

Torch of Reason

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Which Rope?

When in nature's great work, or, when in the social, political or religious actions of mankind, there is a tendency or movement toward any growth of new forms or dissolution of old forms, no matter how small this tendency is, if continued, it will finally accomplish a perfection of growth of the new on the one hand, or the complete destruction of the old on the other.

What are the tendencies of today, or in other words: What are the signs of the times?

When people of the lower classes were compelled by law to wear less costly clothing than the upper classes, when poor people's children were obliged to grow up in ignorance, when women were obliged to obey their husbands without redress, when a master could take the life of his slave and go unpunished, from our point of view the banner of liberty was trailed in the dust.

But even these faults of our civilization seem but mild when compared with those of still earlier times, and the conservative people then considered their condition, if not perfect, at least as perfect as was possible to obtain. Reformers of all ages, however, never rest, and finally create a tendency toward the abolition of the greater evils and the adoption of new and beneficial customs, laws and creeds.

These better conditions are always accepted by the next generation as a matter of course, and the conservatives, although they laugh at the follies of the former generation, do not comprehend that our bettered conditions were fought for by men and women in the front ranks of reform and adopted in spite of just such blind people as they themselves are today.

The result of all actions of mankind may be represented by all the people pulling on ropes attached to the center of attraction—our civilization.

This civilization becomes cleaner, purer and better in every way if it moves up the slope of progress toward the peak of perfection, but

it comes to a standstill or even retrogrades if the forces which are on the lower hill side are strong enough to overcome the brave individuals and organizations that are bravely pulling us up, up, up the wonderful hill of progress.

So far, I think all will agree with us, but when we begin to place individuals or societies on the upper hill side, or on the lower hill side, the opposition begins; but the only way we can find which rope is best for us to pull on, is by using our reason, and to this end let us think.

It may appear to some that we are at a standstill at present, but it is not so, for the forces are working actively on both sides, and although our civilization sways back and forth with the strain of the great forces at work, yet we believe it is surely and steadily moving up higher and higher.

The first class we will mention who are on the lower hill side are the people who are doing nothing, and as they hang a dead weight upon society, they are being pulled along by those who are taking part in the world's great work with their money, time and talents. If those who are doing nothing in the world's onward march would wake up and take hold of the rope which reason tells them is the right one, the conditions would immediately become so much better that our present attainments would look like the barbarous ways of the people of old who were driven about by those pretending to have divine authority, (prophets, priests and kings) like so many cattle.

Now if there are any who have not yet taken an active part in the world's struggle, we beg of you to think first and then take hold of the rope which you think is the right one and pull with all your might. If you never have pulled on the ropes that are moving our grand old world up to a higher and better state, you have missed one, if not the greatest pleasure which is possible for a human being to enjoy. Some may contend that business keeps them from taking an active part, but the best success that is possible in business is very short lived. If you gain wealth it is easily spent or destroyed and if you succeed in hoarding up money, when you die those who get it may squander it and use it for bad purposes. But the work you do in assisting the world to a better future can never die as long as human beings tread upon the surface of the globe.

There are many people who pull on the rope which happens to be nearest to them when the desire to pull happens to enter their minds. If their associates happen to believe in certain modes of action they simply grab hold and pull without asking themselves, "Is this way best?" Thus children follow in the wake of their parents, good or bad, and as

one young man expresses it, "You can't turn dad or I any more than you can turn a red hot griddle."

We admire people who have ideas of their own and who can produce arguments to substantiate them, but we do not admire the weakness of that class of people who get hold of a rope and pull just because their dads do.

Step out from your associates for a moment and look at the work and workers and see if what you are doing is according to what you by your own honest ideas decide is the right work for you to do.

You may make mistakes, but honesty is the main thing, and if a mistake is discovered, hasten to correct it, no matter what croakers say.

"Honor and shame from no conditions rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

Blending.

Although the ministers of the christian churches keep up the fire against us poor godless infidels, yet there is a constant blending between the more intelligent christians and the active, up-to-date Secularists.

The former understand the sincerity of the latter, and that after all, the work for humanity is the best part of christianity; and the Secularists know very well that from the ranks of liberal christians will come many of our most active workers of the future. Although the christian church seems so far away from anything rational, yet the better elements of society are beginning to understand that they must come together and work in unison if humanity is to be saved from religious slavery, intemperance, licentiousness, and all those great mistakes that make our people unfit to live here or anywhere else. We claim that the only basis on which all workers of righteousness can stand must be purely secular; that the work must be for this world alone, for, while all good people believe in making our conditions better and happier here, very many do not believe in a life after death. We claim that this is a self-evident truth and one that must be recognized before the reformation of the world takes place.

Let us all then renew our energies and help to bring about this great union of all the forces of righteousness and the great evils that are now devouring our people will fade away, and, like the extinct evils of the inquisition and witchcraft, will be looked upon only as relics of ignorance and superstition.

Blind Poison.

As in the animal kingdom different animals even of the same species, although perfectly sound,

differ from each other, so we find in the world of thought that no two minds are exactly alike and yet many are in a perfectly healthy condition. But as the body of an animal may become disordered by the introduction of a foreign substance that hinders digestion and assimilation, so may the mind be injured by the introduction of poisonous ideas—ideas that instead of building up, contract and narrow the mind in such a way as to make it unfit to digest the solid, nutritious food of truth. One of the most destructive mind poisons is the one commonly known as superstition, and this, like many of the poisonous drugs, is both a stimulant and a narcotic, for it stimulates and intoxicates the victim's mind in very much the same way that spirits of alcohol does the body.

When in a state of intoxication a person goes through all manner of wild, frantic motions, and the mind, when out of order from an overdose of holy spirits goes through some of the most absurd processes possible; and the analogy is still plainer, when we realize that the victims in both cases are not aware that they are making such fools of themselves. If just the right amount of this mind poison is taken, it acts as a narcotic and lulls to sleep every good and perfect thought of its victim and the sleeper, who is said to be drunk in the case of the alcohol, is called a hypocrite when that "little spark of celestial fire called conscience" is put to sleep by the deadly and seductive influence of the spirits and spooks distilled and dealt out by the great army of religious fanatics.

Not Summer Soldiers.

When Washington's army was almost discouraged on account of the privations the soldiers had to undergo, and when the scales of war seemed to be just on a balance, that grand patriot of the World, Thomas Paine, gave just the assistance needed and as a result we have enjoyed the liberty of the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

Today we are in the midst of a campaign against the enemies of our civil and mental liberty who, in as arrogant a manner as King George was ever capable of, are compelling us to pay taxes to support institutions that we believe are no benefit to us and are even now mustering their forces to compel us to submit to the government of a foreign prince by uniting church and state, thus making this a christian nation.

We may not be able to do as much as Thomas Paine did in the Revolutionary war, but let us be something besides "Summer Soldiers;" let us strengthen our works at every point and we may be sure that the work of our brave revolutionary fore-fathers and those who have so nobly defended what they won will not have been done in vain.