



For the Torch of Reason.

## Pruning the Knowledge Tree.

BY JOHN PRESCOTT GUILD.

Superstition is a parasite which would destroy the life of the tree and at times has nearly done so; but the pruning knife of Liberalism is now in the hands of humanity, and the tree will live.  
—TORCH OF REASON.

In the garden of great Wisdom  
Grew the mighty Knowledge Tree;  
Rooted in the firm creation,  
To bear fruit for you and me.  
Wider its branches spread and higher  
Shoots its skyward-tending stem;  
Mankind all might seek its fruitage,  
Wisdom willed it unto them!

Parasites of superstition  
Founded that fruitful Knowledge Tree,  
Fastened on its blooming branches,  
Blighting them with infamy.  
Up and down the tree they travelled,  
Doing havoc everywhere,  
Till the tree looked wan and deathly,  
'Stead of fragrant, green and fair.

Pruning knife of Lib'ralism,  
Took in hand humanity,  
Low and loft it made incision—  
Cut the thieves off Knowledge Tree,  
In the flames were cast the fragments,  
Burned were they with ridicule,  
Wit and scorn and laugh and loathing,  
The parasites which lost their rule.

Now with renewed strength of reason  
Grows again the Knowledge Tree,  
Flourishing in every season,  
Bearing fruit for you and me.  
That good tree will live forever,  
Freethought rip'ning every day:  
The parasites of superstition  
Evermore must keep away.

## Bohemian Evening No. V.

By C. Elton Blanchard.

### I. MYSTICISM IN PRIMITIVE LIFE.

It had been suggested at the last meeting of the young men with the Old Doctor that it was certainly selfish to enjoy the valuable lessons without wishing others to hear them also. Accordingly Dr. Brown had consented to deliver the next lecture at the Hall of the United Bohemian Societies, a beautiful and commodious assembly room, owned by the organization, and to these people it was the Y. M. C. A., with the religious side omitted. The following reports are prepared as the best verbatim possible to secure:

The president, Mr. Volapek, an elder brother of our friend of former evenings, introduced the Old Doctor, who said:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Students,—The subject as announced about which I am to speak to you is,

### MYSTICISM AND THE PART IT HAS PLAYED IN MAN'S DEVELOPMENT.

I am honored with the privilege of presenting for your consideration and discussion the subject of mysticism, seeking to discover if possible the part it has played in man's development to the present day. I confess to you at the beginning of this paper my inability to condense into the space of time at my dispos-

al a comprehensive discussion of so great a subject. In turning my thoughts to the subject before us, I naturally sought the recorded knowledge of other men. I was almost overwhelmed with the great mass of history concerning myth, magic, mystery, and the persons employing these influences upon human thought.

Some one has said, if men would but define their terms we would save half our discussions. In this paper the important terms are: Science, which is the revelation of truth; Mysticism, the misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misapplication, ignorantly or selfishly, of truth; Superstition, the individual faith which allows the harmful influence of mysticism upon the individual mind.

My investigations lead me to the conclusion that mysticism has usually been disadvantageous to human welfare and happiness. As an argument supporting this conclusion let us consider the subject under three heads:

- (1) Mysticism in primitive life;
- (2) Mysticism in ancient and modern religion, and
- (3) Mysticism in science.

To this discussion I ask your attention not with the utmost confidence in my ability to interest you. The Zulu tradesman chews a piece of certain wood when about to conduct a trade, in order to soften the heart of the man with whom he is trading that he may get the best of the bargain. If I had some of this magic wood, I would chew a piece that your hearts might be softened. Since, however, magic is less respected here than in Zululand, I must throw myself upon your charitable consideration and what I might say must impress you as it will, without the aid of magic.

In considering the influence of the mystic in primitive life we must not forget the nature of thought. Accepting as most men of science do, the theory of man's development from the lowest form of organic life, we can easily think of our race as an animal specie. For the purpose of our discussion it matters not whether the primitive man was hairy, walking on fours, with tail and fanged teeth or not. We can, however, realize that articulate speech is a modern art in the race history. The very nature of language gives us the best evidence of the primitive man's mental status, and the influence of the mystic in his daily life. Max Muller says, "Take away from man his language

and you have only the animal left." Language then becomes the vehicle of reason or abstract thought. What a wonder is language! It is the light within us. Our bodies are but conglomerations of cells, no more perfectly arranged than that of the ox. Yet the few small strands of muscle fibres forming our vocal chords represent the greatest of all nature's works. With them the early man made sounds which stood for what he knew as precept, just as the dog knows bone. These small fibres of tissue are alone the cause which made it possible to say, as did one of our great thinkers:

"There is nothing great in the world but man, and nothing great in man but mind."

With these symbols of ideas came the birth of reason; then imagination and abstract thought. What a story it would be could we know as history this era of human development. Let us paint a picture:

On some forest slope, looking out upon the great expanse of ocean, stands the rude hut of some aborigine. This forefather of ours looks with wonder and awe upon the rising sun. It moves upward from out the unknown depths of the great ocean. The bright morning rays touch the savage face, and he feels the warmth. This single phenomenon doubtless aroused much thought in the mind of primitive man, and to explain the many like phenomena which he saw, such as the rush of waves, the falling and rising of the tide, the wind, thunder and lightning, etc., was one of the first tasks that dawning reason set about.

Let us see what mysticism did for man at this time. However, the religion and philosophy of savage man presents such a jungle of thought that we despair ever reducing it to anything that could be likened to a system. Some of you know already Mr. Frazer's book, the "Golden Bough", and Gerland's "Anthropologie der Naturvolker."

Unprotected by even the savage hut, and with no clothing, the primitive man was doubtless much more subject to influence of weather than his savage descendants. The warm sun was soon a friendly power, and when fire became known it was easy to connect the two. When we wish to please those who do us good we praise them, compliment them—some flatter. So the primitive mind sought to keep with in the good pleasure of this mysterious power—the fire and the fire god. No doubt accidental fires, no

doubt death from burning, taught him that the good became evil often, hence the welfare of man depended upon keeping the favor of the unknown being.

As late as the Greek civilization Helios was the sun god, and Selene, the moon, his goddess. The light from the moon was weaker than from the sun, so this must be a female power, since women were known to be weaker than men. Thus it can be seen that women's rights reformers can blame the moon for their subjection, instead of the "other sex."

The moaning wind at night time sounded like the stricken warrior's death groans, and it soon became connected with the idea of spirit. The philologist traces back the word spirit to the same root as the word wind. Showing that the conception of soul had a common precept with the idea of wind.

How late these influences of the mystic cling to the mind of man is shown by the study of mythology. In the Greek Prometheus, the hero of the tale falls out with Zeus and thus addresses the older gods:

Ether of Heaven and Winds untired of wing,  
Rivers whose fountains fail not, and thou Sea,  
Laughing in waves innumerable! O Earth,  
All-Mother!—Yea, and on the Sun I call  
Whose orb scans all things; look on me and see  
How I, a god, am wronged by gods.

As has been said before this institute by an abler man, the venerable Dr. Hahn, fire being warm, and a live man being warm, while a dead one was cold, the two soon assumed a mysterious connection. Something had left the body, like unto that which leaves the fire. Smoke, steam and white clouds rise from burning substances. That which leaves man at death must be like this. Natural reasoning. This soon gave us the concept of spirit as a form of cloud mist. On distant moorlands, the morning fog was the hovering of departed spirits. The writers of the bible still retained this primitive conception, for we notice that all reference to spiritual beings connects them with clouds, fire and smoke.

If good comes from this mysterious sun, if the wondrous waves of the sea tossed up blessings in the form of food, or if the winds sent falling fruit or nuts at the feet of needing humanity, these were blessings, kind deeds from good beings or gods. But evils came—cold, hunger, death; from what were these?

From beings not good. From