

## Torch of Reason

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### THE EVOLUTION OF DUTY.

There has probably never been a perfectly developed human being, and to determine who was or who is the most perfect would puzzle the gods indeed, if there were any, for one may be quite perfect in some respects while another may far excel him in some other points of strength. In fact, there are people who seem good and strong mentally, morally and physically, and yet, when carefully analyzed, are found to be perfectly blank in some of the most essential characteristics of perfection. We are all limited in judgment, and so in making up our verdicts we can only do our best, labor on and wait for results; but it is a mistake not to give the world the benefit of our honest thought, and therefore we wish to point out what we think is a great weakness of some who are called human. Like the lower animals these poor creatures do not seem to have evolved that great distinguishing trait of manhood and womanhood called "duty." Their every action, like the actions of the pachydermata, shows that the idea of duty has no place in their brains; and of late we have noticed that some have written quite elaborate articles trying to prove that there is no such thing as duty.

Let us see. There are many good men and women who when choosing their course of procedure have a feeling that they ought to do that which is best for the world. If they proceed thus they feel a very high order of happiness, but if for

the sake of some selfish pleasure they neglect thus to proceed they feel unhappy, and this is because they know that they have not done their "duty." It is a duty to take care of one's health. Why? Because we thus become a help rather than a hindrance to our fellows and hasten along the course of progress. It is a duty to study and make our minds all they are capable of being for the same reason; and, for the same reason, there are many, many duties for civilized human beings to perform. But let it be understood that a duty is not a burdensome debt, ever hanging over the victims head, every now and then causing pain by a disagreeable foreclosure; but that it is a debt which it is a privilege and pleasure to pay, and the payment is one for which we ever get value received, and value of such a nature that it does not appeal to our egoistic natures but rather to our altruistic.

Duty when unperformed becomes disagreeable, but, once accomplished, although with much sacrifice, it is a never-ending source of pleasure and proves to be no real sacrifice after all. Of course all this does not fully apply to those who have not evolved to that higher state of consciousness which is alone enjoyed by those who realize that the highest happiness comes from making others happy, instead of abolishing all obligations and living a miserable, short, self-centered life. To the conscientious it is a duty to be self-reliant as far as possible, but not for the sake of self alone. It is a duty to have self control that we may forego immediate, selfish pleasure for the sake of others. It is a duty, and a very pleasant one, to find, as best we can, what our duty is and then to do it.

But we must remember that all this implies no duty to a god, no duty to a son and no duty to a holy ghost, but only duty to ourselves and to our fellow men. The child, before it evolves to a state of conscientiousness and reason, and the lower animals may have no duties; but, now that we have become man, let us put away childish things and try to learn and do our duty as reasoning, human beings, for our duty is that which is best for all.

### THE WAYWARDNESS OF GOD.

God (that is, the idea of a god, and there is no god that we know of excepting the idea) was born and brought up by very ignorant parents. It is little wonder, then, that his childhood life, as recorded in the Old Testament, was one round of wilful, spiteful, jealous, petty, rash performances. His parents (the ancient people), being ignorant of all the modern laws of hygiene, allowed him to eat of the un-ripened fruits of heathen morality,

and he was ever and anon cramped with the colic of selfish bigotry. This, of course, injured his disposition and he became as cruel, jealous and vindictive as any bully that ever graced the prize ring or the penitentiary.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" says this selfish child of ancient myth, and in order to force obedience to his command, millions of innocent creatures' lives were sacrificed. Look how he captured and slew the innocent peoples around him until his very name became a terror to those who loved liberty better than their own lives.

One day, as he sat by the wayside between those two far-separated cities called Priestcraft and Humanity (the latter he was never allowed to enter), he conceived a wicked notion, and at once, as is the habit of reckless young men, put it into execution. It was nothing less than "cutting out" a young man by the name of Joseph, and stealing the affections of his betrothed. Of course this was only in line with his former conduct, but he was now of such an age that we would naturally suppose him to have had more sense, especially as his royal birth gave him the choice of thousands that had never made promises of life-long fidelity to another. But we can never tell what wayward children will do next. We can only try to help them to be better, and if they get too bad, rob them of their association with decent people.

After his son was born, however, God seemed to be somewhat subdued, and his cruelty took on a milder form; and oftentimes after Jesus became old enough to be trusted, the father, when tempted to cruelly maltreat a helpless ox or an ass, would listen to the pleadings of the boy and let the poor creature go, but woe unto a poor brute who had offended both father and son, for although the boy was somewhat human he was still "a chip off the old block," and at times had fits of jealousy and revenge, and cruelly treated those whom he tried to save from his father's wrath.

In the year A. D. 33, or there about, the senior member of the firm, having become old, retired to his summer residence on Gold Hill, and left Mr. God, jr., to wait on their many customers; but it takes experience to run a large business successfully, and the ever watchful Jews soon put a quietus on the firm's gold securities. This made the younger member of the firm reckless and he went to hell very rapidly (see Bible account), while his backers became shaky and took to drink. One day this half-human son found himself caught where he ought not to have been, in someone's garden just outside of the city. Feeling his weakness and knowing the severity of the law he "got in a sweat to see his

ma" and cried for his pa to come and help him, but he did not know that his cruel sire had planned the whole thing and that his son's blood was the only thing that would satisfy his divine sense of justice; and so he died, i.e., the Jews thought he did, but he fooled them at the last minute. The whole scheme to fool the Jews and rob the law of its victim was so nicely planned that even some of the Jews to this day don't know that he is still alive and safe and sound under the roof of his father's summer residence.

How the father and son became reconciled after the attempted sacrifice we are not told, but we do know that the wrath of God is so great at times that Jesus is obliged to act as a mediator, or his "awful dad" would give us poor, ignorant humans just what he thinks we deserve.

But "a change comes over the spirit of our dream." This cruel man-god and this illegitimate god-man have done their work and will soon move farther back into the wilds of heathen nations, and disturb not the happy work and peaceful slumbers of those who are "out of the woods."

Let us not condemn them (they are one) for their wilfulness, but remember how their parents spoiled them. Think how they were humored, how they were coaxed and how they were applauded whenever they did anything "smart!" Was it not enough to spoil even the gods? And, after all, are they not good to retire when they know that their room is better than their company, even if they can't help themselves? Let us "thank God" that he and his son have at last resigned in favor of better citizens, and hope that sometime in the glorious, Secular future their "eternal life" may come to an eternal end that the children of men may have a chance to live without the fear of meeting such wilful creatures or that "warm member," their agent, the devil.

### THE NATIONAL CONGRESS.

Every Liberal will notice with interest the call for the next Congress of Liberals in our country, to be held at Boston next Nov. 17-19.

These yearly meetings of the Liberals of the United States should be regarded as, and made to be important events. They are continuations of a line of annual Congresses of Liberals, commencing with the grand Centennial Assembly at Philadelphia, July 4, 1876. These Congresses have marked a checkered career of Liberalism, but their importance and influence has by no means been limited to what they have done or said. They have been the great witnesses which have stood out in our great Republic for the right, duty and necessity of