

wastes its breath in preaching "righteousness," while Freethought strives for practical reform.

Hypocrisy, which is one of the meanest vices, is essentially a Christian product. Orthodox travellers tell us that they find very little of it in the heathen world, but when they return to Christendom they find it circulating in the very atmosphere. The reason of this melancholy fact is not remote. The evil is entirely due to the exaltation of belief over conduct, and the erection of false and impossible standards which are openly revered and privately neglected. Theophrastus gives us one Character of a Hypocrite, and not a particularly offensive one. The literature of Christendom gives us scores of the most disgusting type.

The benefits of Christianity appear in the apologies of its professional champions, its evils are written large on the pages of impartial history. What real good has it ever achieved? Deny it the right to appropriate all the improvement of the secular intellect and the natural growth of humanity, and how much has it to boast of its own? But the miseries it has inflicted on mankind are appalling in their magnitude and number. It has shed oceans of blood, and bitter tears have rolled from myriads of eyes under its iron tyranny. It closed every thinker's lips. It kept men in darkness and slavery. It made men bow at the foot of the altar and the throne. It preached poverty to the poor and took its share of the wealth of the rich. It invented the rack, the thumbscrew, and the wheel. It illustrated its love of man with the flames of a thousand stakes. It has been a curse rather than a blessing. And its star of Bethlehem was not the herald of a glad new day, but the portent of a long and dismal and disastrous night.

CHRISTMAS.

The Rev. Albert Barnes, in his comments on Luke 2 : 8, says : " It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced. While away in these desert and mountainous regions, it was proper that there should be some one to attend them, to keep them from straying and from the ravages of wolves and other wild beasts. It is clear from this that our Savior was born before the 25th of December, or before what we call Christmas. At that time it was cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. God has concealed the time of his birth. There is no way to ascertain it. By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year."