

The Progressive Club.

The earlier in life children commence to express their ideas in written language, the easier it will be for them in after years to acquire ability in the scientific, business or literary world. With a view to encouraging this important feature of education, the editor of the *LITTLE CANDLE* has organized "The Progressive club," with the following objects: First, to develop literary talent; Second, to encourage the free expression of thought; Third, to cultivate individuality. Fourth, to exercise and strengthen the power of reason; Fifth, to unite our young people by a bond of common sympathy and interest; Sixth, to entertain and instruct.

The plan is to classify the readers of the *LITTLE CANDLE* according to their ages, and have them write essays, stories and other contributions upon given subjects, the quality of the compositions to be judged by a committee of three, of which the editor of the *CANDLE* will be chairman, and the best six to be published in a series in the *CANDLE*. Upon these six the members of the club will be allowed to vote and credit will be awarded according to the number of votes each receive. New and interesting features will be added from time to time.

The movement deserves the attention of all Liberals, as it will result in great benefit to our young people.

Full instructions regarding the work appear in this week's issue of the *LITTLE CANDLE*. Send for sample copy that you may understand the nature and importance of the club.

Some Thought Labels.

Freethought is thought which is untrammelled by authority from which appeal is forbidden—the authority of so-called sacred books, creeds, heresies. It is generally applied now to the religious and philosophical views of those who reject alleged miraculous revelations, and who claim to think for themselves.

Liberalism is a rather indefinite word which stands for views held by those who, rejecting all alleged divine revelations, formulated propositions called creeds and ecclesiastical decision; as without authority, hold that reason is the highest standard of truth and that its free exercise in religion as in all other matters, is a right and a duty. With some, Liberalism means but little more than disbelief of the popular creeds. With advanced thinkers it includes the best thought of the age.

Agnosticism indicates the position and attitude of those who affirm nothing, and claim nothing is known, in regard to the ultimate nature of being, or in regard to what lies beyond phenomena. All knowledge, says the Agnostic,

reality is, in itself, what it is except as manifested in consciousness is unknown. Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, George Elliot were Agnostics. Herbert Spencer is an Agnostic.

Secularism is a protest against other worldliness. It emphasizes the importance of this life and of testing conduct by its results here, in opposition to those who would make a future life, here and now, of primary interest. Secularism, without denying a future life, insist that here we have the affairs of this life to deal with, and that they should not be subordinated to expectations of a life beyond.

Secularism (first formulated by George Jacob Holyoke, of England, some fifty years ago) should not be as it often is, confounded with State Secularization, which means the disjunction of government from religious dogmas and observance or the complete separation of church and state, in which many Christians believe.

Materialism is the doctrine that matter is self-existent, eternal and the ultimate basis of all phenomena; that mind is an outcome, a result, a functional product of organization. That system which makes mind eternal by assuming that atoms have sensations, desires etc., is also, though improperly, called materialism by those who, like Haeckel, are dissatisfied with common materialism, but accept the view stated, and wish to retain the materialistic terminology. Haeckel also calls the view monism.

Spiritualism may be comprehensively defined as the doctrines that spirit is the basis of all thought and the primary principle of being. It may or may not include belief in personal immortality. It may or may not include what is distinctive in modern spiritualism, so called.

These definitions of course admit of amplification, but they may serve to indicate the need of clearness and definiteness in the statement of systems of thought, and the importance of understanding the differences which have brought into existence some of the thought-labels in current use.

B. F. UNDERWOOD,
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Correspondence.

MONTREAL, CANADA, Dec. 27, 1896.—Pearl W. Geer—Dear Sir: In a recent number of "The Free Thinker," I read with much interest and delight the account you gave of the doings of free thinkers in the state of Oregon, and from this priest-ridden land I send you my hearty greetings, wishing you a happy and prosperous new year, with great and increasing success to your Secular Sunday school, and to all rational efforts to direct the minds of men to a true philosophy

of the universe and of life. All the systems called religious profess to teach a philosophy, or theory, of the universe and of life; that is how all things came into being, how they are governed, and how we ought to live. How well clerics of the different systems of superstition understand that those who control and direct the thoughts and beliefs of men, are really controllers and governors of men! And how insidiously they contrived to get control of the education of the young, knowing that the young and inexperienced yield to their assumptions, and receive their dogmas as truth.

You are on the right track to have secular schools entirely free from the influence of any and every sect of superstition. The only danger I see is, that partially informed men, though sincere and enthusiastic, may make your organization only another sort of a church. I have seen more than one free thought organization ruined by preaching. I believe Ingersoll sounded the true keynote, when he said: "Schools and colleges are the only churches we want." This is a far-reaching statement; and free thinkers should keep it steadily in view.

The public schools, erected and maintained by the public's money, should teach primarily the elementary "branches" of reading, writing, arithmetic, the laws of health, and the elementary laws of social science, with the elements of natural science; and they should be restricted from confusing the intellect of youth, by teaching whatever is contrary to the facts and the order of nature, and the reason of man. Free thinkers (and by free thinkers I mean all who claim the right of private judgment—not bond-thinkers) should persistently aim at making our public schools thoroughly unsectarian. And when any well intentioned neighbor ask what sort of religion is taught in your secular school, let them know distinctly that the moral living free thinker's religion is the practice and promotion of truth and righteousness, with the exercise of sympathy and love.

I have often felt vexed to hear some free thinkers speak disparagingly of religion—using the words religion and religious only as terms of approbium. We should rather use the words religion and religious in their original and proper sense, and rescue these good old words from the perversions of priestcraft.

Cicero the eminent scholar, orator, and statesman, who lived before the date assigned to the hybrid Jesus of the New Testament, says that the word religion (religio) comes from the Latin verb relegere, the opposite of neglegere—neglegere meaning not to gather, not to heed, not to neglect to be

reckless etc., and religere (or relegere) meant to heed, to be careful, to live circumspectly, within our rights, regarding the like rights of others.

What the ancient Roman meant by religion was practical moral living,—not believing speculative metaphysical dogmas and traditional fables. Cicero made a broad distinction between these—calling the one religion, the other superstition. This is in harmony with all the great moral teachers and reformers of the world; for in all countries, in all ages, the true moralists have all taught the golden rule—"Do to others, as you would have others do to you." This is the great fundamental moral law. "Morality is the end, religion is the way to, the handmaid of, morality." * *

Morality begins with a perception of, and a regard for, the needs and the rights of others. We see it first in the family, the family is the fountain of equal freedom, justice, sympathy and love—of all that is noble and progressive in man. Here is the beginning of natural religion. This is free thinker's religion.

I have only time to say go on and prosper, and would you kindly send me your syllabus of Secular Sunday school lessons?

Yours truly,
J. MOWAT REID.

* See Prof. MAX MULLER, in his Gifford Lectures. Vol I pp. 33-40.
** Dr. FRANCIS NEWMAN, in his "Phases of Faith."

Brother F. S. Matteson of Turner Ore. writes to us as follows:

Dear Sir:—We have a Japan retriever Spaniel pup, about three months old, seal brow and tan color, weight four pounds, tail an inch long. This is a breed new to this country, and is nice, and desirable. The one we offer is a female, and if you want her to sell to the highest bidder for the benefit of the University we will send her. These Jap dogs are nice, sharp and sprightly. They carry naturally and are easily trained. The one we offer is a daisy, and her name is "Yone Santo." Want her?

F. S. MATTERSON.

Yes, brother Matterson send along the pup and accept our thanks for your kindness. And now who will start the ball rolling? Make us an offer!

Religious zeal enlists the strongest prejudices of the human mind and when misdirected, under the delusive pretext of doing God's service, excites the worst passions of our nature. When man undertakes to become God's avenger, he becomes a demon. Driven by the frenzy of a religious zeal, he loses every gentle feeling, forgets every claim alike of justice, mercy, and humanity, and becomes ferocious and unrelenting.

C. B. REYNOLDS.