

TORCH OF REASON.



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

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New Spirits of the New World

BY PERCY BISSHE SHELLEY.

PANTHEA (feminine of Pantheos) sings. [That is THE ALL, as Goddess evokes the New Spirits. See article on page 5]:

The pine-boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness;
The willows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Likes the notes of a spirit from land and
from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We come from the mind
Of human-kind,
Which was late so dusk, and obscene,
and blind;
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces:
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy
Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose
tresses;
From the azure isles
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roof'd over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unseal'd springs
Where Science bedews his Daedal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes,
and fears,
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few,
Where the bud-blighted flowers of hap-
piness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandal'd with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of
balm.

And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on PARADISE.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic
measure;
From the depths of the sky the round of
the earth,
Come swift Spirits of Might and of
Pleasure,

Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams
rush by
To an Ocean of Splendor and Harmony;

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A WORLD for the Spirit of Wisdom to
wield;

We will take our plan
From the NEW WORLD of Man,
And our work shall be called the Pro-
methean.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth
and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could
never be;

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the
Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect
light,

We encircle the ocean and mountains of
earth,
And the happy forms of its death and
birth

Change to the music of our sweet mirth.
—[From Prometheus Unbound. Act IV.]

The Death of the Gods and the

New Morality.

[Extracts from a summary of the "Weltrathsel" (world enigma) of Prof. Ernest Haeckel, by Joseph McCabe, in Watts' Literary Guide for April.]

BELIEF in a god or gods— and Prof. Haeckel treats exhaustively (and caustically) the innumerable forms of that belief—was a temporary speculation which the nineteenth century has rendered superfluous and untenable. It was based, in so far as it had an element of rationality, on the gaps in our knowledge of nature. Astronomical, biological, and physiological discoveries have sufficiently filled up those gaps to make the old hypothesis no longer even plausible. Modern science has to say to the Theist who asks where God comes in in his construction of the cosmos, in the words of Laplace to Napoleon: "Sir, I have managed without that hypothesis." The supposed commencement of the scheme of things, on which all belief in a Creator and "prime mover" is founded, was a gratuitous assumption, and is utterly discountenanced by modern astronomy. The origin of life needs no supernatural intervention, neither does the origin of thought, of religion, or of morality. Science and philosophy point to the unity of the cosmos. Every form and phase of Theism is denuded of argumentative basis, besides the fact that the dominant conception of a personal God—the notion of a huge "gaseous vertebrate," as Haeckel puts it—is even less rational in itself, and is just as clearly a reflection of human thought as any that has preceded it in the history of mysticism. Nothing short of Pantheism or Atheism is reconcilable with modern knowledge of reality. Atheism is but one expression of the negative aspect of Pantheism. As Schopenhauer wrote: "The axiom of the Pantheist, 'God and the world are one,' is only a polite way of giving the Lord God his conge."

The ethical question has a distinct importance and interest, so the author discusses it at length. Monistic ethics is based on the scientific truth that "there are not two distinct and separate worlds—one physical and material, the other moral and immaterial." No system of morality that contravenes this truth is any longer tenable. Kant built up the two halves of his philosophy in sheer self-contradiction. But there is no need

whatever to transcend nature in constructing an ethical theory and framing an ethical sanction. Working on the lines laid down by Herbert Spencer, we come to a view of morality which is competent to meet the requirements of life and which harmonizes those claims of egoism and altruism, of self and our neighbor, which have been so grossly distorted in Christian ethics. Man belongs to the social or gregarious vertebrates; he has, therefore, naturally, "two sets of duties—firstly, towards himself; secondly, towards the society he belongs to." This moral equality of egoism and altruism is the fundamental principle of the monistic ethics, the basis and fount of "the golden rule." The author then enters into a critical analysis of Christian ethics, which he severely condemns for its belittlement of (1) self, (2) love, (3) nature, (4) civilization, (5) the family, and (6) woman.

Formation of Opinions.

BY HORACE SEAVER.

ALL men are born equal with regard to the formation of opinions; by nature they are allowed the free exercise of their own judgments, equality in investigating, considering, and determining upon all subjects. Yet, notwithstanding this truth will be universally admitted—in the abstract—it seems to be generally disregarded in the application to religion. Hence it is common to hear the remark, by those who denounce innovations upon the popular religious belief, that opinions ought to be governed by the general sentiment.

But this course, besides directly tending to destroy all freedom of conscience, would perpetuate the superstition and ignorance which it is desirable to remove, and prevent the diffusion of the knowledge which all deem necessary and desire to see progressive. We should not adopt opinions merely because they are popular; if the error is general, so much the greater should be the exertion to destroy it. If, by ignorance or by some blind fanaticism, the generality of mankind have been deceived into error, must a man for the sake of popularity join in the concert of deception, and the honest sentiments of his mind remain lost and inactive?

If the opinions of mankind are to remain fixed, when their only claims to belief are antiquity and universality, through fear of encountering opposition or of being unpopular, what advance or improvement could we expect in any knowledge of any kind? Oppose the liberty of thought, and you retard the progress of knowledge; encourage investigation, and a new era arises; knowledge of all kinds advances with rapid strides, and man becomes, as it were, a new creature.—[Occasional Thoughts.]

Galileo Galilei, and the Struggle Regarding the Position of the Earth.

BY CARUS STERNE.

[Extracts from an article in the Open Court of August, 1900.]

IT MOVES, just the same," Galileo is said to have exclaimed, stamping his foot, after having, before the court of the Holy Inquisition on June 22, 1633, abjured faith in the heretical teaching of the movement of the earth around the sun. But the delightful anecdote belongs, unfortunately, to the great multitude of those which it has latterly become the custom to designate the after-thoughts of man or of history. Nothing could have been further from the mind of the intimidated scientist than such a defiant recantation, for it would have been neither more nor less than a challenge of the powerful by the weak. If Galileo had felt the slightest inclination to become a martyr to his convictions, like Giordano Bruno, and had he been the stuff of which martyrs are made, he would not have taken that oath. But the anecdote is not without value, for it allows him to voice what he surely at that moment thought and felt in the depths of his soul, and what other adherents of Copernicus, firm in their own faith, may have wished to hear him acknowledge. So it has come about that this unspoken thought, although universally acknowledged to be of later origin, has become a household word. Even now it ceases not to serve as an inspiration when the Church, in spite of such unfortunate experiences, arrogates to herself a decision in questions which do not come under her jurisdiction.

Hence the Roman Catholic church must even now be grateful to Galileo, that through his compliance and weakness he saved her from applying the torch to his funeral pile. Otherwise, she would have been much more seriously afflicted than by the burning of Giordano Bruno (1600). Bruno it is who was condemned, not only as an adherent of the Copernican system, which in his Ash Wednesday Communion he defended against the Oxford opponents, and further advocated in a book which appeared the same year, Concerning the Eternal, the Universe, and the Worlds, but especially as a Free-thinker, who had pursued the reg-