



Creeds.

By Alonzo Leora Rice.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."
—Tennyson.

I often wonder if the strange,
Diverse opinions in the creeds
And views of men, will ever change
The great Creator's plans and deeds.

One inn of life along the road,
Across the sill one beacon burns,
This leads to only one abode,
From whence no traveler returns.

Alike the purpose and intent,
As arrows to the self-same spot,
Flee from the bow, by one arm bent,
Some fail and others wander not.

Some little breeze, the feathered dart,
May strike along the troubled course,
And cause it from its way to part,
Or still the virtue of its force.

Intent and doubt are still in right,
Bereft of superstition's ray;
And through the battlements of night,
Will lead triumphant on to day.

Virtue and Vice.

By Horace Seaver.

Morality, simply considered as the bond of society, has no more to do with a future life, than it had with a past one; men seldom act in the common concerns of the world, from the hope of a distant and uncertain reward—they feel impelled by something more immediate and forcible. The laws which must ever govern human nature, exist in that nature itself. Man being what he is, his nature determines his morality, inasmuch as it determines the effect which every external or internal influence shall produce for good or for evil; if for good, that influence is virtuous; if for evil, it is vicious. Having discovered what impressions afford him true and permanent enjoyment, and what influences occasion him painful sensations, we deduce thence his rules of conduct. This appears to be the only reasonable method, for all the philosophy and all the religion in the world, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us measures of conduct and behavior different from those which are furnished by reflections on common life. No new fact can be inferred from the religious hypothesis; no event foreseen or foretold; no reward or punishment expected or dreaded beyond what is already known by practice and observation.

Moral conduct springs from the mutual wants and interests of mankind. It is each man's interest that his neighbor should be virtuous; hence each man knows that public opinion will approve his conduct, if virtuous,—reprobate it if vicious. And whenever mankind at large perceive, and whenever legislators act upon the perception,

that virtue and vice exist solely with reference to the nature of human beings—then we may expect to see truth and reason prevail in the world. Those rules of conduct only can rightly be called laws, which regulate human actions alike on one day as on another day; and in a nation calling itself a republic the laws of Moses should have no validity in courts of law to authorize persecutions for the breach of superstitious customs. Our highest object and the end of our endeavors should be to free our country from the exercise of all religious tests in all judicial proceedings, and from Sunday penalties which violate the simple and imprescriptible rights of man. The tyranny of priests is as odious and insufferable as that of kings. The attempt to justify the violation of natural liberty because the majority adhere to those Mosiacal prescriptions which occasion it, only enhances the injustice.

When the priests and their supporters say, that "The dogma of future rewards and punishments is the bond of society, and that to overthrow this dogma of the Evangelical economy would release three quarters of the Christian world from all restraint," they might with truth rather say, that their imposition would be overthrown, and that the tyrannical institutions and exercise of priestly power would be immediately set aside. Men for their own safety are interested in the observance of the obligations of civil order, and indeed, its infringement leads to strengthened measures for enforcing its provisions, and to their increased effect by the experience of their indispensibility. He must be as great a simpleton who believes that there could possibly be a necessity for a general flood over the earth to execute vengeance on the offenders against natural morals, as he who gives credit to its physical possibility.

Experience teaches us that the calamities of mankind have sprung from their superstitious opinions. The ignorance of natural causes created gods, and imposture made them terrible. Mankind lived unhappy because they were taught from their infancy to think that God had condemned them to misery. They never entertained a wish to break their chains, because they were taught that devotion, the renouncing of reason, mental debility, and spiritual debasement were the only means of obtaining salvation.—"Occasional Thoughts."

Egotism and Pity.

By Dr. L. Buchner.

One of the principle sources of good actions, especially as regards our behavior towards our fellowmen, is pity. But at the bottom even this highest of all noble sentiments is nothing but the efflux of a refined egotism. For when we see a fellowman suffering we immediately put ourselves in imagination in the place of the sufferer and ask ourselves what would be our own feelings if we should be assisted or neglected by others. The disagreeable sentiment of the imagined helplessness in ourselves becomes immediately converted into the agreeable one of aid conferred and liberation from a depressed position as soon as we have actually given our assistance to the sufferer. Of course this presupposes a certain development of the powers of sentiment and imagination, in which rude nations or individuals are more or less deficient; this want of sentiment and pity renders them cruel and spiteful toward their fellowman, whilst the opposite character is produced by higher cultivation of the mind and heart. Moreover, we act well, as regards our behavior towards mankind in general, out of consideration for our own weal or advantage, for our good fame, our social position, etc., as well as out of respect for the laws and fear of punishment, whilst all these motives would fall away as soon as, being merely limited to ourselves, we could follow our own egotistical impulses, just as the animals do. It is only his social relations, consideration of the common weal and the conviction that it is his duty to act for humanity to which the individual is indebted for everything that makes man a MAN, and renders him that moral being which the moralists and theologians imagine him to have been created at the beginning. Even the wickedness which is the source of all bad actions towards our fellowmen, just as pity is the source of all good ones, depends ultimately upon a want of recognition of this relation, and is therefore finally, like everything evil, a product of want of cultivation and ignorance. Even moral indifference, or the mere abstaining from bad actions towards our fellowmen, depends ultimately upon an egotism refined by culture, inasmuch as we partially feel the evil that we inflict, or think to in-

flict upon others, in consequence of the process of thought above described, as if it were inflicted, or to be inflicted upon ourselves, and abstain from the action in order to escape from this disagreeable feeling.

Here and There.

By R. C. Ingeroll.

The clergy balance the real ills of this life with the expected joys of the next. We are assured that all is perfection in heaven; there the skies are cloudless, there all is serenity and peace. Here empires may be overthrown; dynasties may be extinguished in blood; millions of slaves may toil 'neath the fierce rays of the sun, and the cruel stroke of the lash; yet all is happiness in heaven. Pestilence may strew the earth with corpses of the loved; the survivors may bend above them in agony, yet the placid bosom of heaven is unruffled. Children may expire, vainly asking for bread; babes may be devoured by serpents while the gods sit smiling in the clouds. The innocent may languish unto death in the obscurity of dungeons; brave men and heroic women may be changed to ashes at the bigot's stake, while heaven is filled with song and joy. Out on the wide sea, in darkness and in storm, the shipwrecked struggle with the cruel waves while the angels play upon their golden harps. The streets of the world are filled with the diseased, the deformed and the helpless; the chambers of pain are crowded with the pale forms of the suffering, while the angels float and fly in the happy realms of day. In heaven they are too happy to have sympathy; too busy singing to aid the imploring and distressed. Their eyes are blinded; their ears are stopped, and their hearts are turned to stone by the infinite selfishness of joy. The saved mariner is too happy when he touches the shore, to give a moment's thought to his drowning brothers. With the indifference of happiness, with the contempt of bliss, heaven barely glances at the miseries of earth. Cities are devoured by the rushing lava; the earth opens, and thousands perish; women raise their clasped hands toward heaven, but the gods are too happy to aid their children. The smiles of the deities are unacquainted with the tears of men. The shouts of heaven drown the sobs of earth.