portrait—if the original ever existed, which *it never did*. I was myself in a position to deny its existence. As President of the London Secular Federation, and editor of the *Freethinker*, and being intimately acquainted with the propaganda of Freethought in London, I was prepared to challenge the substantial truth of Mr. Hughes's story. Still, I did not act in a spirit of infallibility. I made inquiries of others, including those who had carried on the work of Secularism in the places mentioned by Mr. Hughes; and one and all were positive that no such lecturer as John Herbert had ever been known there. It must be recollected that they had only to tax their memories for a year or two, and that no mistake could arise from the mere lapse of time in this instance. My own view was thus confirmed, and I felt justified in severely criticising the story of John Herbert's conversion. I declared that it bore every appearance of a lie; yet I added that, if Mr. Hughes would give the real name of his convert, and prove the substantial truth of his story, I would not only confess my mistake, but "apologise for throwing a doubt upon his honor." Mr. Hughes took no notice of this appeal, and when he published his narrative in a volume I felt bound to publish my criticism as well in a separate form. It was therefore issued as a penny pamphlet, under the title of "A Lie in Five Chapters."

### Mr. Hughes Keeps Silence.

Several other persons tried to draw Mr. Hughes. Amongst them was a friendly critic, the Rev. C. A. Spurgeon, who noticed Mr. Hughes's volume in the *Sword and Trowel*, and advised him to give the names and addresses of his characters. The great Baptist preacher, who was a straightforward man in his way, could not understand all the mystery of "The Atheist Shoemaker." He thought the "feelings" of the persons concerned were as nothing to the gain to the cause of Christ, if the conversion were established to the satisfaction of believers and the confusion of infidels.

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, the leader of the English Secularists, plainly told Mr. Hughes that his story was clearly untrue in many respects, and invited him to have an inquiry made into its evidences. The following paragraph appeared in the *National Reformer* for February 2, 1890, soon after Mr. Bradlaugh's return from India :—

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

This was plain enough, and it was written by one who had a right to intervene. Mr. Bradlaugh was not only the natural but the official leader of Free-thought. He was President of the National Secular Society, whose headquarters are in London; and he was therefore in a position to know whether the eloquent hero of Mr. Hughes's story had any real existence.

Mr. Hughes took no notice of Mr. Bradlaugh's statement and invitation. The burning love of truth, which he professes, did not lead him to see whether he had been misled himself, and had consequently misled others.

The reverend gentleman's obstinate silence provoked the publication of a correspondence between him and

Mr. Robert Forder, secretary of the National Secular Society, who has an exceptionally intimate acquaintance with the *personnel* of the Freethought movement. Mr. Forder wrote to Mr. Hughes on September 5, 1889, soon after the completion of "The Atheist Shoemaker" in the *Methodist Times*, and the following is an extract from his letter :—

"As I have been personally acquainted with all the Atheist lecturers at the Hall of Science, Clerkenwell Green, and Victoria Park during the last twenty-five years, and have been secretary of the National Secular Society for the last fifteen years, you will understand my curiosity to know which one of my old friends and companions abandoned his opinions prior to his death. I therefore take the liberty of asking you the name of the Atheist lecturer, feeling sure you will be glad to oblige one who must have known him for many years."

Mr. Hughes, being away on the continent, did not reply until October 4. He referred Mr. Forder to the Preface of "The Atheist Shoemaker," where it was stated that some of the characters shrank from "publicity," and said in conclusion—

"I am sorry that passage escaped your notice, for it would have saved you the trouble of writing to me. Any information about our work that can be made public with due regard to the wishes and feelings of others I shall always be happy to give you."

Mr. Hughes must have penned the last sentence with his tongue in his cheek. He knew very well that all Mr. Forder wanted to know about "our work" was the name of the converted Atheist Shoemaker.

This correspondence appeared in the *National Reformer* for February 16, with a note on the opposite page by Mr. Bradlaugh :

"In another column I insert a communication from Mr. Forder as to the falsehood of the story of 'the converted Atheist shoemaker.' As the Rev. Mr. Hughes has not hesitated to increase the commercial value of his romance by repeatedly using my name, I should have supposed that common decency would have required him to give me the means of testing his accuracy, especially as he knows I challenge the main allegations in his story."

Mr. Bradlaugh wrote another paragraph on February 23, remarking that the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Pall Mall*

*Gazette*, and other papers, were giving publicity to the fact that Mr. Hughes would not have his story investigated. "The excuse," said Mr. Bradlaugh, "that publicity might hurt the feelings of the dead shoemaker's surviving friends should have been considered before Mr. Hughes published my name in his story. Are my feelings and those of my friends of no account to Mr. Hughes?"

A final note from Mr. Bradlaugh's pen was printed in the *National Reformer* for March 2 :—

"The story contains some statements which I know to be untrue, and contains other statements which I believe to be untrue. I leave to Mr. Hughes the responsibility of having published these as parts of what he describes as 'a true story.' Mr. Hughes, although he made his story more saleable by its references to me, denies my right to inquire into the matter. Mr. Hughes holds very curious notions of what a religious man may do against an infidel."

Now I ask the reader to consider this situation. Would any man of honor have kept silent in the face of Mr. Bradlaugh's appeals? Mr. Bradlaugh was an eminent man, enjoying at that time almost universal respect, and he regarded himself in "common decency" as entitled to satisfaction. He had also stated his *knowledge* that much of Mr. Hughes's story was untrue. In these circumstances, Mr. Hughes ought surely to have made inquiries, if only to satisfy himself. But the sequel shows that he did nothing of the kind. He wilfully closed his eyes to the evidence that would have proved his inaccuracy.

#### A Little Speech.

Throughout this dispute Mr. Hughes has displayed a certain consistency. His policy has been to ignore all the leaders of Secularism, doubtless on the ground that their appeals and challenges would not be seen or heard by his own party. Whenever he has broken silence, it has been in consequence of something that his own party *could* see, in the columns of some political organ of great influence and circulation. Accordingly he was stung into saying something by a leaderette in the *Daily Chronicle*, the "motive and animus" of the writer of which he complained of.



just as he has since complained of everyone who has desired him to put his cards upon the table.

After scolding this writer, Mr. Hughes wrote as follows in the *Methodist Times* for February 27, 1890 :

“We are at a loss to understand what right either Mr. Bradlaugh or the Secretary of the National Secular Society has to demand the name of ‘The Atheist Shoemaker,’ which is suppressed for the reason given in the preface of the book. The narrative makes no attack whatever, either on Mr. Bradlaugh or on the National Secular Society. The Secretary of that Society says no professional Atheist lecturer in London has died during the last ten years in the way described in ‘The Atheist Shoemaker.’ Mr. Price Hughes never said that ‘The Atheist Shoemaker’ was a professional lecturer of the National Secular Society. He simply said that he had spoken in advocacy of Atheism in public halls and in the open air, and that he had spoken with great eloquence and effect.”

This is no answer at all to Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Forder, or myself. Mr. Hughes did not state that his “John Herbert” was a lecturer for the National Secular Society; but, as a matter of fact, it has a monopoly of the “Atheist” platforms in London, and the Atheist Shoemaker could not have spoken from them “with great eloquence and effect,” yet be absolutely unknown to the Society’s officials, and even to the rank and file of its members. Mr. Hughes had been informed that his convert *was* unknown; his story, therefore, *could* not be true as it stood; yet he refused to lift a finger in the way of correction. He continued to advertise and sell the volume as though nothing had happened.

#### Goaded into Action.

My criticism of Mr. Hughes’s story, which I entitled “A Lie in Five Chapters,” was extensively circulated. Freethinkers sent copies of it to Mr. Hughes and his friends and colleagues, to the chairmen of his meetings in the provinces, and to various influential Wesleyan Methodists. The pamphlet gave him a considerable amount of trouble. He admits this in the *Methodist Times* for January 18, 1894 “Christians of a feeble and melancholy type” could not realise the “absurdity” of supposing that the “true story” was “fiction.”

"Moreover, some ministers of religion, local preachers, and private Christians, deficient in the ever-blessed sense of humor," urged Mr. Hughes to publish the name of the Atheist Shoemaker. One letter "touched" him. It was an appeal from "the great Anglican missionary," the Rev. W. H. Aitken, who said that "young fellows who consulted him in the inquiry-room were troubled by fellow-workmen who showed them Mr. Foote's pamphlet." Mr. Hughes was ready to do anything in reason to "satisfy the scruples of the inexperienced, the prejudiced, and the melancholy"—of all, in short, who could not take his bare word in the face of circumstantial contradictions. He was "especially willing" to give "every information in his power to Atheists and Agnostics who treated their opponents with justice and courtesy"—although he had refused this information to Mr. Bradlaugh, the "courtesy" of whose appeal he has admitted to a *Morning* interviewer (Feb. 10, 1894). Evidently the time had come to do something. But *what?* The proper method was to submit to a Court of Honor. Mr. Hughes, however, preferred to appeal to one man, and he cleverly chose a Secularist—Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, on the pretended ground that he could investigate "without prejudice and without passion."

Mr. Holyoake says he applied to Mr. Hughes. Mr. Hughes says he applied to Mr. Holyoake. It is uncertain, therefore, how the little scheme originated. At any rate it was carried out with profound secrecy. Mr. Holyoake was a personal friend of mine as well as a personal friend of Mr. Hughes. He was also a Vice-President of the National Secular Society, of which I am President. But he never gave me a hint of what he was doing. The first intimation I had of it was a public announcement in the *Daily Chronicle* for January 11, 1894, that Mr. Holyoake's report on the Atheist Shoemaker case would appear simultaneously in the next issues of the *Methodist Times* and the *Freethinker*. Subsequently I saw a flaming advertisement of this fact in the *Methodist Times*. I had to learn from foreign sources what was to appear in my own paper.

Now I ask any candid reader what is the value of

an "investigation" conducted in this manner? I wrote a letter of complaint to Mr. Holyoake, but he gave me no reply. The whole matter, indeed, compels me to give my opinion of *why* Mr. Hughes sought the aid of Mr. Holyoake.

Mr. Bradlaugh had too much iron in him, and could not be imposed upon; he had also a legal mind, and knew how to take evidence; besides, he was the leader of organised Freethought in England, and conversant with the practical details of its propaganda in London. It would not do, therefore, to take *him* into confidence. Mr. Holyoake, however, was more obliging and susceptible to Christian compliments; he was almost eighty years of age, and his eyesight was nearly gone, at any rate for the purposes of investigation, in which so much depends on the expression on the faces of witnesses; besides, he had lived for a long time at Brighton, and was out of touch with the details of Freethought propaganda in London. Mr. Bradlaugh was in a position to test the truth of Mr. Hughes's story, Mr. Holyoake was not, and there is the explanation.

#### Mr. Holyoake's Report.

Mr. Holyoake's report was printed in full in the *Freethinker*. Most of it was beside the purpose. Profuse compliments were paid to Mr. Hughes, who was described as a gentleman "entitled to be implicitly believed on his word"—a sentence which damns the whole investigation. Nothing but a sham inquiry was possible when the investigator started with that assumption.

The substantial part of Mr. Holyoake's report is as follows:—

"As soon as he knew that I was wishful to investigate the facts, he placed at my disposal the means of doing so, and volunteered the real name of Herbert. I have seen and conversed separately with 'Sister Beatrice' and 'Sister Ethel,' from whom Mr. Hughes derived many of his statements. I was shown the private Diary of 'Sister Beatrice,' giving contemporary documentary evidence of the minute accuracy of her statement. Their entire veracity seems to me unquestionable. They had not only sincerity, but that cultivated sincerity which is without exaggeration. They said Mr.

Herbert had a vivid faculty of speech and a brightness of conversation which compelled interest and attention. Of that they must be good judges, for their own grace and precision of speech showed that they understood those qualities. Opportunity was given me of seeing Herbert's widow, who has since married again. She appeared an interesting person, clear, frank, and decisive in her statements. She said she had been with Mr. Herbert, her former husband, to the Hall of Science, but had never heard him speak there; in Victoria Park she had often heard him. She had been with him there six hours at a time, he speaking at intervals to groups of persons all the while. He had sometimes been met on entering the park by persons who would say, if he seemed to wish to pass them, 'Come, give us a few words.' She had seen him kicked on the shins by policemen, whose object was to cause resistance, that they might arrest him; and on one occasion two gentlemen gave him their names and addresses, saying if he brought an action against the police they would give evidence on his behalf. He was very earnest in his opinions, and had little meetings of persons in his house, to whom he would produce books and facts in defence of the opinions he then held. He was very ardent for what he then thought to be the truth. His wife said he disbelieved in Christianity because of the cant and, as he said, 'the humbug of those who preached one thing and did another.' It is clear to me that Mr. Herbert was for truth and proof, and was not only ready to offer it when asked, but made occasions to present it. He was an enthusiast, entitled to the respect of his former colleagues, since he shortened his life by real which exceeded his strength."

Some of these statements are ridiculous, especially the one about the Atheist shoemaker's "former colleagues," who never knew him. But it is needless to expatiate on this aspect of this report. What I wish to emphasise is the fact that Mr. Holyoake simply interviewed the concocters of the Atheist Shoemaker story and asked them "Is it true?" They said "Yes," and he gave it his certificate. He made no attempt to see if there was another side to the case.

Mr. Hughes returned Mr. Holyoake's compliments, printed his portrait in the *Methodist Times*, and called his report a "vindication." Mr. Holyoake had been put in possession of the real name of the convert, he had made a "careful" inquiry, and had declared his belief in the "substantial truth" of the Atheist Shoemaker story. Mr. Hughes was in raptures. He hoped

it would be "a lesson" to me. "We trust," he said, "that Mr. Foote will now, for his own sake, withdraw his accusation." Meanwhile the "vindication" was scattered broadcast over the kingdom.

### A Real Investigation.

Happily I was soon able to make a *real* investigation. The relatives of "John Herbert," who live at Northampton, put themselves in communication with me. It may be asked why they never communicated with Mr. Hughes. The answer is that they tried to. "Herbert's" father went to one of Mr. Hughes's meetings at Northampton, and said he wished to speak with him on the subject. Mr. Hughes replied that he was in a hurry. He gave the father his card, and said "Call on me." I have seen that card, and the address on it is in London. How could a shoemaker pay "calls" like that? And how much desire had Mr. Hughes to be well-informed?

I went down to Northampton and interviewed the family—the father and two brothers of the Atheist Shoemaker. They had important documents in their possession, which they have since left in my custody. They also gave me a mass of verbal information. The father is a devout Christian, and has conducted a Methodist mission at Northampton. He is a man of simple, honest manners, and strong feelings. Having just read Mr. Holyoake's report and my pamphlet, he deemed it wrong to let the world be longer abused. "Herbert's" brothers are also Christians, and have never been otherwise. There was never a Freethinker in the family. They are satisfied that the dead son and brother was never an advocate of Atheism. His real name was CHARLES ALFRED GIBSON.

### The Gibsons in London.

The Gibsons were so indignant at Mr. Hughes's conduct that they declared they would do anything I thought advisable. On my invitation they came up to London on Sunday, February 4, and appeared on the platform at the Hall of Science before a very crowded assembly. Several reporters were present, and reports

of the meeting appeared in London papers the next morning. Half way through my own speech I paused to let Mr. Gibson senior give his own testimony. He said that he was there as a Christian man in the interest of truth, and he branded the Atheist Shoemaker story as "a damnable lie." Mr. Stephen Henry Gibson, the "Atheist brother" of the story, said to have been converted by the "seraphic death" of Charles Alfred Gibson, also stood up at my request. "Were you ever an Atheist?" I asked him, and he answered "Never." "Have you ever been anything but a professed Christian?" Again he answered "Never." "Have you ever had any communication with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes or the Sisters of the West London Mission?" And once more he answered "Never."

#### "Herbert's" Identity.

There is no necessity to reproduce the elaborate proofs I gave in the *Freethinker* that "John Herbert" was really Charles Alfred Gibson. Mr. Holyoake has admitted that "Gibson" was the name disclosed to him. Mr. Hughes himself also, in reply to the *Morning* interviewer (Feb. 10), said, "Oh, yes, it was Mr. Gibson's son undoubtedly who was the subject of my book."

#### "Herbert's" Career.

Charles Alfred Gibson was born on May 14, 1861. The date is in the family Bible. He died on March 27, 1889, nearly twenty-eight years of age. His death took place at Sidmouth—Mr. Hughes's "pleasant home on the Devonshire coast"—and he was buried there on March 31.

"Bit by bit," Mr. Hughes says, "we came to know his history." Well, the bits were mostly wrong. "Herbert" is stated to have "taught himself to read by a strange device." The names at the corners of the streets were "his reading book." Then follows a sample of the Bunyan vein which Mr. Holyoake so admires in Mr. Hughes.

"When quite a little lad he would run alongside a gentleman and say in a casual tone, 'Excuse me, sir, but what's the

name of that street?" Then he would read it and spell it over and over again for about ten minutes. On the next day he would return to that street and see if he had learned the name correctly. Board schools, happily, leave the children of the poor no room for such pathetic ingenuity now."

It is a pity to spoil this pretty little story, but there is not a word of truth in it. It is unadulterated romance. Charles Alfred Gibson was not a child of destitution. His father was always able to support his family as a sober, industrious working-man. His "privations," therefore, are all imaginary. And the same must be said of his street-corner schooling. He was at school for five years altogether—when the Gibsons were in America—at Philadelphia, at Toronto, and in New Jersey. He was also a Sunday-school scholar at Grace Church, situated at the corner of Twelfth-street and Race-street, Philadelphia. A faded portrait of his Sunday-school teacher is still preserved in Mr. Gibson's album, and on one of his walls are hung the three American prints that were presented to his three boys over there as school prizes.

"As soon as he could read," says Mr. Hughes, "he began to accumulate books." This also is news to Mr. Gibson, who describes his dead son as intelligent, and fond of an argument, but not exactly bookish. Mr. Gibson stoutly denies that his son could possibly have uttered many of the things that Mr. Hughes puts into his mouth. He says they were quite beyond him, and that "Tom Paine couldn't have written them better."

Mr. Hughes apparently does not know that Charles Alfred Gibson served in the Fifth Lancers, in Ireland, under the assumed name of Cartwright. It was there that he made the acquaintance of the girl he afterwards married in England.

Another fact that Mr. Hughes seems to be ignorant of is, that his "convert" was in the Salvation Army at St. Albans. He and Julia both wore the "Army" uniform. After that he was in the Salvation Army at Camberwell. Mr. Gibson heard him speak once in the Camberwell barracks, and was greatly surprised at some of the things he said.

Julia, the good Christian, who helped to bring her

husband to Christ—from whom his relatives were not aware that he had ever departed—caused an estrangement between Mr. Gibson and his son. I had better be silent about *the cause* of this division. Suffice it to say that Mr. Gibson never heard from his son for two years and a half prior to his death. Even after the alleged “conversion” by Mr. Hughes the son does not appear to have written a line to his father. Julia did, but not until her husband was dying in Devonshire.

Mr. Gibson reckons that his son was in London about eighteen months altogether. During a part of the time, at any rate, he worked at Ford’s, in the Gray’s Inn-road. Mr. Gibson never heard of his lecturing, even from Julia, until he read Mr. Hughes’s book. He does not believe that his son could ever have been an orator, and certainly the space of eighteen months is too short for his acquiring such distinction in that line as Mr. Hughes alleges.

Mr. Hughes is good at pathetic stories—true or false. He tells us that when “Herbert” went down to Devonshire he was “so ill that it was necessary for his wife to accompany him.” Yet in a letter from Julia to Mr. and Mrs. Gibson, written at Sidmouth, she says, “he was down here a month before I was sent for.” She also says that she “had to leave a good place” to go, and adds, “I was then a cook.” This is very circumstantial, and it is in absolute contradiction to Mr. Hughes’s no less circumstantial story. Somebody must be lying. If the liar is Julia, it shows what her word is worth. It also shows her power of neat invention. But if the liar is *not* Julia, the story shows another person’s powers of neat invention, and what *that* person’s word is worth.

#### Death of “Herbert.”

Charles Alfred Gibson died at Sidmouth on March 27, 1889, and was buried in the Sidmouth cemetery on March 31. Mr. Gibson senior has a letter from the doctor who attended his son. There was bad disease of the heart and lungs, and no hope of recovery.

Mr. Hughes devotes several pages to a regular novelist’s account of “Herbert’s” death. The reverend gentleman was not present at the scene. All the little



death-chamber touches are therefore imaginary. Julia must have told him, if anyone did, that the dying man's last words were a "touching tribute" to Sister Beatrice, who "led him to Christ." Julia stated at Northampton, however, that his last words were "Go to Steve he will look after you"—"Steve" being his brother Stephen Henry, who had also been a soldier.

This is how Mr. Hughes, in his fine, calm, restrained style, describes the fall of the curtain.

"He lay for a long time so still that the watchers began to think they would never hear his voice again. But he was yet to speak, and to speak a sentence which was destined to be read in every laud in which the English language is spoken.

"He was evidently gathering his ebbing strength together for a great final effort.

"His hand tightened. He opened his lips; and in startling contrast with his previous whisper, in clear, ringing, exulting tones, he exclaimed :

"Tell Sister Beatrice and the Sisters that now when I have come to the end I fear no evil, for God is with me."

This is what Mr. Holyoake politely calls "brilliant coloring." But it is not history. I put it to any doctor whether a man dying of consumption and heart disease, after many months of suffering and slow decay, could possibly cry out in "clear, ringing, exulting tones" with his very last breath. I have myself seen cases of death from consumption, and all power of motion and speech have gone for hours before the final release. If medical men tell me I am wrong, I will give in ; but until then I must take leave to regard "John Herbert's" dying oration as apocryphal.

#### Was He a Lecturer ?

Mr. Hughes represents his convert as a young man of extraordinary eloquence, and almost a match for Mr. Bradlaugh. "I've been a ringleader," he is made to exclaim to Sister Beatrice. "I have even cheered men when they were dying," he continues, "and encouraged them not to give in." He lectured as an Atheist on Clerkenwell-green and in Victoria Park. He was "a well-known London Atheist." "Why, everybody knows Herbert !" exclaims "a journeyman

shoemaker in Soho"—where, by the way, this marvel of eloquence could not have been specially famous. The journeyman shoemaker is himself but one of Mr. Hughes's inventions. His tribute to "Herbert's" oratory is tremendous. "When he used to speak in Victoria Park," says his Soho eulogist, "there was such continuous cheering that you could scarcely hear what he was saying."

In a long wrestle between the Devil and "Herbert" after his conversion, the former reminds him of "What you used to say in the Hall of Science." Not *at* the Hall of Science, but *in* the Hall of Science. Of course it was Mr. Hughes who invented all the dialectical points of that "wrestle," for he never saw "Herbert" *after it*. Still, words have a definite meaning, and if Mr. Hughes did not wish to signify that "Herbert" had spoken *in* the Hall of Science, what on earth was he driving at? Nor is this all. "It seemed to us of such immense importance," Mr. Hughes writes, "that he should himself go to his old workshop, and to the Hall of Science, and to Clerkenwell-green, and to all his former haunts, and with his own lips tell the story of his conversion." Now if this does not mean that he was a speaker on Atheism in the Hall of Science, the language of Mr. Hughes is no better than thimble-rigging.

But this does not end the matter. Mr. Hughes must be attacked in his last entrenchment. I therefore ask the question, Was his convert ever a lecturer at all?

Personally, I never heard the name of Gibson in connection with Freethought lecturing in London. Mr. Holyoake said he never heard it, and the same answer is given by every Freethinker I interrogate. He could not, therefore, have been "a well-known Atheist." The description is an absurdity. Certainly he could not have lectured in Victoria Park amidst thunderous applause. That Soho shoemaker who said so was a thunderous liar, unless he is, as I conceive, a mere invention of Mr. Hughes's.

Charles Alfred Gibson was in London about eighteen months altogether. He was not a lecturer when he went there. His father and brothers never heard of

his lecturing afterwards—until they read Mr. Hughes's book. Not an Atheist in London that I can hear of has the faintest recollection of this oratorical prodigy. Mr. Hughes never heard him lecture. The Methodist Sisters never heard him lecture. Who did then? Why Julia. The whole fabric of "Herbert's" fame is based upon that one woman's word.

Mr. Holyoake says he has seen "Herbert's" widow, who has since "married again." That is, Mr. Holyoake was told so. She has not been seen or heard of by the Gibsons for two years and a half. Would it not be well to produce her again for a little cross-examination?

"Herbert's" widow told Mr. Holyoake that she had been with her husband in Victoria Park "six hours at a time, he speaking at intervals to groups of persons all the while." Mr. Holyoake may believe it. I do not. Nor do I believe that "Herbert" or any other Freethought speaker in Victoria Park was "kicked on the shins by policemen." As far as I am aware, our speakers have for a long time been on very good terms with the police. But be that as it may, I wish to point out that Mr. Holyoake, as well as Mr. Hughes and the Sisters, obtained his information from the inevitable Julia. However many links are put on the chain, they all hang upon her; and I venture to say she is not strong enough to bear them. We shall see more of her presently. Meanwhile I have to say that the Gibsons do not believe her statements on this head. They feel sure that Charles Alfred Gibson was never a lecturer. Their opinion is—and, after what they told and showed me, it is my opinion too—that Julia deceived Mr. Hughes and the Sisters, and kept up the deception when introduced to Mr. Holyoake.

There is not the smallest scrap of real evidence that Charles Alfred Gibson ever lectured at all as an Atheist, and the negative evidence that he did not is simply overwhelming. Yet this is the very pivot of Mr. Hughes's story. It was nothing to convert an obscure young man from his atheistical opinions. Such a trivial incident would not afford substance enough for an eighteenpenny book. It was necessary to magnify the convert's importance, and the thing was done. He was

represented as noble, intellectual, eloquent and famous. In other words, his *status* is the very essence of the story. It is now demonstrated that he was not, and could not have been, a notorious Freethinker, and Mr. Hughes's story is therefore a lie in its deliberate exaggerations. To declare that "Herbert" was a real personage is no answer to the charge of fraud. It is the *description* of him that has to be vindicated, and Mr. Hughes knows the task is impossible.

### Was He an Atheist ?

Three weeks before leaving his father's house at Northampton, Charles Alfred Gibson knelt down and prayed in the passage. He was not an Atheist *then*. But did he become an Atheist during the eighteen months he lived in London ?

In considering this question, it is requisite to bear in mind the silence of Mr. Hughes as to "Herbert's" having been in the Salvation Army. If the fact was known to Mr. Hughes, he acted dishonorably in keeping it back, and making it appear that "Herbert" had never "known Christ." If the fact was *not* known to Mr. Hughes, nor even to Sister Beatrice, it must have been kept back by "Herbert" himself, or by his wife ; and, in that case, the witness of both of them lies under a very grave suspicion. It would seem that they wished to let it be thought that "Herbert" became a Christian *for the first time* through the agency of the West London Mission. I may be asked, What could be their motive in this deception ? Well, a very simple one. They were dependent upon the Mission for the comforts, if not the necessities of life.

There is another thing that should be borne in mind ; namely, the statement of Mr. Hughes as to "the privations of his youth" and his street-corner schooling. Both are falsehoods, and the first is a cruel reflection on Mr. Gibson senior, whose indignation at it is shared by his sons. Now if Mr. Hughes did not invent these falsehoods, they must have been invented by "Herbert" or his wife ; and in either case the story of his being an Atheist at all is damned—unless we have independent evidence of its truth. For, if Mr. Hughes is the liar, how can we believe anything

he *says* they told him ; and if they were the liars, how can we believe what they *did* tell him ?

Bearing these points in mind, let us proceed with our inquiry. We are told by Mr. Hughes that "Herbert" had "old Atheistic comrades," with whom he and his wife sometimes took a day's excursion. How was it then that he never applied to the National Secular Society for any assistance in his distress, before his conversion? Could none of them tell him of the Society's Benevolent Fund, if he was ignorant of its existence himself? I have had the books searched, and his name does not appear in the list of persons relieved, nor is it in the list of members.

As for the long conversations between "Herbert" and Sister Beatrice, there can be little doubt that they are literary performances. Sister Beatrice told Mr. Hughes something, and Mr. Hughes worked it up into telling dialogues. Still, it may be said, Sister Beatrice could scarcely be mistaken as to the bare fact of his Atheism. Well, I am not so sure of that. Her word, apart from Julia's, is all we have to go upon ; and we shall now see how an emotional lady like Sister Beatrice (or Miss Lily Dewhirst) can be guilty of the wildest inaccuracy.

#### "Herbert's" Converted Atheist Brother.

On the last page of his pious concoction, Mr. Hughes regrets the loss of "that eloquent tongue" of "Herbert's" to the cause of Christ, but believes that his death (as dressed up by Mr. Hughes) may be "more potent even than his life would have been." Then he winds up the story with a final falsehood. It is told in the form of a question—"Has not his Atheist brother at Northampton already turned to God under the influence of his seraphic death?" Northampton, of course, was Bradlaugh's borough ; and the question, put in this way, would deepen the impression that "Herbert" belonged to an Atheist family.

There is not a word of truth in the "conversion" of that brother. Stephen Henry Gibson, who is the person referred to, has always been a professed Christian. He has said so himself, and the statement is

corroborated by his brother Frank, as well as by Mr. Gibson senior. Consequently there was no "atheist brother" at Northampton to "turn to God."

Mr. Hughes, I believe, did not invent this yarn, although I believe he did invent that Soho shoemaker. What he did was to publish it as though he knew it for a fact. He committed the same crime throughout the story, giving his own authority to mere hearsay, without the slightest investigation. He did this as a public man, in the interest of the West London Mission. It is impossible, therefore, to exonerate him from responsibility. He did not care whether the story was true or false so long as he could make it useful, and that is the twin brother of lying. There are very few persons who lie merely for the exercise of intellectual ingenuity.

I believe this yarn of the converted Atheist brother was retailed to Mr. Hughes by Sister Beatrice, and I will give my reasons.

Stephen Henry Gibson has a letter from Sister Beatrice, dated May 28, 1889. It is a very sentimental composition, with ecstatic references to the dead brother, and a fervid appeal to Stephen to come over and help the cause of Christ. I asked him how he got this letter. Was it sent to him through the post? Did he answer it? And had he written to Sister Beatrice previously?

He replied that he had never written to Sister Beatrice at all, and had never had any sort of communication with her. The letter was handed to him by Julia, who was then living in Northampton.

At the bottom of nearly everything we find Julia. She was in communication with Sister Beatrice, from whom, I am told, she sometimes obtained money. It seems to me highly probable, as it seems to the Gibsons, that she fooled the Sister with a yarn about Stephen's being an Atheist; that the sentimental Sister jumped at the bait, and wrote that letter to the young man, sending it through Julia as she did not know his address; that Julia informed the Sister that her letter had brought about Stephen's conversion; that the Sister conveyed the glorious intelligence to Mr. Hughes; and that the reverend gentleman took it without the

least inquiry, and worked in this "crowning mercy" as the climax of his narrative.

This is how I believe the story of the converted "Atheist brother" was developed; and, supposing Sister Beatrice to be honest, it shows how easily she may be taken in. She utterly misled Mr. Hughes as to Stephen Gibson, and she may have utterly misled him as to Charles Alfred Gibson. At any rate, it is impossible to take such a lady's evidence without cross-examination, and therefore the Atheism of "Herbert" has yet to be established.

### Mr. Hughes's Little Trick.

I say that Sister Beatrice's evidence on the point of Charles Alfred Gibson's Atheism is of no value without a cross-examination. Now let the reader see what pains were taken to save her from this ordeal. Her name is just as imaginary as that of the converted Atheist. It is now admitted that her real name is Sister Lily. Had the name she is known by in the West London Mission been given in the story, she might have been troubled by inquisitive Methodists. Mr. Hughes very kindly veiled her identity to guard her *even against her friends*. Indeed, his whole method was one of politic confusion. Feigned names were substituted for real ones at every point where the story was liable to investigation, and mystery was only abandoned where there was no danger in openness and precision.

### Julia.

The Christian wife of the Atheist shoemaker in Mr. Hughes's story is "a daughter of Erin." So is Julia, whom Charles Alfred Gibson married in England, after forming her acquaintance in Ireland, while he was serving in the Fifth Lancers. Judging from the story (it is an excellent word!) of her husband's conversion, and the report of her made to me by the Gibsons, I should say she had extracted the very quintessential virtue of the Blarney Stone. And whenever we probe to the bottom of this matter we come to Julia. It is another case of *Cherchez la femme!*

It is evident that a great deal of Mr. Hughes's story *must* have been furnished by Julia, either directly or through Sister Beatrice, particularly the account of his exploits as a propagator of Atheism. We have seen how she managed that little affair of the "conversion" of Stephen Gibson, and it enables us to estimate the value of her statements about his dead brother. She knows the weakness of religionists on the look-out for converts; and, whatever she may be now, she was formerly by no means averse from using them to her own advantage.

When the Gibsons asked how Mr. Hughes came to tell such falsehoods about her husband, she gave them the airy reply—"Oh, they make it up as they like."

Some of the information I possess was given to me in confidence. Nevertheless I am free to say that if Mr. Hughes will divest himself of his "dignity," and condescend to make an investigation, he will learn whether Julia Gibson was all that his fancy painted her.

At the same time, I cannot find it in my heart to blame Julia Gibson overmuch for romancing in order to obtain assistance for her dying husband. I blame the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes for working it up into a "true story" without the least investigation.

#### **"Herbert's" Old Shopmates.**

Mr. Frank Trasler, a member of the National Secular Society, introduced himself to me and the Gibsons on Sunday evening, February 4. He had worked in the same shop with Charles Alfred Gibson, and was still working there. He remembered the young man well, and advised us to call on his old shopmates.

On Monday morning, February 5, the Gibsons and I entered Ford's establishment. We went down into the very room where Charles Alfred Gibson made shoes in 1888. The men laughed when I read to them what Mr. Hughes says about it in "The Atheist Shoemaker." According to the reverend gentleman's account, his convert's health was ruined by working in "a sweating den," and when the Factory Inspector called, his "Christian employer" took the official upstairs, and treated him to sherry, to keep him from



"putting his nose" in the basement. "Rubbish!" the men said. The Factory Inspector would come whenever they liked to call him, and as a matter of fact he made his inspections without the employer. Charles Alfred Gibson could not have said what Mr. Hughes had put into his mouth. One of the men had worked there fifteen years, and still looked sound. "Herbert" was not "killed by a Christian employer." The truth is, the young man inherited heart disease from his mother, and it killed him as it killed her.

Charles Alfred Gibson's old shopmates remembered him well. He had worked with them about twelve months. Before that he had worked at Lilley and Skinner's, Paddington-green, and while there he had belonged to the Church Army. Within twelve months, that is, of his conversion by Mr. Hughes!

"Did you ever know my son to be a lecturer?" asked Mr. Gibson. One and all answered "No," and declared it an utter absurdity. "Did you ever know him to be an Atheist?" One and all again answered "No." A shopmate said that he was rather fond of arguing, in which he shifted about, taking all sorts of sides, in opposition to the person he argued with. But he was never to their knowledge an unbeliever; in fact, he was always hostile to Atheism in his conversation.

So much for the Atheism of "John Herbert" in the minds of his old shopmates. I have seen them, and Mr. Hughes has not. He preferred to spin his history, spider-like, out of the bowels of his own imagination.

#### "John Herbert's" Landlady.

While talking to these shoemakers, I learnt that Charles Alfred Gibson had lived not far off, in the Caledonian-road. One of them thought he could remember the house, and after some tickling of his recollection he brought out the number, though he was not quite sure of it. I don't wish to trouble the landlady of the house, so I refrain from disclosing the number.

Mr. Hughes seems to have done all he could to baffle investigation. He represents his convert's lodgings as being in Islington. The real place is at the south end

of the Caledonian-road, between King's-cross and the canal. The description of the landlady is equally faulty. I do not wonder that the reverend gentleman or the Sisters never sent her a copy of the story of Charles Alfred Gibson's conversion, as they promised to do. The book would have opened her eyes very considerably.

The landlady confirmed Julia Gibson's statement that she did not accompany her husband to Sidmouth, where he died, but joined him there a month later, when he was pining for her society. Mr. Hughes is therefore wrong on a matter where it was so easy to be right.

Charles Alfred Gibson had no large collection of books, as Mr. Hughes again and again declares. He was fond of reading, but his books were generally borrowed. She spoke, however, in the highest terms of his transparent character, which is a point of agreement between her and the Sisters. She also said that the Sisters were extremely kind, which I can well believe.

Charles Alfred and Julia Gibson lodged with her for six months, from July 1888 to January 1889, as she showed by the rent-book. They had a furnished front room at the top of the house, which is the second floor. Here again Mr. Hughes's account is incorrect. The room was carpeted, and the narrow stairs the reverend gentleman "climbed" were like Jacob's ladder—imaginary.

The landlady remembered her lodger's taking the communion. It was administered by Mr. Hughes, and this is one of his few accuracies. She joined in it, though belonging to a different Church; so it is nonsense to talk about her narrow school of theology.

She stated that Charles Alfred Gibson was at first greatly vexed with professed Christianity, because no one had called on his wife when she was ill. "But was my son an Atheist?" asked Mr. Gibson. "Oh no," she replied, "not an Atheist." "Did he disbelieve in God?" "Oh no, he always believed in God," she answered, and added, "It was the Christianity of the day he was set against." In fact she heard him say, "I'm not against Jesus Christ."

"Did you ever hear of his lecturing?" asked Mr. Gibson. "No," she replied, "he didn't lecture." And she said it with a smile, which showed her sense of the idea's absurdity.

A good deal more came out in conversation, but it will keep. It is enough to say that Charles Alfred Gibson's landlady denies his Atheism, and never heard of his being a lecturer.

### Mr. Hughes's Shuffling.

The case against Mr. Hughes is complete and overwhelming. I have followed the track of Charles Alfred Gibson, and the testimony of all the persons who knew him—his father, his brothers, his shopmates, and his landlady—is that he was not a lecturer, and none of them believe that he was even an Atheist.

Mr. Hughes therefore looks around for some line of retreat. First of all, he stops the circulation of his book, which is no longer obtainable for love or money. Secondly, he seeks to minimise his convert's importance. Having formerly declared that "Herbert" was not a lecturer for the National Secular Society, he now declares that he did not describe him as a "lecturer" at all. He said this to the *Morning* interviewer, and added that I had destroyed a man of straw.

What wretched cavil is this! It is true that Mr. Hughes did not use the particular word "lecturer." But his Atheist Shoemaker spoke "amidst continuous cheering" in Victoria Park; he had advocated Atheism "in public halls and in the open air, with great eloquence and effect"; he was used to addressing "Atheistic assemblies"; he had experienced "the exulting glow of the orator who has conquered his audience."

The reverend gentleman's convert was not a "lecturer." He was only an "orator." Such is the sum and substance of the denial; and it shows the shifts this man is reduced to in the effort to save his blasted reputation.

### A Court of Honor.

Partly to set myself right before the public, and partly to drive Mr. Hughes into the last corner, I

wrote the following letter, which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* for Friday, February 9 :

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

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE DAILY CHRONICLE."

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

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

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

When I say that I will prove these things, I mean that I will produce documentary evidence and the testimony of living witnesses, including the members of Charles Alfred Gibson's family and all sorts of persons who knew him intimately while he was working and living in London—the place which Mr. Hughes represents as the scene of his exploits as a propagator of Atheism.

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

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Hughes did not accept my offer. He preferred to stand upon his "dignity." His reply appeared the next morning ;—

REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES AND MR. FOOTE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE DAILY CHRONICLE."

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

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

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

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

HUGH PRICE HUGHES.

"If I am a liar," Mr. Hughes seems to say, "it is very rude to call me one." He complains of the incivility of the constable who arrests him. Anything is preferable to damnation by a Court of Honor.

The whimpering of this man is positively despicable.

One moment he hides behind Mr. Holyoake, the next he skulks behind a woman's petticoats. What have I to do with the "Christian lady"? I have to deal with Mr. Hughes. He is *the* person to be "attacked." He alone came before the public without a mask. He is the author of "The Atheist Shoemaker." I therefore attack *him*, and I shall continue to do so. Having proved his story to be a mass of falsehoods, I leave him to share the responsibility as he pleases with whatever persons shared with him in the deception.

### His "Dignity."

The only course open to Mr. Hughes is to stand upon his "dignity." Any other course would be fatal. It was a clever move on his part to obtain Mr. Holyoake's "vindication." But it was a false move, and he has paid the penalty. He simply brought upon himself an avalanche of evidence. He is wiser now, and knows that if he moves again he is lost.

But movement is possible on my part, and I proceed to show what this man's "dignity" is worth. I have to remark that he has been found out before.

In October, 1889, he was taken to task by Captain Molesworth, the Chairman of the Royal Aquarium Company, for publicly stating at St. James's Hall that "a young girl who had recently visited the Aquarium with her father had placed in her hands a card asking her to accept the escort of a gentleman on leaving the place." Being challenged to produce the girl, her father, and the card, Mr. Hughes was compelled to admit that the "incident" which had occurred "recently" had really occurred "two years ago," while the "young girl" blossomed into a woman. Captain Molesworth threatened legal proceedings, whereupon Mr. Hughes replied, "I did not intend to make any attack upon the Royal Aquarium or any place in particular"—and by this disclaimer he avoided a law suit.

But a far worse case happened in the very same year, when Mr. Hughes got into trouble with his own body, by publishing certain articles in the *Methodist Times* against the Wesleyan missionaries in India. A sub-committee was appointed to examine into the

charges, and the results of the investigation were published in a volume in 1890 under the title of the "Missionary Controversy."

The Rev. George Patterson, who opened the case on behalf of the missionaries, said that "the mode of elucidating the truth adopted by the *Methodist Times* consisted chiefly in the deliberate suppression of everything on the other side." The sub-committee, while giving Mr. Hughes credit for "sincerity in his professions of confidence and love," remarked that he had to "deal with a public more logical than himself." Their report was dead against him, and it was accepted by the General Committee, which passed a resolution, for which every member voted except one, expressing "profound regret that charges so grave and so unsustainable" had been brought against the missionaries by a Wesleyan minister. "In many of the statements made," said the Rev. Mr. Allen, "he has exaggerated to an enormous extent, and, if he will allow me to say so, *this is characteristic of the man.*"

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

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

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