

Torch of Reason

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THURSDAY... DECEMBER 10, 1896. E. M.

Oregon Secularists should be proud of the fact that our president, P. W. Geer, was elected vice-president of the American Secular Union at the late congress in Chicago.

Secularists, let us put our heads together and make Silvertown purely Secular. Let us show the world that we can establish libraries, museums and universities. Let men, women and children become interested in building good streets, beautiful gardens and finally a public park.

We can, if we will all work together, make this one of the prettiest and happiest places in the world.

How any sane man can believe and teach that he can induce God to make it rain by praying, is beyond our comprehension.

During a dry spell people suffer, and prayer ought to be used to prevent a draught as well as to stop it after it has caused so much mental and physical anguish.

In an account given lately by one of our reverend brothers, he represented a person, who believed in the faith cure for dry weather, as praying day after day until he saw a little cloud, and finally it rained. Can it be possible that our friend believes that it was in answer to the prayer. O, my poor deluded brother, by clinging to those old fancies you are doing yourself and your hearers, especially the young, a great injury.

"Skepticism is the highest of duties, and blind faith the one unpardonable sin." May your friends and your better judgment help you to become a wiser and better man.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

Those wishing to become members of the University Library Association may do so by contributing one or more books. The members of the association may read any book in the library provided they obey the rules and instructions of the librarian. P. W. Geer starts the ball rolling by putting in Cooper's Complete

Works, nicely bound in ten volumes. Let another brother speak.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

There are times when even the most sanguine people ask themselves the questions: "Why was I born? How can I get from life recompense me for all the disappointments, pain, grief and anguish that I am obliged to undergo? Would it not have been better had I never existed?"

The Christian would answer: "God created you for a purpose. That is why you were born. He has a special work for you to perform, which no other can do. Of course your pleasures here on earth will not reward you for all your tears, trials and tribulations. You would be foolish to expect such a thing. Do not strive for the pleasures of earth. Wait and lay up your treasures in heaven and then you will be happy for ever and ever. Is not that promise worth waiting and working for? If you are unusually tried remember it is because the Lord loveth you for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." (Hebrews 12:6.)

The Secularist would answer: "you were born in obedience to Nature's Laws. Your birth was the effect resulting from the corresponding cause. No, your pleasure does not pay you for your pain. You are never rewarded for pain.

"Pain is a result of a violation of nature's laws and you need not expect to be rewarded for your own or others disobedience, so the best thing to do is to prevent all the pain and suffering you can."

A child in its healthful, active play never thinks of being sorry that it exists, and so it is with the older children, under proper conditions; therefore to bring about proper conditions in which to grow and enjoy our existence is the main thing.

The belief that there is a reward in the future for those who suffer here has been the cause of much suffering, but if we reject this idle tale of future bliss, we are at once filled with the idea of working to avoid the useless, unrewarded pain and misery of life.

But some may say that proper conditions do not exist and therefore it would have been better if we had never been born. Let us look at this carefully. Yes; we believe that it would have been better for themselves, for their friends and for the world if some people had never been born; but that is not all of this question. Suppose that it would have been better if the world had never existed, this would not alter the fact that it does exist, and dear reader, you and I do exist, and now that we do, let us make the best of of it. Conditions may not be good, but let us try to make them better and perhaps before we lay down the weap-

ons used in the great battle of life we may put to flight some of the enemies of our race.

A good soldier will not give up the fight and allow the war horse of the enemy to trample him under foot on account of being tired, nor will he stop in the middle of the fight to ask vain and foolish questions in regard to his enlistment, but with an energy born of self-preservation and love for his fellow soldiers, he will gird on his armor and fight till he conquers or dies, and, dying, urges his comrades on to victory.

We are in the midst of the battle! The enemies of mankind are thick about us! Shall we give up and allow them to trample us into the mire of an aimless life? Shall we forsake our fellow men in this desperate war for freedom? No, a thousand times no! Let us break down the barriers that keep us from uniting against the foe. Let us march through the red sea of religious hate. Let us cross the dead sea of foolish faith and enter the promised land of light, love and liberty.

SCHOOL BOOKS.

It is safe to say that there is not a class of people in the whole world who appreciate the work of our public schools more than do the Secularists. They think so much of these secular institutions that they are fearful lest some enemy under the guise of a friend should enter and destroy them and we believe that their fears are well grounded for there is a large class of people who would introduce their particular religion into these schools and thus make them sectarian and practically parochial instead of free schools where the children of all classes can enjoy equal privileges.

It is perfectly natural that catholics and protestants alike should endeavor to introduce their religion into our schools for they believe that it means eternal salvation to those who are taught to worship as they worship and so we find the catholic authorities condemning our "godless public schools" and both protestants and catholics doing all they can to keep out secular teachers, introducing bible reading and prayer and in every way possible teaching their beloved religion. We know this is true by our own experience and although we blame no one, yet we wish to sound the alarm that our free secular public schools may forever remain free from the narrow dwarfing clutches of superstition.

If I were a christian and wished to make our public schools christian schools, the first thing I would endeavor to do would be to get control of the school-books. Let me select or write the children's books and I can prophesy what class of people the future citizens of our great union will be.

Now the christian people are not fools if they do have some ideas that seem foolish to us, and so we find the school books are full of christianity. This is not right and it

must be plain to all that every parent whether he be Mohammedan, Jew, Christian or Freethinker, should have the opportunity to send his child to a school where nothing is taught that is what he considers sinful. Now the common ground, the ground that all may stand on, is secular ground, i. e., all

this reason; our public schools should be purely secular and as this is not the case at the present we have a great work to do.

The first thing to do in this work of freeing our schools of all sectarianism is to examine the school books and make them what they should be. Many people do not believe that a good, and therefore an intelligent god, made all things but their children must be taught the following if they go to public school in this state.

"All things wise and wonderful,
The good God made them all."

—Barnes' Second Reader.

Never before had her grandmo her (who was dead) appeared so beautiful and so tall and, taking the little girl (who was also dead) in her arms, they flew high, high up into the heavens, where she felt neither cold nor hunger, nor fear, any more for they were with god!—Barnes' Third Reader.

Then my dear waves that live on the shore,

Sing a low and comforting strain.

"Fear not little maid, God is good, and once more

Thy father shall come back again."

—Barnes' Third Reader.

"The blue and the gray are the colors of God,

They are seen in the sky at even'

And many a noble, gallant soul

Has found them a passport to heaven."

—Barnes' Fourth Reader.

It was a trying moment for the poor, little, lonely boy; however, this time he didn't ask Tom what he might or might not do, but dropped on his knees by his bedside, as he had done every day from his childhood, to open his heart to Him who heareth the cry and beareth the the sorrows of the tender child, and the strong man in agony. * * Before either Tom Brown or Arthur left the school-house there was no room in which it (prayer) had not become the regular custom. I trust it is so still, and that the old heathen state of things has gone out forever. —Barnes' Fifth Reader.

The above are only a few of many examples where the christian religion is taught in our school books, and for us to adopt books that teach our children that it is heathenish to have schools without prayer; and then pass laws prohibiting all religious exercises, seems rather contradictory and absurd, doesn't it?

We have certainly made a mistake. Let us remedy it if possible at the next session of our legislature.