

# FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL

IN THINGS DEMONSTRATED CERTAIN

UNION

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IN WHATSOEVER MAY BE DOUBTED

FREE DIVERSITY

IENCE

IN ALL THINGS

CHARITY

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W. J. R. HARGRAVE, Editor.

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#### THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY.

BY G. W. GRIFFITHS.

There appeared during last year in *McMillan's Magazine* an article entitled "the Hopes of Theology." It is, in fact, a valedictory address to the students of St. Andrews by Dean Stanley. In enumerating his salient points, the Dean says:—"First, there is the essentially progressive element in religion itself." He continues as follows:—"Lord Macaulay, in his celebrated essay on Von Ranke's History of the Popes, maintains with a rich exuberance of logic and rhetoric, that "the difference between theology and all other sciences is in this respect—that what it was in the days of the patriarch Job, such it must be in the 19th century, and to the end of time." The Dean then proceeds, to his infinite credit, to enlarge on the fallacy of Macaulay's dictum.

In the series of articles which I propose to place before the readers of the "FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL," I shall set but little store by any originality of thought which I may possibly possess (sooth to say, it is but little.) My aim is truth, not the gratification of any personal vanity. Whenever, therefore, I find that truth expressed, for me and for others, in the weightier words of abler men, I rejoice to place it before truth seekers in their pregnant and glowing sentences, rather than in my own feeble words. All I claim is an intense appreciation, a large intuition for, and a power of assimilation of truth, wheresoever I find it written or uttered. But I cannot resist the temptation of saying that, about a year before the Dean of Westminster's address appeared, I had myself selected the self-same passage for the

opening of a work which I had at that time the idea of publishing in book-form, but the substance of which I now hope to communicate to Canadian Freethinkers through the FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL.

The passage in question is so curiously instructive that I reproduce it here. "A Christian of the 5th century with a Bible is neither better nor worse situated than a Christian of the 19th century with a Bible, candor and natural acuteness being, of course, supposed equal. It matters not at all that the compass, printing, gunpowder, steam, gas, vaccination, and a thousand other discoveries which were unknown to the 5th century, are familiar to the 19th."

It is here to be seen how completely even so large a mind as Macaulay's, peculiarly directed, moreover, into the broad paths of whig liberalism, utterly failed to emancipate itself from theological tradition. He accordingly commits himself to the laconic aphorism that "Divinity is not a progressive science." Surely genius never committed itself to a more stupendous fallacy. Judicially blinded by sacerdotalism, over the great historian's literary acumen failed to perceive what printing had already done for the world, and even to appreciate the influence of gunpowder on one of the most mischievous though one of the grandest poems the world has produced—"Paradise Lost."

To Mr. Gladstone has come the "clear, dry light" denied to Macaulay. Listen to the golden words in which, in his "Homer's Place in History," he enunciates a truth of ineffable significance.

"Collateral knowledge and the growth of critical arts have opened to us paths which were closed at earlier dates to better men."

The proposition should take its place in men's minds as a fundamental text—a verse of "proverbial philosophy" somewhat in advance of Tupper. Its apparent simplicity may easily cause its vast significance to escape the superficial thinker, and it is precisely in ignoring the considerations involved in it, that the orthodox manifest their inability to grasp and turn to good account, the tendencies of the advanced thought which distinguishes the day.

I have made the foregoing remarks more in the hope that they may meet the eyes of some who may be halting undecided