

# TORCH OF REASON.



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

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## Ingersoll.—He Left the World Better than He Found It.

BY SUSAN H. WIXON.

HE came into a world of pain,  
Of superstitious fear,  
Where crouching Ignorance had slain  
Its thousands, year by year;  
A world where Sorrow sat and wept,  
In gloomy, quivering dread,  
Lest torturing flames had lapped and crept  
Around the pulseless dead.  
O'er lovely vale and flowery height  
Lay shadows dim and gray,  
As clouds that change to stormy night  
The sunlit, summer day.  
Where should have dwelt the brave and true,  
Free as the bounding waves;  
Firm in the right, and fearless, too,—  
He found a race of slaves.  
Like bold and plumed knights of old,  
With sword and flashing spear,  
He touched the present with the gold  
Of good and gracious cheer.  
He broke the clanking chains that bound  
In servile bonds the mind,  
And mournful hearts new courage found,  
With Reason's wreath entwined.  
He banished many ills from earth,  
Gave hope instead of care;  
He rang the bells of honest worth,  
Brought joys that all might share.  
His was a clarion note to all,  
To all, on land and sea;—  
"Arise, O friends, heed Wisdom's call,  
And evermore be free!  
"Be honest men, be true, be just,  
Nor heed established fraud;  
The right way leads to truth and trust  
By only one safe road."  
The music of his wondrous word  
Was clear as silver bell;  
From east to west, wherever heard,  
The rusted fetters fell.  
To dust have crumbled olden creeds,  
In light he shed afar;  
And in their stead are loving deeds,  
Each one a shining star;  
While noxious weeds to darkness fled,  
And vanished in the air;  
Where once they grew, are roses red,  
And lilies passing fair.  
And where the baleful demons stood,  
The fair, old earth to stain,  
Are human forms in happy mood,  
And love and gladness reign.  
And now his gentle heart is still!  
Yet lives he in our thought;  
Lives in the higher, grander will;  
And in the work he wrought.  
So shall he live, the peerless one,  
Above all noisy strife;  
The world's best work is nobler done  
Because of his true life.  
For him, as centuries come and go,  
No deathly knell shall toll;  
With life and time must ever flow  
The name of INGERSOLL.

## Belief and Knowledge.

BY B. F. UNDERWOOD.

ANY people make no distinction between knowledge and belief, but the distinction is one which it is important to bear in mind, especially in controversy. Some persons think that they know a great deal because they believe a great deal, and such

persons imagine others know less than they do, because such other persons only assert what they know, being reserved in regard to what they do not know.

One may believe much and know but little, and one may know much and have a very short creed. The man of large experience and knowledge is cautious and discriminating in accepting unverified statements. The ignorant man is less capable of calculating probabilities and is easily imposed upon by false statements. It is easier to assent to an old creed, making the authority of a name or book serve in the place of proof, than it is to examine a subject, weigh evidence and make that the basis of belief or disbelief. It is men accustomed more or less to the authority of creeds and to the idea of the preeminent importance of believing this or that dogma, who pride themselves more on what they know, and more on the amount of the marvelous they can swallow, than on the amount of evidence they can adduce to sustain their views, or on the strength of the reasons they can give for adopting and adhering to them. Belief may exist without any real evidence and in conflict with truth. But what one knows is always true.

A conviction is not to be treated as of no value simply because it is a belief. Beliefs move men to action, knowledge guides and corrects them. Theological teachers have prepared statements of what should be believed, declare disbelief and even doubt sinful in advance, and have then pronounced all who rejected their theological nostrum as deserving and destined to eternal suffering. How absurd. Men may be urged to examine, but to urge them to believe is to treat them like children. If the evidence of any claim is good it will sooner or later be accepted by all rational minds. The man of science does not plead for converts. He does not demand belief. He invites investigation. He does not threaten men with damnation if they believe not. He assures them that they will be rewarded with possession of the truth if they apply their minds to the study of his teachings.

Theology by stereotyping old errors and antiquated methods, has become the enemy not only of intellectual growth and material prosperity, but of social progress and natural morality. Science is radical and progressive. Theology is "the Bourbon of the world of thought." Science is knowledge

classified; theology is ignorance petrified. Science is the friend, the benefactor, the "savior" of mankind; its mission is to bless and benefit the race; it hath its "victories no less renowned than war."

Theology has persecuted and murdered reformers, strangled genius, reddened the earth with human blood, and covered it with a mantle of darkness. Science is gaining ground every day; theology is as rapidly losing its influence over the minds of men. The realm of science is the region of natural law; the empire of theology is the region of the supernatural. The enlargement of the former corresponds with man's progress and enlightenment; the domain of the latter has for centuries, with the decay of superstition, been growing "small by degrees and beautifully less."

Theology claims to be able to give an explanation of this universe. Science, which deals with the observable and calculable, studies the order and sequences of the phenomena. The absolute nature of things is unknown, and the puzzle of existence man cannot solve. A mystery to ourselves, we are in the midst of mysteries we cannot unravel. We are all children in the dark, getting now and then a glimpse of the light.

The widest observation and experience in a lifetime, and the most complete familiarity with the results of all investigation past and present, will not remove the barriers to a solution of the problem of this universe; because no amount of knowledge possible to man can relieve him from the organically imposed limitations of human intelligence.

All our ideas of the external world are and must forever be relative. We can know things only as they are related to us, as they are colored by our consciousness, and modified by the conditions of the human organism. So long as there is organism and environment, knowledge is possible only in the form of a relation—a relation between the subject, man, and the object, external Nature.

We can know things only as they are related to the mind. By no power of thought, by no ingenuity of reasoning, by no effort of the will, can we scale or destroy the eternal wall which confines us to the region of the relative, and makes forever impossible knowledge of the absolute, or of "The thing in itself."

## Origin and Nature of Life.

BY DR. PAUL TOPINARD.

LIFE reduced to its simplest expression is the resultant of an ensemble of properties or operations of a peculiar species of substance called protoplasm, which impregnates all the parts of organisms and which we meet with in the isolated state only in moners. The four first properties which must be signalized are: (1) THE OXIDATION of protoplasm, which is the source of its energy or stock of vital power; (2) EXCITABILITY or REFLEXIBILITY, which gives rise to its actions and is the intermittent cause of its loss of energy; (3) NUTRITION, which maintains the integrity of the protoplasm and is the cause of its increase; (4) REPRODUCTION, which supervenes when the augmentation has reached a certain limit. The results, as regards the protoplasm, are contained in two words: life as an individual during a certain period of time, and self-perpetuation in like forms; M. Delage adds a third characterization: the performance of work. These four properties, viewed alone, are physico-chemical in character. If a particle of matter, for example, comes within reach of a moner, an excitation takes place. If the particle is nutrient in character, the pseudopods of the moner will be extended, its cilia will be set in motion, and the nutrient particle will be engulfed. There is nothing mystical in this performance. A property merely is put into play—a reaction succeeding an excitation. At most we might say that the centrosome acted as the center of attraction.

But, reduced to their properties as above defined, protoplasm is merely inert bodies—admirably constructed machines, yet operating without coal and having no actual materials to work upon. Their impulse and direction are given by outward stimuli. They are constrained to respond to the commands imposed upon them, to put themselves in harmony with the stimuli offered—in a word, to obey the exactions of their environments agreeably to the law of necessity, and on pain of death to accommodate themselves to the conditions of existence in which their lot is cast. Hence results the fifth property of protoplasm—that of adaptation. Three factors unite in insuring the perfect action of this property: (1) The plasticity of protoplasm, the result of the joint action of its reflexivity and nutri-