

# TORCH OF REASON.

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

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NO. 10.

Giordano Bruno.

BY AUGUSTUS WATTERS.

THE last day! Tomorrow, as the morn-  
doth break,  
This breathing, sensient, fleshy  
temple—  
This weird abode of sorrow and of joy—  
Will fall as leaves before the autumn  
blast.  
Well, be it so. To ripen precious grain,  
That feeds the toiler and renews his  
strength,  
The shining leaves must fall and turn to  
dust.  
In far-off, happy days, the blood now  
shed  
Will rise again in freedom's deathless  
boughs,  
And in their shade the ransomed world  
will laugh.  
And other worlds, which madmen now  
deny,  
Will shed a benison upon my tomb.  
And yet, to live is sweet. Alas, how oft,  
When Spring hath broken into rosy  
smiles,  
And sparrows chirped about the cottage  
eaves,  
Have I resolved that I would fight no  
more.  
I did not long for what the bigots dream,  
A city built of amethyst and gold,  
With gates of pearl engirt with crystal  
seas,  
For heaven did greet me in each sunny  
nook.  
I asked no comrades but the birds and  
flowers,  
And brawling streams that leap beneath  
the pines,  
And kindly peasants that forestalled my  
needs.  
I craved not gold, nor frescoed living  
tombs,  
Nor hollow joys that stultify the heart.  
My crowning heresy was to love man-  
kind.  
Because I could not brook the fawning  
knave,  
The subtle despot and the jibbering  
dunce,  
That weave their meshes to destroy the  
mind,  
They'd fain give out that I'm a spotted  
fiend.  
And so, to die is best. For thoughtful  
eyes  
That ope before their time in desert  
wastes,  
Ere toiling suns with fierce alembic ray  
Have crumbled rocks and touched the  
savage soul,  
The way to paradise is through the fire.

### Third Stage of Freethought— Secularism.

BY G. J. HOLYOAKE.

"Nothing is destroyed until it has  
been replaced."—Madame de Stael.

SEEING this wise maxim in a  
paper by Auguste Comte, I  
asked my friend, Wm. de  
Fonville, who was in communica-  
tion with Comte, to learn for me  
the authorship of the phrase. Com-  
te answered that it was the Em-  
peror's (Napoleon III.). It first  
appeared, as I afterwards found, in  
the writings of Madame de Stael,  
and more fully expressed by her.

Self-regarding criticism having  
discovered the insufficiency of the-  
ology for the guidance of man,  
next sought to ascertain what rules  
human reason may supply for the  
independent conduct of life, which  
is the object of Secularism.

At first, the term was taken to  
be a "mask" concealing sinister  
features—a "new name for an old  
thing"—or as a substitute term for  
skepticism or atheism. If impres-  
sions were always knowledge, men  
would be wise without inquiry, and  
explanations would be unneces-  
sary. The term Secularism was  
chosen to express the extension of  
Freethought to ethics. Freethink-  
ers commonly go no further than  
saying, "We search for truth." Secularists say we have found it—  
at least, so much as replaces the  
chief errors and uncertainties of  
theology.

Harriet Martineau, the most in-  
trepid thinker among the women of  
her day, wrote to Lloyd Garrison a  
letter (inserted in the *Liberator*,  
1853) approving "the term Secu-  
larism as including a large number  
of persons who are not atheists and  
uniting them for action, which has  
Secularism for its object. By the  
adoption of the new term, a vast  
amount of prejudice is got rid of." At length it was seen that the "new  
term" designated a new conception.

Secularism is a code of duty per-  
taining to this life, founded on  
considerations purely human, and  
intended mainly for those who find  
theology indefinite or inadequate,  
unreliable or unbelievable.

Its essential principles are three:

1. The improvement of this life  
by material means.
2. That Science is the available  
Providence of man.
3. That it is good to do good.  
Whether there be other good or  
not, the good of the present life is  
good, and it is good to seek that  
good.

Individual good attained by  
methods conducive to the good of  
others is the highest aim of man,  
whether regard be had to human  
welfare in this life or personal fit-  
ness for another. Precedence is  
therefore given to the duties of this  
life.

Being asked to send to the In-  
ternational Congress of Liberal  
Thinkers (1886) an account of the  
tenets of the English party known  
as Secularists, I gave the following  
explanation to them:

"The Secular is that, the issues  
of which can be tested by the ex-  
perience of this life.

"The ground common to all self-  
determined thinkers is that of in-  
dependency of opinion, known as  
Freethought, which, though but an  
impulse of intellectual courage in  
the search for truth, or an impulse  
of aggression against hurtful or ir-

ritating error, or the caprice of a  
restless mind, is to be encouraged.  
It is necessary to promote inde-  
pendent thought—whatever its  
manner of manifestation—since  
there can be no progress without it.  
A Secularist is intended to be a  
reasoner, that is, as Coleridge de-  
fined him, one who inquires what a  
thing is, and not only what it is,  
but why it is what it is.

"One of two great forces of  
opinion created in this age is what  
is known as atheism, which de-  
prives superstition of its standing  
ground and compels theism to  
reason for its existence. The other  
force is materialism, which shows  
the physical consequences of error,  
supplying, as it were, beacon lights  
to morality.

"Though respecting the right of  
the atheist and theist to their the-  
ories of the origin of nature, the  
Secularist regards them as belong-  
ing to the debatable ground of  
speculation. Secularism neither  
asks nor gives any opinion upon  
them, confining itself to the en-  
tirely independent field of study—  
the order of the universe. Neither  
asserting nor denying theism or a  
future life, having no sufficient  
reason to give if called upon, the  
fact remains that material influ-  
ences exist, vast and available for  
good, as men have the will and wit  
to employ them. Whatever may  
be the value of metaphysical or  
theological theories of morals, util-  
ity in conduct is a daily test of  
common sense, and is capable of  
deciding intelligently more ques-  
tions of practical duty than any  
other rule. Considerations which  
pertain to the general welfare oper-  
ate without the machinery of theo-  
logical creeds and over masses of  
men in every land, to whom Chris-  
tian incentives are alien, or disre-  
garded."—[English Secularism.

### Belief in God Not Instinctive.

BY CHARLES DARWIN, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.

THE belief in God has often  
been advanced as not only  
the greatest, but the most  
complete of all the distinctions be-  
tween man and the lower animals.  
It is, however, impossible, as we  
have seen, to maintain that this  
belief is innate or instinctive in  
man. On the other hand, a belief  
in all-pervading spiritual agencies  
seems to be universal, and appar-  
ently follows from a considerable  
advance in man's reason and from  
a still greater advance in his facul-  
ties of imagination, curiosity and

wonder. I am aware that the as-  
sumed instinctive belief in God has  
been used by many persons as an  
argument for his existence. But  
this is a rash argument, as we  
should thus be compelled to believe  
in the existence of many cruel and  
malignant spirits, only a little  
more powerful than man, for the  
belief in them is far more general  
than in a beneficent deity. The  
idea of a universal and beneficent  
creator does not seem to arise in  
the mind of man until he has been  
elevated by long-continued culture.

He who believes in the advance-  
ment of man from some low organ-  
ized form will naturally ask, How  
does this bear on the belief in the  
immortality of the soul? The bar-  
barous races of man, as Sir J. Lub-  
bock has shown, possess no clear  
belief of this kind; but arguments  
derived from the primeval beliefs  
of savages are, as we have just  
seen, of little or no avail. Few  
persons feel any anxiety from the  
impossibility of determining at  
what precise period in the develop-  
ment of the individual, from the  
first trace of a minute germinal  
vesicle, man becomes an immortal  
being; and there is no greater  
cause for anxiety because the  
period cannot possibly be deter-  
mined in the gradually ascending  
organic scale.

I am aware that the conclusions  
arrived at in this work [The De-  
scent of Man] will be denounced by  
some as highly irreligious, but he  
who denounces them is bound to  
show why it is more irreligious to  
explain the origin of man as a dis-  
tinct species by descent from some  
lower form, through the laws of  
variation and natural selection,  
than to explain the birth of the  
individual through the laws of  
ordinary reproduction. The birth,  
both of the species and of the indi-  
vidual, are equally parts of that  
grand sequence of events, which our  
minds refuse to accept as the result  
of blind chance. The understand-  
ing revolts at such a conclusion,  
whether or not we are able to be-  
lieve that every slight variation of  
structure, the union of each pair in  
marriage, the dissemination of each  
seed, and other such events have  
all been ordained for some special  
purpose.

Progress is enlightenment. It is  
daylight instead of darkness. En-  
lightenment is knowledge where  
once was ignorance. It is assured  
fact where once was doubt.—[Sus-  
an H. Wixon.