

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

GOD SAVE THE KING

AND OTHER

Coronation Articles

BY

AN ENGLISH REPUBLICAN

(G. W. FOOTE)

“God save the King!” It is a large economy
In God to save the like ; but if he will
Be saving, all the better ; for not one am I
Of those who think damnation better still.

BYRON, *Vision of Judgment.*

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And, when you hear historians talk of thrones,
 And those that sate upon them, let it be
 As we now gaze upon the mammoth's bones,
 And wonder what old world such things could see,
 Or hieroglyphics on Egyptian stones,
 The pleasant riddles of futurity—
 Guessing at what shall happily be hid,
 As the real purpose of a pyramid.

—BYRON, *Don Juan*.

Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
 And priests first traded with the name of God.

—SHELLEY, *Queen Mab*.

And thou, whom sea-walls sever
 From lands unwall'd with seas,
 Wilt thou endure for ever,
 O Milton's England, these?
 Thou that wast his Republic, wilt thou clasp their knees?

These royalties rust eaten,
 These worm-corroded lies,
 That keep thine head storm-beaten
 And sunlike strength of eyes
 From the open heaven and air of intercepted skies;

These princelets with gauze winglets
 That buzz in the air unfurled,
 These summer-swarming kinglets,
 These thin worms crowned and curled,
 That bask and blink and warm themselves about the world.

—SWINBURNE, *A Marching Song ("Songs Before Sunrise")*.

INTRODUCTION.

THE articles in this little collection were all written between June and October, 1902, and were published in a journal which I have the honor and pleasure to edit. They all relate in some way or other to the illness and Coronation of Edward VII. Whatever else they lack, there is one merit I am sure they possess. They are honest. Probably these are the *only* honest articles that were penned and printed on their subject matter. For that reason alone, if for no other, it is well that they should be republished in a more permanent form. Generations or ages hence—for who knows what will float down the stream of time?—this little pamphlet may assure the historian that *all* did not bend the knee to the Baal of monarchy in England at the beginning of the twentieth century; that *one* voice, at any rate, was raised, not only in protest, but in mockery, against a most contemptible superstition.

When I call this superstition "contemptible" I am not speaking in temper or haste, but calmly and deliberately. There is something to be said for the worship of Mumbo Jumbo; he is supposed to be able to make it very hot for those who offend him. There is something to be said for the worship of the Sun; it is an undoubted benefactor. But what is to be said for the worship of the "hereditary nothing" who happens at any time to sit upon the constitutional throne of Great Britain and Ireland? A passion for genius, for moral excellence, or personal beauty, is intelligible; but how is one to explain a passion for the incarnation of mediocrity to which this nation has long been accustomed in its sovereigns? It is not merely a case of inherited folly, for the loyal fever was less acute in the early years of Queen Victoria. It seems, in truth, that loyalism is a form of religion; and it has all the common characteristics of religion—blind faith, headlong zeal, and a hatred of heresy.

When I walked home after the Jubilee procession in London in 1897, I remarked to a friend who was with me that we had not seen the last of that incomparable circus-show. It was designed to dazzle the multitude, and it succeeded. It was a huge "imperialism" advertisement. It appealed to the fighting and dominating instincts of the people. It was an evocation of barbaric sentiment. And as the plain little stout old lady brought up the rear the shouts that acclaimed her had a peculiar ring. It was the applause of deification. What the mob saw in that royal carriage was not the real person who occupied it, but a fictitious creature of their own imaginations.

On the death of Queen Victoria, Albert Edward Prince of Wales became King Edward VII. He was just the same man as before, but the mob (of all classes) felt there was a change. Jocularities at his expense had been common; from that moment they became blasphemies. It was another case of deification. One saw a new divinity created under one's very nose. And now when the King speaks "it is the voice of a god!"

There is no need to blame the King for the superstition of which he is the symbol. He probably smiles at it in private. He was born to his lot like the rest of us; and one may feel contempt for the institution without ill-will for the man. One may even be pleased to see from his jolly countenance that he does not take his absurd position too seriously.

Having avowed myself a Republican, I have also to warn the reader that I am an Atheist. He must expect to find both earthly and celestial superstitions laughed at in the following pages. My ideal includes Reason and Humanity; it has no room for the Ridiculous and the Barbaric.

April, 1903.

God Save the King.

BELIEVERS in Special Providence—and there is no other kind of Providence either honest or really conceivable—are naturally concerned about the King's illness and the postponement of the Coronation. What does it all mean? What is God particularly angry about? What lesson does he intend to convey? Surely there is something more than meets the eye in this startling calamity. See how Providence worked up to it, like a cunning and well-practised dramatist. For a long time it was feared that the cold damp weather would be prolonged, and the Coronation be spoiled in that manner. But the weather improved just in the nick of time. The three Coronation days—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—were simply splendid. The sun shone gloriously in a grand blue sky, yet the sudden great heat was tempered by a delicious breeze. Yes, the weather was all right, but the King was all wrong. Only a few hours (so to speak) before the great event which all his life led up to, he was cast down on a bed of sickness, the doctors were cutting him open and operating on his internals, his very existence was imperilled, and his subjects dreaded that the next bulletin would sound the sad note of preparation, not for his crowning, but for his funeral.

Fortunately the King seems likely to weather this worst storm of his life. To use an American phrase, we take no

stock in kings; but as Edward the Seventh is a man, and we happen to know of his illness, we hope he will recover. We extend the same sympathy to every sick person in this metropolis. As the Queen is a wife and a mother, we respect her sorrow, and wish her a happy issue out of this affliction. Death is so great a fact that when it comes it dwarfs all surroundings into insignificance. Whether it be in a cottage or in a palace, the first cry of a widow's grief has the same tragic note, and the anguish of bereavement scorns the comforts that money can purchase. But afterwards how much harder it is for the *poor* widow! To the grief of the wife is added the grief of the mother as the children pine for the lack of bread, and a nameless horror broods on every day's horizon, and the dear young faces lose their gladness, and the dear little feet go wearily, as though walking to their graves.

But to return to the King. One would think that, as he is the principal sufferer in this visitation of Providence, he is also the principal offender. Has the Lord heard the voice of the Nonconformist Conscience protesting against King Edward's visit to Epsom racecourse? Have all the sins of his younger days made so big a heap that the Lord cannot overlook it? Has he gazed too much upon the wine when it was red? Have pretty women thrown themselves too much in his way? Has he smoked too many cigars?—for even smoking is a sin with the Salvation Army. Anyhow, this illness seems a direct challenge to his Majesty; and, indeed, the pious folk who got up the first big prayer-meeting at St. Paul's Cathedral were pretty much of that opinion, for they hoped the King would be spared, and that the residue of his life might be devoted to the Lord's service—which was a plain hint that so much of his life as had already expired had been devoted to the service of some other personage.

Cardinal Vaughan is too much of a courtier to point in the Lord's name at the King. Still, he sees in this calamity the finger of God. He should have said the hand of God. The finger of God is an unfortunate expression. It is associated

with the most disgusting miracle in the annals of superstition. When the magicians of Egypt saw all the dust of their country turned into lice, they declined to compete any further with Moses and Aaron. They felt that one miracle of that sort was quite sufficient. "This," they said, "is the finger of God."

"The finger of God," Cardinal Vaughan says to his clergy, "has appeared in the midst of national rejoicing, and on the eve of what promised to be one of the most splendid pageants in English history. This is in order to call the thoughts of all men to Himself." King Edward, therefore, is a sort of vicarious sacrifice. He is laid low and tortured in order that careless people might be made to think of the Lord.

Danton said in the French National Assembly, "The coalesced kings threaten us, and as our gage of battle we fling before them the head of a king." And poor, stupid Louis the Sixteenth's head was cut off by the guillotine. Cardinal Vaughan makes the Lord throw the hacked and bleeding body of a King before the British people as his (the Lord's) challenge to their attention.

"May it not be?" all the men of God were asking on Sunday. Every one of them had his "tip" with respect to the Lord's meaning in the King's illness. The Bishop of Winchester came up to London to let out *his* secret. "May it not be," he said, "that just because as a people we were too light-hearted, too superficial, too formal about it all, God solemnly laid his hand upon us and bade us stop?" Of course it may have been, and of course it may have been otherwise. The Bishop of Winchester is only guessing. He is in the guessing business.

The Bishop of Stepney gave his "tip" at St Paul's Cathedral. His idea was that we were too much excited by outward show to discern the deeper lessons; so the Lord tripped up the King's heels and set us all thinking. Still more professional was the view of that burning and shining Nonconformist light, the Rev. F. B. Meyer. "God wanted

the British nation to know," he said, "that when next he gives it victory over its enemies, and grants peace from a war that tried its resources, it should not celebrate it by the blowing of fog-horns and whistles, but by thronging the temples of God and singing his praises." Dr. Meyer keeps one of these "temples"—and it keeps him. No wonder he wants the "temples" to be thronged.

Pastor Spurgeon, of the famous Tabernacle, said the nation had passed through a wonderful week, an awful week. God's hand had been stretched out—"He had made the nation to understand that he was supreme." It does not seem to have occurred to the preacher that this method of proving the Lord is boss was rather rough on poor King Edward.

We expected to find Mr. Sims (of the *Referee*) in fine form over the Coronation postponement, and we were not disappointed. "We are suddenly hurled," he said, "from the highest pinnacle of joy to the deepest abyss of gloom." How the great "Dagonet" must have thrust his tongue in his cheek as he penned that sentence! The London crowd has been enjoying itself as well as looked civil in the circumstances; "Dagonet" has also been doing the same thing, judging from the later parts of "Mustard and Cress." But when the royal bulletin is stuck up he says, "Let us all look unhappy"—And as soon as he is round the corner he dances a jig and makes all the bells ring in his jester's cap.

"Perhaps God put it off because the seats were so damp." So said a little girl who heard some grown-up people discussing what Providence meant by arresting the Coronation. Mr. Sims, who tells the story, does not appear to think that Providence had anything to do with the matter. "Yet it is quite within the bounds of reasonable argument," he says, "that the postponement of the Coronation has saved thousands of people from the evils that would have resulted from sitting for many hours on saturated wood." Probably there is truth in this. It is as good a justification of the ways of God to men as we have seen lately. King Edward had to

undergo an operation for appendicitis in order to save crowds of his subjects from stricture. We understand it now.

A very different explanation is given in a Radical newspaper:—

“It seems as if some calamitous Destiny overhung this nation since our quarrel with the Boer States. That war killed the Queen; its anxieties, no doubt, fostered the illness of the present monarch. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.”

Now if God is angry with this nation for quarrelling with the Boer States, why did he not give them the victory? What sense is there in letting us beat them and take away their independence, and then killing members of our royal family to punish us for our sin? How did the war kill Queen Victoria? Is it the last straw that breaks the camel's back? Very old people must die of *something*. And why should God go for poor King Edward on account of the South African war? He had no more to do with it than any infant in arms. It is commonly reported that he played the part of a pacificator, and helped to bring about a settlement of that unhappy quarrel. Thus the God of the Radical journal is no wiser than the God of the clergy. Instead of going for King Edward he should have gone for (say) Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. What justice is there in carving the King's stomach with operating knives, while the Colonial Secretary wears a monocle in one eye and a smile in the other?

And now for a few words on the “intercession” business. When the present King was Prince of Wales he nearly lost his life by typhoid fever. The nation prayed for his recovery, and afterwards held a great thanksgiving service in St. Paul's Cathedral. God Almighty was publicly thanked for his kindness in saving the Prince's life. But the doctors were not forgotten; two of them were knighted, and all were handsomely rewarded. Now the Prince has become King, and is again in danger, the doctors are judiciously associated with the Lord in the work of his recovery. To leave his life in the hands of the Lord exclusively would be too perilous; the doctors are there to supplement his efforts, and see that

nothing is neglected. They keep an eye on Providence ; and everybody, including the King, feels that their vigilance is requisite. With six doctors and one God all may yet be well.

The Next Move.

THE daily bulletins concerning the King's health continue to be so favorable that sanguine persons are already prophesying that the Coronation will take place very shortly. But the case is one of great uncertainty. There is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip, and there may be yet another slip twixt the King and the Coronation. Not that we wish for it ; we are only reproving a certain rashness on the part of the public vaticinators.

Whether the Coronation comes early or late, the clergy will surely not let it be taken without a preparatory Thanksgiving. That is the next item on the program. King Edward will have to go to St. Paul's Cathedral and participate in a service of thanks to God for his recovery. Nothing will be said on that occasion about the doctors. They will have done their work and received their rewards. It will then be the Lord's turn, and the clergy will see that he gets all the credit. For his reputation, like their existence, is parasitical. He takes all the glory of other persons' successes. The failures he leaves to their own account. It is, indeed, on this very plan that Christianity is constructed. Man is left to share all his sins with the Devil ; but all the good in him is

ascribed to the grace of God. Every time it is heads poor man loses and tails the Deity wins.

We expect to find the clergy working that Thanksgiving for all it is worth. It will give a much-needed lift to their profession. They will receive a certificate of the efficacy of prayer, signed by the King, and countersigned by the British nation. And if they cannot trade profitably for a good while on that basis, they must be very degenerate representatives of the clerical interest.

Religion is worship, and worship is prayer. Piety is a lively sense of favors to come. All over the world, and under every form of faith, this is the everlasting verity. The old story told by Dr. Tylor goes to the root of the matter. A missionary in Africa set up a little iron chapel, with a little bell on the top. One day he was ringing the bell for the morning service, and one of his "converts" came by at that moment. "Aren't you coming in?" asked the missionary. "No," said the convert, "I don't want anything just now."

Someone has sent us a copy of a Roman Catholic organ, the Irish *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. It contains a department headed "Petitions," and another headed "Thanksgivings." These are described as "only a few" out of the "thousands" that reach the Editor. Not one of them is accompanied by a name and address. The only place mentioned is "Tipperary," and the petitioners and thanksgivers sign themselves, "A Grateful Child of Mary," "A Hopeful One," "Hannah," "Three Orphans," and so forth. We suppose the registry of their names and addresses, with other particulars, is kept in the beautiful land above. They pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for some favor—a good situation, or the recovery of a sick relative; and if their prayer is answered they drop a "thanksgiving"—together, we suppose, with something more substantial—to the *Messenger*. If their prayer is *not* answered they say nothing. And thus the game goes on to the comfort of the faithful and the profit of the Church.

Such victims as these are an easy prey. Even the King is

not a difficult one. He cannot help himself. If he were to pooh-pooh the clergy, and refuse to take part in a Thanksgiving, he would only be fighting against the common interests of imposture and privilege—in which his own interest is included. But there is nobler game to be run down. We may instance Mr. Chamberlain. He meets with a cab accident, and spends his sixty-sixth birthday in hospital. Now the accident might have been a good deal worse; it might even have been fatal. We may look upon it as a "mercy" that the Colonial Secretary is still alive. True, his wound is described as "not dangerous," but who can be sure of such things? There is clearly room for prayer; yea, and for thanksgiving afterwards. We suggest, then, that the clergy should try to tackle Mr. Chamberlain. He would be a splendid catch if they could only land him. And now that he has lost a lot of blood he may be amenable. Perhaps the Archbishop of Canterbury is too old for an enterprise like this, but the Bishop of London is younger and more ambitious. He might take Mr. Chamberlain in hand, induce him to show at least a little connivance, get up a special service of prayer for his perfect recovery, and, finally, drive him in triumph to the Cathedral. It would be a splendid stroke for dear old Mother Church, and it should really be attempted.

Mr. Chamberlain's thanksgiving service should precede the King's. It would serve as a rehearsal. The royal affair might then go through without a hitch.

Meanwhile it is to be noted that illnesses and calamities are a golden harvest for the clergy. They live upon other men's misfortunes. The happy do not need them. That is why they preach the religion of sorrow. Every man's misery is their opportunity. They work upon man's mortality, and trade upon his fear of death. Were he immortal he would laugh at them. As it is they can afford to laugh at him.

The King's illness, in particular, has been a god-send to the soul-savers of every denomination, though especially to the parsons of the State Church. By voicing the general

desire for his recovery, by battering the ears of the Almighty with their loud petitions, by representing every improvement in his condition as the result of divine intervention, and, finally, by securing that he shall publicly return thanks to God in one of their joss-houses, they have shown themselves what we always said they were—past-masters in the art of deception and imposture.

The King's Dinner.

WE do not wish to depreciate the King's generous intention in providing a Coronation dinner for half a million poor people. It is something that he thinks of the destitute in the midst of his plenty. But it is very certain that the money—some £30,000—could be more profitably invested. A dinner is eaten, digested, and assimilated; and when the force it gives is expended it disappears for ever. What advantage has been gained if there is no dinner on the morrow? If a man *has* to die of hunger, he may as well die one day as the next. Evidently, then, the King's Dinner—however well meant—is like a dab of ointment on a running ulcer, springing from a chronic corruption of the blood. What is wanted is the *prevention* of poverty—in the sense of destitution of the necessaries and decencies of life. Giving dinners will not promote that object. On the contrary, the very fact that one person is able to pay for *thirty thousand* dinners, while another person is unable to pay for *one*, is in itself a sufficient proof that our civilisation rests upon an absurd and precarious basis. Luxury at one extreme balances poverty at the other. The too-much involves the too-little. The

pride of the prince is the other side of the wretchedness of the pauper.

Fancy half a million people in the richest city in the world, the capital of the greatest empire on earth, to whom a dinner is an event! Something to be looked forward to, schemed for, and almost fought for. What a satire on our boasted civilisation! What a scandal to Christianity! Was it to this end that Christ brought salvation? After nearly two thousand years of the gospel of redemption the world is still so unredeemed! Myriads who have the "bread of life" offered to them by rich soul-saving societies look around in despair for a crust to appease their bodily hunger; and little children cry for food, though "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But if a dinner is an event to half a million people in one city, how many more are there to whom a dinner is an uncertainty? And what kind of civilisation is it when the cravings of animal appetite bar the road to intellectual and moral progress?

But for all the homilies of social science the King's Dinner will be eaten by ravenous thousands. Well-fed people are interesting themselves in the matter. Some of them have the ethical and religious interests of the King's Dinner-eaters so much at heart that they insist on the meal being a dry one. No drinks, not even a mug^{of} small beer. And this in the name of Jesus Christ, who turned seventy-five gallons of water into wine to keep a spree going! Was there ever greater hypocrisy? Surely, in the case of these poor wretches, the square meal of a lifetime might be washed down with something palatable. Surely, in their case, the Bible text might be quoted, "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

It is a pity, for their own sake, that the clergy did not squash the proposal of a Coronation Dinner. It was a grave mistake, from their own point of view, to emphasize the contrasting luxury and poverty of London. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the poor will feel grateful. They will feel

nothing of the kind. They know very well that there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark," though they don't exactly know how to set it right, and dread jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire.

Christianity has no message for the poor except that of kingdom-come. It contemplates the perpetual existence of poverty. "The poor ye have always with you." Its gospel is not justice, but charity. *Private* charity there may well be over and beyond justice. But the one is no substitute for the other.

It is the boast of the New Testament that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." This is all they can ever expect from Christianity. "Blessed be ye poor," said Jesus Christ, "for yours is the kingdom of heaven." A poor kingdom! like Sancho Panza's governorship of that imaginary island. It is the kingdom of earth that really matters. The wealthy and privileged classes keep it to themselves, and they pay a lot of tragi-comic fellows in black to preach the kingdom of heaven to the disinherited masses. This is the moral of the King's Dinner.

Coronation Day.

CORONATION DAY has come and gone at last. It was fixed for the end of June, but "Providence" played the deuce with the arrangements. Splendid weather was turned on, and the King knocked over. It was a nasty sarcasm on the part of that said "Providence," and a postponement was inevitable. Fortunately the King was taken in hand by a strong detachment of the best doctors in the nation. Everything that skill and care could do was done for him; everything that money could command was available. It is not miraculous, therefore, that His Majesty pulled through the worst of the trouble with more than usual celerity; nor is it quite astonishing that his convalescence has been remarkably rapid, for a magnificent yacht in the Solent is certainly an ideal hospital. Science has saved the King. But it would never do for him to say so. He has to play his part as head of the Church as well as head of the State. Accordingly, in his message "To My People" he gives Science the go by. Not so much as an allusion is made to the doctors or the nurses. They will get their rewards, of course; but they must not be thanked publicly. Thanks have to be rendered elsewhere. The clergy must be recognised. They got up prayers for the King's recovery, and they expect to receive all the credit. They are so exacting in these matters that the King was obliged to humor them. "The prayers of my people for my recovery," he says, "were heard, and I now offer up my deepest gratitude to Divine Providence." Perhaps the King half believes this; he can hardly be such a fool as to believe it altogether. It is a discreet mixture; a big sop to the clergy, and a little *blague* on his own account.

We have asked this question before, and we ask it again: Why should God save the King more than any other man in this nation? Monarchs are no longer indispensable. Queen Victoria's loss was "irreparable," but it was found that the

earth still turned on its axis. After the lapse of a year and a-half she is almost forgotten. King Edward's death would equally have left no unfillable void. The Prince of Wales would have mounted the throne, and the loyalists would have worshipped a new God. For loyalism is really a form of religion. When the Prince of Wales becomes King we can see a deity created under our very eyes. He is sanctified by "the divinity that doth hedge a king." He becomes a totally new being in the twinkling of an eye. Before, he could even be chaffed; now, to speak lightly of him is a species of blasphemy. This is all nonsense, however, to the eye of reason. Kings are but men. However high your seat, as old Montaigne says, you actually sit on your own posteriors. Nor, we repeat, are kings in any way indispensable. One king disappears—and another takes his place—"The King is dead—Long live the King." And what difference is there, from the point of view of the Infinite, between the greatest king and the meanest of his subjects? A dead lord, as Gray said, ranks with commoners; and a dead king ranks with the mob of "the illustrious obscure." Unless, indeed, he is something more than a king. But how few monarchs have been able to claim the title of great men: Most of them are small enough—except in their own estimation, or in the flattery of their parasites. It was this truth that made Byron exclaim, in reference to "God save the King" in connection with George the Third, that it was "a great economy in God to save the like." Poor men, working men, breadwinners of families, die every day, and many of them prematurely. They have no troop of doctors round their sick beds, no crowd of nurses to attend to all their wants. They have to fight death alone, and they succumb. Why does not God save *them*? Why save the father of princes and princesses, and not the father whose death leaves his children to penury or destitution?

Whatever be the reason of the King's recovery, he *has* recovered, and gone through his Coronation. The Archbishop of Canterbury has dabbed His Majesty's bald head,

his breast, and the palms of his hands with holy oil, and thus "consecrated" him in the name of the Lord. He is now a full-blown sovereign, King in the sight of God, as well as in the sight of men. The one thing wanting is added. Edward the Seventh was King *de facto* already, but the Church has made him King by the grace of God. He is now both crowned and anointed—and much good may it do him!

The men and women who "assisted" at the Coronation in Westminster Abbey were not the British nation. Neither did they represent the British nation. Most of them were drones or parasites. Some of them had attained to their positions by hard work, of a kind, but these were a very small minority. As for the idle crowd outside, one need not speak of it with the slightest respect. There is more loyalism—perhaps we should say royalism—to-day than ever. There is also more rowdyism. Forty years ago it was not common to hear lads swearing in the streets; it is common enough now; and these lads doff their hats with grotesque reverence at the sound of "the King!" Various "odes" have appeared in the more "respectable" papers. Mr. John Davidson even has joined in the melancholy chorus. But the popular Coronation poet-laureate is the author of a tipsy song which has been shouted on the music-hall stages, and shouted still more lustily in the public thoroughfares:—

Drinking whisky, wine, and sherry,
We'll all be merry
On Coronation Day.

The sentiment and poetry of these lines are worthy of the occasion; the humbug at one end is matched by the vulgarity at the other; and one is tempted to say that to be King over such a mob is not an honor for which any man should thank God too vigorously.

Humbug and vulgarity! These are the chief characteristics of present-day loyalism. There is not a note of sincerity in it. Journalists who should know better, and *do* know better, are swept along by the popular flood. The *Daily News*, the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience, put on one of its best

homilectic scribes to write on "The King's Thanksgiving." There were many blunders in his article, but nothing quite so bad as the reference to that great and noble Emperor whose very name is music to the students of humanity. "The burden of Marcus Aurelius," the writer said, "was not so heavy as the burden of the ruler who presides over the destinies of the British Empire." What a prostitution of scholarship on the altar of political superstition! Marcus Aurelius was not a sham ruler, but a real one; the actual burden of empire rested upon his shoulders. He governed in fact, not in theory; he wielded power and bore responsibility; and in all serious fighting he went through the campaign at the head of its army, sharing its hardships no less than its dangers. Such a man needed no hocus-pocus of anointing to make him a true Emperor. The finest head and the noblest heart in the Roman Empire, resting on the bare ground of the tented field, wrapped in a cloak whose only distinction was that its color was the imperial purple, and thinking out some point in moral philosophy before falling off into a sleep well earned by the day-long cares of a mighty rulership, ought not to be mentioned in the same breath with a commonplace "constitutional" monarch, who is not the helm, but the gilded figure-head, of the ship of State. Christendom has never produced such rulers as the great Pagan Emperors. The throne shed no lustre on them: they shed lustre on the throne. They were eminent and conspicuous not only by station, but by intellect, and character, and public service. And now, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, and all the pretended uplifting influence of Christianity upon the Western world, we have nothing but "Edward, R. and I." to set beside Marcus Aurelius! It is really *too* absurd. We drop our pen in amazement at human folly.

The King's Chaplain.

THIS title is an Hibernicism. It should really be "the King's no chaplain." But that looks and sounds odd, and we have sacrificed strict accuracy to appearance and euphony. The case is this. A gentleman—probably in the soul-saving business himself—has been writing to the newspapers, complaining that King Edward does not keep a chaplain on board the royal yacht. There is a doctor to look after the crew's bodies, if anything goes wrong with them, but no priest, minister, preacher, or man of God of any description, to look after the salvation of their immortal souls. The result is that Captain Lambton actually takes charge of divine service when it has to be celebrated. No doubt he gets through the job with all the proverbial dexterity of a "handy man." Yet he is only an amateur, after all; and the job requires the services of a professional. Captain Lambton has never been consecrated. He is not endowed with the Holy Ghost. Probably, being a sailor, he swears as often as he prays—perhaps oftener. There is something in the salt water, or the open sea, or the atmosphere of a ship, or whatever it is, that encourages the use of superlative epithets and other striking forms of expression. All the greater, therefore, is the need of a tame Christian on board, to dilute the nautical language down to the proper strength for a set interview with the Almighty. Besides, a parson is as necessary as a doctor. Not only is he required as a soul-saver, but he has his living to get, and an opening should be made for him somewhere. It is a sad spectacle to see a lean curate looking longingly at the royal yacht from a distance, when he might be pursuing his trade on board of her, and enjoying a fine opportunity of becoming both fat and useful. It is clear, therefore, at least from the clerical point of view, that the King is acting improperly in sailing about without the company of a clergyman. Nevertheless, it is conceivable

that the King is acting quite properly from his own point of view. Not that we have any right to speak for him; only we think that something could be said if we had the right to say it.

Let us venture to suggest a few considerations. It will be conceded, we imagine, that after all that Coronation ceremony (or tomfoolery) in Westminster Abbey, following so soon upon his severe and well-nigh fatal illness, the King is very much in need of rest. Now a doctor is more conducive to his rest than a clergyman. The former would say "Take your ease, eat and drink well, keep on deck all you can, and sleep sound at nights." The latter would say, "Prepare to meet thy God." But we may be sure that the King is not at all anxious to meet his God, or to spend a superfluous amount of time in getting ready for the encounter. He was quite near enough to meeting his God a couple of months ago. A very distant acquaintance will do for the next ten years. Any man, even a king, who has just narrowly escaped death, will object to being pestered with reminders of his mortality.

In the next place, it must be admitted that the King has been to church a good many times already, that he has listened to a lot of sermons, and that he has heard plenty of lessons, prayers, and hymns. He has had enough to last him for a while. What he wants now is a holiday. He should leave his land-life entirely behind him; and, as the parson is a part of it, the parson is rightly told to stop on shore. When a man is seeking new health and strength, after a very trying illness, he does not want a soul-worrier constantly at his elbow; but may very well say, with the gentleman in the Acts of the Apostles, I will hear thee at a more convenient season.

In the third place, it can hardly be assumed that the King is in love with clergymen. As a man of the world, he must be pretty well aware of what they are driving at. He must know that they pursue their profession (or "calling") for ordinary business reasons. He must recognise that they preach heaven in order to live on earth. He must have a

poor opinion of them as a class, and in all probability he loves them so that he dotes upon their very absence.

Why, in the fourth place, should the King have a chaplain on the royal yacht for the sake of the crew? Sailors are seldom enamored of clergymen. They think it unlucky to have a clergyman on board. They have an idea that it means bad weather. We do not know *why*, but such is the fact. Perhaps it is a tradition that has come down from the days of Jonah. There was no peace till the prophet was thrown overboard. And it may be that sailors are still of opinion that the proper place for a chaplain is the belly of any fish that will entertain him.

The advocates of the clergy may object that the King has shown himself in other respects a friend of religion. Did he not declare that it was to his people's prayers that he owed his recovery? Did he not express his gratitude in consequence to Almighty God? Did he not "hurry up" his Coronation, and give the clergy a chance of signalling their services to the throne and the nation? Did he not show his opinion that he was only half a king until he had received the Church's blessing? Yes, he did so; but it must be remembered that he has a part to play as head of the Church as well as head of the State. It is a very rash assumption that his heart speaks every time he goes through a bit of public hocus-pocus with the clergy. They play the pantomime, and so does he; it is a part of the "business" of both their professions. They dispense the grace of God, and he reigns by the grace of God; but when the pantomime is over it is not surprising that he prefers their room to their company.

For our part, we commend the King's common sense in taking his sea-trip without a ghostly companion—a person who habitually wears black to suggest a funeral, and occasionally puts on a cassock to suggest a shroud. It will be time enough to resume touch with the mystery-mongers when his holiday is over. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The Thanksgiving Comedy.

THE great Coronation farce is drawing to a close. Soon after this article meets the readers' eyes the curtain will be rung down, the performers will be disrobing, and the spectators will be streaming home. What the performers think of the spectators, and what the spectators think of the performers, will not appear in the newspapers. The conventional platitudes and unctuosities will be printed. Nobody will talk sense or truth. It will be all fireworks and "God save the King."

On Saturday the King and Queen will drive into the City and home again by way of South London. Those who wish to bask in the sunshine of the royal countenance will enjoy their opportunity. They will find it cheap this time. Seats can now be had for the price of an old song. The first fine careless rapture is gone. It is impossible to bring back the loyal ecstasy of June. The psychological moment went by, and the psychological moment never returns.

On Sunday the King will take another drive. Accompanied by the Queen and other members of the Royal Family (capitals, please), he will attend a Thanksgiving Service (more capitals, please) at St. Paul's Cathedral. There is to be a "small procession," but nothing very "loud." For did not "Providence" humble the King's or the nation's pride in June? And is it safe to offer another provocation? His Majesty, however, will be met at the west door, at the top of the great flight of steps, by the Bishop, the Dean, and the Canons Residentiary; a procession will then be formed by the Lord Mayor, bearing the pearl sword, immediately preceding the King and Queen; and the whole troupe will appear before the Lord in a highly distinguished and effective manner.

The two Psalms selected for the service are the thirtieth and the hundred and eighth. The former opens as follows:—

"I will extol thee, O Lord ; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit."

We presume this will be regarded as the King's address Jehovah. Certainly he has been spared from the "grave" and the "pit," which mean precisely the same thing. In other words, he has had his trip to heaven postponed. He would rather not take it while the royal yacht holds out for better excursions. He has a good taste in personal enjoyment. "If you want a good thing keep near me," might be his motto. But he is obliged to adopt something more "respectable." So absurd is the divinity that doth hedge a King.

It must be admitted that the Lord has let a good many go down into the pit since he relieved King Edward. Some of them, too, were of much more importance to the world. Zola, for instance—a great writer and a noble man—might have been saved from that absurd death by suffocation, and allowed to complete the work of his genius. Nor should humbler instances be overlooked. How many a breadwinner's life has been cut short disastrously since the month of June. How many widows and orphans have been cast amongst the wreckage of society. Why, O why, should the Lord be careful of kings and careless of poor working men? We thought he was no respecter of persons. Yes, that is the text ; and the flunkey Thanksgiving Service is the commentary.

The Bishop of London is to be the preacher at this Thanksgiving Service. He was done—by "Providence"—out of the five minutes that he was to have had for a sermon at the Coronation. But now he is to have his revenge. "Providence" will have to put up with it, and the King will have to listen. It is to be presumed, however, that Dr. Ingram is courtier enough to "cut it short." God will think twice. A French lady said, before he damns a gentleman of

quality ; and the Bishop of London will think twice before he inflicts a long sermon upon his King.

We read of provision to be made at St. Paul's Cathedral for all sorts of persons, including pressmen, who are all sorts in themselves. But we see nothing about provision for the King's doctors. It was they, and not the ghost behind the curtain, who kept him out of the "pit." Everybody with a grain of common sense knows that if it had not been for their skill and attention, backed up by the finest nursing and other adjuncts that could be had for love or money, all the prayers in the world would never have saved King Edward from becoming a corpse. An operation was absolutely necessary, and that particular operation has only been practised for a few years. Not so long ago, even the doctors and the parsons together could not have saved the King's life. And prayer was just as efficacious then as it is now. It is science that has improved.

Probably the King himself knows why he is still alive. But his position is an awkward one. He must satisfy the clergy or make them his implacable enemies. The performance at St. Paul's Cathedral must therefore be gone through. But we dare say no one will be happier than himself when it is all over.

The "D.T.'s."

THE *Daily Telegraph* was once said to be run by a Jew in the interest of Christianity. The original Hebrew of the tribe of Levi who got hold of it traded a good deal on the cheap, shallow, popular writing of George Augustus Sala. And thereby hangs a tale. Mr. Sala (it is said) in the early days of the connection was instructed to write a rousing article on the Crucifixion. It was to appear the day before Good Friday, and the great G. A. S. wrote it at home, and took it down to Fleet-street himself—which was the cause of all the trouble. For on the way down Mr. Sala, who was not a teetotaller, met several friends, and the journey was broken by the usual adjournments. When he arrived at the *D. T.* office he was eagerly received by the aforesaid Hebrew gentleman of the tribe of Levi, who had begun to despair of that particular contribution. "Ah, Mr. Sala," he said, "I'm very glad to see you. Have you brought the *article*?" "Yes," replied the welcome contributor, and he held it out. But just at that moment he was seized with a fit of maudlin compunction. "You sha'n't have it," he stammered; "it was you — Jews who crucified the Savior. You shan't have it! You shan't have it!" And he reeled over and dropped the article into the fire. There was consternation in the editorial office, and weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on the part of the self-disgusted contributor, when he was able to realise the terrible sacrifice he had made on the altar of a too-well stimulated piety.

Many, many years have rolled by since the probable, possible, or mythical date of that touching incident. But the *Daily Telegraph* still maintains its pious reputation. Was it not the *D. T.*, in the early seventies of last century, when Albert Edward Prince of Wales was down with typhoid fever, that invited us all to watch the great national wave of prayer surging against the throne of Grace? Was it not

the *D. T.* that almost told God he would forget himself if he let the Prince die? And was it not the *D. T.*, when the Prince recovered, that sang the loudest in the Thanksgiving Chorus? The *D. T.* "caught on" to British piety on that occasion, and it has held on ever since.

Our Jew-Christian or Christian-Jew contemporary came out on Monday with a magnificent article on the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's Cathedral. It was written in the fine bold style that Matthew Arnold so much admired, and so celebrated in the Dedicatory Letter of *Friendship's Garland*. Yes, Adolescens Leo, Esq., is still the same. Time has not impaired his youthful vigor. It has not even mellowed him. He roars with the same robust music. He displays the same unction in his moments of piety. The voice breaks, the tears fall; and a large admiring public gazes spellbound at the pathetic spectacle.

"If the King's life," our contemporary said, "was precious to his people before his grave illness, it is doubly so now, in that his subjects throughout the world devoutly believe that he was restored to health in direct answer to their supplications and intercessions."

We doubt if the writer believes a word of this. Probably he had his tongue in his cheek from the beginning to the end of the sentence. Anyhow it is not true that *all* the King's subjects "devoutly believe" in the supernatural character of his recovery. Many of them believe they could have recovered themselves—with or without prayer—in the same circumstances. With a number of the first doctors in the land, with the best nursing skill obtainable for love or money, and with every other conceivable advantage that ample wealth and lofty position could afford, it is very difficult to see much room for divine assistance in the King's case. When there are six doctors and one God, will someone tell us how the celestial share in the patient's treatment is to be calculated?

According to the Bible, the doctors are a sort of interlopers in any kind of illness. But upon this point our contemporary

is discreetly silent. There is no reason, however, why we should practise the same hypocrisy. We beg to observe, therefore, that the Bible persistently sneers at doctors. In the Old Testament we read that things went wrong with King Asa because in his sickness he sought unto the physicians instead of unto the Lord. In the New Testament we read of the woman who had "suffered much of many physicians," and was made worse rather than better, until at last she was healed by the power of faith. Definite directions also are given about what should be done by believers in time of sickness. There is the calling in of elders, the anointing of the sick, and the praying over them; but there is no reference to calling in a doctor. Indeed, it is expressly said that "the prayer of faith shall recover the sick," so that all the other proceedings are purely formal. Such is the teaching of the Bible—the book which both Church and Chapel force into the hands of the children in our public schools; yet no one has the honesty to admit it except Free-thinkers and a handful of Peculiar People—so called, perhaps, because they have the peculiarity of squaring their practice with their profession.

Let us ask our contemporary a question. If it be true that the King's restoration to health is owing to the prayers of his people, is it honest to send poor parents to prison for relying upon prayer to save their sick children? If the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer be true at Buckingham Palace, how does it become false at Barking? And if it be right to thank God in a Cathedral for saving the life of a King, how is it wrong to trust the same God to save the life of a little child in a poor man's cottage?

So much for the *Daily Telegraph*. And now a few words on the Bishop of London. This right reverend Father-in-the-Lord was allowed five minutes for his Thanksgiving Sermon. That was all the King could spare him. But the Bishop made good use of the time. Never was there a worse exhibition of flunkeyism. Dr. Ingram expressed no end of astonishment that King Edward had twice—yes, actually,

twice—been near death. Such things, of course, are never heard of in the case of ordinary men. God meant something by saving the King's life a second time; yes, it was to be thought that "God had some plan for that life of special service and usefulness and strength." Altogether, if we may judge by the rest of the preacher's observations on this head, the Almighty has been thinking of little else of late but the respectable, though not very brilliant, gentleman who happens to occupy the throne of Great Britain and Ireland. All the rest of the world has presumably to look on and wonder—and wait for its share of divine attention.

Dr. Ingram thought it necessary to refer to "the instruments God used." Courtier-like he mentioned first "the noble lady who was constantly by the patient's side"—just as though it were an uncommon thing for wives to tend their husbands. Then came "the surgeons and physicians, whose untiring skill and care were of so great avail," and last "the nurses who were so faithful in their service." Yet the object of the Thanksgiving Service was not to sing their praises, but to "honor God." For without his spoken word "all skill and all nursing is unavailing." Now what is the legitimate inference from these expressions? Why, this. Doctors and nurses must attend the sick; it is not safe to leave a patient entirely in the Lord's hands; God can do nothing without instruments; but, on the other hand, if the doctors and nurses pull the patient through his trouble, it is really not their doing, for all their skill and attention is useless if God does not give the word for the patient's recovery. Such is the mental muddle in which we find a Bishop and a most "distinguished" congregation at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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