

TORCH OF REASON.



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COURAGE

THE world was ne'er improved
By timid, fearful men;
Nor mighty wrongs remov'd
By slavish tongue or pen.
Our noble sires of old
Were dauntless and were
brave;
Their hearts to truth not cold,
Dared prison-cell and grave.

They suffered for the right,
They won the martyr-crown,
They fought the noble fight,
They braved the priesthood's frown.
Help on what they began,
And strive for objects great;
Let us their errors shun,
Their virtues imitate.

—[Selected.

For the Torch of Reason.

Unprejudiced Opinions.

BY CHARLES K. TENNEY.

A day is but the space of time occupied by the earth in making one complete revolution upon its axis. As the earth revolves towards the sun, its beginning and ending cannot be the same at any two different places in its path; hence, the same space of time cannot constitute a day in any two different parts. At some point on the earth the day is always ending and always beginning. As a day is but the time required by the earth in making one complete revolution, at what point in the revolution should we mark the beginning of the day embraced in the time known as "sacred"? In view of what constitutes a day, is there any rational reason for believing that the time occupied by the earth in making any one complete revolution from any given starting point is any more sacred than that occupied in making any other complete revolution? All believe that there should be a time for rest and recreation for man and beast, perhaps more frequent than now, but this does not signify that the first or seventh complete revolution from any given point is any more sacred than the time occupied by the intermediate revolution. That any one revolution is any more sacred than another is an absurdity.

Much is said by our Christian friends about "sacred and profane history". History is a truthful record of past events. What is true must be sacred. That which is false is not history, and in that sense is profane. As much of that which is denominated "sacred" plainly bears upon its face the prominent year marks of falsehood and impossibility, it would seem

edited by the decree or will of man, and it is the height of folly to attempt it.

Man is but a part of the earth and the atmosphere which surrounds it. His being is due to existing conditions and to natural, not supernatural, causes. Change the conditions, stop the earth in its revolutions upon its axis, or in its course around the sun, and there could be no such thing as man. The earth and universe were not created for his sole use. He is but an incident of circumstances and present existing conditions. There was a time when he did not exist, but the earth was going through its revolutions as now. There will be a time when he cannot exist, owing to changed conditions, but the earth will continue in its accustomed orbit.

Matter is ever changing form and place. That which is a part of our body today, and full of life and animation, is tomorrow, when it has performed its part in our life, cast off, and becomes lifeless, until in due process of time it is absorbed by other animate matter, and becomes full of life, until again cast off. Thus matter is ever passing from life to death and from death to life.

The soul of man is but an idle fancy. Its existence cannot be demonstrated by fact or reason. It is the product of faith, and is based on a misconception of man's true relation to the universe. When we learn our true relations to it, and realize the fact that we are but a very insignificant incident of creation, we will cease to chase phantom shadows and pay more attention to ourselves and fellows, and thereby benefit the race.

That there is a supreme ruler can not be demonstrated; that there is not, except in the sense that the whole universe, acting together, is the supreme power, can be mathematically proven. Is faith, based on absurd tradition, better evidence than the demonstration of an exact science?

"The prayers of the wicked avail-eth not." This is equally true of the righteous. No prayer was or ever will be answered, for nature does not act in response to our appeals, but only in obedience to its laws. No law of nature can be

changed by the decree or will of man, and it is the height of folly to attempt it.

The last day will be a very busy one for all concerned. Not only will every human body that ever lived be required to hunt up the scattered parts which once constituted its anatomy, in order to appear for sentence, but the Supreme Judge will have to examine the countless billions of records in order to reach a just conclusion, and at the same time will be obliged to rearrange the whole order of the universe made necessary by the destruction of the earth.

The tree does not put on its raiment of green in the spring-time, or the flower put forth its beauty and fragrance by reason of any special providence, but because, in obedience to the action of the sun's rays upon the earth, it cannot do otherwise. Neither is the fall of the sparrow to the earth due to special providence, but is in direct obedience to the laws of attraction.

Human laws and prisons, the product of man's genius for the betterment of himself and fellows, keep more men from evil than all the churches ever founded or so-called divine laws ever written. Abolish our laws and prisons and the commandments would have a sorry time in keeping our hands from our neighbors' pockets, or from their throats. Self-imposed restrictions, not divine edict, make men good.

Man will base his actions, course in life and belief in future existence upon the naked, unsupported statements of others; evidence that would not be tolerated in a justice court to convict a chicken thief, and yet we are called an enlightened people. In the business affairs of life, superstition and tradition count but little with man, but when anything appears to him mysterious he seems to lose his ordinary good judgment and the word of the religious faker, however foolish or absurd, becomes solemn truth.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live", is the gentle command of the merciful Father, and acting on this command thousands of innocent men and women have suffered death by the most cruel torture. That there could be no such thing as a witch never occurred to the chosen until within a comparatively short

period. It is only since man began to think that this monstrous barbarity has stopped, and only stopped when he found out that a witch was not a reality, but a fiction. If he will think a little more he will reach the same conclusion about the soul and the supposed author of this monstrous edict.

A Great Change.

There was a time when an unbeliever, open and pronounced, was a wonder. At that time the church had great power; it could retaliate; it could destroy. The church abandoned the stake only when too many men objected to being burned. At that time Infidelity was clad not simply in novelty, but often in fire. Of late years the thoughts of men have been turned, by virtue of modern discoveries, as a result of countless influences, to an investigation of the foundation of orthodox religion. Other religions were put in the crucible of criticism, and nothing was found but dross. At last it occurred to the intelligent to examine our own religion, and this examination has excited great interest and great comment. People want to hear, and they want to hear because they have already about concluded themselves that the creeds are founded in error.

Thousands come to hear me because they are interested in the question, because they want to hear a man say what they think. They want to hear their own ideas from the lips of another. The tide has turned, and the spirit of investigation, the intelligence, the intellectual courage of the world is on the other side. A real good old-fashioned orthodox minister who believes the thirty-nine articles with all his might is regarded today as a theological mummy, a kind of corpse acted upon by the galvanic battery of faith, making strange motions, almost like those of life—not quite.—[Ingersoll.]

Colonel Murray, of the Seaforth Highlanders, who was at the battle of Atbara, pays a tribute to the religious sincerity of the Arabs. They believe that if they kill an unbeliever they will certainly go to paradise, and have a good place in its very best department. Accordingly, they are reckless in battle, courting rather than shunning death. "Every one of those men," Colonel Murray says, "believes in his religion, which we do not.—[The Free-thinker.]