

# TORCH OF REASON.



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

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## Thoughts and Deeds.

**L**IFE'S more than breath and the quick round of blood, It is a great spirit and a busy heart; The coward and the small in soul scarce do live. One generous feeling—one great thought —one deed Of good, ere night, would make life longer seem Than if each year might number a thousand days,— Spent as is this by nations of mankind. We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; In feelings, not in figures on a dial. We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

—[Selected.]

## An Active and a Silent Spirit.

BY R. G. INGERSOLL.

### ALCOHOL.

**I** BELIEVE that alcohol, to a certain extent, demoralizes those who make it, those who sell it, and those who drink it. I believe from the time it leaves the coiled and poisonous worm of the distillery until it empties into the hell of crime, death, and dishonor, it demoralizes everybody who touches it. I do not believe that anybody can contemplate the subject without becoming prejudiced against this liquid crime. All you have to do is to think of the wrecks upon either bank of this stream of death—of the suicides, of the insanity, of the poverty, of the ignorance, of the distress, of the little children tugging at the faded dresses of weeping and despairing wives, asking for bread; of the men of genius it has wrecked; of the millions who have struggled with imaginary serpents produced by this devilish thing. And when you think of the jails, of the almshouses, of the prisons, and of the scaffolds upon either bank—I do not wonder that every thoughtful man is prejudiced against this damned stuff called alcohol.

### GOD.

There is no recorded instance where the uplifted hand of murder has been paralyzed—no truthful account in all the literature of the world, of the innocent shielded by God. Thousands of crimes are being committed every day. Men are this moment lying in wait for their human prey. Wives are whipped and crushed—driven to insanity and death. Little children are begging for mercy—lifting imploring, tear-filled eyes to the brutal faces of fathers and mothers. Sweet girls are being deceived, lured and outraged; but God has no time to prevent these things—no

time to defend the good and protect the pure. He is too busy numbering hairs and watching sparrows.—[Prose Poems and Selections.]

## The Unknowable.

BY DR. PAUL CARUS.

**T**HE most modern specter that haunts the realms of philosophy goes under the name of the Unknowable. Ghosts and goblins are done away with by science, but, in spite of that, superstition returns and assumes a vaguer and more indistinct form in the idea of an indefinite and indefinable something which is supposed to be an inscrutable mystery. Some people fear it as a hidden power, some reverence it as the embodiment of perfection, some love it as a fit object of their unaccountable longings, and almost all who in their fantastical visions imagine to conceive it bow down and worship it. It is the Baal of modern philosophy, and even the iconoclasts of the nineteenth century have not freed themselves from this fetish. While denouncing supernaturalism in the religious creeds of today, they preach the supernaturalism of a mystic Unknowable that lies beyond human experience, and do not seem to be aware of their inconsistency.

The Unknowable is like the fog which the Anglo-Saxon saga relates was rising in the shape of the giant Grendel from the fens and marshes of Jutland, and "haunted the halls of men". It is an intangible monster that hides the real aspect of things from the human eye and spreads an unwholesome mysticism about all our conceptions.

The world, however, does not consist of things recognizable, and of fog around or within them. Natural phenomena do not emanate from transcendent sources. Nature is one throughout, and natural phenomena are linked together by causation. Causality, the law of causation, is not a capricious ukase of an autocratic demiurge, who, like a human monarch, rules the world according to the maxim, 'car tel est notre bon plaisir'. Causation is no mysterious process; its law is demonstrable and explainable. In accordance with the conservation of matter and energy, causation signifies the identity of matter and energy in a change of form. Fundamentally, causality rests on the same evidence as the logical rule of identity, and is in its most general aspect as simple as

the arithmetical formula, "once one is one".

The idea of the Unknowable has its root in the relativity of knowledge. We know things only by the way they affect us. Subjective sensations are the elements of all objective knowledge. Knowledge being itself a relation, the Agnostic should but try to state in clear terms what he conceives "absolute knowledge" to be, and his unattainable ideal of "absolute knowledge" will explode in the attempt.

Every manifestation of nature that affects us directly or indirectly can thus afford us material for our sensation. Inasmuch as all existence must manifest its existence somehow (if it did not, it could not be said to exist), we maintain that all existence can at least indirectly be or become an object of cognition.

The existence of a thing implies the manifestation of its existence. It exists only insofar as it manifests itself, and every manifestation, producing somehow an effect either directly on ourselves or indirectly on other things, can be (directly or indirectly) observed, described, inquired into and comprehended. Absolute existence which is not manifested in some way means non-existence, it is a 'contradictio in adjecto' and a chimerical impossibility. Hegel says: "Existence and non-existence are identical." This is true if Hegel refers to an absolute existence, or an existence in and of itself.

The unknown is by no means unknowable, for our ignorance of some subject does not justify the dogmatic assertion that it can not be known at all. There are many problems which have not yet been investigated, and there are innumerable things we do not yet know of, but there are no phenomena in the world which 'per se' are unintelligible. The vastness and grandeur of the world are so great that the province of science is unlimited, and after each discovery new problems will constantly present themselves to keep the inquiring scientists busy. The new problems will be born from the very explanations of the old problems, and they will open new vistas of research which we never before dreamed of; but wherever our inquiring mind may venture, we shall find that, throughout, nature is intelligible.

Nature is not mysterious; if it appears to us mysterious, it is a proof of our ignorance and of our misconception of nature. The mystery

lies in the subject, not in the object; and we should always endeavor to formulate it in an intelligent question. A thoughtful mind is not overawed by things which he does not understand, but he treats them as problems and tries to solve them.

Nature, it is true, is wonderful; but what is most wonderful is that the most intricate and complicated phenomena of nature are marvelously simple in their ultimate and elementary conditions.—[Fundamental Problems.]

## The Heroic Age.

BY RUFUS CHOATE.

**I** MEAN by a heroic age and race, one the course of whose history and the traits of whose character, and the extent and permanence of whose influences are of a kind and power not merely to be recognized in after time as respectable or useful, but of a kind and of a power to kindle and feed the moral imagination, move the capacious heart, and justify the intelligent wonder of the world.

I mean by a nation's heroic age a time distinguished above others, not by chronological relation alone, but by a concurrence of grand and impressive agencies with large results; by some splendid and remarkable triumph of men over some great enemy, some great evil, some great labor, some great danger; by uncommon examples of the rarer virtues and qualities, tried by an exigency that occurs only at the beginning of new epochs, the accession of new dynasties of dominion or liberty when the great bell of Time sounds another hour.—[Open Sesame.]

Trouble comes from avowing unpopular ideas. Diderot well saw this when he said: "There is less inconvenience in being mad with the mad than in being wise by oneself." One who regards truth as duty will accept responsibilities. It is the American idea "To make a man and leave him be". But we must be sure we have made him a man—self-acting, guided by reasoned proof, and one who, as Archbishop Whately said, "believes the principles he maintains, and maintains them because he believes them". A man is not a man while under superstition, nor is he a man when free from it, unless his mind is built on principles conducive and incentive to the service of man.—[George Jacob Holyoake.]