

# TORCH OF REASON.



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For the Torch of Reason.

## Freethought is an Ocean.

BY MRS. R. A. BELL.

**F**REETHOUGHT is an ocean that will spread from pole to pole, And the tides of evolution thro' its vast domains roll; Its broad expanse of crystal waves will widen evermore Until it reaches every clime and spreads from shore to shore.

Freethought is the ocean where narrow creeds are tending— They're drifting toward this mighty sea unconscious of the blending; But on it flows—increasing power—a mighty tidal wave, Each sparkling drop to thirsty minds gives power ourselves to save.

Freethought is the ocean to which active minds must tend, And when within its loving arms all ancient discords end, Don't stay an inland, stagnant pool, a source of death to be— In knowledge grow and onward flow to Freedom's boundless sea!

Freethought is the ocean of liberty and light, And on its deep, broad bosom the foes of Truth we'll fight; We'll spread the flag of Truth and Love: with Reason's mighty chain We'll bind the gods of myth and crime and set their ships aflame!

## Justice.

IN FIVE PARTS.

BY F. L. OSWALD.

PART IV.—PENALTIES OF NEGLECT.

**N**EEED we wonder that the converts of that creed believed in the merit of passive submission to the caprices of earthly despots, and scorned the appeals of justice in their dealings with Pagans and Freethinkers? Why should men try to be better than their god? The worshiper of a god who doomed the souls of unbaptized children and honest dissenters, naturally had no hesitation in assailing the bodies of their unbelieving fellow-men, and princes who loaded fawning sycophants with favors which they denied to honest patriots, could appeal to the sanction of a divine precedent. Every petty "sovereign of six faithful square miles" accordingly became a law unto himself. A man's might was the measure of his right; the "first law" of iron-clad bullies reigned supreme from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and the judges of (the only independent) ecclesiastic courts confined their attention to ferocious punishments of neglect in the payment of tithes and the performance of sorage duties and ceremonies. The belief in the divine right of potentates, and passive submission to the most outrageous abuse of that power, were assiduously inculcated as primary duties of a Christian citizen. Nat-

ural justice, civil rights and the laws of humanity had no place in that code of revealed ethics.

Such teachings bore their fruit in the horrors of insurrection. In the Peasants' War thousands of convents and castles were rent as by the outburst of a hurricane, and their dwellers had to learn the inconvenience of having to submit to the powers that happened to be, by being torn limb from limb, or flayed and roasted alive.

An old Arabian proverb says, "If justice is disregarded, it is just that everything perish"—a doom which the intolerable outrages against human rights and humanity at last experienced in the cataclysm of the French Revolution. There, too, the despisers of natural justice had to eat their own doctrine, the strongholds of absolutism that had withstood the tears of so many generations were swept away by a torrent of blood, and the priests and princes whose inhumanity had turned their serfs into wild beasts learned the significance of their mistake when their own throats were mangled by the fangs of those beasts.

The doctrine of salvation by grace had substituted favor and caprice for the rights of natural justice, and for a series of centuries the consequences of its teachings were seen in the treatment of nearly every benefactor of mankind. The prince who devoted the fruits of his conquests to the feeding of countless convent drones, let scholars starve, and loaded the discoverer of a New World with chains. His successors who lavished the treasures of their vast empire on pimps and clerical mountebanks, let Cervantes perish in penury. The sovereign protector of a thousand stalled prelates refused to relieve the last distress of John Kepler. The moralists who thought it a grievance that the church should be denied the right of tithing the lands of southern Spain, had no pity for the sufferings of the men whose labor had made those lands blossom like the gardens of paradise, and who were exiled by thousands for the crime of preferring the unitary God of the Koran to the trinitary Gods of the New Testament.

Let any man inquire of himself whether he has certainty of anything that is not conveyed to him by his senses, and whether the desire of obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain is not the first motive of all his actions.—Ex.

## This World.

BY HORACE SEAVER.

**O**NE world at a time is quite enough to attend to, nor does there seem to be any good reason for attending to another, since it must be self-evident that when mankind know how to live properly on the earth, they are prepared to live in heaven, if there be any such place in reserve for them. But without this indispensable preparation, it will not be a very desirable residence, even when they arrive there, and hence we may say, that whether in regard to this world or another, our Infidel doctrine is the only proper one for either.

It is true that men are seldom so absorbed in thoughts of heaven as to be without care or interest for the good things of earth, and that if the first day of the week belong to God, the other six are considered as belonging to Mammon. But this only proves that men are as inconsistent in following out their principles, as they are irrational in adopting them. If heaven be a reality, as we are told it is, it ought to absorb our thoughts, and to constitute the sole end and aim of our actions.

We shall perhaps be told, that man would faint and sink under temporal afflictions, but for the consolations derived from heavenly or spiritual hopes. We admit that anticipations of a heaven of bliss excite and give pleasure for the moment. Perhaps the opium-eater, in his ecstatic reveries, was never more perfectly blessed than some enthusiasts have been in their dreams of paradise. But opium, though it offers a seducing mode of escaping from present pain, is yet exceedingly pernicious in its after effects. Depression succeeds to unnatural excitement, and moments of bliss are followed by days of misery. Visions of another world seem to us to act as a sort of moral opium, often no less injurious to the Christian than his favorite solace is to the Turk.

But men must be wretched indeed, if to save themselves from despair, they must resort to artificial stimuli, physical or moral; and we believe that in every case the remedy is worse than the disease. Nay, more; the remedy perpetuates the disease. If a man, to escape his cares, resorts to the bottle, his cares will soon increase, and ruin him. And if, to quiet the

anxieties of life, we have recourse to the excitements of religion, shall we not be similarly situated? Let us hope for the time when knowledge shall dispel the worst miseries of life.—[Occasional Thoughts.]

## Evolution vs. Design.

BY HERBERT SPENCER.

**D**URING the first phase of development, the mammalian embryo circulates its blood through a system of vessels distributed over what is called the area vasculosa—a system of vessels homologous with one which, among fishes, serves for aerating the blood until the permanent respiratory organs come into play. After a time, there buds out from the mammalian embryo, a vascular membrane called the allantois, homologous with one which, in birds and reptiles, replaces the first as a breathing apparatus. But while in the higher oviparous vertebrates, the allantois serves the purpose of a lung during the rest of embryonic life, it does not do so in the mammalian embryo. In placental mammals, it aborts, having no function to discharge; and in the higher mammals, it becomes "placentaliferous, and serves as the means of intercommunication between the parent and the offspring"—becomes an organ of nutrition more than of respiration. Now since the first system of external blood-vessels, not being in contact with a directly-oxygenated medium, cannot be very serviceable to the mammalian embryo as a lung; and since the second system of external blood-vessels is, to the placental embryo, of no greater avail than the first; and since the communication between the embryo and the placenta among placental mammals, might as well or better have been made directly, instead of by metamorphosis of the allantois; these substitutions appear unaccountable as results of design. But they are quite congruous with the supposition, that the mammalian type arose out of lower vertebrate types. For in such case, the mammalian embryo, passing through states representing, more or less distinctly, those which its remote ancestors had in common with the lower Vertebrata, develops these subsidiary organs in like ways with the lower Vertebrata. [Synthetic Philosophy.]