



For the Torch of Reason.

Light.

BY ISAAC A. POOL.

On the far margins of the distant heaven,
There floats a vague and misty spirit
form,
As pale and vast as heaven's expanse it-
self,
So dim, unformed it seems, the weary
eye
Can scarce define the limits of its shape;
And lo, while gazing hitherward it flies,
I, too, on wings advance, more swift
than light,
Across the deeps that float the universe.
To left and right the wheeling orbs
recede,
As from the rushing train in deepest
night,
Backward the whirling sparks in mil-
lions fly;
I through the mighty space see back-
ward turned
Behind me far, the fading planets fall,
While suns and systems spring afresh to
view,
Only to fade anew in distance vast.
A thousand times a thousand years are
past,
And millions more ere that misty form
Assumes a shape benign before my gaze.
At last we meet: I from the distant
Earth,
He from some farther orb unknown,
whose light,
With lingering, lagging speed, falls far
behind
And waits some mighty future to amaze
The eyes of generations yet unborn,
In worlds whose radiance I have left so
far
That they have failed to pierce this won-
drous deep
And faded out of sight.
Thus in mid space
I salutation make in humble mood.
"Oh, Form, ere this by human gaze un-
seen,
Strange brother in this universe of light,
I challenge not your coming, neither
whence,
Nor whither bound; but ere you pass I
crave
Knowledge of vast import to all my
race."
"Speak out," he said, "the dwellers here
well know
The soul of Cosmos; through the circle
vast
We read the scintillating flash of thought
Evolved from human brains in all the
worlds,
As, reading now, I answered your request
Before you form in words your burning
wish.
Know, then, oh, mortal, Nature is su-
preme;
To her all forces yield as of herself.
Of her all matter is and ever was;
All things begin and all beginnings end,
Only to end and begin anew,
In one unceasing round which ever is.
No final end to you shall ever come,
Whether in human dust you people
worlds,
Or sail as burning suns through endless
space:
Unresting ever, you shall ever be
Of all you see an undiminished part.
As much of that imagined God today
As ere you saw the light of earth below;
As much of heaven this instant you be-
hold
As ever in the past your race has seen,
Or all the millions yet unborn shall
reach.
All these are fancies crude, only devised
To hold unlettered fools from rank and
power;
Building a hope, for gain, of future rest,
To cheat the wearied hands of labor now.
The only hell the universe contains
Is that you mortals build from human
hate:
Making of human tools that horrid thing
You all despise, the cringing slave of fear.
Oh, most ingenious have your leaders
been
Devising means to hold beneath their
feet
Your willing necks; a hope of gain un-
bought,

A gain you could not merit by your
deeds;
A dread of punishment all undeserved.
Back to your fellows fly, and bid them
stay
The flood of ruin all such teachings bring.
Bid them be men! None better will they
ever know."
This bring I from the deeps. No need
of more.

Christian and Infidel Duty.

BY BENJAMIN OFFEN.

The very nature and spirit of the
Christian religion, is intolerant. It
says, "Whosoever believes, shall be
saved; and he that believeth not,
shall be damned." This is the firm
ground on which the Christian
stands, and where he must continue
to stand. If he quits this strong-
hold, he ceases to be a Christian,
and, of necessity, becomes an Infi-
del. It follows, then, that believers
in the divine authority of the Bible
must continue to be, what they al-
ways have been, intolerant and
persecuting. How differently do
those feel who have given up all
ideas of divine revelation! They
attach no consequence to faith,
whatever. They have no disposi-
tion even to blame, much less to
injure persons who believe in the
most absurd inconsistencies. They
on the contrary, feel the most live-
ly interest in their happiness, know-
ing that no one can control the
honest convictions of the mind.

The Infidel, then, has the advan-
tage, in a moral point of view, over
the Christian, for the following
reasons: — The Infidel has not to
defend the character nor the actions
of any God or Gods, particularly
of a God "partial, vengeful, and
unjust." He imbibes no angry
feelings, by believing in a God of
cruelty and carnage. The Infidel
has divested his mind of the non-
sense and inconsistency of consider-
ing unbelief as a crime; and, also,
of the fallacy that men can credit
absurdities on insufficient evidence.
He perceives that every man's
religion is, to a very large extent,
a consequence of the circumstances
of his situation in early life, and
the influences which surrounded
him at his birth. The Infidel, there-
fore has no inducement whatever to
injure those who differ from him
in opinion; for, by detaching all
importance from faith, and refer-
ring entirely to good and virtuous
actions, he escapes all those angry
theological quarrels in which Chris-
tians are more or less involved.

So that the mind of an unbeliever
is in a sound and calm state, not
harrowed up by the terrors of an
avenging God, and the thoughts of
endless damnation.

These evils, and many more, the
Infidel is not exposed to; conse-
quently his mind is at rest; his
sense of degradation is not because
he is taught to believe that he is a
poor lost sinner; he feels degraded
only in proportion as he neglects
the duties which he owes to his
fellowmen. The unbeliever, then,
being free from the terrors of doubt-
ing that which he feels it is impos-
sible for him to credit, commences
to walk in the path of moral recti-
tude, considering his own nature,
and the connection he occupies in
relation to society, composed of be-
ings like himself. He listens to
the voice of reason, and clearly
understands that which God or
nature has done for him, and also
that which remains for him to do
for himself. Leaving forever all
religious dogmas, calculated to be-
wildern his mind, his moral path is
as clear as light. No longer stand-
ing on the fearful precipice of faith,
trembling at every step, or chain-
bound in a state of inaction, the
Infidel cheerfully travels on in the
practice of justice and humanity
with a calmness of mind to which
the Christian is a stranger. He
has no angry God to dread, nor
any tempting Devil, against whom
the Christian must forever be on
the watch.

All human beings on arriving at
maturity, find themselves placed
by an unknown power in a world,
in which they will have to enjoy
pleasure or happiness, and also to
endure pain. This is the destiny
of all, without exception. The same
power which propells us into ex-
istence, has made it a law of our
nature to dread or shrink from
pain, and also to desire and love
ease and pleasure. And here we
can at once discover what God or
nature has done for us, and like-
wise what is left for us to perform
for ourselves. This then, is the
stock of moral material with which
mortals commence a life of pleasure
and pain. The same unknown
power has also given man and
woman reason, by the exercise of
which they can augment their
pleasure, and reduce their pain.
By the use of man's rational powers,
he can plainly discover his duty
towards beings like himself. He
loves happiness, ease, and every
thing which makes life worth hav-
ing; so also, do his fellow beings.
He hates and retreats from positive

pain; so does every being which
has life, animals not excepted.
What revelation, then, but this,
does man want to teach him that
which he owes to himself, and like-
wise those things he ought to prac-
tice to every being that has life and
feeling?

And the voice of God, or nature,
calls to every rational being in lan-
guage which, but for false religion,
all would understand. Mortals!
attend to what is done for your per-
manent happiness. Ignorance and
neglect are the causes of most of
the evils which torment you. You
are made to love happiness; you
are also made to shrink from and
hate pain. Every human being is
subject to the same laws; only at-
tend to the moral this contains.
You have no excuse for inflicting
pain on any living creature, because
you know that every being possess-
ing life is governed by the same
feelings as yourself. God, or na-
ture has so arranged things as to
induce mortals to practice virtue,
and to be kind to every thing that
possesses life or feeling; because,
by acting agreeably to the laws of
your own organization, you become
happy in yourself, and have the
additional pleasure of making
others happy also. What excuse,
then, can man have for neglecting
the duties they owe to every thing
that has life and feeling? Do they
need a revelation to inform them
that they ought to be just and hu-
mane? Do they require information
from heaven to inform them that
cruelty to man or animals is wicked?
Let them but consult their own feel-
ings; full information is at hand
calling on them to practice kindness
and compassion.

Do men and women need the
Bible to learn the duty incumbent
on them toward their offspring?
Must we read the pretended word
of God in order to discover that the
husband ought to be kind and in
every way faithful to his wife and
perform every duty connected with
her permanent happiness? Man
requires no divine aid, beyond the
exercise of his reason, to inform
him that in order to be happy in
this life he must be just, peaceable,
sober, and temperate in all things;
chaste, a lover of truth, kind, and
humane to all beings who possess
life. Let every human being, then,
turn to the laws of his own organ-
ization, namely to his love of hap-
piness and aversion to pain. These
laws will give him unerring in-
struction as to the duties he has to
perform, and also as to what evils
he has to avoid.—[Offen's Legacy.