



THE BRIGHT SIDE.

If one looks upon the bright side
It is sure to be the right side—
At least that's how I've found it
As I've journeyed through each day.
And its queer how shadows vanish,
And how easy 'tis to banish
From a bright side sort of nature
Every doleful thing away.

There's a sensible quotation
Which will fit in every station—
We all know it: "As the twig is bent,
So is the tree inclined."

And the twigs of thought we're bending,
If to ways of gloom we're tending,
Will be pretty sure to twist and dwarf
And quite deform the mind.

So, my friends, let's choose the bright
side.

Just the happy, glorious right side,
Which will give us health and spirits
Just as long as life shall last;
And the sorrows that roll o'er us
Shall not always go before us,
If we keep a watch for blue skies,
And will hold its sunshine fast.

—MARY D. BRINE.

Character the Test of Worth.

Freethinkers have always maintained that morality is not dependent upon any theological creed, that it is exemplified in men, and in communities of men of widely different religious beliefs, and by individuals devoid of any beliefs commonly held to be religious; that it has a natural basis in man's constitution and relations to the world.

It does not follow, of course, that Freethinkers have claimed for themselves, as the clergy have claimed for christendom, a monopoly of virtue and goodness. No person fully realizes in life his highest moral ideals, and many people who are "up to heaven's gate in glory" are "done to earth's dust in practice."

The moral standard of the Freethinker is as high as that of the christian. Christian people would not consent to have their religion judged by the moral failures of its adherents, they point rather to the moral ebb tide of their religion, as evidence of its merit. The mistakes, the follies, the crimes even, of believers in christianity are never considered a valid argument against the teachings of the system.

Yet it seems to be quite legitimate with average christian believers to assume that if the position of the Freethinkers is true, every Freethinker must live up to its standard, and that if he fail to do so, it is proof of the fallacy and falsity of freethought. This is poor reasoning. Criticise the conduct of a man, if you will, be he christian or anti-christian, whose life is marked by mistakes and follies, but do not

do this in a spirit of Phariseism, and do not assume that his belief, shared perhaps by millions who are above reproach, is responsible for his shortcomings. Do not put the worst possible construction upon the motives, the acts and the life of an erring fellow-being, however widely his views differ from yours, but on the contrary exercise the same charity toward him, which under similar circumstances, you would have shown to yourself.

The conduct of men and women is generally the result largely of their inherited disposition and tendencies, their early education, their associates and surroundings. Their character is not much changed usually by theories and beliefs which they adopt any time during their life in place of outgrown and discarded views in which they were brought up. Change of environment is much more potent in modifying conduct. Many young men who enlisted in the army during our War of the Rebellion, young men whose lives had been unstained by vice, returned moral wrecks. The temptations to which they were subject in camp and garrison life were such as they had not been sufficiently trained, in most cases, to guard against, and away from home influences and feeling no longer the social restraints of civil life, they yielded to vice which destroyed the innocence of youth before they had acquired the full strength of manhood.

The Freethinker who is true to himself and to his principles will live the rational, moral life. Associations of Freethinkers made up of those who appreciate the moral as well as the philosophical aspects of their thought, cannot be indifferent to the character of their membership. Freethinkers make character instead of creed the test of a man's worth, and therefore, to be consistent, they must insist upon character, upon moral wholesomeness, upon honest and clean living, as pre-eminent above everything else. If they do not do this they are, so far, unworthy the noble cause for which so many have labored, suffered and died. Above all, the representatives of Freethought should be men and women of character without a vulnerable spot through which the spear of the enemy can make its way. Such only can have more influence for good than for evil. Such only should be accredited or recognized by an association as exponents and representatives of its principles and purpose.

Only by combining with the philosophy of Freethought, high moral teaching, moral enthusiasm and practical moral work, can Freethinkers in this age of moral agencies and forces, accomplish by organized effort anything of permanent value. In New York City, Felix Adler has done a great work, far-reaching in its results, because he established his society upon an ethical basis and thus emphasized as of paramount importance what the churches had merely treated as secondary to their theological creeds and religious services.

Let Liberal societies, where they can do no more, give prominence to moral instruction on a natural basis, make their meetings of interest and value to the young, and not give too much time, before those who have outgrown the old creeds, to that negative and destructive work, which at other times and places is still necessary and important. B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Reason Leads Men to Irreligion and to Atheism.

Every man who reasons soon becomes incredulous, because reasoning proves to him that theology is but a tissue of falsehoods; that religion is contrary to all principles of common sense; that it gives a false color to all human knowledge. The rational man becomes incredulous, because he sees that religion, far from rendering men happier, is the first cause of the greatest disorders, and of the permanent calamities with which the human race is afflicted. The man who seeks his well-being and his own tranquility, examines his religion and is undeceived, because he finds it inconvenient and useless to pass his life in trembling at phantoms which are made but to intimidate silly women or children. If, sometimes, libertinage, which reasons but little, leads to irreligion, the man who is regular in his morals can have very legitimate motives for examining his religion, and for banishing it from his mind. Too weak to intimidate the wicked, in whom vice has become deeply rooted, religious terrors afflict, torment, and burden the imaginative minds.

If souls have courage and elasticity, they shake off a yoke which they bear unwillingly. If weak or timorous, they wear the yoke during their whole life, and they grow old, trembling, or at least they live under burdensome uncertainty.

JEAN MESLIER.

Extracts from Thomas Paine's Writings.

"Brave 'Common Sense' the cause of liberty proclaimed,
The 'Crisis' won for us the boon that volume named;
The 'Rights of Man' to tyranny its death-knell gave,
The 'Age of Reason' made for bigotry its grave."

COMMON SENSE.

"The sun never shone on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent,—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now."

"I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this continent to be so."

"Oh, ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. Oh, receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind."

CRISIS.

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph."

"To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead."

AGE OF REASON.

"I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy."

"The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall."