

The Known and Unknown.

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

I went to church last Sunday and heard the same old "chestnut" story. "Moses and the prophets", "Christ and him crucified", and everyone thought it exquisite except myself. It was not even tolerably good, to my thinking; for the preacher did not express his approval of one moral act. It was nothing but religion all the way through. I can tolerate a sermon when the minister will lecture his hearers on morality—tell us how to live in this world. I think every rational being has some idea of how he ought to live, but it is well to be reminded of these things by those we have confidence in. I think all reasonable, sensible people are bound to admit that when a minister tells us that religion is the good to which all things tend; which gives to life all its importance; that he knows what he is talking about, and will have confidence in that much of what he is teaching. I have loved to listen to good advice all my life, but the older I get the less patience I have with ministers who preach now as they did fifty or sixty years ago. I think it an insult to the audience. He is either ignorant himself or believes his hearers to be.

The minister above referred to has regular appointments at this place. He superceded a much smarter man than he is himself. The people did not like the smart man because he was not orthodox enough for them, so swapped him off for one who could tell them all about what he knows nothing about himself. I was really amused last Sunday at his ardent admirers nodding assent to every word he said, when in reality he had said nothing. The discarded minister, whom I heard once, to my thinking preached the best sermon that was ever preached at Waskom. He took his text, but did not refer to it in his sermon, or at least I do not remember that he did. He gave beautiful advice to his hearers, especially to the young people, expressed his ideas very eloquently of how they should conduct themselves in this world, how they should manage to make a success of life in all their business relations, how to be kind and charitable—charity for the faults of others; and all together I thought his talk worth listening to. But the church people seemed to think because he did not tell them anything about heaven or the bad place, that he was not wise enough to be a preacher. I have heard them say they know the preachers know something of what is beyond the grave, know that God has revealed these things to every one who has been regenerated. But it is strange to me that the revelation of each and every one is different, for they all

relate what has been revealed differently. Talmage undertakes to tell us how the old woman looks in heaven. Can he tell us what he knows, or is it a picture from his imagination? We all know that he has a wonderful imagination, and that he draws very heavily on it sometimes, for he does not give us any facts on the subject at all.

I would rather have Miss Kate DePeatt and Miss Grace Gruber tell us what they know about this world and what all of us ought to do, than Talmage and 500 more like him, though they are quite young and he is quite old. He has spent his life trying to find out the unknowable, and now we know from the course of nature that he will soon "sleep the sleep that knows no waking", and yet he doesn't know that he has ever given us one fact on a subject that has consumed all, or nearly all, of his life.

I have just received the TORCH and read Mrs. Bliven's and Mr. Wilson's articles on Scientific Wisdom and Morality. I think there is a great deal of good, sound logic in both articles, and that all thinking, reasoning minds will accept them in that light. And it is so plain that we cannot think they say one thing and mean another.

If I could sell my land for anything like half its value I would gladly do so and move to Oregon; but I could not get anything like what it cost me. This would be a desirable country to live in if cotton were a good price and we had a good system of labor. I have the greatest abundance of fruit. A dozen families could not consume the pears and figs on my home place. My yard is a mass of beautiful flowers and my garden perfectly green.

I have never had but one person refuse to take Liberal papers when I offer them, and that was a nervous old maid. As nice people visit me as the country affords, and I keep my Freethought literature lying around where all can see it. I show it to them and explain the best I can many things they did not know before. It is quite a new thing to most of them, and some of them try to close their ears to my little lectures, but that doesn't set me back any. It would not in the least, even if it caused me to be friendless, so long as I do not give them any other reason for disliking me. I feel that it would make me very miserable to give any one just cause to think I had forfeited the right to be esteemed by my friends.

C. Elton Blanchard seems to deplore the tardiness of Freethought, but I do not. It is very true that I would love to meet persons who believe as I do, for I know it would be quite pleasant and agreeable, and often wish I could go where there are some who are as outspoken as I am; but then if they are

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