

what he believed. He never told anybody. However, he was not superstitious, and in wildest danger never got upon his knees. He kept right at work, and made others do the same. I doubt if he had any faith beyond his five senses; but what he did believe in, he believed in persistently. The world to him was no vagary, but a stubborn fact: he had battled with it heroically, until he had gotten the better of it, and owned and commanded his own ship. He had received many a hard knock and passed through a thousand difficulties, and by sheer pluck had won the day. His wife was with him, a bright and comely woman, and well read. Besides being somewhat of a philosopher, she had the shrewd common-sense of her country folk and a touch of fancy and sentiment such as glows in the pages of Scott and Burns. She was fond of both these writers, and knew them by heart. She could play upon the

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

For the Torch of Reason.
Bible Times and Our Times.

"Think not to say, the former times were better than these, for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning these things."

If those who make so much ado about the present questioning and interpreting of the bible knew or thought more of what is in it they might profit thereby.

The bible has had many advocates who have been as innocent of its contents as a mule is of music. Many a one has advocated the bible as a code of morals when they knew and cared about as much about both the bible and morals as does a farm brute. This kind of people are the fiercest to denounce the infidelity of thoughtful and moral men who have made the bible a study from youth and whose purpose in life is the advancement of the human race; whose thought is not of their own salvation, but their chief desire is to do the most good in their power. Those who are farthest behind the times most abuse those who are in advance of the age.

I suppose that ever since Adam's children were born, or from the first up coming of the second generation, the same deprecating cry has come up from grouty conservatism. The old man is always appearing hopping mad if the youngster gets ahead of him, and yet he is proud in his heart that he has so smart a son. That is, if he has any smartness himself.

Notwithstanding the burden of the speech of all the old men in every age and every country, about the degeneracy of the day, lamenting the departure from the gods of their grandfathers, yet the world has wagged on at its wonted rate and has got on very well for all

their whims, and would have got on much better but for the checks of those who cared only for the old times, and to the eyes of the really live people, the skies gleam brighter and the earth grows richer every year.

Old granddaddy stick-in-the-mud sat beside the fence weeping to see his son remove a big rock from the driveway. He knew it was better out, but then it didn't look as it used to and its absence witnessed his neglect in not removing it long before.

I do not propose to go back to my cradle to take up my abode. I shall not seek the wigwam of the aborigines to finish my education. I shall not concede that barbarism is superior to civilization. I do not believe that savagery is to be preferred to culture. I have no faith that cannibalism is the acme of spiritual perfection. I do not boast that I shall gain eternal salvation by drinking either the literal, the transubstantiated or the make-believe blood of a dead god or dead man, whilst those who are too refined to stomach such gospel dirt are damned to eternally roast as part of the devil's toast, or suffer loss for any time, all because they would not raven, in man or mind, on a fellow's life-ice like gloating wolves.

The story of what one may have endured in the former times, in consequence of its bigoted adoration of customs more ancient still, may serve to point a moral or encourage the wise to a like heroism, but it is the perverseness of stupidity and shamelessness of hypocrisy to suppose and profess that repeating parrot-like the phrase—"Saved by the blood"—has anything in it of purity or savors of holiness.

We are told that we have got too far ahead of the "faith of the fathers," that we are getting too wise above that which is written in the Westminster Catechism or Winchester Confession. That we must turn about and retrace the old paths, if we would get on. Old stick-in-the-mud sits on a log by the side of his tumble down cabin and mutters as the electric car shoots by—"I shall be glad when we get the stagecoaches again." Pious Retrospection reads a modern thinker's book and mourns at the loss of outgrown dogma. He thinks of some out worn garment that has been put on occasionally for convenience, and expresses the hope that we shall soon get back to the united acceptance of the old creed, and that this, that and the other cast off absurdity and disgorged abomination will be yet preached and accepted as they were forty, four-hundred or four-thousand years ago.

Doctor Oldbury and Deacon Driedup want to see things restored to the old basis, and they diagnose dire disorder and prognosticate

certain calamity in the near future if all creation is not filled and paregoricked, bled and blistered, calomeled, exhorted, threatened, prayed for cursed and outlawed as it was in the days of saddle-bag, stone-drags and holy-office.

When the work was to be resumed on the then uncompleted shaft to the memory of the father of the republic, it was discovered by the investigating engineers that it was built above a two-foot deep stratum of quicksand, and declared that it would never do to top out the stump of the Washington monument unless that at first overlooked defect in the site could be remedied. The first thought was to pull down and rebuild the structure. But an excavation was made wide about the base of the pyramid; little by little earth was scooped from under the tall pile; stone by stone, it was sub-underpinned until a foundation broad and deep replaced dirt and drift and mud and mire; all was made doubly secure with iron bands, and the tall cenotaph was shot upward to pierce the clouds.

Some, perhaps, thought it presumptuous or cranky to undo and do over the work of the original architects; but done it was, despite the lament that the former times were better than these, and I have not yet learned that the proud pier is in danger of toppling over, nor observed that it has sprung an inch away because it was put upon a profounder foundation. This testimonial obelisk to human integrity and moral sagacity and energy is bottomed on terra firma, buttressed with iron bands and we trust will stand so long as a free people shall revere the name of one of the nation's master masons.

There are those, even those who are set at the head of college instruction, who echo the complaint that the former times were better than these. They know not how to teach except from the well thumbed "catechism" or much dogeared "manual." They would not know how to handle a geography with a map of a new state in it, but would petition congress to order that all atlases should bound the United States by Florida and the Mississippi river, as it was in the beginning, is not now, and never shall be again. So they call a halt on the thought of other teachers and preachers, and in the name of the old apostles and pedagogues say, "go no further," saying, "it is dangerous to turn new leaves, do not get beyond the pictures, you are too rationalistic or too spiritualistic. Naturalism is 'infidelity,' spiritualism is lunacy, only the super-natural is worth worshipping and only holy we worship it aright."

But the sun of science is rising and the mists and myths of darkness and fear are clearing away;

men are not getting worse but better by being reasonable; belief in miracle is being superceded by practice of morality, and we remember the former times mostly to profit by their blunders; we review the history of the fathers not so much to emulate their wisdom as to avoid their errors.

I am not afraid the people will ever get too wise. There is no reason to think that any one will ever be to rational. No one will ever the less respect the truth by understanding what he reads or by discovering mistakes in the documents or by discarding forgeries in the signatures.

The former times were doubtless better than these, to the people of former times; and times like the former would now be better than these for those of today who have not been elastic enough to comply with present conditions.

The Indian prefers his teepee to a palace. If a troglodite were set down in Philadelphia at the porch of the Continental or the Girard hotels, he would not know how to get his dinner; he would not have money to pay for his fare nor ability to there earn a dime to buy a plate of baked beans. Ship a Fiji cannibal to London and the first thing he would say would be—

"The former times were better than these,
Take me back to Fiji, please;
Fe! fo! fum! I want the blood of an Englishman!"

I do not know but civilization will cease and barbarism come back. I do not know but steam engines will be beaten into boomerangs and cotton-mills become catamounts' lairs. I do not know but the "wheels of time" will reverse their motion and the revolution of planets and people will turn backward, like King Hezekiah's dial, and chaos come again—if ever there were one—but I don't believe it. Is that too agnostic?

I do not know but somewhere in the ages to be will be forgotten the benefits we have today. I do not know but freedom will be buried beneath the re-established temples of superstition and tyranny twirl its bloody scepter from a throne recast from the Bartholdi's statue of Liberty Enlightening the World. I do not know but the printing-press shall be used to flatten witches instead of publishing the daily intelligence, the machine-shops set at work to supply implements for the torture of heretics, and art confined to picturing birds in human shape but without other plumage than impossible wings; when the people who do the work shall live in huts and hovels and the only inhabitable buildings be the castles of butchers of humanity and the temples of unearthly divinities. It may be possible that the school house shall become a barracks, the college be a horse stable, and the

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