



### A Free Thought Hymn.

Oh! my brother, hear me,  
If you would ransomed be  
From the thrall of priestcraft,  
And mingle with the free.  
If old-time fears enchain thee,  
Oh! cast them all aside;  
Let faith in Man sustain thee,  
And Reason be thy guide.

Why, my brother, tell me,  
Dost thou weep and pray?  
What is it dost impell thee  
To cry in wild dismay  
To a mythic Saviour  
Who once, a man like thee,  
And scorning priestly favor,  
Was slain on Calvary?

Stand up, my brother, firmly;  
What hast thou got to fear?  
No Christ can bear the burden  
That thou hast got to bear.  
Erect in conscious manhood,  
Be righteous for the right—  
Disdaining every falsehood,  
Rejoicing in the light.

—CHAS. J. RAE.

### We Build.

Is it nothing to free the mind?  
Is it nothing to civilize mankind?  
Is it nothing to fill the world with  
light, with discovery, with science?  
Is it nothing to dignify man and  
exalt the intellect? Is it nothing  
to grope your way into the dreary  
prisons, the damp and dropping  
dungeons, the dark and silent cells  
of superstition, where the souls of  
men are chained to floors of stone;  
to greet them like a ray of light,  
like the song of a bird, the murmur  
of a stream; to see the dull eyes  
open and grow slowly bright; to  
feel yourself grasped by the  
shrunken and unused hands, and  
hear yourself thanked by a strange  
and hollow voice?

Is it nothing to conduct these  
souls gradually into the blessed  
light of day—to let them see again  
the happy fields, the sweet, green  
earth, and hear the everlasting  
music of the waves? Is it nothing  
to make men wipe the dust from  
their swollen knees, the tears from  
their blanched and furrowed cheeks?  
Is it a small thing to reave the  
heavens of an insatiate monster  
and write upon the eternal dome,  
glittering with stars, the grand  
word—FREEDOM?

Is it a small thing to quench the  
flames of hell with the holy tears  
of pity; to unbind the martyr from  
the stake; break all the chains; put  
out the fires of civil war; stay the  
sword of the fanatic, and tear the  
bloody hands of the Church from  
the white throat of Science?

Is it a small thing to make men  
truly free—to destroy the dogmas  
of ignorance, prejudice and power  
—the poisoned fables of superstition,  
and drive from the beautiful  
face of the earth the fiend of Fear?

INGERSOLL.

### MELIORISM.

The World is Neither Wholly Good Nor  
Wholly Bad.

George Eliot said that she was  
neither an optimist nor a pessimist,  
but a *meliorist*. It was she who  
contributed the word meliorism to  
our language to express a mean  
between optimism and pessimism.

The world, as we know it, is cer-  
tainly not perfect. The theory  
that "everything is for the best,"  
in the sense that all events and  
actions are such as admit of no im-  
provement, destroys all distinctions  
between just and unjust, between  
right and wrong, and renders im-  
possible any rational conception of  
morals. On the other hand, the  
theory that the universe is essen-  
tially evil, that man is wholly de-  
praved and corrupt, that life is not  
worth living, is contrary to general  
experience, and if commonly be-  
lieved to be true, would be the  
paralysis and despair of philan-  
thropy.

History, observation, and com-  
mon sense unite in declaring that  
our world is one in which there are  
both good and evil, right and  
wrong, and in which man's volition  
counts as a factor in helping or  
hindering human progress. A lib-  
ertine may destroy the peace of a  
family; a philanthropist may add  
to the sum total of the happiness  
and comfort of a community; a  
tyrant may bring war, orphanage,  
and misery upon a nation; a wise  
statesman, a great ruler, may lift a  
people to higher conditions by se-  
curing to them the blessings of  
prosperity and peace.

Evidently the true view of man  
and nature is that the world is  
neither perfect nor hopeless; that  
things are neither wholly good nor  
wholly bad, but that conditions of  
human life are imperfect and can  
be improved; that humanity is in  
a process of growth which can be  
accelerated or retarded; that char-  
acter and conduct are not what  
they should be, but that they can  
be elevated; that the natural and  
social conditions of life are defec-  
tive, but admit of amelioration, and  
that it is the duty of every man to  
make the world better, in some way,  
for his having lived in it. To this  
result everyone contributes who  
discovers a new truth, invents a  
new machine, lightens the burdens  
of labor, breaks down the barriers  
between mankind, battles against  
popular error and wrong, or teaches  
a larger view of man, his duties and  
his destiny.

The self-sacrificing heroes of the

world give to it its moral ideals.  
In the wrong done them justice  
and right are violated, but in their  
devotion to principle in the face of  
torture and death, mankind are  
taught by example, the loftiest  
morality is inculcated, and the  
noblest type of character is ex-  
alted.

The great mass of the martyrs  
are those uncrowned and unknown  
to fame. All who have sacrificed  
and suffered for the truth and for  
the good of others, belong to this  
great army. Says a writer: "Cross-  
ing the ocean in a steamship, see-  
ing how the ladies and gentlemen  
march up and down the stately deck  
—the men airily puffing their  
cigars, the ladies chattering their  
idle gossip, a hundred people  
stretched out in easy chairs, read-  
ing novels, sitting at table eating  
delicious food. I have thought of  
those men down below, a hundred  
or more, sooty, grimy, black, ig-  
norant, feeding the furnaces, shovel-  
ing the coal, dragging out ashes,  
doing it night and day, day and  
night, scarce ever having a glimpse  
of the sun, never seeing the glory  
of the sea, never watching the  
serene moon, seeing nothing but  
these awful fires, now and then  
only pushing their black faces out  
of some port-hole to get a little  
whiff of the air lest they die—that  
is the history of humanity."

This vivid picture, which illus-  
trates the inequalities of human  
condition to some extent, may also  
serve to remind us of the folly of  
making display or notoriety the  
test of the value of human service,  
or of judging men by conventional  
standards of social respectability.  
The man "down below" feeding  
the furnaces does a most useful  
work, and he may be morally, and  
even intellectually, above many of  
those who walk the steamer's  
stately deck, and his service to the  
world may be far more valuable to  
millions who, in however humble  
station, have performed faithfully  
the duties of life, have by their  
labor and sacrifice made the world  
better, and they are entitled to our  
gratitude none the less, because  
they were of the common people.

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that."

"The growing good of the world;"  
as Dr. Liddon once said, "is partly  
dependent on unhistoric acts; and  
that things are not so ill with you  
and with me as they might have  
been, is half owing to the number  
who lived faithfully a hidden life  
and rest in unvisited tombs."

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

### LITTLE TORCHES.

"It is well to glory in art, re-  
ligion and the march of Christian-  
ity which has elevated the classes."  
—Bishop Nide, in a sermon at  
Middletown, Conn., June 27.

Yes, dear Bishop, but remember-  
that the "classes" have been elevat-  
ed just in proportion as Christian  
doctrines have been relegated to the  
rear. There has not been a single  
change made in the Christian re-  
ligion for a thousand years except  
to take something away from it.  
The more you take away from it,  
the better it becomes.

We were born in a state of origi-  
nal sin; that is, without anything  
but purely natural gifts and graces,  
in a state accursed before God be-  
cause we inherited a state of de-  
based and fallen nature which can-  
not be restored except by some  
special act of God.—New York  
Catholic News, June 30.

If that be true, then God must  
have damned us before he created  
us; the child is born with an end-  
less sentence in the divine pen-  
itentiary branded upon his heart.  
What a devilish, nice God he must  
be!

"What moral right has a Chris-  
tian to put a temptation in the way  
of his fellow-man? If the contents  
of the glass which I offer to my  
guest cause him to stumble, he  
stumbles over me. I am a partner  
in his sin."—Rev. Theodore L.  
Cuyler, D. D., in the Evangelist,  
July 1.

That's exactly what you Chris-  
tians do when you sit around the  
communion table and drink liquor  
in memory of the divine wine  
maker of Cana. An appetite for  
liquor is as certain to be formed by  
drinking grog at the "Lord's Sup-  
per" as by drinking the same  
miserable stuff in the foulest broth-  
el of San Francisco.

We must look forward, not be-  
hind, lest we be betrayed into the  
folly of heathenism. Lot's wife  
looked back and was turned to a  
pillar of salt. Moses looked for-  
ward and attained success."—Rev.  
John Hall, D. D., in his sermon at  
the Fifth Ave. Presbyterian church,  
New York City, June 27.

Then why look back to collect  
the scoundrelism, dogmas, super-  
stitions and obscenity of a thou-  
sand years ago for rules of life in  
the present. One trouble with  
Christians is that they look back  
like Lot's wife; they are turned in-  
to church steeples instead of pil-  
lars of salt. Quit searching among  
mummies for the spooks of proph-  
ets and work for the good of the  
present. There is plenty to do,  
Dr. John.—W. E. J.