

an increasing isolation, interior mortification, long regrets, inconsolable sadness, lugubrious old age, slow agony, death in the desert!" What signifies the enormous pessimism of a Schopenhauer, of a Leopardi, an Obermann, a DeVigny, of the novelist Hardy, if it is not the affirming answer of our time to that cry of the old world in the *Edipus* of Sophocles, that "the best think is never to be born; the next best to die as soon as possible?" And what is this but the echo of the grim solution of the world by a modern poet who said of it, "Some random throw of heedless nature's die?" Thus the pessimist has built a world without a God, or one with a bad God, and each is a baldly atheistic solution of the world problem.

Agnosticism is the practical equivalent of atheism. To doubt the existence of God, or to assume a neutral attitude towards the question of the divine being is for all practical purposes to deny him. A man who does not know whether there is a God or not does not know whether to obey him or not; and as a matter of fact does not, any more than if he has explored every crack and crevice in the universe and know to a dead certainty that there was no God. An agnostic world would be for all practical uses an atheistic world. Ingersoll declared himself an agnostic, a popular fad among infidels who masquerade in scientific duds, but when he mounted the rostrum or seized the pen he invariably argued for atheism. Herbert Spencer's Unknowable is a much better stagger at God making than Huxley's Don't-knowable, for the recognition of a power behind phenomena is the acknowledgement of a power in the universe not ourselves, and this can hardly be anything else than God, but the assumption of ignorance of a power so manifest is the crassest type of godlessness. The theoretical don't know of the agnostic lands a man at the same place as the practical do know of the atheist. There is a difference in name and degree, but in nothing else.

Atheism, not so much in its intellectual and emotional forms, but in its ethical form of dispensing with God in the life, is a widespread and threatening danger in the world of our day. Men are not likely to announce themselves atheists as the result of a process of reasoning, but millions of them in the world and not a few in the church are living atheistic lives; living as they would live if they knew God to be non-existent. The church must not repeat the mistake of teaching that faith is the dogmatic acceptance of Christ on grounds of intellectual testimony, and that unbelief per consequence is the dogmatic rejection of him as metaphysically explained in the creeds. Faith must not be emptied of its ethical content. Faith is spiritually the life of God in the soul of man, and ethically the life of God in the life of man. If not this it is atheism in effect and fruit. — *Christian Oracle*.

Life is the time for doing. The world is a great workshop in which there is no room for drones. God himself worketh as the great Master Builder. All creatures fulfil their needful functions, from the angel that hymns God's praises to the wasp that buries a corpse. — *Ez.*

BEECHER'S LESSON IN SELF-RELIANCE.

Henry Ward Beecher used to tell this story of the way in which his teacher of mathematics taught him to depend upon himself:

"I was sent to the blackboard, and went uncertain, full of whimpering.

"That lesson must be learned," said my teacher, in a very quiet tone, but with a terrible intensity. All explanations and excuses he trod under foot with utter scornfulness. 'I want that problem; I don't want any reason why you haven't it,' he would say.

"I did study two hours."

"That's nothing to me; I want the lesson. You need not study at all, or you may study ten hours, just to suit yourself. I want the lesson."

"It was rough for a green boy; but it seasoned me. In less than a month I had the most intense of intellectual independence and courage to defend recitations.

"One day his cold, calm voice fell upon me in the midst of a demonstration. 'No.'

"I hesitated, and then went back to the beginning, and on reaching the same point again, 'No!' uttered in a tone of conviction, barred my progress.

"The next"—and I sat down in red confusion.

"He, too, was stopped with 'No!' but went right on, finishing, and, as he sat down, was rewarded with 'Very well.'

"Why," whimpered I, 'I recited it just as he did, and you said No!'

"Why didn't you say 'Yes!' and stick to it? It is not enough to know your lesson; you must know that you know it. You have learned nothing until you are sure. If all the world says 'No,' your business is to say 'Yes,' and prove it." — *Ram's Horn*.

SINKING A SHIP TO SAVE IT.

A shipowner in New York, in conversation with a friend who had recently enjoyed a voyage on one of his vessels, surprised him by telling him that the fine ship whose praises he was uttering had once been under water. Some seven years ago the ship was at her dock in the East River waiting to have a quantity of ballast taken out of her hold before taking in cargo. Early one morning smoke was seen issuing from the hatchways, and an examination showed that in some unexplained way a fire had started and had just reached a compartment in which a quantity of hay was stored. The hay caught fire quickly, and the flames shot up to a great height. The river fire department was quickly on the scene and deluged the ship with water. The scuttles were opened, too, and in a short time the ship went to the bottom. The owners and the fire department agreed that the best hope of saving her was to sink her. She was not badly injured, and the work of raising her was at once begun. In a few weeks she was again afloat, thoroughly repaired and newly painted. She

had proved a staunch vessel, and had since done good service. Ordinarily no greater calamity can happen to a ship than to be sunk, but in this case it preserved her for future usefulness. If the owners had refused to have sunk her the fire would probably have consumed her. It is so with some lives. When the fires of avarice and lust and passion are consuming the soul, there is nothing that can save it but some great calamity that submerges it, from which by Christ's power it rises regenerated.

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke xvii, 33). — *The Christian Herald*.

To do what we ought is an altogether higher, diviner, more potent, more creative thing than to write the grandest poem, paint the most beautiful picture, carve the mightiest statue, or dream out the most enchanting commotion of melody and harmony.

Christ built no church, wrote no book, left no money, erected no monument; yet show me ten square miles anywhere on earth without Christianity where the life of man and the purity of women are respected and I will give up Christianity. — *Prof. Drummond*.

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