

TORCH OF REASON.



VOL. 1.

SILVERTON, OREGON, THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1897.

NO. 21.

LIBERTY.

How winneth Liberty? By sword and brand,
Or by the souls of those who strive and die?
Where dwelleth Liberty? Where lies the land,
Most open to the favors of her eye?
Hath she her seat in empires, deserts wide,
Or most to little freeholds doth she bide?
What is the range that Nature gives her own?
With frost or fire she stays their flying feet,
And holdeth each within its native zone;
The pine its love—the palm—shall never meet;
Nowhere do roses bloom from beds of ice,
Nowhere in valleys laughs the edelweiss.
The races of the sea shall never fare
Beyond the moist and sounding element,
Nor any pinion, fledged and schooled in air,
On venturous errand through the waves be sent;
The cygnet to his nest of river-flag,
The eagle to his eyrie on the crag.
Dwells Freedom with the spherical multitude
The vistas of the mighty sky reveal?
Each planet keeps the track it hath pursued,
And shall pursue while ages turn and wheel;
Uncentered roves the guideless aerolite,
And drives to ruin down the steeps of night.
With law dwells liberty; law maketh free.
Fly law, and thou dost forge thyself a chain;
Still wouldst thou pass the bounds prescribed for thee?
Still wouldst thou grasp strange honors and domain?
Behold! his liberty exceedeth thine
Who freely breathes where thou wouldst fret and pine!
—Edith M. Thomas.

Reform.

F. L. OSWALD.

Truth that prevails against error also prevails against half truths, and the recognition of just claims cannot be furthered by unjust concessions. Uncompromising right is mightiest, and Freethinkers would have served their cause more effectually if they had contended, not for the favor to enjoy a privilege, but the right to fulfil a duty. The ministry of reason imposes obligations to posterity, and to the memory of its bygone martyrs, as well as to our help-needing contemporaries; and the defense of its rights is a truer religion than submission to the yoke of a mind-enslaving dogma. The Rishis, or sainted hermits of Brahmanism, used to devote themselves to the service of a forest temple, and guard its sanctuary against vermin and reptiles; and the believers in a personal God cannot devote their lives to a nobler task than by guarding his temples against the serpent of priestly despotism.

The disciples of Secularism should learn to value the right of Free-

thought as the palladium of their faith, as the basis of all other blessings—moral and material, as well as intellectual. They should learn to revere the memory of the martyrs of their faith, and recognize the importance of their services to the cause of modern civilization and its sacred principles: but they should also learn to recognize the magnitude of the remaining task. It is no trifle that the prevalent system of ethics and the temporal and eternal hopes of millions of our brethren are still based on a lie. It is no trifle that the health and happiness of millions of our fellow-men are still sacrificed on the altar of that untruth by the suppression of public recreations on the only day when a large plurality of our working-men find their only chance of leisure. It is no trifle that honest men are still branded as "infidels," "renegades," and "scoffers," for refusing to kneel in the temple of a nature-hating fanatic. The struggle against the spirits of darkness is by no means yet decided in Italy, where the arch-hierarch is spinning restless intrigues to regain the power which for ages made Europe a Gehenna of misery and despotism. Nor in Spain, where a swarm of clerical vampires is still sucking the life-blood of an impoverished nation. Nor in Austria and southern Germany, where the alliance of church and state remains a constant menace to the scant liberties of the people.

Freethinkers need not underrate the influence of individual efforts to recognize the superior advantage of organized co-operation, so urgently needed for the reform of Sabbath laws, of press laws, and the educational system of the numerous colleges still intrusted to the control of the Jesuitical enemies of science. The strength-in-union principle should encourage the oft-debated projects for the establishment of Freethought colleges (as well as Freethought communities); but still more decisive results could be hoped from that union of the powers of knowledge and of moral courage which has never yet failed to insure the triumph of social reforms. We should cease to plead for favors where we can claim an indisputable right. We should cease to admit the right of mental prostitutes to enforce the penalties of social ostracism against the champions of science; but we, in our turn, should deserve the prestige of that championship by scorning the expedients of the moral cowardice which strains at gnats and connives at beams, at-

tacking superstition in the harmless absurdities of its ceremonial institutions, and sparing the ruinous dogmas that have drenched the face of the earth with the blood of her noblest children, and turned vast areas of garden-land into hopeless deserts. The skeptics who scoff at the inconsistencies of a poor clergyman who tries in vain to reconcile the instincts of his better nature with the demands of an anti-natural creed, should themselves be consistent enough to repudiate the worship of the fatal founder of that creed, and not let the hoary age of the Galilean doctrine palliate the tendencies of its life-blighting delusions.

—Bible of Nature.

A Protestant Nation.

The Presbyterian Messenger, referring to President Cleveland's reference to Jesus Christ in his Thanksgiving proclamation, says:

"The United States Supreme Court has recently declared judicially that this is a christian nation; and now the executive falls in line. And let us hold up not only the christian flag, but the protestant flag. Every historical, constitutional and legal fact and principal that makes this a christian nation, makes it a protestant nation. If it be inconsistent with the rights of Romanists to make this assertion, it is inconsistent with the rights of Jews and even of all irreligious men to make the official declarations that the president and the governor have made. One of our political judges had the temerity to declare in the late Saratoga General Assembly that it is not true historically, or in any other way, that this is a protestant nation. Made in such a place it was a traitorous declaration. Politicians, who are looking for votes, may presume on the liberality of protestants and cater for the papal ballots by such declaration; but all protestants, informed as to the true history of the nation, should repudiate them with indignation."

So this is not only a christian nation, but a protestant nation! If it is inconsistent with the rights of catholics to say this, it is equally inconsistent with the rights of Jews and Freethinkers for the president and governors to refer officially to Christ in their public papers! Exactly. The presbyterian is logical. Then neither Jews, Freethinkers nor Catholics have any rights which protestants are bound to respect in this matter. That is, although all help to support, and if necessary to defend the government, the government discriminates against the religious beliefs of all others in favor of protestants; their religion is the religion of the nation. Hence "this is a protestant nation."

Jews, Freethinkers, Catholics, Buddhists, etc., are allowed to express their views by permission, by toleration. Not that the nation is protestant simply by reason of the fact that the majority of the people are protestant, but it is historically, constitutionally, legally a protestant nation and has been so judicially declared!

What do the catholics say to this? They say that this ought to be a christian nation, that a truly christian nation is a catholic nation, that a protestant nation is only partly christian, that catholics are increasing more rapidly in this country than protestants, that when catholics reach the numbers which will put them in the majority, they will complete the christianizing process which the protestants have begun by making the government catholic, by making the union of church and state closer, by making catholicism the legal, constitutional religion of the nation. Then protestants will have to take their own medicine. They may be tolerated with Jews and Freethinkers, for a while, but they will have no equal rights with Catholics whose religion will be the national religion; supposing, of course, that the Catholics go on increasing as rapidly as they think they will and that the policy of the church remains unchanged.

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Science.

From a philosophical point of view, science is knowledge of the laws of life; of the conditions of happiness; of the facts by which we are surrounded, and the relations we sustain to men and things—by means of which man subjugates nature and bends the elemental powers to his will, making blind force the servant of his brain.

Science is the great Iconoclast, and by the highway of progress are the broken images of the past. On every hand the people advance. The vicar of God has been pushed from the throne of the Caesars, and upon the roofs of the eternal city falls once more the shadow of the eagle. All has been accomplished by the heroic few. The men of science have explored heaven and earth, and with infinite patience have furnished facts. The brave thinkers have used them. The gloomy caverns of superstition have been transformed into temples of thought, and the demons of the past are the angels of today. Science took a handful of sand, constructed a telescope, and with it explored the stary depths of heaven. Science wrested from the gods their thunderbolts; and now, the electric spark, freighted with thought and love, flashes under all the waves of the sea. Science took a tear from the cheek of unpaid labor, converted into steam, and created a giant that turns with tireless arm, the countless wheels of toil.—Ingersoll.