

TORCH OF REASON.

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THE TORCH OF REASON.

For the TORCH OF REASON.

"So long as the torch of truth makes its way it matters not how or by whom it is borne."—Huxley.

The torch of truth is making way,
The powers of darkness mourn;
Blest is the land with reason's ray,
By whomsoever borne.

The gloom was great when truth was
curst,

And might was reckoned right;
The rule of wrong has done its worst,
For truth turns on more light.

Once priests and kings ordained—"Obey
Or death is yours, and well
Ye must believe, or we will slay,
And send your souls to hell!"

But science searched to find out facts,
And found those thronemates frauds;
Truth's torch revealed their roguish acts,
The gleam consumed their Gods.

In vain the hypocrites may rage,
And priests read bibles strange;
They soon will loose their hireling wage,
With reason's ray in range.

Then brave the TORCH OF REASON bear,
O'er ocean, peak and plain,
Till not a human anywhere
Shall grope in error's reign.

JOHN PRESCOTT GUILD,
Tyngsboro, Mass.

Religious Emotion and Revival Religion.

Rev. Thomas Van Ness, a prominent Unitarian minister in a sermon recently delivered in Boston criticised the teachings of Moody, the evangelist, very pointedly. He said:

"The whole plan of salvation, as held out by itinerant preachers, is wrong. To say that a man may be saved in ten minutes is pernicious. Mere blind emotion is not enough; the head must be educated as well as the heart touched. Another harm done is to the children. I would not take any one under 20 years of age to these meetings. The nerves of young girls are often affected, and hysterics or even insanity sometimes results. Experiences are related which ought never to be known outside the domestic circle."

This is what Freethinkers have always claimed. They have protested against exciting "mere blind emotion," because while in many cases it is injurious to both body and mind, it fails to afford either moral education or moral discipline. Appeals to superstitious fears may, during such excitements, have some restraining power while the excitement lasts, but no sooner does that subside than the fears engendered ceases to exist, and the subject relapses into the old ways, with the ability to overcome temptation weakened rather than strengthened. Old beliefs and the

old spirit of bigotry are revived, with opposition to all progressive thought, but there is no revival of moral worth.

In 1857 Theodore Parker aroused the ire of the orthodox clergy by declaring that religious revivals did not make men more honest, more faithful, more just, and that what was needed was a revival of morality. For this truthful and sensible remark, he was prayed for and prayed at. Some of the preachers at a meeting held in Park street church Boston, went so far as to pray that God would "put a hook in his mouth," and that God would "convert him and save him from hell or remove him out of the way." When afterwards Parker went abroad for his health and died in a foreign land, some of these preachers rejoiced in the death of this great and good man as an instance of answer to prayer and an illustration of God's method of dealing with blasphemous opponents of religion.

For centuries the belief has prevailed that the emotional excitement manifested during religious revivals or by individuals under the influence of some religious stimulus was the effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit. In recent years this belief has been greatly modified. Religious revivals and religious campmeetings are less frequent and less general than formerly. The more intelligent religious leaders have come to see that converts added to the churches during one of these revivals, increase their numerical strength but lower their average moral character and social influence. For this reason many of the orthodox clergy even, no longer favor these excitements.

I think Mr. Moody, of late, has tried to accompany the revival work in which he has been engaged with moral agencies and influences which were little thought of by revivalists a few years ago.

In the past, periods of business depression have always been followed by religious "awakening." It was so in 1837. In 1857 the financial disturbance and the loss and suffering which resulted, were followed by a religious excitement which, originating in the east, moved west like an epidemic and extended to the Pacific coast.

Indeed the revival was an epidemic, and an endemic also. Mental and religious conditions and the general feeling of loss and insecurity were such as to render these excitements inevitable wherever pro-

ple assembled under religious leaders who believed in the old creeds and the old methods. These conditions, too, made the emotional excitement contagious. It extended to all classes. Many persons now living remember the announcements in the papers, of the conversions of "plug uglies," "shoulder bitters," "dead rabbits," "awful (Orville) gardeners," etc. It has been stated that 100,000 converts were added to the churches in the United States, as a result of that revival.

In later years revivals have been more sporadic. This fact I attribute in a large degree to the rapid decay of theological belief and the progress of rational, liberal thought inside and outside the churches.

The present business depression in the United States has been very severe and prolonged, but there have been no such general religious excitements as have prevailed in the past. Yet the strain is beginning to show its effect on many minds; and among such, mental conditions are returning favorable to the religious revival. This the religious exhorters feel and partially see, without understanding the rationale of it. Hence the announcements of efforts in the large cities and probably in the smaller communities to inaugurate "religious awakenings" the efforts will no doubt succeed to some extent, but the result is not likely to equal that of such efforts made forty or even twenty years ago.

There is more religious liberality and catholicity now, thanks to the progress of science and freethought, than was ever known before; and the churches have not escaped its influence. We expect therefore that the churches will work together more than hitherto in the direction of a revival and that the excitements will be less violent. The more revolting doctrines of theology, belief in which has so largely been outgrown, will not in the more enlightened communities be given any prominence; there will be fewer conversions through fear and the converts, therefore, are likely to be of a somewhat better class.

Religious leaders, of course, will make the occasion one of use in attracting attention to the work of the churches, obtaining money for missionary enterprises, etc. Many good people and many who are not good, will unite in supporting these revivals (which are fast becoming survivals) but though they may temporarily revive a decaying superstition, they will not revive

honesty or justice, the spirit of inquiry or love of truth. Whatever good may result from the stimulation of religious emotion it will be more than neutralized by the injurious effects of such excitement, which among the more ignorant and mercurial, is often a kind of intoxication, and by diverting the moral disposition and effort of thousands from practical useful reformatory work.

In this great storm centre of commercial activity, ambition and greed, revival religion will not disturb the men who, in the interests of the public, ought to be brought to the bar of justice: dishonest bank officers, members of swindling corporations, wealthy bribers and tax-dodgers, who are members of the fashionable churches and who will give generously for the support of religious revivals or any other movement which shall let them alone and try to "save souls" by teaching the awful sinfulness of sin!

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

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Freethought Advance.

What are the best methods to advance mental liberty, should be the leading thought in every true liberal's mind. In order to arrive at a safe conclusion, it might be well to consider what are the great obstacles to its advancement, like a sagacious general before engaging in battle, takes great pains to ascertain the position and strength of his enemy in order to discover where his most assailable points lie.

One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of Freethought, is the well organized and carefully systematized orthodox religion that holds man's mind enslaved. From generation to generation, century after century for 1900 years man's mind has been forced along the grooves and ruts marked out for it by that giant persecuting monopoly known as orthodox religion which enslaved the nations of Europe during the Dark Ages. It wielded the secular and political powers of the state to execute the sentence of death by torture against all who questioned its authority. Take a glance at the history of these terrible times and note the many cruel wars that this church waged for its aggrandizement.

I will notice two of the most prominent. The Crusades from the 11th to the 13th century—eight wars, eight attempts to conquer the Mohammedian Turks and cap-

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