



DEVOTED TO RATIONAL SPIRITUALISM AND PRACTICAL REFORM.

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Practical Reform.

[Reported for the Spiritual Age.] WOMAN'S PART IN REFORM.

For many hundred years the noblest hearts and loftiest intellects of mankind lived in a splendid dream. They dreamed that among the hidden things of Nature lay a substance so potent and benific, as to charm away poverty, pain, disease, and death itself.

Like them our noblest men and women have also dreamed a glorious dream. It was no philosopher's stone, no fabled elixir of life, they sought to wrest from Nature; but they dreamed that in the infinite beneficence of God a living idea, prolific with benedictions, existed, which could arm the pure heart with power to heal the nations.

I cannot believe that God made such men and women in vain. I cannot believe that such glorious hopes are never to be realized. I do not believe that social evil is eternal and incurable.

[After this exordium the speaker proceeded to show the evils which arise from human selfishness. He depicted selfishness in its five different forms of manifestation—national, ecclesiastical, commercial, social and domestic—the last of which he deemed the worst of all.]

Here—while considering domestic selfishness—at once arises the true method and universal means of hastening all reforms. Here you for the first time lay healing hands upon the great sympathetic nerve of society.

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These are, 1st, Putting justice into the law; 2d, The establishment of true marriage; 3d, The abolition of prostitution—an ugly word, which I shall use but once.

Justice will be put into the law in consequence of a new theory of crime. We make our amendments now after one theory, while our law is founded on another. It is sometimes asked with great simplicity, why law should hang a man, if its object is to reform offenders?

When that time comes, do you think that men will pine away in jail for costs they couldn't pay if they were out? Do you believe that men and women who know the name of God only to swear by—who were brought up to be thieves and taught to steal as other children are taught to read—will be fastened in solitary chambers and starved and whipped like dogs into submission?

There is another principle of the law, of very great importance, which should be revised, I think. It is the principle that by marriage the wife's identity is lost in that of the husband. The consequences are very momentous, and meet you at every turn.

Next will follow the establishment of a true marriage. The freedom of woman will redress the greatest wrong of man—that wrong he now suffers in his relation of husband. Until he fills this relation with one wife, and in true marriage, he is a male, not a man.

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He learns in the conflict of his fellows to know and care for the great principles which dignify life. He is full of its difficulties, its sympathies and rewards. She cannot follow her husband; it is indelicate; it is improper; it is beyond her sphere.

Pious people who are very regular in their lives, and who have always been pious and regular, have great and just weight in society, in consequence of this very steadiness. Their observations are listened to with a respect which is derived, not from the justice of the observation, but from the respectability of the speaker.

Yes, the vice of cities can and will be cured—but not by moral reform societies. They are very respectable organizations, and do much good—but you will see them cheek public vice about the time that you see yourself reducing the flow of Niagara with a large and very bright tin pan.

So will our heaven-suggested cause reduce this murderous social fall, whose every dizzy drop is a once innocent human soul. So shall independent woman open for her sex new channels of happy, harmonious existence.

Nothing is more sublime than Humility; for it stands exalted above everything around it, and never attempts to soar higher.—Augustine.

Your goodness must have some edge to it, else it is none.—Emerson.

TRINITAS.

By JOHN G. WHITTIER. At morn I prayed: "I fain would see How Three are One, and One is Three; Read the dark riddle unto me."

I wandered forth; the sun and air I saw bestowed with equal care On good and evil, foul and fair.

No partial favor dropped the rain; Alike the righteous and profane Rejoiced above their bending grain.

And my heart murmured: "Is it meet That blindfold Nature thus should treat With equal hand the tares and wheat?"

A presence melted through my mood, A warmth, a light, a sense of good, Like sunshine through a winter wood.

I saw that presence, mailed complete In her white innocence, pause to greet A fallen sister of the street.

"Beware!" I said, "in this I see No gain to her, but loss to thee; Who touches pitch defiled must be."

I passed the haunts of shame and sin, And a voice whispered: "Who therein Shall these lost souls to Heaven's peace win?"

"Who there shall hope and strength dispense, And lift the ladder up from thence, Whose rounds are prayers of penitence?"

I said: "No higher life they know; These earth-worms love to have it so. Who stoops to raise them, sinks as low."

That night with painful care I read What Hippo's saint and Calvin said— The living seeking to the dead!

In vain I turned in weary quest Old pages, where, (God give them rest!) The poor creed-mongers dreamed and guessed.

And still I prayed: "Lord let me see How Three are One, and One is Three; Read the dark riddle unto me!"

Then something whispered: "Dost thou pray For what thou hast? This very day, The Holy Three have crossed thy way."

"Did not the gifts of sun and air To good and ill alike, declare The all-compassionate Father's care?"

"In the white soul that stooped to raise The lost one from her evil ways, Thou saw'st the Christ whom angels praise."

A bodiless Divinity, The still, small Voice that spake to thee Was the Holy Spirit's mystery!

"Oh, blind of sight, of faith how small! Father and Son and Holy Call— This day thou hadst denied them all!"

"Revealed in love and sacrifice, The Holiest passed before thine eyes, One and the same, in threefold guise."

"The equal Father in rain and sun, His Christ in the good to evil done, His voice in thy soul—and the Three are One."

I shut my grave Aquinas fast, The monkish gloss of ages past, The Schoolman's creed aside I cast.

And my heart answered: "Lord, I see How Three are One, and One is Three; Thy riddle hath been read to me!"

REFORMERS.

It is delightful to remember that there have been men who, in the cause of truth and virtue, have made no compromises for their own advantage or safety; who have recognized "the hardest duty as the highest;" who, conscious of the possession of great talents, have relinquished all the praise that was within their grasp, all the applause which they might have so liberally received, if they had not thrown themselves in opposition to the errors and vices of their fellow men, and have been content to take obloquy and insult instead; who have approached to lay on the altar of God "their best infirmity." They, without doubt, have felt that deep conviction of having acted right which supported the martyred philosopher of Athens, when he asked, "What disgrace is it to me if others are unable to judge of me, or to treat me as they ought?"

There is something very solemn and sublime in the feeling produced by considering how differently these men have been estimated by their contemporaries, from the manner in which they are regarded by God. We perceive the appeal which lies in the ignorance, the folly and the iniquity of man, to the throne of Eternal Justice.

DEFECTIVE POPULAR RELIGION.

The N. Y. Independent thus speaks on the religious manifestations of the present day; and yet fondly hopes that the church and world are gradually but surely emerging into a period of universal holiness, but in which men will still be subject to the curse and death:—

It should not be set down as certainly consoling, when inquiry is made concerning the present state of religion, if far more glaring defects are found than many have supposed to exist. The Rev. John Angell James writes concerning the present condition of things, as follows: "What is the present spiritual condition of the great bulk of the professors of religion? Amidst much that is cheering, there is, on the other hand, much that is discouraging and distressing to the more pious observer. We behold a strange combination of seal and worldly-mindedness; great activity for the extension of religion in the earth, united with lamentable indifference to the state of religion in the soul; in short, apparent vigor in the extremities, with a growing torpor at the heart."

Mr. James is a Congregationalist. The Rev. J. C. Ryle, a distinguished preacher and author of the English Established Church, says upon the same subject: "Surely no man with his eyes open can fail to see that the Christianity of the New Testament is something far higher and deeper than the Christianity of most professing Christians. That formal, easy-going, do-little thing, which most people call religion, is evidently not the religion of the Lord Jesus."—A Word to Churchmen, p. 22.

"But these," it may be said, "are English writers; they do not describe the piety that prevails in this country." Turn then to testimony from American writers. In a work recently published by the "Congregational Board of Publication," entitled "Primitive Piety Revived," being a prize essay written by Rev. Henry C. Fish, of the Baptist church, and to whom was awarded the premium by Drs. Humphrey, Ide, and Harvey—in that book of such sanction, we find the bold, accusing statement, emphatically made, that "the piety of the present day has widely degenerated from the divine standard."

Dr. Jones, of the Methodist church of this country, says: "A holy church would soon make a holy world. If the church were without wrinkle, or any such thing, her light could not be hid. When the church puts on her entire strength, her influence must be triumphant in the world. When her hearts, and hands, and means, and influences, are all devoted to God and his cause, her aggressive movements will be mighty, will be world-saving."—Christian Purity, Foster, p. 10.

The late Dr. Olin, of the same church, speaking of the young men of the present age, has left behind him the following reproof: "The church is now barely able to hold its ground against the opposing forces of sin and error, or to advance a tardy step to future triumphs; and if it is to be recreated and reinforced by such members and ministers only as already wield its destinies, it must remain in essentially the same condition, while the accession of even a few persons of deeper piety and stronger faith, and larger views, might sweep away the obstacles that retard its progress, and open a career of unexampled success."

Dr. Wayland, in his noted discourse on "The Apostolic Ministry," has the following: "But what is the condition of our churches of all denominations at this critical moment? The disciples of Christ seem to be fast losing the distinctive marks of their profession. Self-denial for the cause of the Redeemer will soon become the exception, rather than the rule. In large districts of our country, the admissions to the churches are not as numerous as the removals by death. In the meantime, the number of candidates for the ministry is diminishing in all denominations, not only relatively, but absolutely. Nay, it is diminishing more rapidly than the figures indicate, for of the reputed number of candidates a considerable portion never enter the ministry; and of those who enter it, a greater and greater number are annually leaving it for other pursuits."

The late lamented Dr. Harris, of England, has left, as a part of his legacy to the people of God, these impressive words, "The church itself requirerth conversion." The noted missionary, Kincaid exclaims, "To the great Head of the Church we must look for a new order of men—men just as absorbed in winning souls to Christ as worldlings are in gathering gold." This is testimony enough. No faithful Christian will, on the whole, wish to dispute it. No intelligent person will dare to do it.

Our own duties are next us; other men's farther off.





