



Our Father in Heaven.

BY CHARLES STEVENSON.

O God, have mercy!" a mother cried,
As she humbly knelt at the cradle-side,
"O God, have mercy and hear my pray'r,
And take my babe in thy tender care.
The Angel of Death is in the room,
And is calling aloud for my babe to come.
Thou, thou alone hast power to save!
O God, have mercy! 'tis all I crave!"

A tiny grave 'neath the willow's shade,
Telleth the answer the Merciful made.

"O Father in Heaven, protect my boy
From the wiles of folly, from sin's decoy;
From the snares of temptation on life's
dark sea,
Guard him, and keep him pure for thee."
So a mother prayed as her darling one
Went forth to battle the world alone—
Alone, save the blessing his mother gave,
And that prayer to God to keep and save.

A murderer's gibbet, high in air,
Answered the tender mother's prayer.

A father and mother knelt them down
Together before the Eternal One,
And with trusting hearts implored that
Heaven
Would guard the flower its grace had
given—
Would keep their blossoming daughter
pure
And guard her eye from the tempter's
lure,
And from every stain would keep her
free
As the lilies that bloom in eternity.

A self-slain lost one, seduced, betrayed,
Was the only answer Heaven made.

A beautiful maiden knelt to pray
For the life of a loved one far away—
Away in the fields where life and death
Hang poised in the scales that tip with
a breath:
"O Father of Mercies, protect the heart
Of him I love from the foeman's dart.
When the death-bolts ride on the charg-
ing field,
Be thou his strength and guide and
shield."

A mangled corpse and a soldier's grave
Was the answer the Father of Mercies
gave.

The night was dark on the ocean's breast
And the waves rolled high in wild unrest,
Where a stately bark was dashing on
Toward a breaker's crest, with her rud-
der gone.

Around the capstan, in wild despair,
The crew had gathered and joined in
prayer
To him who only had power to save
And deliver them from a watery grave.

A crash and a gulping wave alone
Was the answer of the Omnipotent One.

At noon of night, in the city's heart,
When slumber reigned over home and
mart,
The firefiend burst from his secret place
And wrapped all things in his fierce
embrace.

Oh, then how many a frenzied prayer
To heaven for safety rent the air!
For homes! for lives! for loves!—and
then
The flames that crisped them sneered,
"Amen!"

Homes, friends and loved ones crisped
and charred
Told how heaven the prayers had heard.

From the earliest dawn of nature's birth,
Since sorrow and sin first darken'd earth,
From sun to sun, from pole to pole,
Where'er the waves of Humanity roll,
The breezy robe this planet wears
Has quivered and echoed with countless
prayers.

Each hour a million knees are bent,
A million prayers to heaven are sent.
There's not a summer beam but sees
Some humble suppliant on his knees;
There's not a breeze that passes by

But wafts some faithful prayer on high.

The beams smile on, and heaven serene
Still seems as though no prayers had
been,
And the breezes murmur as still they
wave,
"When man is powerless, Heaven can
not save."
—[Selected by B. B. Rockwood.

Justice.

IN FIVE PARTS.

BY F. L. OSWALD.

PART II.—REWARDS OF CONFORMITY.

JUSTICE is the royal attribute of noble souls; the most inalienable crown of their prestige. Men who would defy the power of superior strength, or envy and depreciate the superior gifts of genius, will do unbidden homage to the majesty of superior justice. "Mars is a tyrant," says Plutarch, in the epilogue of "Demetrius," "but justice is the rightful sovereign of the world." "The things which kings receive from heaven are not machines for taking towns, or ships with brazen beaks, but law and justice; these they are to guard and cultivate. And it is not the most warlike, the most violent and sanguinary, but the justest of princes, whom Homer calls the disciple of Jupiter." History has more than once confirmed the test of supremacy. The reputation of incorruptible integrity alone has made poor princes, and even private citizens, the arbiters of nations.

King Hieron of Syracuse thus arbitrated the disputes of his warlike neighbors. Plato, Phocion, Philopoemen, Cato, and Abencerage, settled international quarrels which the sword had failed to decide. The prestige of uprightness has made honor almost a synonym of an "honorable," i. e., honest reputation. The commercial integrity of Hebrew merchants has overcome race-jealousies and religious prejudices, and in America the worship of wealth does not prevent an upright judge from ranking high above a wealthier, but less scrupulous, attorney.

The consciousness of a just cause is an advantage which, more than once, has outweighed a grievous disadvantage in wealth and power. It biased the fortune of war in the battles of Leuctra and Lodi; it enabled the Scythian herdsmen to annihilate the veterans of King Cyrus, and the Swiss peasants to rout the chivalry of Austria and Burgundy. A just cause enlists sympathy, and, as a bond of union, surpasses the value of common interests, which a

slight change of circumstances is apt to turn into conflicting interests and disagreement. Strict adherence to the principles of political equity has preserved small states in the midst of powerful neighbors, whose greed of conquest is restrained by their hesitation to incur the odium of wanton aggression. Belgium, Holland, and Denmark have thus preserved their national independence in Europe, as Japan and Acheen in the East. In Central Africa the honesty and simplicity of the agricultural Ethiopians has proved a match for the cunning of the predatory Moors, who constantly quarrel about the division of their spoils, and, in the vicissitudes of their civil wars, have again and again been obliged to purchase the alliance of the despised "heathen."

The practical advantages of integrity have been recognized in the proverbial wisdom of all nations, but are not confined to the affairs of commercial intercourse. In the long run, honesty is the "best policy," even in avocations where the perversion of justice may seem to promise a temporary advantage. A lawyer who refuses to defend a wealthy knave against a poor plaintiff will gain in self-respect, and ultimately also in professional reputation, more than he has lost in direct emoluments. A politician who refuses to resort to chicanes may miss the chance of a short-lived triumph, but will sow a seed of prestige sure to ripen its eventual harvest.

What Will You Substitute for Religion?

BY HORACE SEAVER.

IT is said by those, who, having been driven to their last stronghold in the cause of religion, and who, finding it no longer tenable upon its own intrinsic merits, are about to abandon its defence, that it would be better, infinitely better, not to remove this long-sanctioned curb upon the evil passions of mankind, even though there should be nothing real in it; that it would be vastly preferable not to demolish this ancient hedge round about the innocent and goodly disposed, even though it should be found to be but a baseless fabric, or, at best, founded upon mere inference.

Now it so happens, that in order to maintain this curb, so called, the perpetuation of ignorance, absolute ignorance, in the mass is in-

dispensable. Light and knowledge threaten its utter destruction; for darkness, ignorance, and superstition are entirely unnecessary to the true happiness and wellbeing of man; and more and worse than that, they are extremely deleterious, except it be for the aggrandizement of a comparatively inconsiderable portion of the heritage. They must, they will be dispelled—it is contrary to the nature of things that they should forever exist.

But what shall be set up in the place of existing religion? has been asked.

Set nothing up as dogmatic and arbitrary, but cultivate a moral principle in the breast of man, without reference to, and totally independent of, any separate existence. Let him rely upon no superstructure that is not founded upon known facts. Instead of a long and incomprehensible creed, let his motto consist of these words: INJURE NO ONE. Whenever the question occurs with respect to the omission or commission of any act in the affairs of life, instead of referring for sanction to scripture, to the church, the ministry, to custom or fashion, let him ask himself the simple question, "Is the thing in itself right and proper to be done, or not done?" as the case may be; and as his best judgment shall dictate, so let him govern himself. This course would ensure salvation economically; and instead of man inheriting the costly necessity of redemption, it would be rendered needless to him, by his refraining from evil. It is impossible to calculate the amount of benefit to the family of man, in every point of view, were they to direct their united energies to these important points, instead of wasting them upon a system that will be found to be but as a broken reed, and a zeal for which, in many instances, has almost eaten them up. In his pecuniary resources, in this country alone, there would be a saving of millions of dollars annually, if man would abandon his servility to the church, and learn and follow the philosophy that is according to Nature and Reason.—[Occasional Thoughts.

Ministers who attempt facetiousness in the pulpit usually display a wit as nimble and sprightly as an elephant dancing a polka. In justice, however, it should be added that, though their witticisms are wofully wearisome, their arguments are almost always amusing.—[Secular Thought.