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THE VICTORY OVER SIN.

Sensible men have long been convinced of the insolubility of the problem of the origin of evil. Somewhere among the mysteries of the free will it lies, and yet somehow, also, under the entire control of the infinitely holy and supreme God. All true freedom must involve the possibility of sin; all real moral character implies the power to do wrong. It is hard for us to conceive of the existence of morality where nothing of sin is known.

But confining our speculations to conditions with which we are familiar, we may say, confidently, that the highest moral qualities are those which arise from conflict with their opposites. The presence of sin in our world, without doubt, has developed a higher style of virtue than would have been possible without it. The spark of holiness which finds itself in danger of being quenched, the consciousness of good which wakens to life amid powerful hostile influences, the regenerate nature emerging from the waste of corruption, all gain in distinctness by the power of contrast and gather an extraordinary sense of their preciousness by the perils which surround and threaten them. That which costs us nothing, however valuable, is too apt to be lightly esteemed; that upon which we bestow great toil and sacrifice, we cherish as more valuable. The liberty and nationality we enjoy, seemed a common-place affair to us, until they were threatened with destruction. This generation of Americans never felt the preciousness of the Flag and of the Union until that hour of magnificent uprising that followed the assault upon Fort Sumter. Nothing else—no amount of argument or of laudation, no long series of brilliant historic illustrations, no cycles of peaceful acquiescence in the authority of the Republic could have wrought such an intensity of patriotic devotion, or sent such indescribable thrills of loyal fervor through the millions of our population, as that one

hostile demonstration. The presence of tyranny and oppression in the world, from the days of Pisistratus, Leonidas and Demosthenes in Greece, of the Maccabees in Judea, of Tell in Switzerland, William of Orange in Holland, Cromwell in England, Kossuth in Hungary, Schamyl in Circassia, Garibaldi in Italy, and Washington and Lincoln in America, has given to liberty an unapproachable ideal loveliness which would have been utterly wanting in undisturbed possession. Liberty has become the subject of profound study, and the theme of the loftiest song. How to guard it from abuse and to maintain it as a beneficent and permanent power among men, are the greatest concerns of enlightened statesmen. The masses of the modern world move toward it with the steadiness and sweep of the ocean tides.

Our race has paid dear, terribly dear, for eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But we do know good and evil, though we have died for it. The tempter in the Garden spoke truly, and from his own bitter experience, when he said: "In the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods [fallen gods] knowing good and evil." And now, since the true God has stooped to rescue us, our ill-gotten knowledge, by his gracious interposition, becomes a means of our progress in holiness and closer likeness to himself. The spark of holiness he gives us, makes us aware of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the sin to which we find ourselves still in bondage, makes us burn with eager desire for holiness. What an intensity of longing is expressed in the outcry of Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Did ever sinless angel above so fully realize the blessedness of a holy condition and so ardently cherish the elements of a holy character as did this Paul, and many another imperfect saint on earth, whose inward life was one continuous and often doubtful conflict with evil? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory! exclaims Paul. Yes, it is this element of victory, which will enhance the bliss of heaven and give robustness and vividness to the

holy principles of the Redeemed, above what unfallen angels themselves can hope to know.

More virtuous and more valuable by far, is the virtue that is formed in the face of temptations to evil. It is ascertained and tested, it is invigorated and endeared, it is illustrated by contrast, it is glorified by victory. But the victory is not man's, it is God's. Awakened man flies to God, the compassionate God stoops to man. Great as are the gains to human virtue from a successful encounter with vice, still greater is the glory reflected in the Divine holiness by its victorious attitude towards sin. More conclusively, more definitely, more resolutely in the eyes of all his creatures, is the nature of God committed to holiness. It is the possibility of sin, only, which has given us a sight of the majesty of law. A world in which there is an eternal hell for offenders, testifies more strongly to the immaculate purity and holy jealousy of God, than a world without a hell and without the possibility of sin.

And so God, by his law and by the penalty of law, has triumphed over sin; has made the wrath of man to praise him. And here there might well have been a pause in the evolution of his character before his creatures. But it is the highest of marvels, in the history of Divine thought, that sin, which seems only calculated to wake the justice of God or man, has been made the means, in the infinite ordering of Providence, of the most glorious manifestations of the love and grace of God inasmuch that the former manifestation has no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. Without sin, there would have been no ministration of law, no judgment seat, no remorseful conscience, no hell; but it was sin which drew forth the unutterable compassion of Deity, which revealed the capacity of the Infinite One for humiliation and sacrifice, which gave to the divinity the highest problem of upholding its movements, pardoned the guilty, and ran off with sin-hath reigned into death. Each might grace reign, through right it is, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Never in this life; perhaps never to finite beings, in the future life, will the mystery of the origin of sin be solved; but great as is the mystery of sin, greater, infinitely, is the glory of the mystery of godliness which it has evoked from the divine bosom. With that we shall be ravished away from the dark problem of sin. Sin, indeed, is not of God. It rages against him, and would overthrow his government. It is diametrically opposed to his infinite holiness. And yet it is in the control, punishment, pardon, and victory over sin, that the infinite resources and capacities, the boundless glory and goodness of God are chiefly revealed to the universe.

INDEPENDENCE DAY.

Thankfully we hail the return of another Anniversary of the Nation's birth. Too near are we to those dreadful struggles, which, for years, imperilled the national existence, to divest ourselves of a quickened sense of its joyful meaning. The memories of the uprising of 1861, of the narrow escape of McClellan in 1862, of Gettysburg and Vicksburg in '63; of the siege of Petersburg in '64, are yet too vivid to allow the thrill of relief, the rapture of victory and the burst of gratitude to be missing from the celebration of to-day. Too many brave soldiers' graves are yet green in Virginia and Tennessee, at Gettysburg, and at Andersonville, to allow us to lose the keen sense of the preciousness of the political liberties we this day celebrate.

We have wondered at the patient endurance, by the people, of the vast burdens of actual war. We have admired and celebrated their cheerful promptness in shouldering the enormous load of the national debt in the less stirring times of peace. It is to the firm principle, the unyielding loyalty, the undying attachment of our people to their free and beneficent institutions, and their innate reverence for law and government, that we owe the privilege of celebrating the beginning of the ninety-first year of our Independence, and our National Life. But the summoning of the Fortieth Congress for yesterday, reminds us of still other perils to our Freedom and Nationality than those of armed rebellion, and of still added

proofs of firmness, endurance and courage, on the part of the loyal people, in the face of their new, and perhaps even more trying, difficulties.

In truth, history might be searched in vain, for an instance of just such a trial as the loyal people of this country, emerging victorious from a struggle with armed rebellion, were called to bear. Scarcely had the smoke of the conflict fully lifted, when the battle-worn people found that, by an unparalleled combination of assassination and treachery, the conquered rebellion was actually in the chief seat of power in the nation, and that too, in the person of one in every way inferior to the rebel leader himself. Decently disguised, and surrounded by counsellors whom the nation had once trusted, and who now knew how to veil their baseness in the choicest phrases; dispensing bribes in the shape of an enormous patronage; there it sat, rebellion rehabilitated, by whatever courtly phrases it might be styled; scattering pardons by the thousand; punishing no one; encouraging the bitterest and bloodiest rebels to resume their places of power, and to trample under foot white and black loyalists, as in the palmiest days of their unquestioned ascendancy, and reaching the culminating point of baseness and malignity in the cool indifference with which it tolerated, and even palliated the massacres of Memphis and New Orleans, and beheld without interference, the monstrous injustice of the perpetrators indicting the innocent sufferers for the offence.

The American people sighed for peace; they had won peace most honorably; they are intensely devoted to trade and money getting; they are too often the plastic material of the demagogue, especially if he has his hand on the plethoric treasury and the vast patronage of the government; their politicians, especially, have belonged so long to the expediency school of Weed, Raymond, and the present Secretary Seward, as to make that policy almost traditional. Hence it is with uncommon joy, even in these times of great national deliverance, that we celebrate our Fourth of July, since the people, calm and undismayed, have accepted the new wager of battle flung at their feet; have come off scatheless from these terribly demoralizing influences, and through that grand embodiment of national principle and of inflexible tenacity in the right, THE FORTIETH CONGRESS, have appeared to complete the conquest of treason, only less tenacious of purpose than itself. We rejoice that this ninety-first anniversary of Independence sees a people, like Hercules, ready to smite every head of the hydra of treason as fast as a new one appears; a people not to be wheedled out of the fairest and most dearly purchased gains for nationality and for equal right ever made, by the cunningest of political jugglers, accidentally in power.

Accidentally, did we say? Nay, but providentially, in the most palpable manner, has all this new and more ingenious stroke of rebellion for supremacy been allowed to follow upon the heels of the war. It has driven the republican party to its advanced policy of suffrage to the loyal freedmen, and of disfranchisement to large classes of active rebels. It has led to a complete defeat and humiliation of the leading rebel classes. It has opened our eyes to the wide spread of the virus of secession, and to the necessity of placing only such men as are above suspicion and above question, in places of power. And it is not improbable that this last, grossest, most treacherous interference on the part of Mr. Johnson and his cabinet, with the will of the loyal people on reconstruction, will be followed by the utter abolition of the various State governments, through which the rebellion has sought to perpetuate itself, and which Mr. Stanberry holds to be now paramount to the will of the people, who three years ago overthrew them in battle. The result may be to detach Mr. Johnson, practically from all control of the reconstruction movement, and to put the finishing stroke to the dilatory work of his own impeachment. And the President and his cabinet need only to push their interference with the Butler-like policy of General Sheridan, to the bounds of persecution, to insure that gallant officer's succeeding to their own seats of power, at the very next change of occupants.

This is a result for which we are not anxious, though far worse might happen. But we celebrate his victories in New Orleans,

and the victory of the loyal people everywhere to-day over the dangerous, disgraceful, and grievous policy of the authorities at Washington, as not less important than any of those which gave heart and hope to the people during the four years of actual warfare.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE WILLIAMS.

The Republican party of this State has done itself credit, and commended itself to the regard and the support of every good citizen, by the nomination of our friend Henry W. Williams, LL. D., of Pittsburg, to the vacant seat on the Supreme Bench. Of the legal and judicial abilities of Judge Williams, there seems to be but one opinion. Of his high moral and religious character, his broad views, his decided loyalty, and radical opposition to every lingering remnant of secession, slavery, and color-prejudice in the policy of the State or nation, we think we can testify, if testimony is needed. Every important private, social, moral and public interest might be safely trusted to his hands. Judge Williams, if elected, will prove one of the brightest ornaments of our already justly distinguished Pennsylvania judiciary.

THE EVANGELIST of last week takes umbrage at our comment on Dr. Field's speech, and scolds us, much in the patronizing style in which the *Tribune* rebukes the city of Philadelphia for again declining to invite President Johnson to her hospitalities. The *Evangelist* is quite welcome to its private opinion of Dr. Field's speech, which as published in full in that paper, must be admitted, with the single exception noted, to be an admirable performance. We trust that the *Evangelist* speaks by the book, in disclaiming for him the political universalism which we charged upon him. But in censuring us, it would have been quite as well to have quoted us, and candidly to have let its readers know what we actually did say in the matter.

What we have written, we have written. We have no retractions to make. Dr. Field's remarks seem to us to justify our charge of holding to that abominable political universalism, which the *Tribune* so openly preaches, and which would teach the civil magistrate to abandon half his God-given functions—"to be a terror to evil doers."

We see nothing to rejoice at or boast of in the escape of traitorous leaders, and virtual murderers, if the *Evangelist* does; we see much in it to make us tremble for the future of the republic. We see in it the triumph of the theory that Government is a mere thing of convenience, over the truth, that it is the most sacred of human interests. We regret that Dr. Field has most unwarrantably thrown his own name, and, in so far as he was competent for that, the name of our Church, into the scales in behalf of a most dangerous delusion and untruth. We believe that we have done best for the good name of our Church in entering protest against his doing so.

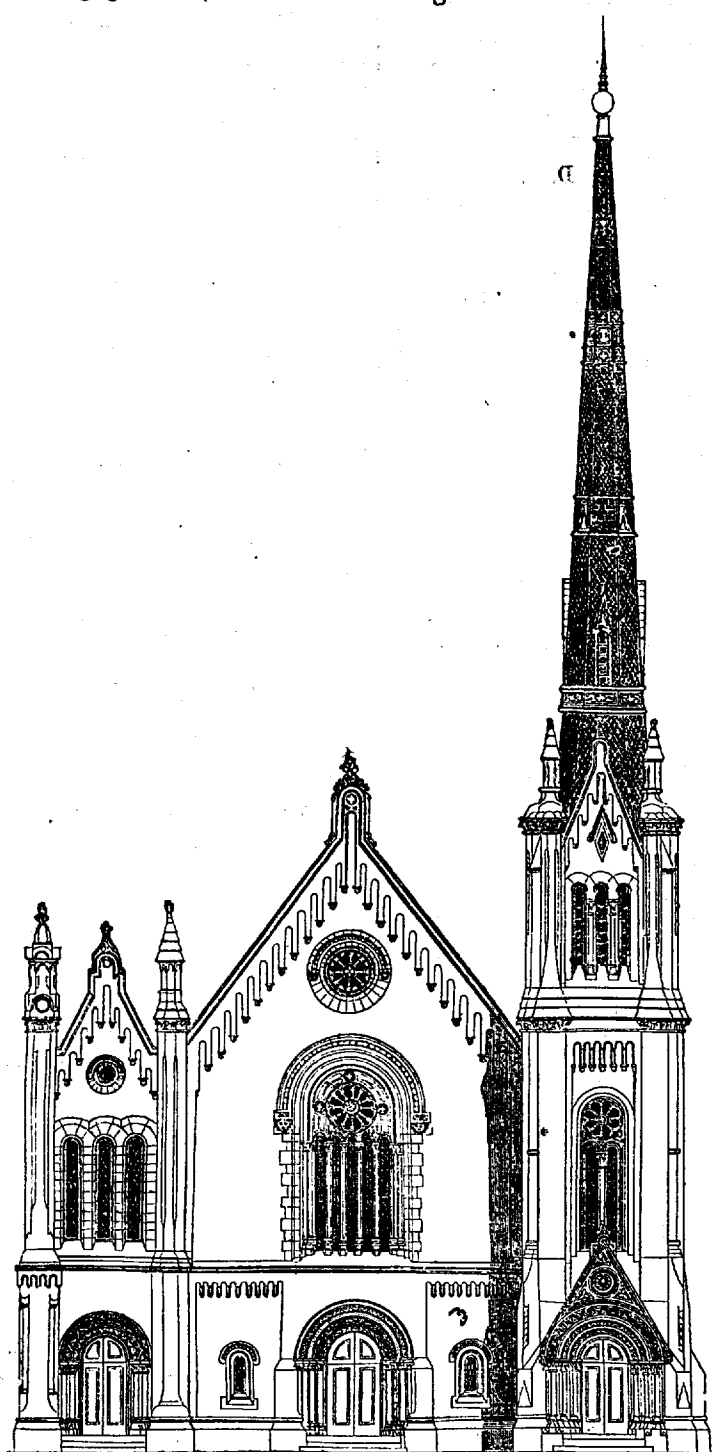
The *Evangelist* uses one word which should be recalled—"insinuations,"—we have insinuated nothing; what we have said, was said openly and squarely, as is our wont.

A SHAKER.—The *Independent*, in its remarkable non-sectarian defence of the narrowest of our sects, rakes the past and the present for examples of Episcopal pulpits which are not imbecile, and succeeds, by this process, in raising six names. Among others:—

"Does the Rev. Philips Brooks shake Philadelphia from 'an imbecile pulpit?'"

Now "Holy Trinity," as the world knows, has no imbecile in the pulpit, but the *Independent's* way of putting things is certainly startling. We are not aware that Mr. Brooks "shakes" Philadelphia. Indeed we believe that the very prestige for pulpit inefficiency and sectarianism, under which his denomination so largely suffers, has operated to his disadvantage in this city, in shutting him out from the sympathies of the masses. We are sure that no man will more sincerely regret such a use of Mr. Brooks' name than its owner.

WE DO NOT THINK many tears will be shed in the United States over the fate of Maximilian. His usurpation was of the grossest kind and his policy towards the liberal leaders was as murderous as that just meted out to him.



Oxford Presbyterian Church,

N. E. cor. Broad and Oxford Street, Philadelphia: Front Elevation on Broad Street.
REV. FRANK L. ROBBINS, Pastor.

The corner-stone of the church edifice will be laid, with appropriate ceremonies, on Monday, the 8th day of July, 1867, at four o'clock in the afternoon. The friends of the enterprise, and the public generally, are invited to attend. The following persons will take part in the services:—Revs. Albert Barnes, R. H. Allen, John W. Mears, A. Reed, P. S. Henson, Edward Hawes and others.