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SEGULAR THOUGHT

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"Agnosticism simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes that for which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe."—T. H. HUXLEY.

"Assent to no proposition the matter of which is not so clear and distinct that it cannot be doubted."—DESCARTES.

Notes and Comments.

THE SUSPENSION OF "SEGULAR THOUGHT."

OUR readers will have been somewhat startled at the action of the Postmaster-General, in refusing to allow **SEGULAR THOUGHT** to go through the Canadian mails; though it must be confessed that the continuation by the present Postmaster-General of the ban placed upon the *New York Truth Seeker* by his predecessor in office was not a circumstance to justify the roseate views of many of our friends as to the advent in Canadian officialdom of more liberal views regarding the rights of individuals to Free Thought and Free Speech. Well, the incident is over, as the appearance of the present number of the paper will make manifest, and all that is left to us is to "mend our ways,"—as far, that is, as printing matter which may be peculiarly offensive to our theological adversaries is concerned, and for which our journal was excluded from the Canadian mails,—and set ourselves seriously to the task of endeavoring to obtain the abolition of the tyrannical power at present possessed by the Government, represented by the Postmaster-General, of violently suppressing opinions to which they may be opposed. Meanwhile, we shall endeavor to act in good faith with our friend at Ottawa. It will, of course, be impossible for us to bow down to his idols, or to respect them any the more because he has power to "squench" us by a stroke of his pen; in truth, they only appear to us in a more ridiculous and helpless plight when their champion endeavors to protect them. The height of absurdity is reached when a business man takes up the role of a Pope, either on his own initiative or at the instigation of priests. Readers of the correspondence

Look up error and file this with it

which we publish to-day will see that Freethinkers are themselves by no means a unit in this matter; and it would probably have been better for the cause of the Postmaster-General had he left us to the tender mercies of our own friends. As it is, in deference to their opinions as well as to the obligations entered into with the Postmaster-General, we shall "roar like a sucking-dove" when in future we contemplate the outrageously absurd situations involved in the current Christian theogony and its prophetic and ecclesiastical accessories. The last official letter in the correspondence calls attention to the condition of the Canadian law in regard to the ecclesiastical offence known as "blasphemous libel." The Postmaster-General will probably know more about that mythical offence than he appears to know at present if he ever enters an action under the statute relating to it, but, whatever might be the decision of a prejudiced judge and jury in such a case, it is our clear opinion that **SEGULAR THOUGHT** has never published anything to bring it within the scope of the terms recited by the Postmaster. We put the correspondence on record in full:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, CANADA,
OTTAWA, 30th March, 1899.

SIR,—I am directed to inform you that, the attention of the Postmaster-General having been called to the issue of 'Secular Thought' hearing date the 25th inst., and particularly to a contribution which appears therein under the title of 'An Easter Hymn,' he has considered it proper to issue an order excluding the journal in question from the mails of this country.

Instructions to this effect have to-day been given to the Postmaster of Toronto.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
W. D. LESUEUR, Secretary.

C. M. Ellis, Esq., Proprietor and Publisher,
185½ Queen St. West, Toronto."

This communication was supplemented on Saturday morning by another from the Toronto Postmaster, informing us that the papers which had been mailed on Thursday, and for the carriage and delivery of which we had paid, were still in the Post-office, and would not be forwarded. This we looked upon as a most unwarrantable proceeding, as the mail bags were at the Union Station, and should have been sent off before the Postmaster-General's order was received. One bag, indeed, was so sent. Under these circumstances, we at first felt like making the strongest possible protest against what we conceived to be a most unjust piece of tyranny. Our legal adviser thought a fair ground existed under the statutes for an action against the official, but our readers can appreciate the difficulties that would be encountered in fighting the Government, which an action would practically amount to; and after due consideration and consultation with friends, we addressed the following letter to the Postmaster-General: