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HUMAN SACRIFICE

BY DR. W. H. GARDNER.

THE conclusions of the most authoritative scientists of the present day teach us to believe that:—

When our earth, under fixed laws governing matter and force, had attained the requisite conditions, living organisms—vegetable and animal—originated; and that from some of these lower forms of animal life, the human race was evolved.

That in his primitive condition man was endowed with powers and faculties but little above his brute ancestry.

That as time passed on his physical and mental powers increased by use and by the survival of the stronger and better-endowed individuals, and by the elimination of those not so well fitted to war with their environment.

From these rude beginnings, hidden away back in the mist of geologic æons, archæology, monumental record and authentic history, all show us that he has progressed by slow and weary stages; sometimes making but one advanced step, or noting but one valuable fact in centuries; yet, as a race, always marking some increment of progress; until now the *homo sapiens* has reached so high a degree of knowledge and civilisation, and placed so wide a gulf between his starting-place and his present standpoint, that only the remnants of the bridge can be discovered over which he has passed.

In every stage of his progress there have been mental ecdyses in which some favored individuals or tribes, by the perception and appreciation of new ideas, involving some beneficent truth to the whole race, have sloughed off their worn-out skins of custom and prejudice and started less trammelled toward the goal to be attained.

In no branch of mental activity have these mental ecdyses been more marked than in religious belief. Still each succeeding higher cult has appropriated from its waning predecessor so many trappings and figments of the old belief, and so interwoven them with the new, that only the comparative mythologist can now select from the present creeds of civilisation the remnants of those effete cults of which they are so largely formed.

The tendency of thought of the present day shows unmistakable evidence that another religious ecdysis is about to take place; and though it is scarcely possible that finite understanding will ever be able to grasp the highest religious ideas in their entirety, yet it cannot be doubted by any intelligent mind that nearer approximations can now be made to *ultimate* religious truths, and higher and nobler conceptions framed of the Deity and the scheme of the universe than ever before; which must soon replace the puerile and degrading ideas formed in the infancy of the race, but which are still propagated and still hold sway over the great mass of mankind.

To the infantile mind of primitive man, everything that was inexplicable by his limited observation and rudimentary reasoning powers, became objects of wonder, amazement, or terror. The bright sun that gave him light and heat, the moon and stars that guided him through the sombre forest, the summer rain-cloud that cooled the parched earth and vivified languishing nature, the rosy dawn that heralded the approach of the rising sun, were all objects of admiration. Whilst the black night encompassed with unknown evils, the rushing hurricane pregnant with the scathing thunderbolt, the flaming mountain charged with fiery death, the ravening wild beast, and the deadly serpent, became objects of mortal terror.

From these ideas was evolved the religious sentiment. And every object that was beneficent and conduced to man's happiness, or, on the contrary, was maleficent and feared, became deified. They made gods of the sun, moon, and stars, the earth and the dawn; they placed Naiads in every stream and Dryads in every forest-grove; the volcano was the home of a devil, and the storm-cloud the chariot of an evil demon.

And as primeval man could frame no higher conception of automatic power than that of his own will, or the chiefs who ruled over him, or the animals with which he was familiar, all of his gods necessarily took those forms—Zeus prosecuted his amours under the guise of a bull, a swan, or a golden cloud; the genial sun was Baal, or Indra, or Apollo; Aurora was a rosy-tressed maiden that opened the gates of the sky for the chariot of the sun-god; Thor launched his fiery

hammer from the bosom of the storm-cloud ; the lame Hephæstus forged the thunderbolts of Jupiter in the fierce fires of Ætna ; the blustering Boreas carried off the beautiful Oreithyra from the banks of the Ilissus ; the Devil masqueraded in the Garden of Eden as a talking serpent ; the God of Israel made an anthropomorphic demonstration to Moses on the top of Sinai ; and in the philosophical pantheon of Egypt almost every living thing was the personification of some deity.

And as his gods all partook of his own sensuous nature, with like appetites and aversions, their favor and assistance could be purchased and their anger averted by prayers, entreaties, praises, and gifts.

In that far-away past, as well as in the present, man was afflicted with many evils—poverty and cold, hunger and thirst, pain and disease, and *death*. From every other evil there was some “respit and repentance,” but from death there was none—the mighty and the lowly, the strong and the weak, the young and the old, were alike conquered by the grim king of terrors.

The antithesis of the dark, silent charnel-house, or the foul, maggot-infested corpse, to buoyant life in the bright, genial sunshine, with sympathetic friends and gay feasts and dances, was terrible to contemplate. What wonder then that man's hope and vanity led him to conceive the idea of a *future life* as the only means of wresting victory from the grave and robbing the sting of death of its venom.

As families coalesced into tribes and nations, the experience of individuals was aggregated, and the ideas of every separate one became the property of all. Apparitions, ghosts, and visions of the dead, seen by a few in dreams and trances, were spoken of and discussed around their nightly fires and at their tribal gatherings, until soon the belief in an immaterial and imperishable *alter ego*, or spirit, became universal, and a continuance of life beyond the grave became an accepted fact.

And now all forms of religion, from the rudest savage fetishism to the most exalted Christianity, hold as a common tenet that there is beyond the present life, another state of existence, in which those who have done what they believed to be the will of their gods on earth, will be rewarded in that future life by honor and happiness, whilst those who have neglected to praise and worship their gods, or who have disobeyed their commands will be degraded and punished with inconceivable torture. And though this conception is so nebulous and misty, and so opposed to human reason and experience, that few believers, even those with the most vivid imaginations, can frame a consistent idea, how an individual continuance of life is possible after death, with an unbroken consciousness of per-

sonal identity, or in what the rewards and punishments of a future life could consist ; yet this belief in its actuality is so potent, that whether Brahman, Buddhist, Parsee, Jew, Christian, Mohammedan, or Mormon, it regulates the lives of its believers and is their sustaining hope and dependence in the hour of death.

From these anthropomorphic and zoöomorphic conceptions of their gods, arose the idea of family descent from them, and their worship as deified ancestors naturally followed. This belief was so widely spread among the nations of antiquity that every family or person of note took pride in tracing his lineage back to this ambiguous parentage between a god or a goddess and some favored mortal. The ruder nations have left us but scant records of the genealogies of even their sovereigns, but among the Greeks and Romans, the amours of the gods and goddesses of Olympus and the families begotten by their illicit loves, are as widely known as the names of Homer and Ovid. It would seem also from the second verse of the sixth chapter of Genesis that this idea was not unknown to the writer of the Pentateuch. The worship of deified ancestors (*Manes*) continued among the Romans until the older cult was replaced by Christianity.

Another belief common to all forms of religion is that the good-will and assistance of their gods can be obtained, and their malevolence averted by singing praises in their honor, praying to them and offering them gifts of such things as it is thought they take delight in. Hence every form of religion prescribes specific rules for daily conduct : catalogues the *feast* days and the *fast* days, enumerating the kinds of food that may be eaten or must be abstained from each day. And in the most of them elaborate rituals have been established, which specify the particular kinds and numbers of prayers, hymns, and invocations to be used on every occasion of life : the amount and kinds of penance to be undergone, and the kinds of sacrifice or gifts to be offered to the God as an atonement for sin, or for the purchase of his favor.

How closely allied are these conceptions in all religions, the following invocations, prayers, and hymns, quoted from widely different sources will abundantly show.

The first is a hymn (or prayer) addressed by the worshipper to Varuna, and is taken from the “*Rig Veda*.”¹

1. “Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay : have mercy, Almighty, have mercy !
2. If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind : have mercy, Almighty, have mercy !
3. Through want of strength, thou strong and bright God, have I gone to the wrong shore : have mercy, Almighty, have mercy !

¹As I have not the *Rig Veda* at hand, I quote this hymn from Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, Vol. I, p. 93.

4. Thirst came upon the worshippèr, though he stood in the midst of the waters ; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy !

5. Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host, whenever we break thy law through thoughtlessness : have mercy, Almighty, have mercy !"

The second quotation is taken from a hymn to Amen-Ra. The translation of this papyrus is by C. W. Goodwin, M. A., from "Les Papyrus Egyptiens du Musée de Boulaq, Fo., Paris, 1872." It is believed to belong to the nineteenth dynasty or about the fourteenth century, B.C. There are twenty verses in this beautiful hymn, but the limits of this essay allow me to quote only the two following :

HYMN TO AMEN-RA.¹

"Gracious ruler crowned with the white crown,
Lord of beams, Maker of light,
To whom the gods give praises,
Who stretches forth his arms at his pleasure,
Consuming his enemies with flame,
Whose eye subdues the wicked,
Sending forth its dart to the roof of the firmament,
Sending its (arrows) against *Naka*² to consume him.
Hail to thee *Ka*, Lord of truth,
Whose shrine is hidden, Lord of the gods,
*Chepra*³ in his boat,
At whose command the gods were made,
*Atum*⁴ maker of men,
Supporting their works, giving them life,
Distinguishing the color of one from another,
Listening to the poor who is in distress ;
Gentle of heart when one cries unto him."

The third quotation is taken from Taylor's translation of the "Hymns of Orpheus," London, 1787 :

TO JUPITER.

(The fumigation from Storax.)

"O Jove much-honored, Jove supremely great !
To thee our holy rites we consecrate,
Our prayers and expiations, king divine,
For all things round thy head exalted shine.
The earth is thine, and mountains swelling high,
The sea profound, and all within the sky,
Saturnian king, descending from above ;
Magnanimous, commanding, sceptred Jove,
All-parent, principle and end of all,
Whose pow'r almighty, shakes this earthly ball ;
Ev'n Nature trembles at thy mighty rod,
Loud-sounding, arm'd with light'ning, thund'ring God.
Source of abundance, purifying king,
O various formed from whom all nations spring !
Propitious hear my prayer, give blameless health
With peace divine, and necessary wealth."

The fourth quotation I will make is from the authorised version of the Sacred Chronicle :

PSALM LIV.

1. "Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength."
2. Hear my prayer, O God ; give ear to the words of my mouth.
3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul, they have not set God before them. Selah.
4. Behold, God is mine helper ; the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

¹ *Records of the Past*, Vol. II, p. 125.

² *Naka*, form of the Apophis.

³ *Chepra*, the Creator.

⁴ *Atum*, the god of the setting sun.

5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies ; cut them off in thy truth.

6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee ; I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good.

7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble, and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

I have given all of these hymns in the authorised English version, in order that they could be more readily compared. And upon careful comparison, it will be seen, that under whatever name, or whatever form the God was worshipped, the ideas in the mind of the worshipper were :

First : That their gods had the *ability* to assist their worshippers.

Second : That the will of their gods, like those of human beings, were *changeable* ; and

Third : That their wills could be influenced by prayer, praise, and sacrifice.

Belief in the efficacy of sacrifice was common to every form of religion. In its fundamental conception, a sacrifice is an offering or gift to the gods, a trade or a bargain in which the worshipper gives to the gods something it is believed they desire, in payment for their countenance and assistance.

Homer taught the Greeks that the gods of Olympus could be influenced by gifts. In the sacred chronicle the necessity of gifts to obtain the favor of the God of Israel is abundantly shown. In the dealings between Jehovah and Noah and the Abrahamidæ, the covenant or bargain between the two parties was never completed without a sacrifice, and most usually of animal life in some form.¹ The first covenant between Jehovah and Abraham, by which the Abrahamidæ obtained their (*quasi*) title to the land of Canaan, and were recognised as the peculiar people of Jehovah, was not ratified except by circumcision ; Abraham himself having to undergo this cruel rite when he was ninety-nine years of age, when there surely could have been no hygienic or moral consideration requiring it.²

Among the Eastern nations even to this day no

¹ *Vide Genesis* iv, 3-4 ; *Exodus* xxii, 29-30 ; xxiii, 15, 29 ; xxix, 11-11 ; xxv, 21-29 *et al.*

² Regarding the rite of circumcision and its significance as a sacrifice, there are conflicting opinions. Herodotus says the Egyptians, Colchians, and Ethiopians practised this rite *from the earliest times*, and that the Phœnicians and Syrians of Palestine learnt the custom from the Egyptians. There is also testimony that other tribes and races totally different in ethnic or linguistic affinities from the Semitic family, practised the same rite. Bancroft says circumcision was common among the civilised people of Central America, and that it is still kept up among the Teanmas and Manos and some of the tribes about the upper Amazon, and Eyre says the custom is still preserved by some of the Australian tribes. There is scarcely a probability that such a peculiar rite could have originated *ab initio* among the Abrahamidæ and been carried to such distant parts of the globe, either upon hygienic or political reasons. The cause that seems to me most consonant with what we know of the earliest history of human thought is that it is a remnant of human sacrifice—a vicarious sacrifice—or sacrifice by substitution, where a *part* is sacrificed or given to the gods to acknowledge their authority and purchase their favor, rather than the whole victim.—*Conf. Herodotus*, ii, 104 ; *Clarke's Commentaries* ; *Genesis*, xvii, 11-12 ; Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. iii ; *Eyre, Australian Dwellings and Customs*, and verb "Circumcision," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last edition, by the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, Balliol College, Oxford.

suppliant goes into the presence of his god or king empty-handed.

To primeval man one of the most pressing and ever-recurring evils was hunger. Food was limited and precarious. Lands flowing with milk and honey were very rare. Sometimes for years in succession there were no rains in parts of Asia Minor, and the torrid sun parched up every green thing. Occasionally swarms of locusts were brought by the winds into Syria and Palestine, which destroyed alike the food of man and beast. Sometimes the Tigris and Euphrates overflowed the lowlands of Mesopotamia, rotted the seed in the ground, and drowned their flocks and herds, and occasionally the Nile shut up his fertilising waters, and famine reigned even in the prolific land of Egypt.

As food was one of the constant wants of primitive man, and, in primitive thought, one of the constant wants of their gods, some article of food, something that supported the life of man, was usually selected as a gift or sacrifice to their gods. The first offerings—certainly during the hunter and herder state of the race—undoubtedly always consisted of animal life in some form. Among the Greeks and Romans they sacrificed different animals to different gods; bulls, oxen, and rams were sacrificed to Jupiter; horses to Mars; goats to Bacchus; hogs to Ceres; and a pregnant cow to Tellus. In the Iliad mention is made many times of the sacrifice of bulls, oxen, and heifers; and at the obsequies of Patroclus, Achilles sacrificed horses, oxen, sheep, dogs, and human beings to the *manes* of the deceased; but no mention is made of any produce of the soil, except honey, oil, and wine as accessories.¹

In the sacred chronicle it is stated that the God of the Hebrews had respect unto Abel and his offering of the firstlings of his flock, but unto Cain and his offering of the fruit of the ground he had not respect.²

In the Vishnu Purana we read that horses and other animals were sacrificed to Siva.³ Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians sacrificed a red bull without spot or blemish, a sheep, or a goose.⁴ That the Persians always sacrificed an animal, usually a white horse, though Xerxes sacrificed a thousand oxen to the Trojan Minerva;⁵ and the Lybian king, Cræsus, propitiated the Delphic god with three thousand of every kind of sacrificial beast.⁶

Among the Babylonians there was one peculiar sacrifice required of the females to Mylitta, the Babylonian Venus, analogous to circumcision;⁷ but out-

side of this every sacrifice consisted of animal life, especially bulls, sheep, goats, and deer.

As the idea of sacrifice was that of a gift or offering to the gods, it necessarily followed that the higher and nobler the victim, the more acceptable was the offering to the god; and as human life, even in that savage age was the most precious gift that could be given, the sacrifice of human beings became an essential part of the religious worship of every tribe or nation at some period of its national existence. Among the more savage nomadic tribes it was at first most probably the principal part of their worship and was perhaps always accompanied by eating some portion of the sacrificial victim; whilst in those nations more advanced in civilisation, where human life was held in higher esteem, it still existed as a survival of the more ancient custom. Among the Greeks of the Homeric period it was undoubtedly a usual means of appeasing the anger of an offended deity. We have already cited the immolation of the Trojan captives at the obsequies of Patroclus; the same author also mentions the sacrifice of his son by Idomeneus, the King of Crete; and the legendary story of the attempted sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia, by her father, Agamemnon, to appease the anger of the wrathful Artemis, is familiar to all.

Ovid mentions in his "Metamorphosis," the sacrifice of Polyxena the daughter of King Priam to appease the wrathful shade of Achilles,¹ and the sacrifice of the two daughters of Orion, King of Thebes, to avert the anger of their god and stop the ravages of a plague that was devastating his city.² Herodotus tells us that after Oeobazus the Persian had fled from Sestus into Thrace, to escape from the Athenians, the Apsinthian Thracians seized him and offered him as a sacrifice after their wonted fashion, to Pleistorus, one of the gods of their country.³

Among the Romans this cruel rite existed from the earliest times until long after the Christian era. Livy says: That after the disastrous battle of Cumæ (B. C. 216) by authority of the sacred books, a Greek man and woman, and a man and woman of Gaul, were sacrificed in the market-place at Rome to appease the anger of the Gods.⁴

Ovid says: "On the Ides of May the vestal virgin throws from the oak-built bridge images of old men plaited in rushes."⁵ He also tells us that Vesta and Tellus were the same deities, and for that reason a priestess of Vesta, who had been false to her vows of chastity, was sacrificed by being buried alive in the

¹ *Iliad*, Lib. XXIII, 205 et seq.

² *Genesis*, IV, 3-4.

³ *Vishnu Purana*, p. 275.

⁴ *Herodotus*, II, 38, 39, 40, 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 199.

¹ *Metamorphosis*, Lib. XIII, Verses 439 et seq.

² *Metamorphosis*, Lib. XII, Verses 487 et seq.

³ *Herodotus*, Lib. IX, Chap. 119.

⁴ *Livy*, Lib. XXIII, Chap. 51.

⁵ *Pastor*, Lib. V, Verses 621 et seq.

earth.¹ Pliny records that in the year of the city 657 (B.C. 96) when Cneius Cornelius Lentulus and P. Licinius Crassus were consuls, a decree forbidding *human sacrifice* was passed by the Senate—from which time these horrid rites ceased in *public and for some time* altogether.² According to Macrobius *human sacrifices* were offered at Rome down to the time of Brutus (44 B.C.) who abolished them upon the establishment of the republic. But long after this time the cruel custom was resorted to in exceptional cases to propitiate the gods; for authentic history tells us that in the time of Augustus, one hundred knights were sacrificed by his orders at Perusia; and as late as A.D. 270 a similar immolation occurred in the time of the Emperor Aurelian.

Far away to the north, beyond the snow-clad mountains, hundreds of leagues from the Eternal City, the shaggy, blue-eyed barbarians of Germania worshipped their cruel gods with the same sanguinary rites³ and poured out their libations from the skulls of their slain victims; while further to the west, under the spreading forests of Gallia and Britannia the fierce Druid priests kept their stone altars reeking with the streaming blood of human beings.⁴

To the north and east beyond the Mare Hadriaticum, the rude Dacians, and along the shores of the Pontus Euxinus, the still ruder Scythians, not only worshipped their gods with human victims, but feasted upon their slain bodies; so integrating one rite with the other that they became known as Anthropophagi.⁵

Even Egypt, the ancient and venerable, the storehouse of learning and wisdom, practised human sacrifice. Plutarch, quoting from Manetho, says: "Men called 'Typhonian' were burnt alive in the town of Idithya, and their ashes scattered to the winds."⁶ Diodorus tells us in explanation, that what was meant by "Typhonian" was men of a red color, which was believed to be the color of Typhon, this color being rare among the Egyptians though common among foreigners; and that these Typhonian men were sacrificed by the ancient kings at the tomb of Osiris.⁷

Other branches of the Semitic family practised the same rites. Heliodorus, in his "Æthiopia," says that the Æthiopians sacrificed to the sun white chariot-horses, to the moon a yoke of oxen, and to the Æthiopian Bacchus all manner of beasts. As I have not "Heliodorus" at hand, I will quote for the benefit of my readers, *verbatim et literatim* the account as given by "quaint old Purchas."

He says :

"Three Altars were erected, two ioyntly to the Sunne and Moone, a third to *Bacchus* by himselfe, to him they offered all forts of Beasts; to *Sol*, white chariot-horfes, to the *Moone*, a yoke of oxen. And when all things were ready, the people with founts demanded the Sacrifice, which vfually was accustomed for the health of their Nation: That was some of the frangers taken in the warres to be offered. First triall was made by spits of gold heated with fire, brought out of the Temple whither the captives had ever knowne carnall copulation, for treading on the fame with their bare feete fuch as were pure virgins received no harme, others were scorched. These were offered in sacrifice to *Bacchus*; the others, to thofe purer deities. These things have I here inferted, not as done, but as like to fuch things, which among the Meroites were vted to be done, and agreeing with the general devotions of thofe Ethiopians. *Philostratus* reporteth like matters of their *Gymnosophists*, and of the Grove where they kept their generall confutations; otherwise, each of them by themselves apart, observing their studies and holies."¹

Porphyry says, human sacrifice was also common among the Arabs.

Of this practice among the Phœnicians and all of the lands colonised by them, evidence scarcely need be adduced. Porphyry tells us that: "The Phœnician history of Sanchoniathon is full of instances in which that people when suffering under great calamity from war or pestilence, or drought, chose by public vote one of those most dear to them and sacrificed him to Saturn."² It was a part of the established ritual of the Carthagenians and every year youthful victims were chosen by lot. Infants were burnt alive and their sacrifice had a special significance. Diodorus, in narrating the expedition of Agathocles against the Carthagenians, says :

"They gave just cause likewise to their god Saturn to be their enemy; for in former times they used to sacrifice to this god the sons of the most eminent persons, but of later times they secretly bought and bred up children for that purpose; and, upon strict search being made, there were found amongst them that were to be sacrificed some children that had been changed and put in the place of others. Weighing these things in their minds, and now seeing that the enemy lay before their walls, they were seized with such a pang of superstition, as if they had utterly forsaken the religion of their fathers. That they might therefore without delay reform what was amiss, they offered as a public sacrifice two hundred of the sons of the nobility, and no fewer than three hundred more (who were liable to censure) voluntarily offered themselves up; for among the Carthagenians there was a brazen statue of Saturn, putting forth the palms of his hands, bending in such a manner towards the earth, as that the boy who was laid upon them in order to be sacrificed, should slip off and so fall down headlong into a deep, fiery furnace."³

Suidas states that human sacrifices were offered to Saturn by the Phœnicians, Rhodians, Curetes, Carthagenians, and the Sardi, their colony. "They (the Sardi)," he says, "offered the fairest of their captives to Saturn, and such as were about three-score and ten years old, who, to show their courage, laughed; whence

¹ *Fasti*, Lib. VI, Verse 455 et seq.

² *Pliny*, Lib. XXX, Chap. 3.

³ *Tacitus*, *Manners of the Germans*, Chaps. 9-39; also Mallett, *Northern Antiquities*, Chap. VI.

⁴ *Tacitus*, *Annals*, Lib. XIV, Chap. 31; *Strabo*, Chap. 4, Gaul.

⁵ *Pliny*, Lib. VII, Chap. 2.

⁶ *Plutarch*, *Isis et Osiris*, p. 380.

⁷ *Diod. Sic.*, Lib. I, Chap. 6.

¹ *Purchas*, *His Pilgrimage*, The seventh Book, Chap. II.

² *Kenricks*, *Phœnicia*, p. 315 et seq.

³ *Diodorus Sic.*, Lib. XX, Chap. 1.

grew the proverb, *Sardonius risus*." In the fable of the Cerastæ, Ovid says that Venus changed that people into bulls, because they had polluted the island of Cyprus, which was sacred to her, with human sacrifices.¹

The Persians also, Photius says, practised human sacrifice and buried men, women, and children in the earth alive to appease the wrath of Mithra. Herodotus also gives his testimony to the same brutal custom; he says:

"After propitiating the stream by these and many other magical ceremonies, the Persians crossed the Strymon by bridges made before their arrival at a place called 'The Nine Ways,' which was in the territory of the Edonians. And when they learnt that the name of the place was 'The Nine Ways,' they took nine of the youths of the land and as many of their maidens and buried them alive on the spot. Burying alive is a Persian custom. I have heard that Amestris, the wife of Xerxes, in her old age buried alive seven pairs of Persian youths, sons of illustrious men, as a thank-offering to the god who is supposed to dwell underneath the earth."²

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

PRESIDENT HARPER'S BIBLE-CRITICISM.

PRES. W. R. HARPER has written for *The Biblical World*, of which he is the editor, an article on "The Origin of Man in His First State of Innocence." We have good reasons to assume that we have before us here in condensed form some of the President's lectures which were recently the subject of acrimonious discussion. The article is a concise and very lucid review of the present state of theological investigation, showing in the writer not only independent critical judgment and a full knowledge of the critical work of others, but also a reverence for the Scriptures, as was to be expected of a man in his position.

Professor Harper has been denounced for heresy and infidelity, but if his critics were fully acquainted with the Bible, and the critical work done by some of the most learned and faithful of Christians in the investigation of the Bible, they would have held their peace. Those people, who led by Dr. Hensen, zealously attacked Professor Harper's position, only exposed their own ignorance and narrowness.

When Professor Harper says of the Genesis, "These are not scientific records, for science [viz., science in the strict sense of the term] is modern," he states a fact that cannot be denied; and there is no doubt that on this point he is in accord with the most orthodox theological scholars of all denominations, and that in critically investigating the Bible with the light of science he only obeys Christ's injunction "Search the Scriptures" (St. John, 5, 39). Professor Harper says, concerning the old Mosaic accounts: "It is a sacrifice to call them history. To apply to them the tests of 'history—always cold, and stern, and severe—is pro-

"fanation. They are *stories*, grand, inspiring, uplifting stories. Either of them has influenced human life more than all the historical records ever penned."

This, indeed, is the grandeur of religion, that it anticipated the most salient moral truths long before they could be known to scientific investigators. But this service that religion has done to mankind does not imply that science has become redundant. The Bible must be used as a help, not as a hindrance, in the evolution of the human mind.¹

Avowed infidel publications, such as *The Truth Seeker* of New York, frequently ridicule religion for holding positions which its representative thinkers never have held; and we believe that it is unfair to identify such bigoted exceptions as are frequently found in our churches, with the traditions of true Christianity—of that Christianity which has been a living factor in our civilisation. On the one hand, our liberals should learn that the leading authorities in almost all our churches are much more free-thinking and radical than is generally known; and on the other hand, we must know that those of our well-meaning but narrow-minded brethren who, ignorant of the divinity of science, scorn scientific investigation because it destroys some of their dearest prejudices, do not represent the real life of Christianity; and it would be a great blessing for our religious development if they could be made to understand that their attitude is extremely presumptuous and irreligious. Who made them the mouthpiece of God that they arrogate to themselves the authority of representing him? God is in light, and not in darkness; he moves in the progress of mankind, not in retrogressive movements; he appears in the revelations of science, not in the blindness of those who deliberately reject reason.

Bigots are no better than infidels. Infidels ridicule the caricatures of religion but bigots furnish the material which justifies, to a great extent, the irrelevant attitude of infidels.

EDITOR.

CURRENT TOPICS.

Last Sunday a Chicago clergyman remarked with fine originality, that "this is a wonderful age in which we live"; and he was right, for a new miracle is reported in the papers every day; and every day it becomes easier and easier for us to believe the story of Jonah and the whale. A pensioner, in a thrill of patriotic exaltation, has voluntarily surrendered his pension to the Government and will draw it no more. I am not sure that this is the only act of the kind that was ever done but I think it is, and the man who did it has set a bright example that will doubtless be followed by a hundred thousand more. Holding the great office of Secretary of State, he sets the fashion with greater authority than any unimportant person could, and men will imitate him who would not care a brass button for the example of you or me.

Although it requires greater courage to give up a pension than to charge a battery, General Gresham's battle record has been

¹ We here remind the reader of Goethe's words: "The good Lord has given us the nuts, but he does not crack them for us."

¹ *Metamorphosis*, Lib. X, Fable vi.

² *Herodotus*, Lib. VII, 114.

called in question, but not with great success. A former pension agent in Indiana declares that General Gresham was never in a battle, although a host of comrades testify the other way, and this critic says that the General was wounded in the leg by a sharpshooter, or a bushwhacker in a contemptible skirmish, and not by a genuine soldier in a fierce, tumultuous battle. Mathematically it makes no difference whether a man was wounded in a big battle or a little one, so that he was wounded, but sentimentally the difference is very great, as every soldier knows. It is more glorious to have been wounded in a great historic battle than in a skirmish unrenowned. Nor have all the different parts of the same battle an equal reputation, for some particular spots on the same field are more celebrated in history than others. For instance, I have never yet met with a soldier of either side who was wounded at the battle of Shiloh who did not assure me that he was wounded in the "Hornet's Nest." Not long ago a tramp accosted me on the street and said: "Comrade, gi' me a dime; I ain't able to work, because, you see that scar on my hand, I got that from a bullet at Shiloh when I was fighting in the "Hornet's Nest." "Well, comrade," I said, "It's much to your credit, and here's the ten cents, for at the time that battle was fought you could not have been much more than three months old." Yes, it is much better to be killed in a big battle than in a small one.

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Last Sunday morning a lady of Chicago said to her husband, "Edwin, have you a revolver on?" He answered, "Yes." "Well," she replied, "then let us be off to church." Persons at a distance, unacquainted with our "idioms," may regard this conversation as caricature, but as we have more pistol-practice here on Sundays than on other days, the precaution was well advised. In fact, a man can hardly be considered properly dressed in Sunday clothes unless he carries a revolver on his hip. Of course, many of our citizens fall victims to the revolver system, and as they are in most cases "fit to kill," we bear their loss with religious resignation; but sometimes the bullets fly wild and hit some unoffending traveller, and of this we righteously complain. Last Sunday, as we are informed by Monday's paper, "crowds gathered quickly at Clark and Harrison Streets about 2 o'clock. Bullets flew in all directions, and passers-by narrowly escaped being struck. Thomas Gilmore and William Hookey shot at each other half a dozen times, but neither of the duellists was wounded." This was the melancholy part of it, because we could have borne the loss of both of them with patient equanimity. On the same day, in another part of the town, "Jacob Leaper, a gripman on the North Clark Street cable-line, was clanging his gong vigorously at 12:40 o'clock near Ohio Street, when he felt something pass through his cap, leaving a burning pain in his scalp. An examination showed that the street-car man had a narrow escape from a stray bullet, which came from an unknown place. A doctor dressed the wound when he reached the car-barns." A free people must necessarily be a controversial people; they have so many things to talk about, and we find that nothing so effectually as a revolver gives emphasis to argument.

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To the south of us they take better aim than we do, as appears by the details of a misunderstanding that occurred last Sunday in a church at Nashville. As the papers tell the story better than I can, I will let them tell it in their own way, thus: "There was serious trouble between the members of the Spruce Street Baptist Church to-day, resulting in Andrew Bishop being shot in the neck and seriously wounded. Several persons were struck with chairs and knocked down. The police soon made their appearance, and fourteen persons, including the pastor and Elder Purdy, were arrested." It seems that there are two factions in the church, and somebody objecting to some of the proceedings, "hot words were succeeded by blows. Andrew Bishop was shot

by one of the worshippers whose name has not yet been ascertained." Efforts are being made to identify him, and as soon as he is discovered, he will be severely reprimanded for shooting while meeting was going on, instead of waiting until after the benediction.

* * *

Even in the South, among the most expert marksmen, bullets will sometimes go astray and hit an innocent man, a mere spectator of the fray; occasionally, indeed, a woman, which is a more serious matter, for judging by the numbers of the "unemployed," we have plenty of men to spare. Here is an account of an "unpleasant affair" that came off last Monday at Houston. Some neighbors who were not on friendly terms happened to meet at the railway station just as the train was coming in, when "Jim Mitchell espied York and opened fire, which was as promptly returned, York falling after firing a second shot. Mitchell kept up his fusillade until he had fired six shots. In addition to York being killed, Milton Sparks was shot to death, his brother was mortally wounded, and Dan Gleason, an omnibus-driver, was killed. Mrs. Sparks was badly wounded, as was also a child she carried. A Mrs. McDowell, an aged lady, received one of the bullets, and her chances of recovery are slim." All this barbarism is largely due to the false belief that a revolver makes a man brave, and that it is a chivalrous thing to have one always ready to protect ourselves and to maintain our dignity. There are laws against carrying concealed weapons, but they rather stimulate the practice than correct it, and it never will be abated until we establish firmly in public estimation the true doctrine that the unarmed man is a brave man, and that the man who carries a pistol about with him among people engaged in peaceful occupations or in social enjoyments is a coward. It is much to the credit of the people of Houston that the shooting of the women and the baby is "regretted."

* * *

Four or five weeks ago, I referred in *The Open Court* to the convention then being held in Chicago by the Dairymen's National Protective Union. It will be remembered that those National Dairymen "wanted a law passed" for the suppression of butterine and "the encouragement of high-grade dairy products." I also mentioned at the time that the people of Chicago were so deeply interested in the latter purpose that they were seriously thinking of combining themselves into a Protective Union against the dairymen. They have been anticipated by the people of Omaha, who have actually had a law passed for the encouragement of "high-grade dairy products"; and, what is most astonishing, the dairymen do not approve it, and even threaten to rebel against it. They held a meeting on the evening of the 17th and bravely resolved: "That believing the city ordinance known as the milk ordinance is illegal and void, members of this association will pay no attention to any official acting by its authority, and we warn them one and all to keep away from our premises and belongings." We are further informed that if the city officials attempt to carry out the provisions of the ordinance, "they are sure to meet with resistance and a lively time." No doubt the people of Omaha, especially those who have children, are interested in "high-grade" milk, and perhaps in their anxiety to get it they have had a law passed that in the opinion of the dairymen is harsh and unconstitutional. Legislative interference in private business is nearly always mischievous, except in the case of dairymen. When we consider how many children of the poor in great cities are poisoned by adulterated milk, we are willing to have almost any sort of a law passed that will compel dairymen to furnish a "high-grade" article.

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Some time ago, I saw a play in which the hero, "Bob Brierly," an ex-convict, found it almost impossible to reform, because when-

ever he got some honest employment somebody recognised him and pointed him out, thereby causing him to lose his place, and driving him to seek work in some other part of the country, where his former history was not known. No matter how hard he tried, society would not allow him to be an honest man. It is the same way here in Chicago now. Lately some "Civic" societies composed of the "better classes" have been organized for the purpose of reforming the city government, purifying politics, and electing good men to office irrespective of party. Probably no more virtuous resolutions were ever penned than have been adopted by the "Civic" societies, and yet scarcely have they got themselves into effective working form when one of the morning papers talks at them like this: "Amateur political reformers are generally used as cat's-paws to get office for chronic office seekers. The new civic federation has in its membership political hacks who have never been known to earn a dollar except in office." And another talks like this: "The 'League of American Civics,' the 'Municipal Reform League,' the 'Civic Federation,' and all the other organizations of rich men for the reform of Chicago politics ought to adopt as a primary By-Law the rule that no man who has been guilty of evading his just and proper taxes should be eligible to membership. It is only necessary to scan the list of members of these high and lofty associations to discover that the rule is not now in force." Certainly not; why should it be in force, when the object of the "Civic Federations" is the civic reformation of these men?

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When a chronic inebriate goes down to Dwight for a course of discipline under Doctor Keeley, he goes there, not for the purpose of indulging in his drinking habits but in order to be cured. So it is with those chronic office-seekers and those chronic tax-evaders who have had the habit of swearing to false assessments; they all join the "Civic Federations" to be cured; they desire to become good citizens and honest men. Must they be foiled in their good intentions by the exposure of their former delinquencies as was the case with Bob Brierly in the play? If there are in the Federations rich men who have heretofore cheated the city in the matter of their taxes they virtually promise by the very act of joining the Federations that they will do so no more. It is something of a hardship to the rich man that even after death he must appear in the Probate Court, and he feels meaner than old Scrooge when his executor files an inventory showing that our departed brother had fifty times more property when he died than he reported to the assessor while he lived. Some day, if the Civic Federation takes good hold of consciences we shall read this tribute on the monumental stones, "Here lies a rich man whose tax assessment corresponded with the inventory of his property filed in the Probate Court." It is easier to pay taxes than to work them out on the roads as I have sometimes done, but taxes like all other obligations must be paid, or worked out, and if we evade them here on earth, we must "work them out" elsewhere.

* * *

That volcanic orator, Governor O'Ferrall, of old Virginia, has made another warlike appeal to the Legislature of that State. He wants two steam cruisers armed with long range guns for use against the Maryland pirates who invade Virginia waters and dredge for oysters there. With the old war-passion flinging electric sparks from his eyes he wanted to know whether or not the sons of old Virginia would tamely submit to the Maryland buccaneers who, not satisfied with Maryland oysters, were dredging for oysters in Virginia's portion of Chesapeake Bay. "Never! Never!" was the answering cry of the excited members; and soon we may expect a proclamation from Governor O'Ferrall declaring war against Maryland. This whole quarrel appears rather trivial to the commonplace mind, but heroic souls remember that great historic wars have sprung out of disputes concerning more con-

temptible things than oysters. Instead of declaring war the Virginia Legislature may save both money and men by simply sending Governor O'Ferrall to make a speech to the oyster pirates of Maryland. That will scatter them quicker than long-range guns.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

BIRTH SONG.

BY G. L. HENDERSON.

Hail, thou sweet little maiden!
My heart has been yearning for thee:
Thy breath with perfume laden
Is sweeter than incense to me.

Come! Thy cradle is ready!
The cosiest corner 's for thee:
Blithest wee little lady,
Our darling thou ever shall be.

Come! Than gold thou art purer:
I kneel at thy heart as a shrine;
No treasure can be surer,
To love, and be loved, is divine!

Ocean gives vapor and cloud,
Which rivers restore to the main;
The Race, by cradle and shroud,
Gives life and resumes it again.

Love out of love evokes thee:
Serve Love, 'tis the life of thy soul!
When served, Love shall revoke thee
As part of the soul of the whole.

Come, child, up through the ages!
This earth is our home in the sky:
Within us live the sages:
In the US WE SHALL never die!

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