

TORCH OF REASON.



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

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Mockery.

WHY do we grudge our sweets so to the living,
Who, all know, find at best too much of gall,
And then with generous, open hands kneel, giving
Unto the dead our all?
Why do we pierce the warm hearts, sin or sorrow,
With idle jests, or scorn, or cruel sneers,
And when it cannot know, on some tomorrow,
Speak of its woe through tears?
What do the dead care for the tender token—
The love, the praise, the floral offerings?
But palpitating, living hearts are broken
For want of just these things.

—[Selected.]

Influences Vitiating Evidence.

BY HEBBERT SPENCER.

ALONG with much that has of late years been done toward changing primitive history into myth, and along with much that has been done toward changing once-questioned estimates of persons and events of past ages, much has been said about the untrustworthiness of historical evidence. Hence there will be ready acceptance of the statement that one of the impediments to sociological generalization is the uncertainty of our data. When we bear in mind that from early stories such as those about the Amazons, their practices, the particular battles with them and particular events in those battles, all of which are recorded and sculptured as circumstantially as they might be were the persons and events historic—when we bear in mind, I say, that from such early stories down to accounts of a well-known people like the New Zealanders, who, "by some . . . are said to be intelligent, cruel and brave; by others, weak, kindly and cowardly," we have to deal with an enormous accumulation of conflicting statements; we cannot but feel that the task of collecting facts from which to draw conclusions is in this case a more arduous one than in any other case. Passing over remote illustrations, let us take an immediate one.

Last year advertisements announced the "Two-headed Nightingale," and the walls of London were placarded with a figure in which one pair of shoulders was shown to bear two heads looking the same way (I do not refer to the later placards, which partially differed from the earlier). To some this descriptive name and answering diagram seemed sufficiently ex-

act, for in my hearing a lady, who had been to see this compound being, referred to the placards and handbills as giving a good representation. If we suppose this lady to have repeated in a letter that which I heard her say, and if we ask what would appear the character of the evidence to one who, some fifty years hence, had before him the advertisement, representation and the letter, we shall see that the alleged fact would be thought by him incontestable. Only if, after weary search through all the papers and periodicals of the time, he happened to come upon a certain number of the *Lancet*, would he discover that this combination was not that of two heads on one body, but that of two individuals united back to back, with heads facing opposite ways, and severally complete in all respects, except where the parts were so fused as to form a double pelvis, containing certain pelvic viscera common to the two. If, then, respecting facts of so simple and so easily variable a kind, where no obvious motive for misrepresentation exists, we cannot count on true representations, how shall we count on true representations of social facts, which, being so diffused and so complex, are so difficult to observe, and in respect of which the perceptions are so much perverted by interests, and prepossessions, and party feelings?

In exemplifying this difficulty, let us limit ourselves to cases supplied by the life of our own time, leaving it to be inferred that if, in a comparatively calm and critical age, sociological evidence is vitiated by various influences, much more must there have been vitiation of such evidence in the past, when passions ran higher and credulity was greater.

Byron and Shelley.

BY FREDERIC MAY HOLLAND.

NO writer has spoken more mightily than Byron against the "blasphemy" of ascribing divine authority to the "royal vampires." He knew that Napoleon had been "the scourge of the world;" but he was indignant to see the men who had struck down the lion kneeling before wolves; and yet he looked forward to the reign everywhere of "equal rights and laws." He spoke freely of the "sacerdotal gain but general loss"

in superstition; and his own highest faith was that "they who die in a great cause" would

Augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others and conduct
The world at last to freedom.

His poems revealed the grandeur of scenery, as well as history, and made delight in mountains and thunderstorms felt as an ennobling influence. His speeches in the House of Lords were pleas for parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation, and mercy to rioters infuriated by famine. In 1820, he was one of the leading Carbonari in Italy; he gave his life to help the Greeks become free; and his name is still a watchword of revolution.

His friend, Shelley, went so far in the same direction as to call himself a republican, as well as an Atheist. He had consecrated himself in boyhood to war against all oppressors; and his position to the last was that of his own Prometheus, suffering continually with the enslaved, but consoled by faith that his sympathy will hasten the glorious day when every man shall be "king over himself," when women, free "from custom's evil taint," shall make earth like heaven, when "thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons shall seem as antiquated as the pyramids, and when human nature shall be "its own divine control." He took the side of the poor against the rich in a drama which was suppressed on account of its severity against George IV., and which ends with a portentous scene, where

Freedom calls famine, her eternal foe,
To brief alliance.

He spoke as well as wrote for the independence of Ireland; and he would have done much for that of Greece, if he had not died soon after publishing a magnificent tragedy, in which he showed what cruel massacres were perpetrated while the rulers of Christendom refused to help Christian patriots against the Turks. Byron is called the poet of revolution; but Shelley was the poet of liberty. One was like a painter who captivated the multitude, sometimes by his brilliancy of color, sometimes by his tragic pathos, and sometimes by his amorous warmth. The other was like a sculptor who left a few statues and tablets, fanciful in design and majestic in execution, for the delight of connoisseurs. Fortunately, the marble is likely to outlast the canvas.—[Liberty in the Nineteenth Century.]

The Work Begun.

BY SINGLETON W. DAVIS.

SCIENTIFIC minds are not satisfied with mere approximation to correctness. The astronomer who would be willing to undertake complex calculations without caring for accuracy of detail in every step would be considered very unscientific, and the chemist who would analyze substances and tabulate the results without setting down the tenths, hundredths, and even thousandths of his unit of measure, would be pronounced a mere dabbler. Thoroughness and exactness are the soul and spirit of Science in every department—investigation, observation, experimentation, generalization. If so in physical science, should they be any less so in religious science? This accuracy being a great factor in the recent wonderful development of the physical sciences, would surely prove no less effective in religious evolution.

The conditions upon which religion has been and is still being developed from a lower to a higher state becoming known, rules for practical application in religious culture in accordance therewith may be formulated and reduced to practice, resulting in a rational voluntary evolution of religion analagous in method and modus operandi to muscular training, intellectual education, æsthetic culture, etc. The study of comparative religion, comprehending the history of its development in all forms in all countries and times, as a means of discovering the laws and conditions of its development, is a correct scientific method and rational antithesis of supernatural "revelation," so-called, for obtaining dispensations of religious information. By the adoption of scientific methods in the study of this subject, we may hope to discover and apply principles by which religion may be rapidly evolved from chaos to kosmos, from something of doubtful influence for good to the immaculate producer of good only; and the founding of a system of rational religious culture is the noblest undertaking any one can engage in, and its consummation would come to the human mind like a flood of light from the scientific "sun of righteousness!" All hail the dawn!

Theologians have exhausted ingenuity in finding excuses for God.