

# TORCH OF REASON.



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

VOL. 4.

SILVERTON, OREGON, THURSDAY, JULY 12, E. M. 300 (1900.)

NO. 27.

Now.

**R**ISE, for the day is passing,  
And you lie dreaming on;  
The others have buckled their armor  
And forth to the fight have gone.  
A place in the ranks awaits you;  
Each man has some part to play;  
The past and the future are nothing  
In the face of the stern today.

Rise; if the past detains you,  
Her sunshine and storms forget;  
No chains so unworthy to hold you  
As those of a vain regret.  
Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever;  
Cast her phantom arms away,  
Nor look back, save to learn the lesson  
Of a nobler strife today.

Rise, for the day is passing;  
The sound that you scarcely hear  
Is the enemy marching to battle—  
Arise, for the foe is here.  
Stay not to sharpen your weapons,  
Or the hour will strike at last,  
When, from dreams of a coming battle,  
You may wake to find it past.  
—[Adelaide Ann Proctor.]

## The World of Illusion—Optimism, Pessimism, Meliorism—All Righted by Science.

BY PROFESSOR LESTER F. WARD.

**T**HE first important fact to be noted is that to man's slowly developing intellect the universe has ever been a great enigma. To solve this enigma has been the universal problem of the human mind. But man has been put into possession of no key to this solution and has attacked the problem wildly and at random, utterly unqualified to make the least impression upon it. The book of nature which was open to him was but a collection of Sibylline leaves that had been first stirred by the wind. Not only were things not always as they seemed, but outside of the very simplest phenomena, everything was utterly different from what it seemed. Almost everything was really just the reverse of what it seemed, and the universe was a vast paradox. The sky seemed to be a great vault of solid matter, which he called for this reason a "firmament." The heavenly bodies seemed to move across this vault at varying rates, and their reappearance led to the notion that they revolved around the great level cake of earth and water on which he dwelt. The invisible air and other gases were likened to mind or spirit. All natural causes were explained after the analogy of human effort in the intentional production of effects, and the earth and air were peopled with invisible and often malignant spirits as their only recognized agents. And thus were built up great systems of magic, superstition and theology. The errors thus forced into man's mind came to re-

ceive the sanction of religion, which rendered it vastly more difficult to dislodge them. This herculean task has been the mission of Science, for the truth lies deeply buried under this mass of error at the surface, and can only be brought to light by the most prolonged and patient research in the face of this time-honored prejudice. The progress of man and society has been strictly proportioned to the degree to which hidden realities have thus been substituted for false appearances.

As a somewhat anomalous but very important example of the erroneous ideas which the human race must needs acquire and reluctantly surrenders, may next be considered the optimistic habit of thought. OPTIMISM can scarcely be called a doctrine. It does not result, like most erroneous beliefs, from a false interpretation of the facts which nature presents to the untrained faculties. It is rather the original, unreflective state of the pre-social mind. It is the survival of the most useful of all instincts, that of self-preservation. It was well adapted to that state, because to the animal it mattered not whether it was true or false. It is still a useful attitude to the swarming millions of human beings who do not reflect. But for it the realization of their unhappy lot, which it prevents, would multiply their misery and render life intolerable. But we are here considering its effect upon society, and it is easy to show that it is bad. It breeds stagnation and stifles progress. It yields contentment, and contentment means inaction. Strange as it may sound, just as the only healthy state of the intellect is doubt, so the only healthy state of the feelings is discontent. This of course assumes that there is something to doubt and something to improve, but there has never been an age when error did not stalk abroad or when misery was not the lot of the greater part of mankind.

The phase of optimism which most concerns the question of the relation of society to the universe is that unreasoned belief which I have called the "anthropocentric theory." The idea that man is in any sense a favorite of nature is false and highly prejudicial to the progress of correct conceptions in social science. It may be called collective optimism and results in social stagnation, just as personal optimism results in individual stagnation.

The extreme opposite of optimism is PESSIMISM. It differs from it as much in its origin and nature as it does in its character as a belief. While optimism is wholly unreasoned and springs from the

feelings, pessimism is exclusively a product of reason and resides in the intellect. Optimism is that hope that "springs eternal in the human breast" and defies the hard facts of existence. Pessimism recognizes the facts and coldly chokes every hope at its birth. But pessimism is also false, first, because many hopes are realized, and secondly, because the representation in the present of the good anticipated in the future is itself a good at least of secondary order.

What, then, is man's true relation to the universe? Is there a true mental attitude that lies between these two false attitudes? There certainly is. It is not a belief or a creed; it is the simple recognition of the truth. The truth is, that nature is neither friendly nor hostile to man; neither favors him nor discriminates against him. Nature is not endowed with any moral attributes. It is, as I said at the outset, a domain of rigid law. Man is a product of that law, but he has reached a stage on which he can comprehend the law. Now, just because nature is a domain of rigid law, and just because man can comprehend that law, his destiny is in his own hands. Any law that he can comprehend he can control. He cannot increase or diminish the powers of nature, but he can direct them. He can increase or diminish the amount of power that is to be exerted at any given point. He can focalize the rays of the sun; he can divert the courses of the rivers; he can direct the currents of the air; he can vary temperatures; he can change water to steam and set the steam to work in propelling machinery, or ships, or railroad trains; he can utilize electricity. His power over nature is unlimited. He can make it his servant and appropriate to his own use all the mighty forces of the universe.

Both optimism and pessimism are passive states of mind. The true state is an active one. Optimism and pessimism assume nature to be in an active state toward man. The true attitude makes nature passive and man active. To the developed intellect nature is as clay in the potter's hands. It is neither best nor worst. It is what man makes it, and rational man always seeks to make it better. The true doctrine, then, is meliorism—the perpetual bettering of man's estate. This will be possible in precise proportion to man's knowledge of nature, so that the condition of the race ultimately depends upon the degree of intelligence that it shall attain.

Optimism may be said to be the thesis, pessimism the antithesis, and meliorism the synthesis of man's relation to the universe. The optimist says: Do nothing, because there is nothing to do. The pessimist says: Do nothing, because nothing can be done. The meliorist says: Do something, because there is much to do, and it can be done.—[Outlines of Sociology.]

## The New Life IN The New World.

### A LAY SERMON

First Delivered in Unity Chapel (Rev. Dr. W. E. Copeland), Salem, Oregon.

By THADDEUS B. WAKEMAN,  
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, ETC., LIBERAL  
UNIVERSITY, SILVERTON, OREGON.

#### TEXTS:

"The Laws of Nature must be understood before they can be obeyed; only through this understanding can man rise to the mastery of its powers and bring himself into final harmony with its conditions."—Prof. E. L. Youmans. See Introduction to his "Correlation and Conservation of Forces."

"What, then, is man's true relation to the Universe? . . . The truth is that nature is neither friendly nor hostile to man; neither favors him nor discriminates against him. Nature is not endowed with any MORAL attributes. It is a domain of rigid law. Man is a product of that law, but he has reached a stage in which he can comprehend the law. . . . Any law he can comprehend he can control. His destiny is in his own hands."—Prof. Lester F. Ward. "Outlines of Sociology;" pp. 25-30.

"Nature is wholly UNMORAL. The moral world is confined exclusively to animal life, including, of course, human life. Yet it is not to be despised."—Ibid.; p. 99.

"TELESIS, individual and collective, i. e., social, becomes his Savior."

**T**HOSE of you who were present at this morning's discourse, remember how it was shown, by an outline history of Religion and of Science, that both had started in a confused multiplicity of things and ideas, which had finally been covered by the UNITY of one grand and simple concept of an ever-existing World of Law. In a word, that the minds of men starting their RELIGION with numberless spirits, devils and gods, had finally in the evolution of religious progress from Animistic Fetichism, during the course of ages culminated in the triumph of Unitarianism, which is the only true Monotheism, with its ONE GOD.

That upon man's other, or objective side, SCIENCE, overwhelmed with numberless things and resemblances, but commencing with Astronomy, had through ages risen from that one department of Nature to the others, until finally it has triumphed in Monism, its one concept OR LAW, which gives the fundamental law of all science—the Law of the CORRELATION and EQUIVALENCE of the forces—that is, of all of the changes in the matter or substance of the knowable universe.

Thus the religious or subjective

Continued on 3rd page.