

TORCH OF



REASON.

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

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For the Torch of Reason.

Destiny.

BY R. H. MITCHELL.

FROM earth to heaven above, from earth to hell below, The holy God decrees, in justice and in love, Mankind at death shall go.

This time-worn creed, religious gift, In priesthood born, by priest made fit, Has ruled the lives of men, With glowing hope all seemed most fair; But darkening doom and dread despair Made world of pain and care. Doth any know of all such bliss? Or state or place where curse and hiss In flame the fearful dead? For when this life, unchanged by us With knowledge clear, shall disappear, By human self unfelt— In sleep of death what shall awake? What conscious mind hath broke its yoke, This silent, dreamless rest? What voice is heard beyond the clouds? What song or chant from nameless shore

Invokes our heedless world? Supernal life, a dream so dear, In spirit orbs revolving clear, Is sought or hoped in vain. To hope or fear for other sphere, Where finite forms unchanged appear, Were jest and menace rude. Where fancy sports with love in pain, Or falsehood's guile with terror binds With frenzied spell or lure. Not glory there, not beauty thence, To sentient spirit brings content Where life and being blend. With stars above, and rolling seas, All nature's boundless dower, Here is our birth and goal. Unnumbered worlds, sublimely thronged Majestic shine in grand control, Entrance and thrill the soul. No more, no more from fate is given To light our way than earthly beam Of universal heaven. Here all is change in earth and air. So bliss and death and every loss The moving mystery share. Forbear to grieve for mortals gone, To hope that eve shall change to morn In time and home beyond. A mystic guest, a flash of power, The meteor day, the moment's love, We ever come and go. The conscious ray illumines and burns, The spark of life content returns To nature's larger home. The work is done, in destined turn; Our lives unfold, our thought confirms Eternal Being's own. Freeport, Maine.

Our Substitute.

BY EDGAR C. BEALL.

In debating the subject of Christianity its advocates are accustomed to define it as the doctrine of a pure life; the principle of universal love and forgiveness, etc. But when they teach it from the pulpit or in their ecclesiastical tribunals, it becomes transformed into a system of dogmas, many of which have not only no connection with any principle of morality, but are simply infamous and deadly.

When Christians expound their religion let them spurn every disguise and appear under their dual flag. We do not deny that there is a noble and lofty side to Christianity, but when pure water flows into a polluted stream, the whole becomes

defiled. Thus, while the Bible teaches forgiveness, the doctrine that unbelievers are deserving of eternal pain is adapted only to distort and undermine every idea of true justice. How can a man have any clear conception of equity who is educated to sympathize with such a dogma? Indeed, how can Christians be expected to improve on the example set them by their Master? Can they forgive and love their enemies when they believe that Christ is going to damn his forever? Belief in such notions regarding man's responsibility to a supposed Creator, is sure to foster sympathy with them. And what men love they will be likely to practice, so that those who favor an infamous punishment in another and endless existence, will be almost certain to have perverted and unjust views regarding methods of government in the affairs of this world.

Thus, instead of salvation from Hell in an imaginary hereafter, by faith in the dogmas of the Church, we offer salvation from the evils in this world by patient and industrious attention to the conditions of development, health, and happiness, as revealed by science. Instead of vainly trying to restrain men from vice and crime by the fear of punishment after death, we would teach them the certainty with which they will be punished in this world for every essentially immoral act they commit. We would teach them that whether their sins are found out or not, they can not do wrong without robbing themselves and stepping backward toward the old four-footed life. And if we fail to produce any evidence of a perpetual joy, we can at least offer the happy assurance that not one poor soul will ever suffer an eternity of pain.

Properly defined, religion means simply the bond between man and the highest object which he can love, and toward which he can feel a sense of duty sufficiently strong to discipline all his faculties, and prescribe to him a rule of life. Hence, it is right that in this sense we should have a religion. But instead of the God of the Bible as the chief object of our consideration, we would devote our efforts to our fellow men, and make the sense of our obligation to them, if not to ourselves, curb every tendency to evil. Those who could be insensible to such a religion as this, would be callous to every thing good in the religion of Christ. There can

be no really lofty motive in worshipping a conditionless, infinite being of whom we can form no clear conception, or at least whom we could neither benefit nor injure. But we can add to the happiness of mankind, and in so doing we exercise all our highest and noblest powers. This, then, is our substitute. Instead of God, we would live and labor for mankind. Instead of Christianity, the Religion of Humanity.

Man's Origin.

WHAT is certain is, that man by all of his characters is descended from some primate. The brain, the hand and all that relates to his way of standing, with the exception of the foot, are proofs of it.

But from what branch and in what epoch was the initial shoot thrown off? That is a question which it is wise to reserve for a future time. We should not forget that families and genera of primates must have existed which have now utterly disappeared, and that the present types may be only descendants of others of which we know nothing.

The comparison between man and the other animals is not restricted to morphological characters. If anthropology gives them the preference, the reason is that they can be got at, analyzed and weighed with great precision, and that they faithfully reflect the functional characters, in virtue of the principle that the "function creates the organ."

Man has the same functions as animals, slightly modified here and there, the same general needs, the same modes of satisfying them, the same sentiments, desires, impulses and motives, the same reflex actions, with or without the intervention of the ego. The psychical are brought into play between sensation and action, isolated and rudimentary in this or that lower or higher animal, less isolated and more marked in others, forming associations in greater or less numbers in one class, and attaining a remarkable degree of development in another, as in the elephant, the dog and the ape, but arriving at their highest degree of differentiation and complexity in man when the volume of the brain and its convolutions have reached their maximum. Animals have the powers of curiosity, attention, observation, reflection, determination,

(the sense for cause and effect,) memory, and incontestable ideas, for which only the formula is lacking. The apes have malice, imitation, the need of play, the spirit of examination, of sympathy, of defiance, the need of talking, of hearing and being heard, the sense for assisting in raising a large stone or in crossing a river, the sense of mutual understanding for making forays or for self-defence, the sense of common utility in disposing sentinels, who are punished when they permit the band to be surprised, etc. Is there a reason to be astonished if one of these animals, having acquired by dint of hard efforts articulate language, which helps him to fix his memories and ideas and simplifies these operations, or by having become gradually more precise in his acts of reason, more careful in his acts of will, more highly conscious of himself, more inventive in satisfying his daily needs—is it to be wondered at that he should have created for himself new and peculiar needs, even psychical in character, and that little by little he should have lifted himself up to the level of the æsthetic sense, the spirit of love of truth?—[Selected]

The Universe vs. a God.

BY SAM PRESTON.

AS an infinite God must necessarily fill the entirety of space, there could be room for aught else. God and man could not live together in the same universe. God would necessarily be everything; then the universe must be nothing. But we have the universe, and that is everything; therefore God is nothing—existing nowhere. A mote that is, is better than God that is not. If we part with God and obtain a universe, we make a magnificent exchange. The issue has always been God versus matter. When people come to understand that matter has always been, that it eternally had the start of everything else, and hence needed no creation, it will be seen that there never has been any necessity for a God, and as the universe is ever governed by law, there is nothing for a God to do. Men must believe in matter, because it is everything, and does everything. Something is always better than nothing. If God is not matter he is not anything; and the idea of God is destined to become obsolete, and gradually pass into utter forgetfulness. The God-idea has been the center and foundation of all the superstitions of the world. When men have learned to dispense with it, their emancipation will be great.