

would take that position unless he was sincere. Nobody deliberately pretends to be bad. But the idea of his being president of the humane society is simply preposterous.

With his idea about the whipping post he might join a society of hyenas for the cultivation of ferocity, for certainly nothing short of that would do justice to his bill. I have too much confidence in the legislature of the state—and maybe my confidence rests in the fact that I do not know them—to think the passage of such a bill possible. If it were passed, I think I would be justified in using the language of the old Marylander, who said: "I have lived in Maryland fifty years, but I have never counted them, and my hope is that God won't."—[Robert G. Ingersoll, in New York Journal.

#### Society.

Were man a stationary being, like the beasts and birds by which he is surrounded—had he a fixed and unchangeable instinct, instead of a progressive and improvable reason—any change in his social institutions would be unnecessary. Society would have been the same at the beginning as it is at present, and it would continue one uniform state as long as man should exist. But man is not thus stationary; he is a reasoning, and therefore a progressive, being. The knowledge and experience of one generation can be transmitted to the next; and as man at forty years of age must possess more knowledge than he did at twenty, so also must the world at large possess a greater accumulation of knowledge, at the end of four thousand years from the creation of man, than was possessed at the end of four hundred. Knowledge is simply an accumulation of facts, and wisdom is the art of applying such knowledge to its true purpose—the promotion of human happiness. Although men may have much knowledge and no wisdom, there can only be little wisdom where there is but little knowledge. The present generation have the accumulated knowledge and experience of four thousand years to work upon, and therefore they have it in their power to act wiser in respect to the establishment of social and political institutions than any generation that has preceded them.

Such being the nature of man and such his powers, the consideration of a social change need excite no more surprise or apprehension than a simple political movement. If a social change be a gigantic one, so, likewise, are the evils mighty which require to be removed. Throughout the whole universe, from the most stupendous planet to the individual atom, changes are perpetual; there is

nothing at rest, nothing stationary. To affirm, therefore, that governmental institutions require no reformation, that social systems need no alteration, is just as absurd as to say that the man shall wear the swaddling clothes which befitted his infancy, and be pleased in maturity with the rattle which charmed his childhood.—[Occasional Thoughts.

#### Superstition.

Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame, promotes the interests of superstition; and nothing is more destructive to them than a maply, steady virtue, which either preserves us from disastrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them. During such calm sunshine of the mind these spectres of false divinity never make their appearance. On the other hand, while we abandon ourselves to the natural undisciplined suggestions of our timid and anxious heart, every kind of barbarity is ascribed to the Supreme Being, from the terrors with which we are agitated, and every kind of caprice, from the methods which we embrace in order to appease him.

Barbarity, caprice, these qualities, however nominally disguised, we may universally perceive, form the ruling character of the Deity in popular religions. Even priests, instead of correcting those depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foster and encourage them. The more tremendous the Deity is represented, the more tame and submissive do men become to his ministers, and the more unaccountable the measures of acceptance required by him, the more necessary does it become to abandon our natural reason and yield to their ghostly guidance and direction.—[Hume.

#### Shakespeare's Irreligion.

It is hard, indeed, to say whether he had any religious belief or no. The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of a distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence about the after-world. "To die," it may be, was to him as it was to Claudio—"to go we know not whither." Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of life and death, he leaves it a riddle to the last without heeding the common theological solutions around him.—[J. R. Green.

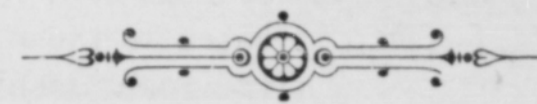
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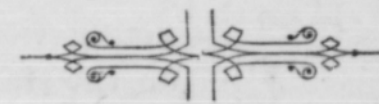
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