



Liberty.

O Liberty, can man resign thee
Once having felt thy generous
flame?
Can dungeons, bolts or bars confine thee,
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?
Too long the world has wept, bewailing
That falsehood's dagger tyrants wield;
But freedom is our sword and shield,
And all their arts are unavailing.
To arms, to arms, ye brave!
The avenging sword unsheathe!
March on, march on, all hearts resolved
On victory or death.

—Home Pastimes.

Release From Notions.—Entrance Upon Knowledge.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

I AM glad I asked you in what sense you used the words "God," "Origin," etc., for your reply comes to me like a piece of refreshing sympathy—as rare as it is refreshing. I can not tell you how the pain grows upon me of seeing how little notion men have of the modesty and largeness of conception necessary in approaching the study of themselves or any other part of nature; and in the conduct of their mere daily business. Of all the people I have ever known, how few there are who can suspend their opinion on so vast a subject as the origin and progression of the universe! How few there are who have ever thought of suspending their opinion! How few who would not think it a sin so to suspend their opinion! To me, however, it seems absolutely necessary, as well as the greatest possible relief, to come to a plain understanding with myself about it: and deep and sweet is the repose for having done so. There is no theory of a God, of an author of nature, of an origin of the universe, which is not utterly repugnant to my faculties; which is not (to my feelings) so irreverent as to make me blush; so misleading as to make me mourn. I can now hardly believe that it was I who once read Milton with scarcely any recoil; or Paley's Natural Theology with pleasure at the ingenuity of the mechanic god he thought he was recommending to the admiration of his readers. To think what the God of the multitude is—morally, as well as physically! To think what the God of the spiritualist is! and to remember the admission of the best of that class, that God is a projection of their own ideal faculty, recognizable only through that class of faculties, and by no means through any external evidences to see that they give the same account of the origin of idols; and simply pronounce that the first

is an external reality, and the last an internal illusion! To think that they begin with the superstition of supposing a God of essentially their own nature, who is their friend and in sympathy with them, and the director of all the events of their lives and the thoughts of their minds; and how, when driven from this grosser superstition by the evidences of Law which are all around them, they remove their God a stage from them, and talk of a general instead of a particular providence, and a necessity which modifies the character of prayer, and how, next, when the absolute dominion of Law opens more and more to their perception, excluding all notions of revelation and personal intercourse between a God and a man, and of sameness of nature in God and man; to think that, when men have reached this point under the guidance of science, they should yet cling to the baseless notion of a single, conscious being outside of nature—himself unaccounted for, and not himself accounting for nature! How far happier it is to see—how much wiser to admit—that we know nothing whatever about the matter! And from the moment when we begin to discover the superstition of our childhood to be melting away—to discover how absurd and shocking it is to be talking every day about our own passing moods and paltry interests to a supposed author and guide of the universe—how well it would be for us to set our minds free altogether—to open them wide to evidence of what is true and what is not! Till this is done, there is every danger of confusion in our faculties of reverence, of conscience, of moral perception, and of the pursuit and practice of truth. When it is done, what repose begins to pervade the mind! What clearness of moral purpose naturally ensues, and what healthful activity of the moral faculties! When we have finally dismissed all notion of subjection to a supreme lawless will—all the perplexing notions about sin and responsibility, and arbitrary reward and punishment—and stand free to see where we are, and to see our own nature, and recognize our own conditions—the relief is like that of coming out of a cave full of painted shadows under the free sky, with the earth open around us to the horizon. What a new perception we obtain of "the beauty of holiness"—the loveliness of a healthful moral condition—accordant

with the laws of nature and not with the requisitions of theology! What a new sense of reverence awakens in us when, dismissing the image of a creator bringing the universe out of nothing, we clearly perceive that the very conception of origin is too great for us, and that deeper and deeper down in the abysses of time, farther and farther away in the vistas of the ages, all was still what we see it now—a system of ever-working forces, producing forms, uniform in certain lines and largely various in the whole, and all under the operation of immutable Law! But I need not enlarge to you on the privileges of a state of freedom and reality. You know what it is to have no longer cause to blush for the moral character of your faith, and to tremble when a passing breeze finds its way into the old cavern and shakes its painted vapors and threatens to dissolve them.

I look back with a kind of horror, as well as deep pity, on myself, in the days when I thought it my duty to cultivate (against nature) an anxious solicitude about my own "salvation"—my own future spiritual welfare. I should now think this as bad as engrossing myself with storing up means of prosperity while my brother had need. How sweet it is to be loose from all such solicitude, and to let one's best nature have its free play from hour to hour!—[Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature.

A Relic of Ignorance.

BY CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

THE atonement theory, as presented to us by the Bible, is in effect as follows: God creates man, surrounded by such circumstances as the divine mind chose, in the selection of which man had no voice, and the effects of which on man were all foreknown and predestined by Deity. The result is man's fall on the very first temptation, so frail the nature with which he was endowed, or so powerful the temptation to which he was subjected. For this fall, not only does the All-merciful punish Adam, but also his posterity; and this punishment went on for many centuries, until God, the immutable, changed his purpose of continual condemnation of men for sins they had no share in, and was wearied with his long series of unjust judgments on those whom he created in order that he might judge them. That then God sent

his son, who was himself and was also his own father, and who was immortal, to die upon the cross, and, by this sacrifice, to atone for the sin which God himself had caused Adam to commit, and thus to appease the merciless vengeance of the All-merciful, which would otherwise have been continued against men yet unborn for an offense they could not have been concerned in or accessory to. Whether those who had died before Christ's coming are redeemed the Bible does not clearly tell us. Those born after are redeemed only on condition of their faith in the efficacy of the sacrifice offered, and in the truth of the history of Jesus' life. The doctrine of salvation by sacrifice of human life is the doctrine of a barbarous and superstitious age; the outgrowth of a brutal and depraved era. The God who accepts the bloody offering of an innocent victim in lieu of punishing the guilty culprit shows no mercy in sparing the offender: he has already satiated his lust for vengeance on the first object presented to him.

Yet sacrifice is an early and prominent, and, with slight exception, an abiding feature in the Hebrew record—sacrifice of life finds appreciative acceptance from the Jewish deity. Cain's offering of fruits is ineffective, but Abel's altar bearing the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, finds respect in the sight of the Lord. While the face of the earth was disfigured by the rotting dead, after God in his infinite mercy had deluged the world, then it was that the ascending smoke from Noah's burnt sacrifice of bird and beast produced pleasure in heaven, and God himself smelled a sweet savor from the roasted meats. To reach atonement for the past by sacrifice is worse than folly—it is crime. The past can never be recalled, and the only reference to it should be that, by marking its events, we may avoid its evil deeds and improve upon its good ones. For Jesus himself—can man believe in him?—in his history contained in anonymous pamphlets uncorroborated by contemporary testimony?—this history in which, in order to fulfill a prophecy which does not relate to him, his descent from David is demonstrated by tracing through two self-contradictory genealogies the descent of Joseph who was not his father—this history in which the infinite God grows from babyhood and his cradle through childhood

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