

THE NEW VERSION.

LECTURES BY GEORGE CHAINEY.

Presentiment of better things on earth
Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls
To admiration, self-renouncing love,
Or thoughts like light that bind the world in one,—
Sweeps like the sense of vastness, when at night
We hear the roll and dash of waves that break
Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide,
Which rises to the level of the cliff;
Because the wide Atlantic rolls behind,
Throbbing respondent to far-off orbs.

GEORGE ELIOT.

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Walter C Wright
from his friend
Geo Chaine

AS A preface to this book, I recommend all my readers to read the Bible. I ask no other apology nor justification for what I have said in the following pages.

P.S.—To those who do not understand the head lines over the last six lectures, the following explanation is necessary. They were first printed in *This World*, a weekly paper published by the author and stereotyped as issued. The present edition of the New Version was all printed before the character of the heading was discovered.

THE NEW VERSION.

I WANT you all to know at once that I haven't read it. If you want to know the reason why, there are several to me very good ones. First, I long ago lost all interest in the proper reading of texts of Scripture. When I commenced to preach, I was very particular on this point. Besides a Bible, I had a Bible analysis, a Bible concordance, a Bible history, a Bible hand-book, a Bible looking-glass, and several sets of commentaries. But, after a good deal of study, headache, and heartache, I found that the concordance only increased my difficulty, that the analysis cast a shadow over the looking-glass, the hand-book contradicted the history, and the commentaries all skipped over the hard points, until, vexed with the whole business, I gave it up, sold them out for about their value in waste paper, and got the best of the bargain. Second, I have found by experience that I can spend my time to a far better advantage in reading Shakspeare or in studying out the proper meaning of some chapter in the newer testament of science. Third, I experience far keener pleasure in reading some good novel that portrays real human passion, love or ambition, than I ever did or could in a book that is in every chapter false to reason, nature, and life. If the New Testament had been compelled to stand or fall by its own merits, it would never have reached a second edition, much more a revision. It is neither reasonable, consistent, truthful, poetical, nor pathetic. To the perfectly free mind, it is a jumble of

absurdities and contradictions. Its arguments are based on nothing and come to nothing. Its promises are drawn on a bank that never has cashed the first one. Its principles are impractical and unnatural. Its historical statements are nearly every one of them proved lies made out of whole cloth. Its doctrines have caused more pain and shed more blood than all the other misfortunes of humanity combined. The only possible value it could be to mankind is destroyed by the doctrine of its inspiration. But, while I care neither for new nor old version, yet I do most earnestly regret the harm they do in maintaining idolatry, ignorance, and superstition, and welcome with eager delight everything calculated to destroy this evil influence. Perhaps no event of the nineteenth century will accomplish so much in this direction as "The New Version." As Colonel Ingersoll says, "This is the beginning of the end." The veil of mystery has been rent in twain, and the holy of holies exposed to the gaze of the people. By this suicidal folly of the actors in this drama, the audience has been introduced behind the scenes, and the play is no longer of interest. The sawdust with which the idol is stuffed has been revealed. The hollow pipes through which the priests spoke are discovered, and, as of old, the mystic oracle will be no longer believed. The principal supporters of the Church are the simple and sincere-minded men and women, who have through ignorance continued to believe its claims. For the first time in

their lives, they have questioned the truth of the Bible.

To their unsophisticated minds, this business is seen in a far different light than by ambitious theologians desirous of increasing their income and glory by a place on the translators' staff. Hitherto, they have really believed the Bible from the first verse in Genesis to the last in Revelations. They supposed that God was the author. The idea that he had left the proof-reading to fallible man had never entered their heads. But now every one is familiar with the fact that there are thousands of different readings that can only be settled by majority vote. They cannot but reflect that, if these men can change it to-day, other men may do so again to-morrow. On finding what were to them some of the sublime passages left out, they will naturally ask themselves, "If man composed these, why may he not be the author of it all?" The Bible in many a house, regarded in the light of a fetich, will lose much of its sacred character when the revealing light of the new version falls on it. This new version will also set thousands of people to reading the Bible. The reason why many think so much of this book is because they never read it. They have imagined that all the good, true, and beautiful things the ministers find in it are really there. By reading it for themselves, they will discover the deception. I think that, if any one would read the Bible for the purpose of deciding the question of its divinity, they would find a verdict against it long before reaching the New Testament.

The Catholic Church obeys the law of self-preservation by withholding the Bible from the laity. The Pope knows better than to countenance a new version. The friends of humanity can congratulate themselves that Protestantism likes the taste of the poison that will destroy it.

The new version also reminds us by comparison of the unprofitable nature of the Church. The world is asking for bread, but it gives it a stone. How pitiful is it to see

the time and millions of money thrown away in trying to correct the mistakes in punctuation, spelling, and wording of former translators! Thousands, yea, millions, are waking up to the fact that it is not the right rendering of one or forty texts of Scripture, but rather the meaning of poverty, disease, crime, ignorance, and misery, that concerns us to-day. The only good accomplished by the new version was unintended. They never expected their work to change the meaning of the Bible in any important particular. If there had been any idea that the new version would destroy the doctrines of the trinity, total depravity, atonement, or eternal punishment, it would never have been commenced. The Church has never grappled with any radical, essential change in society. Every struggle against real wrongs, inverted readings of the true scriptures of nature, has taken place without the Church. It shrinks from all but unimportant changes, such as the altering of a word or a comma, that leaves the meaning still the same as before. If there are any real defects in society to-day, the Church will do its best to preserve them. The new version will also do good, because one improvement always makes way for another. It often happens that some one undertakes to patch up an old house, and ends with pulling the whole thing down and building a new one. So we hope that all this tinkering will result in like destruction, and prepare the way for a new version of the Bible that will be something far different than the present farce.

This true version will make no pretence to divine authorship. It will take its place in the world of literature on the same terms as any other book. It will ask nor receive no favors. Instead of demanding our service, it will seek to serve us. It will honor the mind of man by bidding him sift the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false, the moral from the immoral, to keep the good and throw away the bad. The present idea and version of the Bible is responsible for much of the moral perversity

sion of mankind. On almost every page, we are made through its method of interpretation to call evil good, and good evil. Its Satan is more worthy of our worship than its Jehovah. Esau, the brave and honorable, is cursed and hated; while Jacob, the coward and scamp, is blessed and loved. Solomon, the greatest fool that ever lived, is pronounced the wisest man. Similar moral inversions are found all through the book.

When we read the Bible backwards, we may get some good out of it. *This new version* will frankly acknowledge that it is utterly unreliable from an historical stand-point. Its chronology will no longer make it ridiculous to the merest tyro in science. We shall cease looking for the gold of Ophir, and leave off searching for the garden of Eden. This version, instead of asking that science be forced into conformity with it, will rather seek to conform with the demands of science. Moses and Darwin will shake hands and be at peace. Joshua and Proctor will embrace, and fight together the battles of truth. Geology will prosper without the help of Genesis, while the naturalist will cease trying to rival Noah as a collector. This new version will also escape being worshipped as a fetich. No one will prefer it to a life-preserver in a shipwreck. A starving man will no longer be advised to satisfy his hunger with the Bread of Life or Word of God. Men and women will no more use its words with which to curse each other nor to build high walls of caste and separation that are destructive of all humanity. It will no longer be resorted to as an arsenal of weapons with which to defend and maintain every wrong inherited from the barbarous past as of divine origin. While the old version has brooded over the mind of man like a pall of darkness, and held him fast in the strong dungeon of despair, this new one will be the star of hope and angel of progress. In short, it will be the first time the Bible will be of any real value to the world. For, when we escape from this idea of its inspiration and superiority to all other books, we shall find it, like the religious writings of

Greece and Rome, a storehouse of beautiful allegory with which to adorn our thought. We are apt in this earnest struggle of reason against the tyranny of tradition to lose sight of the value and importance of the imagination. But the probability is that we shall always remain more under the control of our feelings than our judgment. Scarcely a day passes in which we do not perform some act which reason condemns, simply because we felt like it.

In the deliberations of justice and the establishment of social equity, reason ought to be the only lawgiver. But, when the relation of man to man is adjusted according to the most perfect justice, the actual realization thereof will depend very largely upon the influences that are brought to bear upon our imaginations. The stories, songs, traditions, literature, music, and drama of any people are the principal part of the spiritual landscape that influences and moulds their character.

The ideals which we strive to realize, the pursuit of which lifts us above the monotony and humdrum of life, are undefinable. They are like bright, beautiful dreams, which, though we cannot remember, are in some way woven into the web of life. They stir us in some strain of a heroic song or beckon us onward when, through the influence of music or the drama, all that we have loved or hoped or feared or dreamed comes back to us, and like a strong wave lifts us in their arms and bears us triumphantly to deeper and richer life.

Call to your mind the impelling influences of your lives, and have they not been some great excitement or enthusiasm, some all-masterful love or friendship, that refused to listen to reason? Whatever you are to-day is owing far more to the influences that fed your imagination when a child, shaping your air castles and ambitions, your ideas of love, home, and country, than all the store of logical, scientific, historical, mathematical, and moral precepts you committed to memory. Nothing should be so strictly watched by parents and lovers of humanity as the

sources of this stream of inspiration for good or ill. Bad laws and political corruption poison the life currents of society. But not near so much as the bad plays, the wretched music, the clownish songs, indecent pictures, and stories of society furnished by the *Police Gazette*, and a large portion of the juvenile papers that are sold on every news-stand, and so poison and debauch the feelings of our youth concerning love, friendship, and heroism. There are two great mistakes made here: first, the let-alone policy, leaving the boy or girl to read what they please; second, and still worse, the forcing plan, that compels total abstinence, or takes upon itself all responsibility of choice in the name of religion. This has been the moral and intellectual ruin of hundreds of thousands. The Church has done great harm in its hostility to reason. But the evil wrought here has been multiplied a hundred-fold in its opposition to art in painting and sculpture, in music, the drama, and romance. In our public schools, the imagination is starved and the memory crammed. We shall never truly educate until we provide for this element in human nature.

Now, the Bible has no value whatever, save as it relates to the imagination. It is neither reasonable nor true. Every attempt to verify its scientific or historical truth in these days is either born of hypocrisy or mental insanity. As long as the Church insists upon claiming for it divine authority and so remove it from all liability to error, it will be impossible for reason to protect the imagination from false and perverted moral judgments. Ignoble and cruel men will be held up as standards of nobility and humanity. False moral principles will be supported by their relation to the idea of infallibility. Freemans will continue to copy the example of Abraham and Jephthah. Rulers will pattern after David and Solomon, Ministers of religion imitate Samuel in his priestly conspiracy against Saul, Reformers follow Jesus, and, instead of seeking to establish a just state,

devote themselves to the saving of a few.

Universal love will be considered superior to universal justice, and the principles of non-resistance and resignation to wrong better than heroic battling against it. All this I know is mere generalization and statement without proof. But this lecture to-day is only the prosaic introduction to a series, in which I shall endeavor to correct some of these moral inversions, and at the same time show how the prominent features of the Bible, when freed from the idea of inspiration, will be of real service to humanity. After all has been said about our unbelief, I believe that it remains for the Liberals to make the Bible a source of profit and pleasure to the world. To do this, we must effectually destroy the idea of its inspiration; for it is this alone that is responsible for its evil influence. If it were a thousand times better than it is, this would make it a curse instead of a blessing.

Next to the God idea, this one—that in this book we have the word of God—is the main support of all superstition. The best men in the Church are already at work against this. Some of the ablest scholars of the age have devoted themselves to the study of this problem. Though some of them seem to think that the Church and religion will endure when the Bible is compelled to be tried by the same rules with which we judge other books, they are reckoning without their host. Supernatural religion stands or falls with the inspiration of the Scriptures. Still, when this idea of the Bible is gone, the Bible will remain and no good in it need be lost. While the new version of reason will find much in it that is false, crude, immoral, and barbarous, yet, when they are no longer clothed with divinity, they will do us no harm, while the good as belonging to humanity will shine in brighter radiance. We shall read it with that tender and poetical interest a man sometimes feels when going over the scenes of his childhood. For the Bible is the production of the world's childhood. It was

written when reason was undeveloped, art in its cradle, and science unborn.

When we put ourselves in their place, think and feel with them, we shall readily understand the Bible. To their thought, the sky was a solid arch, a firmament, only a short distance above them, upon whose jewelled floors lived angels and gods. These sometimes descended from above and married the daughters of men. To their minds, every remarkable man was the offspring of such a union; while every unlooked-for and mysterious event was ascribed to one of these celestial visitants. When it rained, God opened the windows of heaven; or, if it thundered, it was but the rumbling of his chariot. In this, we shall learn to love and admire the real gods of that time, the noble men and women who move across these pages in company with many ignoble ones. The earnestness of the old prophets, proclaiming the eternal righteousness, will be to us a great incentive to moral action. Again, the dew of youth will breathe its perfume and beauty over human life. Instead of being the dull, stupid slaves of a creed, we will be free to ask for ourselves the great questions of life and duty. Whence am I? Whither am I going? What shall I do? What is beyond the shining heavens, lit by the sun by day and moon and stars by night? What is life? Is it a reality or a dream? What is this struggle in my breast between what I ought and what I would?

Though we shall interrogate nature and reason for light on the pathway of life, yet every earnest-hearted man or woman will love and honor all who like earnestly have vainly questioned the skies. Whether we find food for thought or imagination in the Bible or not will make but little difference, so long as we are but removed from its authority. Men lived nobly, grandly devoted to truth and justice, before the Bible was written, and will do so without so much as hearing of its existence. The power of this book to inspire and interest any one is owing to the fact that those who wrote it were intellectually free, and did seek for

themselves the answer to the problem of life. Once get rid of this idea that it is all settled for us in the Bible by Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul, and human life will become at once more earnest and strong, rich and full. It will be bathed in the perpetual dew of youth. Music and the drama, romance and poetry, will be reborn. Imagination, freed from its cage of iron dogmas, will, like a lark, soar aloft and sing its own sweet, wild song. Wonder, no longer quenched by Omnipotence, will find food in every flower and star. Love, freed from the stigma placed upon it by the Scriptures, will rise into purer and loftier heights.

As the spirit of humanity takes possession of us, comradeship closer than that of David and Jonathan will become the rule rather than the exception. Patriotism under the influence of true democracy will be changed from partisanship into a universal enthusiasm for humanity. The true children of genius will become the ministers of religion, while every theatre and school-house will be a church in which all the sentiments of the heart will be nurtured into fairest beauty. I am hopeful for the future of humanity, because I see that those who are to-day creating the food of imagination are freed from the cold, hard, repulsive creeds and dogmas of the Church. Genius is ever the true regenerator of mankind. In so far as Christianity has been of service to the world, it is owing to the fact that behind all the narrow, dogmatic interpretations of the Church we catch glimpses of a lofty spirit, glowing with the fires of true genius, and so feel beating against ours a heart that was susceptible to all the sweet, poetical influences of nature. For the Christ created by the Church, the second person of a divine trinity, removed from us by the power of omnipotence, we have neither sympathy nor respect.

But our imaginations cling lovingly around the man Jesus, the hater of formalism and hypocrisy, refusing to submit to the scribes and priests, going into the wilderness to think over and solve for himself the mean-

ing of life, finding a sermon in the grass of the field or in the lilies by the wayside, and loving to escape into the solitude of a mountain height, and beneath the silent stars commune with his own heart. Any version of the New Testament that would deliver us from the Christ and enable us to know and understand Jesus as a man, encompassed by the same limitations and thrilled with the same emotions as we are, would be of great service to us. As Liberals, we have a great work in this direction. The complaint is constantly made against us that our destruction and denial include all that feeds the heart or gives room for the flight of imagination.

But nothing is further from the truth than this. The best music, literature, poesy, and art are outside of the Church. The true Bible is the best literature of our own time. Shakspeare and Shelley, George Eliot, and Walt Whitman are far more inspiring than the most eloquent of the Hebrew authors. Our libraries are full of books that contain more food for thought and feeling than the Scriptures,—books that paint for our love and admiration men and women who are self-consecrated to all that is true, good, or beautiful, without one thought that it is a duty they owe to God, that introduce us to the secrets of nature, and make us feel and appreciate its unspeakable beauty. Yea, have we not the telegraph and daily newspaper, the most wonderful productions of the nineteenth century, bringing to all minds and all hearts from every quarter of the globe all that can awaken thought and intensify feeling? How forcibly we felt this yesterday, when the sad and startling news that the President of this great Republic had been stricken down in broad daylight by the bullet of an assassin was flashed around the globe, and the same thought was in millions of minds in New York and Chicago, Boston and San Francisco, London and Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg!

An event like this concerns us far more than the assassination of the king of Palestine or even the execution of Jesus. The

swift indignation, the universal sympathy, the eager interest, and intense excitement are to us all eloquent with meaning.

President Garfield is looked upon as our representative, and each man feels as though the assault had been committed against himself. May not this be looked upon as prophetic of the time to come, when every man or woman shall be regarded as the representative of the whole of humanity? The time certainly ought to come when a similar crime against the humblest member of this Republic will awaken like intensity of feeling and compassion. Already the newspapers, under the excitement of this painful calamity, are calling for a reform that shall protect the President and Cabinet from the terrible evil of the spoils system of politics. But will the time not come when we shall become great and splendid, noble and humane enough to demand that every human being shall be protected from the assassins of ignorance, poverty, and vice? The instinct of self-preservation which, if let loose upon the insane creature who committed the rash act, would tear him to pieces, will yet, under the proper education in which the daily press will be one of the principal factors, bring about an adequate protection of the life, liberty, and happiness of all.

But this cannot be accomplished with our present treatment of criminals. We only return them to society from our prisons more brutal and inhuman than before. The true method is indicated by a demand for a reform of the civil service that shall make the collection at Washington of a needy, desperate crowd of political adventurers an impossibility. Remove the cause, and such legitimate results as the event of yesterday will go too. With such a condition of affairs, instead of wondering at this act of a desperate, insane wretch, we should rather wonder that it had not often happened before.

But far more than this reform do we need one that shall cover the education of both mind and heart of every child in the land. This event and the causes that led to it

are by no means to be compared to the assassination of the Czar of Russia. He had murdered during his reign fifty thousand men and women, with just as good a right to live as he had. The act was done by a party that has undertaken to free eighty millions of slaves from a bondage worse than death. President Garfield is but the servant of the people; and though the power intrusted in his hands, in the control of so many thousands of offices, is both dangerous to him and the Republic, yet under the constitution he is always amenable to the people. In this case, the deed was, in all probability, the rash act of a man whose mind has been crazed and heart deprived by vicious education and want.

With our present system of leaving the training of the imaginations and the hearts of the rising generation to chance or to orthodox Sunday-schools, where such ideas of justice as are involved in such stories as that of Ananias and Sapphira are regarded as divine, we shall, all of us, be more or less exposed to danger from the insane and inhuman victims of our neglect. As Liberals, we owe it to society to show in some practical way that when the mind and heart of man is emancipated from superstition and brought under the healthful influence of sound reason, natural sentiment, poesy, and art, crime becomes an impossibility.

NOTHING.

If this lecture amounts to nothing, I suppose you will excuse it on the consideration that it must be exceedingly hard work to talk an hour about nothing. I would also plead for indulgence on the ground that this is the first time I have resorted to this theme, while all the other preachers hold forth on it every Sunday. But, considering that this world, the sun, moon, and stars, were made out of nothing, there certainly ought to be a few fragments left from which to make one respectable lecture.

Some of you may have found it a little difficult to imagine what the study of nothing had to do with the study of the Bible. But the solemn fact is that the Bible is the text-book of the science of nothing.

It is doubtless on this account it is so easy to understand that a child, nay, even a fool, need not err therein. But, when one thinks of all the sects, the new versions and old versions, the commentators, each one of whom has written principally to deny some other interpretation, he is forced to the conclusion that "nothing" is an exceedingly indefinite quality and quantity.

The beginning of a book is almost sure to foreshadow the whole meaning of what is to follow. If you will take one of the plays of Shakespeare, you will find a forcible illustration of this principle. Take Hamlet, as an example: "Who's there?" This is from Bernardo to Francisco. He who should be challenged is the challenger, showing that Bernardo, on his way to relieve his comrade, is thinking of the ghostly visitant who had

already twice disturbed his watch. Thus in these two words, we have foreshadowed the mingling of the natural with the supernatural, the seen and unseen, that is responsible for the conflict in the mind of Hamlet between his own instincts and the duty he imagines imposed upon him by the dead. In the same way, the Bible opens to us in the first sentence the wrong conception of the universe that runs all through it, and is responsible for all the terrible religious conflicts that have drenched the fair fields of earth with blood, and made the history of Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, the three religions that have sprung out of it, the history of one long, enormous crime against humanity. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." This is the first troubled reflection in the mind of man, that foreshadowed the long and bloody war (that is by no means ended) between the rights of something and the *no* rights of nothing. In the beginning. Now, what does that mean but nothing? Who can imagine a beginning? How could there be a time when there was nothing? Even space is something that is infinite in quantity.

There can be no point where it begins or ends. One point in space is just as much at the centre as any other point. The Hindu mythology represents the world as resting on the back of an elephant, the elephant standing on the back of a turtle, the turtle on the head of a snake, and the snake reaching all the way down. That snake must have a very long tail. But to say "in the be-

ginning" is of the same character. We can no more conceive of a beginning than of a snake that reaches to the bottom of space. To imagine a beginning in time is as impossible as to think of an end to space. As Col. Ingersoll says, "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights." That which we understand as time is but the mile-stones with which we measure that part of a road over which we have travelled, that has neither beginning nor end. Now, we are told that some one has started out on a walk at the beginning of this road. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. In this word "God" we have a repetition of the idea of nothing. God is simply another way of saying nothing. It may have meant something to the author, because he was in all probability an anthropomorphist. That is a horrid word, but it means a big man-God,—a real God, with a body and all the senses of a man. No one can read the Old Testament without being convinced that the writers believed in a real God, who had hands and feet, who walked and slept, ate and drank, loved and hated, was desirous of vengeance and glory, the same as any man. But all theologians agree that such a conception of God is unworthy and degrading. He is said to be a being without body, shape, parts, or passions. Now, I appeal to the common-sense of mankind, if that is not a good definition of nothing. Now, we are told that this nothing, at a beginning that never could have commenced, created the heaven and the earth. By creation we understand the producing of something from nothing. God, that is, the original nothing, after having looked at nothing, felt nothing, smelt nothing, tasted nothing, heard nothing, known nothing, experienced nothing, for all eternity, suddenly made up his mind that so much nothing was rather monotonous, and so resolved to turn a little of the nothing into something.

Now, according to orthodox theology, there are three nothings, each of whom oc-

cupy exactly the same place, and are perfectly equal in duration, power, and glory. Now, if you think of these three as three somethings, it is a little difficult to understand how they could all occupy exactly the same place at the same time. But when you come to understand that they are nothing, the mystery is explained. Now, one of these nothings, we are told, said to the other two, "Come, let us make man in our own image." It is not always plain where the likeness comes in.

Still, every man who believes that he is made in the image of God considers it is his first duty to strive to be nothing. It must be acknowledged that some of them come wonderfully near the mark at which they aim. You go into any church, and you will hear them sing, "Oh, to be nothing!" or pray to be lost and swallowed up in God, which is equivalent to being reduced to nothing. We laugh at this to-day, and yet many of us once seriously joined in these songs and supplications. And when we opened our Bibles and read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," we thought that these three nothings were equivalent to something, and a satisfactory explanation of the existence of all that is. The theologian solemnly bids us remember, "Great is the mystery of godliness." We acknowledge it. We can make nothing out of it. And, what is more, we do not believe any one else can. To us, this idea that something was ever created out of nothing is as unthinkable as a round square, or the Hindu snake that reached all the way down.

To us, the word "nothing" means nothing. It is simply one of the limitations to human thought. There is no such thing as nothing. You try to create a vacuum by pumping the air all out of a reservoir. But space is left, and that is decidedly a something. This whole subject resolves itself into the question, Why is there not nothing in the place of something? Why do I exist? Why is there a world with its oceans and continents, plants and insects, animals and men? Why is there a sun, a moon, and stars, in-

stead of simply nothing? Now, this is equivalent to asking, Why should not twice two be five, instead of four? We cannot understand it. Still we can say, it had to be. It could not have been otherwise. So we cannot understand the smallest particle of something. Still it is self-evident that it had to be. If we could blot the world, the sun, moon, and stars out of existence, infinite space and infinite time remain. Ten million Gabriels may stand with one foot on land and the other on sea, and amid ten billion flaming worlds swear by Him that liveth that time shall be no more; and still time, undismayed, pausing not for a single moment, turning neither to the right nor left, shall flow on forever, as indifferent to their commands as to the chirping of grasshoppers. And though all the stars fade and fall into nothing, yet infinite space endures. As it is utterly impossible that these should have either a beginning or creator, so it is equally unthinkable that the only other two things of which we know anything, matter and motion, should have had a beginning or a creator. From nothing, nothing comes; and, as motion or force is inseparable from matter, the eternity of motion is involved in that of matter. In harmony with this, the greatest discoveries of modern science are that there is no such thing as matter without motion, nor destruction of the least quantity of force.

Do not think for a moment that I profess to understand the whole mystery of something. What I claim is that the idea of its being produced from nothing is unthinkable. Now, theology is the philosophy of nothing, and science the knowledge of something. While theology is every day losing its hold on nothing, science is every day getting a firmer grip on something. I say this about theology because it is the science of God, and the number of people who acknowledge that to them the idea of a being without body, parts, or passions is unthinkable is daily growing larger. If I am not much mistaken, spiritualists are in perfect agreement with materialists in this confession.

For, though they believe that man is immortal, yet they claim that the spiritual body is as really material as this present one. While this, to my mind, seems incredible, yet I am compelled to acknowledge that I know of nothing in the nature of things to make it impossible. But the idea of an infinite, immaterial, spiritual being existing before the creation of matter is utterly unthinkable. Such a being could never know how nor why he existed. Any change of thought or consciousness would be impossible; and so, if the world was created out of nothing, he was neither the architect nor the builder. Or, if he did make it, he could never tell why or how. His intelligence would of necessity be of the same order as that of Topsy's. If any one asked him about his paternity, he would have to reply, "I 'specs I grow'd." In fact, the writer of the Bible does put just such an expression in his mouth, when he makes him say, "I am that I am." I am, I know not why nor how; but I am, and that is all there is about it.

Theologians may answer our questions as one of my little boys does mine when he can't tell,—You don't have to know. Or like the colored preacher who, having said that God made Adam out of the clay and put him up against the fence to dry, replied to an inquiry from one of his audience, "Who made dat dare fence?" by telling him to stop asking questions or he would spoil all the theology. But whether the theology spoils or keeps, questions will be asked; and the question, If God made the world, who made God? is always in order. The old argument of design, implying a designer, will not hold water. Paley's watch, of course, had to have a maker. The idea that it grew like a turnip is not to be supposed. But it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that man has grown. Besides this, the maker of the watch had something to make it out of, while the Maker of man, according to this theory, commenced with the raw material of nothing. Again, if the maker of a watch argues a creator, how much more

the wonderful Being who could make a watch prove that one must have made him! With this deduction, I think we are prepared to intelligently the Biblical theory of creation. How natural it is for a child, when of him first dawns upon his mind, to who made the trees, or the sun, moon, stars!

Now, there is a childhood of the race as of the individual. The earliest glimpses of intelligence in the mind of man always awakened these questions; and the first poets of every separate nation have tried to solve the problem. At the foundation of every separate history and religion of mankind is a cosmogony, or poetical fiction of the origin of things. As

the earliest histories were written before man had commenced the study of nature according to the method of science, they are altogether imaginary. Now, the account of the creation in Genesis of the world, sun, moon, stars, out of nothing, is one of these fictions. If we put from our minds all that the writer was inspired, and try to imagine ourselves in his place, entirely ignorant of all that science has taught us, we will feel beating against our hearts the throbbing of a brother who as earnestly and faithfully as any of us tried to solve the mystery of the world around us. Yonder, upon the banks of Asia, or in some quiet valley, while he tended his flocks, with his wife sitting in the opening of the distant tent, weaving from the rushes plucked from the banks of a brook, and the laughter of his children making sweet music, some brother lay stretched upon the summer grass, gazing wistfully into the silent and serene heavens, asking, as we do, the why and the whence and whither. There is no mystery in our minds nor hard feelings in our hearts, for him. He knew that there was a time when he was not, and so he imagined that all things must have had a like beginning. In order to understand him, we must remember that the God of whom he

speaks was Yahweh, or Jehovah—the Lord of Hosts, or the greatest among the heavenly ones.

The first men gave a personal character to everything they saw, and so to them the heavens had their hosts as well as the earth and seas. But the God of each tribe was naturally looked upon as the strongest. Thus, this Hebrew represented Yahweh as the mighty one who in the beginning had created the heaven and the earth. At the beginning of things, he imagined that all was confusion and darkness. To his thought, darkness was as much a reality as a mountain. At a later date, one of his own tribe speaks of it as something that could be felt. But Yahweh created the light, and, by separating the light from the darkness, as one might sort white beans from black ones, he made the day. To accomplish this wonder, all he had to do was to breathe upon it. All this was done in the period of a single day. We must next remember that to this first dreamer the earth was only a flat disk, resting firm upon its foundations and surrounded with water.

When the world was first called into existence, the land was so covered with water that neither plants nor animals could exist. But Yahweh was equal to this. Again he sent forth his breath, and this time divided the waters from the dry land. A part of them he locked up in great fountains behind the mountains, and then, making a vault or firmament above the whole earth, he stored the rest in enormous reservoirs, above the sky, which the writer supposed to be a solid dome. Thus, when it rained, the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broke forth. Such a conception was perfectly natural to one who knew nothing of the way in which the sun woos the water from the earth in the form of mist, which, on coming in contact with cool winds, is again returned to the earth in the shape of dew and rain.

In several other places in this book we meet with the idea that above the firmament or arch of the sky is the storehouse of

the rain. This was the work of the second day. On the third, Yahweh made all kinds of trees and herbs, each one with its proper seed. On the fourth day, he made the sun, moon, and stars also, to serve as light-bearers, the greater to rule the day, the lesser the night, also, as we find later, for fixing the feast times and marking out the months and years. It is quite evident that all the Hebrew writers never dreamed that the sun, moon, and stars had any other meaning than this. And why should they? Such is the thought of every child until he goes to school and learns that the earth is a round ball always turning upon its axis, and at the same time pursuing its rapid flight around the sun; that this globe to the rest of the universe is no more than a single grain of sand to all the shores washed by all the seas and lakes, and that the sun itself is a million and a half times as large. But to this writer they were only the lamps hung up by Yahweh for the accommodation of the earth, and so quite easily made in a day. On the fifth day the waters were peopled with fishes, and the space above the earth with birds. But the great work of all was done on the sixth day. For, after making the various four-footed beasts that live on the earth, Yahweh said, "Let us make man." Whether he spoke as other kings and rulers do, in the plural, or addressed the other persons of the Orthodox trinity, the writer does not say. He simply tells us that he made man, both male and female, in his own image.

But the more correct statement would be that man made God in his image. For the character of every God is patterned after that of his worshipper. And since this God had been created in the likeness of the writer, he naturally supposed that after working hard for six days he needed a rest; and so on the seventh day, Yahweh, being satisfied with his six days' work, took a holiday. The probable reason for this is that the Hebrews, copying from the Egyptians, were already holding the seventh day as sacred, and the poet represented God as doing no work on that day.

In the next chapter of Genesis there is another story of creation, written evidently by a different author, and contradicting this one in several important particulars. In the first, the earth was at first a chaos covered with water, while in the second it is represented as a dry plain. In the first story, Yahweh created the plants and animals before man, while in the second they are both made after man. In the first, man is made at once, both male and female, while in the second man is made first, and then, because he could find no suitable companion among the beasts, God pitied his loneliness and made woman from a rib cut out of his side during a deep sleep. In the first account, man is permitted at once to eat of the various herbs and grains as well as fruit for food, while in the second he lives on fruit alone until he is made to eat grain for food as a punishment for sin.

It is quite evident that the story of Genesis was made up out of two separate poems, something as we might take the "Prometheus" of Æschylus and Shelley and, though so different, blend them into one. Either of them or both together are pathetic and beautiful when we consider them as the first poetic solutions of the world by the mind of man. While we think of them as our brothers, dimly gazing into the unknown, answering the demands of thought the best they could, our hearts warm toward them with true sympathy, and in spite of the clearer light of science that is shining around us no word of reproach or condemnation falls from our lips. If it had always been regarded thus, we should still read it with satisfaction, wonder, and delight. But through the craft of priests the doctrine of inspiration was invented for the purpose of enslaving the minds of men, and so what was once but a garland of flowers became a chain of iron bondage. The idea that something had been created out of nothing was deified, and so a harmless fancy became a poisonous seed, that has ever since borne naught but death and destruction for mankind.

The interest, devotion, love, and faith that should have been given to something has been worse than wasted on nothing. To describe the horrible tyranny of nothing is simply impossible. This idea is interwoven with every wrong, injustice, and crime that have trampled mankind beneath their cruel feet as good for nothing, mere worms of the dust, who can alone be saved by acknowledging and believing that they are a thousand times worse than nothing. Through the deification of nothing, it has for ages been supposed that the majority of mankind could be fed and clothed with nothing.

The words "God," "creation," "heaven," "revelation," "divinity," "resurrection," "justification," "regeneration," and "trinity," meaning nothing, have been the great objects of strife and devotion; while such words as humanity, evolution, earth, science, character, love, and justice, have been subjects of hate and scorn.

For the honor of a little piece of bread, blessed by some ignorant, canting, sensual priest, a thousand noble men and women have been burned to death. Through this belief in nothing, the tyranny of every king, queen, or emperor, and the robbery of every priesthood has been maintained. What is the authority of a priest to think for you or me made out of but nothing? What is the right of a czar to send to the gallows or to the mines of Siberia fifty thousand noble men and women, guilty of no crime but unselfish devotion to humanity, based on but nothing? By what influence does church property escape taxation, and the free-thinker denied the right of civil protection, besides that of this false respect for nothing? Whenever you see the crown of a king, or listen to the dogmatism of a priest hereafter, please remember that they are the insignia of nothing.

Christianity is the true child of nothing. It bids us be satisfied with poverty of spirit, to oppose wrong with nothing, and to lay up nothing for to-morrow. Its kingdom is not of this world, and, as we know nothing of any other, it establishes nothing.

With its authority based on nothing but creating wine out of nothing, and feeding thousands with a few small loaves and fishes,—which, seeing there was more left over than they had at the beginning, was less than nothing,—it has reduced hundreds of thousands to ashes in order to destroy the realities of science, justice, and reason with the unsubstantial nothings of universal love and salvation by faith. Whoever has this faith counts it his duty to humble himself into nothing; and if it should be universally accepted, society would become one universal, mental, moral, nothing.

But the reign of nothing is drawing to a close, while that of something is already knocking at our doors. Science, which is always the study of something, is steadily encroaching upon the vast domain of nothing. Instead of dreaming about impossible angels, it prefers the study of real butterflies and birds. Instead of going on pilgrimages to a celestial city, it devotes itself to the real ones of brick and mortar in which live actual men and women. Instead of giving our worship to the greatest of all nothings, God, we prefer to devote ourselves to the something we call humanity. Men and women will not consent much longer to be fed and clothed on nothing, while the light of reason will teach us to see to it that the coming generation be taught to love and understand something in place of the nothing that has occupied most of our time. Some people think that they are dishonoring us by calling us materialists. But, when I look into the black gulf of misery and despair into which humanity has been plunged by its faith in, and devotion to, nothing, I accept it as the most honorable title that can be conferred upon me. I rejoice daily because each day records some new triumph to our cause. Every prominent event is teaching mankind that the only providence that watches over us is the human providence, that studies and obeys the laws of some thing. Each flower that brings us beauty and fragrance adorns it. Each rain that nourishes vegetation, and fills the springs o

the mountains nourishes it. Each wind that blows and tide that ebbs hasten the triumph of something over nothing.

The time is coming when the whole world will think less of all the gods than of one true human heart, susceptible to joy and sorrow. Eating and drinking, laughing and sleeping, how much better they are than praying and believing, groaning and watching in the service of nothing! It is true that millions continue to cheat themselves and each other by making much ado about nothing. Steeples, by pointing upwards, point nowhere. Lights burning upon altars light no one. Priests go on talking, solemnly, from Sunday to Sunday, about nothing. But, after all, the heart of the age is growing every day warmer in its love for something. The realities of life, liberty, and happiness are more earnestly sought after than the unsubstantial promises that only fall due in another world. Thousands of seemingly pious church-members would be glad to sell out all they are supposed to own in the bank of heaven for a small per cent. of cash in hand. We put more trust in our own mythical Uncle Sam than in the Yahweh of the Hebrews.

Our respect for something is found in our intense interest in the medical treatment of our wounded President. A great many good people have prayed for his recovery; but, at the same time, none of them would be willing to trust him in the hands of the Lord without the assistance of the ablest physicians. And if anything ought to shake our faith in the terrible mischief of nothing, it should be the fact that Guiteau claims to have been inspired

of God, and, at present, takes great comfort in reading the Bible.

Last Sunday, we met under the shadow of a national sorrow. To-day, bright beams of hope are breaking through the clouds. The heart of the whole people has been drawn in warmest sympathy toward President Garfield, because his career illustrates that principle in our national life that allows one who was once nothing to become something.

With his own heroic pluck and strong right arm, he fought his way from the canal-boat to the highest honors of the greatest nation the sun ever shone upon. In honoring him, we feel that we are honoring ourselves, and the elastic condition of society that allows the wave at the bottom to-day to be on top to-morrow.

But, while we pity him and sympathize with his family in these hours of pain and terrible anxiety, let us remember how full the world is of just such calamities. Other fathers are stricken down. Other wives are watching by the bedsides of those in whom is all their hope. Not only do some see their love and joy leaving them, but also the bread-winner, the only one who stands between them and hunger and cold. All the glory and honor of the Presidency is a mere nothing in the presence of such realities as these. While, then, through the daily newspaper reports we enter sympathetically into the hushed and sorrowing household of the President, let us read on until these daily reflections from the realities of life inspire us to renounce forever all devotion to nothing, and to consecrate all our love, thought, and devotion to the greatest of all things,—Humanity.

UTOPIAS.

We are trying in these lectures to get a rational idea of the Bible. As I go on, I think you will see more clearly the practical service of such a study. When I consider the irrational—yea, the absolutely insane—interpretations to which you have listened from the pulpit of this Book, I am not surprised at the indifference of many liberals to even a right understanding of the Bible.

In my last lecture, we saw how natural it was that man at the first dawn of intelligence should be curious as to the origin of things. Now, next to this, it was equally natural for him to attempt to explain and understand the cause of sensation. The first chapter of Genesis is the attempt to solve the problem of the outer world, while in the second we have one of the first endeavors to explore the more mysterious one within. The true key to the history of humanity is found in the individual man. The ocean is illustrated by the single drop. So the experience of mankind is shadowed in some dim way in the life of each member of the race. I say "dim way," because the great majority never reach the quality of individuality. The Church stands at the open door-way of life, and seeks, with its creed of iron dogmas, to mould every one into a uniform pattern. With its infamous assumption of divine infallibility, it not only murders every original idea, but does its best to strangle at its birth each new sensation of the heart, or sentiment of wonder, hope, and delight. But occasionally one escapes its diabolical clutch, and in defiance of all

its fiendish anathemas, born of the malice of defeat, dares to assert his full right to be and belong to himself. Then, again, the full experience of humanity is mirrored in one life. Thus it is that each free-thinker is not only free to investigate for himself the phenomena of nature, but also equally at liberty to explore the more important world within his own breast. With the author of Genesis, we not only ask the meaning of the earth and sky, sun, moon, and stars, but also the nature of good and evil, right and wrong, joy and pain. We, however, can no longer be satisfied with the memory of a golden age in the past and the hope of a paradise in a world to come, but seek to build our Utopia right here and now.

Every true free-thinker finds it his duty to swell the army of noble men and women who hold it their first and constant duty to seek to banish ignorance, poverty, pain, and crime from the earth.

Wherever the power of the Church is waning, there the same cries are bursting from the heart of the people. Why should existence be a burden to us? Why is woman a social slave? Why should she in anguish unutterable multiply and replenish the earth? Why is one form of worship false and another true? Why does this strife of religion, like that of Cain and Abel, fill the world with jealousy, and lead man to water the earth, until it cries for vengeance, with the blood of his brother? It may seem to some marvellous that we are asking to-day the very same questions as

rested upon the mind of the poet who composed the second and third chapters of Genesis. But the meaning is plain when we remember that he was blessed with the same liberty of thought that is just dawning upon us. But, in interpreting his poem, we must remember that he was entirely ignorant of nature, and hence unable to give the correct answers to the questions that confronted him in the world of facts without and of sensations within.

As I showed you last Sunday, the direct contradictions between this account of the world and that given in the first chapter indicate separate authors. As they agree in some points, we naturally conclude that this second poem is a new and improved study of the same subject. To the mind of each one, the sky appeared as a solid dome, above which lived the heavenly ones, or the various gods, of whom Yahweh was the chief. Though other gods were invited to help make man, yet the proposition came first from the Hebrew deity. But, unlike the first, this writer does not imagine his God creating something out of nothing. The earth, to commence with, was a vast sterile plain, on which was neither plant nor animal. But Yahweh caused a mist to rise from it, from which came rain that watered the whole earth. Then, taking some of the dust or soil of the earth moistened with rain, Yahweh fashioned it into the form of a man, and breathing into his nostrils, he became a living soul. Then he made the plants and animals. But, as among all the animals there was found no companion for man, Yahweh caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, and taking a rib from his side fashioned it into a woman.

Now, the common soil was rather a poor material from which to make a living man, and a single rib from his side an equally strange thing from which to make a woman. Still, they were decidedly an advance on nothing. Having in this brief way explained existence, he strikes right into his real purpose, the solution of the character of life. In his breast was a struggle be-

tween what he ought and what he would. His judgment often pronounced against the insatiate appetite of his passions. The higher possibilities of life condemned the lower, and so the blush of shame often mantled his soul. Before the birth of knowledge between good and evil, there is in every life a period of sensuous innocency that dimly haunts the memory of all after-life, when storm and sunshine alternate across our mental sky. In the babe, there is no strife between reason and sense. It dances in naked innocence and glee before the whole world. It knows nothing, and therefore is ashamed of nothing. It neither remembers nor anticipates. Hence the idea of death and the sensation of regret are equally unknown. Instinctively influenced by this background to every human life, our author naturally, and in part correctly, imagined that the race must have had a like beginning. In the early traditions of every separate branch of the human race, we find the same natural conception. The idea that the birthplace of man is in Eden (meaning the land of loveliness) comes as naturally from this cause as rain from the clouds or light from the sun. According to science, man existed before clothes. But instead of this state being one of purity, it was rather one of complete sensuality. The first attempt to clothe the body was born of the first beautiful sentiment of modesty that is produced by the distinction of the mind between good and evil. When man and woman first sought to put a barrier of clothing between the blind impulses of passion, though it was no more than a girdle of fig-leaves, they took the first step toward physical and moral purity.

Though through ignorance the writer supposed this to be a fall instead of a rise, yet, seeing that clothing had now become a necessity, he represents Yahweh as teaching, by example, the first man and woman how to make garments out of the skins of animals. The Hebrew God was therefore the first clothier. Is this the reason the descendants of our author have until this day a

most monopolized the business? Curious as this question may seem, it is by no means without its support. The gods of every people mould their employments and characters. The Greeks worshipped beauty of form, and so they had in their pantheon of deities Apollo and Venus. They admired strength, and so they adored Jupiter, the Thunderer. And though the Hebrew deity is not so much an impersonation of nature as the gods of Greece, yet, all through the Bible, he is represented as engaged in the clothing business.

In this connection, we should also remember that the inventor of each new art was almost invariably deified. Now, as the tailoring business was of great importance in the mind of our author, he most naturally conferred the honor of its discovery upon Yahweh. Shakespeare makes one of the grave-diggers in Hamlet say, "There is no ancient gentleman but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers! they hold up Adam's profession." He might have added tailors, for, according to this story, clothes were in vogue before graves.

But the truth is that all honest work that is necessary to the progress and happiness of mankind may be performed by a gentleman, and the time is coming when no man shall be considered a gentleman who does not follow some honorable employment. It is an old saying that "Clothes make the man." There is more truth in this than many think. Walk along the streets and notice the harmony between the characters of people as revealed in their faces, and at the same time in their clothes. A man or woman's love of purity, as well as intelligence, are almost invariably reflected in their style of dress, and the respect they entertain for these artificial concealments of nature.

There is a tendency upon the part of some people who claim to be liberals to want to go back to the Garden of Eden, in their estimate of the value of modesty. The trouble with them is, that they were turned out of paradise before they had partaken of

the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I know that there is a good deal of false modesty that has grown out of a wrong interpretation of this part of the Bible. Still, there is a true and beautiful modesty that is born out of the triumph of reason over blind impulse. An immodest man is one whose desires are stronger than his judgment. But you will sometimes meet with a woman whose want of modesty is owing to the absence of passion. For where there is no foe to conquer there can be no victory.

We want as teachers and leaders manly men and womanly women. While woman should strive after some of the qualities of man, it should never be at the cost of her womanhood. A woman without the natural instincts of her sex need not be blamed, but she is to be pitied as we pity any other natural deformity. And, whenever such aspire to be teachers, they should be shunned; for, as sure as you follow them, they will lead you back to the animalism of Eden instead of forward to the Utopia of humanity, when science and reason shall finally triumph over theology and passion.

Our author next endeavors to account for the strife man is compelled to undergo with nature to obtain food and clothing. How natural it was to ask, Why is the earth so unfriendly? Why does it yield thorns and thistles so much more readily than fruit and corn? Why is our task so excessive that we have to labor in sorrow and pain, through summer's heat and winter's cold, to provide the bare necessities of life? Especially must such questions have risen in the East, where the land is much more sterile than with us, and long seasons of drouth often render vain all the labor of the husbandman. Next to the feeling of right and wrong came the thought of the stern necessity of a constant struggle for life with nature, and the sensation of the aches and pains born therefrom. How natural to ascribe this to the curse of his God. Yahweh had been offended. When mankind was innocent, they lived entirely upon the wild

fruits of the forest, and, like the lilies, they toiled not, neither did they spin. How blessed was that time! How sad it should have come to an end! Yahweh must have been terribly incensed. What had man done to so enrage him? Why, he had learned to distinguish between good and evil, and so had become as one of the gods. Yahweh was, as we are often told, of a jealous nature. He was not only Lord of man, but chief of the heavenly ones; and so he said to this celestial hierarchy, See, he has become as one of us. This must go no further, or we shall have him aspiring to our thrones and emoluments. This rebellion against our rights and assumption of equality with us, their lords and masters, must be nipped in the bud. Come, let us curse the ground, and so deprive him by the necessities of hunger of this leisure to think, study, and grow wise.

But we must also remember that, at this time, might was almost universally regarded as right. Yahweh was adored because he was the Mighty One. So man being stronger than woman, she was treated as a slave, and the heaviest part of the burden thrust upon her weaker shoulders, just as it still is by the savages of our own forests, and the ignorant, brutalized peasantry of Europe.

As an explanation of this, woman is represented as the principal agent in the making of this mischief between man and God. Knowing with what pain she becomes a mother, our author found the origin of it in the same offence against Yahweh. Observing the serpent crawling upon its belly, and, because of its secret and venomous character, feared and hated of man, so that between its seed and the children of men there is constant strife, the serpent seeking to bite our heel and we to crush its head, he explained this by representing it as the tempter of woman.

But not only did our poet attempt to explain the origin of the aches and pains of life, but also the end of it all in death. The gods above the sky were believed to be immortal, but, among the Hebrews, man

was mortal. He was made out of the dust of the ground, and to that same dust he returned. The reason for this was found the fact that, before man could partake the fruit of life, through eating which the gods had become immortal, Yahweh had driven them out of the land where it grew, and, to keep them from returning, guard the entrance to Eden with cherubim, a set of winged creatures half dragons and half men, with a flaming sword that turned every way. In any collection of eastern sculpture you will find representations of these beautiful policemen of the jealous Yahweh, which he selfishly guarded his treasure.

Thus you see that this poem describes the various sensations of life needed no miraculous inspiration, but grew spontaneously out of the surroundings and ignorance of the author. The same idea is repeated in the next chapter, containing the story of Cain and Abel. These two brothers are just as mythical as Romulus and Remus, the reputed founders of Rome.

The story is, without doubt, simply an allegory by which the writer continues his song of lament over the lost innocency and freedom from pain and death he vainly imagines was once the lot of man. Cain represents the tillers of the soil and the builders of cities. His children are those who invented the lyre and the art of working with brass and iron. All these inventions were distasteful to Yahweh, who feared lest mankind should become as wise as the god Abel represented man standing still, or, simply, at the most, learning to master and tame a few sheep; for the employment of the shepherd was less progressive, and earlier than that of the husbandman and mechanic and so less offensive to Yahweh. And while he was pleased with the first class his wrath was kindled against the impious wretches who dared to mingle their thoughts with their labor, and so to grow and advance in spite of the curse of the gods.

We must also, in explaining this poem remember that the first Hebrews were shepherds, and the superior strength of the

that dwelt in cities and tilled the soil often resulted in their destruction. While they followed this pursuit, they wandered homeless from place to place, the prey of all. Thus, the author, who believed this kind of life to be the will of Yahweh, represents their blood as crying from the ground for vengeance against the residents of the walled cities. That this is the true interpretation is also seen in the fact that an offence against Cain was punished sevenfold, while the law of Israel was a life for a life, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Those who lived in cities naturally surrounded the rights of life and property with stricter laws and severer penalties than those who lived in tents and wandered from place to place. But the principal meaning of the story is the evil springing out of invention and progress, and the superior innocence of pastoral contentment to the struggle and ambition of life within the walls of a city. In this, he was much mistaken, though many still are guilty of the same erroneous conclusion.

The Church, being founded on the divinity of this story, has always opposed progress, denounced art, and preferred ignorance to wisdom and stagnation to growth. This whole business of adoring stupidity, and enthroning vice above virtue, is born of the doctrine of inspiration. When considered as the revealed will of an infinite God, and history of his conduct, the whole story becomes supremely ridiculous. It seems impossible to believe that the whole Orthodox Church is based almost entirely on the infallibility and reality of this poem. But this is the exact case. Yahweh is turned into the infinite trinitarian Deity, the serpent into an almost infinite and omniscient fiend, at war with God, the partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil the origin of all human misery and death.

In the simple statement that, while the serpent seeks to bruise the heel of man, he in turn bruises its head, is built up the whole tremendous scheme of salvation con-

tained in Christianity, which represents the son of Yahweh as dying to atone for the sins of humanity. To speak seriously of such an idea seems as foolish as to reason with a madman. And the solemn truth is that, while men do hold to such ideas, they are insane, and whoever attempts to oppose these fantasies of a diseased imagination runs dangerous risks. Thousands of the noblest of earth have been cruelly destroyed by those who are controlled by this inhuman frenzy. Thanks to science and the heroism of a few brave infidels in every age, this distemper is by no means as violent as it used to be. Thousands who were once blind, ignorant zealots are now susceptible to the most radical ideas.

A most important sign of the times is seen in the discussion that appears this month in the *North American Review*, on the "Christian Religion," between Robert G. Ingersoll and Jeremiah S. Black. Mr. Ingersoll truly says: "A profound change has taken place in the world of thought. The pews are trying to set themselves somewhat above the pulpit. The layman discusses theology with the minister, and smiles. Christians excuse themselves for belonging to the Church by denying a part of the creed. The idea is abroad that they who know the most about nature believe the least about theology. The sciences are regarded as infidels, and facts as scoffers. Thousands of most excellent people avoid churches, and, with few exceptions, only those attend prayer-meetings who wish to be alone. The pulpit is losing, because the people are growing."

Now, though the truth of these declarations is self-evident to every candid and observing person, yet Mr. Black replies: "It is not true that a profound change has taken place in the world of thought, unless a more rapid spread of the gospel and a more faithful observance of its moral principles can be called so. Its truths are everywhere proclaimed with the power of sincere conviction, and accepted with devout reverence by uncounted multitudes of all

classes. Solemn temples rise to its honor in the great cities; from every hill-top in the country you see the church spire pointing toward heaven, and on Sunday all the paths that lead to it are crowded with worshippers. In nearly all families, parents teach their children that Christ is God, and his system of morality absolutely perfect."

Now, we are not at all surprised to find a man, blind or hypocrite enough to make this claim, further on in the same article making a plea for the divinity of the infamous crime of slavery. No man with one grain of love for true liberty and justice could have written this defence. Every thoughtful person who observes impartially the drift of events cannot but acknowledge that the Church is no longer an influence in the intellectual life of mankind. But a very small percentage of the population of any large city attends church. The ministers who are popular almost invariably avoid theological topics. All the social, political, and reform movements of our age are more or less in defiance of the claims of the Church.

In spite of its assertion that the powers that be are ordained of God, that right and wrong, good and evil, are fully explained by the Bible, millions are silently preparing themselves for a death-grapple with every crowned murderer and thief who preys upon humanity with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other, one supported by a vast standing army, and the other by a vast and greedy priesthood,—all of whom live on the unpaid labor of their fellow-men. Let it be known unto all kings, lords, and priests, that the millions who have bowed their backs in toil and knees in servility cannot be much longer satisfied with a paradise that was lost before they were born, nor one that is to come after they are dead. The voice of the present is clear and strong for a Utopia, right here and now. Why are wisdom, food, clothing, and pleasure denied the majority, when reason sees that there is enough for all? Now I am by no means a complete optimist. I do not believe that it

is possible to establish a form of society that shall be absolutely perfect.

The theological idea of the Garden of Eden and future paradise are absurdities, because such a state of existence as they imply would be equal to non-existence. We are the children of nature and partake of its limitations. It inflicts pain as well as joy. Though we triumph over many of its hostile powers, yet entire deliverance from evil and pain is unthinkable. Still

"The faith that life on earth is being shaped
To glorious ends, that order, justice, love,
Mean man's completeness, mean effect as sure
As roundness in the dew-drop; that great faith
Is but the rushing and expanding stream
Of thought, of feeling, fed by all the past."

Above all other desires is the craving for life and joy. And, as the divinity of this principle is perceived, the race will consecrate itself to its fulfilment. When, through the liberty of thought, the great problems come up again, we shall find ourselves asking the same questions as this first writer in the Book of Genesis, but finding, through our larger knowledge of self and nature, far different answers.

With him, we shall study the relation of knowledge to appetite, and ask how to escape the dominion of lust that slays its hundreds of thousands annually of our youth. Why these brothels and adulteries that destroy so many happy homes, and wreck, at the very brightest hour of life, so many hopeful and beautiful lives? A true Utopia will never be established in which these relations of life do not become the highest care and solicitude of society.

I am not ignorant how coarsely these questions have been handled. I know that the charge of obscenity that has been raised against some who called themselves liberals has not always been without excuse. But, in spite of the immodest handling of this subject by passionate men and passionless women, the good and the true, with clean hands and pure hearts, must bravely confront it; for in its right solution rests the principal salvation of the race. As Mr. Ingersoll says, "The home where virtue dwells

with love is like the lily with a heart of fire, the fairest flower in all the world." Though the cry of some who have meddled here may have been born of lust, yet the exaltation of human love, and the learning to value and worship the body, is the principal hope of the world. But, if any one is to blame for mischief wrought here, it is the Church, which, in its interpretation of this story of paradise, has glorified the reign of brute instinct above that of reason, made motherhood a crime and ignorance a virtue. This is the cesspool that has infected the moral atmosphere the human race has breathed for centuries. From it has come priestly sensuality, monkish lasciviousness, and the starved and blighted womanhood of countless nuns; while the command to multiply and replenish the earth, used by priests, is responsible for the crowded hovels of the poor, from which come the men and women who fill the prisons, poor-houses, and hospitals.

Another question that has to be reopened and settled in the light of our riper knowledge is that of labor. Instead of regarding it as a curse, we must look on it as a blessing. Instead of honoring the man who by chance of birth or speculation avoids it, and dishonoring the sons of daily toil, we must reverse our judgment. In Sir Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, every one was required to work six hours a day, at something for which he had a taste, so that all might have the balance of their time to devote to mental and moral culture. Something of this kind is yet to be. The great question of all is how to guide each one to the work he or she can perform with pleasure and enthusiasm. Whoever is thus interested in a task does not feel its burden. The mind of man is in itself anæsthetic. The soldier, as he dashes with enthusiasm against the foe, is wounded or slain without feeling it; while he who goes in fear, or against his inclination, suffers a thousand wounds and deaths, without receiving in reality a single scratch.

La Roy Sunderland, who devoted the best

part of his life to the study of these phenomena, succeeded in so engaging the attention of people in other subjects that he caused hundreds of teeth and even limbs to be amputated without pain. This seems to be so much like a story out of the Bible that we hesitate to believe it. Still, I know of no event in history that is better authenticated, while I never met a man who was more of an embodiment of earnest sincerity. But in the human mind there is a great unexplored territory; and so, through ignorance of some of its most important functions, most of our education is carried on on false principles.

We are just beginning to get a glimpse of the truth in the kindergarten and industrial methods. The school should be a little world, in which every sentiment and grace as well as power of mind and body should be harmoniously developed. Through such education, each one would be trained to do whatever he or she could work at with pleasure; and so the pain and weariness of labor, that has made so many regard work as a curse, will be removed, and the happiness of human life increased a thousand-fold. Closely related to this is the idea expanded in the story of Cain and Abel,—that life in the past and in the country was and is more innocent than that of the present and the concentrated populations of our large cities. There are many who, like this writer, still look backward for the golden age. To hear some people talk, one would think that the time of Puritanism was an exceptionally moral one, when the truth is that it was a terrible, brutal, and immoral age.

I remember once visiting a Massachusetts Unitarian minister, who was engaged in preparing a local Fourth of July oration; and, in doing so, he distributed a number of books to the various inmates of the family to read, and inform him if they met with anything of interest. Among them was the diary of a very celebrated Puritan minister. But the lady who received it soon returned it with the message that there was nothing in it but a lot of fornication. Every church-

meeting in those days witnessed trials for adultery and various offences against decency that would be considered unfit for publication in a modern *Police Gazette*. And the idea that innocency and virtue are the leading features of rural life is only entertained by those who know nothing about it.

That there is much room for reformation in our cities is very true. But it is only in

a large city that we reap the results of civilization in which, through devotion to sanitary laws, the establishment of public parks, the health and beauty of the country is married to the wealth, progress, and art of the city; and all who desire to can divide their time between work, study, and recreation, and thus secure the harmonious development of body, mind, and heart.

THE DESCENT OF MAN.

THE truer title of this lecture would be "The Ascent of Man." Man, instead of having fallen out of heaven, has risen, wearily but heroically, by his own endeavor, out of hell. The recognition of this fact in the moral and social world is of almost infinite importance. Since Darwin published his two wonderful books on the *Descent of Man*, the scientific world has given to the subject a great deal of study. What was at first approached as a somewhat novel but uncertain theory is now almost as generally accepted among scientists as the law of gravitation. But all that they have done has left the heart of the question untouched. They have simply gathered the raw material out of which social, political, and religious radicals have yet to construct a new and fairer home for humanity. This subject is often made the butt of ridicule in orthodox pulpits. But all who have flung a gibe or sneer at it have blasphemed. Christian pulpits and orthodox prayer-meetings are about the only places where truth is sneered at and justice ridiculed.

Every one who has flung his handful of mud at this truth has betrayed humanity and crucified the New Redeemer of the world. The part of the Bible over which I intend to pass in review to-day, in connection with this subject, has but little merit in it. While it is perfectly natural and explainable, without resorting to the theory of revelation, yet it is mostly written to gratify the vanity of man. You can see in every

portion of it the design of the author to make out an honorable pedigree for the Hebrews, and to exalt their God Yahweh high above all others. Human nature is still afflicted with the same infirmity. About half the books that are written have no higher aim than this. Our author does, however, in some sort illustrate the universal interest of mankind in the question, How did we get here? What is it, a God or a monkey, that stands back of all our human progenitors? Nor should we be surprised that he read the answer back to God. No other solution was open to him. The long list of names given between Adam and Noah, of men who lived from seven to nine hundred years, are evidently a part of a purely imaginary chronology. It is clear that he thought the course of history could be definitely mapped out. He evidently believed that the world was to last four thousand years, and that the Israelites came out of Egypt two thousand six hundred and sixty years after Yahweh had created the world out of nothing. In writing this history, all this time had to be accounted for. Naturally supposing that the men of antiquity were taller, stronger, and lived longer than the present ones, it was quite a convenience in fixing up his family tree to have each progenitor live a very long time. Like some other writers of fiction, he made each character go as far as possible. The oldest is Methuselah, who lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. No doubt, to the writer, to live as long as that seemed a

very desirable thing. To a Hebrew, to have a long life, to drop into the grave "full of days," was one of the most glorious gifts of God imaginable. The brevity of our career is supposed to be a punishment for sin. But this, like many other curses ignorance has imagined to have been pronounced against us, is one of our truest blessings. I am sure that when I was stupid enough to believe the Bible true I never envied Methuselah. I cannot imagine any one enjoying life beyond the present life of man.

Our life is a circle around which we travel; and, having been once around, all the rest must be weary repetition. We commence as children, and end at the same point, though we are no longer capable of the pleasures of childhood. Our first childhood is full of joy and beauty. It knows neither the painful hope of anticipation nor the sweetly sad memories of the past. It is the only experience of the eternal that comes to us; for in it there is neither thought of change nor death.

We often wish that roses and children might always remain as buds just opening into revelation of beauty. But Nature's laws are imperative; and so it is equally as impossible for a child to remain always a child as for a rose to be always a bud. There comes a time when the bud, if it did not open, must decay. So is it with human life. We outgrow more than our baby-clothes. We weary of our dolls, tops, marbles, and games. All the restraints of our dependent position grow irksome. The golden dreamland of youth opens before us with bewitching enchantment. We sigh for its loftier privileges of courtship, love, and liberty. Intoxicating as these often are, they come to an end; and sometimes the sweetness of the cup leaves bitter dregs to be tasted at the bottom. Be this as it may, when we have won our love,—or, like young colts, had our fling,—we soon take eagerly to the more serious pursuits and ambitions of manhood. But, to the most successful, the burdens become at last exceedingly irksome, and they look forward with desire to the

ease and emoluments of a kindly old age. This may be delightful for a time; but, when it emerges into second childhood, the thought that the dreamless sleep of eternal rest is near must be welcome. In connection with this attempt to trace the descent of man, the meaningless repetition that some one was born, married, had a son and died, is broken up, by way of variety, with the story of the flood and the Tower of Babel. Though they have some dramatic and even relative meaning to nature, yet they are evidently secondary incidents to the purpose of constructing a pedigree. As he traced the whole human race to one source, he was compelled to invent some story to account for the varied nationality and speech prevailing in the world. Some tradition of an attempt to build a tower that would reach to the skies may have floated down from the distant past. He himself believed the sky to be a solid arch above the earth, on whose jewelled floors lived the gods. As these gods were supposed to visit the homes of men, it was no more than good manners that they should desire to return their calls. Before the story of the flood, we read, "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of Yahweh saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose."

From these unions came giants and mighty men of renown. Still, Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. But, instead of laying the blame of this business on his own boys, whom he had neglected evidently, by their evil influence, to bring up right, he throws it all upon man, and so, repenting that he had made him, resolves to destroy the whole race. To have carried this out would have spoiled the story; and so Noah and his family found grace in his sight, and were saved out of the general wreck, with which to begin again. It will be impossible to enter into all the

ridiculous incongruities and absurd impossibilities of the flood and ark story. To do so would take us too far away from our chosen task. This, however, has been so well done by Colonel Ingersoll, Professor Denton, and others, that it is unnecessary, save as it fits into our theme. Among all peoples there exist traditions of floods, earthquakes, and other natural catastrophes that seem to have been almost universal in their destructive sweep. At this time, the world itself was not supposed to be very large, and any local event soon grew into universal magnitude. This story is such a large one that to give it any semblance of truth has given the Church a great deal of trouble. But the worst feature of it is that at the close Yahweh acknowledges that it has been in vain; for the imagination of man's heart is always evil from his youth up. And so, because he was delighted with the sweet smell of some roasting beasts and birds, on an altar that Noah had built, he resolved never again to destroy the whole human race.

The writer of this had not risen above the barbarian idea that might makes right; and so, because Yahweh was strong enough to drown a whole world save one family, he feared and honored him. That was his best and highest idea of God. He was proud, as many still pretend to be, to consider himself a direct descendant from Yahweh. Go into any church, and you will hear people boasting in the idea that they are the children of God. I remember once hearing quite a celebrated preacher describe the difference between the scientific and religious ideas of the origin and descent of man. After speaking of the foolishness of doubting the Bible on this head, he said, "Scientists, when they attempt to answer this question, have to say, Which was the son of man, which was the son of a monkey, which was the son of an oyster." Then, opening his Bible, he read, "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Shutting the book, he remarked, "I prefer to stick to the

old pedigree." Now, for my part, I much sooner choose the new one.

Still, this is a very unfair way of putting this subject. And yet this is about the idea of the average churchman. While he claims to be a child of God, he calls us children of the devil, and, when we claim to believe in the method of evolution, talks facetiously about our forefathers, the monkeys and oysters. Let us look closely into the merit of this case. In the first place, we have no desire whatever to be considered the children of God, especially of the one described in this part of the Bible.

I had rather be a child of the meanest Russian peasant than of its emperor. I much prefer to imagine with Topsy that I grewed than to believe I am the child of the infamous, bloodthirsty autocrat of the Old Testament. If this part of the Bible had not been written by a barbarian, he never would have gloried in the relationship. Just look at the portrait he draws. He, Yahweh, is opposed to every step of human progress. He drove the human race out of the Garden of Eden to keep them from becoming wise and immortal. He wilfully deceives the man and woman he had created. He grows angry, and, like an infuriated demon, curses the unborn for the faults of the living. His children who live with him above the skies are represented as corrupting the morals of the inhabitants of the earth, and yet he never puts any particle of the blame where it belongs. He destroys the whole world, men, women, and children, with a cruel flood, except one family, and, after it is done, coolly acknowledges that it is impossible for men to be any better. Who can respect a God who vainly resists the inevitable? He is pleased with the smell of blood. One would think he must be a cannibal. He is not willing that his children should live on calling terms with him; for, when they seek to build a tower up to his abode, he is angry, and confounds their work by confusing their speech. Any conception of a personal God must be equally absurd and diabolical. For, if there

is a God, the picture drawn of him in this book must be perfectly correct. He still banishes us from Eden for desiring to be wise. He is constantly destroying the world as with a flood. Each succeeding generation, one billion and eighteen millions of men, women, and children, are swept from the fair earth into the black, yawning gulf of death. Millions are suffering every day indescribable pain for no fault of their own. In vain does he put his bow in the clouds, when he is forever sending floods, cyclones, pestilences, droughts, and earthquakes that sweep us away by thousands and sometimes by millions. And, according to the Church, he still builds an ark, in which he intends to save a few out of the shuddering, despairing, perishing billions. But to have lived in the ark, with its one window, crowded to repletion with all living animals, birds, and insects, must have been worse than to have drowned at once with the multitude.

In like manner, to be saved by the surrender of our reason and manhood, after the method of the Church, is equally repugnant. As Colonel Ingersoll says, We had rather go down with the great ship of humanity than to sneak off in any little orthodox canoe. Now, I think that most of you prefer to surrender any claim of parentage you may have in this God of the Old Testament. Now are we compelled to take our choice between this God and a monkey? Not by any means. I have no wish to deny the monkey. But the truth is that we are the children of nature and related to all the mingling worlds of matter, force, beauty, and truth. There is not a mote floating in the sunlight nor a star revolving in illimitable space, that is not related to us. From all eternity, every particle that makes up our bodies has been in existence. Do you wonder that your breast thrills with sympathy toward all animate and inanimate nature? Through all the eternities, we slumbered potent therein; and now, having awakened to life beneath the ministrations of sun and stars, earth and sky, winter and summer, force and matter, and all the

blending potentialities of the universe, we cannot but thrill in response thereto.

It is true that we are equally related to the animals beneath us; but that is no disgrace any more than the dull earth is to the rose, from which it has sprung. However repulsive they may be to us, yet our roots strike back into them. And every true man will find in his breast some feeling of sympathy for the smallest and meanest thing that lives. In the strife and war of the forest life by which the fittest have survived, the foundation of our physical life was laid.

From one, we received strength; another, grace; and a third, beauty. For long after the form of man standing erect was realized, he was nothing but a beast of prey. We are the children of untold generations of heroic struggle and martyrdom, of defiance to the hostile powers of nature.

"Men

Perished in winter winds till one smote fire
From flint-stones, coldly hiding what they held,
The red spark treasured from the kindling sun.
They gorged on flesh like wolves, till one sowed corn,
Which grew a weed, yet makes the life of man.
They mowed and babbled till some tongue struck speech,
And patient fingers framed the lettered sound."

What we are to-day, we owe to all the love, hope, courage, thought, and endurance of all men and women. Is not our parentage a most honorable one. Does not he who, in pulpit or elsewhere, mocks at our descent, blaspheme? May we not with pride contend for evolution up from the animals beneath us, as against the idea that we are the fallen and outcast children of a God? The study of this subject in the writings of science is one of intense interest. But, as evolution does not stop with the simple physical differentiation of man, but continues right along through the whole history of the race, I intend to confine myself to this part of it.

The path over which this ascent leads us after we leave the animal kingdom is through what I will call childhood, youth, manhood, and womanhood. Those who are still animals do not all live in the forests. We may still class as animals all who live

only for what they can get, eat, and drink, or enjoy, in a sensual way, making conscience, patriotism, humanity, all subservient to their passional ambitions. In the place of the velvety moss of the forests, they may creep to their prey over velvet carpets, and yet be on an exact level with the lion and tiger of the jungle. Some of the magnificent marble palaces of Boston and New York shelter the lairs of these devouring monsters who rob the poor and the fatherless. Some of the denizens of the forest sit on thrones, from which they rob and murder in the name of justice; while others fleece and oppress the poor in the garb of priests, in the name of heaven. The worse the crime, the more do they appeal to God to prosper their undertaking. The next, or, rather, the first step in the ascent of man, is into human childhood. There is both a childhood of the race and of the individual. Much of the Bible was written by children. There are plenty who have not yet outgrown these swaddling-clothes of ignorance. Every church is sustained by intellectual children,—men and women who cannot think for themselves, and who, like children, swallow all the Santa Claus, fairy, giant, and ghost stories their nurses, the priests and parsons, peddle out to them. What millions are here still clinging to painted dolls, and never questioning the truth of their bewitching fairy work.

But many have entered the larger and richer life of youth. They are no longer hanging at the breast of faith in helpless dependence upon the Church. They have not yet dared to reason much, simply giving their minds liberty to dream and build air-castles. Youth is the age of fancy, courtship, and love. There are thousands in the churches who have reached this position. Their ideas about religion are cloudy, mystical, transcendental. But the age of a true manhood draws near. Some have already entered its glorious kingdom of liberty, love, and truth. They are not only enamoured, but have truly loved and been loved. The work of life is clear and sure. For these, no doubts

or uncertainties, but swift, positive duty-doing every day. The flame of reason shows the path of justice, and joyfully they walk in it. The world has not seen many men yet, but they are growing more numerous every day. When they are strong enough, they will exterminate some of these wild beasts of prey, if to do so they have to invoke the holy wrath of revolution. But, better than manhood, we are also ascending into true womanhood. We are not only beginning to perceive the truth, but also to feel the woe and misery of the world in the tender pity of a woman's heart. All the sweet, limitless love of woman is warming our kindling enthusiasm for humanity.

As the full emancipation of woman, in the recognition of her full equality with man, will be about the last justice done by society, so we shall never attain to the ripeness of development until the tenderness and grace of woman mingle with the justice and strength of man. But the real thing at which we should aim in the development of the race is the carrying forward of each one of these states of being into the next, until they are all blended into one complete life.

It is for this fruition, or consummate flower of life's possibilities, for which we stand as liberals. We appreciate the animal in its place. We do not despise nor trample it beneath our feet as a thing accursed. We delight in all the pleasures of the senses. We value eating and drinking, laughing and sleeping. Each passion has its healthy and legitimate function. They are the soil from which spring all the fair flowers of art, music, and love. We find room in our thought and feeling likewise for the child element. We cannot consent to believe all true those whom we love tell us to be so. No priest shall any longer enslave our reason with his machinery of celestial puppets and miracle stories. We must and will think for ourselves. Still, we would, as much as possible, preserve the innocence and teachableness of childhood. We make room also for the joyous and wistful emotions of youth. While we pause not upon its first border-land of

wonder and dreamy expectancy, yet we do not pretend to have passed all the surprises of life. We make no claim of having found it all out. We are still but as explorers, picking up here and there a pebble on the shore of the infinite. Still, we have won the love to which we can give all our strength and days. We are married to humanity, and all of life's holiest gifts are too poor a dowry for our bride. Whoever loves truly has sounded the depths of purest womanhood as well as scaled the heights of noblest manhood. To have in our hearts this enduring love for humanity is the fruition of life, and fitting reward for all the struggles and pains of existence.

That man can escape from the cruelty of the animal, the ignorance of the child, the uncertainty of youth into this blended strength and beauty of a perfect humanity is the truest and hopefullest gospel yet proclaimed to the world. To be regenerated with its grace and born into its light and truth is a great salvation. It is fulness and fatness of life. We are no longer Methodists or Baptists, Protestants or Catholics, Jews or Gentiles, Christians or Mohammedans, but men and women, children of humanity, citizens of the world. With one of the first to reach this fulness of the stature of a true manhood, we say, "The world is my country, to do good my religion." The soul that is speaking through us is the soul of the world; for are we not

"All made in the likeness of the one,
All children of one ransom,
In whatever hour, in whatever part of the earth,
We draw this vital air:
We are brothers, we must be bound with one compact.
Accursed he who infringes it,
Who raises himself upon the weak who weep"?

O! friends of the liberal heart and the free mind, Christian children and dreamers tell us that we have no gospel to offer the world. There never was a greater falsehood than this. I beseech you to help me, one and all, with all your best endeavor, to proclaim loud and strong, above all the senseless higger-mugger trivialities and vain babblings of the churches, this truth and hope

for which we stand. I have begrudged somewhat the last two weeks in which duty elsewhere and then sickness kept me silent. I am thankful, however, that you have been blessed thereby with the inspiration of two strong minds whose hearts glow with the same vision. We can hardly begin to imagine the significance of this movement. With the united devotion of all who come here and of our two thousand subscribers, if each will do his or her part, we will kindle a beacon light here in Boston that shall be seen all over the land. Many practical reforms depend on this new reading of the descent of man. When all Bibles are revised by the demands of reason and science, truth and justice will have a fair show in the earth; Liberty, instead of resting on the horizon of the future, will come and dwell with us; the world, no longer the prey of priests and tyrants, will follow joyfully the council of its noblest men and women.

Instead of judging one another by some universal standard of right, we shall see that each one is subject to his or her environment, and so we shall cease to expect the same conduct from all alike. In the place of prisons, we will open reform schools; while all our education will keep in view the development of body, mind, and heart.

The highest interest of each will be seen to depend on perfect equality of privilege. Self-love will become a virtue under the morals of evolution. Because we ask for bread, we shall no longer receive a stone. While we strive to be, to the best we know, ever true, it is not for our sakes alone. We can nevermore separate ourselves from mankind, if we would. Deep within our own hearts, we have seen and felt our relationship to the universal good. The passion and enthusiasm for humanity are what bear us on. The thought that thus only can we fill our place here in this great momentous thing of human life, that thus only can we wipe away tears from the afflicted, give sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead, is an ever-impelling power toward truth and duty. We no longer stand gazing up into heaven,

expecting the coming of the kingdom, for, lo! it is already within us. All our senses are avenues of pleasure. Childhood has made us teachable, Youth has made us reverent and hopeful, Manhood has given us strength, and Womanhood love and beauty. Life is jubilant with blending harmonies of wisdom and love. Where it was once dark it is now light.

Our hearts interpret the prayers of all generations, while our hopes chime in sweetly with those of every prophet who has been the herald of a better day. Our prayers are no longer complaints addressed to a phantom, but the earnest struggles of each day to attain to the lofty ideal of human life we have set for our endeavor. Our Bible, instead of being that of one race, is that of all books in which men have written

the record of their thought and experience on the earth. We cannot search out the mystery of the infinite. We see no beginning and no end. Deep calleth unto deep. To much that others claim to know, we are content to plead our ignorance. But we have seen ideas conquering brute forces, truth disarming falsehood, liberty breaking the fetters of the slave, love quenching the fires of hate, justice leading the hungry into the halls in which revellers have feasted, the peasant unseating a czar, children confounding the priests. Herein, we have found a place on which we will pillow our heads, and rest in the sweet assurance that, whether we live or die, the path of humanity is not a descent, but forever an ascension toward the heights of perfect justice, truth, and liberty.

THE WANDERING JEW.

THE subject of my lecture is not the legend to which the genius of Doré and Eugene Sue has given to airy nothing a local habitation and a name, but, rather, the substance out of which that fable grew. The idea of wandering is as closely coupled with the Jew as inventiveness to the Yankee and stubbornness to the Englishman. No people beneath the sun have done so much wandering. Hence, we see that the flower of genius strikes root into the common soil of reality.

In this rational study of the Bible, the life of Abraham, or the first wandering Jew of whom we have any knowledge, now demands our attention. In trying to understand these stories of the patriarchs, it is necessary that we should first put from our minds every idea that they are veritable history. If they are true, there is no such thing as knowing what is true. To a perfectly sane mind, it would be as easy to believe in the historical verity of Eugene Sue's wandering Jew as this one of the Bible.

No rational man or woman can believe true a history that describes events long before they happened; represents a God appearing in the form of a man, eating cakes and veal cutlets; angry at an old woman for laughing at the idea of her becoming a mother; making a covenant with a man, and confirming it by passing in the form of a lamp and a smoking furnace between parts of bleeding carcasses; testing the faith of his friend by commanding him to slay his son; rewarding him for telling a lie; journeying around, like a Talmage, investigating the night side of

city life, and then destroying the citizens with fire, which was a good deal worse than blasting their reputation with sensational preaching. But because these stories of the patriarchs cannot be studied as history is no proof that they are worthless. Fiction is sometimes nearer the truth than historical record.

Walter Scott, in his novels, is the best historian of Scotland, and Shakspeare, in his plays, of England. In common history you have only skeletons, dead bones raked up from the graves of the past by laborious industry; while, in the pages of Scott and Shakspeare you have living men and women, who think and speak, hate and love, doubt and believe, according to the time in which they lived. We know that Falstaff and Hamlet are creatures of the imagination; but they are none the less living realities. So, though we are compelled to acknowledge that it is exceedingly questionable whether there ever were such men as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet these stories are valuable as guides to the history and character of the people among whom they were created, and to whom they were intended by their author to give pleasure.

Nor are these stories without literary merit. They have been the open sesame to the fascinating world of fiction to many a young mind. The long hours I spent in church, when a boy, were often robbed of their tediousness by these Biblical romances. We sometimes say truth is stranger than fiction. But the prosaic people who fling this proverb at young poets, to woo them from the reading of novels, bear unconscious testimony of

the relation of truth to fiction. The world of art is the soul of nature; and no one can understand the simplest fact who cannot discern its poetic as well as prosaic relation to the universe. The art of story-telling, much as it has been condemned by the Church, is the foundation of its existence. The men who best report history are those who make it. The writers of romances and dramas, the prophets and seers who give form and coloring to moral ideas, are the creators of the motives and ideals that produce the struggles and heroisms that are afterwards sung in song and painted in romance, or used by the orator with which to touch the springs of human activity. This art is not only the first in usefulness, but also the oldest in point of time. As soon as men could talk, they invented mythologies, composed poems, and recited histories. When we remember that such stories as these we are studying comprised for the Hebrews all they knew of art, poetry, music, painting, and the drama, we need not be surprised that they regarded them as divine, and found in them the ideals that shaped and controlled their destinies. But, to rightly study them, we must enter sympathetically into the motives that produced them. To judge the authors by the same moral standard we try those of our own time would be most unfair. When a man undertakes to write history, we want him to keep to facts. If he writes fiction, however he may simulate the historical method, we expect him to tell us at the beginning that it is a work of imagination.

But it was far otherwise when these stories were written. This art of writing was a most wonderful thing. The imagination seemed like a voice speaking to them from without. Believing as they did in personal gods who interfered in the affairs of men, they naturally supposed that this was the voice of their god speaking to them. Earnest-hearted and noble-minded men waited in caves in the solitudes of the wilderness or on the mountain heights for this word; and, when they had received it, went forth

into the world, and honestly said, "Thus saith the Lord." Any form of allegory or narrative was seized upon with which to convey the thought, which, while unspoken, was like fire shut up in their bones.

It is difficult to penetrate into all the motives that governed the writer of these stories. Several, however, are plainly discernible. He believed in the superiority of Israel's God and destiny over the Arabs, Philistines, Moabites, and other nationalities round about: hence, he presents Abraham as the friend and companion of God. While to other nations he ascribes a mixed origin, to the Hebrews he gives a pure descent. The Arabs are the children of a bondswoman; the Edomites, of Esau, who married a heathen; while a most disgusting crime against nature is ascribed to Lot, in order to heap degradation upon the enemies of Israel, the Moabites, and Amalekites. But, through Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel, the lineage of Israel is kept pure. The wonderful influence of a work of fiction is seen in the fact that this idea of confining marriage to their own race still prevails among the Jews. Through all their migrations and wanderings from place to place, they have preserved their unity. While thousands of them have become atheists, and believe no more in the infallibility of the Bible than we do, yet they still regard it as a disgrace to marry out of the race. This bondage to custom will continue until the prophets of the religion of humanity, and a new school of artists springing from among themselves, shall create for them loftier and more inspiring ideals. Another quite evident motive of this writer was the vindication of Israel's possession of Canaan by conquest. It was the gift of their god Yahweh. He had designed it for them long ago, when he called Abraham to leave his country and kindred and go to one he would show him. The place and circumstances of this covenant are all described, and even the entire traditional history of the Hebrews from that time to this foretold by Yahweh.

The Hebrew is intensely provincial.

Though, of all men, he should be the most cosmopolitan, yet he is more clannish than a Beacon-Street Bostonian. But as Col. Ingersoll says, "In the presence of eternity, the mountains are as transient as the clouds." The never-ceasing ebb and flow of the tides of time must wear away the hardest rock. So in the perpetual interchange of thought and feeling that characterizes the nineteenth century, the Jew will surrender to humanity, and the descendant of Abraham become the child of nature and citizen of the world. And, strange as it may seem, Beacon Hill will not always withstand the incoming waves of humanity. The aristocracies of wealth and culture will vanish like the Church, when truth and justice shall at last penetrate the heart of humanity.

The false sociology that now grinds the majority into the dust, and worships the golden calf, will soon follow the vanishing falsities, formalisms, and hypocrisies of religion that are fading from our sight. Instead of vindicating a nation, men of genius will devote their highest powers to the elevation of humanity.

Questions will no longer be decided according to a national policy, but in harmony with universal principles of truth and justice. Though many have outgrown the barbarism that might is right, and have ceased to think that wrong becomes right by ascribing it to God, yet our political conduct as a nation is still allied to this beastly cruelty. Though our forefathers rebelled against England for a trifling tax on tea without representation, yet we keep representatives to fawn at the feet of tyrants who plunder and oppress millions without chance of appeal, a hundred times worse. Though we have spilled rivers of blood and spent billions of money to free four millions of slaves, yet we send telegrams of condolence that condemn eighty-five millions of slaves for executing a tyrant who, made a savage beast by autocratic infallibility and power, had murdered more people than he had hairs on his head. Though we forcibly took all the territory of the United States from England and Mexico, yet multi-

tudes of Americans condemn Irishmen for demanding the right to purchase their own land from England. Though America owes her liberty largely to the help and sympathy of French Revolutionists, yet when a rebel to the infamous despotism and savage cruelty of Russia seeks the hospitality of our shores and the protection of the banner we call the flag of the free, our officials threaten to surrender him to the mercies of Siberia, and in answer to a prayer of humanity send a shystering letter that would disgrace a cannibal, much more an American statesman. If these men do not believe this part of the Bible to be divine, they certainly ought to, in order to give consistency to their conduct. The truth is that, while this book is represented as divine and as containing the highest ideals of truth, liberty, and justice, its barbarism will continue to be the measurement of our civilization, and church exclusiveness, hypocrisy, and cant the highest type of social regeneration.

Having considered the motives, let us now turn to the story of Abraham, as a farther illustration of the Hebrew character and religion. Our hero is first introduced to us as leaving his home and kindred in company with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot, in obedience to the voice of Yahweh. The impulse to migrate, to seek a better land, is one of the principal agencies in the world's progress. Those who emigrate are generally of the hardy and adventurous sort. Experience and dissatisfaction with the past conditions generally lead them to continue their wanderings until they come to a more fruitful land. In earlier times, these freebooters and hardy adventurers thought nothing of dispossessing others of their cities and land. As they had nothing to lose and everything to win, they were generally victorious. The law of nature is the survival of the fittest.

"Beauteous is earth; but all its forest broods
Plot mutual slaughter, hungering to live."

Progress is always owing to a change of environment. Every advancement in the scale of life, from the oyster up to man,

may be traced to an accidental or voluntary change of condition. Hence, the instinct to seek a better country is indeed one of the most beneficent forces that control our destiny. Well might this writer ascribe this to his god Yahweh. Any other idea from him is not to be expected. But, for us, the light of science has broken through the thick clouds of superstition that hung above him. To listen for the voice of God, and expect to be guided by some sign from the heavens, is to acknowledge one's self a barbarian. And yet this idea still prevails. Most ministers claim to be especially called of God to their work. Many church members consult Scriptural almanacs and open their Bibles at random, to get a word of guidance direct from God.

Men and women find enough fools in the world to make it pay to advertise in the daily newspapers to reveal the future, and so give direction to life. All this would seem perfectly natural in the time in which these Bible stories were written, but are utterly out of place in this age of science and reason. What right has a minister to be divinely directed to his life-work, more than any one else? And is it not wonderful that millions worship a God who is guilty of such partiality?

The first heresy of which I was guilty was to reject this claim of priestly arrogance and egotism. Science and reason are teaching us that there is a surer and more humane road to progress. This old method of migration was allied to the cruelest injustice. Though Yahweh gave the land of Canaan to the children of Abraham, yet they had to put to death its lawful inhabitants. If this universal method of the slaughter of the weakest was the only way in which an almighty God could raise men, I think he had a thousand times better left them unmade. Thus far, all our progress has been based on injustice. But, thanks to the dispersement of superstition, by the light of science a more excellent way is dawning upon us. Ideas of justice and humanity are triumphing over the sword.

Experience and reason are teaching us how to change our environment and improve our condition without waging a war of destruction against others. Though these States had to be won with the sword, they will be enlarged and improved with the school-house and ballot-box. Already, with few exceptions, we open wide our arms of hospitality to emigrants from the Old World. All Chinese walls, military cordons, and national passports will yet be destroyed, with the idea that every man's home is the world. The whole of America for every American is the promise of this fulfilment. This can come only by the enthronement of reason and nature above every god.

But to return to Abraham. A short time after he entered the land of Canaan, his slaves and those of his nephew Lot quarrelled concerning their respective rights to the wells and pasture-ground they discovered. Abraham, wishing to avoid a quarrel, generously proposed that they part while peace was between them as brethren, and offered Lot the first choice. In this, we see the first faint dawn of reason and humanity.

Brotherly and family love begets the larger love of the nation, and at last of the whole human race. In this trait of Abraham, we behold a national trait. While the whole world has been against the Jews, they have triumphed over all oppression by cleaving together. I know of no people among whom there is so much domestic felicity, while within the national boundary they are more humane than any other sect or tribe in the whole world. Abraham is represented as rescuing Lot from captivity by fighting with his handful of slaves against the combined forces of three or four kings. So the Jews all over the world to-day are coming to the rescue of their persecuted brethren in Germany and Russia. When Judge Hilton shut a few of them out of his hotel at Saratoga, they all made the insult their common cause to avenge. However they may fleece the rest of the world, they stand by and defend each other. It is quite rare to find either a Jew pauper or criminal.

A characteristic story is told of one of them who was seen coming out of Stewart's store after the race had been insulted. A brother Jew at once took him to task for patronizing and enriching with his money the enemy of their race. After listening to this rebuke, he replied, "Jacob, you just keep quiet a little, and you will see I am as good a Jew as you are. Did not our forefathers punish the Egyptians by borrowing their jewels and never returning them? And haven't I followed their glorious example by getting forty thousand dollars' worth of goods of our enemy on credit, when I intend to fail next week?" That the cheating propensity of the Jew is largely overdrawn by the malice of Christians is true, I make no doubt. One thing is quite certain,—that, if Jews set the lesson, there are many Christians who have bettered the instruction. I know of no more absurd folly than the attempt to convert the Jews to Christianity. In my judgment, they are much better as they are. We hope, however, that the time is not distant when both Jews and Christians will sink their hatred and bigotry in the spirit of humanity that aspires to be just to friend and foe.

When Abraham was returning from the rescue of Lot, he was met by Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of Yahweh, who blessed him, and to whom Abraham presented a tenth of all he possessed, notwithstanding his property was a long way off. In this story, that has inspired so many fanciful sermons, we evidently have an attempt by the writer to exalt the priesthood at Jerusalem. He was probably of that profession himself.

In the name Salem, we simply have the latter part of Jerusalem, while in the antiquity of its priesthood, as represented by Melchizedek, we have defended the claim of Jerusalem to be the city of Yahweh, while in the offering by Abraham of one-tenth of his possessions to this priest is presented the right of the present priesthood to their claim of one-tenth of the property of all the people. When the supporters of priestly idleness and

sensuality begin to forget to pay tithes, so priest is pretty sure to have a revelation rect from the Lord on that head.

The next event recorded in the life Abraham is the covenant or oath of Yahweh to make him a great nation, and to give th this land of Canaan as a possession foret One thing is certain: if Yahweh took t oath, he broke it. The children of Esau h revenged their father by robbing the desce ants of Jacob of their birthright. L Esau's mess of pottage, they have got a p bargain. For the land the Bible says flov with milk and honey is a barren desert.

A short time ago, I met a gentleman w had been made an infidel to Christianity going to Palestine. He went there to tr its sacred soil and quicken his faith. "Bt said he, "when I looked around upon t miserable, barren desert, and saw the pove and filth of its inhabitants, and realized w a little, insignificant country it was t rest of the world, and said to myself, 'Is possible that the God of the whole wo chose this place from all others, and h lived and taught?' I found that all my fa was gone, never to return."

The same experience will come to any t who will tear the bandage from the eyes reason and honestly study the Bible as would any other book, without going to I estine.

But to return to the covenant with At ham. By direction of Yahweh, he took ox of three years old, a goat and a ram the same age, and a pair of doves. He each of the larger animals into two pa but left the birds undivided, and arran them on the ground, so that Yahweh, w he appeared, might pass between the pa Among Eastern nations, this was a gene custom when making a treaty, for the swea to pass between the divided body of a be or man, and so call upon God and all mer do the like to him if he should break oath. Hence, making a treaty was cal striking or slaying a treaty. From this co our expression, "striking a bargain." I when Abraham had made this solemn pi

aration, he sat down to wait for the appearance of Yahweh. The sun went down, and he was wrapped in darkness. Terror seized hold on him. The thick, black darkness in which Yahweh dwells closed around him, and weighed on his breast. From out of that darkness spoke a voice, again repeating the promise concerning his posterity, describing their bondage in Egypt and final possession of the land of promise; while there passed between the parts of the sacrifice a smoking furnace and a flame of fire. This was Yahweh.

This description of the God of Abraham is full of food for thought. In all things, we find a law of unity. There is a common basis to all language, and a sympathy running through all religions. Darkness and fire were most naturally the earliest symbols of God. The first Gods were devils, or what men most feared. The idea of divine beneficence was an after-thought that came with the better understanding of nature.

To the first men, nothing was so terrible as a great darkness. When night shut down over the earth, they cowered and trembled at the thought of the invisible powers they believed to be lurking all around them. The dawn of a new day was, to them, the return of life. Darkness was, to them, indeed a shadow of fear and land of death.

We are still influenced by this dread of the night by our ancestors. Children repeat in their experience, in some slight degree, the terror of the world's childhood. People ignorant of science look upon an eclipse as the work of a demon, while its untimely darkness still fills the minds of thousands with a preternatural dread. Let but a dark cloud arise in the midst of the day, and the noisy, jostling, eager world is hushed and stilled. Even the birds of the air and the beasts of the field seem to be awed by darkness.

Madame de Staël was once asked whether she believed in ghosts. "No" she said, "but I am afraid of them." The stoutest heart is so allied to the trembling, cowering past as to know what she meant, in a dark night on passing a church-yard at midnight. In spite

of reason's calm assurance that fear is folly, the nerves quiver. It is utterly impossible for us to conceive of what the men and women of antiquity suffered from darkness. We occasionally get some glimpse into the extremity of their terror in such scenes as this. Abraham could face an army with a few brave followers without fear, but in the presence of the darkness he was a craven, trembling wretch, turning the whisper of a breeze into the voice of God, and a flash of lightning from out the darkness into the presence of Yahweh. One of the Hebrew psalms represents Yahweh by saying,—

"He bowed the heavens, and came down with storm clouds under his feet. He rode on a thunder cloud, and flew and shot forth on the wings of the wind. He veiled himself in a mantle of darkness, and shrouded himself in dark waters and masses of cloud. By the brightness before him his clouds were broken, by hail and coals of fire."

Here, Yahweh is represented as a thunder-storm; and thus we see that Hebrew Yahweh was only an impersonation of the powers of nature.

Thanks to science, we are no longer the slaves of this superstition. As its triumphs in the discovery of gas and the electric light rid us from the inconvenience of physical darkness, so do they drive from us the more terrible moral darkness that has so long afflicted mankind. Every day, the natural is encroaching upon the supernatural, the known triumphing over the unknown, and so widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower.

Next, we come to the quarrel between Sarah and Hagar, a skilful piece of character painting, in which is prefigured the struggle between the marriage of parental and churchly authority and that of true love. Abraham's conduct is thoroughly disgraceful; and, like that of many other men under similar circumstances, deserving of the strongest reprobation. Though a polygamist by religion, yet the superiority of monogamy is seen in the trouble that befalls him. But the real misery then as

to-day falls upon the woman. Sarah, in her treatment of Hagar, represents the tiger cruelty of the women of our own time toward the victims of a false social condition; while Abraham represents the cowardly man who sucks the honey from the lips of the fairest flowers of creation, and then tramples them beneath the feet of cruelest neglect, until, like Hagar, death itself seems sweeter than life.

But I must pass on to the final test of Abraham's character, in the command of Yahweh to sacrifice his son Isaac. In this story, we have the two ideas of faith and sacrifice. Now, we can only understand the people of this age by thinking of them as children in thought. They believed in a personal God, possessed of all the passions and senses of a man. They desire to win his favor. Now, the only idea a child has of being pleased is in the reception of a gift. How natural, then, that they should offer gifts to Yahweh! If he was pleased with the offering of an animal, how much more would the present of a human being delight him! Thus originated human sacrifice. The soul of the slain was supposed to become his slave. The Hebrews were not above this practice. We frequently read of their making their children pass through the fire in the worship of Molech. Yahweh did not require this, yet he recognized the principle by claiming the first-born and compelling them to be redeemed by the offering of an animal and the maintenance of the tribe of Levi as his servants.

In this story, we have in allegorical form

this change from the human sacrifice to the animal. Considered in this light, it is the record of a great progress in religious ideas. The voice of Yahweh that stayed the hand of Abraham was the increase of human love and tenderness that made it impossible for the hand of the father to descend with murderous stroke upon his own son. The design of the author is also to glorify the principle of faith. Now, faith is a good thing when it is subject to reason. But he who slays reason, in order to set faith above its grave, murders the better part of his own life. Now, Abraham's faith was in perfect harmony with his understanding. And so his obedience to the voice of Yahweh was evidence of a loyal nature to what he conceived to be the highest good. But, though he could do no better because he knew no better, far other conduct is possible to us. We have other thoughts of the world. We know that this idea of a personal God has no foundation save in barbarism.

But in the place of Yahweh, requiring our devotion, we have humanity. Do we believe in its final redemption from the hells of slavery, ignorance, poverty, and vice? Only with such faith in our hearts can we live worthy of the hour. If the demand were made upon us, could we sacrifice our first-born, our very life, for the advancement of liberty and justice? If we have this faith then, though we proclaim as false all the ideas of the patriarchs, apostles, and martyrs, yet in devotion to the highest truth we shall be their true successors.

FAIR PLAY.

WHEN my three boys are at play, I sometimes hear one of them shout, "That is *no*

The tiniest dew-drop mirrors the world. So do they reflect the vast life of the world.

"All the world's a stage,
and all the men and women merely players."

But from the scene of its mingled tragedy and comedy, from those that are on and those that are off the stage, I hear a cry that grows louder and louder every day, says to some of the players, That is *no*

When the children demand fair play, shall we expect of men and women?

not time they decided to enforce it easily, if they can), but anyway to see that the laws of the serious game of life are complied with?

at great things may be confidently expected for in this direction is found in the history that the very idea of "fair play" is of modern birth. Though long pregnant in the bosom of humanity, yet it had no articulate form in the affairs of earth until it came to be amid the fierce throes of the French Revolution. Though the young child of liberty was stolen and imprisoned by Napoleon, yet behind the bars of tyrants, kings, priests, and tax-gatherers, it has grown to maturity; and at no distant day he will demand justice from the enemies of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Few realize that the world strides the oppressed and down-trodden, yet taking toward this day of reckoning. Boldly and openly, millions are under the dungeons of despair. Some can

work in one quarter, and others in another. I stand here to-day proudly in this infidel pulpit; and, if I am not much mistaken, you listen to and support me because we feel that the Church which teaches mankind to bow the knee of serfdom to a heavenly Tyrant, and presents the Bible, with its infamous atrocities and immoralities, as the standard of all that is right and true, is the worst foe of liberty and justice. I know that its power is greatly weakened, and that there is some excuse for those who think "the wretch is crushed." But in this they are too sanguine.

"We have scotched the snake, not killed it."

Unless we go further in this business, she'll close and be herself, while our poor hearts remain in danger of her former tooth.

Line upon line, blow upon blow, precept upon precept, are still needed. Though men and women smile at the cant of the pulpit, yet by its social power they are poisoned with hypocrisy; while the rising generation, in thousands of Sunday-schools and, shame to say, in our public schools, is corrupted by having dinned into its ears such stories as this one of Jacob and Esau as divine. We who were taught at our mother's knee to reverence the Bible as God's book cannot begin to realize how much moral poison there is in this presentation of it.

It will take a generation trained in the healthy atmosphere of mental sanity to fully understand what a curse the Bible Society has been to the world. An intelligent Ger-

man lady was telling me the other day that, when one of her boys heard read in public school for the first time in his life this story of Jacob and Esau, he said to her, "Mother, don't you think that Jacob was a great scamp?" There are not many children who have the same chance to distinguish at a glance right from wrong, when right is clothed in rags of dishonor and wrong in the garments of heavenly purity. American Liberals have much to learn from German Radicals. What we want is more Radicalism and less Liberalism. Liberalism is too vague and compromising. It concedes too much by far to the Church. It almost admits that the Church is not far wrong morally. But the truth that German Radicals have learned, and which we all need to learn, is that the morality of the Church is antagonistic to reason and nature. It has condemned us for devotion to truth, justice, and liberty. Standing, as we do, so far above it, we cannot do our duty without condemning it. They have had their innings. It is our turn now. The game must no longer be played in accordance with Bible rulings. The idea of fair play was hardly known to the writers of the Bible. Their only idea of right was the will of God. The priest commanded every vice and injustice in his name, and he was obeyed. The idea of doing right for the right's sake was never dreamed of. Any piece of cheating, or bloody butchery that had the sanction of God upon it, was eagerly executed.

The idea that, if there was a God, he must be subject to the laws of justice, never entered their minds. The Church, following the teaching of the Bible, threatens in some great, theatrical, spectacular judgment-day to bring us all before the bar of God. In the mean time, we find it our duty to impeach their God. If we are guilty of breaking the law at one point, he threatens to hold us guilty at all points. But we find him guilty of breaking every law. The Mosaic decalogue, which was the slow growth of ages, and is then only negative, is said to be the law of Yahweh. And yet

he constantly violates every part of it. He may not use his own name in vain. But those who claim to be inspired, certainly, say, Lord, Lord, when they had better keep silent. We are told to rest every seventh day from labor, but he works on. The grass grows, and all nature toils on Sunday as much as Monday. He tells us to honor our father and mother; when, according to the Bible, he has none to honor or disgrace. We are not to kill, but he commanded Abraham to kill his son, and the children of Israel to murder thousands of men, women, and children. We are not to commit adultery, but the mother of Jesus was the betrothed wife of Joseph. We are not to steal, but he instructed the Hebrews to spoil the Egyptians under the name of borrowing. We are not to bear false witness against our neighbor, but he sent out a lying spirit to deceive a man he wanted to get killed, and chose Jacob over Esau, through enabling him to bear false witness against his brother. We are not to covet. We probably would not, if all the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills belonged to us. But these are only a few of the hundreds of crimes his own book makes him guilty of. He claims to be a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. What an example of fair play! Surely, if these things can be plainly taught, the world will cease to believe in the inspiration of the Bible and the most absurd of all ideas, the idea of a personal God. With these thoughts before us, let us look a little closely at this story of Jacob and Esau. I do not think for a moment that the incidents recorded ever happened.

Neither my time nor purpose will permit me to enter with any length into the design of the author. He probably wished to give a reason for the superiority of the Hebrews over the Edomites, who were a nation living in cities, when they were only a tribe of wandering banditti. Along with this, he may have desired to associate various sacred plans of the Canaanites with the orthodox

religion. But, if it were possible to fully master the historical meaning of this story, it would do us little good.

But, whether true or false, it reflects the morality of the writer, and of the age in which he lived. Nor would I say aught against this (for we do not expect much of barbarians), if it were not regarded as divine. It is sometimes said that the New Testament is our standard of morality, not the Old. But when the New says, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, and still represents us in the hands of God, as clay is in the hands of the potter, to be created according to his will a vessel of honor or dishonor, we see that the New Testament is as blind to correct moral principles as the Old.

Now, Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, and Esau of his father. Esau was the eldest; and, according to the usage of the time, to him belonged the birthright of succeeding his father as the chief and representative of the family. But, one day, Esau, who had been out hunting and caught nothing, came toward home, faint and ready to die for hunger. But, before he reached home, he came across Jacob in the fields, who had some good lentil pottage or bean soup. How natural was it that Esau should say to Jacob, Feed me, for I am faint! If Jacob had possessed one spark of humanity in his breast, say nothing of being his brother, he would have needed no such invitation. But, instead of offering the food at once, he stops to haggle with him over his birthright. What does a man ready to die with hunger care about a birthright? As the devil said of Job, All that a man hath will he give for his skin. Is it any wonder that Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me? So give me the food, and let me live. How often men in these days sacrifice everything for life! At sea, they gladly fling overboard the cargoes to save themselves. No one can honestly blame Esau. His brother had no business to demand any such price. Jacob is represented as a smooth,

respectable man, dwelling in tents; Esau, as a rough, blunt man, a lover of hunting and the fields. It was by no means the last time that oily respectability has cheated the rough toiler of the fields out of his birthright, or demanded a life-long servitude for food enough to keep death at bay.

This kind of thing is going on every day. Thousands of Jacobs who, because they happen to have a present advantage over their hungry brothers, demand a similar price for a plate of bean-soup! I have always wondered, when I have considered what a coward Jacob showed himself to be, why Esau didn't—faint as he was—take some of the pottage by force. So it is a wonder to me still that so many Esaus, faint and weary as they are with toil and hunger, allow themselves to be so cruelly cheated by our modern Jacobs. For, you may depend upon it, these of our time are just as cowardly as Jacob was. A little earnest resistance to wrong will soon put them to flight. We shall find this out some day, and then justice will be done. Now, Isaac being old, and expecting to die, instructs Esau to go and kill him venison; so that, when he has been refreshed with food, he may bless him. You all know how Rebekah helped Jacob to deceive his father by impersonating Esau, and so stealing the blessing. At first, he was afraid for fear he would be caught, and cursed instead of blessed. He never stopped to question the right or wrong of the action, and the moment he saw that success was certain he went forward with the lying and thieving work. How despicable his conduct!—standing there by his blind and dying father, who, his suspicions having been aroused by the sound of his voice, said to him, Art thou my very son Esau? And he replied, I am. And so he received the blessing which rightly belonged to Esau. How different the conduct of Esau, the wild, strong man of the fields, who, when he learned how Jacob had supplanted him, wept bitterly, and said unto his father, "Bless me, even me, also, O my father!" But Isaac had made Jacob the lord of his

brethren, and superstitiously believed that what he had said must come to pass. Superstition always goes hand in hand with ignorance and barbarism.

People ignorant of the laws of nature still attach great weight to the curse or blessing of another. There are thousands, no doubt, in Boston, who believe that a priest has power to bless and curse, and who, if they should be cursed by a pious father, would look upon it as the cause of every misfortune that might befall them. Superstition is the mother of many wrongs. If Jacob had not known that his father would not dare to take back his word, he would never have entered upon this career of villany. When Esau found that there was no chance of recovering the blessing, he resolved in the desperation of his sorrow, after the death of his father, to slay Jacob. Here the noble nature of Esau shines forth, when he restrains his anger, so as not to give pain to his father; while Jacob's cowardly nature is seen by his taking refuge in flight. His pretended purpose is to seek a wife among his own kindred, and so he gains the consent of his father. On his way, Yahweh appears before him, and renews the promise he had made to Abraham and Isaac. This was in a dream; and, when he awoke, he vowed a vow, saying, "If Yahweh will be with me, and will keep me in this way I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Yahweh be my God." Here, again, we have a contemptible standard of morality. Jacob is quite willing to serve Yahweh, if he will pay him well. He doubtless believed in other gods, and resolved, if Yahweh did not protect him, to transfer his allegiance to some other deity. Is not this the underlying motive of a good deal of modern religious service? Are there not thousands who go to church simply because they think it pays? Does not many a preacher sell heart, brain, and conscience to the Church simply for a chance to live? Are not bargains struck every day between God and pious people? If by some natural co-

incidence their wish is fulfilled, there are plenty to believe it a miracle in answer to prayer. The God of the Church is still much like that of Jacob's. He is still thought to be engaged in the work of blessing some and cursing others, of listening to prayers and recording similar vows to this one of Jacob's. Jacob is always on the lookout for a bargain, no matter whether it is with a starving brother or a mighty God. In each case, he tries to get a good deal for next to nothing,—a birthright for a plate of soup, and the protection of Yahweh for selecting him as an object of worship from all other gods. We never read that Esau made any such vow. We are told nothing about his religion. He is such an honest, noble, open-handed, straightforward man that we are not surprised that no language of piety or cant falls from his lips. He probably came as near being an infidel as it was possible to have one in those days. Probably this was the reason God cursed him. According to the Church, he is constantly engaged in that kind of business. Unless Yahweh has improved his morals since then, I have no desire to have any business dealings with him. If worst comes to worst, I will share the curse of Esau before engaging in the lying business with Jacob, for the sake of an unknown and very uncertain blessing.

After Jacob had concluded this treaty with Yahweh, he journeyed on in safety until he reached his Uncle Laban's, with whose daughter Rachel he fell in love. As it was the custom of the country to sell a daughter for a wife, as though she were a slave, Jacob, who had no money, worked for her seven years. But Laban, who was a sharper as well as Jacob, gave him Leah in the place of Rachel. The biter was at last bitten. Not very severely, however, for he was allowed to marry Rachel immediately on trust. After he had paid the stipulated price, he offered to still serve Laban for all the brown sheep, speckled and spotted goats and cattle that might be born while the flocks were under his care. But he has all sorts of cunning tricks and devices by which

he insures that the majority shall belong to him. But, instead of ascribing his good fortune to his own trickery, he constantly insists that it is owing to the blessing of his God Yahweh. Just think of the idea of this partnership! Why, it is worse than a modern church fair. The Angel of God appears to him in a dream, and pledges that Yahweh shall assist him in the cheating business. When Laban saw that he was constantly outwitted by Jacob, he became angry. But, as Jacob seems to have thought discretion the better part of valor, he again sought safety in flight. Though Laban with his sons pursued after him, he was warned of God in a dream not to meddle with him. We cannot help but wonder where the writer could get such an immoral idea of God. And yet, when we look closely into it, we find that every idea of a personal God necessitates the same low tone of morality. Every great wrong that is practised in the world still takes God into partnership. The Church is founded on this idea of a personal God, who is constantly superintending the affairs of earth. But, though it promises only good to man, its path through history is bordered with gibbets and paved with skeletons. It has leagued itself with every tyranny, and upheld every injustice. What supports the infamous despotism of the Czar, that almost maddens us to think on it? Faith in a Czar above. What is it that keeps Charles Bradlaugh from his constitutional and elected right to sit in Parliament, that slanders his good name and tortures him with lawsuits for asking the privilege of the English Parliament to be an honest man, but this same relic of barbarism? What is it that blesses and furnishes chaplains for every standing army of Europe? The Church of this same Yahweh. What is it that pours its oil of divine sanction on the head of every crowned murderer and thief? The Church that says the powers that be are ordained of God. The idea of a personal God springs from a belief in the personality of the blind forces of Nature. Evil and good were both supposed to spring

from a personal will. With such a faith, men naturally sought to secure the good-will of the gods by gifts, incense, flattery, and bargains, similar to the one Jacob made with Yahweh. No matter how they achieved prosperity, it was supposed to be by the blessing of God. This idea still prevails, and will continue to do so, as long as men believe in God. Though children still fill copy-books with the proverb, Honesty is the best policy, yet every one knows that, as business is now conducted, it is a lie. The majority of those who get on in the world, and, like Jacob, are reported respectable, while they ascribe their prosperity to God, know very well that it is by their own tricks and clever cheating of some of their more honest brethren out of their birth-right. Thousands this day have thanked God on velvet cushions, in costly churches, for the many blessings they owe to watered stocks, fraudulent schemes, corrupted legislation, and adulterated food.

The principal support of the Church today is its eminent respectability. Reason, intelligence, and conscience have with but few exceptions forsaken it entire. The essence of Christianity is essentially a selfish bargain with a Deity. Every believer expects to be saved, though millions are lost. He is willing to be blessed by a God who will curse others with eternal pain. Hardened and corrupted by this faith, believers continue their mad struggle for wealth, place, and power, though, to do so, they have to tread thousands beneath the cruel feet of injustice and neglect.

But reason sees that this inequality, instead of being the will of any God, is an imperfection inherited from a barbarous past, that has no right to exist. As its light flashes down into the pit of human wrong and misery dug and fed by superstition, it shows us that these things are all wrong. Children ought not to be crying for bread, nor set to work in factories. No parent ought to be driven insane with looking upon his or her helpless babes growing up in filth and ignorance, from which they can-

not deliver them. No man has any right to assume to be lord or master over another. A state of society that permits hundreds of thousands of young women to sell their bodies to the service of lust and disease must be outrageously wrong. No one ought to be left in the helpless shackles of ignorance. Any right of birth that makes the blessing of one depend upon the curse of another must be an infamous crime.

There are light and air, soil and water, food and fuel enough for all. They are the heritage of all or none. Every advantage given to one generation or class over another, no matter what its antiquity may be, is a base crime against humanity. If there is any sense or meaning to justice, it should be impartial, calling no man master, but leaving each man and woman free to walk erect and own no superior. If there is any truth, it should illuminate every mind. What do these prisons mean? Level them to the ground and build hospitals. What mean these gibbets? What right have you to deprive any one of life? Do you not know that in doing so you pass sentence of execution upon yourself. The hand is not more part of the body than they of you. Do not maim and degrade yourself. The disease only grows worse every time you thus torture it. Seek to purify the stream at the fountain whence it flows. The way of recovery is to make common cause with humanity, to seek in every possible way to establish the ideals of truth, justice, and liberty, as perceived by reason, in the place of every god.

But let us return once more to Jacob. On his way back to Canaan, he hears that Esau, with four hundred followers, is on the road to meet him. Injustice and hypocrisy are the father and mother of base fear. Again, he falls back upon prayer and cunning. After crying to Yahweh for help, he sends forward numerous presents to Esau. Then, surrounding himself with his helpless wives and young children, he goes tremblingly forward, bowing seven times to the ground at Esau's approach, as if to assure him that,

though his father had made him master, he was willing to renounce it, and become his servant. But no sooner did Esau see his brother than he forgot every wrong and desire for vengeance, and ran eagerly forward to meet him, and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, weeping for very joy. And yet Sunday-school children are taught that Jacob was the chosen of the Lord, and Esau the rejected. No wonder some of them grow up to live and act as though they thought God were still on the side of successful villany and brazen hypocrisy.

This sowing broadcast the seeds of immorality ought to be stopped. No better work can be done for mankind than the destruction of these false standards of conduct, by which evil is called good and good evil. Jacob cried to God for deliverance, but found it in the generous, impulsive heart of his brother. All trust in deity deprives us of a useful confidence in humanity. The doctrine of total depravity is the production of belief in an infallible God. If all goodness belongs to him, man must be entirely destitute of it. The Church is constantly cultivating this spirit of mistrust in human nature. Almost every believer in God is afraid of the natural impulses of humanity. Notice how fearful the Church is to-day of the growing spirit of revolt in the hearts of the people against every form of oppression. The instinct of and demand for fair play, that organizes Leagues, Unions, Co-operative Societies, religious and political reforms, is everywhere denounced. But, while the spirit of fear hides its white face behind the cloak of hypocrisy, the spirit of courage and sympathy grows apace in the hearts of those who have been wronged and cheated out of their birthright. Esau is coming with a strong band to meet Jacob, the spoiled to stand face to face with the spoiler. If blood is not spilt, it will not be because of the cowardice nor prayers of the oppressor, but because of the noble, impulsive affection for humanity, that has grown in the heart of the oppressed by fellowship of suffering. While there is a conflagration kindling that shall burn up many present wrongs and institutions, yet it is only the beneficent fire of justice and truth. Be not discouraged, then, my brothers. Though others despair of liberty and justice, hope on. The waiting may be long, but at last

"Ever the truth comes uppermost,
And ever is justice done!"

A BIBLICAL ROMANCE.

ERE is a deep and rich vein of romance in the heart of humanity. We love to be surrounded with strong passions and heroic adventures. When existence becomes a dead monotonous level of the commonplace, welcome a surprise, though it bring us

The thing that interests us most is unexpected. A landscape is romantic when it presents a constant change of

Men and women interest us most when they are many-sided. If our friend tells the old story and plays the same tune every time we meet him, we soon learn to get him best at a distance. Life is only so highly worth living when each day brings some new experience, thought, or

In the dullest lump of human clay there is a slight vein of romance. But here and there the vein deepens and thickens into a mine of inexhaustible wealth, like the mine of Shelley, into which thousands of

Imagination can no more be denied than the stomach. Our wants are also quite as varied both in substance and in taste. The food that kills one person keeps another fat. Our ideals of life that elevate and ennoble would degrade and dishonor others. Though the bar-room has been the gate of ruin and ruin to thousands, it has offered solace to many a rough, honest man, and finds his only relief from the insipid rum of his daily toil through the songs and coarse stories told over a glass of beer and a pipe of tobacco.

While we demand institutions that shall satisfy ideal man, we must not allow ourselves to forget the real men and women to whose strong arms and constant industry we owe our principal comforts. We hope that the time is not far distant when no one will be unjustly deprived of the education and opportunity that makes them incapable of any higher form of pleasure. But, in the mean time, let us remember that these, too, are our brothers.

Many others find satisfaction in works of fiction and poetry and the drama. Though their own lives may be less heroic than that of some rough, illiterate son of toil, yet through their imaginations they experience in this way the deeper emotions and higher thoughts of human life. Though these things have been despised and condemned by the Church, yet they provide for a most legitimate desire of humanity. In fact, the Church is only another method of catering to this same appetite.

Your pious deacon, who forbids his children to read novels, goes to church to be excited in the same way, by imagining himself the child of God, and dreaming of celestial glory and favor. The best orthodox sermon is only a rather tame work of fiction. Through the excitement of the imagination by prayer, song, and preaching, the uniform dulness and stupidity of their daily life are broken with dreams of triumph and future wealth and splendor.

One young lady prefers to dream of

Claude Melnotte; while another, who thinks that wicked, goes to church and does the very same thing under the sanction of religion, by thinking fondly of the time when she shall be folded in the arms of Jesus.

It is because of this principle that religion is dying out much faster in the cities than in the country. In the city, this craving for excitement is satisfied in many ways that are absent from the country. The farther you get away from bookstores, libraries, theatres, museums, lectures, railroads, and daily papers, the more faithful will you find the population to the Church. The Sunday service, weekly prayer-meeting, and annual revival are about the only things that break the dead level of their humdrum existence. The young ladies know no higher ambition than to become a minister's wife; while every boy who yearns for a richer, larger life, offers himself as a candidate for the ministry. With few exceptions, the ministerial ranks are recruited from these sources. The students at theological seminaries are rapidly falling off in number and ability, because the increase of railroads and newspapers, by opening to all the higher possibilities of life, is constantly encroaching upon this territory of ignorance.

The champions of the Church seem to think that the growing revolt of the people from its meagre platitudes and solemn stupidities would cease, if Paine Hall should be burnt up, and a few liberal lecturers and newspapers be silenced. But the truth is that liberty, like the ocean, is fed from a thousand sources. Every discovery, new book, romance, poem, drama, that increases the opportunities of intellectual and emotional excitement, weakens the Church. All the varied influences of our modern civilization are conspiring together to enable the slave of creeds and dogmas to exchange the narrow fields of the Church for the large, rich life of the world outside. The men and women who, through the drama and works of fiction and poetry, create noble ideals of life, and through the influence of the imagination give inspiring motives to

human conduct, are our best benefactors. But, useful as they are to the world, they are not so noble as those who make their own lives heroic. If no one ever visibly realized the highest dreams of youth, hope and ambition would be starved to death. Books are only valuable when they present to us ideals we know can be realized.

Why are so many interested in the sad news about President Garfield? Is it not because this tragedy is related to a truly heroic and romantic life? From the tow-path to the White House is a thrilling contrast. The road over which he travelled must have been one of vivid experiences and vast intellectual achievement. He has, by his own constant and brave endeavor, become the embodiment of all the dreams and ambitions of the republic. It is sad to think of him dying in the fulness of his strength and fame. Still, while the stars and stripes wave above the home of the free, he will live as an inspiring influence in hopes and dreams of American youth. He doubtless represents ideas and political methods we shall outgrow: still, the essential service of his life, in creating a lofty ideal of success as a self-made man, will stand side by side with that of Lincoln in the admiration and gratitude of untold coming generations. On the other hand, the memory of Guiteau will be as infamous as his will be honorable.

But it becomes us to remember that even Guiteau represents another side of the same principle. He also aspired to be a hero. Contemptible and disgusting as his egotism is, it is closely allied to the noblest ambition. He is the victim of his organization and the food he fed on. His little mental capacity could not take in the noble ideals of service to mankind that inspired President Garfield. What little room there was was so taken up with superstition and religion that the rational and humane could not get in. Garfield, though a believer, worshipped a God who was one with the laws and forces of the infinite universe. Guiteau worshipped a God who, leaving the rest of the universe to take

care of itself, came to him personally and told him to shoot the President. He believed every word of the Bible to be true, and thought Colonel Ingersoll, the most sensible man of the nineteenth century, insane. Some have ascribed this action to infidelity; but the truth is that it is just as much the legitimate fruit of Christianity as was the sacrifice Freeman made of his daughter.

Having been visiting during the last week at Pocasset, I went with a friend to the home of Freeman. My companion was Mr. A. P. Davis, who had been the intimate friend of Freeman, and was himself, at the time of the tragedy, an Advent. But, under the thought-provoking influence of that insane deed, he was awakened to the insanity and danger of all faith in supernaturalism, and so courageously abandoned it. As I stood with him in the room in which the modern Abraham not only raised the knife, but actually plunged it into the heart of his child, I could not keep back the thought that both Garfield and little Edna Freeman were slain by the same hand.

Both Guiteau and Freeman claim to have been inspired of God. What better can you expect of a God that was conceived in the minds of barbarians who lived by murdering each other? And yet thousands of innocent people are praying to this monster to heal his victim. The ministers who last week requested Secretary Blaine to order a day of fasting and prayer for this purpose proved themselves the intellectual brothers of Guiteau. They believe in a God that will consign millions to eternal flames, and expect to enjoy as sweet music the sound of their groans, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In making such a request, they show that they have not the faintest conception of human justice, liberty, and fraternity.

While such a faith remains as the principal intellectual food furnished to millions, human life will be ever endangered, and all the wheels of progress blocked by just such intellectual and moral paupers. The grandest work any man can do in this day and

generation is to help destroy this faith. I have been thus lengthy in the introduction of my subject to-day, in order to show you that this study of the Bible is related to the most practical needs and reforms of to-day. We should guard most carefully all that feeds the imagination of our youth. I do not mean, by this, that we are to establish a censorship of the press, like the Church of Rome and the Boston Public Library. By so doing, the best books, like Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, may be consigned by official prudens and ignoramuses to the inferno. I was glad to see in last Sunday's *Herald* that, notwithstanding this action of our Public Library, Walt Whitman, who is in town superintending a new edition of his poems, has decided that he cannot leave out any of the old in the new volume.

What we want is to teach the world what destroys and what enriches life, and then people will let moral poison alone as well as physical. Prohibition laws do but little, if any, good. Where there is a demand, it will be supplied, either legally or illegally. If you dam up a stream in one direction, it will make an opening in another. Men and women, craving stimulants, denied alcohol, will take to drugs.

The only way to stop intemperance is to give to all the liberty, justice, and education that will furnish emotion and enthusiasm, without artificial intoxication. It would do no good for Liberals to acquire power and forbid all reading of the Bible. Neither would it amount to anything, if we were commanded by law to read it. The only laws that get themselves enforced are those that are written upon human hearts. What we should aim at is to cultivate the moral sentiments of the people, so that, instead of reverencing the idolatries, falsities, murders, and injustice of the Bible, they will read it as they do any other book, and divide the evil from the good. By showing them the absurdity of the orthodox view of this book, we shall free them from the responsibility of reading fiction for history, and the commands of barbarians for divine wisdom.

The romance I refer to in my title is the story of Joseph. I need not repeat it. If you have never read any other part of the Bible, you probably have this. I call it a romance, because it has all the characteristics thereof. It is about the only story in the Bible that has anything like a plot, and a hero who interests us by the exciting nature of his adventures. From the shepherd's cote to the Premiership of Egypt is as romantic as from the canal-boat to the Presidency of a great republic. In this story, youthful dreams of splendor and greatness are fulfilled in the most surprising way. The hero of much suffering and danger is at last triumphant. The plotters of villainy find that their inhuman schemes return to plague the inventors, commending the ingredients of their poisoned chalice to their own lips. It reads like a chapter out of the *Arabian Nights*. There is in it the same interpretation of dreams, clever disguises, bewilderment, pomp, and splendor, side by side with poverty and servility, that characterize those tales. But no one thinks them true, nor of holding up their characters as standards of conduct for us to-day. To do so would be no more absurd than the present treatment of these Hebrew stories.

The Church bids us read the story of Joseph as serious history. But just notice a few of the absurdities and difficulties in the way of such an interpretation. There were seven years of plenty in Egypt, followed by seven years of famine. This was revealed to the king in a dream, and interpreted by Joseph. But, though all knew of this, no one seems to have laid up anything but the king. Not only was there famine in Egypt, but all over the world. As far off as Canaan, they had to look to Egypt for supplies. There seems to have been no merchants in Egypt, for Joseph is represented as selling all the corn in person. If there had been any other place in which food could have been purchased, the sons of Jacob, after such rough treatment as they received the first, would hardly have returned a second time.

Jacob would never have let Benjamin go

but for fear of starvation at home. But Benjamin is spoken of as a tender lad needing the care of his father, when, at the same time, he had ten boys of his own. Besides this, they only bought one sack of grain for each person. This was carried on the back of an ass, and part of it fed to the animal as provender. But the distance was so great that any ordinary ass would have ate all it could carry on the road. It hardly seems credible that, notwithstanding many other similar impossibilities and absurdities, thousands of people still believe this to be veritable history. But faith always condemns its possessor to a state of intellectual insanity, that is perfectly inconceivable to a sane mind. It is true that some part of the Church admits that these stories are fictitious, but still insists that, by inspiration, they contain the moral truths and examples that save the world. But this is no nearer the truth than the orthodox theory. The whole structure of Christianity is built on the historical verity of the Old Testament, as well as the New. When this is given up, every ground of faith has gone. Nor is it true that there is any real moral inspiration and guidance in these stories for mankind. Joseph has often been presented to Sunday-school children as a model and virtuous youth, whom God watched over and preserved for his good conduct. But this is not, by any means, the idea of the writer. Instead of representing God as favoring Joseph for his good behavior, he gives all the credit of his virtue to Yahweh. But, whether it was of his own will that he acted or from the inspiration of God, his behavior is very far from satisfying our ideas of right. His conduct toward his brothers was anything but generous, and shows that he took an unfeeling and spiteful pleasure in annoying them. He concealed the fact that he recognized them, and purposely brought a false accusation against them; let them all languish in prison for three days, expecting every minute to be executed; kept Simeon back, and compelled them to choose between starvation and the annoying of their aged

father by compelling him to let Benjamin take a journey, which he fears will be fatal to his life. On their second visit, every foot of which was travelled in fear, he removes their anxiety by a kind reception, and then increases it by inventing another false charge against them, and confirming it with proof that he himself had manufactured. Now, all this was anything but noble. Though his brothers had done wrong to him, that was no reason why he should use all his power and superiority with which to torture them, especially when the innocent were compelled to suffer with the guilty.

Nor was Joseph by any means a model statesman. He is represented as taking, by force, one-fifth of the produce of all the land for seven years, and storing it away in vast granaries, and then, during the famine, compelling the people to purchase the fruit of their own labor. Having took all their money, he bought their houses and lands, and then their wives and children, and at last themselves to be the life-long slaves of Pharaoh. He was under the blessing and guidance of his God, and yet he sold unborn generations into the curse of slavery.

Most forms of government are still modelled after this divine pattern. Many modern statesmen seem to have taken lessons of Joseph. It is in these indirect ways that the Church oppresses the world. While the majority reverence and worship the God of the Bible, they will continue to regard as perfect forms of government that fleece and plunder the masses of the people. Joseph nor his God never seem to have thought that the surplus of the harvest, during those seven years, belonged to those who toiled wearily beneath the sun to produce it. We might have admired him if, instead of selling, he had given back the people their own. But when we see him, in the name of God, coldly and unfeelingly condemning a great nation into perpetual slavery, we are compelled to think of him as the most cruelly inhuman of all the Bible characters.

The writer seems to be entirely ignorant of this, however. His intention is simply to

magnify and exalt Joseph over his brethren. Any true conception of right and wrong was entirely foreign to him. He knew no standard of conduct but the will of Yahweh. All that Joseph did was under the guidance of God. In this, he was more consistent than many of our modern theologians. While they give God all the glory of every virtuous deed, they put all the responsibility of crime upon man.

But the truth is that, if there is a God who is the author of good, he is responsible for evil also. If God was the cause of Joseph's resisting Potiphar's wife, he must also have been the inspiration of the passion that made her unfaithful. If he can heal Garfield in answer to prayer, then Guiteau was right: the voice of God commanded him to do the deed. It is true that the Church shrinks from the logic of its faith. Still, it admits the principle every time it represents God as sending earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and tornadoes to chastise the wicked and to glorify himself by answering the prayers of believers. If he can kill a thousand people with a pestilence, why should they make such a fuss when he kills one with the bullet of an assassin.

According to the Church, God is anxious that we should believe in him under difficulties. He tells us that no man shall see his face and live, and that, unless we take him at his word, he will torment us eternally. Whoever believes in God ought to thank him for evil as well as good.

Nature, however, is irresponsible. We who believe that its laws and forces are the sum of all that is can alone choose the good and reject the bad. When it strikes us with its destructive lightning, we know that it is without malice or vengeance. Because there are weeds, we need not despise the flowers. By rejecting a personal providence, we open the way for a universal one through the study of nature and control of its powers.

Another lesson of my subject is found in the intent of the author rather than his achievement. Though we must beware of taking Joseph as a standard of morality, yet

we have illustrated in this story that universal craving for life large and full, rich and strong, of which I spoke at the beginning. Impertinent as the dreams of Joseph were to his father and brethren, yet he reached the summit of his desires. Children read the story with interest, because all children seek to create in dreams an ideal life. The ideals we cherish are sure to influence our destiny for good or bad. It is because of this that I value so highly the work of the novelist and poet.

We sometimes hear librarians deplore the fact that there are so many who prefer works of imagination to solid reading. But this to me is a ray of hope. The need that becomes universal will secure its own fulfilment. The splendid ideals that only live in

books will yet be realized in actual life. This craving for more life will yet seek satisfaction in action, instead of hope.

To write a romance is good, and deserves far more praise than it gets. But to live so that the simple story of your own life shall be an inspiration to others is far better. The writers of romances, like the one who invented this story of Joseph, have too often made heroes of men who were the authors of slavery. The coming heroes will be those who will devote their lives to the breaking of these fetters. The work of the hour is the achievement of liberty from the wrongs, superstition, and ignorance of the barbaric past. Let all who would sound the depths and scale the heights of life become her servant.

“BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW.”

IN my last lecture, we reviewed the life of Joseph. The man presented by the Church as an immaculate example of morality and statesmanship was found, when measured by the standard of humanity, to be both mean and cruel to an extreme degree. From Joseph, we are led, by the author, to Moses. Thus far, we have looked in vain for any historical ground of truth to stand upon. We have found much to condemn and little to approve. When I commenced these studies, I had still a good deal of respect and reverence left for the Bible. But as I have reread it carefully, but not prayerfully during the preparation of these lectures, I have become utterly disgusted with it. It contains far less of good morals and passable literature than I had hitherto dreamed in my most sceptical moods. When I think of how many people still believe in its infallibility, my faith is so shaken in humanity that I am tempted to give up the task as a waste of time. I should certainly have done so but for a constantly deepening conviction that the best work I can do for humanity is to do my level best toward destroying the entire faith of the Church. . . . Until this destruction can be achieved, no lasting progress can be made. Without this, no reform can be permanent. This is the stone that rests upon the brains of millions, and holds them prisoners in the gloomy tomb of the barbaric past. This it is that is the principal support of every tyranny that treads mankind into the dust of shame, vice, poverty, and crime. This it is that besmutches the fair robes of truth and jus-

tice with the mud of falsehood and slime of dishonor. This it is that worships hypocrisy and applauds cruelty. This it is that represses every natural impulse, and fetters the minds of all who come within its grasp. It stands in the entrance of every path of hope that brave men and women have opened into the possibilities of the future, and seeks with malice and slander to strike down every adventurous, loving, courageous soul who is seeking entrance therein. It takes into its service many of the best of men, and for the smiles and favor of the unthoughtful makes them pall-bearers at the funeral of human joy and hangmen at the murder of human intelligence. I am told that I am too fond of hitting the Church, and ought to restrain my blows by remembering that there are many good and true people within its fold. But that is just the reason I denounce it. If it contained only bad men and women, I would soon leave it alone. But in this Bastile are those I love,—my own flesh and blood,—many who would otherwise do noble work for mankind, whose companionship and sympathy I crave. Though the cold, damp, atmosphere and repressive influences of this prison-house are rapidly changing them, yet I intend to keep on battering at these thick walls, because I know that whoever is delivered therefrom will soon be regenerated beneath the sunlit skies of truth, and breathing the pure air of liberty. I am glad, however, that amid the dross of the Bible I have found, at last, a little gold. In the character of Moses, we do at last come upon a man noble enough to

gain our interest and admiration. That his name is associated with unnumbered mistakes and absurdities is not his fault. He could no more help that than a mighty river can avoid the stray sticks and logs that fall into it.

But, as they do not stay its course, neither do these falsities keep us from discerning the force and nobility of this champion of the wrongs of Israel. Beneath the false garb of infallibility with which the Church has arrayed him, we discern the shining tunic of a real hero of liberty.

In this story of the oppression of Israel in Egypt, we catch the first shadow of historical verity. In both the traditions of Egypt and Israel, we find the memory of a long struggle between a foreign race of shepherds and the Egyptians. That the record of this event as recorded in the Book of Exodus is true, is not to be entertained for a moment. While the general fact may have in it an element of truth, yet the circumstantial account given here must have been made out of whole cloth. No part of the Bible is so full of absurdities, inconsistencies, and impossibilities as this. The wonderful incidents and adventures connected with the birth of Moses are evidently false. Such stories are always invented concerning the childhood of every remarkable man. The idea that a king would command the destruction at birth of the male children of three millions of people, and place the execution thereof in the hands of two midwives, is a little too much of a story. At the lowest estimate, each woman would have had to strangle about two hundred boys a day. They certainly must have attended strictly to business to have superintended not only their advent into the world, but that also of the girls. And when, in connection with the ten plagues, by which Yahweh revealed what he could do in the miracle line, we are told that all the cattle were killed by a murrain, then covered with blains and boils, next killed by lightning, and last the first-born slain by the destroying angel, we are compelled to discredit the entire story of the plagues. The only rela-

tion they can have to truth is in the belief that all natural calamities were supposed to be visitations from God. If there was a day like one we had last week, or a severe storm, a pestilence or visitation of locusts, Moses and Aaron doubtless took pains to proclaim to the Egyptians that they were sent upon them by their God. We have not outgrown this debasing superstition yet. When Chicago burned down, and the hard-won earnings of thousands were all swept away in a few hours, and tender, loving women and helpless babes as well as strong men were driven homeless and destitute out on the prairies in one single night, a great many said God had done it to punish Chicago for its wickedness. But the truth is that, to the wicked and lawless, it was a source of profit, while the loss fell upon the good. Last Tuesday, the hand of God was seen by ignorant and superstitious people. The torment of fear suffered by thousands is inconceivable. Young girls working in factories went into hysterics; while others crouched in corners, terror-stricken and afraid to move. A party of advents put on their ascension robes, and waited in trembling awe the opening heavens and the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. In the same spirit of superstition, redeemed somewhat by a fellowship of sympathy with our suffering President, thousands left their work and went to church last Thursday, to pray God to work a miracle in his behalf. It is already claimed by many foolish, demented people that the slight improvement in the President's condition is owing to these prayers. It seems an ungrateful task to criticize this action, simply because the humanity of a tender compassion is allied to it, and so the foul leprosy of superstition is veiled thereby. But, in the name of a far richer humanity, and a far greater deliverance from pain, I protest against this upholding of the destructive falsehood of the Church by the strong hand of the State. Far more pain was experienced last Tuesday by the slaves of superstition, a hundred times, than it is possible for one man to experience. Instead

of breaking these fetters, they were riveted the tighter by the selfish, pandering spirit of the governors, many of whom in this way, against their own convictions, sought to win popular favor. I protest against it, because entirely unnecessary to secure the end desired. If prayer could do any good, people would have prayed just as much at the dictate of their own conscience as by the command of the State. It gives the sanction of the Commonwealth to what to thousands of its best subjects is a degrading superstition.

It has been said by some of the papers that a governor who himself did not believe in prayer was justified in issuing the call, because it was the wish of a majority of the people. That it is the wish of the majority is by no means true; and, if it was, the majority have no right to trample in the dust the principles of the Constitution that protect the minority. All honor to Governor Roberts, who faced the storm of cant and slanderous hypocrisy in the name of justice and liberty!

The principle of total separation of Church and State was once advocated upon the floor of the Senate by President Garfield himself. In refusing to join with the rest of the governors, the Governor of Texas simply, bravely practised what Mr. Garfield, as senator, most eloquently preached. When some of our Western governors sought to pray away the grasshoppers, a burst of ridicule was heard all over the land. Our respect for a suffering man keeps us from laughing, but we feel all the more deeply the absurdity and the injustice of the act. To pray for the interference of God supposes a power above that of nature. If there is a God who listened to the prayers of last Thursday, and who could, if he pleased, restore President Garfield at once to health, close at once the wound that is the source of his weakness, then he was at the same time in which he was listening to those prayers that told him of his infinite goodness, love, and mercy, devouring hundreds of men, women, and children in fierce flames in the woods of Michigan. Only think for a moment what this

means. Here is a young man, a fond and faithful son of loving parents. He has found a young woman to whom he can consecrate all the wealth of his manhood. After the unutterable joys and emotions of courtship, they vow to cherish each other in sickness and in health, in poverty or wealth, as long as life shall last.

They have gone together into the great West, and built them a little cottage in the woods. A little clearing has been made. A few fields have been won from the primeval forest. As the young wife has listened to the sound of her husband's axe, while he enlarges day by day their little kingdom, it made sweeter music for her than the strains of the grandest opera.

A few seasons have come and gone. Young fruit-trees are just ready to reward their toil. The flowers and vines they have planted and trained together have begun to make their cottage as beautiful as their own love. Through the limitless, sweet pain of motherhood, little children have come to increase their joy. To save them from pain and make life a blessing to them is their constant thought and care. But on that fatal morning the sky was overcast. They said to each other, with gathering fear, what means this smoke, when suddenly, through the thick clouds, burst great sheets of flame. Seizing their children, they seek safety in flight. But, lo! the flames are on all sides. They are surrounded with a wall of fire. Oh, the agony and despair, the cry to heaven for pity, drowned by the cries of their children, until the hot air chokes them, and the fierce, stinging flames clasp them to their breasts of fire, and, leaving them a charred and lifeless mass of human flesh, rush on to devour other homes, lives, and burn to ashes the bright hopes of other loving hearts!

Why, if there is a God, it would be far more appropriate to summon all to curse him instead of to pray. But, whatever of truth there is behind these extravagant stories in which the consistency of reasonableness never troubles the author, we may safely assume that the Hebrews had some

way become the slaves of Egypt. The idea that slavery was a crime was unborn. The stronger was ever ready to devour the weaker. As soon as Israel fled from Egypt, they, in turn, enslaved all whom they could conquer. Moses nor Aaron never once demanded freedom in the name of justice. Though prompted by pity for their suffering race, they had no reason to give why they should be free but the superior strength of Israel's God, and his desire to have them worship him. But, notwithstanding the immoral nature of their religious ideas, we cannot but admire the courage and devotion of Moses and Aaron. The youth of Moses is involved in mystery. Knowing that the story told of his adoption into the royal family must be false, we know not what to put in its place. It is not unreasonable to suppose, however, that his superior nature led him, when a young man, to flee from the hard servitude of slavery. But, though free and prosperous, he could not forget the suffering of his people. He had seen their burdens and heard their cries of pain, as the overseer's whip descended upon their quivering flesh. His employment was that of a shepherd. It gave him plenty of time for reflection.

In every man there is an element of weakness and strength, of selfishness and humanity. Superstition calls the first devil, and the last God. In Moses, these two fought together for the mastery. It was a fire in his breast that burned, but never consumed. From out of its depths there seemed to speak to him the voice of God. He, like us all, was more familiar with his lower nature than his higher. When his heart said, Go and deliver them, his fear and prudence said: It is impossible. Pharaoh will never listen to me. I shall only lose my life for my pains. I am not eloquent. But then he remembered his brother Aaron, who had a silver tongue, so that excuse was taken away. Thus, the struggle went on between the devil and God, until the higher nature conquered; and he went forth determined to deliver his race from their cruel bondage.

He went first to his own people. By the help of the oratory of Aaron, he persuaded the elders of Israel to believe that God had heard their cry, and sent him to be their deliverer. Next, he appeared before Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He did not dare to demand emancipation at once, so he asked for the privilege of leading them about three days' march into the wilderness to worship their God Yahweh. Though, it is claimed, he gave as credentials certain wonderful miracles, the sorcerers of Egypt did the same things. Instead of letting the Israelites go, the king made their tasks all the harder. Each man had to make so many bricks per day. The straw that held the clay together had hitherto been furnished by the government, but now they were compelled to make the same number of bricks and furnish their own straw. To do this, they had to spread all over the land in search of chaff and stubble. Finding their condition worse instead of better, the Israelites complained of the interference of Moses and Aaron in their behalf. Years of oppression had crushed out of them every ambition and instinct of manhood. They were discouraged at the first reversion. In their madness, they curse as enemies their best friends. This is the principal difficulty in the way of any reform. In Russia, the peasants are so degraded with centuries of oppression that it is almost impossible to awaken within their breasts any hope of bettering their condition. They unite with the Czar in denouncing their deliverers, even as the Israelites seconded the tyranny of Pharaoh.

Thousands of laboring men are afraid of joining any movement for the bettering of their conditions, for fear that they may lose their present employment. Under the influence of some eloquent tongue like that of Aaron's, they are momentarily aroused from their dumb despair; but the moment any serious action is required they are oftener on the side of the tyrant than of their would-be deliverer.

The same thing is true in the work of moral and intellectual reform. Our worst

opponents are the victims of this destroying power of the Church. Fettered by ignorance and dead to every noble instinct of humanity, they join with the Pharaohs of the Church in every attempt to crush us. Still, this is not so much the fault of the oppressed as of the oppressors. Every hostility of the ignorant and superstitious should inspire us to renewed effort to destroy the power that is so destructive of humanity. Moses did not let this discourage him. He toiled not so much for the degraded slaves who denounced him as for the men and women who might be born after the emancipation. Thousands, under the blighting influence of the Church, have become so small and mean, stingy and selfish, that we sometimes feel almost as though we were wasting our enthusiasm and devotion. But let us remember that this is not the end, and toil for the ideal and possible humanity rather than the actual,—the men and women who shall rise up under the better conditions of the future in the promised land of liberty and justice. However, then, we may be opposed by the slaves of the present, we must free them whether they will or no, though they give us curses instead of blessings. We can only in this way satisfy our higher natures. Liberty and the love of it is the bush that burns, but is never consumed. From it speaks the living voice of humanity. Have you not heard it? Have you not felt the stinging lash of injustice? Have you not seen men and women growing more brutal every day under these influences? Yea, you cannot silence the cry of your brother. Sit no longer in idle contemplation. Linger no more in the wilderness of fear. Obey that voice that bids you toil and suffer, if need be, for humanity. In that service alone are life and joy.

But, returning to our subject, we find that the sufferings of the Israelites were at first increased by the interference of Moses and Aaron. There seems to be much inconsistency in this, when we remember all that was afterwards done for them. While the

Egyptians suffered plague upon plague, none were permitted to come near them. They obtained gold and silver from the Egyptians for the asking, crossed the Red Sea without bridge or boat, obtained water in a desert without digging wells, and food without sowing or reaping. Why, then, was existence made so grievous to them that they railed against their best friends just for the want of a little straw? Besides this, what a foolish and unnatural command!

The ambition of Pharaoh was to build splendid temples, palaces, and forts, that would last forever. To refuse them straw and compel them to put in its place any stubble or rubbish they could find in the fields was the very extravagance of folly. A building is no stronger than its weakest part. A few unsound bricks were liable to bring the noblest structure to the ground in a heap of ruins.

And yet the world is constantly repeating the folly of Pharaoh. Society is a great palace, in which every man and woman represents a single brick. If any essential element of manhood or womanhood is denied them, they endanger the whole structure. We have lately had a forcible illustration of this in the insane act of Guiteau. One unsound brick has come near bringing the whole structure of society into a heap of ruins. The vicious and degraded poison the atmosphere we all breathe. The solidarity of human interests has never been fully recognized. The principal power of Christianity, it is true, was the establishment of a brotherhood. But that was the kingdom of God. It was circumscribed by doctrines of religion. It damned all who would not or rather could not believe its mysteries. But all who discern the signs of the times see that the kingdom of man is at hand. The *Herald* this morning, in reviewing Mr. Wakeman's lecture delivered in this hall, claims that in his best utterances he is simply reaching the manward attitude of Christianity. Like most of the utterances of the *Herald* on religion, it is exceedingly broad and generous, and prophecies

the day when Christians and infidels will be shaking hands together.

But, if the scientific humanitarianism of Mr. Wakeman's lecture is the present attitude to any degree of Christianity, it is because infidelity has shown it the way. The ideas of human society that are now engaging the attention of the most thoughtful and earnest men and women are those that spring essentially out of the moral and truthful spirit of infidelity. Christianity is stationary. Its kingdom is not of this world. It simply seeks to prepare men and women for another. Christ was wise, having never learned. If any of us lack wisdom, we are to pray to God. If any are sick, we are to look to the same source for restoration.

Christianity applauds poverty of spirit and commands non-resistance to evil. It makes poverty more desirable than wealth, and condemns thrift and forethought by bidding us take no thought for to-morrow. Wherever you find Christians practically and truly humanitarian, it is where the struggle of life has forced them to accept the principles of infidelity. Suppose, when the schools opened last Monday, the children had been informed by their teachers that, instead of studying this term, they were going to obey the Bible and pray to God every day for wisdom. How many Christians would have accepted the logic of their faith? The recognition that the laws of nature are immutable is the entire teaching of scientific infidelity. Christianity daily casts discredit upon this, and bids men and women make bricks without straw. It divides the world into saints and sinners by an arbitrary line, when such division is most absurd and unnatural. Its believers shut themselves up into societies and cliques, and say to the rest of the world, Touch me not, for I am holier than thou. The principle of human solidarity is entirely ignored. And if we go on much longer, digging gulfs between churches and brothels, capital and labor, culture and ignorance, building vast structures upon rotten foundations, there will be a crash one of these days,

that will be likely to reveal it in a way that it will not be easy to forget.

This is not only a question of self-preservation, but also of justice. Every one who is oppressed by society is required to make bricks without straw. We have the same standards of conduct for all, when their opportunities are entirely unequal. We expect thousands to be honest and virtuous, and yet never give them a chance of being anything else but the servants of lust and crime. How many sons of toil are expected to be men without half a chance!

Condemned to live and die as in caverns, no beauty gladdens and ennobles their lives. The works of genius and the inspirations of music and the drama are almost entirely beyond their reach. The only pleasures they can obtain oftener curse than bless. Think of the homes in which thousands live in every large city, the air they breathe, the food they eat, the ignorance and poverty in which they are steeped, and cease to wonder that the children bred there are the foes of society. They are rotten bricks in the temple of humanity, and when they fall it will not be alone.

Wherever a man or woman is denied an equal chance to be true to the highest manhood and womanhood, there injustice reigns, and bricks are required without straw. Any one case is sufficient to illustrate the whole law of human life, every injustice involves some form of slavery. The right of the strongest and of majorities to rule is the foundation of all wrong. When infidelity has destroyed the false systems of religion and morality that prevail, it will be seen that the weakest has the same right as the strongest, and the smallest minority the same as the largest majority.

Take, then, as the example of every violation of human wrong, that wretched woman, who, because she sells her body for a supper, is the outcast and reproach of society. It is her shame and destitution that have more right to rule society than any king, president, or priest. She represents the wrongs of

society; and the one business of government is to right wrongs; make it impossible for her to exist by removing all the conditions that led her to a life of shame, and for the first time justice will be fully done.

Give every man and woman an equal chance in the spirit of liberty to satisfy their needs of body, mind, and heart, and intemperance, lust, and crime will cease. But, before this is done, all monarchies and armies must be destroyed, all barracks and churches be pulled down, and in their places be established democracies based on human rights, and a federation of States based on the universal principles of justice and human brotherhood. The purpose of every organization must be the equalization of burdens, duties, and pleasures, so that the full physical, intellectual, and moral de-

velopment of every man and woman may be secured.

Until this is done, bricks will be made without straw, and we shall live in daily jeopardy of wars and revolutions. But the spirit of humanity grows apace, the signs of the coming of the kingdom of man are increasing every day.

"Look with steadfast gaze,
And see yon giant *Shadow* 'mid the haze,
Far off, but coming. Listen to the *moan*
That sinks and swells in fitful undertone,
And lend it words, and give the shadow form.
And see the *Light*, now pale and dimly shown,
That yet shall beam resplendent after storm.
Preach thou their coming, if thy soul aspire
To be the foremost in the ranks of fame;
Prepare the way with hand that will not tire
And tongue unfaltering, and o'er earth proclaim
The *Shadow*, the ROUSED MULTITUDE; the *Cry*,
JUSTICE FOR ALL; the *Light*, TRUE LIBERTY."

CELESTIAL BARBARISM.

TO MINDS habituated to religious methods of thought, this association of words may seem to involve a contradiction. But things are not always what they seem. Wolves go in sheep's clothing, and barbarism is often hidden beneath the livery of heaven. I am not fond of barbarism in any form; but when it comes as Satan, arrayed in garments of light, I hate it, and shall do my best to reveal to all its true character. Barbarism in its place and time is all right, but translated by faith to another world it is all wrong. Natural barbarism may be even valuable, like gold within the ore; but celestial barbarism is the ore after the gold has been taken out, and is worse than useless, because, cheated with the idea that it still contains some of the precious metal, much labor and time is thrown away in trying to get from it what it no longer contains. The barbarian in the woods is the beginning of a man, but the cannibal on Wall Street is the point where manhood ends. Barbarism as the primeval condition of man, rough, naked, free, wild, in the woods, is full of strength and beauty; but worshipped in cathedrals and churches, beneath the light of the nineteenth century, as of celestial birth, is utterly loathsome. Our breasts swell with honest indignation when we think of the terrible waste of so-called religious worship. A short time after I had left the Church for good and all, I was invited by a Methodist to go to church with him, with the assurance that, if I would only put myself under old influences, my old feel-

ings would return to me. For refusing, I gave him two reasons: first, that my present feelings were a thousand times better than my old ones; second, that to spend an hour in church that I could spend with my wife and children or in my study, communing with the grand minds of history and of the living present, would be like spending an hour in a vault foul and loathsome with the rotting dead, when I could pass it in the open fields beneath the blue sky, and breathing the pure air balmy with the breath of flowers. This idea is splendidly put by *Liberty*, a little fortnightly paper, lately started here in Boston, by our friend Benjamin R. Tucker,—which, though small in size, is most mighty in ability,—when he says: "The religious atmosphere is the atmosphere of the hospital, full of sickness and of nursing. Low, suppressed speech, solemn wailing, and forms prostrate or bending; awe-struck, blind, believing, fearing, prospecting, entreating, coddling soul, nourishing with sip of wine and crumb of bread; priests, deacons, and pews,—ah, well, the reminders are too many,—everything but health." The Church might be also compared to a museum full of skeletons and of monstrosities preserved in the alcohol of faith, mummies wrapped in the bandages of creeds, remains of barbaric times, and every variety of fossilized forms, buried beneath the débris of centuries.

The priests are the glib-tongued attendants or guide-books that describe the specimens,

and their value to the world. If simply as a museum, to give us information concerning our barbarian ancestors, it would come service to the world.

every Sunday, under their instructions, is bow down and worship these pre-mummies and monstrosities of nat-Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, ghthmare of fear conjured up in savage is worshipped as an object of infinite and mercy. The selfish, blood-thirsty ds who captured Canaan, destroying and old with the sword, excepting he virgins, for a far worse fate, are med as examples of righteousness and ss. The harsh, cruel, inhuman laws nacted presented as standards of the t morality and justice. This is the I want to hit to-day, just as hard and as I can, in connection with a review Biblical history of Israel from the they left Egypt to their arrival at n.

loing this, we must remember that cord was not written until long after-

Neither was it written for the purf telling the truth, but like most relig-ooks, and I think all religious newspa- imply to advance and glorify certain us opinions of the author. He wanted ve to all the world that Yahweh was ightiest of all Gods, and Israel his and favorite people. The whole his- the world was made tributary to this e, while all the rest of mankind were made to be tortured with plagues, ned by pestilence, starved with fam- uthered and ravished in war, just to what great and glorious things Yah- ould do. This is still the idea of the ian religion. Every book and newspa- written to show that the whole history world has been conducted in the in- of the evangelical scheme of faith, at the damnation of all the heathen nbelievers and all the misery of the is to exhibit the glory of God and ute to the eternal felicity of his saints. all the contradictions, absurdities, and

immoralities of this part of the Bible spring out of the national conceit and religious bigotry of this writer. In writing the history of barbarians, he stupidly represents them as having all the usages of the settled order of society in which he lived. Because, under some of their kings statistics were taken, he represents them doing the same thing in the wilderness, and actually gives us the number of fighting men, by which we are enabled to know that there must have been about three million. As seventy people had made this gain in four centuries, each Hebrew woman must have had about eighty children. Besides this, the whole population of Israel were instructed in one single day to keep the Passover, and actually did keep it. At the first mention of this feast, Yahweh said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and slay the first-born of every man and beast." Between this and the next morning, all the Israelites had to be notified, every eight persons provide themselves with a lamb, roast and eat it,—wool, hoofs, and intestines, a meal that would take a good many weeks of starvation to bring a civilized people to,—go all over Egypt borrowing jewels, collect together all their flocks and herds.

All this had to be done in twelve hours. But, with telegraphs and telephones, street-cars and railways, it would take us nearer twelve months than twelve hours to do that kind of a job. Moses is also represented as often speaking to all the children of Israel at the same time. A short time before this, he represents himself as a very poor public speaker. How in the world he could be such a hypocrite as to say this, when he could make three million people hear him at one time, is a little hard for us to understand. In the time of this writer there was a whole tribe engaged in the work of offering sacrifices. But, during the life of Aaron, he and his two sons were the only priests; and yet he represents them as doing just as much as the whole tribe. These three men had to make all the burnt-offerings on a single altar, nine feet square, besides attending to other

priestly duties for three millions of people. At the birth of every child, both a burnt-offering and a sin-offering had to be made. The number of births could not have been less than three hundred a day, consequently six hundred offerings had to be made daily for this purpose alone. And, then, there were a great many others for various purposes. A poor woman was permitted to receive pardon for bearing the pangs and responsibilities of motherhood by offering two pigeons instead of a lamb. If half of them availed themselves of this privilege, it would have taken about one hundred thousand pigeons annually. The priests had to eat a large portion of the burnt-offerings, and all the sin-offerings. The burnt-offerings would no doubt make them a good breakfast. That would leave them fifty lambs apiece for dinner, and one hundred pigeons each for supper. But all this had to be done when the rest of the people were complaining because they had not a mouthful of meat, and while they were settled around Sinai, a barren desert, where there was no food for lambs and never a pigeon seen.

But this is only one out of a hundred of equally impossible absurdities this writer is led into by clothing a tribe of barbarians with the habits and manners of his own age. In like manner, the Church is the author of equal absurdities and inconsistencies by trying to marry the civilization of the nineteenth century to the barbarism of two thousand years ago. It is because of this, priests, who are to teach purity, are forbidden to marry, and so, by very necessity, compelled to revel in moral filth. It is because of this that men receive from one to fifty thousand dollars a year for lauding poverty, that trailed its rags after Jesus, while they treat the same people as tramps and criminals today. Because of this, they proclaim Abraham the father of the faithful, and send Freeman to an insane asylum. It is because of this that those who profess to be the cause of all progress and improvement in human affairs have steadfastly, by every power in their reach, opposed every change. The

profession of the Church to be the cause of improvement is the most glaring inconsistency and absurdity beneath the sun. But the principal evil springing out of the attempt of this writer to ascribe celestial origin to the barbarism of his ancestors is its relation to morals. I suppose the children of Israel, in their march across the desert of Arabia, were, on the whole, about as good as they could be. We don't expect much of barbarians. Their religious ideas were a rude species of nature-worship. In fact, all worship comes from this source. Every deity is the personification of some power or grace of nature. Hence it is that the various systems of religion are found to represent the climate and geographical characteristics of the countries that gave them cradle.

Beneath a warm sun and over a fruitful soil, the gods were soft and gentle. But, in a cold climate or over a barren soil, they have always been stern and fierce. The same thing happened beneath a burning sun as a freezing one, especially if the soil was alike barren. Wherever the heavens and the earth are friendly to man, there the gods have been ideals of kindness, beauty, and grace, while their service has been the gratification of the senses. But, where the soil has been unfriendly and the climate painfully hot or cold, there the gods have been revengeful, jealous, stern, and cruel. In the religion of Greece, we have an example of the first order: in that of the Hebrews, one of the last. As a nation, they spent their childhood in the cruel arms of slavery and their youth on the equally cruel deserts of Arabia, fighting famine, serpents, wild beasts, and other like desperate, hungry tribes for an existence. Toward the rest of mankind, they knew no law but that of might. Hence, they called their god Yahweh, El Shaddai, or the Mightiest of the Mighty. The sun scorched them and famine devoured them, so to them a flame of consuming fire was the best symbol they could give of God. He was a stern, jealous God, claiming the right of vengeance, and visiting the iniquities

fathers upon the children of the
d fourth generations. He could
ppeased with rivers of blood, and
born of all living creatures had to
ed to him. Every natural calamity,
mine, pestilence, and defeat in war
fered, were supposed to be marks
ispleasure. When he appeared to
; was as a flame of fire, with clouds,
, and lightnings round about him.
d from every sign of his presence
ost abject terror, and prayed Moses
mediator between him and them.
he worship they offered him was
of sacrifices and cruel self-denials.
day set apart for his service, it was
enjoy any pleasure. They dared
le a fire, either to warm them or to
ir food. To violate this law was to
hed by death. Under the worship
sh, for the simple reason that they
him mightier than all other gods,
urally came to regard might as
ous with right. Hence, we find that
were permitted to have their chil-
ied to death for a single act of dis-
e, while woman was treated as
an a slave. Her office of mother.
; treated as a crime. Any one was
l to accuse her of the sin of adul-
l her only redress was to drink some
which the priest had mixed some of
ings of the sanctuary, a dirty slaugh-
of thousands of animals. If it
r sick, she was guilty; and it is hard
ne how any one could help from
k after such a dose. But, if it did
urb her, then she was innocent.
these dreadful superstitions would
been outgrown, if the emoluments
ileges of the priests had not de-
upon ascribing to them a celestial
aintenance of every barbarism in
o-day is the consequence of this
ociation. Every man and woman
arous in their feelings and ideas
in the same proportion as they are
. When they outgrow religion in

all its forms and consequences, they for the
first time become truly civilized. The man
or woman who is thoroughly freed from
religion will give to every other man and
woman every right they claim for them-
selves. They will scorn to assume master-
ship over any one, physically, intellectually,
or morally. Slavery to such will be utterly
repulsive in all its forms. To be happy
themselves, in a rational and natural way,
and to make as many others as possible
equally happy, will be to them the sole aim
of life. In the eloquent language of Colonel
Ingersoll at the grave of his brother, the
man who has outgrown the barbarism of
the Church will say, "For justice, all place
a temple, and all season summer." He will
regard happiness as the only good reason,
the only torch; justice the only worship,
humanity the only religion, and love the
only priest. His sole aim will be to add to
the sum of human joy; and, if every one
to whom he renders some loving service
could bring a flower to his grave, he would
sleep beneath a wilderness of flowers. I
do not say that every one who claims to
have outgrown the ideas of the Church is
thus perfectly just and humane. After the
disease of religion is conquered, there is
often a long convalescence before perfect
moral health is reached. Many of our
political and social forms are the out-
growth of religious barbarisms. After we
get rid of the cause, many of the effects will
remain. The principles we apply to the
Church must be applied also to the State
and society. All the wrongs and barbarisms
thereof can be traced to a religious idea that
has descended to us direct from the worship
of Yahweh. God is still supposed to be
pleased with the misery of mankind. He is
still appeased with the offering of blood,
and reconciled by long and painful self-
denials. Sabbatarian laws do their best to
keep men and women from enjoying them-
selves one day in seven, after the other six
have been given to weary toil. The enjoy-
ment of good food and drink, or the ex-
perience of the thrilling emotions produced

by a grand opera or a great drama, or for young people to love to move their feet to the rhythm of music, are still supposed to be offensive to God. If a President is shot or a conflagration consumes a city or lays waste a thousand homes in the country, it is still supposed to be a visitation from the God who, from seventy thousand pulpits in this country alone, is proclaimed as a consuming fire. That there would be no misery in the world but for religion, I do not pretend to say. If we should give all the devotion wasted now upon the skies to humanity and the study of nature, though we might escape from many evils that now afflict us, some would still break out upon us in the blind, irresponsible forces of nature. Still, half the devotion spent upon God given to humanity would increase the happiness of the world a hundred-fold. The idea that life could be a source of pleasure was never thought of until infidelity dared to be true to the present instead of the past. To us, all the pleasures of the senses are permissible. We gaze with delight upon every beautiful form, and are thrilled with joy by every inspiration created by the magic power of human genius. Liberty intoxicates us with unspeakable emotion. We are afloat upon the boundless sea of thought, gliding from island to island of fresh wonder, beauty, and delight:—

“For always in thine eyes, O Liberty,
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved.”

To the same evil influence of religion in endowing barbarism with celestial birth, we trace the support of every form of injustice. The God of the Church is still the mighty of the mightiest. He is the glorious law-giver, because he is Almighty. From this faith comes the idea that might is right. Because of this, millions submit patiently to be trodden underfoot by earthly tyrants. All rebellion against earthly kings and despots has been born of rebellion against the king of kings, the despot of the skies. I have faith in the final triumph of liberty in France, because it goes hand in hand with infidelity to the Church, while I am sure that it will be

long before any victory will be gained for humanity in priest-ridden Spain. I expect to see the autocracy of Russia tumble into a heap of ruins any day, because Nihilism and Atheism are synonymous. But when I read that almost one-half of the delegates at the Irish Land League Convention were Catholic priests, that the present struggle of her wronged and oppressed people will soon be counted with the long list of past failures seems to me a foregone conclusion. And I am almost sure that Charles Bradlaugh will yet take his seat proudly in the English Parliament, because he is both a Republican and Atheist. The men who are so blinded with superstition as to stop in their fight for liberty to hurl stones at him can never succeed in winning a perfect triumph for her glorious cause.

The defenders of liberty are compelled to be the foes of the Church. Not only does the Church support every throne in Europe, but also the similar injustice of majority rule here. It is in this way that she compels the minority to help support that which they hold to be the worst foe of human happiness. Every law upon our statute-books to-day that is inconsistent with universal human rights is owing to the fact that the barbarous legislation of the Hebrews has been ascribed to divine inspiration. The same is true of the slavery and degradation of woman. For her, every cup of human joy, liberty, and justice has been polluted with the foul scrapings of the sanctuary. To lick up the dust beneath the dirty feet of priests has been one of her constant duties from that day to this. Her chance to be wrongfully accused and condemned has been almost equally certain in every age. Inspired by the same religious ideas, many a woman accused of witchcraft has been flung into the water. If she drowned, she was innocent; but, if she could swim, she was adjudged guilty, taken out and burned to death. Beneath the teaching of the Church, to be a mother has been a crime, and not to be one a still greater sin. Her chance of justice has been something like the present opportunity of medical stu-

in Maine, where no one can graduate in medicine unless he has had regular practice in a dissecting-room, and no bodies can lawfully be dissected except those of criminals which have been executed, and capital punishment has been abolished. In other States, the wise law-makers of Maine say: "You can't graduate, unless you have dissected a subject. You can't have a subject, unless somebody is hung. We don't allow anybody to be hung." In the same way, theistic theology says,—

"You can and can't,
You will and you won't,
You'll be damned if you do,
And damned if you don't."

Thousands of women have no more chance of being virtuous and happy in modern society where God is the Church—than the Calvinist reprobate had to be saved. Protestantism, with its doctrine of a universal and free salvation for all, is as much opposed to absurdity, immorality, and injustice as Calvinism. The only full and free salvation for mankind will come after the complete destruction of all celestial privileges and ideas. All our good is of the earth, and every year. Each season has its own flower, so that nature can protect its own truth and yield its own joy. The beliefs of yesterday are serviceable when, like the leaves of last year, they fall into the ground to enrich the present living ones. Each age for itself, and each man for himself, is the doctrine of modernity. Only thus shall all seasons blossom in one season, and all intelligence and glory be crowned with glory and beauty each man for his own. Religion represents man's pilgrimage as leading him from earth to heaven. Science and reason lead us from the vain, idle, and unproductive life of the Celestial City, to search and find the City of Humanity. The world like that of old, is full of danger and difficulty. But, if we take a great heart of love for our guide, we shall easily overcome. The way leads us through three beautiful temples. The first is the Temple of Study. At the door stand three armed to the teeth,—Bigotry, Ignorance, and Superstition. But to every one who comes here is given a shield of courage and a sword of truth. The weapons of our

foes are old and clumsy. A few good blows from our sword of truth put them to flight. We have much to learn here. No one can be saved without patient and earnest study. But, to him who is willing to learn, there are plenty of guides waiting to unfold all the secrets and wonders of nature. Before this brightening lamp of science, all darkness of ignorance, fear of superstition, and narrowness of bigotry fade away.

Passing from here, we come to the Temple of Reality. Before the door stand three other foes,—Theology, Mystery, and Metaphysics. Theology curses us loud and deep, and looks longingly toward a pile of old racks, thumb-screws, and other instruments of torture.

Mystery bids us fear and tremble, and prepare for death and judgment.

Metaphysics seeks to turn us aside into another temple, which, though piercing the skies with cloud-capped towers, is just ready to tumble into a heap of ruins. But, guided by the star of liberty, we press forward into the Temple of Reality. Here, the realities of human life, its wrongs, deprivations, and inequalities, are revealed to us. We see that, whatever the future may hide from us, our true and only work is in this world. Thus, knowing our work, we pass on toward the Temple of Ideality. Here, Intemperance, Vulgarity, and Profanity jeer and laugh at us; but, listening to the moan of the world's suffering, we scarcely hear them, and pass on into the temple, when, lo! a new world of beauty and worship opens before us. Ideals of human perfection stand in the niches of dethroned gods, ravishing visions created by the splendid children of genius beckon us onward to loftier heights. The heroes and reformers of all ages greet us as brothers beloved. The suffering martyrs and heroines of all nations shed their bright radiance around us. The majesty of noblest manhood and beauty of gentlest womanhood, blending into one ineffable ray of strength and joy, thrills us with unutterable delight. Thus, fully consecrated and inspired to work for humanity, we pass without, and, behold! the gates of the City of Humanity stand wide open before us; and above them we read, in letters of gold, "Blessed above all are those who, forsaking the selfishness and idleness of the celestial city, come here, through the Temples of Study, Reality, and Ideality, to the loving, willing service of *man*."

DIVINE BRIGANDAGE.

I COME to-day to speak of a subject which to any devout believer in a God must seem blasphemous. I have often tried to point out to you how the very conception of a personal superintending deity is an immoral one, springing, as it does, from the ignorant and degraded fears of barbarians. My only apology for referring to it again is that I have never yet commenced to do justice to the subject. Whether true or false, important or unimportant, it has taken such strong possession of my mind that I must obey its masterful dictates, and seek ever, at every fitting opportunity, to give it adequate expression. That you will all see it in the light that I do I cannot even hope. I may, to some of you, seem to be riding a hobby, as from time to time I hurl my lance at this enthroned despotism of the skies, as the abettor and upholder of every earthly despot. The destroying cancer of evil and poverty that is feeding on the very heart of humanity will make its victim writhe in unutterable agony before he will call for the surgeon's knife. The best I can do in this proud and free position you have given me is to hasten as fast as I can this painful remedy. I shall try soon to set forth more fully the health that is to follow the separation of the natural from the supernatural, the rich and fervid emotions that will spring forth directly from the heart of humanity and this fair earth, and to kindle the fires of a noble enthusiasm for humanity, that shall yet replace all the burning zeal for God and wasteful worship of the Church.

I readily acknowledge that the supreme thing is to furnish the heart with motives of action. But, unless these be preceded with true and just ideas, we shall be as helpless as an engine without an engineer, or vessel at sea without chart, compass, or helm. Hence, I am determined to do my best to shake from their foundations all the cruel and unnatural ideas of theology. It is because of this that I have attacked the Bible as the parent source of all the lies that are scourging with whips of injustice and shame the back of man.

That this book needs to be attacked, ridiculed, vilified, and trampled upon is one of the most unanswerable proofs of the mental and moral degradation of mankind.

Put this book, as a standard of right and justice, into any one's hands whose head is clear of the darkness of superstition, and heart free of any love but that of his kind, and I am sure he would soon fling it from him in utter loathing and disgust. It seems to me almost impossible to conceive that millions of people still regard it as the revelation of the love and thought of any being possessed of either wisdom or love. And yet I do know that this is so. I know that I myself have read these words that fill me with shame for the race I belong to, on bended knees asking the same God who inspired it to inspire me to understand it. I know that, while I was terribly blind and foolish, I was equally sincere, and I am equally sure that there are hundreds of thousands who revere it in the same way.

Whenever I speak on these subjects, this fact is always present with me, filling my heart with a profound sympathy for every sincere devotee.

While I am sorry to say a word that can give pain to any human heart, I am equally sure that pain must come to all such before the light of reason and of justice can thrill them with its keenest joy and loftiest hope. I know that the messengers of this healing must seem as poison-dealers. As of old, the world still gives its Socrates a cup of hemlock, Jesus a cross, Hypatia the raving mob of brutal priests, and John Brown the hangman's noose. To-day, the prisons of Europe, and especially the hideous mines of Siberia, are full of high-souled men and women, who, but for loving humanity more than themselves, might be to-day living in ease and luxury. I know that thousands in all ages for espousing the truth have been compelled in penury and want, neglect and contempt, deprived of the sympathy even that would have been so sweet of those whom they have loved dearest, to live and die alone, and oft in despair. To those who laboriously sow the seed of truth and justice, but few ever live to see the harvest. While I hope that this sad state of things is improving in the more rapid changes of our time, yet I know that, for thousands who will espouse the cause of humanity as against the Church, it means the loss of business, friends, and position.

Heresy is as yet undowered. He who essays to become the champion of a despised and persecuted truth must live in daily jeopardy. In all time, those who have done their best to arouse the sleeping world from its slumbers of ignorance and folly have been regarded as rude disturbers of its peace and rest. I remember distinctly that the men who first troubled me in my sweet dreams of heaven and oblivion to earthly truth were regarded as anything but friends. But, when fully roused by their earnest cries and the light of reason revealed to me the true work of life, I saw that they were the saviors of the world. For enabling me thus far, dear

friends, to stand in this hall and proclaim fearlessly the new gospel of deliverance, I can never sufficiently thank you. My daily inspiration is that you sustain me, and will continue to do so, because I voice the thoughts of justice and truth that are flaming on the altars of your own hearts. The only questions that it is worth my while to discuss and yours to listen to are those that relate to the decrease of human misery and increase of human happiness. How shall we hasten the day when the unequal conditions of modern society shall be abolished, when labor shall cease from the oppression of greedy capitalists and giant monopolies, when men shall no longer live as brutes, when women shall cease to starve and pine of neglect, when white-faced, meagre, puny children will no longer be seen in the factories, when the policeman's task shall end, prisons be to let, and the hangman become a dim tradition of a barbarous age? How, I repeat, shall we bring in this greatly-to-be-desired day of man but by the abolition of all brigandage or theft, whether divine or human? But, in pondering upon this subject, I am deeply convinced that the reverence paid to the stories of divine brigandage is responsible for most of the human robbery that digs ever deeper the hell of poverty, and makes constantly more impossible any escape therefrom to the heaven of a comfortable competence.

The part of the Bible that is largely responsible for this is that which describes the conquest of Canaan by the armies of Israel, under the leadership of their God, Yahweh. Seventy thousand clergymen, in this country alone, teach that an infinite, all-wise, and merciful God was once the voluntary leader of a cruel and merciless band of savage banditti, who made it the one business of their lives to deprive another people of their cities, houses, and lands, and most of them their own lives, sparing only such as they could not conquer; or who, thinking that a living dog is better than a dead lion, became their slaves. Think of a God telling Joshua to destroy old and young, from the dimpled

babe to the gray-haired sire; to put to the sword everything that breathed, even to the dumb, helpless brutes; to spare of human kind only the maidens, but at the same time reserving them for a fate worse than death, by giving them up to the lawless passions of a brutal soldiery and priesthood. Is it any wonder that the Church that believes this can still force its priests by celibacy to often trample the beautiful flowers of maiden modesty and virtue in the mire of passion, unredeemed by the hallowed presence of love and the mutual obligation of marriage? Is it any wonder that, when God himself provided for wholesale prostitution, houses of ill-fame stand side by side with houses for the worship of this same God, and that churches themselves, by their doctrines and influence, sustain the traffic?

Think of a God who could instruct his army not to spare the women in the condition that held at bay for a short time the infamous cruelty, torture, and death of a Czar of Russia! Do you wonder that the worship of such a monster is regarded as the chief support of that Czar's throne, or that his Church blesses and sanctions every tyrant and standing army of Europe? Think of a God, who, because the inhabitants of a city were brave and true enough to defend their homes, their wives and children, against invaders, consigning them to a ban, commanding that not only they, but the city in which they lived, and all the wealth of their gathered toil, be burned to ashes, and a curse pronounced upon any man who should ever undertake to rebuild it! Is it to be marvelled at that those, who can worship a God who could in this way give up city after city to the fire and sword, can roll in wealth and live contentedly in cities where thousands, by poverty, ignorance, filth, and vice, are kept under a living ban of cursing, a thousand times worse than death?

Is it any wonder that, when a God could steal the land settled, possessed, and cultivated by one nation, for the purpose of giving it to another, a condition of society in which a few rob thousands of the warmth

stored by the sun in the earth or forests, the light that shines for all, the land which belongs to all or none, until death to many bears a sweeter smile than life, and the grave a brighter welcome than their own firesides, is supported and maintained by all who adore him. We read in this tale of bloody butchery and incest commanded by Yahweh that, because one man took a little of the spoil condemned to fire, God punished the whole people for his sake until they took him, his innocent wife and babes, all his servants and even his cattle and sheep, and stoned them to death. Is it strange that, where such a God is worshipped, we live under a system of justice that will allow any one strong in position and money to commit almost any crime with impunity, without fear of punishment, while any petty offence of a poor man is punished with long years of brutalizing imprisonment, while his innocent wife and children are condemned to pinching poverty and beggary?

We read also on this benighted page of savage egotism and superstition that this God caused the sun and moon to stand still, in order that the army of Israel might continue to hack men and women to pieces whom they had already conquered. Should we be astonished to find that the Church which worships this God has in every age arrested the light of progress, for fear that the present riot of slaughter by war, poverty, ignorance, and vice might cease its hellish work. We learn here that God sent hornets to help the Israelites to conquer the Canaanites. While men and women believe in this, will they not continue to believe that all the plagues of grasshoppers, potato-bugs, army-worms, and the like, are sent by God to chastise us for our sins? We read here also that the people who yielded themselves up to the Israelites without resistance were condemned to perpetual slavery. Remembering this, we remember also that the Church was the principal support of negro slavery in the South, and that to the wronged serfs of labor today it offers no hope but degrading non-resistance to masters and tyrants.

It would be altogether unnecessary to my purpose to go into all the details of this shameless page of human history. It is such a pool of blood, reeking with the effluvia of the worst type of moral depravity, that for our own health we cannot more than glance at it. The only comfort is that it could not by any possibility be true. The Canaanites were not by any means so easily conquered. To the honor of humanity, they often gave as good as was sent. The whole story is full of the most barefaced lies and contradictions. In one place, we are told that Joshua conquered the whole land of Canaan, from south to north, and, in another, that while he defeated them in the mountains he could not in the plains, because of their iron chariots. We are also told of many tribes and kings whom he could not subdue. In one place we read that Joshua conquered Jerusalem, in a second that it was only taken by the Israelites after his death, in another place that it was never conquered, and later on we are told that David subdued and took possession of it.

In the face of such contradictory assertions, we can easily put aside the silly stories about the overthrow of the walls of Jericho, and the standing still of the sun and moon, and even such wholesale slaughter of the Canaanites. But still these brutal conceptions of a God remain, and no interpretation can get them out of the Bible, that does not tear up, root and branch, the whole system of Christian theology. And it is from these ideas of God and nature the present social conditions of mankind receive their life and support.

Every Christian nation still seeks to enlarge its dominion by the crime of conquest. England, the most Christian nation of Europe, holds Ireland in chains against her consent, and by any possible excuse seeks to enlarge her empire. Russia, during the reign of the last Czar, sent fifty thousand men and women, into whose hearts had dawned the light of liberty and holy love of humanity, in chains to Siberia, there to be treated worse than wild beasts. Germany drives from his home and fatherland, at the

point of the bayonet or with the alternative of the dungeon, every one who loves his race, and intelligently works for its deliverance from wrong. Even our own Republic, with its foundations of liberty and vast territories waiting the redemption of labor, encourages men and women to come here, at the cost of many sacrifices and hardships, to leave many of them on the road to a better life, in the hands of the heartless monopolists and capital of our large cities, where often their last state is worse than their first.

The Christian Church stands in every city, pointing by its innumerable spires to nobody knows where, extending to the millions grovelling in poverty and filth the shameless crust of charity, but never saying a word against the robbery that makes such things possible. Why did those Missourian brigands stop a train, and at the mouth of a revolver compel the passengers to surrender their money? Because the Church has arrested the train of progress with the obstructions of superstition, and by robbing men and women of their equal rights to life, liberty, and happiness, made such desperate, defiant villainy possible. The Church, like those brigands, confronts the world with the open, flaming fires of hell, and says to all, Pay me tribute, or eternal death is your doom. The armies of Israel, that laid waste the cities of Canaan, destroying some completely and giving others up to the spoil of a brutal soldiery, are directly related to the armies of Europe, that lay waste the fruitful fields of earth and tax the creations of labor to keep them in golden splendor and drunken riot.

The conquest of Canaan in the name of God, and so the selecting of one tribe over another for favors, is the beginning of every government that permits individuals and parties to lay claim to the land, which, instead of being the property of a few, belongs equally to all. The worship of the God of the Bible, who delighted in the burning of cities, the total destruction of man and beast and every living thing, who was pleased and pacified by the offering to him

in fire the flesh of innumerable beasts and birds, is the beginning of a stupendous system of plunder of humanity in the interests of the skies. No words can describe the cruel waste of worship. All that is given to God, or the priests that serve him, is stolen from mankind. Think of such a city as Boston boasting of its civilization. If it is not civilized, it is for no want of churches or of ministers, whom Carlyle called black-coated dragoons. But nothing can be trusted, unless behind bars and bolts. Every household is in a stage of siege. Business is mostly carried on on the principle that every man is a rogue. The question in the employment of labor is what is the least I can pay. Every clerk and street-car conductor is secured from stealing by all manner of checks, bell-punches, and the like. The policemen are often said to be in league with criminals. Politicians, with few exceptions, are regarded as thieves by profession. While the ministers of the gospel know that they are principally supported by men whose callings are dishonest. If this is civilization, there are many who would find their condition improved by a reversion into barbarism.

But nothing better can be expected, while the Church wastes millions upon gods, maintains the divine right of kings and the powers that be, and so defends the universal preëmption of the land for themselves and heirs by a few privileged persons against the equal right of all others to its possession. The time is coming when we shall regard every vested right, no matter how hoary the parchment or divine the privilege by which it is held, that is in any way inconsistent with the principle of perfect human equality, as a relic of barbarism. All robbery of one man by another or others of life, liberty, or a chance to be happy in the possession of a comfortable support for himself and family, whether done in the name of God or of law, is simply brigandage.

I acknowledge nothing in this universe diviner than my own highest self, that I struggle to make my constant and actual

self. Any one who entertains any other faith to this, in the shape of authority above that of the individual, whether of earthly or heavenly Czar, is in league with robbers who plunder men and women of their supreme right to belong to themselves. To bow to any authority higher than that of our own reason and conscience is to be a slave. Any claim over any man or woman higher than this, by king or priest, is robbery. Any one who is deprived by some one of what belongs to him by reason of his humanity, against his consent, is the victim of highway robbery. As Proudhon says, "A free man is one who enjoys the use of his reason and his faculties; who is neither blinded by passion, nor hindered or driven by oppression, nor deceived by erroneous opinions." On this definition of liberty, how many are there who are not robbed of some of their dearest rights? Who rob them? Their own brothers, in the name of their Father in heaven. Only by depriving them of any such sanction can we break from us the yoke of their oppression.

There are two great cries to-day breaking forth from the oppressed heart of humanity, *Land and Liberty*. However we may heed them, they will be heard, and as we answer them will depend whether our lives are a curse or a blessing to the world. I do not say what the reply must or will be. I simply to-day hear the cry; and as it reaches the innermost recesses of my heart, thrilling me with new and brighter hope for the salvation of the world, I can but help to give it utterance. As yet we but hear the whisper of a coming storm that shall shake the hoary past of wrong and oppression from off its firmest foundations. Listen to Nihilist, Socialist, Land Leaguer, and scientific philosopher like Herbert Spencer, and what is it they are saying? Give us land. The earth is our mother. Without some personal right in it, we are orphans and outcasts. Without the dignity of possession in the home we live in, the land we cultivate, we are serfs. The sense of degradation and wrong crushes out of our hearts the finest joys of life. The

landlord, without toil or thought, clutches with greedy hand the bread that should go to our wives and children. As long as we are thus defrauded of our own, of the value that has been created by our common toil, we can neither attain to the highest dignity of manhood nor the largest love for humanity.

By what right do a few claim exclusive possession of that which is our common mother, and so deprive us of our only source of life and blessing? We brought nothing into this world, and can take nothing out. How can the inheritance of a few dirty pieces of parchment dig such a gulf between us and the lords of the soil? By what right are we condemned to give one-fourth of all we earn for enough land on which to lie down at night to sleep?

The cry for liberty is like unto this of land, and often so blends with it that it is hard to distinguish them from each other. "Give us liberty, or we die," is the cry of thousands. Take from our aching, throbbing brains these stones of ignorance that hold us captive in the dark tombs of superstition. Take these manacles from the lips of free speech, so that we may voice everywhere and to all men the truth that is like fire shut up in our bones.

Knock from off our weary limbs these shackles of poverty that brutalize our souls, blind us with passion, and bewilder us with error. Why should we be governed by those who have no more right to be our masters than we have to be theirs? Why should our minds belong to priests and our bodies to employers or the grave? Why should we not stand erect as well as others, and call no man master? Does not the sun shine for us? Do not the flowers blossom and shed their perfume for us as well as the rich? Why should we live where the blessed light and pure air of heaven cannot reach us? Why should there be no patch of ground where we can build our nest secure from intrusion, cultivate fruit and flowers, and watch our children at play after our day's work is done? In the eloquent and prophetic language of

Henry George, in *Progress and Poverty*, "All this and much more is denied, when the equal right to land—on which and by which men alone can live—is denied.

"Equality of political rights will not compensate for the denial of the equal right to the bounty of nature. Political liberty, when the equal right to land is denied, becomes, as population increases and invention goes on, merely the liberty to compete for employment at starvation wages. This is the truth that we have ignored. And so there come beggars into our streets and tramps on our roads, and poverty enslaves men whom we boast are political sovereigns, and want breeds ignorance that our schools cannot enlighten, and citizens vote as their masters dictate, and the demagogue usurps the part of the statesman, and gold weighs in the scales of justice, and in high places sit those who do not pay to civic virtue the compliments of hypocrisy, and the pillars of the republic that we thought so strong already bend under an increasing strain."

In speaking to you to-day of this conquest of Canaan, I could not avoid speaking of this modern conquest of America by pre-emption deeds of exclusive ownership of that which belongs to all as much as air or sunshine. But this and all other wrongs are supported by divine example in the conservatism of the Church. Whatever the final solution may be of this terrible problem of poverty, we shall do our best to help in its achievement by every good blow we deal the religion that says, It is good to suffer, and pronounces its blessing upon poverty. Before man comes to his own and breathes the pure air of liberty, he must break from all allegiance to the skies, and find in the universal well-being of the human race his only devotion. This world in its entirety as well as limitations must be the field of his endeavor and the source of his highest hope and joy.

If once in a while the solemn, mystic music of the hope of the continuity of individual life beyond the grave comes to you across the dark waters of death, let it only

inspire to nobler efforts to make this life the grandest and happiest for which you can hope or dream.

This world will soon become a paradise, when we throw down the barriers of injustice that are keeping millions from sharing in its bounty. Free men and women from the narrow, pinching poverty that crushes every noble instinct out of their lives, and all the years of life will be too few in which to see its beauty and feel its joy. Instead of wasting their time in peeping behind the curtain of the dark, they will be so com-

pletely absorbed in the thrilling, many-sided interests of life that they will almost forget to think of death. Instead of looking into the fading traditions of the past for gods to worship, we shall find them in the men and women who sit by our own firesides, or in the ideals of our enlarged visions of the noblest manhood and loftiest womanhood.

All this, and a thousand times more than tongue or pen can tell, will liberty bring to us.

*"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty,
Shines that high light, whereby the world is saved;
And, though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."*

EXTRAORDINARY SAINTS.

In the story of Samson, we are told that, having slain a lion and afterward found that a swarm of bees had settled in its carcass and stored it with honey, he drew from it this riddle: "From the eater came forth food, from the strong one sweetness."

Now, though bees have far too much common-sense and good taste to make their home in putrefying carrion, from which we are quite sure that Samson never found honey in such a place, yet, symbolically, I want to fulfil this saying to-day. From the fierce devourers of human life, set for our example and admiration as heroes and saints in the Book of Judges, I wish to extract some truth that shall hasten the day when, through the overthrow of all who devour like the lion, the hungry shall be fed, and from this deification of brute force, with which the world has been so long and cruelly cursed, come sweetness and blessing. But the surest way to realize this hope is to take away the darkness from men's minds concerning religion.

To many of you, this is unnecessary. But I would ask you to remember that these lectures go to twenty-five hundred subscribers, scattered over every State and Territory of the Union, and that they often find their way to those who are still walking in the thickest darkness of superstition. Though some of you may think that more useful subjects of study might be found than the Bible, yet I can assure you that I am constantly receiving evidence of the good ac-

complished through these discourses upon its follies, falsities, and injustice.

I take it, however, that your continued presence is evidence of your approval of this earnest attempt to destroy with the hammer of the iconoclast the idols of the Church. Those who come here simply for pleasure may grow tired of this spirit of conflict. A gentleman informed me yesterday that he had been here several times, but thought my discourses contained too much light and too little sweetness. He also cited my attention to a Unitarian minister who deals only in sugar and sunshine, and makes his hearers experience none but the most comfortable emotions by representing that everything is going on just as well and lovely as it possibly can. But there never was a greater lie than this.

This is by no means a time when we ought to be feeling satisfied with the world as it is. That there are many beautiful and true things in the world, I do not for a moment doubt; but these will reveal their grace and shed their perfume without my help. What I want to do is to get rid of some of the rank and pestilential weeds that choke their growth. If you should ask me from what source the worst influence produced in Boston to-day has emanated, I should be much inclined to say, not from the grog-shops nor brothels, but from the pulpits that drug good men's souls to sleep with this optimistic chloroform. It makes men and women feel comfortable and con-

tented with things as they are, when they ought to be willing to see society shivered from top to bottom rather than have the present hypocrisy and cant spread its limbs the wider, and poverty and despair strike its roots the deeper.

We must view the world as we find it, not as we want it. The world has always been improved most by men who have said things are just about as bad as they can be. Any change that can be inaugurated must be one for the better. Certainly the time to cry, Peace, peace, has not come, while the rule of society is still that of the jungle, where the strong devour the weak; nor to deal exclusively in rose mist, when the horizon is black with clouds of impending storm and ominous portent; nor to proclaim all things are fair and good, when by our very sides are great sinks of misery, poverty, despair, and death, poisoning the air we breathe and slaying our brothers by the thousand. Things are by no means as well as they can be, nor never will be without the stormiest words and the most radical changes ever thought of. Proudhon, the most radical writer of France, was once asked by Napoleon what kind of society he would have. *Sire*, he said, I dream of a society in which I should be guillotined as a conservative.

So I think all that I say against the Church will be counted as orthodox before its falsity and cruelty to mankind will be sufficiently described and felt to shake it from its throne of ages. In my last lectures on the Bible, I endeavored to point out its true character in making barbarism celestial and brigandage divine. To-day, I wish to continue the task by calling your attention to the real nature of a few of the saints mentioned in this Book of Judges, of whom, Paul says, "the world was not worthy." If he had said, who were not worthy of the world, I think he would have been much nearer the mark. My only excuse for calling back from the dead these awful butchers and robbers is that in spirit they are still alive and active in the world. Through the embalment given them by Christianity,

their fierce and turbulent spirits are still making war upon the weak and plundering the defenceless. Little respect for or interest as we may have in the Old Testament, it nevertheless binds society to the body of the dead past, and so poisons all the channels of its moral life. Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? has become the prayer of many. My heart is thrilled with this cry for deliverance. So I try to do my best to break the chains. It is not against the men I speak. I entertain no enmity for the dead. What I oppose is the act of the Church in keeping them out of their graves, and insisting upon it that savage freebooters were saints, inspired of God to be our intellectual and moral guides. Viewed simply in relation to their own time, we might find in them something to admire, or, at least, they would give us no more trouble than do other savages sunk into the deep, black gulf of oblivion. They lived in an age of murder and rapine. Every tribe was a band of brigands, every king a freebooter, every god a deification of some brute or physical force. Hence, the men of the greatest physical endurance and prowess came to be regarded as heroes and saints of God.

The Book of Judges is an attempt to count the praises due to these men of might and victory. To repeat them here would be a waste of time and serve no good purpose. All I want to do is just to touch on a few of the striking incidents, and show how they are connected with the prominent principles that control the conduct of humanity to-day.

To cut off a stream, we must go to the fountain from whence it flows. Christianity is corrupted by its origin. Its only great service to the world will come when it abandons gods for humanity. This can never be until we have destroyed the doctrine of the divinity of the Scriptures. The best way to do this is to help people to understand of what they are composed.

With this preparation, let us turn to the saints. The first one mentioned here of any great prominence is Deborah, a prophetess whose powerful preaching stirred up Barak

and the children of Israel to undertake another campaign against the Canaanites. In the Book of Joshua, we are told that the whole land was conquered, and divided in portions between the twelve tribes. Afterward, we are told of many cities unsubdued, and of the fact that, while the Israelites had driven them out of the mountains, they had been unable to dislodge them from the plains. Most who read the Bible do so with a bandage before their eyes. It is impossible not to do so with the slightest faith in its divinity. Why should our sympathies be on the side of the Israelites? They were the invaders and robbers of Canaan. The Canaanites had built the cities that they conquered, and tilled the soil which they seized with the sword as the gift of their God. All sorts of excuses have been given for this by the Church, but not one of them has in it the first quality of reasonableness. With what despair and brave courage they must have fought for their homes against these savages. Defeat not only meant no quarter for themselves, but wholesale slaughter for their wives and children. City after city in the hill country had been taken, but on the plain thus far they had successfully withstood defeat. Under the successful generalship of Sisera, they for long defended their lives and homes against the invader. But Deborah the prophetess, full of religious zeal, stirred up the Israelites to rally all their forces to defeat them here. Fired with her positive assurance that Yahweh had promised to give them the victory, they came together from every quarter. Yahweh is with us, she cries. He has whetted his sword and grasped his shield, and his spear trembles in his hand. Fear not the might of the Canaanite; for as a lion roars over his prey when a flock of sheep approach him, so does Yahweh roar. The beast of prey shudders not at the sound of their bleating, though they be many; nor trembles at their numbers, for they are helpless. So Yahweh fears not the war-cry of Sisera's warriors. Thus inspired into a frenzy, they went forth to battle. The ground by good fortune where the

fight commences is in their favor. A storm arises. It lightens from heaven. As this is the symbol of Yahweh, they are doubly sure of his presence; and their wild cries blending with the roar of the thunder frighten the horses of Sisera, and cause them to rush frantically with their dreadful war chariots among his own warriors, and so they are compelled to flee before Israel. They rushed in wild and hurried flight toward the river Kishon, that flowed through the plain; but that with the storm was swollen high, and helped to destroy them. Sisera, when all was lost, fled with Barak, the commander of Israel, in hot pursuit toward the tents of the Kenites, the allies of Canaan, and like them enemies of Israel. His chariot was broken, and the latter part of his journey had to be pursued on foot. But!—O welcome sight—yonder is the tent of Heber, the Kenite chief. He is safe at last. Jael, the wife of Heber, comes forth to meet him, and offers him rest and refuge. Sinking to the ground, exhausted with his race for life, he asks for water; but she gives him milk, and covers him with her cloak. Deceived by this kindness, he sinks peacefully to sleep, only to be treacherously and cruelly murdered by this woman's own hand. With this, she makes peace with Israel, and obtains the honors of saintship. Deborah sang: Blessed be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, blessed be she above all women of the tent! When he asked for water, she gave him milk, gave him rich milk in her costliest bowl. She laid her hand on the tent peg, her right hand grasped the workman's mallet. Then she smote Sisera, pierced through his head. She crushed it, she pierced it as he slept. Between her feet, he bowed and fell. Where he bowed down, he fell disfigured.

Was there ever such gloating over the act of a fiend? And yet the Bible bids us worship these two women as saints,—a traitor and a fury, two incarnations of murder and hate, of whom the Bible says the world was not worthy. It is to be hoped it never will. But Deborah was a prophetess, had direct communications from God, and tells

us that not only the heavens in their fury, but that the very stars in their courses, fought on their side against Sisera.

It seems impossible for us to comprehend this blending of religious frenzy and cruelty, this gloating over and glorification of the murder of the defenceless. This chapter of savage history seems to many of you to have no relation to our time and nobler humanity. But do you not know that millions have acknowledged this day, on bended knees, this book to be divine, and this slaughter the will of God? Do you not know that seventy thousand men have stood up alone in this country, to-day, and defended as true and perfect this jumble of lies and barbarous cruelty of the Book of Judges? The Church that believes these inhumanities divine still gives its moral coloring to most of the laws of the so-called civilized world. Beneath its blessing, wars of conquest are waged; and, by its approval, the defenceless are slain by traitors. The heroes, after whom the world shouts and sings, are still often the embodiment of the lowest and most brutal elements of human nature. The way to come to the front is still to be destitute of the sentiments of mercy and justice. In our own memory, we have crowned with the laurel wreath of fame the men who were successful in war because they never estimated the worth of human life.

The highest interests of humanity are terribly betrayed by the charlatans and priests who, in the garb of sanctity and with the name of God to conjure with, practise humbug. Is it a time for saying, Peace! for prophesying smooth things, when this swollen monster of selfishness and inhumanity, called the Church, is in league with every tyrant in Europe? It is only by the support of religion that thrones can endure or the right of the strong to oppress and rule the weak be maintained a single day. It is the Church in its fear of the justice that is growing in the heart of man, that is to-day turning Judas to the cause of land and liberty in Ireland. It is this that is coming to the support of Bismarck in his hostility to

the champions of human liberty and justice. It is this that brutalizes and enslaves the Russian peasantry, so that they hang like a millstone on the necks of their would-be saviors.

We think sometimes that we have outgrown such ideas as are chanted in the song of Deborah, and yet every history studied by the rising generation is pitched at the same key. History is little more thus far than the glorification of tyrants and the apotheosis of murder.

Most of our daily newspapers side with the strongest in every fight. But, thus far in the history of the world, the right has been oftener on the side of defeat than victory. And yet, like the writer of this book, God is still supposed to be only on the side of victory. Is not this the spirit of the Church? Does it not worship success, no matter how gained, and pray for those in power, indifferent as to how they acquired it? Does it not teach that misfortune is the punishment of sin, and every calamity the mark of God's displeasure? Over every innocent, helpless babe, slain by poverty and preventible disease, the Church cantingly bids the parents to bow submissively to the will of God, and to learn from this visitation of his inscrutable goodness to centre their affections on heaven.

The Church must of necessity be full of this thought, because its whole life is colored by the Bible. Deborah says the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. If they did, they have changed sides, for to-day they fight to rescue his name from disgrace. The cause of science is that of the weak against the strong. She has hitched her wagon to every star. The law of gravitation is on the side of truth and justice. As the tides, steam, and electricity learn to do our will, we forget the glory of God in our interest in and admiration for man. Every new discovery and invention is a triumph of humanity over the despotism of the skies. The lightning may have joined forces with Deborah; but to-day we know that it has become our willing servant, and is daily

the work that will soon make con- and slavery impossible. Little do we see the promise for mankind contained these wonderful discoveries and inventions of modern science. Phillips Brooks just published a volume of sermons which he calls *The Candle of the Lord*. But some time Phillips Brooks and every other man has learned that we long since gave up candles for kerosene and gas, and that even now we are going out before the brighter rays of the electric light. Whether they will or not, they and the Lord will have to give up their candles, or be lost in the darkness of the dead past.

The Church is but a feeble, perishing thing, while science is a burning and a shining light that turns the long, dark night of superstition into the golden light of joy.

The next hero or saint whose life is given to us for its length is Gideon. As the example of his life is similar to the last one, I shall not dwell long upon it. It contains one of the most absurd and incredible stories in the Bible. The Midianites had conquered and enslaved Israel. Though they commended themselves for their oppression, yet they were more merciful than the Israelites ever were to a conquered foe.

Yahweh sent an angel to Gideon to tell him that he must deliver Israel from the power of Midian. To prove the divinity of his message, three separate miracles were performed. Gideon then, strong in the faith, went to collect an army. But, for the honor of Yahweh, it was too large. So by various means he reduced it to three hundred. The night before all this time lay secure in camp. One night into their midst as a spy, the angels came and they spread out like grasshoppers upon him in multitude, with camels as numerous as the sands on the seashore, the number of men of this great host being one hundred and fifty thousand strong. As he lay through the camp, he heard two men talking in a dream, predicting that all this army would fall into his hand. Hurrying back to the three hundred men, he provided each with a trumpet and an earthen vessel in

which was hidden a flaming torch. Do every thing as I do, he said. The warriors silently surrounded the camp; and at midnight, just as the sentries were being relieved, they simultaneously broke their pitchers, revealing their torches, blew their trumpets, and sounded their war-cry, the sword of Yahweh and Gideon. Panic seized the Midianites. They drew their swords, and wildly attacked each other, and thus defeated themselves, the fugitives flying in every direction, only to be cut down by the Israelites, who had risen almost in mass.

Nothing could be more ridiculous than the accomplishment of such a feat in the space of a few hours. To have even surrounded such an army would have required more than a day's march. The largest part of such a body of men would have been too far off to hear their shouts or see their torches. Divided themselves into three parties, they could neither see nor hear each other, so that union of action was impossible. Nor was there food enough in the whole of Canaan to feed such a host of men and *beasts*. Though in the extravagant statements we see that the story cannot by any possibility be true, yet his after cruelty to all who would not fight with him, and his deliberate murder of all persons of war, but strengthens the influence of the Bible in the direction I have already enlarged upon. Every time the Church has appealed to the sword, its favorite text has been, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Gideon's brave little band, notwithstanding the too utterly unwarlike character of the story, has been the favorite subject in every prayer and revival-meeting, where God has been called upon to enable one to chase a thousand and two to put ten thousand to flight, and so glorify his name by choosing the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. In connection with this story of Gideon there is a lesson in logic too good to be passed without notice. When Gideon first believed himself the chosen instrument of Yahweh, he went out under cover of the night and destroyed the altar of Baal. When the worshippers of

Baal found what he had done, they went to his father Joash, and demanded Gideon that they might put him to death for his act of sacrilege. But Joash answered, What, will you take up the cause of Baal? Will you come to his rescue? Surely, whoever encounters his wrath will die before morning.

If he be a God, then let him contend against the sacrilegious man himself. It seems a sad pity that the worshippers of Jehovah should not have been turned from some of their murders with similar advice. Why, indeed, should men be so quick and zealous to avenge an insult done their God? Is he not strong enough to protect himself without any help from weak, mortal man? Stand still then, and behold the salvation of the Lord. What need has the Almighty of the feeble hand of man? But reason and religion have no fellowship with each other. Logic and piety are as antagonistic as night and day, fire and gunpowder. The next saint of any special merit whom we are called upon to worship in this goodly company of whom the world was not worthy was Jephthah. When he was called to deliver Israel, he was an acknowledged freebooter and leader of a band of brigands. But, as in that character he had taught all the country to fear his name, the priests who were looking for a hero to lead the battle against the Ammonites fastened upon him. Chosen to this command, the spirit of Yahweh came upon him. Under his banner, the warriors of Israel rallied from every side. If Yahweh would but help, the victory was certain. If he would but grasp his shield and spear and go forth with them in thunder, hurling his arrows of fire, then victory was sure to be on their side. But would Yahweh do this? Not without prayer and sacrifice. Countless gifts were made and promised by the warriors; and at last the general himself, thirsting for victory, stretching out his hand toward his home, made this solemn and terrible vow: As sure as Yahweh lives, if I return in triumph from the fight with the Ammonites, whoever first comes to meet me shall be made a sacrifice to Yahweh.

The victory is gained. Jephthah returns triumphant. He comes in sight of his home. A troop of girls come out to greet the victor, with music and flowers. At their head, eager with the swift foot of love, comes his daughter, his only child.

The quick eye of love sees her first; and, remembering his vow, the sword of despair pierces his heart. His vow has been made, and cannot be recalled. Her life is the price of victory, and she so young and fair must be slain by his own hand. As brave, as fair, and as superstitious as her father, she asks but for two months to bewail her lot in dying unmarried and to prepare herself for the altar. The request was granted, and at the end of two months he returned from other victories to fulfil the dreadful vow. The victim, crowned with flowers, was led round the altar with music and song in honor of Yahweh. She met her cruel fate heroically; but who shall describe the agony of the father when he struck the fatal blow, and saw his hand red with the blood of his own child, while the sacrificial flames consumed her fair form? Thus Yahweh received what he has ever demanded, the dearest treasure of a human heart. What hideous monster is this, who can never be sated with blood, whose altars have streamed with blood, and who, for the crime of the guilty, ever receives the life of the innocent? Christianity in its primary meaning is only an offering of humanity to appease a villanous and a blood-thirsty God. Every creed is a wall of cruel separation, sundering human hearts and minds that need each other's fellowship of thought and love in the great struggle for existence. Every doctrine is an ignorant guess at an insoluble riddle. Every church is a citadel of falsehood, every prayer-meeting a nursery of cant and hypocrisy. All worship of the unknown is but the stammering of the white lips of fear. Theology is the barbarian's interpretation of the universe, and in the light of science is all the baseless fabric of a dream. Ages of devotion have changed the name into love, the crown of thorns into

flowers; but the fairest blossoms of piety hide the deadly serpent of superstition. In art and song, flowers are twined around the Christian cross; but through them all we discern the symbol of sacrifice that proclaims humanity as dust and ashes beneath the feet of gods, and offers them in return for their smiles and favor our own flesh and blood.

In the strange story of Samson, the Hebrew Hercules, we have evidently a blending of the sun myth with the tradition of some early hero of great physical strength. The meaning of Samson is the sun-god. The flame of fire that marked the announcement of his birth symbolizes the dawn that heralds the god of day. The riddle cited in the beginning doubtless is related to the fact that, when the sun enters the constellation of Leo, or the Lion, the bees make their combs, and when he leaves it the honey is ready. His hair is the seat of his strength, because it symbolizes the rays of the sun that constitute its power.

When the mists and storms of winter cut these off, it is robbed of its energy and light, and imprisoned by frost and snow. But the rays return again, and with them he triumphs once more over his foes.

Whether this is the meaning or not of this story, it evidently contains the two elements

of nature and hero worship. But, though these are still preserved by the Church, yet we are rapidly outgrowing them. We no longer worship nature, but, while enjoying all its grace and beauty, subdue its powers to our service. To us, man is a far nobler object of worship than sun, moon, or stars. We regret not the time when, in every grove and on every height, was an altar to some personification of the strength or beauty of the natural world. We gladly give up all the good fairies, nymphs, and genii that were providences to man, in order to escape from the thronging troops of hobgoblins and demons that dug full his path with pitfalls and drove him mad with ugly dreams.

For us, the world is far fairer beneath the light of science, with no altars but those of our own firesides, and no gods nor goddesses but the men and women we love and honor. Samson, the strongest, is no longer the measure of our justice, but rather the need of the weakest. We follow no guide, and will be ruled over by no judge but the equal right of all men to life, liberty, and happiness. Every right in the natural bounties of nature, that are the products of no man's labor, every opportunity of education and politics, should be eligible to the weakest and poorest member of society on the same terms as to the strongest and richest.

PRIESTCRAFT.

In the development of humanity, the priest has always been the greatest foe to progress. Being the product of our lowest fears, he has naturally thwarted our highest hopes. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap" is as true of the race as of the individual. Having constituted the priest our protector and master in the realm of intellect and conscience, the instinct of self-preservation mingling with a natural love of power makes him the foe of any change that involves either the limitation or abrogation of his authority. Let me make this plainer. The priest is the product of fear. With the first awakening of thought, involving personal consciousness, in the mind of man, came the sense of awe. He ignorantly imagined that every tree, mountain, river, lake, storm, cloud, and star had the same self-consciousness as himself. All that pleased him, as well as all that hurt him, was by the intent of some personal power.

How to win their favor and avoid their displeasure became the supreme object of life. If one seemed wiser and luckier than the others, they at once concluded that he was the favored of the superior powers. Such became to them as gods. They were priests, mediators or go-betweens. While men were absolute in their ignorance and fear of nature, the priesthood was absolute in power. All that mankind hoped or dreamed centred in them. They were looked to in every emergency. Their con-

jurations healed the sick. Their sacrifices propitiated the gods. By their power, they defeated their enemies in battle. By their judgment, disputes were settled. In short, through them they obtained every good and avoided every evil. The first priest was doctor, teacher, lawyer, judge, general, and king all at the same time. But, as time went on, the great teacher Experience revealed a better way. The sick often failed to get well, notwithstanding the exorcism of the big medicine man. Worse than that: some one, by watching the animals select certain herbs when they were sick, discovered that

*"Mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities,"*

and by experiment learned how to extract from them their medicinal virtues, so as to cure many of the ills that flesh is heir to, independent of the priest. Other men would rise up, in whom dwelt the spirit of wisdom, and sense of justice, in such large degree as to cause their judgment to be sought after more than that of the regular priest. It was also discovered in time that, though the priests offered thousands of sacrifices, and promised victory in the most positive terms, that, if the opposite side had better weapons and wiser and more valiant generals, they generally suffered defeat.

After a few lessons of this sort, they learned to prefer physical prowess on the battlefield to priestly prayers and sacrifices,

least, to see to it that the sword of
 as supplemented with that of Gideon.
 t is not in human nature to surrender
 ity and power without a struggle to
 win it. However sincere men were in
 development of the priestly function,
 resorted to duplicity and craft in their
 le to maintain it. Real power and
 n to lead men is the greatest blessing;
 s abuse, degenerated into selfish cun-
 is the most terrible curse that ever
 d humanity. History is the record of
 rrible struggle between incompetent
 s of men, claiming divine right to
 cure, or rule, and the men claiming
 me right in the name of their own
 n and strength. From this conflict
 pruned the most terrible tragedies, not
 f the past, but also of the present.
 what is far worse, I am afraid we have
 ust commenced to taste the bitter fruit
 s sowing the seeds of death and de-
 on. In all the signs of the times, I
 lications that the most terrible con-
 approaching between every form of
 ity that is based upon human igno-
 and superstition, and that which
 s from the real hopes, loves, and needs
 manity. The conflict must come.
 priest and king reigning by divine
 must go. Every altar and throne are
 d upon a lie. Having sown to the
 we must reap the whirlwind. But in
 uds of ominous portent is one clear
 of sky, and in that rift I discern a
 hope.

ugh Jesus said, "The wind bloweth
 it listeth, and thou hearest the sound
 i, but canst not tell whence it cometh
 hither it goeth," we know better.
 un tell both whence it cometh and
 r it goeth. . . . And though God said
 d mockery to Job, "Canst thou send
 ngs that they may go, and say unto
 here we are!" we have done it. As
 s the wind is born, we know it, and
 hich way it is going, even to the
 re of its velocity. And then we send
 e lightning and bid it go instantly

through all the land, to warn farmer, mer-
 chant, and sailor of the coming storm.
 Though this does not stop the hurricane in
 its swift career, yet it robs it of much of its
 power to destroy. So I think that, in the
 knowledge of human nature and the forces
 that shake and upheave society, we have
 reached a power of prevision that enables us
 to ward off much of the threatened danger.
 History repeats itself. The thing that has
 been shall be again. But, when it comes,
 it shall find us better prepared for it than
 before. To know well the past is the best
 guidance we can have in working for the
 future. It is because of this that I ask
 you to-day to give me your thought while I
 set before you a bygone struggle between
 competency and incompetency,—a strife for
 mastery between the leader born of human
 fear and one demanded by human need.
 The event I refer to is the strife between
 Samuel the priest and Saul the king. Though
 to-day the king is as false and useless as the
 priest, it was not so at this point of develop-
 ment in the history of the Hebrews. The
 history of the race is repeated in the develop-
 ment of each nation. Thus far in the life of
 this people, the priest had included in him-
 self every form of authority. To him, the
 people of Israel came in every trouble. Did
 disease ravage or pestilence destroy, it was
 he who attempted to heal them with all sorts
 of incantations. Did they fight with some
 neighboring tribe in order to spoil them of
 their land and possessions, he was their
 leader. Though they were often defeated,
 yet every victory is ascribed to his presence
 and direction. But, notwithstanding their
 priests had constantly promised them vic-
 tory over all the land of Canaan, they often
 suffered defeat. The most of the victories
 gained were under the leadership of valiant
 men not belonging to the priesthood. Still,
 they were constantly overpowered and re-
 duced into a condition of slavery by the
 Philistines, Canaanites, Amorites, and Mo-
 abites who dwelt in the land. Though the
 priest repeatedly assured them that Yahweh
 would fight for them and give them victory

yet death and destruction taught them that the great warriors and iron chariots of their foes were stronger even than Yahweh.

Of course, no priest would acknowledge this. According to them, every failure was ascribed either to the wickedness or unbelief of the people. But the time came at last when the cup of their patience was exhausted. Though Samuel, the high priest, was judge, general, and king, yet they were scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Looking around them, they saw that the success of their enemies was owing to their superior weapons and wiser generalship. Weary of constant defeat, they demanded that Samuel abrogate some of his power, so that they might have a king to lead them into battle like other nations. This he was very loath to do. Like most of his class, he was fond of supremacy, and tried every possible way by which to perpetuate it. In the story of this struggle, as given in the Bible, there are evidently two traditions,—consisting of the contradictory interpretations of the event as given by the partisans of Saul and Samuel, which, at the expense of the most outrageous absurdities and contradictions, the author blends into one.

The first story represents Samuel as choosing Saul, and giving Israel a king under the direction of Yahweh. The second represents the people demanding the change on account of the age of Samuel and corruption of his sons.

The first represents Saul as selected by Samuel when away from home, looking for some stray asses; the second, at a great gathering of people and by lot. The first speaks of Saul as a young man, concerning whose absence from home his father was solicitous; while the second presents him as the father of Jonathan, who had himself reached the years of manhood. These are enough to reveal the unhistorical character of the narrative. But, though all such traditions are largely fictitious, still they generally contain a soul of truth. The two sides to the same tale no doubt represent the respective attitudes of the priesthood and people. Samuel

resisted the demand just as long as possible. He did his best to maintain his supremacy by appealing to their fears and selfishness.

But all to no purpose, for Saul was chosen to satisfy their demand. After the election, Samuel wrote the laws that should govern the relations of king and people. This he contrived, so as to have the naming of the successor to Saul. Just as soon as Saul revealed that he had a mind of his own, Samuel did all he could to find occasion of complaint in him, so as to depose him and put in his place a man more to the liking of the priesthood. The right man was found at last in the person of young David. He was secretly anointed, and shortly afterwards began to raise an army with which to seize the kingdom at the death of Saul. This, no doubt, is the version according to Saul.

But from the priesthood comes the claim that the need of a king was a revelation from God, and that Saul was elected and rejected under the direct instruction of Yahweh to Samuel. But, when we view this subject in the clear light of unprejudiced reason, it is quite evident that every misfortune that befell Saul was caused by the inhuman craft of the priestly class in their scheme to perpetuate their supremacy under the changed conditions, by establishing on the throne a tool of their own. All this may have been in connection with the most sincere belief that their treachery received the sanction of God. Belief seldom makes any difference in the character of a man. If he is a good man, he claims to be endowed with the grace of God. If he is a bad one, he is equally sure that his conduct is inspired of God. Every species of crime has been authorized by God. In the Bible, we find that, when a certain prophet wanted to commit adultery, he had a revelation from Yahweh, commanding him to do so. Similar claims are made touching every other form of wrong. On the same principle, whenever Brigham Young stood in need of funds, he had a revelation that some man was to sell his farm or merchandise for the benefit of

the Church. And to-day, when a Mormon desires to have another wife, he claims to receive her at the command of God. The Church of Rome is constantly having equally convenient revelations. What the believer in God covets from his own heart soon becomes to him synonymous with the divine will. However religious Samuel may have been, he was a tyrant by nature. From him emanated the command to banish all soothsayers from the realm on pain of death. He was a soothsayer himself, and determined to have a monopoly of the business. When he was judge, he enforced the cruelest laws,—passed by the priesthood to the very letter,—such as “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” and the command ‘to stone to death any one who should kindle a fire or do any kind of work on the Sabbath. When Saul spared the life of Agag, he fell upon him and hewed him to pieces like a log. My time will not permit me to dwell at length on the working out of the treachery of the priesthood; nor can we begin to imagine the terrible results in such an age springing from their hostility. Notwithstanding necessity had created a king, they still possessed the balance of power. Their curse, like that of Rome in the summit of its power, was more to be feared than death.

Though Saul’s life was embittered by this opposition, yet he must have been as superior in intellect and morality as he was in physical strength and beauty. He was the spontaneous choice of the people. He was king, not by birth or election, but by natural fitness. When chosen by vote, he went back to his humble life at home, following the plough, until the defence of the weak called him into the field of battle at the head of an army. Instead of standing apart like Moses and Samuel, and praying for Yahweh to confound the foe, his tall form marked, like the white plume of Henry of Navarre, where the conflict was thickest and deadliest. He so endeared the people to him by his heroism and justice that they defied the wrath of Yahweh, as invoked by the priesthood, rather than be disloyal to so good and brave a

prince. It is true that once or twice this enmity weighed so heavily upon him as to lead him to make assault upon the life of the man whom he knew his foes had selected to supplant him. But his deepest dejection and despair vanished before the charm of music. And though his mind under the weight of his grief was like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh, still we feel like saying:—

“See what a grace was seated on this brow:
Hyperion’s curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury,
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination, and a form, indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man.”

But the lesson of this tragedy belongs to all time. It is but one of thousands of similar crimes by priests against noble men and women who have championed the rights of humanity. The fruits of superstition, however fair without, are bitter and dangerous to eat. This injustice and crime was the religion of that age. As Hobbes says, the difference between religion and superstition is that religion is superstition in fashion, and superstition religion out of fashion. Free religion claims that religion of itself is always a blessing. But, while I believe that there are good and true men and women under every form of faith, I hold with the firmest conviction that humanity will only reach its highest development when all forms of religion are outgrown, and all piety or zeal for God is displaced by earnestness and enthusiasm for humanity. To do this, the priesthood must not only be shorn of its right to rule, but also of its last vestige of power. Step by step, we are approaching this goal. The groundless nature of all of the assumptions of this aristocracy of the skies is being exposed to scorn and ridicule. The time was when the priest was the only physician. The New Testament says: “Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”

There is a small sect in England, of true believers, who take the Lord at his word, refuse to employ a doctor, and depend solely on prayer. But that Christian nation has found it its duty to send a few of them to prison for manslaughter. Though there is a good deal of latent superstition among us in this direction, yet the serene indifference of God to the millions of prayers offered for the restoration of President Garfield has, I think, given it a blow which it will not long survive. Experience is teaching us that our only hope in sickness is the skill of the physician to administer the healing medicines of nature and good nursing. Fifty years ago, when any one was sick, the priest was sent for as soon as the doctor. But today he is generally more conspicuous by his absence than presence in the sick-chamber. Experience is also teaching us that the priest is equally valueless as a legislator. Though a number of bishops are among the law-makers of England, experience has taught the people to always count them in as the most bitter opponents to every reform measure. This means that every law that improves the condition of the people curtails the privileges of the aristocracy of the skies. We are also learning that all meddling by pastors or spiritual advisers with family affairs is invariably productive of mischief. In France, they have found it necessary to deprive them of the privilege of officiating at weddings, and equally necessary, for the preservation of the Republic, to banish the Order of Jesuits from the realm. Wherever and whenever priests have anything to do with the making of the laws, they are sure to be found hostile to the best interests of humanity. Under the light of reason and science, we are also discovering that the moral life of the people is obstructed rather than fostered by the Church. We discern most clearly that true morality is thoroughly antagonistic to the so-called morality of Christianity, that has sanctioned slavery, defended the right of the powers that be to rob, oppress, and murder mankind. Having progressed thus far, we have only one more discovery to make. And

that is that the impulse of devotion to what is right and just comes not from the skies, but from human hearts; and that, instead of being fostered by worship, it is developed by all the influences of human progress, that tend to cultivate the spirit of human brotherhood and good-will.

The claim to exclusive possession in this quarter is the only assumption of the priesthood that is still respected and to any extent sincerely believed. This is their last stronghold, and they will struggle to maintain it with the zeal of despair. They know that, when this citadel is taken, their last reason for existence is demolished. But the hour of conflict approaches. No power can arrest the final triumph of man to rule and possess this globe, physically, intellectually, and morally, in his own right and name. The lesson of all history is that the only redeemer of man is man. Millions of sacrifices have been offered on the altars of the gods to entreat their assistance, but no hand but that of man has moved to defend or succor the distressed. A great deal has been preached about divine justice, but none ever yet righted a wrong but that which man has shown to man. Man as man, standing in the simple dignity of nature's truth and power, is the highest object at which we can aim. The only authority of man is man. The idea that duty is the will of some power above man is the foundation on which has been built all the pyramids of priestcraft that have shut the human race in the dark and gloomy caverns of religious fear. But we are learning that every inspiration to noble action springs like the flowers from the earth. You cannot put new wine into old bottles. The emotions produced by worship will never make men and women enthusiastic for the cause of humanity, as represented in the morality of equality, liberty, and fraternity. The work of liberalism is only commenced when it has intellectually demolished the arguments of the Church. We must supplement our logic with all the agencies that will arouse the feelings and prompt to action. We don't

want any religion, because that is feeling born of devotion to a phantom. But we do want enthusiasm for humanity, born of devotion to suffering flesh and blood.

Our principal work is to elevate the people through healthful sentiment, and so give to society loftier and nobler aims. This is the supreme work of the hour. The people are beginning to demand it. The world is weary of inequality. As the light of intelligence rolls away the stone of ignorance from the brain of man, justice enters and takes up his abode in the heart. The people have suffered long. For ages, they have bowed their necks meekly to the cruel yokes of tyrants, because the priests bade them do so. For centuries, they have bared their backs to the lash of lords and masters, because the Church said, Servants obey your masters, for this is right in the Lord. Millions have endured poverty and degradation unresistingly, because of the promise that in another world they should walk on golden streets and live in costly mansions. But, as science disperses this illusion, they are beginning to discern their equal right to the opportunities of life, liberty, and happiness, right here and now. As the light of reason grows brighter, the attendance at church grows slimmer. The preaching of contentment, poverty of spirit, non-resistance to tyrants, and indifference to the needs of to-morrow, is no longer inspiring nor comforting. The sermon has become the common symbol of dulness; a church sociable, of coldness; and a prayer-meeting, of hollow cant and formality.

Slowly, but surely, the conviction is ripening that the Church is the chief foe to progress; the truest friends of humanity, those who struggle against both the oppressions of Church and State. But, when the priest no longer opposes because he can no longer defy the majesty of public sentiment, he seeks by cunning to claim the victory for himself. This has always been the method of the Church. Every discovery of science and spirit of reform have been first reviled and denounced as crimes against God and man, and then adopted and brazenly claimed as its own products. Even so will it be with the present demands of reason and science. There are already men who occupy Christian pulpits who have surrendered morality to humanity, and yet maintain their office as priests, mediators between God and man, purveyors of spiritual food in the name of religion. But this won't do. We have only this one claim of religion to wrest from them. Once destroy the idea that the inspiration and fine feelings of life spring from worship, and the office of the priest is forever destroyed. Never again will they curse the world with their hostility to progress. Defeat them here, and forever afterward to advance and grow into a larger, richer life of thought and feeling, will be the normal condition of mankind. Old ideas will fall off as easily as the leaves of summer are now dropping from the trees, and new sources of moral life and inspiration will be as sweetly welcome as the flowers of each new spring and summer.

“THE HEART OF YAHWEH.”

THE virtues of one age often become the crimes of the next. The Gods our fathers worshipped are seen by us to be devils. No king of olden time has been so praised as David, when, if justice was done, he would fall lower in our reprobation than either Nero or Caligula. In thousands of Christian pulpits, this brutal tyrant and cowardly fanatic has been exalted as a saint; while the minds of millions of children are confused and their moral sensibilities blunted through their being taught that he was the one man among all the Israelites most after God's own heart. This might not be so injurious, if their idea of God was the same as that of the man who wrote this record of barbarism and superstition. But they are required to believe that this God whom David pleased is infinite in love, justice, and mercy. An attempt is often made to excuse David, on the ground that we cannot judge him by the moral standards of to-day. But, when the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures is to be defended, it is claimed that the highest ideals of morality were furnished by Yahweh to Moses on Mount Sinai. I don't think he can be so excused. It is true he lived in a barbarous age of the world. And yet upon the same pages we find ideals of heroism, self-sacrifice, and humanity, that abide trial by our highest standards of right and duty, and shame the conduct of many professional saints of to-day. Whether the record of his life is true or false, we cannot resist a feeling of indignation that a life

that was little more than a succession of crimes and controlled by the most immoral principles should, in this age of the world, be presented for our praise and admiration. If we take the most charitable ground, and say that the evil character of his life was the legitimate fruit of a barbarous age, it still remains our duty to destroy the evil influence exerted by the contradiction between the character of David's life and the opinion set upon it by the author. To do this is not the most agreeable task. I should much prefer to justify a good opinion than to prove it false. Nor should I undertake such a task, if I was not deeply convinced that the evil influence flowing from this false judgment is immeasurable. The true standards of morality, as revealed by reason, will never establish justice between man and man until these false ones, born of fear and ignorance, are destroyed. I have called this lecture "The Heart of Yahweh" for two reasons: first, David is said to have been a man after God's own heart; second, as Satan was once a God, so Yahweh is rapidly changing from the mightiest God to the meanest devil. David served this devil well, and for that reason was a fiend himself. In the first place, he was superstitious. He permitted himself to be the tool of the priests. When they conspired against Saul for assuming the right to offer a sacrifice and selected him as the instrument of their opposition, he readily assumed the rôle of traitor. It is true that he twice spared the

"The Heart of Yahweh."

Saul when in his power, but not from round of mercy or humanity, but because he feared to touch the Lord's anointed. He was sure that Yahweh would remove him the way, and bring him to the throne in place, but feared to take the task in his hands. The intensity of his superstitions brought out in various ways. When silence reigned in the land, he believed it was sent as a punishment from Yahweh for his sin in numbering the people. During this census, the people had to come together in great multitudes at certain designated places, in order to be numbered. The probability is that, in these crowded places, sanitary conditions were neglected, so the plague brought on by David. When a famine reigned in the land, he sought to appease the anger of Yahweh by offering even sons of Saul as human sacrifices. He believed that Yahweh needed a place of worship, and sought for prosperity in the presence of the ark in which he was supposed to

When success enabled him to live in the shade of cedar, he mourned because Yahweh had to live in a tent. He sought various conjuring tricks the direction of the wind in all his undertakings; and one day when he heard the sound of the wind blowing from the branches of some mulberry trees, he believed that it was Yahweh going before him to fight against the Philistines. That he was so superstitious means that he was so religiously. This was the controlling element of his life. The priests of Yahweh were his counsellors in all things. He devoted a large part of all he took in to help maintain the services of the sanctuary. He composed religious music, and took great pains with this part of worship. Nevertheless, the record of his life is a record of crime upon crime.

Religion seldom, if ever, changes the character of its possessors. It may give greater stability to whatever of evil or good there are in their dispositions. There seems to be as much human nature in the Church as in the world. Last Sunday night, I lectured at the Lyceum. In going from the hall to my

stopping-place for the night, I passed several fine churches and numerous costly residences. The friends I was with kept themselves busy by saying: "That is the church where Mr. B. was Sunday-school superintendent, who is now in Concord prison. This house used to belong to Mr. C., who stole a hundred thousand dollars, and fled to Canada; and that church you see over the way was largely built by his contributions." As this kind of history was kept up while we walked a half-mile or more, I cannot say that it tended in the least to improve my opinion of what the Church is doing for the world. It is claimed by many that these men must have been hypocrites. But that does not follow. They may have been sincere in their professions of religion. A man can believe that he is a great sinner by nature, and saved from doing wrong by the grace of God, and yet commit a crime. David was religious, and yet he was guilty of every infamy possible to man. He gave largely to the Lord; but, though his harem was crowded with the handsomest women that could be found in the land, he caused Uriah the Hittite to be murdered, one of his most devoted followers, in order to steal his wife, and hide the crime of his adultery. He could die instructing his son to build Yahweh a magnificent temple, and at the same time charging him to execute the most infamous bequest ever left by one man to another. With all his religion, he was as much of a tyrant as was ever a czar of Russia. Saul reigned in the affections of the people, but David in their fears. Saul was opposed by the whole power of the priesthood, backed by David and his fellow-brigands; and yet his throne was secure. David was supported by the entire priesthood, surrounded with the most valiant generals; and yet the people revolted from him to Absalom, because the kindness of Absalom won them as much as the cruelty of David repelled them. Saul lived in the greatest simplicity possible to a king, while David surrounded himself with the most costly and extravagant objects and pleasures.

To build his palaces, fight his wars, and maintain his costly court, was a sore burden to be borne by the people. Like a czar of Russia, he was always surrounded by a body-guard of foreign mercenaries; while his principal method of suppressing Nihilism was then as now by the employment of spies and detectives. He was not only a tyrant, but also a coward. The stories of his bravery are evidently false, because miraculous. David the giant-killer reads too much like Jack the giant-killer to be worthy of credence.

In the Second Book of Samuel *xxi*, 19, we read that Elhanan slew *the brother of Goliath the Gittite*. But the words *the brother of* are in italics, and were inserted by the translators. The Hebrew simply says Elhanan slew Goliath the Gittite.

Whenever the translators of the Bible thought it ought to mean something quite different than it really did, all they had to do was to slip in a few italics. The great majority of people believe the Bible inspired, italics and all. We find other evidence of his cowardice in his many successful schemes of craft. A brave man is hardly ever a cunning one. Instead of meeting his foe face to face, he devised some scheme by which he accomplished his purpose, while seeming to be aiming at something exactly opposite. When he caused the death of Uriah, he seemed to be most his friend, and loudly condemned Joab for doing exactly what he had secretly commissioned him to do. Instead of conquering Abner, the heroic champion of the house of Saul, he enticed him to his court on a friendly errand, and thus exposed him to the vengeance and jealousy of Joab, who seized the opportunity and murdered him. Though he denounced the deed bitterly, yet it is quite evident that the consummation was one for which he had devoutly wished.

When he fled for his life before Absalom, he was still cunning enough to send a friend into the councils of his foe to advise him falsely. But his greatest cunning, mingled with cowardly treachery, is exhibited when

the death sweat was on his brow. Shimei, a friend of the house of Saul, when David was driven out of Jerusalem by Absalom, had cursed him, and pronounced his misfortune the punishment of Yahweh for his cruelty to the sons of Saul. But, through a religious vow David made in order to secure the smile of Yahweh, the life of Shimei was spared. But this vow expired with his death, and so in his last moments he requested Solomon to see that he was avenged on Shimei. But a thousand times worse than this was a similar favor requested of Solomon for Joab, the real founder of all his greatness. Every success and victory of his life was acquired by the valor and wisdom of Joab. In all the great warriors of Israel, we never read of one so uniformly loyal, valiant, wise, and victorious as Joab. His counsel and forethought saved the life and kingdom of David at almost every turn. Not only did he save the king from his foes, but also from the worst part of himself. When the king had wished for some water from the well of Bethlehem, guarded by the Philistines, he was one of the three mighty men who had broken through the ranks of the foe, and procured it for him. Though he himself was far more fit by nature to be king than David, yet he always was true to David. But, for this success and valor, the king hated him. He envied him the love and admiration of the people, all the more because he had it not. Though he relied on him in every hour of danger, yet he constantly wished him dead. Not daring to trust his kingdom without his great defence during his life, when the death rattle was in his throat, he accompanied his charge to Solomon to build Yahweh a house with the fiendish command to assassinate Joab and his brother, the execution of which infamous demand was one of the first events of Solomon's reign.

Of an almost equally fiendish nature was his murder of the seven sons of Saul, as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Having acquired his throne by treason and lawless force against the house of Saul, he felt insecure while any

of that house remained. With Macbeth, he felt:—

"Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy."

As Macbeth's half-religious belief in the strange utterances of the witches, coupled with his own soaring ambition, led him on from crime to crime, even so did the religion and ambition of David. It is true that he spared Mephibosheth, one of the descendants of Saul, in remembrance of his oath to Jonathan; yet he was a cripple, and he well knew that there was no danger of his ever becoming king. But it was far otherwise with the seven sons of Saul, who fell as victims to his fanaticism and jealousy. For some time, the crops had been poor. Famine threatened to destroy them all. Every such calamity was a mark of the displeasure of their God. Why was his wrath now kindled against Israel? Their king was intensely religious. The altars were ever loaded with sacrifices. The people might perish with hunger, but Yahweh never. The priests could find no fault with the reigning power. Hence, some fault of Saul must be unatoned for, some religious rite had been neglected or oath broken. It was at last remembered that a covenant had been made with the Gibeonites, that their lives should be spared, though they were to serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water. But Saul, in his zeal for the purity of the Hebrew race, had endeavored to exterminate them. This was the cause of the famine. Thirsting for vengeance against Saul, the Gibeonites demanded that the blood of his race atone for his crime. The request was readily granted; and so seven claimants to the throne of Israel were offered as a religious sacrifice to appease the wrath of Yahweh. The victims were first stoned to death, then hung up for the birds of prey and wild beasts to devour, and the whitening bones continue to plead with Yahweh to turn away his wrath, since the sin of Saul had been now atoned for by the murder of seven of his race. Religion has always

sought to destroy one crime by committing another.

But alongside of this cowardly treachery of David, inspired by religion and ambition, there rises up one of the sublimest visions of human love and womanly heroism that redeem the honor of the human race. Rizpah, the mother of two of the victims, was yet alive. This woman must have been a fit companion to the heroic Saul. As handsome as she was brave, after the death of Saul she had won the love of Abner, the unconquerable, whose praise was in the mouth of friend and foe. Though all her efforts availed naught in the rescue of her children, yet she resolved that their bodies should not be devoured by birds and beasts of prey. And so, for six long weary months, by night and by day, she protected them from the hungry wolves and vultures, in order that they might have honorable sepulchre. Her heroism won the admiration of her foes, who kept her from perishing at her awful but sublime vigil by bringing her food. At length, the rain came; and David, thinking that this barbarous crime had turned away the wrath of Yahweh, allowed the remains to be taken down and buried in state with those of their father Saul and brother Jonathan. Amid the darkness of this crime and superstition, the heroic love and devotion of this mother's heart shine like a star, prophetic of the time when simple, pure, human love shall triumph over all the cruel devotion and fanaticism of religion. All the Bibles in the world might sing the praise of David, and crown him with glory for the fervor of his religion; but the crown of light and glory that gleams upon the noble brow of Rizpah would outshine his, as the sun does a glow-worm. Such deeds go before our weary march, and light the way to man's true redemption from the long night of superstition. They shake our faith in the horrible monsters of human fancy and fear, and create in us that sublime trust in the deathless energy of human love that shall guard its highest devotion from every destroyer, until the wrongs enacted by religion shall be

buried out of sight. They sustain us in the vigils we keep, and enable us to stand firm through the long, weary night-watches of the world's ignorance and crime, in the full assurance that the day shall dawn at last. Through them, we discern that the divinest temple shall yet be the home where virtue dwells with love, and the only altar the human heart on which blazes the sacred fire of unselfish affection. Above the smoke of all the wars and sacrifices of that age, the radiant beauty of her example arches into splendor like the rainbow above the storm cloud, a promise of the time yet to come when war shall be no more, and men, instead of offering their devotions to a phantom, shall consecrate them to suffering flesh and blood. But perhaps some of you ask, Is there not another side to the character of David? Did he not write beautiful and inspiring Psalms, which, in their expression of the noblest aspirations of the human heart as well as of its truest penitence, have been as a well of water in a desert to many a discouraged and fainting soul? Such is the idea of the Church, but it is utterly baseless in the light of modern Biblical research. The leading writers of the Church have given up this idea. Nearly all the Psalms bear internal evidence of having been written at a much later period than that of David. The common interpretation given to them, as representing the religious experiences of David, originated from the same source as did the italics that created a brother for Goliath, in order to give David the glory of having killed a giant.

Take as an example the fifty-first, which is said to have been written by David to express his penitence for his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. The contradiction between its opening promise of a sacrifice of bullocks and its closing, declaring that God desires no sacrifice but a broken and a contrite heart, bears evidence that it had more than one author. Like many of the hymns that Unitarians sing, they were first composed to express orthodox ideas, and afterwards revised so as to

express more advanced opinions. Then the author declares that his sin was only against God; but, surely, David could not think for a moment that he had not sinned against Uriah. The author also says that obedience is better than sacrifice; but David resorted to sacrifice at every emergency of his life, and evidently put more trust in the blood of beasts than in anything else. Similar evidence against the authorship of David is found in nearly all the Psalms ascribed to his pen. Hence, we cannot restore his lost character from this source. But why is such a monster covered with glory, and declared to have been a man after God's own heart? First, from the fact that this was the first triumphal period in the national life of Israel. Hitherto, they had never been thoroughly victorious over the heathen, so called, roundabout. The tribes were unsettled and divided, and never acted in entire unity before. The period of the judges was chaotic, presenting only a few brief and isolated triumphs over their enemies. But the throne of David was supported by a band of invincible warriors, while the events of his reign all tended to unite the various tribes into one people with one ruler. Thus, infamous as his career was, it was covered with the mantle of national glory. But, through its tarnished splendor, we are beginning to see the rags and filth that covered his life. National glory as well as pride covers, like charity, a multitude of sins. George Washington might have been as bad a man as David, but he would be none the less our national hero. David is represented at first as the man after God's own heart, because he was the selection of the priesthood, and always did his best to second all their pleasures. Later on, he was canonized as a saint, because it was seen that the character of his life was the national ideal of Yahweh.

Yahweh was worshipped, not because he was better than other gods, but because he was the mightiest, and so feared the most. In the struggle between Absalom and David, the people's hearts were on the side of Absa-

lom, but with David were the mighty men of renown, one of whom could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. Yahweh, like David, accomplished his designs by cunning and treachery. Those whom he would destroy he deceived. His oath of honor was broken, whenever it suited his purpose to do so. David was a man after God's own heart, because Yahweh was created after the heart of David. Because he was a man of blood and of vengeance, so also was his God. The stream cannot rise higher than its source. But this is the fountain from which flows the so-called water of life, that is dispensed in this country alone by seventy thousand priests. From those altars, dripping with human gore, came the symbolism of Christian sermon and song. The foul murder of the seven sons of Saul for the crime of their father is preserved in the doctrine of the atonement, that offers to redeem the guilty by the pangs of the innocent. The deathless hate of David, inspiring him to the base crime of ingratitude and to break his sworn promise with the death sweat upon his brow, connected with the idea that he was a man after God's own heart, was doubtless in a large measure responsible for the infamous doctrine of eternal hate. If a saint could carry his hate into the land of death, so might the God he revealed follow his enemies into the shadow of death with the fire that is unquenched and the worm that never dies. The prosperity of David, through the support of the priesthood, has led to a perpetual league between altar and throne for the oppression and robbery of the people. His life of murder and lust, hidden beneath the garment of saintship, has given courage to every wolf preying upon humanity, under cover of sheep's clothing. The bottomless gulf of his lust, fostered by a crowded harem, has given divine sanction to the horrors of Mohammedan and Mormon polygamy. The praise of his piety, though it served only as fuel to the flame of his cruel and selfish ambition, has riveted religion so firmly to every form of immorality that

nothing short of the fierce struggle of a revolution will ever separate them. The ideas of religion here inculcated have sown thick as thistle-down the seeds of ingratitude. Sacrifice to God is still regarded as the highest duty of life. When David longed for some of the water from the well of Bethlehem and three of his mighty chieftains broke through the ranks of the Philistines to bring it him, he poured it out on the ground as an offering to God. So, in all ages, the most precious things of earth have been consecrated to the gods, the noblest heroism and devotion of human hearts wasted on a phantom.

The one redeeming feature of it all is that men and women can be thus earnest and devoted to each other. When this devotion, instead of being poured out by religion like water on the ground, is consecrated to and received by humanity, this earth will become a paradise. Instead of seeking for our ideals in gods and goddesses, born of savage fear and hate, we shall find them in the loving hearts and generous deeds of men and women. From this chapter of crime and shame, I return, in closing, to that one promise of hope exhibited in the sublime heroism of a mother's love in that terrible vigil of Rizpah. This is the divine love that seeking ages have striven to find enthroned in the heavens, when it exists in every unselfish thought and deed of any human life. This is the star of the sea, that gleams through the thickest clouds, and points the way, through the darkest night and the fiercest storm, to the port of peace. This is the mother of God, by whose intercession evil and wrath are turned aside. The figure of Mary by the cross of Christ, as an emblem of patient and enduring love, fades from memory at the thought of Rizpah guarding her dead by night and day for six long, weary months.

Though no thronging worshippers hail her Our Lady or Queen of Heaven, yet as an emblem of the sublimest courage and most quenchless love she shines clearly apart from and above all others. But, beyond this,

she illustrates what the human race has darkly suffered and borne through the vain efforts of religion to propitiate the unfriendly powers of nature by human sacrifice and grief. The heart of Yahweh is as untouched by our grief as was that of David by the sorrowful vigil of Rizpah. Famine and pestilence, poverty and shame, ignorance and crime, are still supposed to

be sent by God. Salvation is still sought for in prayer and sacrifice. When the rain came, and brought with it the promise of harvest, then David relented. So, when the curse and misery born of poverty and ignorance are removed, we shall cease to torture, hate, and murder each other, to win the favor of God, and the gentle heart of woman will be preferred to *the heart of Yahweh*.

THE FOLLY OF SOLOMON.

WHEN I was a Methodist minister, I ventured to dispute the wisdom of Solomon's rule for bringing up children, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," by saying, "Spare the rod and save the child." A few days afterwards, a pious sister took me to task by saying: "Brother Chainey, I am afraid you are growing sceptical. You say scarcely anything about the blood of Jesus and the glories of heaven, and last Sunday you contradicted God's word as written by Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived." To which I replied, "I think Solomon the greatest fool that ever lived." Of course, she was more convinced than ever of my unbelief. But from that day to this, I have seen no reason to reverse my judgment. If the claim of the Church concerning him is true, he is also the greatest hypocrite the world has ever seen. While showing to others the steep and thorny path of virtue, he, like a puffed and reckless libertine, the primrose path of dalliance trod.

But whence came the idea that he was a wise man? First, from the ignorance of the time in which he lived. The people over whom he ruled were but one degree removed from savages. Brains were a scarce commodity in their markets. They had no school-books nor newspapers. Their whole stock of wisdom consisted in a few moral maxims and war-songs, which were composed from time to time by some one a little more intelligent than the majority. The wisdom of one age is the folly of a later one. Wisdom only comes by experience.

It is the ripest judgment of the best minds. Some people think that wisdom is acquired by education. But there are many learned fools; and, as some one has said, "there are no fools so great as learned ones." The education of schools and books must be digested and turned into brains. Wisdom is knowledge understood, a mind well disciplined by observation and reflection to understand at once the meaning of any new fact brought before it. It is power and capacity to stand on one's feet, to walk serenely on the heights of liberty, while fools wander, lost in mists of ignorance and fogs of superstition below. But, in the time of Solomon, no one had reached these heights. Darkness was upon all the face of the earth. The highest intelligence was simply a low species of animal cunning. The wisdom of Solomon was of the same order as that of a tiger crouching in silence and secrecy, in wait for its prey. He was simply the most crafty of his time. It was not until a long time after he was dead he became wise. This was brought about in the following way. The religious men of a later period were fond of making moral precepts or proverbs. They cudgelled their brains to propound riddles of a similar character. The better men among them, revolting from the loathsome and barbarous ritual of the temple, began to preach a religion of duty, of righteousness, as more pleasing to God than the blood of bulls and goats. Precept upon precept, line upon line, were given, until

some one undertook to collect them into books. Now, the custom of the Hebrew writers was to ascribe the authorship of such books to some one man whose name was associated in the traditions of the people with the subject-matter, just as authors now dedicate a book to some friend or great man. In our time, the author preserves his own right in the book. Among the Hebrews, he surrendered it entire, in order to give all the honor to him whose name was to secure it fame and influence. David was celebrated among the kings as a musician; and so, when some one made a collection of psalms, they ascribed or dedicated them to him. In a similar way, Solomon, through his reputation for wisdom, became endowed with the honor of having written all the proverbs that were the slow growth of many centuries.

The Hebrew mind is fond of this kind of composition. All their prominent writers are like Touchstone, very swift and sententious in their style. You go into any synagogue to-day, and you will find that the sermon is often a string of moral proverbs. But this kind of teaching is by no means productive of the highest kind of morality. Its tendency is to make men think of right only as a legal or arbitrary standard. The memory is crammed with certain things to be done, and other things that are not to be done; while the heart is left barren and empty of any noble and instinctive generosity. It is a sort of penny-wise and pound-foolish style of morality. It saves at the spigot, but lets out at the bung-hole. It makes a man careful and prudent, but leaves him narrow, bigoted, and selfish. As Jesus told them, they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. This is quite characteristic of the Jews. They are very careful to keep within the province of legality, but have no scruples of conscience in cheating you according to law. What the law allows, that they take, though it be as unkind as to cut from your side a pound of flesh. They are virtuous and law-abiding citizens, sober, thrifty, and industrious, and yet in the highest sense of morality they are not so moral as many who, in yielding to

some strong temptation or sudden impulse, break the law. Morality and legality are often two quite different things. The best way to make men good is not accomplished by everlasting dinning into their ears what is right and wrong. If one had his mind charged with all the moral proverbs ever coined, he would constantly meet with some new combination of circumstances to which none of them would apply. Besides this, proverb-makers do not agree. One often contradicts the other, so that he who depends on them sometimes finds himself at cross-roads, not knowing which way to take. The world needs inspiration more than logic or precept. We all know more than we perform. What we want is the desire and enthusiasm to do that which we see clearly ought to be done. This is the one thing needful above all others. Only, instead of getting it by prayer and faith down from the skies, we are to get it by feeling the woes and oppressions of wronged humanity, and the kindling hopes of a brighter future for the world, lit by the flashing rays of science. Liberalism is somewhat in danger of falling into the dry rot of legalism and cold precept style of morality of which the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes is made up. We, like the prophets of Israel, are revolting from barbarous doctrines and senseless religious practices. That right and wrong are things entirely separate from faith in the blood of Jesus is as plain to us as it was to them, quite independent of the blood of beasts. But, if we think the simple, prosaic repetition of self-evident moral laws and common-sense maxims is to greatly improve the condition of the world, we are much mistaken. Liberalism has, like all other progressive movements, to pass through a period of mere outward legality. We have already had our Solomons proclaiming loudly the way of virtue, and yet themselves keeping the primrose path of dalliance. We have many who conform most scrupulously to the written law of right, whose eyes are blind and ears deaf to the higher law that is unwritten.

But all this is the sure foundation of a new temple, within whose walls the heart shall vibrate to finer touches of emotion and thrill to nobler purposes. The old tides of religious feeling are running out; but they shall flow again, freighted with new life and blessing, in the surging waves of enthusiasm for humanity.

But let us return to Solomon. Though it is exceedingly questionable whether he ever wrote any part of the books ascribed to him, and very certain that the history of his glorious reign is largely mythical, containing but a small portion of truth (and in the judgment of some critics none), yet my purpose is served best by assuming that the position of the Church is true. In doing this, I am not ignorant that there are many within the Church who have abandoned this ground, who claim to preserve the essentials of Christianity, while criticising the Bible as severely as we do. But, having passed through that experience, I know that it is only the necessary blending of the old with the new until the fulness of the new life and thought is reached. The world cannot live there for long at the time, any more than it could exist on the bosom of the Atlantic. A few will remain there, who are engaged in commerce between the two; but the great body of the people will pass as swiftly as possible from one shore to the other. Hence, we have no warfare with those who are keeping open the high road of liberty. Our first duty is to attack and destroy, absolutely, the position of Orthodoxy. The Church claims that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and that he wrote several books in the Bible under divine inspiration. Now, if he wrote these books, then his life was the quintessence of folly. Let us look at it. He was the son of Bathsheba, the favorite wife of David, to possess whom he deceived and caused the death of her husband Uriah, the Hittite. When David was old and bed-ridden, they attempted to keep him alive by causing to lie by his side a young and beautiful woman. But the heat of life had left him, never to return. The people soon be-

came tired of such a king, and selected, in his place, Adonijah, one of his sons. But Solomon and his mother schemed to supplant him. A plot was laid for Bathsheba to visit David, to implore his consent to have her son crowned his successor, and to have Nathan the prophet to come in just at the right time to declare that Solomon was the choice of Yahweh and the priesthood. So, when it was declared that Solomon was king, and supported by the will of his father and of the priesthood, the people, notwithstanding they loved Adonijah better than Solomon, were too much the slaves of superstition not to quickly side with the latter.

This was his first stroke of cunning, upon which he laid the foundation of a reputation for wisdom. When Adonijah found himself forsaken of all, well knowing the disposition of his brother, he fled to the sanctuary for refuge, it being illegal to kill any one who sought its protection. But Solomon was too cunning to risk the wrath of the people by slaying him at once, and promised him that, if he would go home, not a hair of his head should fall to the ground. But, after the death of David, Adonijah, who had fallen in love with the beautiful Shumanite who had ministered to his father, sent his mother to ask permission of Solomon to marry her. Now, Solomon, fearing the popularity of Adonijah, at once made this a pretext for killing him. Though the request was a natural one, and pleasantly made by his brother's mother, he answered churlishly: "Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is mine elder brother. As the Lord liveth, Adonijah shall die for this." Here, again, we discern his beastly cunning; for, instead of giving his brother a trial or allowing him time to flee for refuge to the sanctuary, he sent Benaiah, a professional murderer, whom he kept always busy, to do the horrid deed at once. This was not wisdom, but rather the craft of a serpent and the secrecy of a tiger, waiting under cover of the ambush of a false friendship and then leaping forth upon him and dragging him down to death, when off his guard. Is this the wis-

dom that an infinite and merciful God inspires? No wonder the Church, believing in and worshipping such a monster, cultivating his example, has ever been a ravenous and cruel beast of prey, rending and devouring humanity, giving to every brother man who has asked for a little liberty or the privilege of being happy imprisonment, torture, or death.

Solomon was also cunning enough to commit the murder in the name of the Lord. He was very pious, because the priesthood was the chief support of his throne. The worst crimes ever committed on the earth have sheltered themselves beneath the same name. Religion is to-day principally a cloak, under cover of which every form of rascality is carried on. The Church is always for the tyrant and against the wish of the people. Destroy the Church to-day, and every despotism would fall to-morrow. The aristocracy of the skies is the support of every other. Adonijah was the choice of the people, and so represented the spirit of democracy just struggling into life. Though this child has grown to manhood, yet his rights are still denied; and he is often compelled to seek refuge by flight from the sword of tyrants whose envy and hatred receive the blessing of the Church.

When David was dying, he gave Solomon his blessing, and instructed him to do to Joab and Shimei, two men whom he hated, but had feared to kill himself, according to his wisdom. That is, he charged him to find some wise way of killing them. Can there be a wise way in which to be ungrateful? Can one wisely deceive a friend or commit a murder? David thought so. Hence, we see that even he knew no higher wisdom than the low animal craft and cunning of Solomon. Guiteau has just this form of wisdom, and like Solomon claims also to have been inspired. The only misfortune of Guiteau is that he wasn't born soon enough. If he had lived when God was writing the Bible, he would have been high priest or king; and his book, *Truth*, would be to-day a part of the inspired canon. What was

wisdom then is now regarded as a mixture of rascality and insanity. But the next act of Solomon was worse than this one. Joab, to whose valor all Israel was indebted more than to any man, on hearing what had happened to Adonijah, fled for refuge to the sanctuary. But Solomon descended to the fiendish act of breaking the plighted word of the nation, and sent his murderer, Benaiah, to kill him, while thinking himself protected from death by the law of the land and all the sanctions of religion. In reading the life of Solomon, I have been forcibly reminded of Macbeth. Adonijah was Duncan, and Joab Banquo. After he had got rid of his elder brother, the people's choice and true heir to the throne, we can imagine him saying:—

"Our fears in *Joab*
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be feared: 'tis much he dares.
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valor
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear; and under him
My genius is rebuked."

Though there is no evidence that he wrote Ecclesiastes, yet there are parts of it that must have been written by such a one, whose bloody deeds had rooted sorrow deep into his memory, charged his brain full of troubles, and stuffed his bosom with that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart, until he began to be a-weary of the sun and wish the state of the world undone. Each felt the same, only they expressed their thought in different words. Man is like the beasts, said one. The same thing happens to the good as to the evil. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. The other said:—

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: It is a tale
Told by an idiot full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

Such despair and weariness of life is always the sear and yellow leaf of one who has had no motive in life but vaulting ambition. He who will not think before he acts, and so avoid injustice, must think afterwards and regret. How sad must be the life of one who can say, "I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun," or in the presence of this fair earth with its balmy springs, effulgent summers, plenteous autumns, keen, delightful winters, majestic mountains, sparkling rivers, sublime oceans overarched with the domed firmament inlaid with stars, with all the wonders of human thought and love, moan out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit!" Surely, such is the reward of folly, not of wisdom. He who sows to the wind must expect to reap the whirlwind. Solomon, like Macbeth, sought to gain peace by sending others to peace. After Joab was despatched, Shimei remained. For some reason or another, hatched in his cunning brain, he didn't kill him at once, but promised him life as long as he should remain within the walls of Jerusalem. This he did for three years. At that time, two of his slaves ran away. As they had no fugitive slave law in that country to send them back, Shimei, supposing he had outlived his danger, and anxious to recover his property, went in pursuit of them. But, as soon as he returned, the king sent out his murderer, "who fell upon him that he died."

But all this time Solomon is represented as walking in the fear of the Lord, keeping all his commandments, and so delighting the heart of Yahweh that one night he came to him and told him to ask of him whatever he desired, and he should have it. He then asked for wisdom. Being pleased with the modest nature of his request, Yahweh gave him also wealth and length of days, and declared that he should be wiser than any who came before him or should come after him. In the presence of this intellectual sun, all Humboldts and Shaksperes, Huxleys and Spencers, Hugos and Renans, must pale their ineffectual fires. But what intellectual pleasure or progress does the

world owe to Solomon? Who was ever soothed or inspired by reading Proverbs or Ecclesiastes? They have bred a cold, pedantic, selfish style of virtue, or filled the heart and mind with blindness to the beauty of nature and worth of life. We are told that he understood all about trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, and of beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes. But how much botany or natural history did the world ever learn from the Hebrews? He built also a temple unto the Lord. Now, this temple was hardly as large as this building (Paine Memorial), but to build it required the combined strength and skill of two nations. According to the inspired Word of God, it took 153,300 men seven years to build this house. Is it possible than any sane man or woman can believe such a statement as that? They must have understood the science of making a job last a good deal better than modern workmen. After it was done, he sanctified it by killing in it two-and-twenty thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. Yahweh surely must have had enough blood to drink and meat to eat for once in his life. If Solomon did this, can you conceive of a greater piece of folly? What a sweet-smelling savor must have gone up to tickle the nostrils of Yahweh from such a slaughterhouse.

But the wisdom of Solomon is supposed to consist principally in his proverbs or moral maxims. He tells us who finds a wife finds a blessing and obtains a proof of Yahweh's favor, and that it is better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and angry woman. This was evidently written by some honest man who had one woman for a wife, and a good one, for which blessing he thanked his God. But imagine Solomon writing in that way, with one thousand wives. He may have had some reason to wish himself at times in a desert, but none to discourse on the blessing of a true marriage, in which there is one man to one woman. Many of his proverbs are uttered

against licentiousness. Is he not the prince of fools and chief of hypocrites, who could search all lands for handsome women with which to fill his harem, and yet say, Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding and destroys his own soul? Think of Solomon, who spent millions in importing thousands of chariots and horses for his army, writing this proverb: "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord." The proverbs recognize Yahweh as the only ruler of the world; but Solomon not only built him a temple, but also erected temples to the gods of the other nations round about, showing that he believed in them and solicited their favor as well as that of the chosen divinity of Israel. That a man like Solomon could ever compose moral precepts is as inconceivable as to think of Guiteau writing a book like Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* or *Data of Ethics*.

But, granting he did write them as the Church declares, there is no evidence of great wisdom in them such as the world has never seen and never will. Most of them are the simplest kind of commonplaces. If a man meets his enemy, will he let him go? Such as the man is, such is his strength. As well say a pound weight weighs a pound. A warrior at bay is like a bear robbed of her cubs. A fugitive is like a partridge on the mountains. Woman's beauty without sense is like a golden ring in a sow's snout. A merry heart is a perpetual feast. The sluggard is the spendthrift's brother. A poor man entertains, a rich man speaks roughly. The sot and the glutton grow poor, and sluggishness is clothed in rags. When you meet with honey, eat not too much, or you will loathe it and be sick of it. Surely, the wisest man the world is to ever have might have told us something a little harder to find out. When Hamlet said, "There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark but he's an arrant knave," Horatio aptly said, "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this." So, we might say, there needs no man wiser than the dullest fool to tell us

such things. A man might as well claim wisdom for telling us men have noses, or that wool grows on sheep's backs, or that a strong man is stronger than a weak one. But these things not only required the intellect of the wisest man, but also the wisdom of the infinite God to reveal them. Now, a great many of these proverbs are in the form of riddles. Just think of an infinite, all-wise God desiring to make a revelation of his will to mankind, doing it by asking a number of childish riddles for the sake of answering them. For example, What is as sweet as honey? Pleasant discourse, for it is sweet to the soul and a medicine to the bones. What is worse than meeting a bear? Meeting a fool in a fit of folly. What is heavier than a stone and more burdensome than sand? A fool's anger. What is sweet at first, and then like sand in the mouth? Stolen food. Children playing at riddles would do better than that. The idea that it needs a wise man or a God to tell us such things is the most concentrated folly.

But, if Solomon was the author of Ecclesiastes, it is there that his folly grows most rank and foul. It is the negation of all that is true, good, or beautiful. All things mock desire. Searching for wisdom is a bootless endeavor. The writing of books is a weariness of flesh. If we do any good, we get no thanks for it. There are not many people of understanding,—not one man in a thousand, and no women at all. You should not aim at being too good, for a righteous man is often destroyed by his goodness. Enjoy what you can get, and trouble yourself about nothing else. Death is better than life, for life is full of misery. Man gains nothing by all his toil. Nature repeats the old round with wearisome monotony, for there is nothing new under the sun. Vanity of vanities, everything is vanity. Such is the folly of Solomon. He points the tongue of scorn at everything fair and good, and mocks at all truth and nobility of life. Such infidelity is the curse of the world. The scepticism for which we are denounced

is the revolt of our reason from supernatural absurdities and cruel doctrines. But this is the denial of all worth in man and nature. It offers no comfort to-day nor hope for to-morrow. Such despair could only come from one made dyspeptic by too much feasting, virtuous by the impotency bred of excess, whose way of life had fallen into the sear and yellow leaf. Christianity is charged full of this horror of life. Everything belonging to this world, its preachers tell us, is vanity and vexation of spirit. The end of life is to prepare to enjoy another existence by despising this one. In every church they sing,—

“Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these earthly toys,”

or,

“Oh, tell me no more
Of this world’s vain show.”

Such a philosophy of life kills hope, destroys enthusiasm, crushes ambition, arrests progress, bids us bear meekly the fetters of tyrants, and suffer all the ills that flesh is heir to, as imposed upon us by iron fate or omnipotent will. Though the Church calls us infidels and sceptics, there lives more faith and fidelity in our doubts than in all their creeds. To destroy this blight and bane of scepticism, cultivated by every church in Christendom, is our mission.

We are to show that virtue is its own reward, loyalty to the loftiest ideals the surest road to happiness, liberty the mother of order, not of confusion, that life bounded by the cradle and the grave is well worth the

living, that all that gives enthusiasm and fine feeling to life springs like the flowers from the earth. It is true life’s sunshine is flecked by many shadows. Adversity often comes an unwelcome guest into the fairest prosperity. Pain makes many hours drag wearily, and the death of friends palls the brightest day with gloom and horror. But sorrow endureth but for a night, and joy cometh in the morning. The grass withereth, the leaves fall, the flowers fade; but the winter has its keen delights, and charms us with its wonders of snow and ice, while the spring soon returns to intoxicate our sense with its budding beauty, and to thrill us with the amorous kiss of its soft and perfumed air. Life is full of difficulties, but the joy of success rewards our toil. What though death comes at last, when we have seen the beauty of spring and summer, heard the music of the sea, enjoyed sweet fellowship with kindred hearts and minds, communed through art and literature with the most inspiring genius, loved and been loved, felt the kisses of our children upon our cheeks and their arms about our necks, and by our devotion to truth and right, left the world a little better than we found it, going to our final

“Rest in faith,
That man’s perfection is the crowning flower
Toward which the urgent sap in life’s great tree
Is pressing, seen in puny blossoms now,
But in the world’s great morrows to expand
With broadest petal and with deepest glow.”

SELF-RESPECT.

IN the Book of Job, we have a noble picture of a man against the greatest odds, in the deepest affliction, maintaining in fact and argument the integrity of his nature, and so preserving in spite of general condemnation his own inherent sense of self-respect. How far any one of us is to do this in this world of a tangled yarn, of a mingled good and ill, seems to me to be the supreme question. For a long time, we have been studying the Bible in its expression of savage cruelty and blind superstition alone. It has been an unpleasant task, made bearable only because it has strengthened us in our conviction that it is no part of our duty to respect these barbarisms nor to sadden our lives with walking in this darkness. The only bright spots we have found have come from the bursting forth of human love and truth in revolt against the tyranny of priest and king. Through these rifts, we have caught sweet visions of a brighter future, when truth and justice shall fill the world with peace and beauty.

But, in our study of the Bible, we have come at last upon a brighter theme. The mind of man has ripened, and the experience of life taught him to know better his own heart. The spirit of doubt and of opposition to established or Orthodox opinion is born and finds its first worthy exponent in the author of the Book of Job. This man was the Voltaire, Paine, or Ingersoll of the time. The Book of Job is a drama, under which form the author seeks to solve anew, from the stand-point of advanced thought, some of the deepest problems of life. What

is the right of public opinion over the individual? What is the nature of evil and good? What is the relation of man to the universe without? Is our conduct free or necessitated? Does any one do that which he sees to be right without some selfish end in view? These were the questions that rested on the mind of this author. One of the most interesting facts to my mind is that, in all ages and parts of the world, the great thinkers, poets, and prophets of humanity have essayed the same task. In *Prometheus*, *Faust*, and *Hamlet*, we are led to face the same problems. Such works are immortal, because they sound the deepest experiences of our hearts, and soar to the level of our highest thoughts. In this Book of Job, the cause of the individual is tried. The right of every man to live and think is brought into court, and, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, bravely and wisely maintained.

We, of all people, are most interested in these arguments and judgment. We belong to the minority. Our right to have our own opinion is denied by the majority. It is true we are tolerated and allowed to live, but only with the full understanding that the price of our liberty is to be eternal pain. We contend that man is good and true, independent of any selfish end or ulterior consideration. While the majority debase themselves in the dust and cry, "Unclean," and pray, "Lord, have mercy upon us most miserable sinners," we stand up on our feet, strong in the dignity of our manhood and sincere devotion to the right, and so, though

all the rest of the world denounce us, maintain our self-respect. To do this is to solve the problem of life,—to strike the key-note of existence that enables us to reach the highest harmony of the true, the beautiful, and good. Whatever discord or hate there is outside of this in the world, here is, as it were, a secret heart of love which the brave win and find rich with blessing,—a very well-spring of comfort in the midst of the wilderness, to which we can ever flee for rest and inspiration.

A man who does not respect himself is the blight and bane of society; while one who does is a centre of health and blessing. Only by living a successful life ourselves can we help others to succeed. The star that moves majestically in its own orbit is one of the connecting links of order in the universe; while that which dashes wildly across the orbit of another becomes a disturbing element, a note of discord in the music of the spheres. Though in the grand laboratory of nature, it gives up all its substance to other worlds, an individual centre of light and power has been blotted out. So the man who maintains his own self-respect moves serenely in the appointed sphere of his own thought, hope, and love, is a note in the eternal music that makes up the gladness of the world, a point of light and beauty on the horizon of thought, a connecting link in the grand and beautiful order and majesty of social and moral life. But let him lose that self-poise, cease to turn upon his own axis, revolve around his own best love and intelligence, turn from his own highest ideal to follow blindly some other individual or organization, and he becomes a note of discord in life's jubilee, a destructive and disturbing element in the social and moral life of the world. He may be praised as a saint in all the churches, he may be rich and prosperous in the sight of all the world during his life, and, when he dies, leave millions to build hospitals or orphan asylums; but, if he has sacrificed his own honest thought and innermost love, been for purposes of gain in business or position

the devotee of a creed or a system contradicted by his own reason, there is nothing added to the aggregate of human good, while there has been blotted out of existence a star of light, a power of truth and order that would have been a part of the world's brightness and beauty,

"Till human Time
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb
Unread forever."

It is because of this, I fear no devil but a creed, and no hell but that spirit of universal slavery and death called Orthodoxy. By Orthodoxy, I mean any attempt of the majority to lord it over the minority, any reduction of life into a system of doctrine that says you must believe it or be damned. Orthodoxy is the shutting down around the soul of man, trembling and throbbing with the touch of the infinite tides of life and being, a solid wall of granite beyond which he cannot pass. It means the quenching of all wonder with Omnipotence, the ending the ever-joyful, earnest search for the truth by the free spirit of man in some name of God or cast-iron rule of duty.

Orthodoxy tries all men and theories at the bar of God. But Liberty judges all gods and creeds at the bar of man. Does your God come up to our standard? Is he willing to live and let live? Can we respect him and ourselves at the same time? Does your creed match our farthest hope and noblest deed? Does it open in the wilderness of human trouble springs of comfort and refreshing? Does it gild the dark cloud of sorrow with the golden splendor of light and beauty? Does it come to the heart weary with the monotony and routine of life's struggle for existence, with successions of horizons and ever-enlarging prospects of richer life? Is the sum of human happiness constantly increased by it? Is man or woman in any trouble of loss, of sickness, or temptation benefited by it? Is the life of the individual made more rich and sweet, grand and strong? Does it rise to wider visions of thought and swell into larger volume of affection? Tried in these scales of

truth and justice, all gods and creeds are found wanting; for the life of man is ever onward, onward into light, and the thought and love of to-day are better than any God or faith of yesterday.

To make this plain, and so to vindicate the honor and dignity of man against the prevalent religious opinions of the age, was evidently the purpose of the author of this book. Job is the representative of man stripped bare of every outward possession in life. The incident and machinery of the drama are entirely imaginary. Job himself is the symbol of man at his best, in spite of every opposing force and evil. Satan is the spirit of judgment that is often found in company with all that is highest and best in the heart of man, awakening doubt where there should be trust, and demanding condemnation when only sympathy and compassion are needed. Does Job serve God for naught? All that a man hath will he give for his skin! The same spirit says to-day, All men are sinners. Every man has his price. All virtuous conduct has at the bottom some selfish consideration. This satanic spirit that seeks to slander out of existence the unselfish goodness of mankind is in the Church and out of it. From going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, it comes into every assembly of truth and virtue, with its unbelief in man.

But the misfortunes of life are a furnace that divides the pure metal from the dross, and brings to light the nobility of man against all his accusers. Hence, as the test of his integrity, misfortunes are represented as coming thick upon Job. Children, servants, property, health, honor among men, have, in one calamity after another, been swept away. Hitherto, he had been orthodox, and received without question the doctrine that evil is the reward of sin and good of righteousness. But pain has too sharply pierced the tender, sensitive, quivering heart of flesh with pangs and darts unfelt before, for him to continue any longer an optimistic believer in the relative goodness of all things. Here it was, this terrible fact of evil. Before his

own experience, all his former theories broke down. He was quite sure that it could not be in punishment for any fault of his. Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, represent the Orthodoxy of the age. They came to Job in his grief, and were smitten into silence for seven days at sight of its extremity. They meant well. They wanted to do him good. They were quite sure that, in their creed, they had explained the full cause of Job's misfortune. As long as they were silent, and gave only this beautiful tribute to the sincerity of their sympathy, they were a comfort to him; but, when they opened their mouths and undertook to administer consolation with their theology, then Job had to say, "Miserable comforters are ye all!"

Humanity and nature cannot be packed into any creed. He who thinks that his theory of life covers all his joys and sorrows is like a quack doctor who thinks that he has found a specific for all the ills that flesh is heir too. No wonder that Orthodox religious newspapers advertise and indorse the infernal lies of the patent humbugs that cheat and fleece the ignorant, or that broken-down orthodox ministers often take to the patent medicine business, for Orthodoxy and quackery are twin-brothers. He who has preached the blood of Jesus, as the cure of every moral ill, has either the stupidity or hypocrisy to proclaim sarsaparilla or hop bitters as the cure for all the physical ills of life. When one reads the testimonials with which the newspapers are filled, of the miracles wrought by this or that nostrum, he wonders that people are still sick and doctors busy. So to listen to the testimonies of religious people is to be filled with wonder that everybody has not long ago sought this fountain of life and joy. But both orders of testimony are either the product of ignorance or deception. How vain and shallow is the philosophy of the Church, in presence of the real tragedies of life!

This discovery was one of the first influ-

ences that shook my faith in its creed. When called to speak words of comfort to those for whom the heavens were hung with sable as they stood about the cold and lifeless form of some one who had been a part of the sunshine of their lives—that which the Church bade me say—seemed like making a mockery of grief and an auction of consolation. In spite of my creed, the love at my heart gave the lie to its cruel dogmas. And, instead of drawing a religious warning from the event, I found that I could but mingle my tears with theirs, and confess myself as powerless as themselves to justify the evil that had come upon them. Orthodoxy is cruel in life, but in death it is a very fiend. It casts a shadow upon the brightest day, but from the cloud of grief it bursts like a thunderbolt to blast and destroy the noblest minds with insanity. Some say that science has no comfort to offer at the grave. But better eternal silence in the presence of death than to speak such words as the Church alone can offer.

I know of naught more absolutely inhuman and tormenting to the most sensitive natures than the average funeral service. I am frequently asked by Liberals, What shall we do at funerals. I always say, Better not have a word spoken than call in an Orthodox minister. I heard a man not long since pleading very earnestly for Christian burial for convicts. Not a word was said against the injustice of society that had made them criminals. But woful calamity, horror upon horror, when a prisoner died, he was buried like a dog. But, for my part, I had a thousand times rather be buried like a dog than a Christian. So, if I am ever in trouble like Job, I had rather be left alone in my misery than be tortured with the false explanations thereof of the Church.

Though Job did not understand the cause of his suffering, yet his Orthodox visitors were quite sure they did. They have had a vision, a revelation. One of them had seen a spirit, that told him all about it. They are the be-all and end-all of knowledge. For them there is no mystery or un-

certainty as to the source of trouble. They know that all prosperity is the reward of righteousness, and all adversity the punishment of sin. It makes no difference to them what Job thinks about it. They are quite sure that trouble doesn't spring out of the dust. The innocent never perish, and the righteous are never cut off. Hence, all this calamity that has come upon Job is in punishment for his sin, sent to bring him to repentance and reformation.

Though Job stoutly maintains his innocence and uprightness of heart and life, still they insist that, no matter how outwardly pure and correct in his life he may have been, he must have committed some crime in intention, if not in deed. He had probably prided himself in his great devotion, or been vain-glorious in his hope of a reward. This being the character of their own motive, they judged him by the same low moral standard. This is the very nature of Orthodoxy. It is the religion of the shop and huckster's-stall.

It is a good bargain driven with God. It is so many sacrifices, so many prayers, so much faith given for a crown and a harp. The worshipper glibly acknowledges his sinfulness, in order to be written down a saint. Present evil is borne with on the ground that it is to be made up with greater good to-morrow. True manhood always flees from this sordid atmosphere. He who loves and reveres himself fears no hell and covets no heaven, but finds his highest joy in his own conscious being. Though Job confronts their arguments with such experience, yet they insist upon it that God sees man's iniquity when it looks as though he did not; that before him man is always unclean; that there is nothing for him to do but to acknowledge his sin, and by so doing escape from the wrath of God. They say, Behold God putteth no trust in his ministering spirits, and the heavens are not pure in his sight, much less abominable and polluted man, who drinketh iniquity as water. Man, in their estimation, is only a worm, a reptile; and there is no goodness in him,

from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. It is the same doctrine that is preached in every Orthodox Church. Whoever enters one of them must leave his manhood at the door, and surrender every right of self-respect.

But that which at first is only a profession soon becomes a reality. He who debases himself from fear of hell or hope of heaven is indeed debased. Many such lose the power to believe in any higher motive, and so they say to us, whose only motive to right is the love of it for its own sake, Why, if I believed as you do, I would have nothing to restrain me from doing wrong. Job, conscious in his own integrity and maintaining his self-respect in spite of all the evil that had come upon him, was a complete mystery to the Orthodoxy of his age. This perplexity deepens when they demand what explanation he can put in the place of theirs, and he replies, None. I don't understand it. I have no theory to propound. God is unsearchable and past finding out. Such can never understand how one can have a free and open mind, content to say to many things, I don't know, and yet be loyal to that which he does know. If he does not accept their dogma, why then he must have a creed of his own; and so they urge him to tell it, in order that they may attack it with their logic.

But the noblest faith is ever better felt than told. He who worships by ritual is an idolater; and whoever believes by book is an infidel to the higher and holier truth of human love and hope. The Church calls us unbelievers because we reject their creed, which is simply a denial of our larger faith in the thought and love and hope of man. Our creed is unwritten, simply because all the books ever written or that ever will be written cannot contain it.

But, when these men couldn't move Job in any other way, they began to try to frighten him into accepting their creed by telling him what awful things had befallen other wicked men, how they had been overtaken by asps and vipers and fires from

heaven, just as men do nowadays by harping on the death-bed terrors of infidels and the awful torments of the fire that is unquenched and the worm that dieth not.

But Job was too grand a man to be frightened from his own honest conviction by any miserable scarecrow of Orthodox superstition. Through all his suffering, he carried a noble courage; never boasting, but still finding a moiety of comfort in his misery in the flimsy and absolutely silly arguments of his opponents, daring even to laugh at them in a quiet sort of a way, saying, "No doubt, ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you; but I have understanding as well as you. I am not inferior to you, yea who knoweth not such things as these."

Think of this poor, afflicted, solitary man turning against these self-asserting theologians clothing themselves in the garments of divinity and infallibility. No wonder that he almost took their breath away with his fierce appeals to the Almighty to show him his sin, and preferring to deny the very existence of a God rather than believe a creed that made of him an infinite fiend. His whole wealth of manhood rose up in scorn against a God who could, for any reason, afflict a poor, weak, mortal man. The true Promethean spirit was in his soul, and we may well fancy him saying:—

"I know not aught within the universe
More alight, more pitiful than you, ye gods,
Who nurse your majesty with scant supplies
Of offerings wrung from fear and muttered prayers,
And needs must starve, were't not that babes and beggars
Are hope-besotted fools.
I reverence thee.
Wherefore? Hast thou ever
Lightened the sorrow of the heavy-laden?
Thou ever stretched thy hand to still the tears
Of the perplexed in spirit?
Was it not
Almighty Time and everlasting Fate,
My Lords and thine, that shaped and fashioned me
Into the man I am?"

Against them and their God, Job fell back on his manhood, dared to respect himself, be guided by common-sense, be true to his own instincts and, against all their platitudes, assert his own knowledge, bought in the dear school of experience. "Am I a sea

monster, that the Almighty should deal thus with me?" he asks. In a few words, he makes short work of their theory of evil by showing that in this world the same things often happen to the innocent as to the guilty. He will not bow to the dust in any mock humility, though they do call him a worm. He knows that he has done nothing to merit the misery that has befallen him, and so challenges the whole universe to name his offence. What better were these men than he? What right had they to a revelation that he had not? Has he not wisdom as well as they? If God has revealed a secret to them that he has hid from him, such a God is more deserving of hate and scorn than love and worship. It mattered not to him that they piled argument on argument to prove that he was prone to evil as the sparks to fly upwards. He simply knew better, and so stood firm in his self-respect. Nothing could lodge him from here. He would never acknowledge a depravity he knew he did not possess. With the most solemn oaths, he protested the purity of his life, his devotion to the happiness and comfort of his home, his honor in dealing with his servants. The fatherless had never cried to him for bread, and been turned away. He had never eaten his morsel alone, and, if he found any naked, he soon made them warm with the fleece of his sheep. Neither had he put his hope in gold, nor made wealth his boast. He had never rejoiced in any calamity that befell those that hated him, nor had any stranger been allowed to sleep in the street.

Nor had he at any time hidden the truth, because of any fear what the multitude would say about it. He had esteemed the truth even more than his necessary food. Friends may reproach him, but he can see that his own heart doth not. He will at least, whatever other evil may befall him, never come to despise himself for playing the hypocrite. "Till I die," he grandly says, "I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me

so long as I live." In so doing, Job was secure; for this is the sure refuge of life. Whoever hideth himself here becomes invincible against all that man can say against him. Whoever makes this principle of self-respect the guide of his life is a centre of life and blessing to his fellows.

It is out of hearts that have thus stood firm through the long night watches of the world's darkness that has come all the true light of life. To all such, whether they lived yesterday or move among us to-day, we should turn as the true saviours of humanity. Only by acting from the same principle can we be free men and women. We boast in vain of our freedom, while we are slaves to any theory or name. Those who think that the highest freedom of man is already won do not yet understand what it means to be free. As yet there have been but few perfectly free souls on this earth. The grandest and noblest sight we can behold is a right perfectly free man. Let us not think of liberty as something we have attained unto in all its fulness, but as the grandest prize of life, for which we may yet contend. A few cowardly souls begin to cry out against the dangers of too much liberty, and, as its light approaches, fly back like owls and bats into the darkness of the night.

But the real danger is that even we shall not behold its perfect glory nor listen to its full song of victory. Still, some of us have at least caught a few glimpses of its radiant beauty, and so made it the devotion of our lives. But the path to its goal is steep and rugged. Though we cry, Excelsior! and struggle bravely on, the way grows steeper and the storm more unfriendly until at times our voices are hardly heard above its deafening roar. But, even though we never reach its glory-crowned summit, we will at least not live the tame and insipid lives of those that slumber at its base. Let come what will, let life and death do their worst, and if there be a hell let that do its worst also; and I had a thousand times rather maintain my self-respect with Job

than take my stand with the time-serving, timid, cringing, whining, fear-haunted theologians, who sought to frighten him out of his liberty into bondage. Such are the kidnappers of the human mind, and deserve a thousand times more to be driven from their destructive traffic than did the men who made a business of stealing men and selling them into physical slavery.

What right has any one to a revelation we have not? Are we not men? Have we not the same capacities of joy or sorrow, hope or despair? When they tell us then that we must accept their creed, name their God as the final cause of all things, let us bravely tell them that we have no particle of respect for such a God; for far beyond the vision of their creed our souls have beheld fresh and larger horizons of truth and beauty. When they tell us that we are totally depraved, let us not be afraid to fall back like Job on our consciousness, and assert the falsehood of the charge.

Does it go for nought that we have loved

purity, that, inspired by love, we have consecrated our lives to the joy and gladness of others, that we have broken our bread with the hungry, and stood by the truth as we have seen it, though we know that we have been losers thereby? And is not this the solution of the problem of life? To belong to a popular and respectable party or church is not of necessity a bad thing; but to belong to yourself, and to be quite respectable in your own sight, is infinitely better. That these two things do not sometimes go together, I do not deny. Still, I am far more sure that they are often thoroughly antagonistic to each other. To enjoy the last, most of us have found it necessary to forego the first. But, in doing so, we have tasted the sweets of liberty, plucked the fairest blossoms of love and friendship, known the joy of victory, ceased from the confusion of calling evil good and good evil, and, by trusting in and following the guidance of our own hearts and minds, experienced the unspeakable satisfaction of a true self-respect.

PRIEST AND PROPHET.

NO STUDY of the Bible would be complete without grasping the character and relation of these two important factors in the development of its religion. All religions have had their corresponding functionaries. History and nature are equally full of contrasts, because the first is but the reflection of the last. The inner life of man is subject to his environment. The spiritual is the resultant of the outer, just as much as the eyes are produced by light. The fish in the mammoth cave have none. So man would have no conscience, if there was no choice between evil and good in nature. For this reason, the poet who imagined our first parents in a Garden of Eden, a state of perfection, had to represent them as destitute of the knowledge between good and evil. In the realm of nature, we not only have the dualism of good and evil, but also of day and night, heat and cold, storm and calm, land and water, mountain and valley, earth and sky, beauty and deformity, health and disease, life and death. As man's spiritual life, by which I mean the union of his mental and moral faculties, stands in direct relation to all that is without, and, as far as we can see, is produced by it, we find here the same extended dualism,—truth and falsehood, hope and despair, love and hate, joy and sorrow, facts and fancies, wisdom and folly, sanity and insanity. Of course, the list might be much extended. Now, in an ignorant age, when man, simply through lack of experience, guessed at the meaning of what he saw around him, this dualism appeared in other forms, as God and

devil, heaven and hell, angel and demon, saint and sinner, priest and prophet, eternal life and everlasting death. As we shall see later on, science gives correct ideas of nature, and so entirely alters our definitions of the external world and of our relation thereto.

Both priest and prophet were the product of this ignorance. Both must, sooner or later, along with kings and slaves, disappear from the face of the earth. But as those who would under other conditions have been kings and slaves will be something nobler, so will those who would have been priests and prophets yesterday serve humanity to better purpose to-morrow. By understanding their work in the past, we shall prepare our hearts for their coming.

This dualism of which I have spoken reappears again in many ways in the life and work of both priest and prophet. The priest is the voice of the past, the prophet is the oracle of the future; the priest serves at the altar of memory, the prophet at the shrine of hope; the priest repeats, the prophet creates; the priest is made by society, the prophet makes society; the priest is stationary, the prophet revolutionary and progressive; the priest first conquers the prophet, though, later on, the prophet triumphs over the priest. The priest hates every live prophet and worships every dead one. As Jesus said to the priests of his time, "Woe unto you, for you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them!" The priest is always orthodox, because he is in the majority; and his work

is to mumble over the inscriptions that have been written on the tombstones of the dead.

The prophet is always heterodox, because he is in the minority, and speaks the living word that is like fire shut up within his bones and will come out, though it burn up in the holy wrath of revolution all the endowments and emoluments of the priestly class. The prophet sees visions and dreams dreams. He is hence sometimes called the seer, or one who has a second sight, and sees what others do not. The priest receives these utterances, and repeats them in the service of the temple erected to the God in whose name the prophet spoke. When other prophets come who contradict what this one has said, they are liars and children of the devil. In point of time, the prophet is older than the priest. In most religions, the first prophet has been their God. Jesus and Buddha were both prophets, and had to contend with the established priesthood of their time. If we could get at the beginning of any religion, we should find a prophet,—some man or woman breaking the silence yet unbroken, and speaking in the name of some power higher and greater than themselves. It may be that the Yahweh of the Hebrews was in the first place such a man. Science points to a time when language first began to shape itself into being. The first speech consisted of nouns, or sounds formed to represent the facts of nature. But along with the naming of earth and sky, land and water, day and night, the thought of the mind and the feeling of the heart grew and began to demand expression. But at length came one who saw the correspondence between the outer and inner, and so gave expression to the pent-up longings of many hearts. This faculty of seeing truth in the form of pictures always seems like a voice from without. The operation of the mind creates an illusion, and what we say of ourselves seems to be given us from some one else to say. Experience has taught us that this is the nature of the imagination.

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,

And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

But, of old, this frenzy was received as the presence of a god; and whatever was spoken under the excitement was received as a "thus saith the Lord," and so treasured as a revelation from heaven.

It is, of course, impossible for us to realize the intense emotion excited by the first prophets. Man was a mystery unto himself. On every side was mystery. All things were to him alive. Unable to speak to the powers he believed to be in all things around him, he hailed with joy any one who revealed to him the character of their thoughts and purposes toward him. Thus, if the speaker was not worshipped as a god, his words became authority for all time. But, when the tongue of the prophet was silent, then arose the priest whose business it was to remember his instructions, and repeat the ceremonies of worship, or rather exorcism, he had established. As long as no new prophet arose, this service was beneficent. But still you can see at once that their work would be a mechanical one, and, like all routine, it would tend at last to the bondage of habit and suppression of progress. These old words and forms, through constant repetition, would become so inwrought into the life and the thought of the people that it would require a terrible struggle to give them up. They would be so intimately related with every interest of the priestly class that they would naturally oppose with all their might any one who pronounced them false. But this antagonism of the priesthood could no more prevent the coming of new prophets than the frosts of winter the flowers of spring. While the priests are exalting and worshipping the past, walking among its dry bones and building the sepulchres of former prophets, some new one will be wrestling first-hand with the problems of life and duty, opening his heart to the fresh influences of nature, the truth that blooms in the lily by the wayside, thrills in the songs of the birds, shines from the distant stars,

until a new vision of life and beauty will appear to him. But though for death he offers life, beauty for deformity, certainty for uncertainty, liberty for bondage, the living present for the dead past, it will all be despised and rejected as infidelity. But, though the prophet has often sealed with his blood the truth he has proclaimed, yet the truth is not dead; for, consecrated by his death, it rises into new power until the priests are compelled to take it into their system, for, though one generation kills the prophets, the next builds their sepulchres. Such is the sad epitome of religious progress in all ages.

Among the Hebrews were both priests and prophets. But the two classes were always at war with each other. It is impossible to review the history of this struggle. But it explains many of the contradictions and enigmas of the Bible. Moses established numerous rites and ceremonies of worship. But Isaiah, who appeared at a much later age, and saw that obedience to the law of right was better than sacrifice, denounced all their ceremonies as abominations. Speaking in the name of the Lord, he said: "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." Several times in the history of Israel, the people became so indifferent to the worship of Yahweh that the priesthood, for want of support, almost died out. At these times, many prophets arose, who denounced with fiery zeal the backslidings of the people, and threatened them with every conceivable calamity. All the heathen nations round about were summoned by Yahweh to prey upon them. But, in order to keep up the national glory, these foreign powers were afterwards to be punished for suffering themselves to be used by Yahweh as instruments of correction to his people. So much was foretold that never

came to pass that the Book of Jonah seems to have been written by some one for the express purpose of explaining why the predictions of the prophets were not always fulfilled. The idea that these men were inspired by God to foretell future events is simply ridiculous. When they speak of the future, it is in such a dark, mystical way that no one can possibly tell what they really meant. Hence, it has been easy to read into their words after events, of which their authors never dreamed. I need not dwell on this, because many of the leaders in the Church have rejected as foundationless the claim that the prophets revealed, in a miraculous way, events that only took place long after their death.

The claims of commentators and theologians touching the fulfilment of prophecy are so far-fetched that all sensible people have ceased to consider them worth noticing. One prophet contradicts another. Every nation and city was threatened with destruction, so that, in the very nature of things, somebody's prediction was bound to be fulfilled. The national vanity that always proclaimed a restoration and a new king who should be more successful than either David or Solomon has been twisted into a foretelling of the birth of Jesus and the spread of Christianity. The declaration that the Jews should be scattered among all peoples long after they had been thus spread abroad is looked upon in the light of a miracle. But, though we can no longer believe that the prophets spoke by inspiration, yet many of them as men are worthy of the highest admiration. They were the poets and reformers of their time. They were fanatical. They often denounced things that were good in themselves, opposing the introduction of chariots and horses and ships of Tarshish, which was as foolish as would be the preaching against railroads, steamships, telegraphs, and electric light to-day. But, notwithstanding these limitations, they were generally earnest and good men. They preached the religion of deed as more important than that of creed. They launched thunderbolts of in-

dignation against priestcraft and hypocrisy, and oft-times aroused a sleeping nation from the death of formalism and orthodoxy. Under their teaching, the religion of the Hebrews gradually grew from a system of barbarous rites and sacrifices into the love and practice of goodness.

We hope much for humanity from the final triumph of the prophet over the priest. We must not forget that there are still priests and prophets, and that the first far outnumber the last. Every orthodox minister is a priest. He stands at the altar to offer a vain oblation, to repeat the words of the dead, and command the observance of numerous fasts and feasts. He no longer slays a beast, but still he talks much about the efficacy of blood. He no longer seeks to satiate God with flesh and blood, but still he endeavors to feed the people with them, under the symbols of bread and wine. He no longer mutters sacred formulas over the entrails of a bird killed above a running stream, but he still repeats them above the sleeping innocence of childhood and the silence of death. The sprinkled blood has become sprinkled water; and the altar on which the sacrifices of old were made has become a work of art, on which all are told they must bind themselves, a spiritual offering unto God. We have more respect for the heterodox minister, because he has something of the prophet in him. He dares to say, Is God dead that he is silent now? If our fathers were inspired, may we not claim the same blessing? To him, the heavens are still open, and showering blessings on the earth. While he reverences the prophets of old, he looks for new ones to come. He seeks to reconcile the teachings of science and reason with those of theology and tradition. And, when they have contradicted each other, many of them have rallied on the side of the first in preference to the latter. Liberty owes much to the prophetic ministry of such men as Channing, Parker, Savage, Chadwick, and Swing. They have conquered ground from the enemy that might otherwise never have been won.

Perhaps, however, the prophet of the past is more especially repeated to-day in the trance or inspirational speakers of Spiritualism. I notice in them the same earnestness, the same spirit of progress, the same exaltation of to-day over yesterday, and equal strong emphasis of the superiority of deed to creed. They are better than the old prophets, because they say the spirits are to be tried. They acknowledge that they may err, and that false spirits are as liable to speak through them as true ones. But, however this may be, they have the imperfections and limitations of the old prophets. Though they bring us news from another world, they contradict each other most remarkably. According to spiritual authority as represented in their papers, there are more false mediums than true ones, just as there were of old many false prophets to one true one. They prophesy a great many things; and then, like the author of the Book of Jonah, they write books to show why they are not fulfilled, and sometimes get their prophet conveniently swallowed for a time by some whale of a law court or prison. They have the same want of harmony and logic, the same chaos of a few good things mixed with many bad. The prophets of old could only speak under conditions. They had to wait for the frenzy. That which we know to be a natural trait of a vivid imagination they supposed to be a supernatural visitation.

Sometimes, they sought to bring about the right conditions by fasting, meditation, or prayer, or by the drinking of wine. This example is followed by the inspirational speakers of to-day. At our freethinkers' convention at Hornellsville, one of them, before speaking, said that, while he believed that all he taught was under influence, he was afraid he couldn't say much this morning, because the spirits demanded conditions, one of which was that he fast before speaking; and that, unfortunately, that morning he had breakfasted before learning that he was to speak. I couldn't help my sceptical mind from wondering why his spirit friends

didn't kindly inform him in time what was expected of him and them. I do not say this out of any doubt of their sincerity. I entertain great admiration for some of these speakers, and am proud to number them among my friends.

I simply report these things as I see them, and am quite willing to wait patiently for further proof as to who is deceived on this subject. I do this more willingly, because they lay no claim to infallibility, and so leave open the highway of progress. Thus saith Thomas Paine's or Theodore Parker's spirit is better than "Thus saith the Lord," because we are permitted to appeal from what they say to our own reason and experience. I also find that I can only lecture under conditions. It is impossible to write well on a full stomach or when the body is tired. But I am not willing to believe that I am simply a funnel for some one else, whether they are living or dead. Truth is only valuable when it is digested, and made bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In my opinion, and I think thousands are ready to second it, there will be shortly no more priests nor prophets. The gods have not only left the sacred groves and hills, but also the churches and chapels. We have no more sacrifices to make for any one besides living men and women. "I believe" must give place to "I know."

The Christian praying-machine, called a litany, with its vain repetitions of "Good Lord, deliver us!" or "We beseech thee, good Lord, to hear us most miserable sinners!" will be soon looked upon in the same light as the Hindu praying-machine, which repeats over and over, as it is turned round by the devotee, "God thou knowest, God thou knowest." They may go on some time longer, like some poor fellow in the street, grinding over and over a well-known stock of doleful tunes, in hope of catching a few pennies flung to them from the heavenly windows above. Like these Italians with their dismal music, they will be tolerated for a while, for the sake of the amusement they furnish to intellectual children. But we

hope that the time is not far distant when the true reformation and regeneration of society will offer so many better advantages that there will be no one left to follow this same vagabondish style of getting a living from favors flung from those who despise them, simply because they imagine it is a cheap way of keeping silent the cries that are bursting from the lips of the people for better care and comfort. All men and women of intelligence have ceased to think that one can be virtuous for another, or that goodness can be obtained out of the skies by praying for it. Thousands within the Church already acknowledge that it is ridiculous to pray for temporal blessings. They will soon see that it is equally so to supplicate for spiritual ones.

The work of the priest in his office of public prayer rests upon the wild idea that the universe is changed at will, and that there is no such thing as moral law. It is as foolish to pray for the light of truth as to ask with Joshua for the sun to stand still. He who would know the truth must seek and find. Character is only won by faithful endurance, and persistent devotion to our highest and purest ideals of life. But, though the assumptions on which all priestcraft is founded vanish before the rising sun of science, all the facts of nature and life remain. The destruction of theology is simply the awakening of humanity from a troubled sleep, and the vanishing of a dream that has disturbed our slumbers. The world is now before us for the first time in all its glory and beauty.

Man is here, in all his strength of achievement. Woman is here, with all her wealth of enduring love. Knowledge is here, daily encroaching upon the boundaries of the unknown, and opening before our minds fresh fields of exploration. Hope is here, ever more conquering the giant of despair and demolishing the castle of doubt. Truth is here, daily widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower. Love is here, with its perpetual enchantment and thrilling joy. Art is

here, daily creating some new source of pleasure and winning some foot of barbarous territory for the permanent occupation of civilization. For

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever;
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A quiet bower for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing."

Books are here, that like true friends share our joys and sorrows. Thus, this world is constantly growing better, men and women are becoming too full of the milk of human kindness to worship any being, God or man, who delights in the shedding of blood, and far too intelligent to think that truth has aught to do with the entrails of a bird or incantation of any sort. Every day, those who can take no more delight in singing

"The blood, oh, the precious blood,"

are on the decrease, while, as Mr. Ingersoll says, only those attend prayer-meetings who wish to be alone. But, while they lose their interest in these things, their desire to know what is true and do what is right between man and man is steadily increasing. Those who have least need of priests are oftenest heard demanding education, health, air, water, land, right, and justice for all. We have ceased to expect to know what is to happen to-morrow. But we desire to know what is happening in the ends of the earth, how men thought, loved, and acted yesterday, or what good work of love and kindness is to be wrought to-day. And so the men and women who write our books, make our newspapers, who can tell us some new truth, repeat or interpret for us what has been well said or done at any time on the earth, not only replace the work of the priest, but minister to our true needs far better than they ever did or could. The endowments and buildings that are now used as dens of superstition, sepulchres of exploded theories, pyramids of embalmed corpses, will some day pass into this truer service of humanity.

When we look around us and see how thick these black dragons, the body-guards

of cemeteries in which lie buried departed ideas are, and behold how rich the tombstones and how costly the gifts that are daily deposited on the graves, we are inclined to lose heart and faith. But as sure as day follows night, so sure will this vast edifice of superstition crumble into a heap of ruins, these men become the servants of man instead of God, and all these buildings be turned into lecture and concert halls, libraries and reading rooms, art galleries and gymnasiums.

Nor is the hope of the future to be found in any new "Thus saith the Lord." Mormonism is the latest religion pretending to come direct from God. It is just as divine as any of them; but we see no beauty in it, that we should desire it.

Two men, within a short time, have received a "Thus saith the Lord." One plunged the murderous knife into the heart of his own child. The other flung a pall of grief over fifty millions of people by killing a man for whom he claims to have had no malice. One is in a mad-house, and the other in a prison. One, by the cowardice of hypocrites, was deprived the right of a trial: and the other, by the shame of political corruption, has been tried a hundred times too much. Whoever in the future says, "Thus saith the Lord," writes across his own brow, "Insane."

But the work of the prophet will be taken up by the poets, idealists, and reformers who work for the kingdom of man, and seek their inspiration from the truth, beauty, and goodness of this world instead of from one above. We are coming into direct communication with nature. Men are learning to think for themselves. Intellect enlightened casts off the bandage of faith from the eyes of reason. Let us then not grow weary in well doing.

"Our course is onward, onward into light,
What though the darkness gathereth again;
Yet to return or tarry, both are vain.
How full of stars when round us dark the night,
Whither return? What flower yet ever might,
In days of gloom and cold and stormy rain,
Enclose itself in its green bud again,
And hide itself from tempest out of sight?"

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

OUR subject to-day calls us somewhat into the realm of the imagination. Though superstition with all its evil progeny is supported by the enthronement of fancy above fact, yet we must learn that imagination, when subject to reason, is of unspeakable service.

The history of England, as written in the creative fancy of Shakspeare, is far nearer the truth than the records of those men who, because they only sought to write facts, call their works history. Why? Because, in the pages of Shakspeare, the past is alive. We become personally acquainted with some of those who lived in it; and, through them, we touch the hearts and minds of those with whom they lived. While in the bare facts of history, we have only dust and ashes scraped from yesterday's tomb, which fills us with horror, and far oftener suggests a lie than a truth.

The Bible and Shakspeare are sometimes compared together. It is a most unjust association. The Bible reflects the falsehoods conceived in the imagination that acknowledged no service to reason and nature. Shakspeare is the same power entirely true to nature and patiently subject to reason.

Science as well as literature is dependent for its best results on the help of the imagination. Reason and observation furnish the facts that guide the way. But the darkness that covered the origin of man has been removed more by the imaginative and creative powers of Darwin and Spencer than by the bare facts they record. Serving as the handmaid of reason, the imagination sees through the darkness and mists of supernaturalism the true primeval man emerging from the heart of nature, through the

progressive scale of animal life, to his nobler place and power. All religion, art, and language as well as science guide us back to this origin of man.

With man came hope. As the train gathers speed by its own momentum, so the motion forward from the animal to the savage man tended to push him forward with ever-increasing desire toward the distant horizon of civilization. But as the train could not make headway of itself, so, if there had been nothing behind as well as before man, hope would have perished at its birth. Hope, like man, is the child of both pleasure and pain. As the sun of science has slowly risen through the long night of ignorance, so hope is the beautiful bow of promise that spans a dark background of fear and despair.

Hope, of course, is infinite in variety, including as it does all the ideals cherished by wide humanity. But all variety has a background of unity. The multiplied hopes of all men and women are backed by one great hope of the world, "deliverance from evil." Of course, this hope has varied in definition. Where men said with Buddha:—

"Life is long-drawn agony.
Only its pains abide: its pleasures are
As birds which light and fly.
Sweet is fond love, but funeral flames must kiss
The breasts which pillow and the lips which cling,"

they also sighed, and struggled with him to enter into Nirvana, or eternal death:—

"For sorrow ends but when life and death have ceased.
How should lamps flicker, when their oil is spent?
The old sad count is clear, the new is clean,
Thus hath a man content."

If, however, life seem good but for certain accidental conditions, like slavery or

disease, its hope will be for deliverance therefrom. If there is belief in immortality and escape from evil seem impossible in this life, then even the grave becomes the goal of hope, and the gateway of death the opening desire of life. This is the hope of Christians and in part of Mohammedans, which is accounted for by the fact that these religions were born of similar conditions. We who are not Christians are said to be without hope in the world. Atheism and despair are supposed to be synonymous. If our views of life are true, we are told that the best thing we can do is to persuade all to commit suicide. To say that this is not true seems something like declaring that we have neither horns nor cloven hoofs. If our joy does not prove itself, it is worthless. But, though to seriously meet this ignorant and foolish charge is not worth our time, yet it is well to give clearly our reason for the hope that is within us. To do this, we must contrast it with that which we have thrown away in order to secure it. I have called this lecture "The Hope of the World," because I wish to explain to you the nature of the Messianic hope of the Jews, how and why it was changed from a temporal deliverer to the spiritual one of the Christian Church, and how and why both of these are vanishing before the mightier hope that fills our hearts with joy and courage to-day. In my last lecture on the Bible, I spoke of the Priest and Prophet. Now, the Hebrew prophet was largely produced by the Messianic hope of that people. In proclaiming his coming, he simply expressed the desire of all hearts around him.

This is the principal burden of the writings of all the prophets. Of course, the hope was expressed in many different ways. Sometimes, it was in the form of a golden age: sometimes near at hand, and again afar off. But almost always it took the form of a personal deliverer. The evil from which they sought deliverance was the yoke of bondage, grievous taxation, and shame, forced upon them by some foreign king. All their traditions and ideas associated

prosperity with the reign of some prince of their own blood. Though this was connected with the idea of enriching themselves by bringing other nations beneath their yoke, yet the whole nation looked and longed for a ruler who, because mightier in war than David and wiser in council than Solomon, should restore the old palmy days of victory and conquest, when the land was rich with spoils and slaves captured in war from the neighboring tribes. It was a most natural desire. Nothing in the whole history of the world is more easily explained from the natural and rational stand-point. The way theologians have forced supernatural meanings into all the Messianic predictions of the prophets is almost infinite in its absurdity. The Hebrews had, and could have, no other hope. They had no belief in immortality. They had no idea whatever of the spiritual kingdom, so called, of Christianity. They were slaves. They were oppressed with burdensome taxation. They, proud above all people of their national life, were ruled over by foreigners; their religion making association or marriage with other nations a crime, yet forced into constant dealings with them.

No hour of life was exempt from some annoyance by the presence of the hated Gentile. Any one with a heart to feel and a tongue to speak must proclaim deliverance from such a curse. All their religious life and faith for a time centred here. Each new prophet proclaimed the coming one. Yahweh, their god, had not forgotten them. He was only trying them now, so that he might cause their glory to shine out in brighter radiance than ever before. He would yet comfort his people Israel, raise them up a deliverer chosen and anointed by himself. Thus, Isaiah tells them. "They who are now afflicted shall not remain in darkness. The people that now walk in gloom shall see a glorious light, the dwellers in the land of night shall see the gleaming dawn. Thou, Yahweh, spreadest them out again: thou givest them joy to taste, as in the time of harvest or the day when the

spoil is divided. For thou wilt break his yoke and the staff with which he is driven, as when Midian was smitten. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. Dominion shall be laid upon his shoulders, and men shall call him Wonder of Wisdom, Might of God, Booty-seizer, Prince of Peace." But preconceived opinions of what this ought to mean led the Christian translators to force ideas into it, undreamed of by its author. Take as another example the passage that represents this child born of a virgin. Judea is overrun at the same time by the Syrians and northern Israelites. Ahaz, the king, is met by Isaiah, who promises, in the name of Yahweh, speedy deliverance from these foes. He is slow to believe. Isaiah tells him to demand a sign. He refuses to put Yahweh to the test. Still, the prophet gives him the sign by saying, "Behold a woman: she is with child, and shall bear a son. Call him Immanuel (God with us); for, though he must live upon herdsman's fare, upon milk and honey, till he know the difference between good and evil, yet before that time has come the land before whose two kings you tremble shall have become a desert." Any one reading this part of the Bible with the eyes of reason will find quite other meaning than that which theologians give to it. There is nothing said either about a virgin or a miraculous conception, and, instead of concerning the future, has sole reference to the time immediately following its utterance. He simply means that in a few years before a child as yet unborn, though bred on the healthiest food, giving precocity to the intellect, shall be able to tell good from evil, the land of Judah should be rid of both of these foes. In this case, the child spoken of is not regarded even as the Messiah.

But, all through the Messianic period, every child born into the world was looked upon by its parents as a possible fulfilment of this hope. This desire was in the air, the theme of every preacher, the heart of every song, and the burden of every prayer. Many believed themselves the chosen of the

Lord, and sought in various ways to fulfil their mission. Within the century in which Jesus is said to have lived, more than fifty would-be deliverers arose, claiming to be sent of God and obtained some following. This mighty hope, concentrating generally in one individual of salvation and restoration to Israel, throbbed in all the life of that age. No one could pass it by. Thwarted in one direction, it revived in another. The hope of all and the heroism of all are recorded in the life of Jesus. He is the fortunate centre around which many scattered rays have gathered, according to that law of history that centres in the name of a Washington the courage and glory of a nation, and in that of Lincoln all the pains, enthusiasm, and even martyrdom of thousands of despised and unknown abolitionists, who lived and died alone for that liberty of four millions of human beings. His hand was but the happy instrument to sign a charter of emancipation that had been long written in the blood and tears of thousands of equally as good and brave men and women.

I shall speak of the personality of Jesus in another lecture. To-day, it is enough to say it is quite probable that such a person did espouse this idea and proclaim himself the deliverer and king of the Jews, for which he was, as many others had been before him, put to death by the power of Rome that brooked no rivals. His followers, cheated in their hope that it was he who should have redeemed Israel, began to give a double meaning to his life and words. The same hope was reborn, only instead of looking for another they found in some of his words a veiled promise that he would return. Like all the enthusiasts of that age and clime, they spoke in the language of poetry. He was not dead. He had risen from the grave. He would come again, not this time in humility, but in the clouds, already established on a throne surrounded with pomp and glory, and so set up a kingdom on earth in which they, his best friends, would be chief lords and consuls. This they preached to others. From time to time,

a few converts were made. These new disciples took their poetry for prose and fiction for reality. In this way, about two hundred years after the death of Jesus, his life was written and that strange book, containing a few facts clothed in a multitude of myths and absurdities, called the New Testament, was given to the world. This gave to nothing the appearance of something, to a will-o'-the-wisp born of the fumes that rise from the morass of earthly trouble the semblance of a star descending from heaven. For a time, the hope was still located this side of the grave. But, after long and weary looking for the second coming, the idea began to gain ground that all his promises had reference not to this, but to another life. If Christ had risen, he was alive somewhere. If he lived, then they should live also. Their faith in his resurrection became to them the assurance that they also should rise again. For a time, the two ideas strangely blended together, that of the temporal and the heavenly kingdoms. According to some, this resurrection was immediate and spiritual. To the majority, it was literal and afar off, not taking place until Christ should come and establish in person his kingdom on the earth. Gradually, the idea has changed, until only the ignorant hold to the theory of a literal resurrection, though it is one of the principal dogmas in all the creeds.

It is a question whether this idea has done more harm than good in the world. Personally, I am thoroughly convinced that it has destroyed more of the real joy of life than all other things together. I have no doubt that it has done some good. No pen can paint nor tongue describe the misery that filled the world, into which the hope of the grave was welcomed as an evangel. Everywhere, the weak were the prey of the strong. Might is right was the only law. The destroying power of ambitious lust for wider empire deluged all lands with blood, and glutted all markets with slaves. The conquered were degraded by slavery and fear, and the conquerors far more so by injustice and brutality. The poor and the

afflicted received this gospel. It was like chloroform to their pains. To be martyrs was a privilege for all who believed that the grave was the gateway to everlasting bliss. By accident, this religion and Church became allied to the state and power of Roman empire. From that time, it has had a double history, the outer and seeming one of pomp and glory, the inner in the nourished hope of the poor and afflicted of earth that the pains and injustice of this life will be atoned for in heaven. The outer is the natural progress of the world through Roman and Saxon empire into democratic and liberal principles. To call this progress of civilization Christianity, as many do, is both false and absurd. Real Christianity has naught to do with this world. It prefers poverty to wealth, humility to pride, and weakness to power. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Those that believed it sought in penance and prayer to prepare themselves for death. It did its best to arrest all progress, to destroy all art, literature, and science. All its hope lies beyond the grave. Its early preachers carried into their pulpits the skull and cross-bones.

Most preaching to this day is sepulchral. Though my heart is full of joy, I am afraid that this shadow of death, under which I so long lived, sometimes gets into my voice. As several orthodox ministers passed through the twilight of Unitarianism on their way toward the full light of liberty, I see that the Unitarians are advising future converts to go to their theological schools, so as to get themselves well grounded in their faith before entering their ministry. But at what school should they tarry, after leaving the pulpit, for good and all, for the liberal platform? None is possible at present. But, if we ever have one, let its principal end be the development of good physical health, and such study of natural oratory as shall get the preaching tone out of them, and make it unnecessary to proclaim from any liberal desk,—

“Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound!”

The sepulchral in the Church is to the manner born. The most miserable nations are to-day the most Christian. Ireland and Italy can match every pinched beggar—though both countries swarm with them—with a priest, who, however often on his knees, never sees them for the mountainous size of his belly. Prosperity and happiness are, in all lands, the sorest foes of the Church. Revivals are always the most numerous during a financial panic and general hard times.

The only exception to this rule of the partnership of misery with Christianity is a great plague, like the cholera or yellow fever. These tend to harden the hearts of the people against the thought that there is mercy in heaven. But poverty, that casts its damp, chilly atmosphere over all things, that keeps just out of arm's reach every desire, making life so thin and barren that heart and mind are bereft of hope and courage and reduced to that bankruptcy of self-respect that leads people to despise themselves and beg of both man and God for temporal and spiritual crumbs of favor, is the most efficient co-laborer with all the Moodys and Sankeys, Pentecosts and Needhams, who go about howling and singing down this world, in order to get people to take stock in another. But, as the years go by, these revivals grow less and less. The hope of heaven is like a tallow candle, growing feebler and feebler, in the presence of the electric lights of hope and joy that are bursting forth upon our darkness, and promising to translate the long night of fear and superstition into the perfect day of liberty, truth, and justice. The Church is no longer enlarged in the old way. In drumming for recruits, it has learned to appeal to the love of social enjoyment and innocent amusement. It decoys people into the fold by erecting stages, giving plays, concerts, suppers, and even balls. Its coffers are supplied by pay for present enjoyment far more than for any hope of joy to come. Some people are thoughtless enough to think, if liberals follow these usages of the Church,

that we are indorsing Christianity, when it is they who are indorsing us, in order to maintain themselves.

Again, a few have thought that in charging admittance and reserving these seats we were doing the same thing because the Church has succumbed to the spirit of the world enough to rent pews. This is business and secularity, not Christianity. We want no one to stay away from these lectures who cannot afford to pay, and urge you all to apply for complimentary tickets for any one you know would like to come and yet cannot afford it. On the other hand, we believe that every one who supports them according to his means will find them of far greater service than if he received the same free. I cannot stop to mention all the influences that are at work destroying the old idea of the Church. One thing is a change in the nature of the evil from which we hope for deliverance. Even where the power of one man is still potent, as in Russia and Germany, but few believe in it. The majority hold it a curse, and struggle to rid themselves of it. The world has ceased to look to king, queen, or emperor for deliverance from evil. Even the magic name of pope or patriarch has lost its charm. The doctor is now sent for instead of the priest in case of sickness. The power of one man in any sphere of life is on the decline. The only deliverer from Cæsar was Brutus, another of the same kind. That which we fear is no longer an army of conquest led by some unmatched warrior.

Nor are we content with the one blessing of peace. When war was as common in the world as thunder-storms are with us in summer, the desire for peace eclipsed all others. But life has grown larger. We thirst for unnumbered blessings. We not only want protection in our labor, food, and clothing, but knowledge, culture, art, books, magazines, papers, pictures, lectures, concerts, amusement at theatre, sociability, homes, lawns, and flowers.

No one man can give us all these. We

see clearly that to the many they are to come by the triumph of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The hope of the world is not a king, however wise and just, but democracy, by which I mean the elastic condition of society that shall give immediate fulfilment to the best desires of all hearts, the general elevation of all, the prosperity of each, the wisdom of the masses, the inventions of many, the justice of each to all and all to each. What we desire is the equality, not of division or communism, but of opportunity, and the development by right education of a proper sentiment, that shall always be just in its censure and true in its approbation. Debts of honor are always safer than those that are made legal by all manner of restrictions. We hope for the day when all just obligations shall be enforced by the mighty force of a true public sentiment, without the help of any of our present legal machinery, that far oftener punishes the innocent than the guilty. Sick and disgusted with the daily story of political corruption, we hope that the time is coming when the triumph of true democracy shall make every public officer simply the servant of the people, amenable always to the will of the people, and as easily discharged from the public employment as any one is for wrong-doing in private service.

But the most complete social regeneration, we are told, does not include the need of such a spiritual deliverer as Christianity provides. No, but it does away with the disease, and so destroys the need of the physician, which is far better.

Character is as much the production of our surroundings and nature as the color and perfume of a rose or the stench and pestilence born of filth. Even the latter is an effort toward health and beauty. The tendency of nature is ever toward restoration. When a bush is down in the forest, all her forces conspire to lift it up again. Her tendency is in the direction of the survival of the fittest, not of the strongest, but of the best. Man, weakest at birth of all things, triumphs over the lion and tiger.

If nature is ever unfettered from the supernatural, all life will be a struggle forward. The hell of remorse is as much the product of falsehood and superstition as that of fire and brimstone. Theology thinks itself merciful, because it has substituted the first for the last. As mental pain is worse than physical, it has become more inhuman. Even many would-be rationalists think that this pit of despair is a part of nature, from which our gospel offers no deliverance.

With Karl Heinzen, whose birthday we celebrate next Wednesday, I believe that "crime will cease to exist as soon as right is a fact; for law becomes humane as soon as it has no longer to protect a wrong, and war impossible as soon as the guaranteed equality of all leaves the ruler without servants. Then, the conflict between public and private morality will disappear; and it will no longer be wisdom in politics what in social life is villainy, and no longer honorable in the latter what is infamous in the former. The lust of spoliation and oppression will be transformed into the necessity of mutual interchange and help, and the fulfilment of all just claims will free society from the curse of punishing crimes which it has created itself, and of being accuser, judge, executioner, and culprit all in one." If this is not true, then there is no hope for the world in the gospel of rationalism. If it is true, then all other hopes become despair, when compared to this. As above the mad dash and deafening roar of Niagara shimmers a beautiful rainbow, so above the wild rush and mad whirl of human passion hovers the circle of inviolable law.

The steadfast order with which the planets move shall yet come into the lives of men, when, instead of bending to external authority, they are impelled from without as well as from within to be true to themselves. Blessed is the hope that a day shall yet dawn when there will be neither saints nor sinners, when crime will be seen to be the result of a malformation, when the idea of vengeance shall fall out of justice, and

leave it simply the merciful and patient care of the sick by the well. This is indeed a radical gospel. But, believe me, it is the one true hope of the world, that shall yet turn our night into day and all our mourning into joy. How shall we reach its fruition? How shall the thousands of young women that crowd to repletion the palaces of shame, their hearts filled with despair, and the young men who wreck themselves to sustain them, be restored to purity and love? How shall the thousands who grow harder and bitterer every day behind prison walls become a blessing to the world and a joy to themselves? How shall the millions of physical wrecks from the frosts and blights of lust and intemperance, that wither and fall from the great tree of humanity, grow, instead, into all fair use and beauty? How shall the dismal streets, foul alleys, tenements reeking with filth, swarming with sickly men, women, and children, be turned into pleasant cottages, surrounded with fruit and flowers? How shall the wan cheeks of little children be painted with the roses of health and joy? How shall weary wives

and mothers, dragging out a miserable existence in rags and despair, be restored to plenty and hope? How shall the desire of all hearts, the theme of every song, the burden of all prayers, be fulfilled, and the hope of the world, instead of floating dimly on the far horizon of the future, take up its abode in the living present? By the annihilation of every law that makes any one the master of another, the establishing of a form of government that is each day the voluntary wish of the governed, the destruction of every privilege that gives to any one an opportunity not open to all alike; the taking of the responsibility for moral or physical sickness, rendering the happiness of the majority subject to accident, and placing it instead upon society, so that henceforth no man can strive after any personal good without helping all. Then, instead of looking to one man on earth below or in heaven above to bring us salvation, wide humanity will become its own God, its own Saviour, and fulfil its own hope by building its own heaven.

ICONOCLASM.

In the lectures I have given on the Bible, I have endeavored to group together the leading events and lessons of the Old Testament. It now remains to connect similar rational thoughts with the New Testament. In my last lecture, I tried to explain the Messianic idea of the Jews, and to show how the hope of a temporal deliverer grew naturally into the supernatural idea of modern Christianity. We found that the prophets who gave utterance to this idea of a Redeemer were, in spite of their fanaticism, the most earnest and intellectual men of their age. They always proclaimed the spirit rather than the letter of the law, and preached a religion of deed instead of one of creed. It is impossible to overestimate their influence for good in the life of Israel. They were in each age the men of progress, of original power, who kept the intellectual life of the people from stagnation by the introduction of new ideas. But for them, the nation would have been powerless in the hands of a selfish and unprogressive priesthood. This seems to have been its condition for a long time before the appearance of John the Baptist. Temporally they were subject to Rome, and spiritually to their own priesthood. Religion was a most hollow and heartless formality. Professions of saintship were simply worn as sheep's clothing by those who were at heart wolves, growing fat by preying upon the innocent and helpless. Into this condition, John was born. Numerous men had risen, who claimed to be the Messiah and made abortive attempts to stir up a rebellion against

Rome. John seems in the spirit and manner of the old prophets to have attributed these misfortunes to the wickedness of the people. Instead of claiming to be the Messiah, he proclaims that before the blessing of God can rest upon them they must repent, put away their sins, and learn to live righteously. While he promised deliverance to the penitent, he threatened the impenitent with fearful judgments. The axe he said is laid already to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not bear good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire.

Who shall abide when Yahweh comes? Behold, he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor, he will gather the wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Now, I have no intention to lay any great stress on the historical verity of what the New Testament says about this stern preacher of the wilderness. His life and ministry is, however, thoroughly confirmed by Josephus. As he worked no miracles and laid no claim to any supernatural origin, we may, without credulity, place some dependence on the fact that such a man did exist and teach. The New Testament account contradicts itself in many ways. The only evidence of truthfulness is found in its description of his treatment of the various classes who came to him. To the Scribes and Pharisees, the churchmen *par excellence*, he cried, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" To those who thought it was enough to be Abraham's children in

order to be secure of Yahweh's blessing, he said: God can raise up children unto Abraham out of these stones on the river's bank. You must repent. When they declared that they did repent, he told them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Overcome your greed, your selfishness, your hard-heartedness. Be generous and merciful. Whoever has two coats let him give one of them to the needy: whoever has abundant food let him satisfy the hungry.

In these and other glimpses into his style of preaching, we find evidence of a unique and independent mind. He was the true radical and iconoclast of his age, rebuking wrong and injustice, whether covered with the crown of the king or the mitre of the high priest. For this, he was thrown into prison by Herod, and finally beheaded. It would make no difference to my purpose, if I knew no word of all this was true. Whether fact or fiction, we have sketched for us the picture of a man who smote with fierce blows the idols of his time, one who feared far more the loss of his own self-respect than the enmity of all men, who never hesitated to rebuke a lie or sham, though it was clothed in the garments of respectability or cloak of piety.

We of course have no sympathy with his faith that Yahweh was about to come and set up a kingdom, in which the righteous should be blessed and the unrighteous punished. For centuries, men have looked to heaven in vain for justice. But the skies are dumb to all prayers. They smile as sweetly upon the unjust as the just. But though the mind of John was clouded with the superstition of the age, yet, when he proclaimed the coming of a day of wrath and retribution, he voiced one of the deepest feelings of the heart of man. The same expectation and looking for of a fearful, fiery indignation that shall avenge the wrong and reward the right is as strong to-day, yea, far stronger, than in the time of John. We do not deceive ourselves by looking for the interference of some supernatural power. We no longer believe in the great theatrical

spectacular judgment-day of the New Testament.

But there is daily growing up a conviction in our hearts that things as they are cannot go on much longer. Every throne and tyranny of king and priest to-day is resting above the fires of a volcano that will sooner or later burst forth, and overwhelm it with destruction. It is this fire that kindles the watch-fires of liberty all along the shores of Russian despotism. It is this flame of justice in the hearts of Englishmen that will consume the House of Parliament, or see Charles Bradlaugh proudly take his seat therein. It is this that is to-day strong enough in Ireland to defy English law by the power of natural justice. It is this that organizes labor unions, woman's rights, and liberal league conventions. Let the king and priest, the bigot and demagogue, take heed, for the axe is already laid at the root of the trees. There are a great many in these times who plead for gentle and slow methods of reform. To those who are in earnest to attack and destroy at once the strongholds of superstition and crime, they preach moderation, and bid them rather trust in the slow and sure process of evolution. The standard of right to all such is, Is it respectable? Because the Church has been driven to tolerate us, we are asked to tolerate it. Now, toleration is not a virtue, but a vice. Existence on suffrance is hardly worth having.

All toleration is an infringement in thought, if not in deed, of the liberty of another. It springs out of the idea that opposition can only be carried on in connection with persecution. There is however no love of father and mother so tender and kind as the antagonism of the true radical enthusiast. The passion of his heart is his love for humanity. His sole motive is the happiness and good of all. He will not tolerate a moment a lie or wrong, however cruel he seems to those he loves for its denunciation, because he knows that of all things it is most destructive of human joy. If your wife or child should take to nursing

a viper in their bosom out of a strange freak of affection, however much they might think of it, your love would be revealed in the courage with which you would seize and crush it.

A lie is the most deadly serpent that ever coiled itself about the heart of humanity. I know that the work of battling with error is by no means always pleasant. Still there is no joy like that of the heroic soul whose courage is born of the largeness of his love. The adventurer who crosses first the unknown sea, in search of new lands on which to build freedom's holy altar, the pioneer who blazes the path to the advance post of civilization, however great their privations and dangers, have a keener zest and more abounding joy of life than those who reap the fruits of their daring. 'Tis the brave heart who leads the battle; but, while the timid shake in the agony of fear, his soul is thrilled with the joy of courage. The weakness of liberalism has been its toleration. History gives no hope of victory by any such method.

No advance was ever made by substitution, by simply offering the new for the old. On the other hand, every step forward has been made by the spirit and method of antagonism. Thus, Christianity took the place of Paganism, Protestantism of Catholicism, and in the same way must the truth of nature and enthusiasm of humanity displace the ideas and motives that are born of supernaturalism. There is no way to destroy an idol save by smashing it. You will never smash it, unless the spirit of indignation nerve your arm. You will never be indignant, unless you discern its destruction of the happiness of mankind. A great many seem to think that, in this warfare with superstition, the simple statement of the facts is all sufficient. Hence, they lay stress on culture and college training. Now, I would not undervalue this. The truths of science and arguments of well-disciplined minds have done much toward letting in the light. But, though we argue as skilfully as Socrates, if we do not fire the heart with a

deep sense of the wrong and injustice inflicted upon humanity by religion, our words will be little better than so many mouthfuls of wind.

The battle lies with us, even as with John the Baptist, far more between right and wrong than truth and error. Science has made it impossible for any truly intelligent person to go on believing in the old dogmas. Still, these continue the creeds of all the churches; while the very men who teach science are often found hypocritically bowing the knee to their idols. Hundreds of thousands attend and support church, who will privately say to any free-thinking friend, Theology is all damn nonsense, because they have never come to see and feel how it stands in the way of human progress and joy. You cannot argue such people out of this hypocrisy. You must make them see the moral deformity of the whole business. You must in some way connect your cause with the milk of human kindness that exists under the thickest shell of indifferntism.

The moral power is what moves the world. That is, you must arouse the feelings as well as convince the judgment.

As the old abolitionists made men and women weep tears of sympathy for those who were slaves to human masters, so you must arouse in them the same sympathy for those who are slaves to a divine master. As these champions of liberty made you pity those who worked all day long within reach of the overseer's whip, so you must pity those who are driven to their religious duties by the tormenting lash of fear. You must make all such see and feel that all the great social wrongs of our time are fed and strengthened by this system of celestial autocracy and injustice. Now, by iconoclasm I do not mean the forcing of our opinions down other people's throats. I would not for a moment advocate the interference by law with the cherished ideas of any one, so long as they do not interfere with the rights of others. But, just because Christianity does do this, we should strike hard blows against it. Christianity, it is

often claimed, conquers and rules by love. There could not be a greater mistake. It owes almost all its power and influence to the sword. Put the churches on an equal footing with liberal and science halls. Let the preachers have no favors shown them, nor be trusted under any circumstances any further out of sight than other men. Let husbands demand that they only visit their wives in accordance with the social etiquette that is binding upon all alike. Let the text books in schools be weeded of every theological bias. In other words, put Christian ideas on an equal footing with all other ideas, and how long do you think they can resist the growing light of science and enthusiasm for humanity? But every one who pays a tax or increases the prosperity of the country is compelled at the point of every bayonet, the edge of every sword, the gloom of every dungeon, to help support it. Thus, the Church is strong to-day, because it wields the sword; and nine out of every ten churches are supported by money that is wrung by all kinds of tricks and underhand practices from moral cowards, who are afraid not to give simply because they fear its strength.

It is religion, not humanity, that produces this disposition to compel people to believe and profess as you think they ought to. Joseph Cook is supposed to represent Christianity in its most enlightened and scientific form. I read, in last night's *Boston Globe*, a description of a lecture he lately gave in the town hall of the city of Deccan, India, copied from the *Deccan Herald*. The matter of his lecture seems to have been a rehash of some of his Boston Monday lectures, in which he told the Hindus, as he did Americans, the old lie that, while they were taking to scepticism, the best scholarship of Europe has abandoned it. At the close of the lecture, he asked the audience to join in prayer with him. Whereupon, many cried, "No, no!" He then asked the Hindus to join him in the Lord's prayer in the name of their false gods. At which there was a great cry, of "Shame! shame!" Here a

Rev. Mr. Rivington got up and said: "The Lord's prayer is a very sacred and solemn prayer; and no one should be asked to join in it, unless he has received holy baptism. It is no use casting pearls before swine." (Cries from the audience, "Who are the swine?") Mr. Small then got up, and said he had lived for eighteen years among the Brahmins, and he never had cause to call them swine. The president, Major Rowlandson, here interposed, and said that he disagreed with the lecturer in insisting upon offering up the prayer, as the audience consisted of varied creeds, and ruled that the meeting should disperse without the prayer. Mr. Cook got very much excited, and said that he would not be bound by either president or committee, but would offer up a silent prayer.

This is a fair example of the way Christianity gets itself advanced. First, by trespass; second, by insult; and, thirdly, by cunning. In reading such a disgraceful display of bigotry and arrogance, it makes one wish he had been born a heathen, so as to have been saved from the prejudices of early education in such a tainted atmosphere. It has been taught that the success of missions built up the Church. This looks somewhat as though the time will come when their failure will contribute to its downfall.

But, while I would never trespass on the equal rights of all men, yet our convictions about religion are of such a nature as to render it our highest duty to do all in our power to destroy the whole system of theology and emotions of religion, and put in their place the truths of science and feelings that rise out of natural justice and instincts of humanity. The iconoclast is the one who destroys idols.

When John told the Jews to repent, they said, "What shall we do?" So, I fancy, some of you may be saying, "What are the particular idols you would have us smash?" First, God. All worship of God is idolatry. Men have made to themselves many images of God. Some have been made out of wood and stone, others out of mental and moral

qualities, but still carved: only, one has been made with a material, and the other an intellectual, chisel. To worship the last is just as much idolatry as the first. It wastes the warmth and devotion of the heart upon an unreality, a mere make-believe. When the mind of man comes into true knowledge of nature, it is lifted into such a clear atmosphere of truth that the idea of omnipotence becomes an insult, and of creation a barbarism. Nature not only fills us with joy and strength, but makes it impossible for us to wish to go behind her in search of food for our minds or hearts. All idolatry, whether heathen or Christian, is a system of illusions. It is our duty to show the worshippers that their gods are bits of painted wood and stone. It is true that our gods have gradually been enlightened and civilized.

But it costs altogether too much to reform a god. However much you may improve him, "A god's a god for a' that." However he may seem to voice the oracles of reason in the hands of pure theists and radical Unitarians, he is just as much an automaton as the one at Delphi, which the priests contrived to make speak by a clever arrangement of speaking-tubes. We must not only destroy the idol, but put in its place the reality, to which we can bring all our devotion, without wasting the smallest part of it. We must patiently and earnestly labor to contrast the truth of one with the falsehood of the other. The old idea, according to the catechism, represents the chief end of man as to glorify God and enjoy him forever. The new idea is to glorify man, so that when, through death, we sink into eternal rest, we may still live in the growing joys of humanity. According to the first, we are to spend a great deal of time in helping and praising omnipotence. Now, in the first place, if there is an Almighty God, he needs none of our help. He is quite able to paddle his own canoe. In the second place, the word is meaningless. If there is any truth in it, there is no dependence to be placed in our senses or reason. The world is simply one vast insane asylum; and all who live in

it may say, with the heart-sick and world-weary Macbeth:—

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

If something can be produced from nothing, then, indeed, we are such stuff as dreams are made of. We may wake up to-morrow morning, and find that twice two is five; that two particles of matter can occupy the same place at the same time; that yard sticks have only one end, and triangles two sides.

In the place of this senseless and impossible absurdity, we put the weakness of man, needing to-day above all things the principle of coöperation and the spirit of helpfulness in all the relations of life. Suppose, instead of organizing men and women into churches to worship God, we give all that thought and time to organizing them into societies for mutual helpfulness, education, amusement, and insurance from want. If we can once break down the walls of dogmatic separation that men build around their idols, all the men engaged in one trade or employment might form a society that would secure them against almost every evil that exists under our present fierce struggle of individual competition. I plead for destruction of all idols, because this is the reform that must come before all others.

I might take up any one of the many attributes of God, and treat it in the same way. I will notice but one more, omniscience. Can you travel to the end of a road that has no end? Can you think of a being whose sight is as immeasurable as space must be?

The mind of man is incapable of containing any idea corresponding with the word.

But we know what human sight is. We know that many are born blind who, by education, can be taught to read and enjoy life in spite of this deficiency. We are beginning to learn also that those who do see don't begin to see all they might. We are learning that to educate our eyes to discern all the beauty of the stars and flowers, earth and sky, land and sea, will enrich the value of life a hundred fold. While we have been seeking imaginary paradises, we have become blind to the one that is all about us. While we have been praying, we have lost the opportunity of knowing. While we have been painfully laboring to trust, exposing ourselves to the most painful doubts and fears lest, after all, we have failed to secure God's favor, we have lost the assurance that comes of knowledge and obedience of nature's laws. While we have cultivated reverence and awe, we have blasted the healthier feelings of admiration and joy in nature. Enlightened reason not only fails to find any trace of God, but sees with equal clearness that the very idea is an immoral one, because it stands in the way of the development of the highest powers and truest joys of human life. We must banish from human thought this bugbear that affrights and darkens the lives of men. Our souls can never vibrate with the touch and swell of the infinite tides of life and being until this monster of injustice is destroyed.

Any conception of a power or being that admits of an interference with or arrest of the orderly laws and processes of nature is a discord in the music of life, which the higher culture of the future will strike out of the score. Another idol we must destroy is Jesus. While the shadow of supernaturalism is permitted in any way to fall upon his manhood, any relation for good there might be between us and him is destroyed. Instead of being an inspiration, he becomes a bewilderment; in the place of an example of truth, love, and courage, he becomes an idol, before which men ignorantly and stupidly worship. In rejecting his deity, Unitarianism has juggled and mystified people

by claiming to believe in his divinity. The true Liberal must reject this fanciful divinity as energetically as his deity. Each true man must belong to himself. Only as we first belong to ourselves can we possess anything. Liberal Christians have also built up what they call a purely human idea of Jesus, that is as much an idol as was ever worshipped by a painted savage. They ascribe to him every possible perfection and grace of character, so that it has become in its extravagance a false and hollow thing, an ideal altogether impossible of realization, that depresses rather than stimulates the individual who takes it for his guide. The praise and wonder given to him not only make the worshipper feel like a grasshopper beside this giant, but also blind him to the worth and beauty of living men and women. Theodore Parker broke many fetters from human limbs by his courageous denunciations of slavery.

But he rent asunder far more chains of a more degrading bondage, when he attacked the Unitarian idolatry of Jesus, and showed that, when taken as a man, he was at times both a bigot and a fanatic. However good and true Jesus may have been in his life, he lives to-day in such an atmosphere of falsehood, tyranny, and unnaturalness that the only way in which we can truly honor him is by scorning, hating, and rejecting him; for, through centuries of ignorant idolatry, the true friends of humanity are compelled to turn from him as the foe of liberty. The possibility of ever knowing what he was as a natural man is buried so deep beneath mountains of myth and miracle that all toil in this direction is in vain. Another idol demanding the hammer of the iconoclast is the Bible. As long as it is regarded as anything but a human production, the friend of liberty must scorn it far more than he reveres it. I have spoken so often of this that I shall say but little of it to-day. While I recognize that it contains many true thoughts, beautiful and inspiring sentiments, yet I am thoroughly convinced that, if it were possible, it would be better that

every Bible should be burned and every text blotted from the memory of man than to continue to worship it as an idol. As long as, through its influence, falsehood is permitted to reign side by side with truth, injustice with justice, hatred with love, despair with hope, and these words that bewilder the mind by contradicting each other are so often regarded as the only torch of light in man's journey from the rosy dawn of birth to death's dark night, we must do our best to rid the minds of men of this idolatry by never hesitating to make plain its deformities and falsehoods. The same warfare must be waged against every doctrine of supernaturalism. They are all the product of a false conception of the universe, and are to-day in direct contradiction with the natural conscience and reason of mankind. Every miracle and preternatural event that is taught against the consent of reason is a dark cloud between the hearts of men and the sunlight of truth. While men refuse to trust their senses to be guided by reason or continue to hold any fact or truth of nature as profane, the wheels of progress will be blocked, the hopes of humanity unfulfilled, and its truest joy and peace unrealized.

All idolatry is destructive of human joy, even the mild form of it we find among Free Religionists, in their worship of that one word "religion." The meaning has gone out of it. You cannot put new wine into old bottles. The idea of religion is essentially that of dependence upon a person or persons outside of us. The recognition that we are dependent on the laws and limitations of nature is quite different, and does not for a moment trespass upon our manhood. Religion, as I have before indicated, means prayer, trust, reverence, awe, while nature means knowledge, assurance, admiration, and joy. While even Free Religion is allowed to encourage this attitude of life toward the universe, it joins hands with Orthodoxy in robbing men and women of all these nobler and manlier conditions of thought and feeling. Our work admits of

no compromise. The best service of the bravest hearts is demanded here. Bigotry, fanaticism, and ignorance guard the path that leads to liberty. Their name is still legion, but they have been so beaten and broken with the advancing hosts of knowledge and humanity that victory is swift and certain. Let but the hosts of liberty, of nature's loyal sons, rally their strength, and the work of the destroyer will soon end. Our course is onward, onward into light. On every hand, the signs of new life and hope appear.

Last night, I saw in a newspaper that the friends of liberty in Chicago have contributed \$200,000 to establish Mr. Miln at the head of an independent society in that city, and to give him the editorship of a weekly paper to be published in the interests of liberalism and ethical culture. I earnestly hope that it is true. These are the things that are to come.

We have seen how the Hindus received the gospel from the lips of Rev. Joseph Cook. Yesterday, I received a marked paper from that most Christian and bigoted country, Canada, published in the city of Montreal, containing the following item: "On Sunday last, the pastor of the Presbyterian church was called upon to perform a duty which to him must have been exceedingly unpleasant. It was an announcement proclaiming the removal from the roll of church membership of five of his congregation, at their own request, for the reason that they had adopted views conflicting with the doctrines of evangelical religion. The persons whose names have been struck off the roll include two ladies and three gentlemen, whose alienation is a matter of profound regret to pastor and congregation alike." In Montreal, they have a live secular society organized on the basis of *This World*. This is one of the results. Reports of revivals of religion are growing less. Everywhere, you hear a wail that the churches are growing backwards. This is a report of a new kind of revival that prophesies a day to come when men and women

will leave the churches faster than they ever joined them.

The old sun hastes to its setting, but a new one already begins to gild the horizon. All things are pledged to the fulfilment of our cause. There is no rain falls that does not nourish it, no wind blows that does not whisper it, no flower blooms that does not adorn it, no river flows nor tide ebbs that do not follow it with fluid footsteps to bear it on their swelling bosoms on its way to glorious victory.

Conflict is not the end we seek. We fight not against theology for the sake of fighting, but for the liberty of every man, woman, and child. We are inspired and sustained by the vision of peace, plenty, and joy that

shall be fulfilled when the smoke of battle shall float away forever from all the fair fields of human life. We seek to rid the seas of human thought of pirates, that every adventurer in search of truth may launch his bark, and sail forth upon its joy-crested billows without one pang of fear. We carry the battle into the enemy's land because, by so doing, we hasten the victory that shall cover all lands with richest blessing. We willingly seem unkind that we may leave assurance behind us to all coming ages that we were actuated by almost infinite tenderness. The courage that renders us bold and strong to fight is born of the largeness of our love; and all that we destroy is that we may fulfil.

THE MAN JESUS.

MILLIONS are jubilant to-day with the thought that nearly nineteen hundred years ago a man who had been dead three days and nights rose alive from the tomb. If he did, a more remarkable thing has happened since. This man that snatched from the hands of death his sceptre, and successfully rebelled against the dominion of the grave, is to-day buried beneath such a mountain of myth and fable that all hope of a resurrection is vain. In spite of the vast system of religion that has been built around his memory, it is utterly impossible to ever paint a true picture of the real man Jesus. Many great minds, like Strauss and Renan, have tried to fulfil the promise of Easter, and rescue him from this more real tomb in which he lies buried. But each one who has essayed the task has brought to us an altogether different man, and so proved what they call a restoration to be a modern invention. All who try to do this are sure to imitate those dealers in antiquities who manufacture themselves what they make their customers believe was dug up beneath the walls of Troy or Jerusalem. How different are the ideas of the Church about him! Some claim that he was very God, others only man. The only times his life is mentioned, outside of the Bible, are proved interpolations, inserted no doubt by priests as props to their ecclesiastical privileges and powers. The Gospels themselves are as contradictory about him as modern critics.

The first three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, represent him as a poet, who never opened his mouth without teaching by parable;

while John paints him as a subtle philosopher, who never so much as told a single parable. One writer pretends to give an accurate account of all he said and did; while another tells us that, if he should write all his words and deeds, the whole world would not contain the books they would fill. Matthew represents him as a Jew, who took every opportunity that presented itself in which to speak evil of Gentiles; while Luke describes a man who constantly, as in the case of the good Samaritan, exalted the Gentile above all Jews. One represents that the events of his early life were all directed by dreams, while another makes them subject to the visitations of an angel. Commentators have reconciled this by saying that the angel appeared in a dream. For once in their lives, this class of people have hit the nail on the head; for the number of people is rapidly on the increase who think that angels at least are such stuff as dreams are made of.

The Gospels are like a picture gallery, with a score of portraits of one man, all as different as it is possible, and yet each claiming to be the only true and correct likeness. To find out which is the true one is utterly impossible. But all this does not explain away the fact that he has given name to the religion of three hundred millions of people. The question still remains, Why are the finest buildings in all our cities and towns consecrated to the purposes of this religion? Why are there in this country alone seventy-five thousand men whose employment is to echo his words and pro-

claim the ideas he taught, as the only light of hope shining on the horizon of life for wide humanity?

Whether fact or fiction, man or God, poet or philosopher, Jew or Gentile, dead or risen, as is claimed this day by the lisping lips of infancy and the tremulous ones of age, no such wide-spreading influence and power can be without its meaning for thoughtful minded and earnest-hearted men and women. Now, while I believe that Christianity could have been born and risen even into all its present place and power in the world, if such a man as Jesus never had lived, yet I attach no great importance to this idea. It is quite possible that there was a man who bore this name, who was persecuted and suffered death for his devotion to his own heart and mind rather than to the religious formalities of the age. Sometimes, I fancy that, amid all this din of creeds and controversies, each giving the lie to the other, I hear the echo of a gentle foot-step and the music of a voice deep and strong, and yet withal soft and sweet, suggesting a nature in which manly strength and womanly tenderness were perfectly blended.

But I am far more inclined to the opinion that it is born of the heroism of many lives, the far-reaching shadow of a spirit that was strong in that age. It was a time that had some semblance to our own. Orthodoxy and aristocracy joined their forces, and did their best to oppress the people. Priests and soldiers strove together in fleecing them. Between rich and poor there was an impassable gulf. Those who made the laws placed enormous burdens on others, but never so much as lifted a finger to help bear them. But the deeper the darkness, the brighter does a good deed shine. Precious must have been the memory of any man who gave his life to the work of ending this wide-spread misery. As beneath the gloom of Russian despotism, in defiance of death and the far worse horrors of Siberia, there are many who know no purpose but that of giving life and liberty to the land, so at

this time there were many true hearts who longed to do something to ease the burdens of the weary and heavy-laden. Every experiment was tried. Some preached communism; others denounced the wasteful services of religion, and proclaimed as more pleasing to God than prayers or sacrifices deeds of kindness to the poor and afflicted; while still others, inspired by the faith of the old prophets, that God would anoint and raise up a deliverer unto Israel, believed themselves the divinely chosen, and led in forlorn revolts against their Roman masters.

It seems to be a law of nature for all new life of thought or feeling to express itself through a number or group of kindred hearts and minds. Our age is favorable to scientific discovery, and so the great men of our times are such as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall. The time of Shakspeare was favorable to the production of dramatic poets; and so we have a group of illustrious writers, such as Marlowe, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher. In the time of the rebellion of the Colonies there was another group of great men,—Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Paine, Franklin,—all exponents of the same principle of independence.

Many other illustrations of the same principle might be given. As these clusters of stars recede into the distance, their rays seem to mingle together and reach us along the line of a single name. Thus, the names of Washington and of Jesus have become the mediums of conveying to us the glory and beauty,—not so much, as many think, of their own lives, but of the glory and beauty of many earnest and true hearts. It is never one, but always many men and women who roll forward the chariot of progress. Each age has furnished its quota of heroes in the long struggle of humanity upwards from animalism into manhood. Each century has witnessed its noblest and best, standing shoulder to shoulder and fighting against some power of darkness and evil. At one time it is despotism, in another priestcraft, sometimes ignorance, and in others hypoc-

ris. But, since the possibility of progress dawned upon the human mind, we have been struggling ever forward. But, while our course is onward into light, yet our movement is by cycles. While we are constantly gaining new victories, yet old evils are constantly breaking out in new places. Like causes produce like effects. Many of the conditions that surround us are the same as those that existed at the advent of Christianity. As then, the altar is a Molech and the priest a vampire. As then, our rulers do nothing but load us with burdens which they never help to bear. As then, those who make great professions of piety are often the greatest villains, preying on the helpless and innocent like wolves under cover of sheep's clothing. But fortunately, now as then, these conditions are producing a noble spirit of discontent and manly revolt against untruth and injustice. Many are the redeemers of humanity who, fleeing from the wasteful ceremonies and cant of the churches and the base arts of demagogues, are content to live under ban and social ostracism, in order to contend with all their might and main against these wrongs.

But how shall we triumph? How shall we break the fetters of the last slave, and give life and joy to those that are ready to perish? The Church says, Go to Jesus. We say, Go to nature and all the fountains of life. The Boston *Herald* wants me to rise and explain what these fountains are. I shall try to do so. But let us first see what is promised to those who go to Jesus. The foremost idea of the Church is that Jesus was God. The heart of both the Catholic and Protestant form of faith is that we confess that the man called Jesus Christ is both God and man; that, though he is the son of God, he is of the same substance as his Father, eternally begotten, coequal and eternal with his Father according to his Godhead, but less than the Father according to his manhood, who, being both man and God, is not two, but one,—one not by conversion of God into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God. It is true the Unitari-

ans reject this idea of Jesus, but they are such a small body that but few people outside of Boston ever heard of them. But even they, with but few exceptions, hold that he is to us the revelation of the divine nature, so that we still have from them this idea of the union of God with man.

The next idea of Christianity is that this God-man suffered for our salvation. This grew naturally out of the first. Being both God and man, it follows that for the love he bears to man, and the love God bears to him, he can win for his human friends the favor of the divine side of his nature. Thus appeared the idea of being reconciled to God through the mediation of Jesus. This was the text from which all the apostles preached. The New Testament without this idea would be like the play of "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out. It has furnished more food for controversy than all other dogmas together. It has inspired the bloodiest wars that ever laid waste the fair fields of earth. It is still held to in some form or another, from the moral-influence theory of Unitarianism to the coarse, slaughter-house fountain-of-blood theory of Moodyism and Methodism.

The next idea of Christianity is that, though Jesus as man suffered the penalty of death, by his divine nature he burst the prison bars of the grave, and rose again. Along with this is the faith that, because he rose again, we also shall. How this cause is related to this effect is by no means easy to see. Because a God was restored to life after three days is no proof that finite men will be so resurrected. Besides this, he came forth before his body had decayed, while what others might have taken for death may have been but its appearance. But how different with us, whose bodies are resolved back into their original elements, taken up into vegetation and even into other bodies, so that the substance in my body may once have roamed the woods of Massachusetts in the shape of a savage Indian!

Now, these are the three central ideas of Christianity. The Church says, "Believe in

Jesus as a God-man, and you shall through him be reconciled to God and have immortal life." You see that the foundation upon which it all rests is belief in God. Christianity did not grow out of the man Jesus, if there ever was such a man, but out of the world's belief in gods. This or some kindred form of faith is sure to possess men's minds, while they explain all things with the idea of a supernatural being or beings. Wherever gods have been believed in, men have instinctively caught at the idea of a divine man. Jesus is but one of many upon whom similar honors have been conferred. No matter what may be the misery of a people who believe in God, he is in some way the cause of it. It is true that they may think that he is angry with them for their sins. So thought the prophets of Israel, whenever they were defeated by their enemies and made to serve as slaves their conquerors. Their one hope of deliverance from any trouble was to win back the smile of God. Any man who seemed superior to the majority was supposed to be filled with the divine spirit. In such a soil as this, such a faith as that of Christianity was bound to grow. Man is the subject of his environment, just as much as the fish of the Mammoth Cave. As long as the world believes in God, it will continue Christian. Wherever faith in a Supreme Being predominates, they believe in this idea of a God-man, and seek the favor of God through his mediation. Some have supposed that they could discard the principles of Christianity, get along without Jesus or any mediating power, and yet believe in God. Such were the old deists. But their God was an exceedingly cold-blooded and unnatural creature. He made the world as a watch-maker does a watch, wound it up and set it a-going, and left it to itself. Such a God, if there is one, is not worth troubling about.

Then there is the Theistic idea of the Free-Religionists and most advanced Unitarians. This is the idea that God is revealed in all nature, in each flower and star, in each blade of grass that carpets the earth,

and in every leaf of the forest. Theism is not exactly the same as pantheism, because it holds that God is more even than the full sum of nature and of man; that, while he is the life of all, he yet has a consciousness of his own existence above and beyond that of all the myriads of beings that people all the worlds. But this God is so vague, indefinite, transcendental, and impersonal that to say you believe in it is synonymous with saying you believe in a kind of something — well, you don't know what exactly, but a sort of a thing or power or force you feel must exist, you don't know why or how.

Everything has to have a vanishing-point, where it at last peters out, runs into the ground, or gives up the ghost, in obedience to the law of change, in order to give place to the new generation of ideas and personalities. As the last flicker of light is to the candle, the feeble sprout sent forth from the root of a dead tree, the last flash of consciousness in a dying man, the twilight to the departing day, so is Free Religion or Theism to Christianity. Religion without ideas and without meaning, as cold and distant and as impossible of warming the heart of any man, woman, or child, as it is for us to make a fire of the bundle of sticks the man in the moon carries on his back.

But as the characteristic feature of the birth of this form of religion was faith in God or Gods, so the leading one of this time is a rapidly growing conviction that the very idea of God is an absurdity and, from its relation to all that concerns the happiness of mankind, an immorality.

The age of faith opens to one of reason and science. Though we do not undertake to explain the universe beyond the boundaries of our experience and knowledge, yet these go far enough to make many of us feel that there cannot be any such thing as either a personal or impersonal God. This changes altogether the ground of our hope, and the answer given to that oft-repeated question, What must we do to be saved? From the old faith came the idea of God and man,

from the new one comes the idea of nature and man. The Church's ideal is a divine man, a man who can work miracles, defy death, win for those that trust him the smile of God, and open before them the gates of eternal life. Our ideal of a man is one who is one with Nature, whose language opens for us her secrets, whose life is subject, but true to her laws, using them all to his own advantage, whose ear reports for us the sweetest music of her waves and winds, whose eye sees her largest beauty, and whose life is so like her towering mountains and surging waves that to be in his presence is rest, hope, and joy. This idea that man is one with nature must, in time, take the place of the one that Jesus or any man has been or can be one with God.

Science is eloquent with the idea that all life is one, whether it blush in a flower, give strength to a lion, shine from a distant star, or paint with beauty the dimpled cheek of a babe. The astronomer has found out that the substance of which every star is made is the same as that of our own earth. The naturalist has made it quite evident that all life has been an evolution from the lowest forms of vegetable substance up through the animal kingdom into the genius of a Shakespeare, a Goethe, or an Humboldt. This is why we are going to nature. This is why all the trains will soon be crowded, and all the lakes and seas dotted with white sails, or curling columns of smoke from steamers bearing each day their thousands of eager worshippers, hungering and thirsting for communion with nature, longing to wrestle with the foam-crested breakers, to gaze upon the blue of the sea or the glorious drapery of the mountains. This is why the walls of the humblest cottage begin to be decorated with some faint resemblance of a brook or bit of forest or glimpse of mountain or sea. Of old, men and women went on weary pilgrimages to any place where the footstep or shadow of a God had fallen. Think of the millions who have toiled to Mecca in order to kiss the black stone that the priests said had fallen out of heaven.

Or those other millions that toiled annually from all parts of the world up to Jerusalem, because of that other lie the priests told about the glory of God shining between the cherubim. Remember the crusades and their mad fury, and the thousands who a few years back went every year to get near to God on the Mount of Olives or in the Garden of Gethsemane. That this faith in God is dying out and yielding to the power of nature is seen from the way modern ministers prefer to go to the White Mountains, the Adirondacks, or to explore the wondrous scenery of the Rhine, or gaze upon the beauty of the Italian landscape, or the Highland lochs and hills.

A few years ago, the churches were as full in summer as in winter, but now they are almost empty. This is simply because the idea of God and man is giving way to the coming one of nature and man.

But here we need more than one man who realizes this ideal. There is no vicarious sacrifice in nature. Each one must seek and find for himself. Those who are most natural in their lives and best acquainted with nature's secrets will, it is true, always be sought after as guides and mediators to this fountain of life. But there can be no permanent satisfaction, unless we penetrate the secret of her power to charm and inspire for ourselves. Visiting art galleries, operas, and theatres, can only temporarily stimulate and revive us. What we want is that artistic development within ourselves that shall make an art gallery of every sunset, landscape, or starlit night, that can, through the imagination, live in all the heroic events of history and creations of immortal genius. We have seen how from the idea of God and man there proceeds naturally first the idea of reconciliation with God and of immortal life.

So from the idea of man and nature comes the idea of winning the favor of nature, securing her service; and then out of this comes also an increase of life. As the world lost faith in miracles, men began to study the laws of nature. Thus, we have learned,

as Emerson said, "to hitch our wagon to a star." We have made the law of gravitation, the ebb and flow of the tides, to do our bidding, the strong hand of steam to do our work, and the swift foot of electricity to carry our messages as quick as thought all around the world.

This work of teaching nature to smile upon us and do our drudgery will go on, until all shall have time for mental, physical, and moral culture. When as much time and money have been spent in securing the help and blessing of nature as have been spent in winning the smiles and assistance of gods, there will not be a single human drudge left in the world. This will give us a chance to make this life so worth the living that we shall care but little whether we are to live again or not. Then, each one will have time and knowledge with which to seek and find the fountains of life.

Do you ask me what is life? I cannot tell. I am reminded, however, of an examination a young Unitarian minister had to undergo at Evansville, Ind. He wanted to teach some of the ignorant colored people how to read and write. Some of the orthodox people told their minister that he was a heretic, and would exert a bad influence over his congregation. So the colored minister told him that he would have to undergo an examination before he could be trusted to teach. To this, he gracefully submitted. The questions propounded were, "Do you believe that God is God, and Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ?" "Most certainly," he answered. "It's all right, brederen: this man can't do you any harm." So I can say I know that life is life. I know that it is the one thing we all crave. How horrible is death in all its forms! Anything that interests us must seem to be alive. A picture may have many defects, but, if it seem to glow with life and animation, it fills us with delight. The old remnants of Grecian and Roman art, marred and broken as they are, are sought after so eagerly because they express, in every line and curve, such perfection of life and energy. Look at this

Easter time. See how this love of life triumphs over the grave! The old Easter eggs of our childhood have actually hatched out, and the shop-windows are filled with young chickens, which, though dead, are yet made by art to look as though they were alive. The pictures and cards are full of this sentiment, rich with bursting blossoms and laughing, living children, instead of solemn, ghostly-looking angels.

Easter is celebrated in all religions. It originated as a spontaneous celebration of the resurrection of nature from the grave of winter. It expresses the joy that fills the heart of the natural man, when the season of spring first makes its appearance and the air bears to us the first breath of perfume from opening flowers. I am asked, What are the fountains of life? Let me mention a few. A good bath in the morning; a system of physical exercises that calls into play every muscle in the body, sending the blood, which you know even the Bible says is the life, dancing and sparkling through all the veins; plenty of pure air and good lungs to breathe it with, which every one might have, if we would obey the laws of nature, and give every one an equal share in what no one can produce, such as land, air, and water.

Besides this, we ought to make a knowledge of physiology and the exercises that produce physical health the basis of all education. Another fountain of life is a good square meal and a good stomach to digest it with. I think the man who asked this question in the *Herald* must have been dyspeptic, or he would have known himself. The human stomach is the lord of creation, and dyspepsia the incarnate fiend of all evil. When the feast is spread and good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both, then every sense — the eye, the ear, the smell, the taste, the touch — becomes a fountain of life, while over all these soars the imagination by which we live in the joys of others, — yea, what is more, gather fresh life by sharing their sorrows, even as the oak-tree strikes its roots the deeper, reaches higher and spreads

its limbs the wider by wrestling with the storm.

Another fountain of life is something to do that will give us pleasure in the doing of it. Half the misery of the world comes from the want of adaptation between the individual and his work. To find what each can do, with pleasure to himself, should be one of the first cares of education. Be-

sides this, time would fail me to tell of love, friendship, sincerity, art, literature, and scores of other fountains of life and joy that will reveal themselves to any one who turns away from the disease and death of religious dogmas. Whoever shall go, instead, to nature and these fountains of life, shall become his own Saviour, his own God, and build his own heaven.

THE NEW RELIGION.

THE new religion I refer to is an old one. But, though the frosty locks of hoary winter circle its brow, and it halts feebly to the tomb, yet it once was young. I sometimes think that Christianity, so called, to-day is only the afterglow of a sun already set, the kindly memory that outlives institutions as well as individuals. I see that the semi-liberal paper, known as *The New Religion*, has changed its name to *The True Religion*. I suppose they were afraid of being thought to be the advocates of some new system of religion, like Mormonism, Positivism, or Spiritualism. One is often reminded in this world of the reflection of Juliet:—

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.”

“True religion” is open to the same objection as the first title. Every system and sect of religion claims to be the true one. Even some people who come to Paine Hall think we have true religion. I question the religion, however. At least, for my part, if I can get the truth, I am quite willing to dispense with the religion. I doubt whether there is much, if any, truth in religion. I believe in enthusiasm for truth and right, and in true devotion to humanity, but not in true religion. I am not unmindful of the fact that many earnest liberal workers, who are emancipated from superstition, still prefer to use this word as expressive of the finer side of life,—its tenderest perfume and grace. They of course mean what I do, when I speak of the enthusiasm for and worship of Humanity. They may possibly succeed in establishing this word in the life

of reason, but I have my doubts. It is generally safest to put new wine into new bottles. But there are exceptions to all rules. This may be one of them. A great many people shrink from giving up the word “religion” for practical reasons. They don’t like to be thought of as strangers to the finer and more spiritual side of life. It is, however, a great injustice to suppose or hold to the idea that materialism and atheism are synonymous with coarseness and barbarity. The real truth is that the finest and most perfect men and women, that will grace this earth with richer beauty than the stars do the heavens, await the destruction of all religion. They must have for their production unbroken harmony and communion with nature,—not nature veiled in ignorance, but as bathed in the all-revealing light of science. Any faith in supernaturalism must of necessity destroy the most delicate perfume of the human heart. It presents something to worship and strive for beyond the perfecting of our own lives and the happiness of our common race. It destroys wonder with omnipotence, degrades immutable law and eternal truth into accidents, and makes the existence of all things spring from chance. Right, in its grandest meaning, only becomes possible by the destruction of faith. We are only just beginning to discern the meaning of justice by the light of the few rays of reason that have struggled in through the thick clouds of superstition, the very blackness of darkness, that have so long covered the whole earth. It is only by winning from every defender of

the faith, from the Pope down to the most callow exhorter, the right of reason to be sole arbitrator in all questions of right and wrong that we can make a truly humane law. As long as any idea of a miracle remains, we can never feel sure of any ground we stand upon. It is simply because of the necessity of this complete destruction of every form of theology that I favor even the surrender of the use of the word "religion." When I think of the glory of free manhood, the servility of saintship, the hope of science, and despair of theology, I feel sure that a few more years will see the forms of superstition fleeing before us like wild beasts before the footsteps of civilization.

But at other times I see a darker picture. On every hand, I behold vast and costly buildings, each one of which is a fort, obstructing the progress of civilization, and a prison house for men's minds worse than the Bastille of France. I remember that last week the majority of the legislators of Massachusetts insulted humanity and spit upon their own manhood by refusing to revoke a law that accords less protection to atheists, among whom are many of the noblest men and women that have yet done honor to our common humanity, than to thieves and murderers. One consolation remains, however. It is but seldom they get an atheist into their courts to insult. When I look at the splendid equipments of the Church, with its vast armies of soldiers for the Lord, which is synonymous with rebels to humanity, with their vast recruiting system of Sunday-schools, and then upon the few scattered and tattered forces of liberty and truth, I am tempted to despair. But I remember that such was the difference between the army of the colonists and that of Great Britain. But those well trained and uniformed soldiers were simply hired and trained butchers. While those undisciplined forces, annoying them with frequent skirmishes, watching and seizing every opportunity, were men ready to give all, even to life itself, in order to breathe the sweet air of liberty. The first could be defeated, the last *never*. For

every defender of liberty slain, a score are born to avenge his death. But when I ponder on the strength and influence of the Christian religion, and see what a power it has been in the history of humanity, and how, after the brains are out, it continues to reign by the force of habit in the imaginations of the people, pushing us from our stools like Banquo's ghost, the question arises, What kind of a time did it have in getting itself here? What lessons may we learn from the character of its childhood, and the reception it met with when trying to make its way into favor with mankind? For, though we have no religion to establish, yet we have that which is better. Though we bring no glad tidings from the skies, yet we have found a gospel as native to this world and to the manner born as the flowers and trees. History repeats itself. All things must obey the law of nature. Every institution, like every human being, must be born in weakness and grow slowly into wisdom and strength. Though there is such a vast difference between our aims and those of Christianity, yet in this law we are united. That which claims to have been a child of Omnipotence found but poor hospitality in the world at first. The Jews, like the legislators of Massachusetts, preferred Barabbas to Jesus.

This makes the last lecture of a course of twenty running through the prominent features of the Bible. The last one given was on "The Man Jesus." In looking over what follows, it seemed to me that the most important lesson for us contained in the history of the early Christian Church was the similarity of its reception then to that which we are meeting with to-day. I also find within its own life many features that are very prominent among Liberals to-day. Christianity did not by any means spring at once and full-armed into existence, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter. It had, like every tree in the forest, to obey the law of natural development. Before the time of Jesus, it existed potentially in the character and faith of the Hebrews. The soil in

which it could alone grow was only after long preparation able to produce it. I have shown in other lectures how the general character of the Jews, with their Messianic ideas, by the force of natural law tended to produce this system. Nothing exists of itself and for itself alone. Each person and institution is a link in an endless chain. Jesus himself is reported to have said, "Other men have labored, and we have entered into their labors." So others entered into his. The apostle Paul and other enthusiasts engrafted their philosophy into his. The Gospels were the mythical growth of almost two centuries. But, all this time, the new religion was having a hard time. Its teachers were imprisoned, tortured, and put to death. Though Jesus had said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," yet it was rent into every possible division. One said he was of Paul, and another of Apollo. Paul withstood Peter to the face, because he said he was to blame; while Peter was equally sure that Paul was in the wrong. Then there was the great division between Jew and Gentile. Then there were many troubles about marriage, circumcision, baptism, and the division of property. Most of the preaching was done by travelling from town to town, and then so poorly paid for that even a bachelor, like Paul, had to stop and work at his trade, in order to pay his board bills. To be converted to Christianity was to join a party that had no social standing, no endowment, no political influence, to lose friends, and perhaps position, and associate with those whom the majority despised and often persecuted. They were regarded as the enemies of the social order, interfering as they did with the trade and business of those who made a living out of the reigning religion. They were Nihilists and destroyers, wanting to turn the world upside down. In short, whatever else may be true or false about Christianity, it is quite true that they had a very hard time of it for the first two hundred years, and that the early teachers and preachers of this new religion wanted their own way, and stood up boldly for it

against all disputants within and without the Church.

There are a good many isms in the Christian Church to-day, but most of them commenced at the beginning. This is according to nature. The men who espouse an unpopular cause are generally of strong will and ardent temperament, who can little brook opposition. When organizations become large and popular, they tend far less to division than when feeble and unpopular. The Catholic Church being the strongest, as you all know, suffers less from isms than the smallest denomination. In the early life of Methodism, they were constantly splitting up into factions. But, to-day, they hold joint conventions to arrange for consolidation. From the same natural law there are more cliques and animosities in a country village often than in a large city. Nature is full of analogies. The weather in the morning is always more unsettled than at any other time in the day. So also is it in the spring of the year, as we have seen quite lately. The influences of night and day, winter and summer, contend together for the mastery. The same law holds good in the mental and moral world. The new light of truth contends with the vanishing darkness of error, and the warmth of a new hope for mankind fights for victory over the dying winter of selfishness and discontent. In all this, I am reminded of our own position and internal condition.

While our cause is in its infancy, yet its place and work have been long preparing for it. Bruno, Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, and Luther were among its first prophets.

The seeds of the plants of hope and beauty that are beginning to adorn the earth have been long hidden in the ground. The Roman's love of liberty, the Greek's passion for beauty, the Norseman's love of adventure, the German's thorough and eager search for truth, the Frenchman's love of pleasure, the Englishman's strength of will, and the American's curiosity and inventiveness have all prepared the soil in which our hopes flourish. Thus, we also are a link in

the endless chain of evolution. Before we shall take our true place and accomplish our mission in the unfolding of the life of humanity, we must take into our thought and love much more of what is of old than many of us in our ardor for what is new think of. Christianity only found place and power in the world by incorporating into itself many of the rites, customs, and principles of Paganism. So the Church, being in the world, has grown with it, and represents many things which must be taken on by whatever succeeds it. It owes much of its strength to-day to its fulfilment of social instincts and its works of philanthropy.

While we lay the axe at the root of the tree and reject in total all its superstition, we must, in these directions, follow its example. But we must not despair because we do not accomplish all we wish. We must endure the weakness and encounter all the slips and falls that are associated with childhood. Once again, one is of Spencer and another of Kant, one of Ingersoll and another of Wakeman. All attempts at organization will be accompanied with ism and separation. Spiritualist and materialist must repeat the struggle between Jew and Gentile, until we see that our life and work are one. All kinds of disputes about marriage laws and property will cause trouble and misunderstanding, until we find our work is above and beyond all these. Having had the courage of our opinions, we are naturally, many of us, rather inclined to want to have our own way; and so Wakeman withstands Underwood to his face, because he believes him wrong, while Underwood is equally sure that the blame is on the other side. Those who preach our gospel espouse an undowered cause. To be converted to our principles and to enlist under our banner is to join a party that has but little social or political influence, and to share the whips and scorns of those of whom it is said they seek only to destroy, and, if allowed to have their way, would turn the world upside down. We are the light of a new day, contending with the mists and clouds

that have enveloped the earth during the long night of superstition. We are the April of the season that shall turn the winter of the world's discontent into glorious summer, and bury the clouds of gloom and fear, that have so long lowered above the earth, in the deep sea of eternal oblivion.

When the light of reason and more generous warmth of humanity first break, down in among the fogs and clouds that have risen from all the swamps of the world's ignorance and brutality, the weather is quite likely to be somewhat unsettled. But when you see and hear Liberals indulging in silly controversies, personal tit for tats, remember that this rawness and dampness belong not to the summer we herald, but the winter we banish. When will this state of things come to an end? Now, looking back at Christianity, we find that it only began to grow stable and strong after it had converted the Emperor Constantine. So I think our cause awaits the conversion of its sovereign. Who is the king, queen, or emperor, that shall lead us to victory,—Alfonso of Spain, Victoria of Great Britain, or Alexander of Russia? Not one of them, nor any of their tribe. If they should be converted to our principles, they would have to abdicate their thrones, just as much as the minister must renounce his creed and quit his pulpit for the service of reason and liberty. People were impressed into Christianity by royal decree, on pain of death. But the sword or the bayonet takes no part in converting the slave of superstition into a child of nature and reason. Our work is to destroy the sword, not to use it. We deny the right of any man, be he king or pope, to command the mind of another. Liberty has no use for masters nor slaves. For us there is no crown higher than that which decks the brow of every honest man, and no seat of power above that where all just men and women sit together with equal honor and respect. Kings and queens will have no more place in the true city of humanity than lions and tigers do this day in Boston.

It is the instinct of self-preservation that

leads this class to stand by the Church. After Napoleon betrayed the Republic, and, like Hamlet's uncle, became

"A vice of kings,
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket,"

he found it necessary to restore the Church to its former dignities, in order to help him defend his stolen property. All kings and queens have a similar partnership in guilt with the Church. As long as men and women bow the knee to the King of kings, they will continue the serfs and prostitutes of that King's kings. But, before reason can reign king of kings, it must convert to its side the coming emperor of all this world,—*the sovereign people*. Let us convert the people, the heart, and conscience of the world to our cause, and the money kings who sustain the Church from the same principle Napoleon did, and go to sleep on Sunday in their soft-cushioned pews, may sleep on, if they please, to the crack of doom.

Here is where the real difference commences between the reign of faith and supernaturalism and the age of reason and nature. That was for the glory and praise of God, this is for the service and perfection of mankind. That inculcated poverty of spirit and meekness of disposition becoming those that serve as lackeys, this encourages self-respect and honor, as becomes those who know no higher honor than to be a man. With them, goodness was obedience to authority: with us, it is voluntary joy in making those of our own flesh and blood as happy as possible. Christians believe themselves the aristocracy of the skies, and so they support and reverence the same selfish principle on earth. Children are taught to do good simply because it will please God; and, as evil is often called good and good evil in the definitions of both Church and State, they grow up to wear their righteousness, like a cloak, on the outside.

Hence, with the great majority, to be good means to be in fashion, and pass through the world in a respectable manner. This

religion, by its very nature, prospered as soon as it touched the throne. But the final victory of reason can only come when, at the touch of liberty, fraternity, and equality, the last throne crumbles into dust. I am not blind to the passionate desires for virtue and the yearnings for the good that have animated the breasts of thousands of Christians. But these pertain to their humanity, and, by their devotion to a phantom king of heaven, have, like many flowers, wasted their sweets on the desert air. But, when reason shall free their minds from superstition, all this will be consecrated to the joy of humanity. Instead of wasting their time in trying to experience communion with God, in flattering him with eloquent prayers and fervent songs, they will seek, through communion with humanity, the perfection of their love; by the study of science, the discipline of their reasoning powers; and, by the study of art and nature, the cultivation to their utmost of all their faculties, so that they may do something in the world that deserves to be praised, because it has given joy and life to others.

A day must come in the history of humanity when our one devotion will be the extinction of disease, the destruction of crime, and the perfection of all the physical, mental, and affectional powers of each child born into this world. The time is coming when the whole world will think less of all the gods than of one true human heart, susceptible to joy and sorrow. Eating and drinking, laughing and sleeping,—how much better they are than praying and believing, groaning and watching, in the service of God! The aim of Christianity is to prepare for death. The aim of reason is to prepare to live.

In closing this course of lectures on the Bible, I wish to recapitulate a few of the lessons that I have drawn from its study. A true explanation of the Bible will assign it a place in literature on the same terms as any other book. Thus, the mind of man is honored and recognized by bidding him sift the wheat from the chaff, the true from the

false, the moral from the immoral,—to keep the good and throw away the bad. This version, instead of asking that science be forced into conformity with it, will rather seek to conform to the demands of science. Moses and Darwin will shake hands, and be at peace. Joshua and Proctor will embrace, and fight together the battles of truth. Geology will prosper without the help of Genesis, while the naturalist will cease trying to rival Noah as a collector. No one will any more worship the Bible as a fetich, no one will prefer it to a life-preserver in a shipwreck, and men and women will no longer use its words with which to curse each other. Whenever this book deals with the supernatural, it tries to explain nothing. God is only another way of saying nothing.

The story of creation is the same as saying that nothing, after having looked at nothing, felt nothing, smelt nothing, tasted nothing, heard nothing, known nothing, experienced nothing, for all eternity, suddenly made up his mind that so much nothing was rather monotonous, and so resolved to turn a little of the nothing into something. No wonder, then, that every one who believes in God considers it his first duty to strive to be nothing. If the faith of Christianity should be universally accepted and lived up to, society would become one universal, mental, moral nothing. Instead of giving our worship to the greatest of all nothings, God, we prefer to devote ourselves to the greatest of all somethings, Humanity. Every prominent event is teaching us that the only providence which watches over our lives is the human providence that studies and obeys the laws of something. Each flower that brings us beauty and fragrance adorns it. Each rain that nourishes vegetation and fills the springs of the mountains enriches it. Each wind that blows and tide that ebbs hasten the triumph of something over nothing. The theological idea of the Garden of Eden and future paradise we found both equally absurd. The millions who have bowed their backs in toil and knees in servitude cannot be much longer satisfied

with a paradise that was lost before they were born, nor one that is to come after they are dead. The voice of to-day is for doing the best we can to make a Utopia right here and now. This is to be done through the purification of love and exaltation of home, an education that shall teach each one how to do the thing he or she can find joy in, and the blending together all the advantages of both city and country, so that all can divide their time between study, work, and recreation, and thus secure the harmonious development of body, mind, and heart.

In the place of the descent of man, we found his ascent. The great man who gathered the proofs of this theory so laboriously has gone to his well-earned rest. His name will live in immortal fame, while the thousands of hypocrites and priests who have made him the butt of ridicule will rot in oblivion. The question is not, Are we the children of a God or a monkey? By this discovery, we learn that we are the children of nature, and related to all the mingling worlds of matter, force, beauty, and truth. There is not a mote floating in the sunlight, nor a star revolving in illimitable space, that is not related to us. From all eternity, every particle of matter that makes up our bodies has been in existence. No wonder our breasts thrill with sympathy toward all animate and inanimate nature. Though we are related to the animals beneath us, that is no more disgrace than is the dull earth to the rose from which it has sprung. Through the potency of this principle of evolution, ideas conquer brute forces, liberty breaks the fetters of the slave, love quenches hate, and justice leads the hungry into the halls in which kings and emperors have riotously feasted. Herein, we have found a place on which we can pillow our heads, and rest in the sweet assurance that, whether we live or die, the path of humanity is not a descent, but forever an ascension toward the heights of perfect justice, truth, and liberty. In the experiences of Abraham, we saw, in allegorical form, the prog-

ress of man from human to animal sacrifices. From his faith, we gleaned the hope that the time would yet come when men and women would become great and noble enough in their devotion to humanity to sacrifice their own lives, if need be, for the advancement of liberty and justice.

In the impulsive admiration of our hearts for the manly-hearted Esau over his deceitful brother, we saw the beginning of that love of fair play that organizes leagues, unions, co-operative societies, and all the reform associations that have for their end justice. It gives us hope that though Esau is coming with a strong band to meet Jacob, the spoiled to stand face to face with the spoiler, that no blood will be shed, not because of the cowardliness nor prayers of the oppressor, but because of the noble, impulsive affection for humanity that has grown in the hearts of the oppressed by fellowship of suffering. Though we did not approve of the conduct of Joseph toward his brethren, nor fall in love with a statesman who made a famine the occasion of selling all the people and their unborn children into slavery, yet we learned from it a lesson of the power of romance to influence life through the imagination.

In the study of the bondage of the Israelites to the Egyptians, we learned that any injustice to man is requiring bricks without straw, and like putting rotten material into the house we intend to live in, that will one day bring it in a heap of ruins down upon our own heads. The progress of Israel through the wilderness and their conquest of Canaan we had to define as celestial barbarism and divine brigandage.

In the study of the lives of the Biblical saints, we were fain to prefer any amount of modern sin to such saintliness. To us, the

world is far fairer beneath the light of science, with no altars but those of our own firesides, and no God, angels, nor saints but the men and women we love and honor. In the struggle between Saul and Samuel, we saw the first triumph of the secular over the religious spirit. Ever since, the beauty and worth of this world have been gaining ground in the affections of mankind, until the sermon has become the common symbol of dulness, a church sociable of coldness, and a prayer-meeting of hollow cant and formality. A study of David revealed this man, after Yahweh's own heart, as a greater villain than Nero or Caligula. The so-called wisdom of Solomon we found the essence of all folly. From Job, we gathered a noble lesson of self-respect. From priest and prophet, we learned that all inspiration from heaven is a delusion, and that the hope of this world is not in heaven, but on earth, in the devotions of all good men and women to truth and justice. With John the Baptist, we have learned to lay the axe of reason at the root of the dead tree of superstition. In the study of the man Jesus, though we fancy that, amid all the din of opposing creeds and controversies, we sometimes hear the echo of a gentle footstep and the music of a voice deep and strong and yet withal soft and sweet, suggesting a nature in which manly strength and womanly tenderness were perfectly blended, still we found it more just and rational to ascribe the good of Christianity to the heroism and devotion of many lives. Thus, each step of the way has tended to show us that all religion will yet give place to the view of life that serves humanity rather than God, and finds all that is good, beautiful, and true springing, like the flowers, from *this world*.