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AN ATHEIST'S THOUGHTS.

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'T IS easy, when the many cheer and rulers bless,
To serve a faith that some revere and all profess—
To cringe to cruel creeds, to laud the rich and strong.
To guard and honor throned fraud and wrong.

But when fair Truth would save a world despite its frowns,
Its poisoned javelins at her hurl'd, its thorny crowns,
Its onslaught as on leprous Crime from some foul den,
While Falsehood's mask seems truth sublime to men:

Then is the time for loyal hearts to dare true deeds,
To be such men and act such parts as shame the creeds.
Then should we fight for truth, for worth; and, strong of heart,
In this the noblest war on earth take part.

While Christian poison's vaunted still Earth's panacea,
While saints deluded strive to kill each new idea,
And seek by monstrous myths to climb to paradise,
Yet brand plain truth and duty crime or vice:

Arise! Unsheathe the sword of light; plain truth avow;
Against Religion's hordes unite: the time is now.
Ever she bars man's onward way, the tyrant's friend;
Her power to curse and rob and slay must end.

Mother of mischief, source of woe and fellest rage,
Of living truth the deadliest foe in every age,
Still her wild fears and hopes delude: many she binds,
Enslaving, as her spell-bound brood, men's minds.

Strike hard for souls in prison pent; dare all her spite.
Until her giant force is spent, still smite and smite.
Spare not her frauds—god, priest or pope—till thought be free;
Until their real, if humble, hope, men see.

On earth's most precious triumphs bent, of moral might,
Smite prejudice with argument, smite wrong with right.
But brave men will not fear to fall in fiercer strife
If need be; they will give their all, their life.

Thus shall we speed each righteous cause, thus help earth's
To sweep away oppressive laws and cruel wrongs. [throughs
Man's war for men must never cease while one remains
To lift to light, or to release from chains.

Arm'd Science aids the war we wage; she fills our ranks.
Stoutly her legion'd facts engage the foe's turn'd flanks.
Earth's hope, man's moral sense, takes form more firm each
Wakes from deception and grows warm with power. [hour,

Dark Superstition's phantoms one by one shall pass away,
The lamp of Truth, a glowing sun, spread endless day.
Slave of that lamp, not of creeds, Nature's caress
Our all-compelling prayer of deeds must bless;

Till, harvested the fields hard won, due virtues met,
On happy realms of men the sun shall never set—
On men no longer fiercely blind, but wiser grown,
With war and want and all their kind unknown.

For sage and hero shall not cease to lead our race
Forth from its brutish miseries and all that's base;
And man shall learn his onward way, nor turn aside,
But law well fathomed shall obey as guide.

Be this a dream or what it may, come hope or fear,
Some simple duties of today at least are clear.
An inward impulse, sure and strong, demands that we
From tyranny and fraud and wrong be free.

Evolving law, stern lord of earth, compels our fight;
His sons must follow foremost worth, must love the right,
Sowing the fields, for time's increase, with their best deeds,
Of joy deep-rooted and of peace sure seeds.

So may we work in Love's own might, so build and sow,
That household joys and all delight may surely grow,
And spread afar one wide domain of glowing life,
Whose toil is sweet, since purged of pain and strife.

Thus earth shall breathe an atmosphere of hope and love,
The splendor of a due career each soul shall prove.
We, for these ends so fair, so vast, on Truth rely;
Misleading phantoms of the past must die.

Emotion waste on air we shun, vain love recall;
E'en could God be, he needeth none; man needs it all.
Reverence for man, care for his fate well cherish'd, then
Lives all that's truly good and great in men.

We will not, cannot, help grand lies to keep us slaves
To ignorance and to mysteries that ignorance craves.
Ever would we through earth's long youth aid the one plan
Of changing man to truth, not truth to man.

Nor need high thought and pure fare worse for Fiction's fall;
Wonder itself, the Universe, enfolds us all;
Heav'n's starry radiance sublime shines as it shone;
Eternities of teaming time roll on.

Nor Nature's broad magnificence, sea, sky, and field,
Nor Art's heart-music sweet, shall hence less rapture yield;
Nor childhood's charm, nor friendship's grasp, shall e'er grow
Nor mother's kiss, nor lovers' clasp, grow cold. [old,

Life's course, life's joys, remain the same, but conscience, freed
From prison chains, can teach true fame, true thought, true deed.
And when life fades, and joy and strife, can he repent
Who looks back on an honest life well spent?

The war of progress and good sense forever glows
With feeling far, far more intense than "pleasure" knows;
And Thought's resolve, and patient care and earnest gaze,
Shall well replace the beggar's prayer and praise.

We are no lawless mutineers. We smile at those
Who in their foolish hates and fears deem us their foes.
Nay, could pure Truth and Justice be a god most real,
To such in reverence deep would we appeal.

But since there is no living god, then Man, alone,
Set free to shape his fate, must plod towards the throne
Of ideal Good on earth by ways that earnest wills
Shall find or make through each rough maze of ills.

The passing losses of today we do not scorn;
But, be they bitter as they may, they must be borne.
Old thoughts die hard. They linger still. Their influence blinds,
Till new thoughts grow and form and fill new minds.

On conquering Fate by valiant skill, man is resolv'd;
And step by step the means, the will, shall be evolv'd.
We are content to pioneer for paths ahead
Where shadow-smitten men yet fear to tread.

To win true hearts, Omnipotence should show on earth,
Not blood-stained skill, but innocence; not might, but worth.
In vain invent your guiltless god and blame the laws
He never by his slightest nod bids pause.

Oh, who that had almighty power could hear earth's cry
Of pain and wrong, yet hour by hour stand idly by?
Oh, such a god, of whom men dream, should first atone,
Not for men's sins, but sin supreme, his own.

Are men rank cowards, to be shocked that some should dare
To judge Omnipotence, lest mocked by semblance fair?
A just and wise Omnipotence, if such could be,
Would smile, well please'd such honest sense to see.

And could almighty Love make hell? But nay, his own
Revolt from half the tale they tell but have outgrown.
The pleasant only they would fain find true at last,
Yet wish the crowd to dread hell's pain, aghast.

O brave and true, whom cruel foes have made to feel
Fast-bleeding wounds and savage blows that yet shall heal,
Suffer and fight, till shameful wrong shall hide its head,
Till, pierced with earnest pen and tongue, 'tis dead.

Fight on, by precious truths impell'd where war resounds,
Fighting with mighty passion held in wisdom's bounds:
Resolute beyond all words for man's great gain,
Your deeds are true, your words are swords not vain.

Love shall be yours, and peace that comes to eyes that see
The promised land of happy homes of souls set free,
Whose joy shall soothe your grief to rest and nerve your will;
Your heart with music of the blest shall thrill.