

TORCH OF REASON.

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For the Torch of Reason.

Creeds.

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all the sad world needs.
—[Ella Wheeler Wilcox.]

The human heart in dark, mysterious ways
Must worship something; always seeking aid
From distant sources, leaving daily paths
Where many walk with lame and bleeding feet,
Or sit with lips too dumb to plead their woe,
Or faint beneath their burdens; knowing not
One man can be another's savior here;
That we need never bear in lands remote,
A perilous enterprise to render aid,
For by our gateways famished hands reach out.

We do not need some supernatural dawn,
Nor sound of mighty trumpet, to know we walk
On holy ground; no pilgrimage we need
To view the shining fields where peace is found,
For like an angel clothed in spotless white,
She walks attendant in our common ways.
We daily pass her in the paths of men
And heed her not, as we our search pursue
For saints crowned with fair aureoles of light!

The Aztec temple with its gilded gold,
The Lucas shrine with its mysterious rites,
The babe's sweet cry that by the Ganges stream
Went out in darkness, or where lips grew pale
Beneath the Jaghernaut's broad, grinding wheels,
But tell how human hearts have sought to find
One star, and blotted out the noonday sun.

This life we have, and bounded by a sleep.
What lies within our ante-natal clime
We long to know, and what succeeds our day.
Astrologers have sought to fashion out
From starry signs the fate decreed to man:
The heavens keep their secrets well; the winds
Return fresh from the great wide world;
The clouds float on their far discursive way;
And, from the sea, no knowledge does there come.
The questions that we daily ask, receive
At nightfall, only empty echoes back.

'Tis ours to live so that the world may be
The better for our living, knowing that
A wrong to one concerns all fellowmen;
Preparing well the soil for wisdom's seeds

That none may fall upon the barren rock,
Or be the food of feathered pilferers;
And guarding well, that no one comes
and sows

At nightfall, tares of discord and regret.
Kind words we have should be our daily speech,
And carved not in the cold unfeeling stone:

Too long delayed, the marble dove that wings
Its sculptured flight, bears no sweet messages

Beyond the barriers set by time and fate!
When lips are dust they will not need
the kiss

That might have been the sesame in
doubt,
To widen out the paths to peace and light.

No use to place the broken harp of
flowers
Beside the palsied hands that never knew
What cunning diction lay therein to build

A wall to hedge them from the ills of life.
And if the one whose pillow was a stone,
Could see celestial ministers of light
Ascending and descending from the sky,
We find no argument for our neglect,
In sight so blest, but a disquietude

For larger bounty that he should have owned.

Were the red beacon light of danger
burns
Along a pathway where some one may
fare,
The darkest night should find our ready
hand
To warn him ere the boundary be part;
There is no help that bears such help-
lessness
As that which reaches out to rescue him
Who sinks in sight of harbor-lights and
home;
The life-line that we throw should circle
all,
And gird the world with love's circum-
ference!

ALONZO L. RICK.

Ray's Crossing, Ind.

Reform.

When the harbinger of day dispels the specters of darkness, half-awakened sleepers often mourn the fading visions of dreamland, as they would mourn the memories of a vanished world, till they find that the solid earth still remains, with its mountains and forests, and that the enjoyment of real life has just begun. With a similar regret the dupes of Jesuitism mourn the collapse of their creed and lament the decline of morality, till they find that religion still remains, with its consolation and hopes, and that the true work of redemption has but just begun.

The reign of superstition begins to yield to a religion of reason and humanity. The first forerunners of that religion appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, when the philosophers of northern Europe first dared to appeal from dogma to nature, and since that revival of common-sense the prison walls of clerical obscurantism have been shaken by shock after shock, till daylight now enters through a thousand fissures.

But Secularism has a positive as well as a negative mission, and after removing the ruins of exploded idols, the champions of reform will begin the work of reconstruction. Temples dedicated to the religion of progress will rise from the ruins of superstition. Communities of reformants will intrust the work of education to chosen teachers, who will combine the functions of an instructor with those of an exhorter. In the languages of several European nations the word "rector" still bears the significance. The ministers of Secularism will not sacrifice physical health to mental culture. They will be gymnasiarchs, like the Grecian pedagogians who superintended the athletic exercises of their pupils and accompanied them on foot journeys and hunting excursions. They will be teachers of

hygiene, laboring to secure the foundation of mental energy by the preservation of physical vigor and to banish diseases by the removal of their causes. They will seek to circumscribe the power of prejudice by the extension of knowledge. They will obviate the perils of poverty by lessons of industry and prudence. Their doctrines will dispense with miracles; they will make experience the test of truth, and justice the test of integrity; they will not suppress, but encourage, free inquiry; their war against error will employ no weapons but those of logic.

The religion of reason will limit its proper sphere to the Secular welfare of mankind, but will ask as well as grant, the fullest freedom of metaphysical speculation. Why should the friends of light darken the sunshine of earth with fanatical wars for the suppression of private theories about the mystery of the unrevealed first cause? Why should they rage about the riddle of the veiled hereafter to please the ordainer of the eternal law that visits such inexorable penalties upon the neglect of the present world? Should the friends of common sense quarrel about guesses at the solution of unknowable secrets? We need not grudge our wondering brother the luxury of meditating on the mysteries of the unseen or the possibilities of resurrection. Shall the soul of the dying patriarch live only in his children? Shall it wing its way to distant stars? Shall it linger on earth:

"Sigh in the breeze, keep silence in
the cave,
And glide with airy foot o'er yonder
sea?"

Why should we wrangle about riddles which we cannot possibly solve? But we might certainly have honesty enough to admit that impossibility. Musing on the enigmas of the "land beyond the veil" may entertain us with the visions of a dreamy hour, but should not engross the time needed for the problems of the only world thus far revealed.

Thus, founded on a basis of health-culture, reason and justice, the office of priesthood will regain its ancient prestige, and the best and wisest of men will become ministers of Secularism by devoting their lives to the science of happiness on earth.—[The Bible of Nature.]

God, in his infinite justice, damns a good man on his own merits, and saves a bad man on the merits of another.—[Ingersoll.]

The Fall of Man.

BY EDGAR C. BEALL.

If Adam was created perfect he could not have sinned, because none but an imperfect nature can sympathize with wrong. If he was morally perfect at all, his perfection must have consisted in the supremacy of his moral faculties, and in a necessary incapacity to yield the reins of government to the lower propensities. And if his moral faculties had been supreme, his highest pleasure would have been in acting according to their dictates. It is, therefore, unreasonable to believe that such a man was ever created perfect, and that, notwithstanding his perfect moral powers, he allowed the lower nature to overcome the higher.

The idea of a perfect moral nature necessarily implies a complete moral restraining power. And where this moral restraint is perfect, no amount of temptation would be capable of overruling it. Such a mind would be as incapable of vice as Nero was incapable of virtue. Imagine Nero being irresistibly tempted to a life of purity! Could anything be more absurd? And yet it is surely no more inconsistent than to imagine a perfect man and woman being induced to steal.

If it is objected that in a perfect mental organization, the lower faculties would be subject to the same temptations as in any other combination, I answer that from the very nature of the case the greater the appeal to do wrong, the greater would be the offense to the moral sentiments; and as in a perfect supremacy of the moral forces, all sinful appeals to the lower propensities would elicit a corresponding resistance from the moral sentiments, of course the intensity of this resistance would keep pace with the force of the appeals to the lower faculties, thus entirely preventing the lower propensities from ever obtaining the consent of the moral faculties to indulge in a criminal desire. Take, for example, a highly cultivated and refined lady, with large benevolence, conscientiousness, etc., and with small destructiveness and acquisitiveness. Think of such a person being tempted to commit a murder for the purpose of robbery. That is, imagine her debating the question in her mind; her small destructiveness urging her to commit the deed and her moral faculties protesting

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