

TORCH OF



REASON.

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"TRUTH BEARS THE TORCH IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH."—*Lucretius.*

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Torch of Reason—Acrostic.

BY MINNIE M. PRESTON.

Torch of Reason, brightly glow
On forever against the foe.
Right and Reason must prevail;
Courage soldiers! Truth can't fail!
Hold aloft the Torch so bright;
Onward! Upward! Win the fight!
Falter not, for foes are near.
Right will win, so never fear,
Error must retreat ere long,
And the earth to truth belong;
Science reign from shore to shore.
Out then error! Close the door,
Ne'er give up till the battle's o'er.

False Conceptions of Human Nature.

BY DR. L. BUCHNER.

IT is sufficiently well known, that the intellectual life of animals has hitherto been greatly underestimated or falsely interpreted, simply because our closet-philosophers always started, not from an impartial and unprejudiced observation and appreciation of nature, but from philosophical theories in which the true position both of man and animals was entirely misunderstood. But as soon as we began to strike into a new path it was seen that intellectually, morally and artistically the animal must be placed in a far higher position than was formerly supposed, and that the germs and first rudiments even of the highest intellectual faculties of man are existent and easily demonstrable in much lower regions. The pre-eminence of man over the animal is therefore rather relative than absolute, that is to say it consists chiefly in the greater perfection and more advantageous development of those characters which he possesses in common with animals, all the faculties of man being as it were prophetically foreshadowed in the animal world, but in him more highly developed by means of natural selection. On closer consideration all the supposed specific distinctive characters between man and animals fall away, and even those attributes of humanity which are regarded as most characteristic, such as the intellectual and moral qualities, the upright gait and free use of the hands, the human physiognomy and articulate language, social existence and religious feeling, etc., lose their value or become merely relative as soon as we have recourse to a thoroughgoing comparison founded upon facts. In this, however, we must not, as is usual, confine our attention to the most highly cultivated Europeans, but must

also take into the account those types of man which approach most nearly to the animals, and which have had no opportunity of raising themselves from the rude, primitive, natural state to the grade of the civilized man.

In such a study as this, just as in the investigation of the animal mind, we at once arrive at the knowledge of quite different things from what the closet-philosophers in their pretentious but hollow wisdom have hitherto endeavored to make us believe, and we ascertain immediately that the human being in his deepest degradation or in his rudest primitive state approaches the animal world so closely that we involuntarily ask ourselves, where the boundary line is to be drawn? Whoever then wishes to form a judgment as to the true nature of man or his true position in nature must not, as our philosophers and soidisant "great-thinkers" usually do, leave out of consideration the primeval origin and developmental history of man, and looking merely at his own little self in the delusive mirror of self-esteem, abstract therefrom a pitiable portrait of a man after the philosophical pattern. He must on the contrary, grasp at nature itself with both hands, and draw his knowledge from the innumerable springs which flow there in the richest abundance.

Nowhere do we find these springs richer and more copious than in the reports of travellers in distant lands as to the savage men and tribes which they have met with, and especially in those simple narratives which often in a few words give us a deeper insight into human nature and its near relationship to the great outer world than the study of the thickest volumes produced by our closet-philosophers. All the definitions of these learned gentlemen, all their tenets and arguments, all the deductions from the so-called "highest principles of science" which they profess to have discovered, are broken by the force of these simple facts, like soap bubbles against the objects which they strike.—[Man in the Past, Present, and Future.

News from Manila says 35 schools with a probable attendance of 5,000 pupils were opened in that city on July 3, by order of the provost marshal. One hour each day is to be given to teaching the English language. If Sectarianism is excluded from those schools then this move is in the right direction, otherwise not.—[Progressive Thinker.

Fifteen Centuries of Church Domination.

BY FELIX L. OSWALD.

FOR fifteen centuries the pilot of the church lured our forefathers to a whirlpool of mental and physical degeneration, till the storms of the Protestant revolt enabled them to break the spell of the fatal eddies, and, like a swimmer saving his naked life, mankind has struggled back to the rescuing rocks of our mother earth. Lured by the twinkle of reflected stars, we have plunged into the maelstrom of anti-naturalism, and after regaining the shore, by utmost efforts, it seems now time to estimate the expenses of the adventure.

The suppression of science has retarded the progress of mankind by a full thousand years. For a century or two the Mediterranean peninsulas still lingered in the evening twilight of pagan civilization, but with the confirmed rule of the church the gloom of utter darkness overspread the homes of her slaves, and the delusions of that dreadful night far exceeded the worst superstitions of pagan barbarism. "The cloud of universal ignorance," says Hallam, "was broken only by a few glimmering lights, who owe almost the whole of their distinction to the surrounding darkness. We cannot conceive of any state of society more adverse to the intellectual improvement of mankind than one which admitted no middle line between dissoluteness and fanatical mortification. No original writer of any merit arose, and learning may be said to have languished in a region of twilight for the greater part of a thousand years. In 992 it was asserted that scarcely a single person was to be found, in Rome itself, who knew the first elements of letters. Not one priest of a thousand in Spain, about the age of Charlemagne, could address a completer of salutation to another." In that midnight hour of unnatural superstitions every torch-bearer was persecuted as an enemy of the human race. Bruno, Campanella, Kepler, Vanini, Galilei, Copernicus, Descartes and Spinoza had to force their way through a snapping and howling pack of monkish fanatics who beset the path of every reformer, and overcame the heroism of all but the stoutest champions of light and freedom. From the tenth to the end of the sixteenth century not less than 3,000,000 "heretics" i.e., scholars and free inquirers, had to

expiate their love of truth in the flames of the stake.

The systematic suppression of freedom, in the very instincts of the human mind, turned Christian Europe into a universal slave-pen of bondage and tyranny; there were only captives and jailors, abject serfs and their inhuman masters. Freedom found a refuge only in the fastnesses of the mountains; in the wars against the pagan Saxons the last freemen of the plains were slain like wild beasts; a thousand of their brave leaders were beheaded on the market square of Quedlinburg, thousands were imprisoned in Christian convents, or dragged away to the bondage of feudal and ecclesiastic slave farms, where they learned to envy the peace of the dead and the freedom of the lowest savages. "One sees certain dark, livid, naked, sunburnt wild animals, male and female, scattered over the country and attached to the soil, which they root and turn over with indomitable perseverance. They have, as it were, an articulate voice; and when they rise to their feet they show a human face. They are, in fact, men; they creep at night into dens, where they live on black bread, water and roots. They spare other men the labor of plowing, sowing, and harvesting, and, therefore, deserve some small share of the bread they have grown. Yet they were the fortunate peasants—those who had bread and work—and they were then the few" (while half the arable territory of France was in the hands of the church.) "Feudalism," says Blanqui, "was a concentration of all scourges. The peasant, stripped of the inheritance of his fathers, became the property of ignorant, inexorable, indolent masters. He was obliged to travel fifty leagues with their carts when they required it; he labored for them three days in the week, and surrendered to them half the product of his earnings during the other three; without their consent, he could not change his residence or marry. And why, indeed, should he wish to marry, if he could scarcely save enough to maintain himself? The Abbot Alcuin had twenty thousand slaves called serfs, who were forever attached to the soil. This is the great cause of the rapid depopulation observed in the Middle Ages, and of the prodigious multitude of convents which sprang up on every side. It was doubtless a relief to such miserable men to find in the cloisters a retreat from

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