

activities of man and all the workings of nature." It seemed strange that he should have coupled this declaration with an anticipation of criticism, for what thoughtful man could be expected at this stage of thought to conceive of God, whether personal or impersonal, as essentially other than "a great and ever-present force, which is manifest in all the activities of man and all the workings of nature"? Yet Dr. Abbott was not out of his reckoning in anticipating criticism. One clergyman absurdly denounces that conception of God's immanence as pantheism, and asserts for the churches that they "conceive of God as a personality, eternal and infinite, apart from and outside the creations which he has brought into being." Another similarly describes God as "the only being outside" the universe he created! In the midst of this paganism it is gratifying to find some clergymen besides Dr. Abbott whose conception of God does not divest Him of omnipresent beneficence and omnipotent rationality.

"Frenzied prosperity" is what the underpaid and the unemployed are beginning to call it.

THE SAFETY AND SANITY OF ANANIAS.

I

Many and many a commonplace liar, perhaps excusable, and certainly comparatively innocuous, has been shamefully entreated by public opinion in being compared with the Great Untruthful of all history, Ananias; and many and many a man of the Ananias class has lived out a long life serenely unconscious of his turpitude, looked up to by far less harmful men, and, in turn, looking down upon his betters from the height of wealth or social respectability which his lack of conscience enabled him to maintain.

What was the sin of Ananias, that he should be singled out from the millions of all time as the rightful occupant of the very pinnacle of disrepute? It could not have been merely that he lied. The Psalmist said in his haste

that all men were liars. He was led to this sweeping conclusion because he was greatly afflicted. Yet in his calmer and more hopeful mood he does not distinctly take it back, and we are left to infer that even his mature opinion of the honesty of mankind was not at all flattering. Tennyson speaks of his own time—which, probably, was as honest as any—as one in which "only the ledger lives and only not all men lie." In the name of all that is decent, why should we pillory the memory of one unfortunate Hebrew and pelt it with our execrations and abuse for twenty centuries?

This fastening upon Ananias as the great liar does Ananias no harm, but it does us much good. When a quality is typified in a person we can understand it so much better and discuss it so much more handily. When we have no actual person to take as a type, we imagine one; and so we have our Drink Demon, our Angel of Peace, our Santa Claus, and all the rest. This raising of Ananias to the bad eminence of the Specimen Liar of all ages is another proof of the wisdom of that great humanity that Talleyrand and Lincoln had in mind when they said: "Everybody thinks better than anybody." The world's judgment of Ananias is absolutely wise.

Let us look at the sin of Ananias, that we may know it, abhor it, flee from it.

This man was a member of a communistic society; it is categorically stated in the record that "they had all things in common." They were a little band of enthusiasts gathered about an Idea. Ananias, like some other members of the band, was a land-owner. Like others he sold a piece of land. But he put into the common fund only a part of the price, though he pretended that he offered it all. The leader of the little community, Peter by name, taxed him with his deceit, and Ananias fell dead. Sapphira, his wife, who had been a party to his fraud, not knowing of the discovery, later made the same attempt to deceive the band. She also was stricken, and was buried with her husband.

Surely this was a fearful penalty for a merely venial sin. Look at the case from Ananias' point of

view. He was probably a far-sighted man, and, as such, he would know that the enthusiasm of the communists would soon wane, and that those who threw their all into the common fund would live to regret, perhaps in age, decrepitude and poverty, the fearful error they had made in trusting the zealots who had pushed themselves into positions of leadership. He agreed, no doubt, with the tenets of the band; but he was not deaf to the counselings of reason and experience. If we assume that he was a wealthy man, we make his case all the stronger. He was contributing much, receiving little, and exercising only partial control; while others gave nothing—having nothing to give—yet demanded as much as he, and had even more to say in directing the affairs of the society. Besides, if he was accustomed all his life to decent surroundings, the breakdown of the communistic organization which he foresaw, and which actually came to pass in a very short time, would mean a fearful fall for him and his family; whereas those who had always been poor would simply return to their accustomed life. He may have had reason to doubt that all the others were actually contributing with perfect honesty to the common fund. In the sales of property and inflow of contributions there must have been cases that looked not exactly right. Would it be safe, would it be sane, for him to give all where others, it might be, were giving only part? Anyway, had not a man a right to do what he would with his own?

If this was the reasoning of Ananias, he deserved his punishment and more, for his very plea was an aggravation of the offense. The strong, earnest man who led the little band of devotees showed the offender in a word or two the nature of his wrongdoing; and it was probably a conscience-stricken and repentant Ananias whose corpse was soon after borne out by the young men. But the communistic leader did not set forth the circumstances. It was not necessary to do so, for all the parties to the discussion knew them perfectly. We must use imagination to see the matter in the light in which it must have presented itself to Ananias himself as judg-

ment was pronounced against him by the leader of the people he had betrayed.

The world of that time was a bad world. We can, without hypocrisy, hope that we of to-day are, on the whole, better than the people of that time were. Religion had been formalized or corrupted; government had become the hireling of the unscrupulous and the crafty; society was little more than communal vice. Every lover of mankind was looking and praying for a remedy for the fearful social diseases of the time.

The little communistic band of which Ananias was a member had the temerity to believe that they had been made the bearers of the message that should save the world. Tremblingly and with an awful joy they were spreading the glad tidings. A part of their message, if not the whole of it, was love,—a love embracing all mankind and knowing no barrier of birth, creed, social condition or worldly wealth. They had been told, and they believed, that they were the salt of the earth, the light of the world. If that salt should lose its savor, if that light should be hidden, the one chance for the sin-sick world would be lost; mankind would be doomed forever. They may have been all wrong. But they wished ill to no man, and they had a right to their opinion. They had a right to demand honest treatment at the hands of others, for they were candid in their dealings with all.

Their association was a perfectly voluntary one. If any man wished to remain outside, he was free to do so. The little band had no offices to give, no honors to confer, no wealth to divide. In the world outside were all these things, and the man who loved them was by that fact excluded from membership in the band, unless he lied to get in. Ananias knew all this, and, by his very membership, declared his acceptance of it. If he changed his mind, he could at any time withdraw. But to change his mind and still act in such a way as to lead the others to believe that he was with them in feeling, was to introduce discord with all its fearful consequences. To say that others had already acted with duplicity could not justify him in so acting; for he had

not established such a charge against them before those to whom they and he were bound, nor could he say that any promise made to him by the band as a whole had been broken. If he was dissatisfied, his course was to withdraw.

Set in contrast, on the one side the self-abnegation, the pure and lofty enthusiasm, and the fond and exultant hope for humanity, that marked the true men of this little band of brothers, and, on the other side, the cold, calculating selfishness, the half-hearted interest, of Ananias, and we see what the communist leader must have meant when he told the poor culprit: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Ananias may have been killed by some sudden, subtle bolt from heaven. But, if he did not deserve even a worse fate than that which overtook him, the bursting upon his view of the fearful nature of his sin was enough to end his life.

II

After centuries had been spent by mankind in the vain effort to found governments upon force, upon law, upon commerce, upon religion, upon monarchy, upon art; and after nation after nation so founded had waxed, waned, died and been almost or wholly forgotten,—there arose a nation whose cornerstone was declared to be justice. The first words this nation uttered to the world were a declaration of this principle as being so deeply and obviously true that it could not be argued, but must be taken as the ultimate basis of all argument, of all system, of all organization. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," declared this nation as its very first word to the world, "that all men are born equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." To maintain these rights was the one object of government as stated at the inception of this nation.

It was a new evangel to a world sunk in war, chicanery and social mal-adjustments. At that time, the wisest of men were fearful that the "red ruin and the breaking up of laws" of a former day were to come again, and soon. But the utter collapse of government was prevented. The founders of the new state declared, and so did

their successors for generations, that the new principle had been the salvation of the world. The new state prospered as no country had ever prospered before. Some of its people, from the very first, distrusted the new principle of justice, and, as time went on, the number of this class seemed to increase. But there were some who declared that every year proved yet more clearly that government for any other purpose than the maintenance of justice would mean early and utter ruin to the state. And, as their country was the only one that had made justice the object of its government, they saw that to make a change and to found the government upon force, conquest, wealth, or any other form of authority, would be to leave the world again in darkness and the nations without a leader. Mankind would go back, and it could then regain its place only after ages of misery, and only by once more "weltering its way through Chaos and the murk of Hell."

This may have been all a mistake. But there is a band of men in the new nation, be they mistaken or not, and be they few or many, who are devoted heart and soul to the idea that absolute justice, and the maintenance of their country as one in which the government strives after absolute justice, is necessary to the salvation of their country and of the world. Ananias and his moral kin are those whom they have to fear. The man who says that he is one of this band, yet holds that freedom is to be given to certain people only when he is graciously pleased to believe them fit to enjoy it; that robbery is to be prevented only by composition with the robber; that justice is to be proclaimed, not freely as a right, but tentatively as a privilege—this man is the Ananias of the band of believers in the new nation and in the new evangel.

When a man can win a woman by declaring that he loves her, not unselfishly but calculatingly, not devotedly but safely and sanely, then a nation may hope to prosper by chaffering and huxtering with justice. Even conquest cannot make a nation great unless its people devote themselves to conquest. How then can Justice,

whose kingdom is so much harder to establish, make great the nation that gives her half-hearted and cynical devotion? Had the spirit of Ananias animated the early preachers of the gospel of love, the movement would have died before it was born. If those who pretend to love justice are to declare that justice shall be done only when and where it does not interfere with the interests of those who have bought and paid for the privilege of doing injustice, Ananias and his kind are given command of the one movement that is to save the world. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

A. C. CAMPBELL.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

LOUISIANA.

Natchitoches, La., Dec. 15.—I have seen at this place during the past few days a good illustration both of the manner in which effectual work may be done in the interest of juster taxation, and of the readiness with which open-minded men accept clear suggestions.

Natchitoches (pronounced Nack-i-tosh) is one of the most interesting old towns of the South. It combines the beauty of an ancient background with the freshness of modern progress. It is a cathedral town with a Catholic bishop. It is the seat of the State normal school, one of the best in the whole country. Here one may see the flower of Southern hospitality, in homes as simple as they are refined, as open as they are modest, as dignified as they are gracious. Here one may find the best type of the high-toned Southern gentleman—not, perhaps always free from prejudice, who is?—but, in the main, open-minded and well-informed. Here one may sit at table with the old regime and listen to a discussion of woman suffrage. Here one may attend a reception at the home of an enlightened Congressman and find about him a group talking of Henry George and the single tax. Really there are few towns in all these United States superior, in a combination of refined manners and intellectual freshness, to this old and new little city of Natchitoches—with its dignified double-towered cathedral and its own municipal lighting plant.

It is no wonder that Louisiana's recently-elected progressive superintendent of education should have wished to assemble here his first meeting of local superintendents. The normal school, where they met, is, as I have said, one of the best in the land. It is so recognized by the foremost school men, North as well as South. The State superintendent of Maine was present

at the meeting, and he will bear witness to the truth of this statement. It was fine to see his undisguised admiration and his genuine friendliness.

The meeting was notable for its earnestness and for its businesslike conduct. Nearly every corner of the State was represented by some leading man enlisted in the cause of public education. There was an entire absence of politics and political axes—just a determination to further public education. Of course a main underlying thought was the increase of funds for this purpose, and this brings me back to the theme with which I started and which is the purpose of this communication, namely, that earnest men are open-minded and see more things than newspapers are ready to report.

I spoke quietly, not publicly, to men from every part of the State, and found not one who did not agree with me when I said that the large land holdings were shamefully assessed at far below their values, and that the revenues of the parishes ought to be increased by a juster assessment. A parish superintendent said to me that one might ride ten miles in any direction from his town without getting off the land of half a dozen men, that this land was worth on an average at least \$15 per acre, that in fact you could not buy it, and that it was assessed at not more than a dollar per acre. Let me say also that most of these sound-headed men also saw the point that a juster assessment would not only increase revenue, but might force the great land holders to sell land in smaller holdings, a result which they clearly saw would be advantageous to the development of the community.

I talked quietly and individually, because the time is not quite ripe for public agitation of the question. But it cannot be long delayed. The discrimination in favor of large landlords is too marked to escape public attention much longer. Assessors are still timid and conventional. Some who have innocently tried to assess equitably have lost a good job, and the masses of the people have not yet opened their eyes. But the time is approaching when the idea of a better assessment of land values for public revenue will be more generally grasped and a reform demanded. What I found at this meeting was that many who want more money for the public schools already see the point. Meantime nearly all are ready to join in a campaign in favor of local taxation for local schools, and by and by they will agree where to lay the honest burden.

J. H. D.

WASHINGTON.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 17.—We have it on high authority that "words are good when backed by deeds, and only so." Being curious to learn whether "words, words, only words," was the

attitude of the administration towards the "beef trust," and having in mind that the House on March 7, last, at the instance of a Republican (Martin, of South Dakota) unanimously passed a resolution, calling upon the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to report as to the cause of the low price of fresh beef and the large margin between the price of cattle on the hoof and dressed meat; and that nine months have elapsed, and the "early report of his findings according to law," which he was then directed to make, has not been made, I introduced a resolution yesterday, directing the Attorney General to report whether he has ascertained that the "beef trust" is a combination in restraint of trade, and if so, what steps he has taken to cause a "forfeiture of their property" in course of transportation from one State to another?"

The curiosity that dictated the resolution was not lessened by the discovery that in a letter to the American Anti-Trust league, dated August 20, 1901, Mr. Moody's predecessor, Attorney General Knox, declared it to be the duty of his department; "and its object, to enforce the Federal statutes as interpreted by the courts, wherever there is probable cause for believing that they have been violated." As the "probability" of their violation by the "beef trust" must be admitted even by the Attorney General's office—else why the farce of applying for an injunction—it would seem that there is no good reason for not taking the most summary action against this combination that the statutes provide for.

In view of the very explicit wording of section 6 of the "anti-trust" law, of 1890, which provides:

"Sec. 6. Any property owned under any contract or by any combination, or pursuant to any conspiracy (and being the subject thereof) mentioned in section 1 of this act, and being in the course of transportation from one State to another, or to a foreign country, shall be forfeited to the United States, and may be seized and condemned by like proceedings as those provided by law for the forfeiture, seizure and condemnation of property imported into the United States contrary to law;"—

what can be more clear, than that it is the obvious duty of the Attorney General to at once take steps for the "forfeiture, seizure and condemnation" of any property of the beef trust which may be (and it always has some) in transit between the States? Does anyone doubt that the combination would dissolve if such summary steps were taken?

Anyone making whisky without complying with the internal revenue law has his property confiscated and destroyed, and is lucky to escape with his life if he attempts to defend his property. He who manufactures cigars except in accordance with internal revenue regulations finds his property confiscated. Whoever brings property into this country without paying duty is liable to lose it. But those who compose