

Thoughts at a Revival.

BY J. EDWIN JOHNSON.

The people of Vale and vicinity have been enjoying a "red hot" revival, conducted by God & Co., the Co. part consisting of a lady evangelist and her daughters. I don't think any of the audience saw God, but they were assured that the lady was working for and assisted by him. Being naturally somewhat "depraved", I was impious enough to note some imperfections in the good lady's discourses, and will endeavor to make some comments.

As a preparatory movement, our evangelistic friend, in order to get her hearers worked up to the proper pitch of reasonless emotion, introduced the cheerful subject of deathbeds and portrayed, with ordinary ministerial regard for truth, the horrors of an Infidel death. She represented Thomas Paine as recanting at the last moment, calling on God to forgive him for writing the Age of Reason. Voltaire and other prominent Freethinkers were treated in a similar manner.

Such trash makes one "tired"; it seems to me they should try at least to imitate the truth. If any one has a reason to fear death I would like to know who it is — the Christian or the Secularist; one who believes that death is only a transition into another life, either of consummate joy or indescribable horror, or one who believes that death is simply a complete and perfect rest, one who believes that if death does end all pleasure it at the same time ends all pain. For my part, give me an assurance of complete and perfect rest in preference to an uncertainty, either in regard to myself or any of my friends. I am sure I could never be happy with the thought that perhaps some friend of mine was suffering the torments of hell on account of incurring the displeasure of a merciful(?) creator. I believe that the most hideous doctrine ever preached to credulous humanity is that a person can be happy in heaven while a relative is suffering the torture of hell fire. What a barbarous doctrine for nineteenth century men and women to believe!

The reverend lady made one break that was very amusing to one acquainted with history. She said the church is and has always been the friend and supporter of science. She cited such incidents as the persecution of Galileo, Harvey and others, and then asked impressively, "Would the theories advanced by these men have ever been accepted and become popular without the support of the church?" In the way of brass, I thought that capped the climax, but I think she knew that a good share of her hearers were ignorant and credulous enough to believe her, and took ad-

vantage of them, or perhaps she herself is ignorant.

Who persecuted Galileo, if it was not the church? Who disputed Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood? Who burned Bruno for proclaiming a fact that every schoolboy now knows? Who condemned the printing press as the instrument of the devil and opposed every new invention and scientific theory, if it was not the Christian church?

A few misrepresentations might be overlooked, but all the supernatural doctrines of the ecclesiastical fraternity are bad, and I think the whole batch should be dumped, and that without fear of destroying much valuable property. What I consider about as bad as anything preached is, that respectable people, no matter how good they are, unless they have the assistance of Jesus, are no better than the inhabitants of the slums. Let us take a look at the situation. What is the most potent factor in the reform of mankind? Is it not the example set by the better class, a desire to emulate the good qualities of those whose moral standard is acknowledged to be high? We must have some incentive to advancement, some goal in the distance, some superior moral standard to try to reach, or we will never improve; we are more likely to retrograde. There is no such thing in nature as standing still; everything must either move forward or backward. It is like a boat being propelled up stream—whenever the propelling power ceases, the boat goes down stream. There are some, a minority party, who are always in advance, and who by their example lift up and improve those who are morally and intellectually their inferiors. It is not so hard to lead the weaklings and improve them if they will give any assistance themselves; but when a man thinks he is good enough it is a more difficult task, if not an impossible one. What, then, is the effect on those whose morals are not of the highest degree of excellence (and there are few in whom there is no room for improvement) of the belief that they are good enough, that being good is not as essential as faith in Jesus, and that they will enter into eternal glory simply by believing a lot of fables and fish stories? I do not believe in teaching total depravity, but I do believe in teaching that none of us are perfect, and in trying to improve ourselves and everybody with whom we come in contact.

Ever since I have been old enough to take an interest in Freethought work, it has been my intention to become a lecturer and work for the cause, but as I listened to the false assertions and harmful doctrines preached by this revivalist, my intentions became a strong resolve. I vowed that if I possessed

sufficient eloquence to induce people to listen to me, I would devote the most of my time to the work of spreading the gospel of truth; and whether I lectured or not, to do all in my power to lift the veil of ignorance and credulity from a superstition-cursed people so that they may see the torch of reason and walk fearlessly in its light.

Liberals, we must bestir ourselves; we must counterbalance the evil influences of these monstrous doctrines. Do not be content to think that a few are doing their best, perhaps giving their entire lives up to the work. We can and must contribute something toward it ourselves.

Vale, Oregon.

Santa Claus Stories.

BY M. P. GIFFORD.

Some time ago I noticed in the TORCH OF REASON an article copied from the New York Sun, in which a little girl asked if there is a Santa Claus, and the editor tells her there is and for her not to believe those who tell her the contrary. Could anything be more ridiculous? The idea of the editor of the New York Sun telling an innocent, inquiring little child what he knows to be an absolute falsehood. For such impostors there is no excuse.

Does any man believe that a lie is more beneficial than the truth? Does any man believe that to tell that which he knows to be false is conducive to morality? Does the editor of the Sun believe that his infamous lie will never be found out? Surely no man believes these things.

By and by the little girl will find out the truth, and what will be the effect? How can we expect to become more civilized? How can we expect our children to advance and become more intelligent when such monstrous stories are told them? As long as such tales are inculcated, as long as parents tell their children fairy stories for truth, just that long will we be rocked in the cradle of superstition.

The responsibility for such stories does not rest altogether with the editor of the Sun, for I know of scores of intelligent people who tell their children this same Santa Claus story. Not long ago I was speaking to a little boy on this subject. He was telling me about the nice things Santa Claus had left him. Said I, "Do you believe there is a Santa Claus?" And the little fellow replied, "I know there is." Then I asked, "How do you know?" He replied, "Mamma says there is." There you have it. The little fellow believes his mother, but by and by he will find out that there is no Santa Claus, and that his mother is a liar.

I have talked to a great many on this subject, and asked them if they

do not think it a bad example. Some reply, "Oh, well, it was taught me when I was young, and I see no harm in it. You know it is an old custom."

I agree it is an old custom that originated in superstition, and like all other superstitions, should be abolished. If we have presents for the children we can give them from our own hands. Don't look them in their honest eyes and tell a glaring untruth. It is not necessary to tell them that an old man from Fairyland brings the presents in order for the children to appreciate the gift. They will appreciate it just as much if they know you gave it to them, and what's more, they'll appreciate you more when they find that you have been honest with them. When parents tell their children such stories they will naturally believe, but when they get older and find that they have been grossly deceived, will it not have a tendency to make them feel at least uncomfortable and unhappy to think their parents have purposely deceived them? Men and women should drop such silly tales, be men and women and tell the truth. There is no one with a spoonful of brains but knows there is no Santa Claus.

Reforms, as well as charity, begin at home. So I would say, men and women, begin this year to reform the old Santa Claus stories. When next Christmas comes don't tell your children that Santa Claus brought the presents, but be honest. By doing this a gigantic falsehood will be obliterated and a shining truth will take its place.

Council, Idaho.

In the above, from one of our most active young Secularists, if we substitute the word God for the word Santa Claus, the excellent article serves a double purpose.

God's Just Laws.

BY J. A. WILSON.

The law of the Lord is perfect. . . . The statutes of the Lord are right. . . . The commandment of the Lord is pure.—[Psalms xix, 7-8.]

Let us examine some of the bible god's "perfect" laws and see if there is any justice or mercy in them.

Thou shalt not eat anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it to the stranger that is in thy gate, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto the alien.—[Deut. xiv, 21.]

Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.—[Ex. xxxi, 15.]

They found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day . . . and all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died, as