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**Upon Charles Bradlaugh
and a Catholic Editor.**

In the brave days of old, subsequently to the bridge-keeping exploit of the admirable Horatius, but before the war that was supposed to end war, Mr. Gilbert Keith Chesterton got the polemic pasting of his life in the *Clarion*, when that once-famous rag was a clarion, at the hands of Mr. Robert Blatchford, in the era before that persevering and persistent publicist had become sunken in Spiritualism and sentimentality.

But, as the Latin poet long ago remarked: All things are subject to change, and we are changed with them. And now our erewhile friends have overlaid (no difficult task, in the case of the editor of *G.K.'s Weekly*) the heresies of their journalistic heyday, and they find repose in varying forms of spiritual narcotics. Mr. Blatchford consoles himself in age with the elusive and mysterious denizens of the Summerland; and Mr. Chesterton has developed a more than platonic affection for the lady who is popularly supposed, by the less-educated Irish and others, to be God's mother.

The cerebral vagaries of spiritually-minded and materially-prosperous journalists are of no special interest to us; our popular newspapers are fulfilled of gloriously-gorgeous gush, descriptive of the religious raptures of Fleet Street hacks; and God knows, or perhaps he doesn't know, that it is beyond the wit of any one scribbler to attempt to record all the weary wanderings of those holy and untroubled tripe-merchants who pen their pure piety at so much a column. But now and then one of the denizens of the Monastery of Fleet Street calls our kibe badly, and then we simply have to kick out, and damn the expense.

If ever there were a perfectly and undeniably immortal system of thought it is that of Atheism. This is a paradox that should, but, we fear, will not, delight that superstitious, super-witty, superlatively-fecund mind owned by that supernumerary of Christian apologists, Mr. G.K. Chesterton. For the three hundred and forty two thousand, eight hundred and second time—

our calculation is only approximate, and we write under correction—that divine Distributist announces to an expectant and sceptical world that Atheism is dead. "That dead age of Atheism" is our poet's gentle anti original and—we suppose—witty way of describing the epoch dominated by the colossal figure of Charles Bradlaugh. Yet, in spite of its having been repeatedly buried, we seem to recall one or two papers and one or two writers who remain devoted to the cause of Atheism; immortal in that it seems to survive an unlimited number of funerals.

If we seem to labour an obvious point, be it remembered that we are attempting to disprove, once for all, the pious fallacy that religion survives, unchanged and eternal, the assaults made upon it by the nobler and braver and wiser of mankind. The change in the popular outlook regarding "God," "Heaven," "Hell," and the rest of the Christian rag-bag, has been brought about by the efforts of militant Atheists, one of the most dominant of whom was the heroic Charles Bradlaugh, the noblest figure of the later nineteenth century.

All his life this superlative warrior and philanthropist was calumniated and reviled by "good" Christians; now that he is dead, slain by religious enemies who objected to his efforts to free mankind from various forms of theological and social superstition, he is patronizingly sneered at, and his lifework derided, by the ponderous arm-chair critic and superstitionist who has never run any sort of social risk in his life. (Yes. We know all about the Marconi ramp; but that was mainly an anti-Semitic stunt. Mr. Chesterton, as a good medievalist, cannot bear the idea of Jews having part in the public life of this country. No true Catholic ever forgives the Jews for rejecting the preposterous claim of the late Jesus Christ to be regarded as God's little boy.)

That "dead age of Atheism" has now, it is well known, given place to a living age of Catholicism, though nobody, excepting Mr. Chesterton and his religious friends, seems to have noticed it yet.

In spite of the radiant inaccuracies and dreary optimism exuded by our popular paradoxist, we do not think that the Roman Catholic Church, with all its foul and filthy accompaniments, will ever again rule in Europe; its foundations have been sapped beyond restoration by various branches of that poor, dead Atheism, whose death sacred scribblers have been celebrating for so many centuries.

Like many another pious egotist, Mr. Chesterton enjoys the delusion that, since he, G.K.C., has found Jesus, Atheism has

ceased to exist; this kind of ducking-ostrichism is, however, common to those afflicted with super-religiosity, and it is with great pleasure that we inform our Christian journalist of the fact.

Our remarks are unquestionably in very bad taste; but they are not in such execrable taste as those of our holy editor patronizing Charles Bradlaugh from his arm-chair, and decrying the hero's life-work in the interests of his mythical Saviour.

Upon reflection, our clerical clownist may realize that it is because of the self-sacrificing heroism of Charles Bradlaugh, and his predecessors and successors in heresy—in the teeth of Christian opposition and terrorism—that we are enabled to answer the Chestertonian jibe at Atheism by fleers at the decaying and draggled deities of Catholicism.

For the first time in the history of theological controversy Freethinkers and Pietists may debate without dire consequences to the former; thanks, as I say, to Charles Bradlaugh and such as he. The ultimate result will not be favourable to any form of superstition.

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