

## ROCKING CHAIR PHILOSOPHY

The Universalist Sunday school children are to be let walk in the Evangelical Sunday school procession, on what is called "Anniversary day," in Brooklyn. This is regarded as an admission that Universalism is not incompatible with evangelical doctrines. The concession, of course, is significant. It is "important, if true." For years, those who looked at the matter from the view point of children have girded at the implied bigotry of the exclusion of the Universalist infants and thrust the tongue in the cheek. They have not realized how important a matter eternal punishment is in any well-constructed theology. If the doctrine is right, then denial of it is wrong, and if those who deny it are wrong, then, too, fellowship with them is not right. You will say that this is the circular reasoning of Touchstone, whereby he condemns them to plutonian fires who have not been at court; but I defy you to find any flaw in the hypotheses. The only way to light up the caverns of that severe proposition is by the use of common sense, not of uncommon sense. Children walking with banners and music, in their holiday clothes, in a procession with their playmates, are deliberately made the victims of theological formularies by learned doctors and casuists. The latter cannot be overturned in the snug little limits of their rotary reasoning; but human nature, the human heart and the merry laugh of childhood dissipate such solemn nonsense at will. And the heart is right, everlastingly right. The admission of the Universalist children should never have been refused. It must have been due to a bigotry and an ignorance descended from that which burnt those who differed from you at the stake— unless it burnt you for differing from it. Dean Swift said what Beecher gets the credit of saying: "Orthodoxy is my doxy and heterodoxy is your doxy," and, barring the equivocal meaning of doxy, which no one should look up in the dictionary, the remark is very wise as well as very witty. Another remark in the same vein was made in a headline in a New York paper, the first time the pastor of Plymouth church preached against eternal punishment. The headline writer too bluntly said: "BEECHER KNOCKS HELL OUT OF RELIGION."

I am afraid that almost profane statement expresses a disposition of the human mind. I know of no one who actually relegates any persons to hell in his sincere thought, unless they are his enemies. They are conveniently sent there by a process of the mind akin to the sense of fitness of things. Per contra, none whom we love is sent there in our thought, if it be normal thought. Eternal punishment is not preached in Protestantism. The contrary is not preached. It is ignored as a rule. The discovery that God is Love and that the gospel is the good news of love woos more men than brimstone bulldozes into righteousness. So when the Universalist children sing their hymns, bow their curly heads in prayer, romp on the park sward and receive their prizes of books, flowers or sinful candy for proficiency and punctuality, along with the Evangelical children, let us hope that the still excluded Unitarian and Swedenborgian and Catholic children will be regarded by Him who "took a little child and placed it in the midst and said unto them 'suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of heaven.\*\* Verily, verily I say unto you unless ye repent and become as a little child you can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."

*Syracuse Standard*, Syracuse NY, Sun. 16 Nov 1884