



Don't Shrink.

I KNOW not whence I came,
I know not whither I go,
But the fact stands clear
That I am here
In this world of pleasure
and woe;
And out of the mist and murk
Another truth shines plain—
It is my power
Each day and hour
To add to its joy or pain.

I know that the earth exists,
It is none of my business why.
I cannot find out
What it's all about—
I'd but waste my time to try.
My life is a brief, brief thing,
I am here for a little space,
And while I stay
I would like, if I may,
To brighten and better the place.

The trouble, I think, with us all,
Is a lack of high conceit;
If each man thought
He was sent to the spot
To make it a bit more sweet,
How soon we could gladden the world,
How easily right all wrong,
If nobody shirked
And each one worked
To help his fellows along.
—[Ella Wheeler Wilcox]

Work of the Worldly.

BY ROBT. G. INGERSOLL.

What have the worldly done?

They have investigated the phenomena of nature. They have invented ways to use the forces of the world, the weight of falling water—of moving air. They have changed water to steam, invented engines—the tireless giants that work for man. They have made lightning a messenger and slave. They invented movable type, taught us the art of printing and made it possible to save and transmit the intellectual wealth of the world. They connected continents with cables, cities and towns with the telegraph—brought the world into one family—made intelligence independent of distance. They taught us how to build homes, to obtain food, to weave cloth. They covered the sea with iron ships and the land with roads and steeds of steel. They gave us the tools of all the trades—the implements of labor. They chiseled statues, painted pictures and “witched the world” with form and color. They have found the cause of and the cure for many maladies that afflict the flesh and minds of men. They have given us the instruments of music and the great composers and performers have changed the common air to tones and harmonies that intoxicate, exalt and purify the soul.

They have rescued us from the prisons of fear, and snatched our souls from the fangs and claws of superstition's loathsome, crawling, flying beasts. They have given us

the liberty to think and the courage to express our thoughts. They have changed the frightened, the enslaved, the kneeling, the prostrate into men and women—clothed them in their right minds and made them truly free. They have uncrowned the phantoms, wrested the scepters from the ghosts and given this world to the children of men. They have driven from the heart the fiends of fear and extinguished the flames of hell.

They have read a few leaves of the great volume—deciphered some of the records written on stone by the tireless hands of time in the dim past. They have told us something of what has been done by wind and wave, by fire and frost, by life and death, the ceaseless workers, the pauseless forces of the world.

They have enlarged the horizon of the known, changed the glittering specks that shine above us to wheeling worlds, and filled all space with countless suns.

They have found the qualities of substances, the nature of things—how to analyze, separate and combine, and have enabled us to use the good and avoid the hurtful.

They have given us mathematics in the higher forms, by means of which we measure the astronomical spaces, the distances to stars, the velocity at which the heavenly bodies move, their density and weight, and by which the mariner navigates the waste and trackless seas. They have given us all we have of knowledge, of literature and art. They have made life worth living. They have filled the world with conveniences, comforts and luxuries.

All this has been done by the worldly—by those who were not “called” or “set apart” or filled with the holy ghost or had the slightest claim to “apostolic succession”. The men who accomplished these things were not “inspired”. They had no revelation—no supernatural aid. They were not clad in sacred vestments, and tiaras were not upon their brows. They were not even ordained. They used their senses, observed and recorded facts. They had confidence in reason. They were patient searchers for truth. They turned their attention to the affairs of this world. They were not saints. They were sensible men. They worked for themselves, for wife and child and for the benefit of all.

To these men we are indebted for all we are, for all we know, for all

we have. They were the creators of civilization—the founders of free States—the saviors of liberty—the destroyers of superstition—the great captains in the army of progress.—[A Thanksgiving Sermon.]

Unfettered Education.

BY W. J. DEAN.

Animals oftentimes commit acts which if committed by man would be called evil. This tendency is displayed more by some animals than by others. We say of some dog that he is a worthless cur, always doing something mean. Where does the dog get his mean disposition? Was there some canine Adam that fell from grace and transmitted his fall to all his dogish posterity? And is the good in any dog due wholly to his having taken advantage of a “plan of salvation” intended for the benefit of his race? Of course the idea is absurd. Then is it not reasonable to suppose that a mean dog comes by his mean disposition in about the same manner that a mean man comes by his?—that it is to a great extent the out-cropping of a transmitted trait? It will be admitted that some animals, more noticeably domestic, present evidence of having progressed farther than others of their own kind; so it is apt to be said of them that they are better than others. Now who shall say that the case of man is not analogous one? To those who accept evolution the subject is largely freed from its difficulty. Fortuitous circumstances have enabled some to progress or evolve more rapidly than others; therefore some have cast off that barbaric selfishness, that look-out-for-number-one policy, and fully recognize their duty to others and the claims of others upon them. Others, and by far the greater number, are more or less actuated by man's primitive promptings.

Superior intelligence enables some to trace the effects of an act further than can others. With such there would be a great incentive to commit any act that would result largely in good, and a restraint should be placed upon their hereditary impulses to deeds which their intelligence tells them would ultimately result in pain and misery to themselves or others. Of course believers in total depravity hold that morality does not increase with education. On the contrary, we Freethinkers claim that morality and education go hand in hand; but we must be permitted to attach our own mean-

ing to the term education. Unfortunately, most of our high schools of learning are still under religious domination, and an education demanded by the times is seldom obtained in such institutions; for every avenue that leads to a real education is guarded as if those avenues were infested with venomous reptiles. The pupil's mind is put into a straight jacket. Should any naturally progressive student succeed in breaking the mental fetters and attempt to freely rove on the broad, breezy common of the universe, he is at once sent home and his parents requested to keep him where he can do no mischief. No such free roving is tolerated. Thinking, except in a prescribed channel and with prescribed conclusions, is virtually forbidden; but students are taught, aside from mathematics and dead languages, that Christ died for sinners and that the chief end and object of life is to make our “peace, calling and election sure”.

Such an education is of doubtful benefit to the race; but an education that accepts no mental fetters, an education that expands the mind and stimulates it to reach out to the remotest corners of the universe and even speculate as to what is beyond; an education founded on truth and reason and whose object is the universal welfare of humanity—such an education will make a man better, braver, nobler and grander in this life and the better fit him for the next, if such there be.—[The Bible Prophecies.]

The ghosts and their followers always took delight in torture, in cruel and unusual punishments. For the infraction of most of their laws, death was the penalty—death produced by stoning and by fire. Sometimes, when a man committed murder, he was allowed to flee to some city of refuge. Murder was a crime against man. But for saying certain words, or denying certain doctrines, or for picking up sticks on certain days, or for worshipping the wrong ghost, or for failing to pray to the right one, or for laughing at a priest, or for saying that wine was not blood, or that bread was not flesh, or for failing to regard ram's horns as artillery, or for insisting that a dry bone was scarcely sufficient to take the place of water works, or that a raven, as a rule, made poor landlord:—death produced by all the ways that the ingenuity of hatred could devise, was the penalty.—[R. G. Ingersoll.]