



Truces.

OH, make no truce with Sin.
His breath
Contains a poison that
will stain
The jewels in life's gold-
en chain,
And introduce the monarch, Death.

Oh, make no truce with Lust. His eyes
Gleam with a deep and baleful light.
He is the devil-ghost of night,
And all he touches fades and dies.

Oh, make no truce with Greed. His grasp
Is fatal to a soldier true;
He will deceive and throttle you;
His hand is like a coffin clasp.

Oh, make no truce with Care. His might
Is crafty, and you should defy
All his advances, lest you die;
He is the foe to Queen Delight.

Oh, make no truce with Shame. But stand
Before your equals pure and good,
A part of man's own brotherhood
Of soldiers worthy of command.

Oh, make no truce with Gold. His worth
Is nothing to a conscience clear.
What is he to a man in fear?
A tyrant from the sordid earth.

Oh, make a truce with Truth, and try
To gain the fortress of Renown,
By being brave. Oh, batter down
The fort of Falsehood, ere you die!
—[Selected.

Occasional Thoughts.

BY HORACE SEAVER.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

What evidence is there of the existence of these places, in the view in which professing Christians generally talk of them? We never could find any: and one sect, at least, the Universalists, appear to have been quite as unsuccessful as regards the latter place as ourselves. They have long since exploded the idea of any such place as hell. But would they not find it just as difficult to prove any such place as heaven? People have no more come back to tell us anything about heaven than they have to tell us about hell. We may say that people have dreamed about it; so they have dreamed about the other place just as much.

The only idea, therefore, that we can form of either heaven or hell, exists in the mind, and there only—it is a state, and not a place—that such is the fact, is obvious from daily experience and common observation: and let theologians mystify and speculate as they will, the true doctrine is this: Happiness is heaven, and the misery which arises from guilt is hell.

VIRTUE AND RELIGION.

We have no idea of permitting any man who assumes the garb of piety to claim, in consequence, any preeminence in virtue. We prize truth above all things, and it is quite time that we understood the

just distinction between virtue and religion.

We consider, then, that religion is not even presumptive evidence of virtue. Religion is a belief in a superintending providence, who is swerved by prayer, and who yields to the supplications of the penitent. This belief is compatible, as all experience teaches, with great moral obliquity in the same individual, or it may unite with great virtue in the same person. Religion, therefore, offers no proof of a good life, but it is evidence of great selfishness. God or nature has made self-interest the rule of action in man; to say that a man acts without self interest is to say that he moves without a motive power. The broad, natural distinction, therefore—all men being equally selfish—between virtue and vice, that distinction which is furnished in the nature of things, we take to be this: the virtuous man pursues his self-interest, his self-gratification, so as never to invade the rights of others, and to administer as much to the happiness of his fellows as lies in his power; the vicious man pursues his self-interest, his self-gratification, regardless of the rights and interests of his fellows.

If this definition be founded in nature, it follows that religion is not evidence of virtue. The religious man works for his reward, and, like the adventurous merchant, makes a long investment; he is willing to endure much here for the benefit of the long and happy hereafter, which lies in prospect. Let us, then, take religious people as we find them; try them by their conduct towards mankind, and not by their belief, or by their rites towards their God. If you find a kind, benevolent, just-dealing man, call him what he is—a virtuous, good citizen. If you see an intolerant, egotistical, vain, persecuting man, though he beat the pulpit for a living, and pray loud at conference meetings, class him among the vicious—it is his natural rank.

RELIGION AND LIBERALISM.

When the assertion is made that the Christian religion has always from the day of its origin, been the promoter of strife and discord, the generality of men regard you with the stare of incredulity. They do not believe it, or cannot understand how it can be possible. They have always heard Christianity spoken of as the parent of peace and harmony; and they cannot for a moment imagine that she could

ever in any way, directly or indirectly, support or countenance war or bloodshed. The assertion of the skeptic is denied with no little warmth, and he is pointed to this great Republic as a living refutation of his charge.

We have no religious wars here, but we are a Christian people, nevertheless, and therefore it is false to say that religion is the promoter of strife and contention.

True, we have no religious wars among us, but we are not quite certain that their absence is owing to the humanizing tendencies of Christianity. We attribute it altogether to the increase of Mental Liberty, the offspring of Liberal or Infidel Principles.

Some two hundred years ago, when these saving principles were but imperfectly understood, or hardly understood at all, men and women were tortured and put to death in this country, for religion's sake. There was no lack of Christianity among those Pilgrim Fathers who instigated and carried out the frightful persecutions of their day—in fact they committed them under the guidance and direction of Christianity, as they understood it; if Massachusetts was as religious at the present time, as she was when she hanged the Quakers for their religion, she would hang Quakers still.

But all this brutality has come to an end, and we now enjoy comparative freedom of conscience; and we owe the blessing entirely to the introduction and dissemination of Liberalism. It has stopped the taking of life for opinion's sake, and eventually, as it increases and becomes popular, will remove every species of persecution. But Christianity never did and never can, from its very nature, exercise this benevolent spirit, because its nature is bigotry. Give either of the two great denominations of Christians, Catholics or Protestants supreme power, and neither of them would show any mercy to dissenters. Their history confirms the truth of this assertion. They both have persecuted, and do still, to the extent they dare to go; and they would go farther were it not for the counteracting barrier of Liberalism, which lies like an impregnable mountain across their path. In our own country there is more Liberalism than in any other, and hence there is less persecution to be met with than in any other. But no thanks to Christianity for this superiority. It is all due to Liberalism, which, while it teaches the

honest inquirer his rights and duties, stands a wall of defence to shield him from the remorseless vengeance of religious bigotry. Take away this shield, and let Christianity have no opposing force, and there would be nothing to save the doubter of today from experiencing the fate of the Quakers in the early times of New England.

Liberalism, not Christianity, is what has given us our free institutions and the degree of political and mental liberty we possess. The system of Christianity, which was originated some eighteen hundred years ago, may have been as good a one as the people to whom it was given were capable of appreciating; but as it neither allowed nor contemplated anything like improvement in its principles, it would seem to belong to another age, while Liberalism, gathering knowledge from the march of reason and the discoveries of science, is enabled to improve upon the past and offer a system more in accordance with Truth and Nature.

Origin of Belief.

Do you know why a Chinaman wears a pigtail? If you do, you know the reason of nearly everything that exists in the world of fashion and belief. Each Chinaman does it because all the others do, and they all do it because their fathers did; and if you trace the custom to its origin, you will find that some sacred fool in the first place started the fashion by which thousands of millions of Celestials have had their heads as well as their minds moulded after the model of a primitive polywog. And the minds as well as the bodies of all other people are formed or deformed just in the same way. Just as the divine pigtail has descended to Ching Chong from the prehistoric period of Solong in the dynasty of Ding Dong, so all our own fashions, ceremonies, beliefs and ideas, have descended to us from bare-legged barbarians who would be unrepresentable in this age. We have changed the fashion of our clothes, but our belief in the divine right of many ancient evils is still unchanged. This is the depraved heredity of mankind—this belief in the beliefs of our ancestors without regard to whether they are true or not, or whether these ancients are really competent to form opinions for us now.—[New Dispensation.

The rights of the smallest child are as big as those of the largest man.