

TORCH OF REASON.

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

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Is the World a Dreary Place?

BY ELIZA COOK.

Some call the world a dreary place,
And tell long tales of sin and woe;
As if there were no blessed trace
Of sunshine to be found below.

They point, when Autumn's winds are
sighing,
To falling leaves and withered flowers;
But shall we only mourn them dying,
And never note their brilliant hours?

They mark the rainbow's fading light,
And say it is the type of man;
"So passeth he"—but, Oh! how bright
The transient glory of the span.

They liken Life unto the stream
That, swift and shallow, pours along;
But beauty marks the rippling gleam,
And music fills the bubbling song.

Why should the preacher ever rave
Of sorrow, death and "dust to dust?"
We know that we shall fill a grave,—
But why be sad before we must?

Look round the world and we shall see,
Despite the cynic snarling groan,
Much to awaken thankful glee,
As well as wring the hopeless moan.

Perchance the laden tree we shake
May have a reptile at its root;
But shall we only see the snake,
And quite forget the grateful fruit?

Shall we forget each sunny morn,
And tell of one dire lightning stroke?
Of all the suits that we have worn,
Shall we but keep the funeral cloak?

Oh! why should our own hands be
twining
Dark chaplets from the cypress tree?
Why stand in gloomy spots, repining,
When further on sweet buds may be?

'Tis true that nightshade oft will bind us
That eyes, the brightest, will be dim;
Old wrinkled Care too oft will find us,
But why should we go seeking him?

A Rational View of the World.

BY ERNST HAECKEL.

Love remains the supreme moral law of rational religion, the love, that is to say, that holds the balance between egoism and altruism, between self-love and love of others. "Do to others, as you would they should do to you." This natural and highest command had been taught and followed thousands of years before Christ said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

In the human family this maxim has always been accepted as self-evident; as ethical instinct it was an inheritance derived from our animal ancestors. It had already found a place among the herds of Apes and other social Mammals; in a similar manner, but with a wider scope, it was already present in the most primitive communities and among the hords of the least advanced savages. Brotherly love—mutual support, succour, protection and the like—had already made its appearance among gregarious animals as a social duty; for without

it the continued existence of such societies is impossible. Although at a latter period, in the case of man, these moral foundations of society came to be much more highly developed, their oldest prehistoric source, as Darwin has shown, is to be sought in the social instinct of animals. Among the higher Vertebrates (dogs, horses, elephants, etc.), as among the higher Articulates (ants, bees, termites, etc.) also, the development of social relations and duties is the indispensable condition of their living together in orderly societies. Such societies have for man also been the most important instrument of intellectual and moral progress.

Beyond all doubt the present degree of human culture owes in great part its perfection to the propagation of the christian system of morals and its ennobling influence although the great value of this has been impaired, often in the most deplorable manner, by its association with untenable myths and so-called revelations. How little these last contribute to the perfection of the first, can be seen from the acknowledged historical fact that it is just orthodoxy and the hierarchical system based on it (especially that of the Papacy) that has least of all striven to fulfill the precepts of Christian morality: the more loudly they preach it in theory, the less do they themselves fulfill its commands and practice.

It is, moreover, to be borne in mind that another and very considerable portion of our modern culture and morality has been developed quite independently of Christianity, mainly through the continual study of the highly elaborated mental treasures of classical antiquity. The thorough study of Greek and Roman classics has at least contributed much more to it than that of the Christian church fathers. To this we must now add in our own century (rightly called the "century of the natural sciences"), the immense advance in the higher culture which we owe to a purified knowledge of nature and to the monistic philosophy founded upon this. That these must also exercise an advancing and ennobling influence cannot be doubted, and has already been shown by many eminent authors, Spencer, Carneri and others, in the course of the last thirty years.

Against this monistic ethic founded on a rational knowledge of nature, it has been objected that

it is fitted to undermine existing civilization, and especially that it encourages the subversive aims of social democracy. This reproach is wholly unjustified. The application of philosophical principles to the practical conditions of life, and in particular to social and political questions, can be made in the most various ways. Political "free-thinking," so called, has nothing whatever to do with the "freedom of thought" of our monistic natural religion. Moreover, I am convinced that the rational morality of monistic religion, that unifying conception of nature as a whole which we designate in a single word as Monoism, is in no way contrary to the good and truly valuable elements of the Christian ethic, but is destined in conjunction with these to promote the true progress of humanity in the future.

With Christian mythology and the special form of theistic belief associated with it the case is different. In so far as that belief involves the notion of a "personal god," it has been rendered quite untenable by the recent advances of monistic science. But, more than this, it was shown more than two thousand years ago, by eminent exponents of the monistic philosophy, that the conception of a personal god, creator and ruler of the world, does not give the slightest help toward a truly rational view of the world.—*Monism.*

The Revision of a Creed.

BY DR. PAUL CARUS.

WE have at present the strange spectacle that in one of our churches the proposition is discussed to change some grave particulars of creed. The old doctrines have become "unpreachable," as it is expressed, either because the ministers no longer believe them, or because people are loath to listen to ideas which now appear as monstrosities and absurdities.

We naturally hail the progress of a church and its development into broader views of religious truth. Yet at the same time we feel the littleness of the advance. What is the progress of a few steps, if a man has to travel hundreds of miles! Moreover, what is any progress, if it is done under pressure of circumstances only and not from a desire to advance and keep abreast with the true spirit of the times!

The change of a creed should not be forced upon a church from without by the progress of unchurched thinkers, but it should result from the growth and expansion of its own life. The church, as the moral instructor of mankind, should not be dragged along behind the triumphant march of humanity, but should deploy in front with the vanguard of science!

The eternal damnation of noble minded heathen and of the tender souled infants who happen to die unbaptized, was sternly believed in by the ancestors of our Presbyterian friends. They declared, without giving any reasonable argument for their opinion, this is part of the divine order of things, and whosoever does not believe it, will be damned for all eternity, together with the wise Socrates and the virtuous Confucius.

Who made Calvin the councillor of divine providence and who gave him the right of electing or rejecting the souls of men? On what ground could his narrow view, excusable in his time, be incorporated into the creed of a church? The argument on which Calvin's view rests, was very weak, but the founders of the Presbyterian church being convinced of its truth, thought to strengthen it by incorporating the doctrine into their Confession. An idea, once sanctified by tradition, has a tenacious life. Reverence for the founders of a church will keep their errors sacred and will not allow an impartial investigation of their opinions.

Reverence is a good thing; but all reverence toward men, be they ever so venerable, must be controlled by the reverence of truth. And this is the worst part of the change of the Confession. The change, it appears, is not made because the objectionable doctrines are recognized as errors; but simply because they are at the present time too repulsive for popular acceptance.

Why are the doctrines of eternal punishment not openly and confessedly branded as errors? Why can it not be acknowledged that tenets which our fathers considered as truths of divine revelation, were after all their personal and private opinions only?

We ask why, but receive no explanation. Yet there is a reason that lurks behind; although it seems as if the men who are most concerned were not conscious of it. If the error were acknowledged, a principle would be pronounced which opens the door to a greater