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Bible Times and Our Times.

courtroom be made an arena where quarrels are settled by duels, as in the former times. Perhaps our operas will be transformed into rings for Spanish bull-fights, and Paine Memorial building become a Methodist church. Mayhap those who dare say "boo" contrary to the legalized belief will be thrown to wild beasts in the menagerie for the amusement of the orthodox Sunday school. All these things may come to pass—but it is improbable.

In the course of civilization's development the chronological order of certain discoveries and inventions has been, if not providential, at least very favorable.

In the former times, or three or four hundred years ago, when the church held universal sway, the mechanical ingenuity of all christiendom was employed in constructing engines of torture and death, all to the end that priestcraft might be absolute and perpetual. The clergy, for their holiness, held the patent on knowledge, and it was sin to know anything they didn't deign to teach. If some one used his skill without leave from the saint-factory, whatever he made was labeled the works of the devil, and the fabricator of anything new and useful to the masses was sent by a rough rout to his alleged master.

If, in the good old days of the inquisition, the steam engine had been invented and the power of electricity had been discovered and controled, these mighty appliances instead of being the servants of men at large would have ministered to the fury of fanatic and fraudulent monsters, who in the name of the storied Savior that brake not the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax, would have used these factors of industry and intelligence only to torture and destroy whoever undertook to be too rationalistic—i. e. did not take the priest's dictum for divine truth.

In the former times every folly that is known to man took some sacred name and filled the world with fury; every incident that was not understood was an omen of something awful; every fact was regarded as a lie, and every lie was regarded as indisputable truth; reality was cursed as devilish and the impossible was worshiped as divine.

In the former times, to inquire into the principles of nature, instead of accepting the childish tales of the priests, was not to be thought of; to think, was sin; to doubt, was to be damned. To regard things as they are instead of as they were said to be by the church was infidelity; to attempt to claim the right of individual opinion, was treason to the state; to wink otherwise than was laid down in the

formulas of worship, was defiance of the church; to die without the help of a priest was hell, and to get well by the aid of natural medicaments instead of by incantations and miracles, was to be worthy of death.

In the former times it was a capital crime to pick up chips to bake a pancake on the Sabbath. and parents were comelled to stone their children to death for going to Sunday school of another than their own supersacred sect. The wife must submit to her husband in all things, and if she did not, he could divorce her by his own blessed will.

In the former times the Gods dwelt among men, the devils traveled about ad libitum. Woman was then a thing for man's convenience and men were supposed to have been made to hack each other in pieces to please the kings who are ordained of god (by right of the priests, of course) to sick 'em on each other. War was then the only honorable business, except that of the priest, whose principle was to procure God's blessing upon wholesale human butchery. Then peaceful science (what there was of it) was cultivated by the hermits of the monasteries and mountains who were left alone because they were thought to be good for nothing else. Famine was a frequent visitor because so many were engaged in each other's destruction (all for God's sake) that not enough were left at home to till the soil. Disease held undisputed sway, and the pestilence that followed holy pilgrimages to sinks of death were regarded as invitations of Jesus to call those to his arms who had got too good to be wearied by longer remaining in this stinking world. The rule then was—the more filth the more faith, and the odor of sanctity had no affinity with scented soap.

In the former times the father of the faithful was one who got crazy on religion and undertook to slaughter his own son and bake him as a supper for his bloothirsty and flesh-hungry God; and the fakir who jewed his brother out of his inheritance, this same God selected to populate his holy land with a peculiar people whose chief record is that of killing the natives, appropriating their wives and adoring their idols; afterward crucifying their own prince for calling them to repentance.

In the former times the meekest man was one who committed murder when a prince of Egypt and then ran away to herd sheep to save his neck. The one whom God chose to be king of his people did not know enough to find stray mules, and the general who raided the wicked Philistines got stuck on a harlot and "lost both hair and eyes."

In the former times the only galoot who was "perfect in his generation" got drunk on the first

vintage after the earth had been devastated by a flood to rid it of revelers. Then again the only good man in a whole city wouldn't have been there if he had not been selfish, and his wife was so fresh she had to be salted by a shower of brimstone and brine. The man declared to be "after God's own heart" stole the wife of his general and then planned his death in battle to get out of the scrape. The wisest man had enough wives to tend a cotton mill.

Compare the people, one and all, of the present day and thinking times, with those of the piously credulous past.

Whom will you honor in your highest niches of worthies—Washington, who freed his country from foreign dominion, or Joshua, who led an army of treacherous and bloody invaders? John Brown, who with his feeble band sought to free four million slaves or Francisco Pizarro, the christian hogherd, who conquered a peaceable and industrious nation to make himself the richest man who ever vexed the earth? Who was the best preacher, Peter the hermit who hounded all Europe on to the crusades, or Theodore Parker who proclaimed a relegion of humanity? What orator should woman love to listen to, St. Paul, the old bach who declared "wives be obedient unto your husbands," or Col. Ingelsoll who advocates "liberty for man, woman and child?" Who was the better woman, Rabab, the harlot, who protected the spies of the enemy of her country, or Joan of Arc, who led her nation's army to establish her lawful king? Who acted most like a hero and a man, Onesimus the slave, who sneaked back to his master because he was told to by a minister of Christ, or Tonsaint L'Overture, who led a revolution and fought to free himself and fellow slaves from Christian thralldom? Which is the better way, the ancient account of packing a god-box about on two poles, or the modern method of building a railroad and riding in a palace car? Which is the best style of anniversary, the sacred barbecue of the old Jerusalem, or the Columbian Exposition at Chicago?

No. The former times were not better than these, nor are these times so good as those which are to come. Today is better than yesterday, yesterday better than year before last, tomorrow better than today, and year after next will be better than next year. Men are getting more civil every day and their gods are growing less savage. Bye and bye hell will freeze over and God will become so full of glee he will go skating on the ice with the happy young folks who will never hear of the Westminster catechism.

As men run to and fro and knowledge is increased, bigotry re-

tires and superstition flees like a thief from the electric light. We know how to catalogue those who miscompare our own day with the night of long ago. If it is not because their deeds are evil, it is because they have not woke up.

Let us adjust our eyes to the increasing light as the sun mounts toward the zenith and let our hands be zealous for the labor of the hour and leave the dead past to attend its own funeral. No prophet's tomb-stone can block the wheels of progress. JOHN PRESCOTT GUILD.

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