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The Skeptical Shoemaker.

"I have read," said the shoemaker, "a good deal about the heathen gods, and I believe the account of Christ is taken from some of the heathen writings or other."

"Will you abide by your own decision on two questions that I will put to you?" said the Bible-reader. "If so, I will freely do the same. I will abide by your own answers; by doing so we shall save much time, and arrive quicker at at the truth."

"Well," said he "out with it, and let us see if I can answer; there are but few things but what I can say something about."

"Well, my friend," replied the reader, "my first question is, Suppose all men were Christians, according to the account given to us in the Gospels concerning Christ, what would be the state of society?"

He remained silent for some time in deep thought, and then continued to say, "Well, if all men were really Christians, in practice as well as theory, of course we should be a happy brotherhood indeed."

"I promised you," said the reader, "that I would abide by your answer; will you do the same?"

"Oh, yes," he readily replied; no man can deny the goodness of the system in practice; but now for the other question; perhaps I shall get on better with that; you have got a chalk this time against me."

"Well, my next question is this, Suppose all men were infidels, what then would be the state of London and of the world?" He seemed still more perplexed, and remained a long time silent. At length he said,

"You certainly have beaten me,

for I never before saw the two effects upon society; I now see that where the christian builds up the infidel is pulling down. I thank you; I shall think of what has passed this afternoon."

The sequel was that he was fully persuaded in his own mind to give up all his infidel companions and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But the change did not stop here. When first the reader called, he had to sit on an old, dirty chair, with a number of half-starved children sitting in their rags on the floor around him, neglected and uncared for; now they have moved to a better home in a cleaner street. Within, all is cheerful and happy. The father, no longer faithless, delights in the company of his wife and children, all of whom are neatly dressed; and his chief happiness is to read and speak to them of the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

"Where the christian builds, the infidel pulls down." Why is this? The fact can not be denied. Infidel France wrote, "Death is an eternal sleep" above her cemeteries, and then tore down civilization, and quenched the light of humanity in seas of blood. And French communists in 1871, while arresting ecclesiastics, describing them as "servants of a person called God," dug down the foundations of law, order, peace, and truth, and with fire and sword destroyed their fellow men by the thousands and made the the streets of Paris red with blood.

The fruits of Christianity are as precious as those of infidelity are vile. Where the precepts of Christ has sway, war is unknown; robbery, dishonesty, intemperance, violence, and lust are forbidden; and under their benign influence, property is secure; life is sacred; poverty is provided for; sickness is pitied; infancy is nurtured; old age is revered; womanhood is cherished; and manhood is ennobled. Such are the fruits of true Christianity;—and infidel virtues mostly spring from Christian roots. Skepticism cannot blot out a father's godly counsels or a mother's fervent prayers. And as a result there are often traces of Christian principle where there is no Christian profession; as there are plenty of people who practice infidelity while they profess Christianity. Do not be deceived by names or professions. Set genuine infidelity beside genuine Christianity; watch their fruits, then choose between the two.

H. L. HASTINGS.

The above is taken from a little pamphlet entitled "Fourteen Nuts for Sceptics to Crack," which was written, we should judge, more to keep Christians in line than to furnish food for skeptics.

We who are skeptical are very apt to look into the motives of men

when they make statements, and in looking over the aforesaid pamphlet we find that it has had an enormous sale which must have netted the author quite a little fortune. We do not consider this wrong, provided the author means what he says, but only state it as a fact in trying to discover motives for writing such trash and deceiving the poor shoemakers.

If we had been in the poor shoemaker's place, we would not have been confounded by such a wily fellow as this Bible-reader seemed to be, and of course we would have always remained in our poverty-stricken state, for the good Christians in that community would not have helped a poor fellow unless he was weak-minded enough to be overcome by such slim arguments or bad enough to become a hypocrite.

The first question was: "Suppose all men were Christians, according to the account given to us in the gospels concerning Christ, what would be the state of society?"

The shoemaker was overcome because he was not posted or because he was influenced by the earnestness of the speaker, or something else was wrong, for whoever will read about the angels, and demons and devils, and dreams and miracles, and the many foolish things that are taught by the gospel-writers and which must be believed in order for one to be a Christian, will see at once that if all were really Christians we would be superstitious dreamers and so gullable that we would soon lapse back into a barbarism worse than the world has ever seen. The question properly put would be: "Suppose all men were good, and kind, and true, advocating and practicing the principles taught by the great and good of all ages, whether it be Confucius, Buddah, Jesus or Robert G. Ingersoll?"

We do deny the goodness of the system of Christianity in practice and claim that Christians do not try to live up to it, and that they would be very foolish if they did try to. Many who think themselves Christians are paying no attention to the supernatural part of the religion but are just working for the good of this world, and so they are Secularists but don't know it.

The second question was: "Suppose all men were infidels, what then would be the state of London and of the world?"

The story-writer makes the shoemaker appear very weak for he couldn't see the fallacy in this statement put in the form of a question. If the questioner had said: "Suppose all men were bad men or bad infidels," etc., then it would have been a fair question.

Jesus himself, if the Bible accounts be true, was an infidel, for he did not believe in the orthodoxy

of his time, and if we had our choice we had rather live in a world with such men as the infidel Thomas Jefferson, Robert G. Ingersoll and the good infidels of Silverton than any Christians that we ever knew. Some Christians are so bad that no one would wish to live with them, or if it is claimed that these are not real Christians, we can also claim that the bad infidels are not good specimens, but those spoiled by Christianity, i. e., they are not Secularists.

The man of the last was at last overcome and "gathered in" and repeats the old gag: "I now see that where the Christian builds up, the infidel is pulling down."

The fact is that the Christians are pulling down everything that science builds up just as fast as they can, but infidels are getting the upper hand of these deluded fanatics, and the world is advancing in spite of the Christian blockade. While infidels are building up science, Christians are building up superstition.

When infidels claimed the world to be round, Christians killed the heretics. When infidels claimed that the stars were other worlds, Christians said it disputed their holy book and the life of the philosopher was the sacrifice offered up. Every fact worth knowing has been branded as infidelic, and today the great truths of geology are fettered and the mouths of those who would declare the grand laws of life are stopped because these laws do not harmonize with Christian stupidity.

When France wrote, "Death is an eternal sleep," the butcheries brought about by the ignorance of moral law caused by the rule of kings and priests does not prove the falsity of the statement, and when we consider that more blood has been spilt in the name of Jesus Christ than any other religious leader, and that Christianity is one of the smallest sects, it does look as though the author was trying to deceive us and make us believe that infidels are awful people.

Christianity is responsible for more blood-shed than any other religion, and is largely responsible for the French Revolution. If the people of France had been Secularists (Secularists are all infidels but all infidels are not Secularists), they never would have brought upon that country the conditions necessary for such slaughter, but Christians believe in atoning for their sins by spilling innocent blood. History shows this to be true and the priests of today celebrate this horrible doctrine and also give sanction to the deadly cup when they lie to their hoodwinked shoemakers and tell them that the nasty slop used in the communion is the blood of Jesus.

The fruits of Secularism are as precious as those of Christianity are vile.

Where the minds of men are