



For the Torch of Reason.

Be Contented.

BY MRS. R. A. BELL.

Every heart has its shadows of care—
Let in the bright sunshine each day;
It will cheer your sweet moments of rest
And chase those dark shadows away.

Why not brighten your pathway with
smiles?
Fling worry and sadness aside;
Life is at best filled with trials—
Let patience and love be your guide.

Let your hearts overflow with true
kindness;
Let your songs be quick, light and gay,
So with hope's gilded banner before you
It will shed a sweet, halcyon ray.

Your lives will be well worth the living
If you'll try to be cheerful alway;
You'll be fit for the duties assigned you;
Oh, try to be happy today!

Then why should you mope and repine,
And worry o'er things of the past,
When proudly the victor will come
And settle these worries at last?

Bohemian Evening No 4.

WHAT IS LIFE GOOD FOR? THE LIBERAL STANDPOINT.

By C Elton Blanchard.

Again the dining room of the Brown home was filled by twenty-five or thirty young men, all intelligent and more or less educated Bohemians. It had been agreed that the Doctor should talk upon the value of life as suggested by Mr. Votipka's question of the previous evening. The old man stood before the little audience holding in his hand a copy of the TORCH OF REASON, and several letters. Let us hear what he has to say.

Dr. Brown: I have here, my young friends, a copy of a paper called the TORCH OF REASON, published at Silverton, Oregon. I see that some reporter has taken down the talks we have hitherto had together, and they are published here in full. We must be careful hereafter what we say, as no doubt relentless critics will be watching us. I am not certain we are not even now in trouble for I have already received this bunch of letters plying us with questions.

This man wants to know if I think the Marriage Institution necessary. (Holding a letter in view of the audience.) Another wants to know, if God did not make the world, who did? There are at least a dozen different inquiries in the lot, and we will try and answer them all, if the TORCH OF REASON is reasonable or unreasonable enough to continue reporting these little "evenings" we are enjoying together. So we will let the letters pour in; the old Doctor will do his best.

Tonight I am to tell you what

life is good for, from the standpoint of a naturalist, a Liberal, yes Infidel if you wish, though the most unfaithful people in the world can be found among Christians, that is, unfaithful to science, and in many respects to the teachings of Jesus. But I caution you, let us not diverge. Life, what is it good for? Perhaps we can best illustrate the value of life to the naturalist by comparison. There is no stronger element in human nature, or in fact, in the nature of all organic life, than selfishness. Even the grass is selfish. It crowds and chokes out the tender flower. The strong preys upon the weak. The weak upon the weaker. It is the old and well known "struggle for existence" in which the law of natural selection prevails; "the survival of the fittest" so much talked about by Darwin, Huxley and others. This selfishness is even a factor in formulating the theories of eternal life. It is the same spirit that grasps always the greater share of fruit among the lower species, as that which constructs a theory of immortality, based upon the fundamental principle that "many are called but few are chosen". Selfishness prompts the hope of bliss and peace in "worlds to come". To me it is a base motive for right living, if one is good because the good go to heaven and the bad to hell. My children would not be considered good, from a very commendable motive, if they were good because promised sweet-meats, a pony, a toy, or some reward appreciated by a child. Suppose a mother says, "Now, Johnnie dear, be a good boy for ten minutes, and I will give you a stick of candy!" Thus the Lord of Hosts, says to man, "You troublesome rascals, if you will be good now and kill my son Jesus, believing that his death saves you, I will reserve a seat for every one of you in the ransomed throng!"

Thus we have a fair exposition of the motives, if the bible I told you about is strictly followed, that prompt Christian belief. Let us see what life means to a truly bigoted Christian. It means one constant reminder, daily and hourly, of the worthlessness of life. The Christian if a true one, very few true ones are to be found, sees the world only as a bad place. He recognizes the wisdom of an almighty God, the creator of all things, in creating this world and the Devil into whose hands it has been placed. This Christian sees the world as a testing place, a life of temptation and trial; one endless, ceaseless

struggle to keep away the influence of the evil one. This Devil whispers in his ear, haunts his dreams and crazes his mind. Martin Luther had many encounters with the very Old Nick himself. On one occasion he broke an ink jug over the old chap's head.

The Christian recognizes the power of the good and kind Father in Heaven, even when the evil one has been given power to create all the sub-agencies for human ill. Cold, hunger, need of clothing and shelter, sickness, death and sorrow are but part of that plan of test. Bacteria, parasites for plant and animal, poisons and the whole list of ills, which reason and experience have taught us to shun, belong to the Devil's outfit. Then the battle wages. Several times, from the Garden of Eden to the Cross on Calvary where the meek and lowly Jesus suffered death, did this dastardly Devil get the mastery over man, obliging the good and loving Lord to readjust his plans. I can imagine how the crafty old fellow, Satan, twisted his tail in glee and put a finger upon his peak-like nose and leared up at the portals of Heaven, when he saw these confessions of his victory.

My dear friends, is it any wonder that insane asylums are full of poor demented beings, who have worried themselves crazy, trying to make out what this life was good for to Christians? Is it any wonder that storm-tossed souls plunge into the black uncertainty of death by suicide? I cannot blame them when I think of the dreadful task they have to perform in trying to make any good of this life from the true Christian standpoint. A galley slave bears his chains hoping for a day when freedom comes. A Christian bears his trials in faithful submission. A mother kneels at her son's death-bed. He is not a Christian. The mother is. She sees no fate but hell for her loved son, a good son, too, but not a believer. She writhes in agony, praying unceasingly, and in her frenzied mind the yawning darkness of hell swallows up her dearest treasure. What is this life good for to a true Christian?

In justice to modern Christianity, we must admit that there are few true Christians. Good men and women are increasing in number, but true Christians are hard to find. Thanks to the great searchlight, Reason, aided by Science, the world is fast being cleansed of superstition and ignorance. Howev-

er, now and then an honest inquirer asks: "What value is life if we are not spirits immortal?"

Man as a specie of animal runs his course and dies. He is an individual, and yet his little entity is but an atom of the whole. His race sweeps on and he is a member of it; is valuable according to whatever part he plays in the life of that race. We cannot live for our own lives alone. Just as a mother cell divides and divides again in an endless process of creating new cells, so man is but a cell whose chief duty lies in promoting the good of his specie.

Personally there comes another view. We have only begun to learn that while outside our specie we must be selfish, we cannot be selfish within it, and be truly good. We must destroy the wheat for bread, and no doubt some animal life for flesh, though I think the less the better. We cannot be true men until we learn that selfishness is not excusable between man and man. This thought for others, makes this life beautiful. Jesus had the lesson learned, if he said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Burns caught the beautiful sight, and gave it to us in the lines:

"For a' that, for a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be, for a' that."

Viewed in this way, life means everything. If because others do wrong we suffer—let it be poverty, want or what not—we strive to remove the wrong, and adjust, by natural means, the resources we need to keep from want and pain. If sick, science helps us to know the cause and remove it. If we have sorrows and temptations, we bear them as brave men, self-reliant and in a full knowledge that law is immutable. If we make mistakes and fall, we get up and see to it that the same mistake is not made again. We council Experience. We learn. Law is our almighty; we fear naught but wrong, and wrong is but broken law.

We look about us. The world is a vast storehouse of what Science has to offer us. We see nothing but good outside. If evil comes it has a natural cause. The world to us is the most beautiful and delightful thing possible to imagine. Our hearts swell within our breasts and we feel as did Tennyson when he wrote:

"And all, for a man to rise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be."

We become dissatisfied with our present state of things. We invent