

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.
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PAGODA OF PEKING.

Characteristic of China, as exhibiting the state of decay into which public buildings are suffered to fall. (After a photograph.)

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AMERICA.

BY THE HON. CHARLES CARROLL BONNEY.

I.

The age we live in is an island, grand
And beautiful and wonderful! Its clouds
Are pierced by mountain monuments of great
Immortal deeds. Its sunny hills are crowned
With Arts' proud temples, and the church-spires tell
Of golden vales where God hath worshippers.

Science is everywhere at work, and while
She buildeth wonders, upward to the stars
Goes a triumphal anthem evermore
From earth's green gardens and the ocean's shore.
With awe-filled souls we stand and look away,
Out on the deep, blue, limitless expanse
Of moving waters: backward to the past
The spirit turns, seeking some island fair
In the far-off horizon, upon which
The soul may rest its vision: looking down,
It sees the precious fragments that remain—
The splendid ruins of antiquity,
Beneath its feet. The searchers after truth,
Who find their joy in seeking hidden things,
Have sought them out with all the eagerness
Of children gathering the early flowers,
And from the dark waves drifting them away
Toward oblivion's midnight-mantled gulf,

Have rescued the rich treasures, and have learned
 To read from them, as from a well-writ book,
 The marvellous story of the continent,—
 The birth and infancy of the New World,
 And its advance through prehistoric times
 Till it became adapted to the needs,
 And fitted to supply the wants of man.

II.

Unnumbered ages have been borne away
 To the great sepulchre, the mighty past,—
 That glorious mausoleum where the years,
 With all their good and glory, wrong and shame,
 Lie down at last to the untroubled sleep,
 When they have given back their life and bloom
 And beauty to the Father from whose hand
 They took them in the morning of their day,—
 Since from the ocean's untold depths, and gloom
 And grandeur, rose a New World. Strangely came,
 From out the wondering waves, Atlantic born,
 The new and mighty continents. All wild
 And desolate at first, the billows came,
 And sung their anthems grand along its shores.

III.

Ages of glorious seasons glided by,
 And living sunbeams came, God's messengers,
 To bid the sleeping elements arise
 In wondrous forms of majesty and power,
 On the prolific breast of the New World.
 Forms followed ever by still higher forms,
 In an ascending order built on law,
 Forms which should be upbuilt through the lapse
 Of countless generations by the power
 And glory of Jehovah's love, to form
 A marvellous pyramid of being, crowned
 By an immortal soul, called man, endowed
 With power to bend the lightnings to his will,
 And make the wild waves and the waterfalls
 The servants of his reason; and the stars,
 And relics of existences whose births
 Are lost in untold cycles, yield up truths

Hid in the tombs of time so long that naught
But an immortal soul could wrest them thence.

IV.

In the o'er-arching sky enthroned, sat one
Who guided ever the high destiny
Of earth and man, to keep them in the way
Of God's appointment. His inspiring name
Is victory's anthem to the aspiring soul—
Our language hath no more triumphal word,
The mind can grasp no more exalted thought,
Than Everlasting Progress!
Under his care and guidance, in his smile,
The vast and wonderful development
Of universe and system, earth and man,
With an unfailing movement has gone on,
And with increasing glory shall go on
Forever, rising ever in the scale
Of life and beauty, toward the great divine,
Eternal, perfect Parent of the Suns.

V.

The vales were carpeted with shining grass,
And larger verdure, and the hills were crowned
With most majestic forests.

Races rose,
Of strange-shaped beings, rudimental forms,
Leading the way like prophecies, to more
Exalted phases of existences, which
Would manifest more perfectly the love
And wisdom of their Maker.

Ages passed:
Those races flourishéd; went from youth to age;
Wrought out the work they were designed to do,
Then went to their great sepulchre, and left
In its vast solemn chambers all that now
Tells their amazing story to mankind.

Races rose o'er their ruins: earth and air,
And the blue moving waters were the homes
Of active life, in forms more wonderful
Than those which in his marvel-making dreams

Come to the poet. Every passing race
 Hath morning, mid-day, evening, and at last
 Its awe-inspiring burial and night.
 Each hath its special mission to perform :—
 He who created them makes naught in vain :—
 And each, when it hath played its destiny
 In Time's grand drama, goeth mournfully
 Down into Death's deep shadow and still vale.

VI.

Anon the Monarch of the Under-world,—
 Fierce King of Lava's realm of surging flame,—
 Roused from his slumber and in torturing rage
 Lifted great islands from the storm-tossed sea :
 Buildd majestic mountain ranges, wild,
 And high and marvellous. Filled lakes with fire :
 Wrecked life and loveliness. Hurled high in air
 Huge burning rocks as children play with toys,
 Shaking the mighty continents till all
 That on them lived were paralysed with fear,
 Or in dread chaos yielded up sweet life
 To the fierce demon !

Prince of awful powers,
 His name is Earthquake. In mid-world he dwells,
 And in his rock-bound prison feeds on fire,
 And dreams such dreams as none can ever know
 But he who dreams them.

But in all these dark
 And fearful episodes we still behold
 An over-ruling, guiding providence
 Of wondrous love and beauty. Oh ! think not
 That even here is aught unmerciful.
 Do not our sorrows herald in the dawn
 Of brighter mornings more replete with joy ?
 So did the earthquake but entomb the life
 Which dwelt on earth, that in more perfect forms
 A glorious resurrection it might know,
 Into a world renewed and beautified
 By storm and darkness.

VII.

Look backward to its source : the solemn flow
 Of the mysterious mighty river, Life,

Whose Alpha, or Omega, or expanse,
 No wizard hath pretended to unfold,
 Is sweeping onward with the lapse of years,
 And centuries and ages, to the deep
 Unbounded ocean of a glorious
 And indescribably grand destiny.
 And we are portions of that Amazon
 Of being: and each individual,
 One of the living water-drops that form
 Its never-resting billows: each great wave
 A generation, sweeping grandly on
 To Life's vast ocean.
 Forever ebb and flow its mighty tides,
 Bearing the fleets of progress on their breasts
 To new achievements and discoveries.
 Years are but moments in such histories.
 But howsoever humble we may be,
 As atoms in the universe of God,
 Ours is the highest station in the grade
 Of animate existence, and to us
 He has assigned a mission to fulfil,
 Of mightiest import.
 There are sublime responsibilities
 And solemn duties resting on us here;
 Claiming fulfilment, and rewarding it
 By clothing in habiliments of light
 The Soul, and giving it a shining crown
 Of everlasting glory, and a strength
 And beauty, fitting it at last to be
 Companion of the angels in their work
 Of gracious ministry to human need.
 To our own keeping priceless gifts are given,
 In mental mines of gold and precious gems,
 Exhaustless through eternity, though wrought
 With utmost diligence, but yielding more
 And more abundantly the rich rewards
 Of the immortal treasures which they hold.

VIII.

The New World seemed abandoned to the sport
 Of chance and chaos: changes vast and dread,
 And mighty in the ruin which they wrought,

Swept o'er the land whose vales are now our homes,
 O'erwhelming growth and progress: changing back
 To dust the clay that life made animate
 With bloom and beauty.

Whole generations of old moss-grown trees,
 Children of ages of deep solitude
 And solemn grandeur, that had clothed their forms
 Of lofty majesty with leafy robes
 Of brightness and of beauty, years on years
 Whose story is unwritten, save by Him
 Who writes His record on the enduring rocks,
 Bowed to the winds and waters and went down
 To the long sleep of ages 'neath the hills
 Torn up and piled upon them, that should change
 The forests into coal-fields which would light
 In the far future, many a happy scene
 Of home and fireside, in a hundred lands
 Through coming life-times.

Birds of giant forms,
 And powerful pinions, and death-dealing beaks;
 And towering ferns and grasses with them went
 To the same mighty sepulchre and sleep.
 Fishes of varied colors and strange forms,
 Which played in clear bright streamlets and fair lakes,
 Or dwelt in secret caverns, lone and deep,
 O'erwhelmed and shrouded in their coffin clay,
 Lay down to slumber with the untold dead
 Of sea, and plain and mountain: wondrous forms,
 Whose fearful strength like the wild tempests owned
 No master but the King of Kings alone.

Vast lakes that mirrored all the gorgeous
 Cloud-palaces and mighty giant shapes
 That sylphs build on the azure plains of heaven,
 Broke through their mountain barriers and rushed on
 To mingle with the ocean, giving fields
 Of untold richness to the sun's warm smile.
 Those lakes are now the prairies. Little dream
 They who tread daily o'er them what they were
 In those time-hallowed centuries.

Yet now,

In this our own age the same work goes on
 In the great inland seas: slowly, yet none
 The less unceasingly and certainly.
 And though in its brief life-time, human eye,
 Unaided by the instruments which art
 Hath blest the soul with, in its thirst to know,
 Could note no change in their vast magnitude,
 Still, with the lapse of unknown centuries,
 They shall go back, to mingle once again
 With ocean's waters. From its depths they came,
 And to them they shall all at last return.

They too are emblems. When the child grows old,
 How yearns the heart to find and feel once more,
 The tender love of infancy's dear home,

IX.

Years followed years, and age succeeded age
 Of mightiest changes, fitting this New World
 To be the dwelling of a loftier race
 Than yet had been upon its vales and hills.

And now the Earthquake, in his prison home,
 Was fettered for a thousand centuries,
 Striving from time to time to break his chains,
 And showing that though bound he is not slain,
 But lives and dreams of liberty and war,
 While Man, the last and God-like one of all
 The wondrous line from monad up to mind,
 Makes here his empire.

To the New World came,
 From lost Atlantis, and more distant climes,
 And island habitations now unknown,
 Invading hosts who made the land their own,
 And turned it to the uses of mankind.
 Buildd huge castles; fortified great towns;
 Reared monuments and temples; gathered gold
 And gems from mountains; shells and pearls from sea:
 And fruits and flowers, and fields of golden grain,
 From the fair hillsides and the sunny plains.

X.

The peopled bosom of the New World smiled
In palmiest prosperity, nor dreamed
Of dread catastrophe impending near,
And waiting the appointed hour to fall
And overwhelm the continent.
But it was so: the cycle was complete,
The era closed. The equinoctial year,
Vast and mysterious, had reached its height,
And stood a moment, mid the watching stars,
Looking with pitying eye upon the world,
Then voiced the order to the waiting seas,
Of the far north to take their mighty way
Of deluge and destruction, toward the pole
O'er which the Southern constellations shine.

The New World woke as ever. The great sun
Rose as serenely from the gorgeous east,
Kissing the dew-drops from the blossoms fair
That in the soft grass nestled bashfully,
As he had done for ages. Leaping brooks,
Whose crystal waters, ever murmuring
Low dreamy melodies, to silver changed,
With every gush of sunlight that streamed down
Through whispering leaves and blossom-laden boughs:
And joyous choirs of bright-plumed singing-birds
Sang Eden orisons. The active world
Woke with its olden hum. The student bent
O'er the strange cypher and hieroglyph,
Seeking in science something to allay
The thirst that burned his spirit. He who tilled
The soil for his subsistence, went that morn
To his loved labor with the same free heart
And jocund carol that bemark him now.
And radiant maidens, singing joyous songs
Gathered wild blossoms and sat down to dream
Enchanting visions of swift-coming years,
Gazing away into the clear blue heaven,
Till they forgot the green world and drooped down
Amid the sweet-breath blossoms and dreamed on
In vision-lighted sleep of that bright world

Whose radiant beauty and exquisite joy
 Steal o'er the spirit in its holier hours,
 Filling the heart with heavenly happiness,
 And such sweet melodies of love and faith
 As make it feel the nearness of the realm
 Of the immortal life : the kinship close
 Of those who there delight to do God's will.

XI.

Such was the New World ere the mighty change
 That now succeeded in its history.
 Then the Storm-Demon spread his sable wings,
 Hiding the blue sky and the awe-struck earth
 With masses of impenetrable gloom.
 His angry torches glimmered fitfully
 Amid the thunder of the mighty guns
 That heralded destruction. Then the rain
 Fell on the earth's warm bosom. Day passed day,
 Week followed week, and still the waters poured
 In torrents from the windows of the sky.
 Brooks swelled to roaring rivers and rushed on,
 Strewn with the fragments of the total wreck
 They left behind. At last, the mighty deep,
 Rising to meet the fury of the storm,
 O'erleaped its boundaries, and made the earth
 Another mighty sea—a sepulchre !
 The great waves in their madness fiercely tore
 From their foundations the majestic hills,
 And planted them o'er cities, hushing all
 Of life, and joy and sorrow, hope and fear,
 In the dark dread immensity of death.
 The unbound ocean brooded o'er the earth
 Like Night o'er Chaos, solemn and alone.

XII.

Years glided into years. The waters went
 On to the Southern ocean, and once more
 The New World felt the sun's life-waking smile.
 The rainbow shone in heaven, God's great seal
 Of glowing beauty. How we love to look
 Upon its splendid glories when a storm
 Is passing from the blue and beaming sky!

Over the graves of that primeval race,
 Trode a new people. From the mountain lands
 Whose heights o'er-topped the deluge and its woes,
 In the more favored countries of the world,
 Came when the love of conquest led them forth,
 Adventurous men, and once more peopled o'er
 This glorious New World; builded new towns:
 Founded great empires: reared high monuments
 That looked with silent majesty toward heaven,
 As it did seem forever. Laws were made,
 And gifted orators and poets stirred
 The deepest passions of the human soul,
 Rousing high aspirations and sweet dreams
 Of coming glory. Lovely maidens twined
 Wreaths of love's amaranth and myrtle bloom
 Around strong manhood's warm and generous heart,
 Which yielded gladly to the thralldom sweet,
 While the enchanting, joyous melody
 Of perfect happiness stirred all the strings
 Of the heart's golden lyre.
 Whene'er two spirits of like temper meet,
 Love's angel, swift descending from the skies,
 Ripples the waters of the heart's pure spring,
 By delicate touches of his shining wings,
 And soul responds to soul with songs of joy.
 And fair-haired children played on mossy knolls
 With clear sweet ringing laughter and glad hearts
 All ignorant that life hath nights of tears.
 So dreams man ever in prosperity,
 And in the future sees but brighter hours,
 And dearer pleasures than the present yields.
 And there were gushes of child-warbled song,
 And tales of thrilling interest, that waked,
 And stirred to action bold aspiring thoughts,
 And proud ambitions purposes to win
 By persevering industry and zeal,
 A place in Fame's immortal galaxy
 Of gifted souls, which would outlast the years
 Allotted to the spirit for its work.

Along the wilderness-shored Oregon—
 In the Missouri's clime, and in the land

Of the Cordilleras—in the golden vales
 Of California, and where lived and reigned
 The unknown builders of Chi Chen—along
 The lofty Andes, those majestic thrones
 Of giant Condor and of mountain storm—
 In the rich country of the Amazon—
 Along La Plata, and on Chili's shore,
 Nations sprang up and flourished.

XIII.

The generations followed as of old,
 And peace and power seemed builded on the rock
 Of perpetuity. The years passed on,
 Till finally the clear and starry north
 Was shadowed by a dark and threatening cloud,
 Which moved with ceaseless march toward the south.
 The savage Indian in fierce war-tribes came
 From Boreal Asia, o'er the ice-paved sea,
 As poured the mighty hordes of Goth and Hun
 Into eternal Rome, and swept away
 From their fair homes and happy villages,
 The people who had built them: save amid
 The vales of Mexico, where still remained
 The Montezumas, great and powerful,
 Waiting a future conqueror: and save
 That garden of the Southern continent,
 Where still the Incas reigned in strength and power.
 The North was desolate; its vast expanse
 Was but a hunting-ground for roving tribes.
 In Yucatan had perished a great race,
 A gifted people; yet their temples still
 Survive decay: like old Cholula tell
 The mournful story of those long-gone years.
 And many an ancient relic tells its tale,—
 Some touching legend of that earlier race.
 And we have found in many a sacred place
 Throughout the Western Hemisphere, the graves
 Of those forgotten peoples, and have torn
 Their mouldering bodies from the halls of death,
 To learn their story from their crumbling bones.
 We tread upon their tombs. The dust that formed
 The mortal dwellings of their spirits here,

Into our forms is moulded : and the same
 Atoms that blossomed in the past, bloom now
 In other forms, in other creatures shine.
 The mind, the bright Immortal Soul alone,
 Is reproduced and multiplied in time.
 Dust moulders back to dust. The spirit knows
 No dissolution. It but recreates
 Its human being and goes home to heaven.

XIV.

Again the march of centuries went on,
 And hunter nations flourished and grew strong.
 Then the wild warrior in his forest home,
 Wooed the fond dark-tressed maiden and looked up
 Through the dim glory that fell on his soul,
 To the Great Spirit's throne beyond the stars,
 And uttered unto Him his simple prayer.
 And council-fires were lighted, and young braves
 Chased the free bison and the bounding deer
 O'er hill and prairie : and the wigwam's smoke
 Curled lightly upward to the smiling sky,
 Beyond whose bright horizon they did dream
 Of waking from death's sleep, to find a home
 That never would be visited by pain,
 Celestial hunting-grounds,—the Spirit Land.

And while the years went on, bold Northmen came
 O'er the Atlantic from their far-off homes,
 And traded with the Red Man, and bore back
 The wealth the New World gave them for their toil.

XV.

Years glided into years, and 'mong the thrones
 Of the stern empires of the elder world,
 Wandered a glorious spirit. He had seen,
 With the clear vision of philosophy,
 Across the Western ocean, a New Path,
 Undreamed of by the sages : they did mock
 At what they deemed his worse than foolish dreams.
 But his high spirit knew its destiny,
 And, mastering every obstacle, revealed
 To Europe's wondering princes the deep truth
 Of his grand vision, realised at last.

Oh! there is something God-like in the dreams,
 And toil, and tears, and suffering, and renown
 Of the far-seeing, gifted souls who come
 Like angel visitants from Paradise,
 And walk among us. Ah! how oft unknown
 In their habiliments of human clay:
 How often wronged and tortured: trodden down,
 Finding no rest but in a martyr's grave.
 But they rest sweetly now. The world has done
 Its worst: and soon in tears, repentance comes,
 With gold and marble, and funereal hymns,
 And mournful music, and dark waving plumes,
 To make atonement for long years of wrong.
 Death is the greatest blessing of the good.
 The high, the gifted: when the star goes back
 To its divine Creator, then the world
 First learns how great a spirit it has scorned.
 We mourn their loss, and yet for them rejoice,
 For they are in a far more peaceful clime,
 From which in life's serener hours they come,
 And whisper to the spirit yet again,
 The olden love they erst did give to us:
 Warn us of evil: counsel us of good,
 And bid us live and strive so worthily,
 That we may join them when our work is done.
 Time glorifies the past; and each year adds
 Brightness and purity to all that we
 Have loved, and still do love, though life's swift stream
 Hath borne them from our worship, far away.
 The sunlight tinges every cloud that made
 Our spirits sad, and the sweet roses hide
 Each thorn that wounded.

XVI.

Then from Europe came
 To the New World Columbus had revealed,—
 This wondrous land of promise and of hope,—
 The White Man with his cultivated soul,
 Learning and science, eloquence and art
 To find new homes where with a freeman's hand,
 And an unfettered conscience he might live
 In larger liberty, a higher life.

But then as if to prove that savagery,—
 The lust of conquest, and the greed for gain,
 Defile all races of our human-kind,
 Alike barbarian and civilised,
 The men to whom Columbus showed the way,
 Filled Mexico with carnage, woe and wrong ;
 Peru with outrage, robbery, and grief,
 And wrought destruction not to be described
 In human language. Ah ! how terrible
 Is murderous war, in all its murderous forms !

XVII.

Thousands of years ago, Humanity,
 On eastern plains began her grand career,
 Her march triumphal, westward round the world,
 Each year, each century she has gone on,
 Developing some new sublime idea :
 Ascending in the scale of thought and truth :
 Ennobling and untrammelling herself,
 With each advance towards the setting sun.

Such was its destiny. The pale-faced race
 Has driven the red warrior as he drove
 From home and burial-place those who, ere him,
 Peopled the lands of free America.
 Fair is the White Man's future, but the race
 Of the stern Indian bows to destiny,
 And in its wasting desolation e'er
 Moves slowly onward toward the deep abyss
 Beyond the horizon where the Red Man's sun
 Still lingers, shedding a faint radiance
 Over the country he once called his home.

XVIII.

Filled with funereal gloom the aching heart
 Lifts up its eyes with longings for the light,
 And turns again toward the morning's gates,
 Then smiles to see the glory of the dawn
 Descending to the valleys. Now the soul
 Ascends the mountains for a larger view,
 And soars above them till the continent
 Before its vision like a picture shines.

How marvellous and beautiful the scene !
 Fields, farms and gardens, cities, villages,
 Imperial States, and Nations still more vast !
 And in the heart of North America,
 The Great Republic. Elsewhere on the earth,
 Each people dwells apart, in its own land,
 And holds its rights by arms and fortresses,
 And strategy and battle. Not so here :
 But in this wondrous land all races seem
 To find a common ground of harmony,
 And dwell together as should brethren dwell,
 In unity and peace, with equal rights.

What means this miracle? How was it wrought?
 The marvellous mystery is quickly told.
 This is the Palestine of the New Age !
 To its fair fields the voice of God hath called
 From all the leading nations of the earth
 The brightest of their children, here to build
 A living temple of Free Government,
 The last and greatest wonder of the world.
 Here Liberty abides. Here Law and Faith,
 And Equal Rights, and Justice hold their sway,
 Except so far as some invading wrong
 Breaks in and baffles them till put to flight
 By the roused people whose resistless power,
 The common welfare ever may invoke.
 For in America the people rule,
 And choose their Kings to serve them, not to reign.
 Thus they who in their native lands had feared
 Their neighbors as their foes still meet them here
 As equals, and become their warmest friends.

XIX.

Yet here in Freedom's Garden had been sown
 The dragon's teeth of human slavery,
 Breeding vast ills and bringing on at length
 A trial of Free Government so fierce,
 Prolonged and terrible that it was proof
 To all the world that more than kingly power
 May by self-government be held and used.
 And thus has been assured throughout the earth

The final reign of Law and Liberty,
 With sovereign Justice and Equality:
 And by Coöperation, finally,
 Such bounteous prosperity that all
 May find supply of every righteous need,
 By honest industry.

Then will the dream
 Of Paradise Regained have been fulfilled !
 Then, learning wisdom from the Prince of Peace,
 The Nations will in Arbitration find
 A better safeguard of their rights, than war ;
 And wealth and power their highest glory seek
 In the most faithful service of mankind.

xx.

Thus do the hopes of human liberty—
 Free State, Free Church, free conscience and free thought ;
 And equal rights, protection and defence ;
 Laws mightier than armies, order firm
 And well-maintained without the bayonet :
 Rest on the Great Republic, and depend
 Upon the future of America.
 And this high claim involves no disrespect
 Of elder nations, though their treasuries
 Hold glories gathered through a thousand years,
 For the Republic is God's minister
 For human service, not a new device
 Of man for conquest and aggrandisement.
 So when the empires of the older world
 Salute the Great Republic, they confess
 Not the supremacy of other men,
 But the transcendent providence of God.

The eagle symbols His all-conquering Truth,
 The stars a knowledge of His sacred Laws,
 The bands the bonds of Human Brotherhood :
 And the fair hues the banner's folds display,
 The light and love of Unity and Peace !

Where'er these emblems tell of Liberty,
 And Law, and Justice, and Fraternity,
 And he who rev'rences, would name them all,
 He speaks the one grand word—America !