

TORCH OF



REASON.

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

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For the Torch of Reason.

The New Trinity.

BY ISAAC A. POOL.

LIVES may pass as daylight passes,
Flitting like the fleeting breath;
These are Matter's endless changes,
These we speak about as Death.
Life is but the songs of Matter,
Wakened by Eternal force;
Underneath, the living Ego
Swings its everlasting course.

All below is calm and placid
As the deeps beneath the sea;
Only on the outer surface
Can the hurricane be free.
Hearts may break in utter anguish,
Out of bounds, beyond control,
They among the flesh may languish—
Sorrow can not reach the "Soul."

"Soul?"—I hear your fervid question!—
"Trinity" I use as well.
What they are, for your digestion,
I will undertake to tell.
Through the Universe unending
These Eternals hold their sway;
Matter, Force, in all their Spaces—
All, their principles obey.

Principles to each adhering,
Never such a thing as laws;
Laws require a maker's steering;
Cosmos knows no "great first cause."
Things eternal never perish,
Never can begin to be;
Though the gods and creeds you cherish
Bend for you the coward's knee.

Spaces fill the void unbounded,
Bounding each peculiar form;
Force produces life, compounded
Where the globes of Matter swarm.
Light and heat are only motion,
Force, the parent, guides them well;
Thus She breaks the priest's devotion,
Mocks him with creation's spell.

Male and female has some meaning;
Matter, male, bestows the form.
Force, from indolency weaning,
Wakes the pulses round and warm.
So they fill anew the Spaces
Where we close our flash of Time;
Build the suns and planet's graces—
Sing for me this simple rhyme.

Such I hail the triune power.
Spaces, Matter, Force, the three,
All as One the Cosmos dower
With its vast infinity.
Forms may change, to ruin scatter,
Still remains the perfect whole.
Forms are still eternal Matter,
Force, to Cosmos, deathless Soul.

These require no sordid preachers,
Scorching through the streets of hell;
Science, Reason, are our teachers,
"Truth, and only truth," to tell.
Here no needs for deep damnation,
Filling coward hearts with fear;
Here no promised, cheap salvation—
Sold for ready dollars here!

Manhood, free from Superstition,
Yet may glorify the race;
When he meets each fair condition
With an honest, manly face.
Freed from tales of some hereafter,
Told of "Christs" and "heav'nly
birth;"
He will answer them with laughter,
"I've enough to do on earth!"

Fallacies of Contusion.

BY JOHN STUART MILL.

THE following is an argument of Descartes to prove, in his a priori manner, the being of God. The conception, says he, of an infinite being proves the real existence of such a being. For if there is not really any such being, I must have made the conception;

but if I could make it, I can also unmake it; which evidently is not true; therefore there must be, externally to myself, an archetype, from which the conception was derived. The ambiguity in this case is in the pronoun I, by which, in one place, is to be understood my will, in another the laws of my nature. If the conception, existing as it does in my mind, had no original without, the conclusion would unquestionably follow that I made it; that is, the laws of my nature must have spontaneously evolved it; but that my will made it, would not follow. Now when Descartes afterwards adds that I can not unmake the conception, he means that I can not get rid of it by an act of my own; which is true, but is not the proposition required. That what some of the laws of my nature have produced, other laws, or those same laws in other circumstances, might not subsequently efface, he would have found it difficult to establish.

Analogous to this are some of the ambiguities in the free will controversy; which, as they will come under special consideration in the concluding book, I only mention memoriam causa. In that discussion, too, the word I is often shifted from one meaning to another, at one time standing for my volitions, at another time for the actions which are the consequence of them, or the mental dispositions from which they proceed. The latter ambiguity is exemplified in an argument on Coleridge (in his Aids to Reflection) in support of the freedom of the will. It is not true, he says, that man is governed by motives; 'the man makes the motive, not the motive the man;' the proof being that 'what is a strong motive to one man is no motive at all to another.' The premise is true, but only amounts to this, that different persons have different degrees of susceptibility to the same motive; as they have also to the same intoxicating liquid, which however does not prove that they are free to be drunk or not drunk, whatever quantity they may drink. What is proved is, that certain mental conditions in the man himself must cooperate, in the production of the act, with the external inducement; but those mental conditions also are the effect of causes; and there is nothing in the argument to prove that they can arise without a cause—that a spontaneous determination of the man's will, without any cause at all, ever takes place, as the free-will doctrine supposes.

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One of the most singular examples of the lengths to which a philosopher of eminence may be led away by an ambiguity of language, is afforded by this very case. I refer to the famous argument by which Bishop Berkeley flattered himself that he had forever put an end to 'scepticism, atheism and irreligion.' It is briefly as follows: I thought of a thing yesterday; I ceased to think of it; I think of it again today. I had, therefore, in my mind yesterday an idea of the object; I have also an idea of it today; this idea is evidently not another, but the very same idea. Yet an intervening time elapsed in which I had it not. Where was the idea during this interval? It must have been somewhere; it did not cease to exist; otherwise the idea I had yesterday could not be the same idea; no more than the man I see alive today can be the same whom I saw yesterday, if the man has died in the meanwhile. Now, an idea can not be conceived to exist anywhere except in a mind; and hence there must exist a universal mind, in which all ideas have their permanent residence during the intervals of their conscious presence in our own minds.

That Berkeley here confounded sameness numero with sameness specie, that is, with exact resemblance, and assumed the former where there was only the latter, hardly needs be more particularly pointed out. He could never have broached this strange theory if he had understood that when we say we have the same thought today which we had yesterday, we do not mean the same individual thought, but a thought exactly similar; as we say we have the same illness which we had last year, meaning only the same sort of illness.—[A System of Logic.

Men seek retreats for themselves—houses in the country, sea-shores, and mountains; and thou, too, art wont to desire such things very much. But this is altogether a work of the most common men; for it is in thy power, whenever thou shalt choose, to retire into thyself. For nowhere, either with more quiet or more freedom from trouble, does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts, that by looking into them he is immediately in perfect tranquility. And I affirm that tranquility is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind.—[Gems of Thought.

The Love of Money.

BY SMILES.

THE saving of money for the mere sake of it, is but a mean thing, even though earned by honest work; but where earned by dice-throwing, or speculation, and without labor, it is still worse. To provide for others, and for our own comfort and independence in old age, is honorable, and greatly to be commended; but to hoard for mere wealth's sake is the characteristic of the narrow-souled and the miserly. It is against the growth of this habit of inordinate saving, that the wise man needs most carefully to guard himself; else, what in youth was simple economy, may in old age grow into avarice, and what was a duty in the one, may become a vice in the other. It is the love of money, not money itself, which is the "root of evil"—a love which narrows and contracts the soul, and closes it against generous life and action. Hence, Sir Walter Scott makes one of his characters declare that "the penny siller slew mair souls than the naked sword slew bodies." It is one of the defects of business too exclusively followed, that it insensibly tends to a mechanism of character. The business man gets into a rut, and often does not look beyond it. If he lives for himself only, he becomes apt to regard other human beings only in so far as they minister to his ends. Take a leaf from such men's ledger, and you have their life. It is said of one of our most eminent modern men of business—withal a scrupulously honorable man—who spent his life mainly in money-making, and succeeded, that when upon his death-bed, he turned to his favorite daughter, and said solemnly to her, "Hasn't it been a mistake, —?" He had been thinking of the good which other men of his race had done, and which he might have done, had he not unhappily found exclusive money-making to be a mistake when it was too late to remedy it.—[Room At The Top.

What a grand power is the power of thought! And what a grand being is man when he uses it aright; because, after all, it is the use made of it that is the important thing. Character comes out of thought; or rather thought comes out of character. The particular thoughts are like the blossoms on the trees; they tell of what kind it is. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is."—Sir W. Raleigh.