

A CANADIAN TO THE RIVER ST. LAWRENCE.

Could child of thine attune the lyre
Which Albion's humblest brooks inspire,
St. Lawrence, thy majestic wave
The minstrel's homage well might crave.

Though feudal tower nor storied shrine,
Nor vine-clad slopes thy course define,
Thou sham'st the streams of high degree,
That creep through England to the sea.

As if unloosed at His command,
Who holds the ocean in His hand,
In deep that thunders unto deep,
Thou plungest from thy native steep:

Thy hoary locks behind thee flung,
The mist of ages o'er thee hung,
Thou com'st like chaos from night's womb,
His reign of terror to resume:

Waves huge as Boreas ever piled
About thy footsteps dancing wild,
And o'er thy forehead high and broad
For diadem, the bow of God.

Nor less for majesty renowned,
Thy long procession island-crowned
And forests girt, a silver chain
Of cataracts from mere to main;

So strong, so free, so undefiled,
From rock to rapid rolling wild,
With music ceaseless as the roar
Of seas that break on Thule's shore.

Roll on my country's pride; thy wave
Still may Ontario's rafts-men brave,
Still from St. Anne's the boat-song wake
The echoes of the Maple Lake;

And aye may Phœbus, from whose smile
Affrighted shrinks such brooks as Nile,
Upon thy brow his kisses lay,
And with thine azure tresses play.

From Niagara's veil of smoke,
In thunders from of old hath broke,
The tribute of the prostrate floods
To Him whose throne is in the clouds.

With filial reverence would thy child,
Blend with thy voice his wood-notes wild,
And with thy cataracts upraise
To heaven a humble song of praise.

Sault-au-Recollet.

"CERTAINTIES IN RELIGION":—A CRITICISM ON DR. COOK'S LECTURE.

Dr. Joseph Cook's almost world-wide celebrity as an eminent defender of the Christianity of the day induced many in Toronto to avail themselves of the opportunity to hear him a few days ago. The "certainties in religion," which Dr. Cook takes for granted, but does not prove, are—that we do exist; that we must go hence; that all desire to go hence in peace; that, therefore, we must model ourselves to the laws of the universe, and allow our nature to harmonize with these laws. None of us have done this. We must do it. We cannot alter those unerring laws. *We must alter.* He also asserts that *we can think*—therefore the cause of our being must have been able to think. The universe shows thought—is the result of thought—therefore there must be a Great Thinker whose thought finds expression in it.

Few comparatively incline to dispute these positions, yet there are a thousand points at which they are capable of question.

Dr. Cook, however, further affirms as a certainty that a man *may* begin to keep these laws of his being. It is pleasant to find he admits this to be possible; but, he adds, what of the past?—the transgressions already done? How are these to be wiped out? Nature, science, philosophy, and echo, as expressed in Dr. Cooke, alike answer "nothing." A constant remorse assails us the moment we awake to the fact of our transgression. Here he drags in the familiar illustration of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth trying to wash and sweeten her "red right hand." He waves this "red right hand" before his astonished hearers and wrings it, and the feelings of his audience, persistently through a long series of paragraphs which monotonously demonstrate continued unsavoriness. Confirming this by glowing metaphor the impossibility of obliterating the dark past, he then likens our condition to the mammoth cave of Kentucky (from which one might almost suppose that there is still something great about us). We require a light to guide us through the darkness, which lamp, he says, is the Divine Word. He sees in the darkness, revealed in letters of glowing light, the word "Atonement." This is another "certainty in religion," and provides the screen which *can* obliterate the past. He proceeds to illustrate this by a king who had made it a law in his army that any deserter should be punished with one thousand stripes. One of his soldiers deserts;

but thinks better of it, repents, and voluntarily returns. The king's heart is melted. He fain would forgive, but his law requires the penalty. The king himself resolves to save him. He bares his own kingly shoulders to the lash, and, as the soldier's substitute, endures say *ten* stripes in satisfaction of his own law; and then he restores the soldier to his place in the ranks, where the soldier must still fight and perform his duty. Yet, though the fact remains that he *did* desert, this punishment of the king's in his stead is as a screen which shuts out the past. It can no more be remembered against him. Law is satisfied. The past is blotted out. Dr. Cook then gives the application, accompanied with further displays of Lady Macbeth's "red right hand" waving still mysteriously, and apparently without any cause, in the middle-distance. This kind of salvation is then offered to us all by the lecturer, and endorsed by rounds of applause.

Many in this age will, and do, enter a most emphatic protest against any such theory as this being called a "certainty of religion." If Religion consist in mere subterfuges, it may pass. But it cannot be pleasing to any who believe in God—who regard Him as Infinite Love and Wisdom—to hear His character thus impugned. It is somewhat satisfactory to find that Dr. Cook realizes that there is only one God—not three—and that salvation must come from, through, and by God Himself. That is at least some advance on rigid Calvinism. Still, the horrible view he gives, by implication from his parable, of the nature and dealings of that one God with us his creatures, is so utterly repugnant to even *our* feeble thoughts of love and mercy, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart grows faint with a pitying agony, at the contemplation. Just think of the idea this parable of Dr. Cook's conveys. It may be painful, but it is salutary, to analyse it. God is a King, it says, who has enrolled an army and made laws for its regulation. These laws are simply the expression of His arbitrary will. If any soldier transgress them he must be punished with 1,000 stripes. No provision whatever for mercy has been made in the *original* law. When one deserts and returns voluntarily repentant, it shakes the whole scheme, which had never contemplated such a decent, conscientious, dutiful, loving act, as this. It surprises the King, and (with reverence be it spoken) touches His heart. He feels He really ought to forgive and condone; but the foolish law He has foolishly made, stands in His way, and His pride will not permit Him at once to alter it. He must continue to exalt His own dignity; and to do so. He resorts to a miserable subterfuge. If the law be right and just, why not carry it out? If it is not, why not abrogate it altogether? No, that would admit Him fallible and His law unjust. He tries a compromise. He takes the deserter's place, in semblance only, and suffers for him—one *per cent.* of the legal penalty. Could a more contemptible mockery of honesty and justice be imagined? Such conduct shows His own contempt for the justice of His own law.

Dr. Cook will never restore Christianity either to respect or power by any such burlesque of justice in an atonement which is but the product of the diseased fancy of man, and is foreign to—oh! how infinitely far removed from—the very nature and essence of a God who *is* Love, and whose love in its very nature is justice. For justice is right-doing, and is therefore love, in form and act.

The Bible teaches no such atonement—no such reconciliation of *God* to *man*—for none is needed. It *does* teach the need of reconciliation—atonement—of *man* to *God*. God was in Christ reconciling the *world* to *Himself*—not Himself to the world. God always loved the world. The world did not always—does not yet—love Him; but He gave forth the expression of Himself in that Son of Man, who was but the visible Human form of His own Being—"the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—that He might win men's love to Himself, and thus by Love beget love—thus reach and save them from their sins, and *therefore* from their consequences.

God's Divine Word teaches this in every jot and tittle of it. Not one phrase—not one expression—is there in it that shows God to be anything but love and mercy. Not one threat, not one word of condemnation does He utter on that man who longs to do His will. Not one added pang does He inflict even on the evil further than they bring on themselves by acting contrary to the law of their being, and the moment they live, or try to live, according to the order inherent in their very constitution, the recuperative energies stored up within them—spiritual, mental, and physical—feel an influx of new life from Him, healing, purifying, saving them. This is the Gospel—good news indeed!

Christianity is better without Dr. Cook's defence of it. However pleasing it may be to those who love their own distorted views of a God whom they think to be "altogether such an one as themselves," to have their views thus daringly confirmed by a supposed orator, and however much it may administer love God because He first loved them and came Himself to live and die for them that they might have life through Him—who know that His very being is Love—that He never ceases to strive to bless *all* His creatures, sending forth the refreshing dew of His goodness and truth on every soul that He has made, whether they reject it or not—who is kind alike to the evil and the good, and "sendeth His rain upon the just and the

UNJUST."

BED.

The bed—of the eiders softest down,
'Twas a place to revel, to smother, to drown
In a bliss inferred by the poet;
For if ignorance be indeed a bliss,
What blessed ignorance equals this,
To sleep—and not to know it?

O, bed! O, bed! delicious bed!
That heaven upon earth to the weary head;
But a place that to name would be ill-bred,
To the head with a wakeful trouble—
'Tis held by such a different lease!
To one, a place of comfort and peace,
All stuffed with the down of stubble geese,
To another with only the stubble!

Hood.

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