

An Agnostic View

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Some time after the death of Herbert Spencer a number of distinguished men considered the desirability of raising some abiding monument in his honour. They decided to seek permission to erect a memorial tablet in Westminster Abbey, and this scheme was commendable because of its simplicity. The desire was to set up in the Abbey, where the fame of so many great men is commemorated, a plain and unobtrusive record of Spencer's life and labours. But though the appeal for permission to carry out such a plan was made by a large number of the world's greatest thinkers and most distinguished public men, the Dean of Westminster felt himself compelled to withhold his assent.—*Daily Chronicle*, September 10th, 1906.

The vast colossus of the latter years—
Huge silver statue in the realm of Thought—
With arms strong-folded, and calm upward gaze,
Stands on the massive pile his hands have wrought,
And something of the glamour hath he caught
That to the gods pertains; the sky dark-blue
Sheds over him the calm undying hue
Of intellect; the brow's most noble rise
Endomes the depths of the deep-seated eyes.

Unflinching, strong, could this brave Statue stand
Pure and unsullied in a Christian fane,
While pigmies, in the shadow of his hand,
Mocked the advance of mighty Reason's reign
With jeers and gapes ignoble and in vain?
He, the Agnostic giant, in his might
Would shame the dying faith's dark priests to flight;
The superstition that he smote would reel
Beneath the wond'rous Statue's mighty heel!

Why should a Christian temple shelter him
Within the dark recesses of its night?
Should Phoebus' image stand in corners dim,
Lest it should fade beneath the sun's strong light?
Should feeble priests serve incarnated Might,
Muttering dull shibboleths of "love" and "grace,"

An insult to our Giant's scornful face?
Should Faith and Reason share the self-same fane?
Would Sun and Night together peaceful reign?

Nay, 'tis the sun would make the darkness fade,
As Truth shall superstition smite and slay,—
No wonder, then, that men should be afraid
To have their temple dim the sun's wild ray
Admit, for light makes neither truce nor stay,
But reign sole queen; shall he, her mighty one,
The thunder-browed apostle of the sun
Honour a fane where Christians kneel in dread
And slave-like love unto a god that's dead.