

TORCH OF REASON.

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

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Revised for the Torch of Reason.

This Life Means Action.

THIS life means action,—from the early dawn
Till death reminds us that the day is gone,
Till all the sunbeams shimmer from the sky,
This life means action, or we faint and die.

This life means action,—death is holy calm,
A period of rest, the soul's sweet balm,
A respite in the grave that Death doth give,
This life means action, or we cannot live.

This life means action,—through a pathless space
The planets move upon an endless race,
Each keepeth on its own appointed way,
This life means action, or we soon decay.

This life means action,—rivers onward flow,
The ocean billows ever forward go,
The winds are soon beyond the hour's recall,
This life means action, or no life it all.

This life means action, action evermore,
And at its best its flitting days are o'er
And gone long, long before we realize
That life means action, or it quickly dies.

One Thing Certain.

IF, as is most probably the case, man's belief in a supreme being originated in his ignorance of nature and nature's works, to what else can we attribute that belief, at the present day, than to his early impressions, his credulity and his prejudices? He has assayed the deep recesses of nature's works—he has discovered the invisible laws by which those works are governed—he has traced to their true sources those wonders of nature which were the astonishment and terror of the ancients, and, to them, the precursor of some dire calamity from their vindictive deities. He has also, by indefatigable researches, developed those beautiful systems in the government of the material world [whose symmetry has led many to attribute their origin to some intelligent and mighty power], and has proved them to be operated upon by natural causes and effects. But, still, he is blinded; still he is the slave of superstition; the slave of prejudice; in an age of learning, in opposition to the elucidations of his own mind, and the facts developed by his own researches. So long as man continues to believe in probabilities; to permit his mind to be directed by others than himself; to take affirmations for truths, and suppositions or probabilities for facts; and that which is unnatural, for natural; and so long as he takes things unseen for things that are seen, so long will he be a slave of his own infirmities. But one thing is certain—not only reason teaches it, but experience proves it—that where these mental fetters have been broken, and the mind permitted to take its natural range

through beautiful and unbounded fields of nature, ignorance has been overthrown, and truth and reason have raised their alters upon the ruins of the fallen fabric.—*Secular Science and Common Sense.*

Woman and the Bible.

BY SARAH A. UNDERWOOD.

THE Bible—both the books of the Old Testament and of the New, express the views in regard to woman which prevailed when those books were written. The conception in regard to woman was that she was naturally man's inferior, that her position should be one of subordination, that she should have no will of her own, except as it was in accord with her father, husband, or master.

The enlightened portions of the world have gradually been outgrowing these ideas. This progress has constantly been opposed by the influence of Bible teachings on the subject. The influence of the Bible against the elevation of woman like its influence in favor of slavery, has been great because of the infallibility and the Divine authority with which the teachings of the Bible have been invested. If the Bible had, like other books, been judged by its actual merits, in the light of reason and common sense, its teachings about woman would have had no authoritative weight; but when millions have for centuries been brought up to believe that the Bible is an inspired and infallible revelation from God, its influence has been mischievous in a thousand ways.

A collection of books which teaches, as from God, that man was made first for the glory of God, and woman for man simply; that woman was first to sin, and therefore should be in submission to man; that motherhood implies moral impurity and requires a sin offering (twice as much in the case of a female as a male child), must have continued to keep woman in a degraded condition just in proportion as such ideas have been believed to be true and inspired by God.

The advancement of woman through Christendom has been going on only where these doctrines have been outgrown or modified through the influence of science, of skepticism, and of liberal thought generally. That the Bible does teach that woman's position should be one of subordination and submission to man, and that through

her first came sin into the world, is indisputable; and I do not see how such teachings, believed to be direct from God, can be accepted without retarding woman's progress. Mr. Lecky and others have shown historically that these Oriental conceptions have distinctly degraded woman wherever they have prevailed.

What we should naturally expect to have resulted from these conceptions is shown by experience actually to have been the result of such teachings, enforced by the authority of Moses and of St. Paul.

The idea of woman's equality with man in all natural rights and opportunities finds no support in the Bible. The doctrine that there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, in Christ Jesus, had no practical application to social conditions. It left the slave in chains, and the woman in fetters. Where the old theological dogmas respecting woman are least impaired, woman's condition is the least hopeful. Where the authority of reason is in the ascendant, or where it is superseding the authority of book revelations, of creeds and churches, woman's position is the most advanced, her rights are the most completely recognized, her opportunities for progress the most fully allowed, and her character the most fully developed.—*The Woman's Bible.*

Position and Privilege of Truth-seekers.

By Harriet Martineau

What an emancipation it is to have escaped from the little enclosure of dogma, and to stand,—far indeed from being wise,—but free to learn! How I wonder at myself now for having held (and very confidently held forth upon it, I am ashamed to say) that at all events it was safe to believe dogma; that for instance, whether there was a future state or not, it was safe and comfortable to believe it;—that if, even, there was no God, serving as a model to man,—the original of the image,—it was safe and tranquillizing to take for granted that there was. The enormity of this mistake was not fully apparent to me till last year, when a young man destined for the church, but not satisfied about all its doctrines, and in a state of fluctuation about his duty altogether, laid down as the one certain thing in his own and every other case, that at all events it was safe to take for granted what the

Church prescribed. The very first step he took from this position was to conclude that his difficulties about a leading doctrine arose from personal sinfulness, and must be resolutely put down. I found then how clear and strong had become my vision and grasp of the truth that the holding of error is an incapacitating condition—an evil infinitely worse than merely being occupied with what is untrue,—bad as that is. I saw clearly how enervating and depraving is the practice of harboring, through timidity or indolence, what is suspected to be untrue. The mere exclusion of the truth, by presence of the error, is a prodigious evil; but far greater is the misfortune of the deterioration of all the powers,—from the lowest faculties of perception up to the highest of conscientiousness, reverence and benevolence,—which ensues upon all tampering with our own best nature. And what a feeling it is,—that which grows up and pervades us when we have fairly returned to our obedience to Nature! What a healthful glow animates the faculties! What a serenity settles down upon the temper! One seems to have even a new set of nerves, when one has planted one's foot on the broad common of Nature, and clear daylight, and bracing breezes are about one, and there are no more pitfalls and rolling vapors—no raptures and agonies of selfish hope and fear—but sober certainty of reliance on the immutability of Nature's laws, and the lofty liberty that is found in obedience to them. We are still, and our kind must long continue to be, injured in power and in peace by the operation of past ignorance, which has mournfully impaired the conditions of human life; but the emancipation which may be obtained is already precious beyond all estimate. Ignorant as we yet are—hardly able yet [even the wisest of men] to snatch a glimpse of the workings of Nature, or to form a conception of the existence of Law, obvious as it is that our condition is merely that of infant-waking upon the world of existence, the privilege of freedom, as far as we are able to go, is quite inestimable—perhaps indeed as great as it can ever be. It is hard to conceive that it can do more for individuals at any time than animate their intellects, renovate their consciences, elevate and refine their moral conceptions and conduct, and lift them out of the condition of passionate children into one of serene maturity of faculty, though not of knowledge.