

For the Torch of Reason.

God's Good(?) Answer.

BY MRS. M. M. TURNER.

The answer to the following prayer was a long and bloody fratricidal war:

"TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. A RECOMMENDATION.

"Washington, Dec. 14, 1860.

"Numerous appeals have been made to me by pious and patriotic associations and citizens, in view of the present distracted and dangerous condition of our country, to recommend that a day be set apart for humiliation, fasting and prayer throughout the Union.

"In compliance with their request and my own sense of duty, I designate Friday, the 4th day of January, 1861, for this purpose, and recommend that the people assemble on that day, according to their several forms of worship, to keep it as a solemn fast.

"The union of the states is at the present moment threatened with alarming and immediate danger; panic and distress of a fearful character prevail throughout the land; our laboring population are without employment, and consequently deprived of the means of earning their bread. Indeed, hope seems to have deserted the minds of men. All classes are in a state of confusion and dismay, and the wisest counsels of our best and purest men are wholly disregarded.

"In this the hour of our calamity and peril to whom shall we resort for relief but to the God of our fathers? His omnipotent arm only can save us from the awful effects of our own crimes and follies—our own ingratitude and guilt toward our heavenly father.

"Let us then with deep contrition and penitent sorrow unite in humbling ourselves before the most high, in confessing our individual and national sins, and in acknowledging the justice of our punishment. Let us implore him to remove from our hearts that false pride of opinion which would impel us to persevere in wrong for the sake of consistency rather than yield a just submission to the unforeseen exigencies by which we are now surrounded. Let us with deep reverence beseech him to restore the friendship and good will which prevailed in former days among the people of the several states, and, above all, to save us from the horrors of civil war and 'blood guiltiness'. Let our fervent prayers ascend to his throne that he would not desert us in this hour of extreme peril, but remember us as he did our forefathers in the darkest days of the Revolution, and preserve our Constitution and our Union, the work of their hands, for ages yet to come.

"An omnipotent providence may

overrule existing evils for permanent good. He can make the wrath of man to praise him; and the remainder of wrath he can restrain. Let me invoke every individual, in whatever sphere of life he may be placed, to feel a personal responsibility to God and his country for keeping this day holy and contributing all in his power to remove our actual and impending calamities.

JAMES BUCHANAN."

Bible people say now that "God thought best that it should be as it was." Seated in the happy home he made for himself with the angels which, according to the catechism, "he created to adore and enjoy him", and, being omniscient, he looks on human agony and suffering as though he enjoyed it. Christians say he is working to some "far off divine event". He is either not omnipotent or not good. In Isaiah 23:10 God says, "Before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me." We certainly have come into the time "after" this god, against whom I bring an indictment for all human suffering.

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My Experience in the Land of Polygamy.

BY JOEL M. BERRY.

In the spring of 1853 Colonel Steptoe was sent with a small detachment of U. S. soldiers to protect the emigrants, then going the overland route to California and the western world, from the assaults of the Indians and other desperadoes along the route. It fell to my lot to be one of that detachment, and we organized at Fort Leavenworth, Missouri.

I was chosen one of the teamsters, and drove a six mule government team from there to Salt Lake City, Utah. We were some three months in making the trip, and went by way of Fort Carney, Fort Laramie, Chimney Rock to Salt Lake. I would like here to give in detail some of the remarkable incidents that we witnessed on that trip, and some of our encounters with the Indians, buffaloes, prairie dogs, grasshoppers, rattlesnakes, etc., which would be in reality the most interesting part of my subject, but space will not permit.

After going into camp at Salt Lake, our curiosity soon led us to an investigation of the wonderful city. We were kindly treated by the Mormons and invited to attend their church, were introduced to Brigham and his apostles, and talked with them for hours at a time. They invited us to take dinner with them, which we often did, but when it came to sitting down at the table with four or five women as wives and only one man, it looked a little odd to me at first, but I soon got used to it.

After being there in camp for some time and getting pretty well acquainted with some of the leading members of the church, I was taken very ill, the company got marching orders and I, with some others, was left at Salt Lake, and never heard anything more of the company of soldiers. After getting well, I took a trip south, saw some of the relics of the notable Mountain Meadow massacre, but when I got ready to come home, the question was how to do it. The journey was too long and dangerous to undertake alone, so Brigham told me to wait a short time, that he was going to send a delegation of ministers to the states, and that I could accompany them as one of the teamsters if I wished. This was a God-send to me, and the way I got home.

Now, I wish to say this, that during my three years' experience in the western world, I never was treated with more respect and civility by strangers than while in Utah, and I see more immoral conduct in the various forms of so-called Christian churches in one day here than I did all the time of my stay among the Mormons. I am not a polygamist, neither am I a believer in the doctrine of endless punishment, but I find them both taught in the Bible, and the Mormon has just as good authority for his belief as any Christian church has for its fool rites, ceremonies and beliefs. I can see no more sense or reason for unseating a congressman for believing in the one than the other. It is a poor rule that won't work both ways.

The constitution says that church and state are two separate organizations and the one shall not interfere with the other; how, then, are we going to bring a man's religious opinions in question under these conditions and rule him out of his seat in the congress of the United States? What would Washington, Jefferson or Paine say in a case of this kind? We know what they have said, and we don't suppose they would change their opinions a particle. I look upon the whole thing as a humbug. One writer says the people of this country like to be humbugged, and if they think this a good chance, let them pitch in.

The Religion of Humanity.

BY C. ELTON BLANCHARD.

Extract from a lecture delivered at Paine Hall, Boston, January 1, 1899.

Christians are impervious to anything that is funny about superstition. Their eyes and ears are shut. They follow the advice of the Quaker, who said to his son on his wedding day:

"My son, when thee went a courting, I told thee to keep thy eyes wide open. Now thee is married, I tell thee to keep them half shut."

I ask you to remember that reverence is a fetish. Reverence nothing that reason cannot respect.

My friends, let me modify the Quaker's advice. When we were savages we could be excused for shutting our eyes against truth, but

now that we are civilized, we have no excuse, and future generations will hold us responsible. I advise you to open your eyes.

I hold revival services whenever I can, seeking to revive in the human mind the slumbering reason of men. I am a preacher of the blessed Religion of Humanity. I want to make new converts. I want people, who are still in the toils of supernaturalism, to take a new start in life; to turn over a new leaf. I want to make new soldiers of the law that is, and was, and always will be. Who will begin now? This is the cry. Some young man or woman comes to me and says: "What is the new religion you preach? Why is it better than the religion of Jesus Christ, the church and the Bible? Why should I turn from the teachings of my mother? I learned my prayers at her knee, and when she died she made me promise to meet her over there. My mother was the noblest of women. Her love was poured out to me from the time of my birth until she went home to God. My mother's religion is good enough for me, why should I give it up?"

My friend, listen. To love your mother and to reverence what she revered is natural—indeed so natural that the same is true of brutes. I would not for the world hurt your feelings, but facts are stubborn things. Your good mother was mistaken. Many other mothers have been good and loving though they followed Buddha, Brahma or some other "savior of the world." Men or women are not good or bad because of what they believe. But belief in dogma helps to make them bad often, as history can many times prove. I ask you to give up faith and set your reason free. The religion we offer—we Infidels—says: Do right; obey law; live for good. It says, there is no escape for punishment for sin. All sin is dependent on matter; I never knew of a sinner after he was dead, but I have heard of dead sinners! Our religion says: If you lie, you not only know you are a liar, but, worse yet, the laws of the mind will so operate that by and by you cannot tell yourself whether you are telling the truth or not, and I excuse a great many preachers on this same principle! (For the greatest of these is Charity).

If a man eats too much dinner, or drinks too much beer—I don't drink myself, it's against my religion—he would be just as consistent to get down upon his knees and pray, "Oh, Lord, please forgive me, I have eaten too much spring chicken. My stomach aches terribly. Oh, take away this pain," as the Christian who says: "Dear Savior, I have sinned in thy sight. I am not worthy of thy love. I borrowed five dollars and forgot to pay it. I had a little toot last night, and, dear Jesus, please forgive me."