

BLUE GRASS BLADE

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JAMES E. HUGHES Editor and Publisher

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Courage and truth.

The motto of Freethought.

Victory follows earnest effort.

Work is an exceeding great institution.

Few photographers take people for what they are worth.

It is sweet to work when we work for those we love.

Wise is that man who can profit by the foolishness of others.

Prayer was never known to carry much dead weight or win a fight.

The true believer always carries a long face as if his religion was hurting him.

When the Blade gets made Archbishop of the diocese we will run a New Jerusalem train of our own.

If Harry Orchard should happen to remember a few more at the next trial it would surprise nobody.

It has been well said that "Te deums" and "Jubliates" are but asses' bray set to popular music.

Bibles and booze constitute the main ingredients of a missionary's wardrobe as he goes to carry the "gospel" to the heathen.

Trust may be defined as confidence but the people have little confidence in the trusts for they have been playing the confidence game to long.

When the evidence is all in and the arguments made the judgment of the people will be against orthodox Christianity as a force moving in the direction of human happiness and progress.

Pope Pius seems to be up a stump in the middle of a swift running stream with never a plank within forty miles and no boat at hand to help him escape the tortures of his friends.

When Justice sits up all night and Liberty enlightens us with a continuous performance the orthodox faith might stand some chance of pulling through the higher criticism even if it gets rough usage in the struggle.

The race is moving forward with remarkable speed and leaving orthodox so far in the rear that its adherents are endeavoring to have broken glass strewn along the path that the pneumatic of Freethought might get seriously punctured.

If the publication of the "Crimes of Preachers" had been made continuous, the list would fill a rather volume by this time. Accurately and fully compiled, the world would stand against at the display made of the doings of these men who walk in the ways of their dear Lord.

Every church spire points a curse in the blue, ethereal vault surmounts a cruelty that has wrested heartaches and groans from humanity for ages. Its black shadow cast upon the floor is an omen for evil and a bolt upon civilization. How much misery might have been spared had the church never been known to mankind?

CHURCH FIRED OUT OF SWITZERLAND

Considerable satisfaction will be felt by American Freethinkers over the fact that the little republic of Switzerland has followed the example of France and has taken a decisive popular vote in favor of separation of church and state.

What seems to be the most incredible feature of this action is the fact that while the Roman Catholic church was the most bitter opponent of the cause of separation in France, were among the most active advocates of disestablishment in the Swiss cantons. This may be better understood however, when one realizes that the established church in Switzerland was Protestant so that while the Vatican resented any interference with its alleged authority in matters of human government it will readily take sides with the disestablishment party when a Protestant church is affected. In this Vatican and its adherents simply show the cloven foot and all thinking people will see the animus that impelled the Catholics to vote for the separation.

With a complete separation of church and state in two of the most important republics in the world, why should the American republic linger on the threshold of doubt and hesitation. Both France and Switzerland have had years of experience over the United States, and after all the centuries of church influence in matters political they have thrown off the yoke while America goes on still enacting laws based, professedly, on the Christian bible and at the behest of the representatives of the Christian church.

It is, probably, strange that in Geneva, the home of Calvinism, and the Canton that sheltered Voltaire, the disestablishment proposition won its first victory. The records show that 7,655 votes in favor of the separation and 6,822 against it, giving the reform party a majority of 833. It is recorded that fully 10,000 refused to vote at all showing an utter indifference concerning the subject. But the church element still remains disestablished. The adherents of the church confidently expected to win the day, and the press reports state that they are inconsolable over the decisive result of the vote taken. Thus it comes about that the theocratic "Civitas Dei" which later back to the days of the murderer, John Calvin, has been voted out of existence, swept away by the popular will of the Swiss people. Ample time is given the church to prepare for the change as the law does not go into effect until January 1, 1909, or nearly sixteen months.

While the Swiss law is not so radical, as it effects the church, as that recently put in operation in France, yet it is a step forward and has taught a valuable and important lesson to the whole Christian world. It is practically another declaration of independence and one that is bound to exercise an important influence upon the rest of Europe.

Because this action is aimed at the Protestant church instead of the Catholic, it is charged that the latter joined issues with the Freethinkers and social democrats, which Protestant organs denounce as an "unholy alliance." The sacred denunciation would have been made concerning any other political combinations that might have been effected to bring about the same result. The Protestant world stood silent while the Catholics were being thrown out of France, now the Catholics assist in putting the Protestants down and out, proving that these Christians insist upon hating each other and are jealous of each other's power. While this spirit prevails there is no danger of "unity" between the opposing elements of Christianity.

NEW ENGLAND SUPERSTITIONS.

The appearance of a new cult of theosophists on the Pacific slope, under the autocratic leadership of Mrs. Katherine Tingley, has brought forth a world of comment from the religious press as instancing another strange belief that is decidedly anti-Christian, although within the scope of the superstitious element.

Up to the present the west has been singularly free from the influences of so-called occultism, but with the advent of the new brotherhood at Point Loma, its work has begun. While it will not rebound much to the benefit of mental liberty it is a decided step against the orthodox faith. The Christian church is as much opposed to theosophy as it is opposed to Freethought and Freethought opposes both theosophy and the church. It is a strange fact, perhaps, but none the less a truth, that very little, if anything, happens today in the alleged development of the race, collectively and individually, that has not happened before. No form of superstition can possibly arise that will not catch some of the people and no matter how grossly inferior it may be it will find some adherents, some followers. In the early days Christianity went through the same process but coming to power and influence in an ignorant and turbulent age, with autocracies on almost every hand, encompassed by fraud and imposition, it acquired a stronger power than it would have done had its original inception been postponed to later and more intellectual age.

Concerning the advent of theosophy in California it is a noteworthy fact that the new leader hails from Massachusetts. This state has been productive from more superstitions than any other, perhaps all others, in the Union combined. From the day of Cotton Mather and the burning of women as witches, superstition has flourished in Massachusetts as nowhere else in the country, except among the primitive Indians. Spiritualism took root in its soil. Shakerism grew and flourished there like a green, bay tree. Millerism and Mormonism ran through the State like a forest fire with a strong breeze behind it. In other words Massachusetts, the soil upon which the puritans landed in America, has been the most prolific field for the cultivation and growth of every conceivable

fad in physical, social and sexual matters. Even to this day the Boston papers contain a large number of advertisements of alleged mysticisms than other papers to the inch counted by pages. The introduction of slavery into America came from the people of that same state and the movement for its abolition was born there. These facts are suggestive of something being radically wrong with the spinal column of that New England state, and the fact that a high order of intelligence is said to abound there, with opportunities for open and free discussion, the strict and uncompromising attitude of the orthodox church has impelled the people to seek for something new leaving the Christian religion with a mighty small hold upon their feelings.

SATURATED WITH CRIME.

Could it be made possible that the ignorant and uneducated worshippers of the Nazarene, they who constitute the very backbone of the Christian church, were made aware of the mass of corruption and vice in which their religion had claimed to power, they would be compelled to hesitate about accepting its pretended divine authority, while the few intelligent that may be still found among its adherents, would abandon it altogether.

Such arguments are frequently made by Freethinkers with little or no effect. As a rule an orthodox Christian refuses to reason or discuss his belief or the Freethinker's belief in the alleged religion of Christ. This attitude is deplorable for whenever a man or woman will give away to Reason their faith loses its grip and invariably dies out of mind. No intelligent person would assert, or even contend, that such arguments were made without authority. History is enough to justify them. Writers of this and other ages testify to the facts without regard to their effect on the prevailing religions. Religion can alter a fact. Its miracles are but fanciful, chimerical and imaginary.

That our readers may be fortified in the positions here taken we quote the following from Draper's Intellectual Development. On page 229, Vol. 1, he says,—

"It was none too soon that Jerome introduced the monastic system at Rome—there was need of a change to austerity. None too soon that legacy hunting on the part of the clergy was prohibited by law—it had become a public scandal. None too soon that Jerome struggled for the patronage of the rich Roman women; none too soon that this stern fanatic denounced the immorality of the Roman clergy, when even the Bishop Damasus himself was involved in a charge of adultery."

Whatever may have been its origin it is evident that Christianity came down through a vile and impure channel. For the most part the common clergy were unlettered and ignorant. Even the bishops were not above mediocrity in intelligence. The rivalries of the ambitious prelates for power heightened the degradation, maintaining, at all times, a reckless scramble for influence, an unscrupulous resort to bribery, clerical intrigue, and murder.

The history of the Christian church teems with incidents of a truly shocking nature. From the day of its admission to power it has been the aim of every royal snob to make theology a branch of his politics, and in conjunction therewith it has been the aim of every priest and preacher, of whatsoever denomination, to make politics a branch of theology. By the aid of his superstition the priest wielded a greater power over the ignorant multitude than the king could possibly wield, hence a liaison was formed in which the church materially profited in return for monarchical services rendered. In this manner came the original union of church and state which becomes the stern and unrelenting duty of every Freethinker to unite the knot that binds them together. Conceived in iniquity propagated by sword, bloodshed and famine, the Christian religion has been the greatest curse ever inflicted upon man. In proof of this we but refer the doubter to the work we have quoted from above.

LOVE CHRIST AND BE HAPPY.

One of the questions that seems to be demanding serious attention among the people is to what extent a devout Christian and church member can derive innocent amusement without appearing to provoke a conflict between the individual and the church authorities. And so it has come to pass in the twentieth century, with all our boasted freedom, liberality and progress, with such mighty questions of public import yet to be solved and evolved from a condition of chaos, that the church must occupy itself with such paltry, idiotic and frivolous issues from which no good can come and which will be enacted in spite of church decree or ultimatum.

The particular phase of the issue under discussion, as shown by the church writings, is of degree rather than kind. It amounts to either a total prohibition of certain forms of amusement, or suffer penalization by loss of church membership, and a moderate enjoyment. One churchman proposed a ban upon the wearing of gold ornaments or costly apparel in church, the use of intoxicating beverages, dancing, cardplaying, attendance upon a theater or circus, and above all indulgence in a Sunday excursion of any kind. All this in an assumption, by the church, of an authority over the individual which is neither conferred by the Scripture of early church canon. If the church continues to attempt an ironclad application or enforcement of such invasions it is more than likely to overpass all reasonable bounds to show itself provineal and provoke a reaction. A century ago, or more, the church undertook to regulate dress, prohibiting ribbons or artificial flowers to be worn by women and buttons could not be worn by men

on the back of their coat. This was extreme pettiness and invoked by the parson for no other reason than to assume an authority over the individual altogether unwarranted and absurd. The cause of it all lies in the fact that the people are drifting further away from theological restraints and undertake to regulate their daily, social life in a manner that is pleasing and satisfactory to themselves without regard to church or church rules. The parson is not blind to this tendency and recognizing the loss of spiritual prestige the effort to restrain individual action by the plea or religious authority is the last, desperate chance the church is taking to retain its fast dying influence over the public heart and mind?

In this may be discerned the real difference between Christianity and Freethought. The former is a religion of pessimism, pure and simple, the latter is optimistic through and through. The latter would create joy in every human heart and implant the capabilities of enjoyment, while the former has been productive only of the greatest sorrows and heart-burnings. The latter is a religion, if it may be called, of laughter and sunshine, the former a creed of great sorrow and gloom. In other words, Freethought and philosophy of light and life, while Christianity stands for darkness and death. If there is a God, which we do not believe, and he has feelings like unto our own, and we can conceive of no other form of consciousness or sensation, then he must recognize the fact that there is more true worship in a happy joyful heart, if engaged in a ten pin alley, than in a cathedral full of splanetic individuals, repeating the catechism.

No greater truth has ever brought before a free people than the declaration that as regards moral action there is a multitude of questions that can only be determined, and must be determined, by the individual. With these state and church have nothing to do. Admitting and allowing the tendency of physical government to interfere with human action as concerns merely moral issues, the church has approached the same path and would fasten laws and rules upon the individual as measures of restraint to prevent them getting away from, or from under, church control. Only bigotry, born of ignorance, will presume to dictate to an American citizen what he shall or shall not do so long as he keeps strictly within the law of the land. But this is not enough for the church. It proposes to go still further and prohibit certain acts, not offenses against the law in order to exercise what authority it can over the individual. In this the church is inconsistent. It may argue, condemn, enjoin and appeal to men and women, but when it attempts to use force and exert an authority not conferred upon it, an invasion of the region of personal conviction must follow. To be consistent with this sort of thing the church should cease its festivals and fairs, its games of chance, its kissing bees and old maid's auctions, its leg shows and raffles. But it will never do this so long as it is calculated to bring an extra dollar into the church treasury. And so the church still remains the personification of cussedness, the avatar of evil. It is the incarnation of human perversity. It would transform the race into a grand army of mental invalids. There is no possible excuse for the church trying to cram non-essential religious formulas down the throats of men and women with a bludgeon. Only Puritanical intolerance would strive for such an end. Puritism is dead and its heirs at law are rapidly reaching the same fateful end.

JEW AND CHRISTIAN.

The Blade has previously written upon the injustice of Christians towards the Jew. The worship of a dead Jew and the vilification and despoliation of the living Jew, constitutes the principal occupation of the Christian world. It now happens that this injustice is to be portrayed to the Christian people through the medium of a drama.

But why the necessity of such a policy? Do we lack the courage to solve our social problems? Shall we always fear to face the issue, adopting a Fabian policy until we are shamed by a great thinker into action on the big questions that are ever before us? It would seem that it needed the sharp lightning of an Ibsen, the lanceet of a Shaw or the sneers of a Strindberg to force us into rectifying social abuses.

The problem of the Jew and his classification has been before the Christian world since its beginning. Many have been the half-hearted attempts to find a solution, but always it lapses back into the unface issue docket, always to come up again, a factor of keen annoyance.

Max Nordau is the latest to try his hand at righting the wrong. His splendid philosophy, his breeziness of style, his same judgment and his magnificent humanitarianism should commend his words to the student, the thinker, and above all, the reformer, as he presents his latest work, "A question of Honor," a tragedy in four acts. Taken as a drama, something to be played before a nightly audience, it is fairly close to a failure. The action is slow—painful so—long speeches clouding what little incident there is. There is too much analysis, too much preaching for the modern stage—in short, it lacks the technique of a master playwright.

But its value lies in courageous handling of the relations between the Jew and the Christian. Julius Moser, a Jew has candidly renounced the religion of his forefathers and turned Christian, owing to the advancement in the German government in any other way. He has brought up his sons and his daughter, Christine, to be ashamed of their Jewish blood. Christine falls in love with Leo Kohn, a Jew proud of his faith, and the two approach Moser for his consent to their nuptials, Moser is horrified, and offers to compromise on the basis of Kohn becoming a Christian, Kohn refuses and Moser relents, but Christine's brother, feeling that