

The Agitator.

"Every plant that my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."—JESUS.

"Such is the irresistible nature of Truth, that all it asks, and all it wants is the liberty of appearing."—THOMAS PAINE.

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WHOLE No. 14.

BLESS THEE, MY MOTHER

Bless thee, my mother! Thy coming has given
Light to the lonely one, sad, and heart riven,
Hope to the comfortless, rest to the weary,
Wandering through, thorny paths, darksome and dreary.

From thy bright spirit home, where love forever,
Purely and sweetly reigns:—and never, no, never,
Heaves a cloud of suspicion, or sorrow,
To hide in its gloom, the clear sun of to-morrow:—

Where the green fields, ever brilliant with flowers,
Sparkling with streamlets, and dotted with bowers,
Bathed in an atmosphere, genial and holy,
And smiling on every one, high born and lowly.

Where richest music the heart pulse is thrilling,
Where sweetest songs, the whole spirit is filling
With raptures ineffable; and peace is flowing,
Pure as the stream of Life, in each one glowing:

From that bright spirit home, hastening to meet me,
With needed solace, and kind words to greet me,
Thou comest. No sinister motives impel thee.
Thy love, pure and constant, doth ever surround me.

Thy precious promise shall cheer me and strengthen,
Thy words of comfort, my earthly days lengthen,
Thy heavenly influence ever uphold me,
Till comes that joyful day when I behold thee.

Thank thee, my mother dear, do I not ever,
Know that no time or condition can sever
Thee from thy lonely child, wandering and weary,
Battling the storms of life, darksome and dreary.
Hampden, Ohio, 1858. E. A. KINGSBURY.

AN INVOCATION.

Come gentle spirits to us now,
Look on with tender eyes,
Touch your soft hands upon each brow
Sweet spirits from the skies,
Come from your homes of perfect light,
Come from your silvery streams,
Come from your scenes of joy more bright
Than we e'er know in dreams.

O speak to us in gentle tones,
Our hearts are seeking now,
A beauty like to that which shines
Upon each angel brow.
If holy spirits visit earth,
If this great boon be given,
O, come to us to-night, ere long
We'll go to you in Heaven.

Like holy sunbeams on a sea
Filled bright with happy isles,
Where sullen storms forever flee
Where heaven forever smiles,
They come, and night is no more night
Pale sorrow's reign is o'er,
For death is but a gate of light,
And gloomy now no more.

Edgefield S. C. J. A. CHAPMAN.

SCATTER THE GERMS OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

Scatter the germs of the beautiful!
By the wayside let them fall,
That the rose may spring up by the cottage gate
And the vine by the garden wall;
Cover the rough and rude of earth
With a veil of leaves and flowers,
And mark, with the opening bud and cup
The march of the summer hours.

Scatter the germs of the beautiful
In the holy shrine of home;
Let the pure, and the fair, and the graceful there
In the loveliest lustre come.
Leave not a place of deformity
In the temple of the heart,
But gather about its earth the gems
Of Nature and of Art.

CONFIDENCE is a plant of slow growth.

HELENA MILES' HEART HISTORY.

BY MRS. H. F. M. BROWN.

CHAPTER II.

Helena's Childhood.

"She felt a mother-want about the world,
And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
Left out at night, in shutting up the fold,
As restless as a nest deserted bird,
Grown chill through something being away,
Though what it knows not."—E. B. BROWNING.

Helena Miles had no childhood—no fresh, spring-like, childish childhood. Her life-stream seemed turbulent and bitter; but that was natural enough; how else could it be since the stream out-flowed from a restless and wormwood-tinctured fountain? She was never repulsed, yet she asked no sympathy in her baby troubles. Mary and Kitty would climb unrebuked upon Mr. Miles' knee, and twine his chestnut locks about their tiny fingers; and pillow their heads upon their mother's bosom and pour out all their childish joys and sorrows; but Helena always felt a sort of stand-off-spirit in the presence of her parents. She instinctively felt that there was no room for her at the home-hearth, no welcome for her in the mother's heart. And so the child sought a home in the forests and the companionship of birds and beasts. She gathered nuts for the squirrels in autumn, and fed the snakes from her own hand. They became to her dear as friends. She gave them names and told them all her heart-hopings and soul-secrets. These dear, dumb creatures knew the child's voice, knew that she was their friend; and when she called them by their names they came forth to receive her bread and her blessings. The birds were Helena's music teachers, and she proved herself an excellent pupil in the bird-school. She could "caw" crow-like; and sing as well the robin's song and the nightingale's plaintive lay. She could skate and swim, and dive and climb; but she was sadly deficient in the arts and graces that make up civilized life. People called Helena a strange, wilful child, and great sympathy was felt for the unfortunate parents. "A terrible curse to the family that child would prove." So said the town oracles.

"'Tis even so," thought Mrs. Miles, as she looked upon her sun-browned, gipsy-looking child.

And it was "even so;" but where was the fault? Who closed the heart-door against that child and sent her forth a wanderer in the world's wilderness? Who is responsible for the terrible history written in the child germ—in the constitution of a human soul?

When two more children were added to the Miles household, Helena felt still more the want of room at the home hearth, and the dearth of affection for the unwelcome child. The fields and forests grew more home-like; the reptiles a nearer kin and the bird-song sweeter. She not unfrequently spent days in the mountains without sight of a human soul.

She would gather nuts and wild berries and spread upon the ground a table for herself and dumb companions; of the forest leaves she made her couch, and of the blue sky a covering. Strangers regarded her as a fugitive from a Gipsy-band, acquaintances, as a poor unfortunate child, by Nature defrauded out of common intelligence. Mr. and Mrs. Miles looked upon their wild, uncultivated child as a hopeless thing.

"But," said Mrs. Miles, "the child's history is written in the Book of Fate and I have no power to change it."

"I have power to change it," replied Miss Thompson, a maiden Aunt of Mrs. Miles'. "Give the child into my charge and I'll soon teach her something besides romping."

Miss Thompson had for many years been the principal of a private boarding school in the North of New Hampshire. She was never admired for beauty and harmony of person or spirit—never patronized for the love and tenderness manifested toward refractory girls; but she was honest, exacting, unyielding and religious—as-the-world-goes.—Just the woman to take in charge Helena Miles "and the like o' her," so every one said and so it was to be—for so it was "written in the 'Book of Fate.'"

(To be continued.)

LOVE DEEPER THAN PREJUDICE.

During our late tour in Steuben county, we were called upon by an elderly Deacon who seemed strongly opposed to Spiritualism. We entered into an animated conversation, and endeavored to convince the Deacon that the most precious promises of Christianity related to communion with the spirit world. Our arguments, however, elicited nothing but a more persistent opposition on his part. At last we were requested to sit for the purpose of receiving something from the spirits. We sat a few moments, and then recognized and described a spirit whom the Deacon identified as his daughter. His feelings suddenly changed, and, with tears in his eyes, he said the same daughter came to him in dreams almost every night. These facts that touch the affectional fountain of the soul, can silence the loudest prejudice. Many a head is full of blinded bigotry, while the heart aches for communion with the dead.

RICHES NOT HAPPINESS.—The late Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, when surrounded with immense wealth and supposed to be taking supreme delight in its accumulation, wrote this to a friend:

"As to myself, I live like a galley slave, constantly occupied, often passing the night without sleeping. I am wrapped up in a labyrinth of affairs, and worn out with cares. I do not value fortune. The love of labor is my highest emotion. When I rise in the morning, my only effort is to labor so hard during the day, that when night comes I may be enabled to sleep soundly."

Four things I am sure there will be in heaven; music, plenty of little children, flowers, and pure air!—MACDONALD CLARKE.

SPEECH OF CHARLES M. PLUMB,

At the Philanthropic Convention, Utica, September 10th, 1858.

We publish, to the exclusion of other matter, the speech of Charles M. Plumb. We feel assured that our readers and writers will bless us for so doing. In point of style, logic, clearness of expression, common sense thoughts and *burning truths*, this sermon has never been excelled. It would be wise to print it in pamphlet form and send it wherever tracts, bibles, sermons and newspapers have failed to teach a broken-hearted humanity the way to heaven.—[ED. AGITATOR.]

The present is a most appropriate occasion for inquiry into the cause of existing evils. Never before has crime seemed so prevalent. In city and country, property is held at more than ordinary hazard, and life itself is in constant peril. At the seat of Government, where the example and influence of law-makers should deter the reckless from deeds of criminal daring, life and property are less safe than in mountain passes infested by banditti. Our prisons are more densely populated, our police justices and criminal judges are more actively employed than ever, and theft, robbery, arson and murder, abound all over the land.

An unusually large number in society are destitute of employment, and poverty, privation and despair are driving multitudes to criminal deeds.

At this time, I repeat, a Convention such as this is most opportune, for a very interesting and no less profitable inquiry is the one here instituted—namely—whence originates the dissimilarity among men? What causes conspire to make one man a thief, or a drunkard, or a murderer—and another honest, temperate and peaceful—the one a man of vice, the other a man of virtue? Occupying, as these two classes do, positions differing more or less widely, where and when does the divergence begin—and by what is it caused?

Various replies to these inquiries have been furnished by the world, many of which are found embodied in the religious systems extant. For eighteen centuries the Christian system has disposed of the question as to the source of evil, sin or crime, by assuming the original total depravity of the race. This idea of the innate wickedness of every natural desire of the soul, has been accepted as an all-sufficient and truthful explanation of the evil in the world; and the plan of redemption through regeneration, as the only true remedy. But this solution fails to satisfy the rational mind, since however much it may be affirmed that all men are totally depraved, we see those we know are not so, and indeed are scarcely willing to admit the application to ourselves. And again, those who claim to have been cleansed from this native impurity by an Almighty power, fail to demonstrate the superiority of their moral standing, and often seem to require several successive births to make them equal in our estimation to the natural elevation of others.

One all-sufficient ground for the rejection of the Christian theory of the source of evil is, the reflection it casts upon the wisdom and goodness of the great creating Cause. We cannot believe that the Infinite God would give existence, and with it the curse of an evil nature, but must rather look upon whatever manifestations of opposition to the right and good humanity may exhibit, as indications of an unprogressed stage of development—a condition of childhood, out of which, through the law of progress, all will ultimately be brought. I have not yet rejected the old tradition that man was created in God's image, and I fancy there is a closer resemblance to-day than in the infancy of the race. True, too often the divine likeness is nearly obliterated in the formation or education of the child, but the bright similitude within can never be lost.—The spark may be dimmed, but never goes out.

Who can wonder at the undeveloped condition of humanity, or at the multiplicity of errors into which man falls, when this central fundamental idea is so erroneous. We have been taught that the human heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;" and prayers to a remote but supposed inexhaustible fountain of good have been repeated for us, that we might receive thence a supply to overbalance and neutralize the fatal mass of iniquity within. We have looked *within* for the source of evil, when it lies *outside*, and the soul's normal effort is to overcome it, just as the child strives to walk, and run, and climb.

Not only have all systems of restraint and punishment, but of education also, been based upon this notion, that a full tide of evil continually wells up within every human heart, the springs of which must be *cauterized* by the application of the burning truths of a wrathful God. The devil, whom theologians have whipped over humanity's shoulders—being a creature of fancy, a myth, has suffered nothing from the fierce assaults of Christian castigators, while *man* has been grievously scarred and wounded in the conflict. Humanity traduced and defamed—bereft of all title to happiness, all hope of reward—promised only evil and misery for all eternity—humanity wronged, outraged, crushed and bleeding, cries aloud for justice! Shall we not heed the cry? Let us direct our efforts to the removal of the wrong conditions which pervert and weaken man's native capacity for goodness, and effectually prevent, for a time, his growth and development. Only remove all obstacles to its full and free manifestation, and mankind will inevitably show that the element of goodness *lives* though it slumbers within them. It is not a caged fiend, but a sleeping enfeebled angel that dwells in the human soul. Touch the right chord, appeal to the right nature, and you receive the desired response.

But every capacity for good is subject to abuse; the faculties that rightly directed make man noble and God-like, can be perverted and misdirected, greatly to his loss and injury. Possessing a nature keenly sensitive to outward influences, the circumstances of man's life exercise a potent power in moulding his character.

Nor do these forming influences begin with conscious existence; we must know the condition of the body and mind of the parents, to trace the first causes of misdirection in the child. The source of sin, evil or crime in the world, dates back to the conception and birth of each individual, and springs directly and legitimately from false education—incorrect ideas of human accountability and capacity.

The wrong education of one generation paves the way for the bad organization of the next, by leading to a disregard of proper conditions for their most perfect development.

Upon the threshold of existence the child is met by a religious system that condemns him unheard, for the evil of a nature given him, without the privilege, on his part, of exercising the least choice or preference concerning it. He feels instinctively the injustice of such sweeping condemnation, and soon learns to imitate a Deity so profoundly unmindful of the happiness of his creatures, by himself disregarding the rights and necessities of others.

If God creates nine-tenths of humanity for endless misery, we may not wonder at parents making a large portion of their offspring miserable by unhealthy organizations and criminal tendencies. If the Divinity we worship massacres whole races of men for trivial acts, we need not marvel at his worshippers destroying their families by their own excesses.

The evils of a false theology are most palpably seen in the popular idea of the necessity of regeneration. According to the Christian faith, the first birth counts nothing but damnation, and invariably counts that. No amount of growth from the first birth can fit one for the joys of heaven. A second alone can do this. What need of careful effort then in the first work, if it has to be gone over with again? What mechanic would properly attend to the construction of a piece of mechanism, if he knew that another and more expert artisan were to fashion it after him? In order to secure perfection in any work, or to approach thereto, the ideal of perfection must exist in the mind of the laborer and inspire his efforts.

The false and fatal myth that the infant, as it comes from the hand of nature, must be a poor miserable failure, a bundle of iniquity, an embryo devil, full of the germs of sin, that will surely blossom out at maturity; the idea of the absolute necessity and universality of man's degeneracy; the denial of any power in human effort to save the soul—one and all of these ideas have cursed the world, and aided in perpetuating the manifold evils in society.

Profoundly sensible has the world been that a second birth is necessary—that human nature unregenerate is purely evil, and apparently for fear this darling idea should be exploded by actual demonstration, mankind have gone to work manufacturing total depravity—generating children to match their infernal theology! So long as we are satisfied

that *deeds* pass for nothing on high—that *character* has no market value in heaven—that *labor* cannot save the soul—so long as we rely on a foreign power to do that for us we ought to do for ourselves, to make good the imperfect work of our own hands, just so long may we expect to see mankind developed to correspond.

The ancient poet David said of himself in Psalms: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nor will I doubt the correctness of David's own statement. He was perhaps wise enough to understand his own organization; and his dealings with sundry persons all through life abundantly proved him to have done no discredit to the origin he so frankly acknowledges! But the efforts of religious teachers to apply this individual confession to man universally and for all time, are libelous toward heaven, and blasphemous toward humanity! Too many actually are "conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity"—but what is admitted as a *fact*, is not, necessarily, true as a *principle*.

Our agriculturalists have learned the lesson of economy embraced in the trite maxims, "Less stock and better;" "Smaller farms and better tilled;" but the equally apparent and infinitely more important truism, "Fewer children and better" is ignored, and *quality* is sacrificed to *quantity*, to the vast detriment of society. Various important breeds are improving our cattle, and perfecting our wool products, but still there is bad blood in children! Men will send to Europe for a horse or cow, and even to China for a Shanghai fowl, but within their own doors they are deteriorating the human standard to a corrupt, mis-shapen sickly type of humanity.

It is time this lesson respecting the first birth were learned. The earth is populated with youth who are a living shame to their parents; and instead of great men and noble women as the rule, they are only rare exceptions. Every effect has an adequate cause. Not a sad-hearted, or bad-tempered boy or girl, but there was some day or hour in the parents' life when one of two diverging paths, if carefully trod, would have blessed that child with a joyous spirit and happy disposition. A man blesses or curses the race not only by his outward acts during life, but by the inheritance of habits, constitution and disposition he gives his posterity. How priceless a gift to the world is a well-formed, healthy, happy child! How bitter a curse is a sickly inheritor of disease, or worse, the corrupt receptacle of a parent's sin! A Baltimore paper recently published an account of the fiendish exploits of a boy 15 years old, "son of a *very respectable*" citizen of that city. He first tied securely a favorite Newfoundland dog, then saturated his shaggy coat with camphene, and set fire to it for the delight of witnessing his torment? He next tried to roast his little sister by placing her with hands and feet tied, upon a stove he had heated for the purpose. In this he fortunately failed.—Now whose fault is it that such mad passion for horrible deeds so completely over-master one so young? Yet the father of such a son is a "*very respectable citizen*," and doubtless receives the commiseration of community!

In some countries, it is said, the crime of the child destroys the caste of the parent. In our own the less just custom prevails of degrading the child for the parent's crime. It is a *misfortune* to be born of erring parents, but to have erring children is not only a misfortune but a fault—the source of manifold crimes, itself a crime! Let society demand of every married pair that they furnish none but well-organized progeny, the germs for useful citizens, and there will be more care in their production and education than now.

Banish the idea of God-made hell-doomed children, natures totally depraved coming direct from the hand of infinite wisdom, and teach that in the bodies and souls of the child will be mirrored the parent's vices or virtues, and a change will soon be visible.

Talk of the debt owed the parent for existence! The idea of infinite obligation for a life unsought, undesired, and often unblessed by a single compensating joy. Does that poor bed-ridden youth, whose frame is racked by pain, and whose life-legacy is a parent's disease, owe that parent any thanks for existence? Does yonder lad, born with his father's thirst for strong drink, or his vindictive temper, or that one with the felon's doom stamped not only upon his countenance, but upon every fiber of his soul, owe a weight of gratitude to the beings who culminated in his frame, the fruit

of their own excesses? Nay, verily, and it were not strange if such a boy bitterly cursed the authors of his being. Who can envy that parent whose child wishes he had never been born?

We cannot raise apples from thorns, nor strawberries from thistles! And that miserably unfortunate specimen of scrofula, with blood as foul as the habits of the swine whose flesh accelerated the progress of the disease—perhaps imparted it—might as well seek to bail Lake Ontario with a thimble, as to produce healthy, well-organized offspring! Or that a man with ungovernable temper, who knows of no self-control, and renders existence a burden to all his household, may well despair of seeing in his own likeness a sweet-tempered, happy babe! Our asylums, insane retreats, poor houses and hospitals, are filled with teeming thousands brought into a world of pain and suffering, of silence or darkness, of wild fancies or criminal appetites, by those who owed them a decent birth with healthy bodies and happy souls. What shall be said of the *unnumbered* thousands born every year, with excitable and passionate, sad and misanthropic, or malignant and revengeful dispositions to whom existence can scarcely be a blessing?

A vast majority of the wretched ones of the world, receive their wretchedness from parents who had no right to reproduce themselves, or from conditions of life, and surrounding influences that no friend of humanity, no truly enlightened parent would permit to be transferred to the countenance and life and being of a child. What can we expect from the little one that forces itself into existence, in spite of the reluctance and despairing sorrow of the mother, who, perchance, knows what an inheritance her child is doomed to possess?

How is it that the jails, and poor houses, and hospitals, or worse still, the grog shops, gambling hells and brothels of our land are filled to-day? I tell you truly the inmates of these places were born for the very destiny we now see them filling.—“The penitentiary, the dungeon, the gallows, and the Lunatic Asylum are means employed by the world to punish the victims of an inconsiderate generation.”

Many of the doomed ones never chose their destiny. It was forced upon them along with an unsolicited existence by their parents. The day of their birth, and, perhaps, months prior thereto, the clairvoyant eye could have foreseen their fate.—Alas! how many more are each day prepared for the same end! It is in vain to deny it. Criminals are victims. Those who gave them existence and created or elected the controlling circumstances surrounding their childhood, are, to a great degree, responsible for the character of their lives. It is a sad thought that the ranks of thieves, and drunkards, and libertines are to be filled by the innocent tenants of the cradles in a thousand homes.

But so long as maternity is unprovided for, we may expect to find constitutional tendencies to vice, and witness the sad effects of early surroundings in dwarfing and warping the pliable natures of infantile humanity. Too many children are accepted simply as “Providences,” instead of creatures of parental design and effort. They are regarded as “sent” the same as rain and hail, frosts and tornadoes; and must be received meekly, graciously, and if possible gratefully, though they come as much out of season and out of place, as snow in August!

Many parents are unfitted by reason of misfortune, ill-health or uncongenial relations from giving birth to children; others from the nature of their situation, the health of the mother, the cares of the father, ought to limit the number of their household, yet most of both of these classes are found with large and constantly increasing families. If the posterity in such cases, deprived as they must be of any potent influences favorable to human elevation, make good citizens, few thanks are due the parents.

We have permitted our youth to “come up” without any just appreciation at home or at school of either the latent capacities or normal wants of their child natures. The cloud of total depravity has enveloped our early lives, and concealed whatever hidden excellences we possessed. What wonder that we have become a race of criminals.

Our men are too much absorbed in money-getting, or political scheming, and our women in fashion-chasing, to attend properly to the rearing of their offspring. Even among our so called great men, statesmen, scholars, and theologians, we find the laws of parentage, which should be understood and applied, quite overlooked; and as a result, note the well established fact that two successive

generations of scholars or philosophers are seldom found in the same family. Thus is the labor spent in educating one generation apparently lost upon the next, for the immediate descendants of educated parents rarely equal their progenitors, while from obscure parentage with no other lineage than pure blood, and the welcoming smiles of true conjugal love—which are superior to any titled ancestry—spring those who become honored and respected among men and women. It cannot be so utterly impossible to attain practically what we so clearly comprehend in theory. An observance of nature's laws will insure success in the work of human elevation, through the God-appointed means of a true considerate generation.

But no parent who gives unbridled rein to his own lower passions can expect to see them controlled in the person of his child. If we cannot save our sons and daughters from hereditary tendencies to crime, and surround them with influences calculated to insure harmonious growth, we better have no more children, for it will be worse than in vain to obey the ancient injunction to “multiply” if we only multiply vice and crime, instead of virtue and excellence. Our only hope is in the spread of light. Abandon the idea that our reckless, haphazard, accidental descendants can be patched up and white-washed over by the Holy Spirit; and carefully consider how we may make the world better by reproducing ourselves with beautiful vigorous bodies, and pure noble souls, and the task is well begun. Our work is a personal one, the center of action is your soul and mine. We cannot isolate ourselves from humanity. A thousand links connect and identify our existence with the race. Nor can we hope for the salvation of mankind till we enter individually upon this work of self-culture.

As theological opinions have stood in the way of human progression, so have religious teachers and leaders, true to their creeds, proved themselves the greatest foes to progressive movements in all ages. Scarce one of a hundred among the priests of this nation puts forth a single well directed effort for the cessation of crime. Zealously laboring to save the soul through regeneration, they overlook the importance to the world of a proper generation and a correct education. Thirty thousand clergymen in this country, not content with preaching total depravity from the pulpit, issue biennial volumes of living testimony illustrative of their discourses—children in whom the necessity for a second birth, and perhaps a third or fourth is clearly manifest! Graciously receiving these living duplicates of themselves as “God's gifts,” and seeing in them evidences of depravity, they come to accept each regular “providence” of this sort as a new endorsement from high authority of their own conceptions of the degeneracy of human nature. * * * * * Those who ought to be our teachers, are slowest to accept the first idea of improvement, and exhibit the most profound ignorance, and amazing stupidity respecting man's most vital interests. Ecclesiastical courts have been greatly exercised concerning the marriage of a man to his deceased wife's sister, but are silent as “dumb dogs” upon the marriage of first cousins, that prolific source of disease, idiocy and crime. Indeed, our laws, civil as well as ecclesiastical, while encompassing marriage itself with a hedge of legal thorns, making it next to impossible to escape an unhallowed bondage, overlook entirely the marriage of blood relations, or of immature half-grown children, which are adding to the victims of our Asylums, Hospitals and Jails.

Synods and General Assemblies will silence the man—no matter how pure in heart and blameless in life—who marries a noble woman with strength of character sufficient to refuse to remain the slave of a drunken husband and who had obtained her legal freedom, while they have not a word of censure even for that minister or layman who murders a wife every three or five years, by his excessive sensuality, and fills the land with the feeble, diseased and vicious offspring of his victims.

Of the many sources of crime to be found in outward circumstantial relations, none are more prolific than unhappy marriages—none more fatal to the next generation. Yet for their relief there exists few provisions in law, and trifling encouragement in public sentiment. Concerning most other causes of crime, society makes some, though far too little allowance. But a mis-alliance in marriage, though an abundant source of inharmony and legal crime, is hardly recognized as an evil, and its victims are oftener censured than commiserated, for that which may be their misfortune, but is not their fault.

Parties scarcely out of their babyhood, with not only judgment immature, but character unformed, are deemed eligible for a co-partnership the most intimate known, that is allowed no terminating period this side the grave.

Many men marry for purposes that prostitute and degrade a relation that should be most sacred, practicing a deception against which it is next to impossible to be always secure. Yet for the calamitous results to the victims of such baseness, and their children, society refuses to offer a remedy. From a theology that pictures God as punishing eternally for the sins of a moment, is legitimately framed a legal code that “punishes a matrimonial blunder with imprisonment for life!”

Our criminal records, and the reports in every daily newspaper, of wives poisoning their husbands and husbands murdering their wives, or both seeking a suicide's grave, testify to the failure of our laws to provide a way of escape from a bondage worse than death. Indeed, our statutes, in effect, only secure the victim to the oppressor, shutting out all hope of release, except through death or crime. In vain will our State authorities hope to do away with prisons and penitentiaries, till they have amended the Divorce Code on our statute books. When sufficient causes are permitted to dissolve an unholy marriage relation, that in utter blasphemy is pronounced of God's “joining,” we will not find husbands and wives perishing at the hands of their unhappy companions. Strange is it that law-makers cannot see that a peaceful legal decree is a better remedy than prison, the pistol, or the grave.

In respect to the treatment of criminals, we need only to say this: Our criminal code is steeped in orthodox theology! Every page bears marks of primitive conceptions of the human and divine natures. The dungeon with its implements of torture, the stake, the scaffold, and the gallows, are successive modifications of penalties, consequent upon improved ideas of a vindictive Deity. Swap away all those harsh features drawn from the church's creed, and approach the violator of law with the olive branch in our hand, rather than the sword of inflexible mis-called justice, and his better feelings will be roused, the man will throw off the accumulation of gross habits and tendencies, and stand forth in God's image redeemed!

By those who have long believed in human depravity, the practicability of inaugurating an era of kindness and love in our prisons and penitentiaries, is candidly questioned. To such we would say “try and see.” Abandon the plan of punishing the wrong doer, and seek his reformation, education and improvement; and if kindness, gentleness and love fail, upon fair trial, to reach the heart of the most hardened criminal, we will “forever after hold our peace.”

It is frequently urged against the Harmonial Reformers of this age, that they do not sufficiently apprehend the sinfulness of the sinner,—they are too charitable towards the fallen, too slow to believe ill of humanity.

This position reminds one of the zealous hell-fire Christian who remarked at one of the church conference meetings, in speaking of Universalists, that “some there were who believed that all would be saved.” “But,” said he, “My brethren I hope for better things!” So our conservative philanthropists and orthodox humanitarians, when we offer more charitable conceptions of human character, “hope for better things.” It really seems as if the Christian world was unwilling to believe that the unregenerate man had a spark of goodness in him. With them all righteousness belongs to Christ, and their faith is summed up by a leading exponent in one word—“Substitution,”—Christ standing in the stead of man.

I hesitate not to take the side of humanity, a creed-bound, existence-cursed, God-damned humanity!

Let others who choose, glory in the cross of Christ. Let others who choose, stake their well-being upon the merits and attainments of imaginary deities. I declare my faith in humanity. I will trust in the power of salvation to the God-derived, universally-possessed element of goodness, ever-present, latent or active in each immortal soul. Long enough have we denied man every true and manly attribute,—long enough have we enriched the Gods, at the expense of mankind.

Let us now repay the debt, and henceforth deal justly by man. Let us take the side of down-trodden, oppressed, victimized, and if you please, “wicked,” “criminal” humanity, and defend him against all enemies, human, infernal or deific!

THE AGITATOR.

PUBLISHED SEMI-MONTHLY.

Mrs. H. F. M. BROWN, Editor and Proprietor.

OFFICE ON SUPERIOR ST., A FEW DOORS EAST OF PUBLIC SQUARE.

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

DEAR READER.—Our last notes were rather hastily written in Richmond, Ind. We told you something about the meeting there of the "Friends of Progress," but did not tell you the friends "organized" the better to carry out their plans for lighting, dark places. It is well known that in many towns there cannot be found as many self-saviors and free-thinkers as Lot numbered in *ancient Sodom*. The friends propose to organize and appoint a committee to collect funds in the shape of books, tracts and money to aid in sending missionaries into the world's great wilderness to preach the glorious gospel of Brotherhood Self-hood and Progression—(our creed.) We are on that committee. If any one has books, pamphlets or papers of any kind, that will give light and scatter truth, and wish to commit them to our care for distribution they will be thankfully received and sacredly appropriated to the object desired.

It would be well if each town would collect reading material, and make it public property. Editors and authors no doubt would contribute gratuitously to the reading fund.

Richmond is a John the Baptist in reforms. The cause may be attributed to the intelligence and untiring energy of the women of that city. We have nowhere else met so many noble, self-reliant women. True they are not all pioneer women, but of the mass we are speaking. Our last sermon in that city was preached to a woman (sorry to say it) upon the sin of scandal. Our remarks were *pointed* and *personal*. We closed the services by praying that she might not receive the measure she had meted out to others—that her woman's heart might never be pierced with poison-pointed arrows directed from woman's guilty hand. A class of persons think if a woman ventures out of the shadow of the home-roof, without the protection of a pair of masculine boots, that she is gratuitous food for semi-human wolves and hungry tigers. We are self-appointed to teach this unfortunate class of creatures to beware how they handle a woman's reputation. To her it is *valuable*. How well we shall succeed in our new calling time will determine.

We spent a few days very pleasantly in Cincinnati visiting old friends, making new ones, working out the "Sketches for my young Juvenile Friends" and lecturing. If newspaper reporters are worthy of credit the same lectures were smart and simple, good and good for nothing.

Cincinnati is the home of a multitude of *human* souls, who are ever ready to give you a helping hand and a friendly "God bless you."

We passed a few days with some friends on the banks of the Ohio a few miles south of Cincinnati. Grapes, peaches, and genial souls made the place endurable, but Heaven be merciful to those whose life-lines are cast among the swine pens and the *swine* producing engines—distilleries of Patriot. We wonder how people who vegetate in that pestilential atmosphere can possibly be human. Some few of them are nevertheless.

Our darkest day was in Darke county O. Mr. W., an anti-meat and tobacco eater, anti coffee, tea and wine drinker, invited us to light the darkness in his vicinity. He had no home there, we therefore, made one at a clean, quiet hotel. No one there had seen us, yet Mrs. Grundy knew positively that we wore bloomers, believed in atheism, advocated anti-marriage laws and denounced the divinity of the Pentateuch. The Baptist church was engaged for the lecture before these important things were made known. What was to be done? The trustees had too much self-respect to close the doors simply upon the testimony of the garrulous old lady. The clergyman was invited to call and examine our creed; but he was sick. Dr.—came in his stead. He found our skirts after the Parisian fashion plates and our creed not sufficiently heterodox to cast us out of God's house; so he gave us his blessing and went his way, saying, perhaps, to his soul, "What weak nerves the people have! Just as though *that* little woman could put out Truth's everlasting light!" We went our way to the church feeling like a Christian going to a Pagan shrine with heart offerings for the Pagan Deities. We *tried* to remember that the house was a *sacred* place; but could not feel a bit of it and wished ourself in God's unconsecrated, unsanctified temple where we could speak the solemn truths that in our secret soul were pleading for utterance. But we did say just enough to incite the insurrection spirit in a large bark-brained preacher who had the courage and the misfortune to be in the congregation. He made his speech and rushed out of the house as though he thought his remarks of sufficient moment to call forth a response. We next morning turned home-ward wondering of what stuff humanity was made. The question was soon answered. A poor, wretched woman with five little children came aboard the cars. The husband and father was dead—the widow penniless. She was trying to beg or work her way to her friends. Two of the little ones were shaking with the ague. We thought to try an experiment by appealing to men's purses and women's souls. We went to each individual in the cars—told the woman's sad story and solicited aid in her behalf. Not a soul refused assistance and we soon had the pleasure of making glad that human-hearted sister by putting into her hand a purse of dollars and dimes and a pass to her place of destination. The passengers gathered about to see how she received this unexpected donation. Tears gathered in her eyes—they expressed her thankfulness—words were wanting. Just then a boy came to say we were wanted in the other end of the car. The want was simply to know to what church, if any, we belonged. "What does it matter?" we said. "Nothing only we have been betting" said a sailor looking fellow. "That man says you are a Christian and I can swear you are an infidel, for I have been wrecked, starved and frozen, and not a cent has a Christian ever given me." We did not decide the question knowing the betting-money was to be paid at an oyster saloon.

At home again. If Noah's dove was here we would rejoice with it in having found rest for its weary wing. Yet dear, and never to-be-forgotten are the many hearts that greeted and blessed us in our wanderings. The few fire brands that rattled about our head are quenched and sunk in the sea of Pleasant Memories.

THANKS to the friends who have so generously responded to the call for a renewal of subscription. If any of our old subscribers miss their papers let them see if their subscription has not expired.

MRS. HARRIS.—Thanks for an invitation to attend the meeting of the "Friends of Progress." A previous invitation prevented our accepting it.

CORA V. HATCH.—Mrs. Hatch has left her husband recently, and refuses any overture for a reconciliation. Every *human* heart, that knows anything of the affair, commends her for her womanly independence; but few dare say so publicly.—The world usually goes with wind and tide. When it is popular to applaud true heroism and to rebuke masked hypocrisy Cora Hatch will take her appropriate place among the few who refuse to yield blind obedience to the corrupt laws of society.

The public are demanding the reason for the separation. Just as if the outside world had a right to know all the particulars of that *secret* heart history! It is enough to know that the woman belongs to herself—has the right to decide, in matters of this kind, for herself, and that others have no right to interfere with these rights.

MR. TOOHEY lectured in Chapin Hall, Sunday the 3d inst., morning and evening.

The evening discourse seemed peculiarly timely and appropriate. The subject was "The Press." The speaker gave a brief outline of the history of this mighty helper in the work of human Progress, portraying its wonderful influence in every conceivable department of Life; and closed by exposing—not in a spirit of censure, but of deep regret, the almost incredible extent to which the popular Press of the present day descends from the dignity of its true mission, to the work of scandal, misrepresentation, caricature and falsehood; to the blinding and misleading of the multitude under its control, instead of truthfully enlightening them. Mr. Sterling followed Mr. T. in a few earnest, telling criticisms upon Spiritualists and Reformers, in relation to the great lack of toleration among themselves. L.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The Regular course of Lectures at the Western Homoeopathic College, is to commence October 27th.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS.

Mrs. E. A. Kingsbury will speak at Ravenna on the 17th of October, and at Chagrin Falls on the 24th.

A Mass Meeting of Spiritualists and other friends of progress, will be held at Ravenna the last Saturday and Sunday in October.

S. P. Leland and A. B. French will speak in New Lyme on the 13th, Chagrin Falls, Sunday 17th, Newton Falls 19th.

APPOINTMENT.—"L. M. P."—If the arrangements are made and notice given we will speak in Clyde on Sunday the 17th inst.

Will you inform us in regard to the appointment?

MRS. WM. W.—Your time expired with No. 12, we will now send the paper to K—. Joel Tiffany's address is Troy, N. Y.; T. G. Foster's present address is Cincinnati, Ohio. He intends removing, soon, to Mendota, Ill.

"THE BIBLE AND SPIRITUALISTS," was written by a clergyman who has the reputation of being orthodox.

BOOK NOTICES in the next number.

Begging Mediums.

MRS. BROWN:—You Editors have said about enough about "Vagabond Mediums." Every sensible person knows they are a great nuisance. Now I wish you would turn your attention to *begging mediums*—a set of lazy fellows who lounge about, and harp upon their missions, and then ask hard-working people to support them in their idleness. They expect you to feed them, to loan them money, and if you refuse, or ask them to pay it again, it is horrible for they are "*working* for the cause."

Yours for the cause of common honesty.

JOHN SMITH.

DEPARTURE OF JOHN ALLEN.

The many friends of Mr. Allen will be pained by the tidings of his decease. The following letter from our mutual friend, Rev. A. Gage, will give all the information we at present possess. We hope in our next number to give the full particulars of his illness and death, together with some of the events in his strange history. We visited him last week in company with Mr. Gage. We had a special object in that visit, but found him too ill to talk of future plans and purposes. We both left with the feeling that *that* meeting was our last in the Earth life.—ED. AGITATOR.

HAMILTON, October 5, 1858.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN,—Our impressions of our friend, John Allen, are confirmed. He is dead—died, I think, on Sunday, though the facts in the case have not fully, or very definitely transpired with me yet. Poor John, has seemingly spent his life to no purpose, at least, he never realized what he had set his heart upon and spent his life for. I am made very sad by this event, first, because there is no one as a *theorist* in reforms, who can fill his place. He had the most comprehensive view of reform—he conceived of *integral harmony* and life—Secondly, I feel that I have lost much personally, for he was ever to me an inspiration, a source of knowledge and a fountain of new and beautiful thought. I was desirous of drawing from him his views upon a multitude of themes and putting them on paper for preservation, as I knew that he had written but little.

Still I feel a degree of melancholy satisfaction at the thought of his departure—for I can but think his disappointed, defeated and crushed spirit will now find rest. Yes, like a wearied child he has now lain down the body to *sleep*. He had his faults no doubt, nay, I know he had; but his heart was noble, and kind, and loving. We may say, *we* have lost a friend, *truth* a fearless advocate, and humanity a defender. He lived before his time and has been crucified as the friend of anything new in science or morals, ever has been and ever must be.

But John Allen was one of the most, nay, the most unselfish man I ever knew. He was only desirous of incarnating these Gospel principles, which alone can save and ennoble the race.

Will you write a befitting notice of his death; I will endeavor to furnish the facts in the case of his death soon.

A. GAGE.

DEAR SISTER:—The enclosed obituary will apprise you of the departure of my youngest brother from the material form. He was aged 31, and we had no idea, a few weeks ago, of our having so soon to bid him adieu. I trust *it is well with him*, and that we shall hear from him in due time. He promised to communicate to me through Mansfield. I read to him, a short time before he passed away, from the Educator, the "Prayer in Sickness," &c. Our family circle is invaded, for the first time, by the angel of death. The weight of grief falls heaviest upon my mother, whose heart-strings tenderly entwine around her children. She finds some consolation, however, in a partial realization of the intercourse of departed friends.

M. A. T.

NOTE.—We deeply sympathise with our brother Milo, in his late affliction; but we do not weep as do those who have no faith in our glorious philosophy. To the spiritualist "Death is but a kind and gentle servant who, with noiseless hand, unlocks the gate of life to show us those we love."

A theological professor, speaking of Balaam's ass, says it is wrong to doubt that the ass spoke like a man, when we daily hear so many men speak like asses.

CORRECTION.

In the last Agitator, under the caption of "A little Philosopher," I am made to use the following expression: "From this I suppose Jesus, the great Reformer, wished to have men and women like you, little children. Be good, kind," &c. As punctuated, this is incorrect; for I do *not* suppose he wished to have them to be little children; but rather, like them, to be good, kind and affectionate, and ask questions.

Where fear or superstitious awe so far holds the ascendancy in the human mind, as to prevent an interrogation of the Great Nature in her magnificent and glorious operations, the individual who is in such condition is so filled with doubt and uncertainty as to be comparatively miserable. Take those, if you please, who regard an eclipse—the appearance of a comet, &c., as an indication of divine displeasure miraculously displayed, which prevents them from investigating them, and tell me if they are in a heavenly, or happy condition. So with regard to other "miracles," if we must fear to investigate them lest we become infidelic; or because they are the deep and hidden mysteries of Godliness, what different are we? But if, on the contrary, we are free to examine all things, creeds, claims, appearances, and theories, having full confidence in the Divine Controller of the Universe, and the consummation of the purpose of existence, we cannot be otherwise than happy in their investigations.

G. B. P.

October 4, 1858.

Milan, Ohio, August 17, 1858.

MRS. BROWN,—I wish to correct one or two mistakes which I notice in the *Agitator* of the 15th.—*First*—Mrs. Warner is engaged to speak every Sunday in Milan, and also each Thursday evening, instead of "half the time" as you have it stated. In a few instances the Milan friend, have granted her leave of absence to attend grove meetings abroad; but her engagement with them is for each Sunday until the first of December next, when her year expires. It is proper I should make this correction, for without it many of your readers may be led to think Mrs. Warner's excuse for not attending meetings elsewhere was not the true one.

Second—Mrs. Warner will not be present at the convention in Clyde. I wrote the friends there to that effect some weeks ago. But no doubt our good brother French thought he was correct in his statement.

I wish here, for one, to raise an objection to the plan which so universally prevails in the West of inviting so many speakers to attend our Grove Meetings. We generally have four, and not unfrequently six and seven at a two day's meeting, when three would answer just as well, and two would be better still. Our speakers are not so numerous that they need to go in gangs in order to obtain hearers. If they would divide off in pairs, far more good might be accomplished. And besides it would be better pecuniarily, for both speakers and hearers. As it now is a sufficient sum is seldom raised at our Grove Meetings to defray the travelling expenses of all the speakers, when if this amount was divided between two or three they would not be so apt to think they had been turned empty away.

Without presuming to dictate I would suggest to our friends, who contemplate getting up Grove Meetings, to get the promise by letter or otherwise, of the attendance of two good speakers at a specified time. *After* this is done announce the meeting with the speakers names.—These with what volunteer and home force can be obtained, cannot fail for two days to interest any audience that can be collected. And if variety of talent is wanted let the friends soon after secure other two speakers, and appoint *another* meeting; and thus keep the ball rolling.

This plan will give the Truth to a greater number of hearers, for the six speakers would be holding three meetings instead of one all on the same day;—and besides it will be easier for the hearers to do their duty towards the speakers than by following the old plan.

Yours for Reform!

E. WARNER.

Mr. Warner's letter is among the *lost* and found. It may seem out of time; but the suggestions are good, nevertheless.

A Leaf from a Journal.

Last night I dreamed myself weeping—I said sorrowingly, I am alone. When by my side stood a dear friend of my earliest days who seemed to be a guardian spirit and in accents of Love and wisdom he spoke to me thus, "O earth child thou hast lived in years, not in *deeds*. He lives most who thinks most—feels the noblest—acts the best,—Thou need'st trial to call thee to higher life. Thou knowest little of the resignation which exalts life and lightens it of its weary burdens. Thou knowest little of the purer enjoyment which submission brings." Then I said "O speak celestial teacher I would learn of thee, I would learn to bear the ills of life, for I am weary." "Yes child, thou *art* weary from weakness and inexperience; but thine is the power to strengthen thyself; to act reasonably, to act wisely, to act nobly in the great drama of human life. Is it wisdom to be forever sighing for that which thou mayst never attain? Is it wisdom to indulge in vain regrets for that which is common and unavoidable? Is it wisdom in thee to be disturbed by trifles, to yield to useless tears, to rob life of its health, happiness, and beauty by indulging despondency? I would exhort thee, O child, to explore thy inmost self—to control thyself, to cultivate an equanimity of temper, to avoid extremes of elevation or depression of spirits, that thou mayst meet the diversities and many trying exigencies of life with becoming self-possession; by so doing, thou wilt not only increase thine own happiness, but the happiness of those around thee. Thou wilt feel a nobler, a more tranquilized joy than thou hast ever experienced; a joy which will bring thee nearer the eternal throne and breathe inspiration into thy being and link thee harmoniously to the ever varying circumstances which life may develop. Learn, contemplate, judge thyself, O child?"

"I thank thee celestial guardian, thou pure angel! I seem to feel thy cool breath on my burning brow; I know thou hast spoken wisely, though I may not be able just now to practically exemplify my appreciation of the truths thou hast offered."

I awakened from my dream happier and calmer than when I fell asleep. I seemed to know I had an angel friend, and though it was only a dream I could not efface the impression it made upon my mind. Dreams often seem *real* to me, and leave an indelible impress on the memory which defies the drear inclemencies of earth. And do we not sometimes in dreamland wander into the *real* realm of gorgeous beauty whose fields are graced with endless bloom, and whose sun-touched temples rise far beyond the reach of mortal vision; and is it not a *reality* that in dreams we wander through those paths angelic feet have trod and really meet again those early loved ones who faded from the earth in the misty shadows that gather about the tomb?

L. L. A. D. ANDREWS.

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AGITATOR COMMUNICATIONS.

DIVORCE.

In these days of social revolutions and reforms, it is not strange that the subject of divorce should claim a goodly share of public attention. Many are the views entertained of it, though as yet there has been but little spoken or written upon the subject. For what reason I know not, unless it be from a feeling of dislike that most people have to taking the initiative step in any new movement, especially when that movement is likely to be unpopular.

The light in which the subject is regarded depends principally upon education and religious prejudices. There are certain philosophical, common sense sort of people, who hold that incompatibility of disposition is a sufficient plea for a divorce—Again there are others who contend that a bill of divorce should be granted upon but one plea only, adultery. Such are the adherents of modern theology who base their faith upon biblical authority. The next, and by far the largest class are those who do not appear to be troubled with conscientious scruples, but who seem to doubt the propriety of allowing a greater latitude to the laws granting divorce, not that they do not believe it would be a just and rational proceeding based upon sound philosophy and good sense; but because they have no confidence in humanity. Were separations easily effected they fear that mankind would be prone to try the experiment of a new partner oftener than would be exactly proper. They seem to lose sight of the fact, that we are regulated in these matters by immutable laws and principles that render a mutual separation out of the question where two are properly joined.

Before entering fully upon this subject, it may perhaps, be well to glance at the institution of marriage and the marriage ceremony, in order to discover if possible upon what they are based, and what claim they have to divine authority. True marriage is the union of two souls effected through the laws of spiritual affinity; the perfect blending of two congenial spirits. In other words:

"Two souls with but a single thought;
Two hearts that beat as one."

That is marriage, and nothing else can be. God ordained it and sanctified it. He planted in our souls unchangeable laws by which we should be regulated in these relations. He who attempts by forms and ceremonies to join what God hath not joined, or to set bounds to the human soul, arrogates to himself the power and authority of Jehovah who will not hold him guiltless for his temerity.

What are marriage ceremonies?

The devices of man to compel two human beings to dwell together, whether it is for their happiness to do so or not. For is it not prescribed that before they can be pronounced husband and wife, they shall solemnly promise before witnesses to love and cherish each other till death? And that, before they can dissolve this union, they must produce, what in the eyes of the law, is a good and sufficient plea for a divorce? Death alone relieves them of their obligation in the eyes of the Church, except in the solitary case of adultery. And who shall pretend to say how many have been driven to that extremity, in the hope of obtaining a release from their vows? The marriage ceremony is regarded as an act of recognition by the law, of the propriety of two persons of the opposite sex assuming the responsibility of husband and wife. Thus far it is well enough, and no farther. But has it any claim to Divine origin? If not, what is the nature of the obligations it imposes, and how far are we bound to respect them?

Before proceeding farther, let it be distinctly

understood that no authority whatever shall be respected, but the laws of God implanted in our nature; and if in the investigation it shall be discovered that the laws of man conflict with the laws of God, they shall unhesitatingly be set aside as naught. Some may enquire if it is proposed to discard biblical authority altogether, to whom it is answered that man's organism is his Scripture. There are no laws recorded in the Bible possessing the least shadow of a claim to divine origin, that are not found inscribed in the soul of man.—Divine revelation is but the history of man's spiritual unfolding: all else is but profane history full of the conceits of man; an inextricable mass of truth and fiction prefaced with a "thus saith the Lord," to silence all enquiry with respect to its authority. But to resume—what claims has the marriage ceremony to divine origin? Admitting the Bible as authority, what evidence have we that God authorized a marriage ceremony?

"And the Lord God said, it is not good for man to be alone. I will make an helpmeet for him." Which he did by causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, from whose side he took a rib, and fashioned thereof a woman.

That was all. He did not request them to join hands whilst he performed a ceremony over them. He created in them attractions proportional to their destiny and left them to themselves, and it was enough, for he that created them, "doeth all things well."

They had no form of marriage in the primitive ages, in the days of the Patriarchs. There were no obligations imposed by either priest or magistrate in those days, but the man simply took the woman of his choice to wife without form or ceremony, and it is not until a comparatively late period in the Jewish history, that we have any account of marriage rites, nor do I think it can be found where God directly, or indirectly authorized a peculiar form of marriage ceremony. That being true, the religious obligation falls to the ground, and we are left to deal with the subject in a moral point of view. Marriage, then, is only a civil contract in which the contracting parties, being a man and a woman, agree to love and cherish each other to the end of their natural lives, but how many there are who have promised more than they are able to perform! For such the law has made no provision. What are we to do in that case?

Let us now examine the nature of the moral obligation involved in this contract. The man solemnly promises to love and cherish the woman, and she in turn promises the same toward him. So after all they are only bound by their promises made before witnesses. Now the question arises, how far are these promises binding?

Obedience to the laws of the land is a moral obligation if those laws are just. If they are not, we are not morally bound to observe them. To be sure we can be compelled to observe a law that is in force, whether just or unjust it matters not a whit. A proper regard for the feelings and wishes of those around us, is a moral obligation so long as we violate no principle of our being. An oath, a vow or a promise I hold to be one and the same, and are only binding so far as they are made in good faith, and the performance of which will involve no violation of the laws and principles implanted in our constitution. It matters not whether we vow to do a thing or promise to do it so long as we feel it a duty, and we should observe one as quickly as the other. But if we either vow or promise ignorantly and afterwards discover the performance involves the violation of those laws and principles inherent in our nature, the faithful obedience to which is actually necessary to happiness, we are no longer bound. An oath or a vow is as binding in one case as another (if there

be any virtue in them at all, which I do not believe,) and if I were to swear to take a man's life, it would be as binding as though I were to swear to honor and esteem him, so far as the virtue of the oath itself is concerned. The former, all theologians will admit is not binding, and the latter I assert is binding no farther than he merits my honor and esteem. And this is equally true of marriage vows and promises so far as the moral obligation is concerned.

Having shown that we cannot be morally or religiously bound to perform either vows or promises made in ignorance, which involves the violation of those higher laws instituted by the Creator for our happiness, we are left to deal only with the restraints of the law. The law which does not allow dissatisfied parties bound in wedlock to love where their attractions impel them, and enjoy the full fruition of that love without a divorce, which it (the law) will not grant on any plea within their power to bring, is manifestly unjust. A law to be just should be founded on some inherent principle or necessity of our nature and should be so adjusted as not to interfere in its operations with any other requirement of our being. Such is not the case with the laws regulating divorce. In some parts of the world it is required by law that you shall commit a crime before a bill of divorce can be granted. And in all cases and in all places it is a more difficult matter to obtain one than it should be. But "the law's delay" and injustice, the vexation and expense of obtaining a divorce are not the worst features of the case. Contumely is heaped upon the poor unfortunates who thus seek to be relieved from the misery of an ill-assorted marriage—they are traduced, reviled, shunned, and by those, too, who are alike unhappily circumstanced, and from whom they have a right to expect sympathy and countenance. An inharmonious union is the most soul destroying of all earthly conditions, and against those who are so unfortunate as to enter into such a one, the doors of happiness are forever closed, bolted and barred by the State and the Church. Escape is out of the question except through the most tedious and trying process, and by running a theological and social gauntlet. The affections soon become withered and the soul a barren waste with not one green spot around which to twine a fond remembrance. To call it a union is a misnomer. It is no union. Oil and water do not mix. Their particles may be made to penetrate by shaking, but they never unite of their own accord. So two beings between whom there is no true affinity never unite. They may force themselves into a nominal union, but their souls never blend. They have nothing in common. They do not respond, because they cannot, to each others affectional nature, consequently they cannot be happy. It is impossible to be happy unless the longings of our soul for companionship and love are fully responded to. It may be possible for us to so chain and smother the emotions of the heart as to live along perhaps contentedly, but we cannot be happy in the truest and holiest sense of the term—and more, there will be times when the soul will rise up in spite of us. There will be times, let things be ever so well ordered, when the soul will catch glimpses of a happier condition which it feels that in justice belongs to it. Then will the shallowness of its vaunted contentment become painfully manifest. The mantle of self-deception in which it had enveloped itself falls to the ground and the long pent up fires of affection blaze forth afresh only to sink it deeper and deeper into the hell of an unloving union.

Is it just that any human being should be so punished for having inconsiderately taken a false step? God in my soul answers—"No,"—every true heart in the land will enter its protest.

The above is no overdrawn or fancy sketch. It

is the experience of thousands and will continue to be until people are educated into a better knowledge of the laws of their being. Until then let there be, for God's sake, for the poor yearning soul's sake, some honorable means of escape for those who are thus unhappily situated. I do not wish to be understood as advocating the entire abrogation of the marriage ceremony. I only wish to see it modified so as to suit the necessities of the case. That we should appeal to society in some form to sanction our union is well. But for two beings to be so hemmed in by the requirement of the law that it is impossible for them to separate honorably, though they may be divorced spiritually, if ever united—is wrong, all wrong. G. W. S. Maquon, Ill.

THE BIBLE AND SPIRITUALISTS.

It is not strange that there should be some who quarrel with the Bible and denounce it as a mischief-making affair. For it has caused more bloodshed than any other one thing, during the last eighteen centuries. It has been the warrant and sign manual for the cruelest deeds that blacken the history of civilization. It sent hordes of Europeans to bleach their bones on every pathway to the land of Palestine. It has built the most infernal dungeons on earth, established the most inhuman tribunals, kindled the faggots and fires of persecution, and now divides into a multiplicity of hating, bigoted sects, the civilized world. But still we hold to the Bible, notwithstanding the perversions that it has suffered, and the wrongs it has been made to sustain. It is a great and good Book, abounding with wise sayings, spiritual facts and philosophy. We do not believe it to be the *plenum* of all moral and spiritual truth.

Nor does that collection of writings make any such claims for itself. Unfortunately for humanity and the Bible, sectarian teachers and theological Tyrants, have assumed that the Bible, made ages ago, is the record and source of all spiritual knowledge—and the inspiration for all time—the last will and testament of the Almighty, signed, sealed and delivered to the Priesthood. They tell us it is superior to reason—the only evidence of immortality, and the infallible guide of the human soul in its search after happiness, and to the regions of unfading glory.

Now we like the Bible for many reasons; for its sublime poetry, for its bold rebuke and strong encouragement; for its noble truths and divine precepts; for its far-seeing prophecy and inspiration; for its history of the prophets and apostles and of Jesus. We love it for the much good it contains; but we cannot accept the Bible as the spiritual almanac, containing all the religious and spiritual facts and calculations for all time and eternity.—We cannot receive it as the Horoscope of creation's destiny—the programme of all time—the test and measure of all truth, and the last communication from Heaven to Earth. We could just as easily adopt the rude theories of astronomy held by the Egyptians or Chaldeans as the guide and *plenum* of all astronomical truth for all time as to receive the Bible as the Perfection of Divine Wisdom, and the whole plan of the Divine economy. We should as soon think of sweeping the Siderial Heavens with an opera glass, as to think to become acquainted with all the works and ways of Deity by studying the Bible only. Instead of making it an idol, as many do, we would take from it all the good we can find and leave the bad, the erroneous and useless, to rot in forgotten heaps. Instead of making it the master of Reason and tyrant of the soul, we would try it by the same test that we would all other books.

We know there are falsehoods in it—that there are errors inculcated by it. Some of its con-

tents are indecent, some of its requirements and laws are diabolical and savage. Still we know it contains lofty and Heaven-born truths. Some of its pages are vocal with the accents of heaven, and utterances of the spirit world. We would hold fast that which is good—and we *individually* must judge for ourselves, *what* and how *much* is good.

Will any one contend that there is nothing in it but what is good? We think not. Therefore we accept the Bible for all that it is worth, all the good it contains. G.

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

NEW PUBLICATION.

DEAR CHILDREN.—I have just published a book for you entitled "SKETCHES FROM NATURE." The book contains thirty-nine sketches—mostly of Nature's sweet human buds. I will print the preface—a letter to Flora Louisa Turner—that you may know why I have written the book.

The price in plain binding is 37 cts.—in half gilt 50 cts.—in full gilt 60 cts. If any of you will send me two dollars, I will send you five of the Sketches, you paying the transportation. One little girl has already found sale for ten copies which will entitle her to twelve books. Send your orders to the Editor of the Agitator.

FRANCES BROWN.

TO FLORA LOUISA TURNER:

I have been thinking, dear Flora, that after reading the following Sketches you will say, "I wonder why Aunt Frances wrote all these long and short stories!" Others may ask the same. But none can answer the question so well as I can. I shall, therefore, tell you why I have written them and let you tell those who read the "Sketches."

Well, darling, I had several reasons for writing these simple tales of every day life. One reason is, many of them are girlhood memories. I love to write them because they bring back so many pleasant scenes, and dear, sweet faces. I seem to see—while writing of bygone things—my father, in his prime, my gentle mother, with my blue-eyed baby-brother on her knee. I know they have all gone to the "Greenwood of soul," but I think the death stream must be bridged, or I should not see them as I do.

But I have another reason for writing the "Sketches." Children read stories; they want to know something of the great world, and so they go to books for information. But many things are written for young people that they should never read—frightful stories that make them sorrowful instead of happy.

Some very good people think children have wicked hearts, and that our Heavenly Father does not love them. You try to be good, try to love and please the dear God-Father, but you shrink at the very thought of reaching forth your helpless hands to His. Children are blessed buds upon the Life-tree, but they want the love-shine and the heart-dew, else they will wither and die, as die the May rose-buds when blasted by the icy breath of the Frost-King.

I have thought, ever since I could think, that a book might be written for you, and such as you, that would help you to see "Our Father in Heaven" as he is,—a gentle, loving God—a book that would make this beautiful earth brighter, heaven nearer, the child-heart happier and wiser. I have attempted to write such book. How well I have succeeded the reader will judge.

Thine in love,

FRANCES BROWN.

MY DEAR CHILDREN—I saw a notice in the Agitator calling for reading matter for you. I have a story I want to tell you—a *true* story.

In our little village we had a beautiful flower that every one loved. It had bloomed nine summers and every summer added to its beauty and perfection. A few days ago it began to wither and droop, but it did not droop unnoticed; a spirit gardener from a better world saw it fading, and bore

it gently away to a more genial soil, where there are no rough winds or blighting storms.

That little flower was Ida Pierce, our village pet. Do you know why every body loved her? It was because she was good and loved everybody. She always seemed like a little angel, straying from its heavenly band, and now they have found her, and taken her to their home in the spirit world.

Her little playmates will often think of her and I hope they will try to be like her.

Just as the sun was shedding its last golden rays over the earth, that little form was laid in its narrow home.

Thirty or forty little boys and girls, Ida's school-mates, stood around her grave, accompanied by their teacher and sang:

"Around the throne of God in Heaven,
Thousands of little children stand,
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy happy band.

In flowing robes of spotless white
See every one arrayed,
Dwelling in everlasting light
And joys that never fade."

As their sweet voices vibrated on the air at that hour when all was hushed and still, it sounded solemn yet beautiful; was not her angel voice accompanying them, though unheard by us?

Ida, her mother says, never told a lie, and never went to bed without saying her prayers, and she was so careful about taking anything that did not belong to her that she would not even taste of anything that belonged to her brother or sister till her mother had satisfied her it was right, and not stealing. She loved her mother dearly, would never leave her for school without a kiss, and would often ask her to go to the neighbors and stay while she was gone, for fear she would be lonesome. But sweet Ida is gone. Shall I ever find another as good? Methinks I hear you all say, "I will try to be as good as Ida." AUNT SARAH.

Thank you, "Aunt Sarah" for the above sketch.—*Ed. Agitator.*

A lady named Temple, who is well known in the fashionable regions of Belgravia has discovered a remedy for stuttering. It is simply the act of reading in a whisper, and gradually augmenting the whisper to a louder tone.—*London Paper.*

A METHODIST MINISTER COME OUT.—Mr Paine, Wesleyan minister, was tried in Greenboro, Henry Co., before a committee of the Wesleyan church, for "preaching unchristian doctrines, contrary to the Wesleyan discipline and the word of God." The specifications—disbelief in a personal devil, disbelief in the divinity of Christ, resurrection of the material body, and endless punishment. He admitted the charges to be true, with the exception that he believed in the divinity of ALL men, Christ included. He was suspended.

In these charges the 'Word of God' is made secondary to the Wesleyan discipline, and the devil a sort of DEADHEAD in the Godhead.—*Vanguard.*

DEATH FROM SLANDER.—A young lady, in Newport, Maine, lately destroyed herself, having been driven to desperation by cruel slander upon her character. The assailants of character are not less criminal than those who attack the lives of their victims. Human tribunals may not reach those who drove this poor girl to death, but the stings of conscience will avenge her.—*Providence Journal.*

HUMBOLDT'S PREDICTION.—The great philosopher Humboldt, it is said, has predicted that his own death will take place in 1859, and he has suggested that a certain publication of his works should be postponed till that time.—*Spiritual Age.*

VITAL RELIGION.—It is a great deal easier to repeat "a whole liturgy of prayers" than to govern one's temper, overcome a bad habit, and resist the constantly recurring temptations to self-indulgence. It is a great deal easier to *feel* good than to *be* good. It is easier to get up an incoherent fervor of mind than calmly and steadily to pursue the even way of our ordinary duties. To go to church and be excited by solemn music, and to lose one's self in vague emotions,—how much more agreeable is this than to stay at home, and amidst the hurry and discord of daily returning trials, to maintain a quiet and cheerful mind.

Before marriage the man is very much struck with the woman, and afterwards the woman is very much struck by the man. Punch says it is a striking business all through.

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