

TORCH OF REASON.



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

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The Fear of Truth.

BY B. G. HOSMER.

THERE is, for almost every man that breathes,

The solitary aim of happiness;
And if he do not think to find it here,
He seeks it in a life beyond the death.
His hopes and fears have made him circumspect,

But hinder him from being truly good;
Since goodness, self-regardless, does the right,
And never stoops to calculate results.

A mystic proverb has come down to him
That what he chases never can be caught,
But waits for such as are not covetous.
Yet still he hunts, for though he blindly trusts
In many fictions of his fantasy,
He has no courage for the larger faith,
Which, born of wisdom, compasses the world.

Under those blows which cannot be escaped

Whoso has learned to suffer, suffers least;
But he who fears to suffer, adds his fear
To the full weight of other suffering.
And yet we curse ourselves with cowardice—

Whether avoiding an unwelcome truth,
Or giving ear to an agreeable lie.

A mother, comforted in widowhood
By boyish talk and merry, careless eyes,
Watches with breathlessness the ripening man;
And, as his voice grows deeper, hears again
The father's tones in fresher melody.

Meanwhile come friends to her with serious mien,

Telling grave tales of worse than levity,
And bidding her exert her gentle sway
To mould his passions, ere it be too late.
And she is startled at each new report;
But, at the sight of that fair, open face,
Forgets her fears, and cannot even doubt;
And lets him rule her, as he always did—
Until the fatal stroke falls suddenly;
And she lies crushed beneath an infamy,
That has been fostered by her over-love.

A dreamer, not suspecting that he dreams,
Surrounds himself with phantom images,
Transmitted downward from his ancestors.

But burnished and recolored by himself,
He peoples the celestial depths with forms

Created from analogies of earth—

A God, controlling like a mortal king;
Angels in human bodies, glorified;
Places of chastisement and recompense,
And other copies of our daily life.
In this, his phantom-world, he finds support,

Though feeble and oft failing to his needs.
Clinging to this, in fear to follow thought
On its dim journey through the distant wilds,

He rises never to that calm remove
From whence philosophy surveys the creeds.

Let us repose in Nature's unity,
Where Truth and Gladness stand in brotherhood;

Where, like the earth, our destinies advance:

Like it, not lost, although no trail is left
Upon the space through which it wanders on!

O sacred Truth, receive us unto Thee,
That we may lose in Thee our puny wills,
And know no other hopes and fears than Thine!

Then, while we live, it is a hero's life;
And when we fall, it is a martyr's death.

If we weigh virtue by the mere utility and profit that attend it and not by its own merit, the one virtue which results from such an estimate will be in fact a species of vice. For the more a man refers all his actions

especially to his own advantage, the further he recedes from probity; so that they who measure virtue by profit, acknowledge no other virtue than this which is a kind of vice.—
[Nevill.]

The Dynamic Theory.

BY JAMES B. ALEXANDER.

THE Dynamic Theory, by showing the connection between the external stimulation and its internal sequel in mental action, proves both of them to belong to the same class of physical motion. A study of mental action therefore demands and includes an investigation of the related and antecedent physical phenomena. When these are all considered together we soon perceive that they belong together. Particularly are the phenomena of mentality and vitality seen to be inseparable. In fact all organic reactions partake of both vital and mental characteristics, and when we consider the more elementary organisms, the two merge into each other till it becomes impossible to make any distinction between them. A similar consideration extended to other branches of physical phenomena show them to be derived from a common stock, and that finally we must consider all energies as only one.

If the mind is simply an aggregate of phenomena, the sum of the motions of something, of course it ceases or dies whenever the substance of which it is the motion ceases to act. And this must be true whether we consider the soul material or immaterial. The motions constituting mind cannot be supposed to exist after the dissolution of the thing that moves, any more than the waving of a flag or the ticking of a watch continue AS SUCH after the flag and watch have been destroyed. The effects of all of our acts go on in other forms of motion, because being a part of the sum of all physical energy, they cannot be lost. But for the very reason that our acts do thus pass into other forms of motion, they cease to be our acts. If the movements that HAVE BEEN made by our hands no longer exist as such, neither is it possible that the movements that have constituted our minds from day to day any longer exist. And as any future movement of the hands depends upon the continued integrity of the hands themselves, so any future manifes-

tation of mind depends upon the continued integrity of the organism whose motion it is. As we have seen that mental phenomena during life depends constantly and absolutely upon the integrity of the brain tissues, and that when a portion of the brain is destroyed or diseased a certain definite sort of mental action therefrom ceases to be performed, the conclusion appears obvious and inevitable, that when the brain is all gone there is an end of the possibility of any further mental action. When the body and brain are dissolved it certainly looks as if the machinery for the production of mind were totally destroyed. A disinterested observer could hardly reach any other conclusion. But we are none of us disinterested; and when a conclusion is greatly against our wishes and our HABIT OF THOUGHT, we naturally struggle against it.

[The author then reviews the other hypothesis of a continuation of thought process as a material or immaterial possibility, and finds that the difficulties of the "material ether" to be "insurmountable," and the immaterial ether to be unthinkable and "out of the question." The only remaining question is that of supernatural causation of existence continued in some way unknowable to us, and which we are said to accept by act of faith, as Tertullian did, who said, after denying the immortality and incorporeality of the soul: "CREDO QUID IMPOSSIBILE EST." (I believe because it is impossible). As to such a state of "belief," if it can be so called, it is beyond a rational mind and can "neither be supported nor disproved by scientific research." In order to believe in this way we must cease to be rational beings.]

The Martyrdom of Man.

BY WINWOOD READE.

THE system of Ptolemy was supplanted by the system of Copernicus. . . . In the same manner we are the true successors of the early Christians above whom we are raised by the progress of eighteen hundred years.

As they preached against gods that were made of stone, so we preach against gods that are made of ideas. As they were called Atheists and blasphemers, so are we. And is our task more difficult than theirs? We have not, it is true, the same stimulants to offer. We cannot threaten that the world is about to be destroyed; we cannot

bribe our converts with a heaven; we cannot make them tremble with a hell. But though our religion appears too pure, too unselfish for mankind, it is not really so, for we live in a noble and enlightened age.

At the time of the Romans and the Greeks, the Christian faith was the highest to which the common people could attain. A faith such as that of the Stoics and the Sadderuces could only be embraced by cultivated minds, and culture was then confined to a chosen few. But now knowledge, freedom, and prosperity are covering the earth; for three centuries past human virtue has been steadily increasing, and mankind is prepared to receive a higher faith. But in order to build we must first destroy. Not only the Syrian [Christian] superstition must be attacked, but also the belief in a personal god, which engenders a slavish and Oriental condition of the mind; and a belief in a posthumous reward, which engenders a selfish and solitary condition of the heart. These beliefs are, therefore, injurious to human nature. They lower its dignity; they arrest its development; they isolate its affections. We shall not deny that many beautiful sentiments are often mingled with the faith in a personal deity, and with the hopes of happiness in a future state; yet we maintain that however refined they may appear, they are selfish at the core, and that if removed they will be replaced by sentiments of a nobler and purer kind. They cannot be removed without some disturbance and distress; yet sorrows thus caused are salutary and sublime.

[Evolution means] that mankind should be elevated by misfortune, and that happiness should grow out of misery and pain. I give [then] to Universal History a strange but true title: THE MARTYRDOM OF MAN.

In each generation the human race has been tortured that their children might profit by their woes. Our own prosperity is founded upon the agonies of the past. Is it therefore unjust that we also should suffer for the benefit of those who are to come? Famine, pestilence and war are no longer essential to the advancement of the human race. But a season of mental anguish is at hand, and through this we must pass, in order that our posterity may rise. The soul must be sacrificed; the hope in [personal] immortality must die. A sweet and charming illusion must be taken from the human race, as youth and beauty vanish never to return.