

TORCH OF



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'Tis a Little Thing.

To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drained by fevered
lip,
May give a shock of pleasure to the
frame
More exquisite than when Nectarian
juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to speak a phrase
Of common comfort, which by daily use
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear
Of him who thought to die unrenowned,
'twill fall.
Like choicest music; fill the glazing
eye
With gentle tears; relax the knotted
hand
To know the bonds of fellowship again;
And shed on the departing soul a sense,
(More precious than the benison of
friends
About the honored deathbed of the rich),
To him who else were lonely, that
another
Of the great family is near and feels.
—Talfourd.

Progress in Spite of Christianity.

It is therefore clear that for our present age and for the future, a foundation must be sought and found for culture and morality different from that which can be furnished to us by religion. It is not the fear of God that acts amelioratingly or ennoblingly upon manners, of which the middle ages furnish us with a striking proof; but the ennobling of the conception of the world in general which goes hand in hand with the advance of civilization. Let us then give up making a show of the profession of hypocritical words of faith, the only purpose of which seems to be that they may be continually shown to be lies by the actions and deeds of their professors! The man of the future will feel far more happy and contented when he has not to contend at every step of his intellectual forward development with those tormenting contradictions between knowledge and faith which plague his youth, and occupy his mature age unnecessarily with the slow renunciation of the notions which he imbibed in his youth. What we sacrifice to God, we take away from mankind, and absorb a great part of his best intellectual powers in the pursuit of an unattainable goal. At any rate, the least that we can expect in this respect from the state and society of the future is a complete separation between ecclesiastical and worldly affairs, or an absolute emancipation of the state and school from every ecclesiastical influence. Education must be founded upon knowledge, not upon faith; and religion itself should be taught in the public schools only as religious

history, and as an objective or scientific exposition of the different religious systems prevailing among mankind. Any one who, after such an education, still experiences the need of a definite law or rule of faith may then attach himself to any religious sect that may seem good to him, but cannot claim that the community should bear the cost of this special fancy!

As regards christianity, or the Paulinism which is falsely called christianity, it stands, by its dogmatic portion or contents in such striking and irreconcilable, nay, absolutely absurd contradiction with all the acquisitions and principles of modern science that its future tragical fate can only be a question of time. But even its ethical contents or its moral principles are in no way essentially distinguished above those of other peoples, and were equally well and in part better known to mankind even before its appearance. Not only in this respect, but also in its supposed character as the world-religion it is excelled by the much older and probably most widely diffused religious system in the world, the celebrated Buddhism, which recognizes neither the idea of a personal God, nor that of a personal duration, and nevertheless teaches an extremely pure, amiable and even ascetic morality. The doctrine of Zoroaster or Zarathustra also, 1800 years B. C. taught the principles of humanity and toleration for those of different modes of thinking in a manner and purity which were unknown to the Semitic religions and especially to christianity. Christianity originated and spread as is well-known at the time of a general decline of manners, and of very great moral and national corruption; and its extraordinary success must be partly explained by the prevalence of a sort of intellectual and moral disease, which had overpowered the spirits of men after the fall of the ancient civilization and under demoralizing influence of the gradual collapse of the great Roman empire. But even at that time those who stood intellectually high and looked deeply into things, recognized the whole danger of this new turn of mind, and it is very remarkable that the best and most benevolent of the Roman emperors, such as Marcus Aurelius, Julian, etc., were the most zealous persecutors of christianity, whilst it was tolerated by the bad ones, such as Commodus, Heliogabalus, etc. When it had gradually attained the superiority,

one of its first sins against the intellectual progress consisted in the destruction by christian fanaticism of the celebrated Library of Alexandria, which contained all the intellectual treasures of antiquity,—an incalculable loss to science, which can never be replaced. It is usually asserted in praise of christianity that in the middle ages the christian monasteries were the preservers of science and literature, but even this is correct only in a very limited sense, since boundless ignorance and rudeness generally prevailed in the monasteries, and innumerable ecclesiastics could not even read. Valuable literary treasures on parchment contained in the libraries of the monasteries were destroyed, the monks when they wanted money selling the books as parchment, or tearing out the leaves and writing psalms upon them. Frequently they entirely effaced the ancient classics, to make room for their foolish legends and homilies; nay, the reading of the classics, such as Aristotle for example, was directly forbidden by papal decrees.

In New Spain christian fanaticism immediately destroyed whatever of arts and civilization existed among the natives, and that this was not inconsiderable is shown by the numerous monuments now in ruins which place beyond a doubt the former existence of a tolerably high degree of culture. But in the place of this not a trace of christian civilization is now to be observed among the existing Indians, and the resident Catholic clergy keep the Indians purposely in a state of the greatest ignorance and stupidity.

Thus christianity has always acted consistently in accordance with the principles of one of the fathers of the church, Tertulian, who says: "Desire of knowledge is no longer necessary since Jesus Christ, nor is investigation necessary since the Gospel."

If the civilization of the European and especially of christian nations has notwithstanding made such enormous progress in the course of centuries, an unprejudiced consideration of history can only tell us that this has taken place not by means of christianity, but in spite of it. And this is a sufficient indication to what an extent this civilization must still be capable of development when once it shall be completely freed from the narrow bounds of old superstitions and religious embarrassments!—Buchner.

Secular News.

The Sunday school lesson quarterlies are now ready and may be had at this office at ten cents each.

If any of our regular subscribers do not get the TORCH OF REASON regularly, please notify us at once and the mistake will be corrected.

We have made arrangements to publish some of Katie Kehm Smith's lectures, which, no doubt, will be greatly appreciated by our readers.

The regular quarterly meeting of the executive board of the O. S. S. U. will be held at Liberal Hall, Sunday March 7 at 3:30 p. m. All friends of the cause are invited to be present.

The entertainment and social given at Liberal Hall by the Secular Sunday school of this place on Washington's birthday was largely attended and all seemed to enjoy themselves.

Five Secular Sunday schools have been started in the last four months. If we only had more lecturers in the field the increase would be greater. This demonstrates the success of the work.

H. C. Davenport, the cartoonist, has consented to furnish us with articles giving his experience during his recent visit to Rome. This will be something entirely new and no doubt relished by our readers.

A gentleman of this town who was received into the Christian church at a recent revival here, came in and subscribed for the TORCH a few days ago. Whether this is significant of a change of mind, or a desire to know both sides, we do not know.

University Notes.

We need a pianist who can also assist in primary work.

Our chemicals and apparatus having arrived, we are having interesting work in chemistry and natural philosophy.

The question for debate tomorrow evening at the Y. P. S. S. C. is: Resolved, That capital punishment should be abolished.

Sometime in the near future we will have an oratorical contest. Prizes will be awarded to those who are adjudged victorious. Any member of the University will be admitted and drilled free of charge.

The class in physics this week succeeded in capturing a ghost and confining it in a small viol. It is wonderful to relate that this aerial element would obey only certain persons, and for these it would do just as it was told.