

Torch of Reason

UNIVERSAL MENTAL LIBERTY.

ONE WORLD AT A TIME.

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Something New.

When great reforms are first inaugurated there are always many things to combat, and oftentimes the greatest reforms have seemed to be entirely crushed, but again and again the great truth has burst out upon the world in another form and at last it is recognized as a living, active principle by which men are governed.

Today the great truth of mental liberty is again brought to the notice of the mental slaves and would-be freemen of our great country, by the opening of the first institution of learning ever controlled by a purely secular organization.

Is the Liberal University of Silverton, Oregon, to be the great climax of events that is to inaugurate a higher and better civilization?

Why not? If the principles of Secularism will make the world better, and these principles of love, liberty and truth are firmly planted in the minds of a few students by their being educated in science, morality and all the knowledge that is so beneficial to us here, without having their young minds dwarfed by any of the confusing doctrines of theology, why will they not exert a very great influence when they go out into the world? And then if this University is a success, others may be instituted and soon the light of mental freedom will shine from every quarter and every community and every home will be filled with peace and love and joy.

United Effort.

How can we effect a union of the people so that we may work together to bring about better conditions for all,—better schools, better physical and mental development, and a standard of morality

that would make it impossible for one brother to selfishly hug to himself vast millions while another is lying at his feet, sick and dying for the want of a crust.

The great task of saving the world falls upon the intelligent, thinking people of the middle classes. But it never will be saved by individual work in trying to convert people of the slums to some particular religious belief or by relieving their immediate sufferings by charity. We believe in relieving suffering as fast as possible, but the cause must be removed before a permanent relief can be effected. Conditions must be made such that all will be comfortable and happy,—so there will be no very rich, and no very poor. But can such a condition be brought about? Yes it can. And as soon as the different factions in the religious world drop their mysterious nonessentials and get down to business,—unite and together work to make this world better,—we will begin to do something worthy of an intelligent people. And this is the hope of the Secular church that by our organization without any creedal test, we will be the means of finally uniting in one grand body all the contending religious factions, thus forming the universal religion of humanity. Then will a higher civilization be begun and the coming man and woman will enter the stage of action hand in hand and play well their parts in the great drama of life. We must learn to unite. In united effort there is salvation. When this great lesson has been learned, and not until then, will we advance rapidly.

Some may say that we need never expect catholics, protestants and liberals to unite, but if you will stop to think you will see that we are uniting every day. People are drawing nearer and nearer together and all we want is to get everyone to investigate and be honest and in time we will all find the truth.

Let us make our lives pure and free from deceit and fraud; let us be true to our higher and better impulses; let us by our example and by the use of our reason help to bring about a condition that will prove a real heaven to poor, suffering humanity.

Our work should begin here at home and after we have made this earth what it ought to be, a happy dwelling place for every human being who enters it, then it will be time to build "mansions in the sky."

Vindictive Punishment.

The heathenish way in which our criminals are made criminal and then their horrible punishment is a reproach to any people, but this punishment of casting men, who have been wronged more than they have wronged, into prison without a chance to im-

prove themselves but with every incentive to be worse when they are turned loose, and our horrible capital punishment is the outgrowth of Christianity.

It is a mild idea of hell. Those who can advocate eternal punishment beyond this life can easily torture men's bodies here for their mistakes—mistakes, too, which are caused by the low state of society in which men find themselves.

We are not upholding crime. We believe in doing away with crime, but cruel and unjust punishment will not do away with it while the cause is not removed. We were talking with a minister some time ago and advocating the idea that all criminals were unfortunates and that we should pity them and try to help them become better men and women, that a person who does wrong should not be injured any more than one who has some contagious disease, that the idea of a hell for wrong doers was as bad as to have a hell for those who were unfortunate enough to have the small pox or rheumatism.

He seemed to be astonished at such doctrines of love and pity for the unfortunates and scouted at our ideas. Now which is the heathen idea, love, pity, and reform of criminals, or the dungeon, the hangman's rope and hell after death?

If you had a brother and he was born with or had contracted by evil association, mean, low ideas and had in a fit of anger committed a murder would you like to see him hung? Would you be made a criminal if he was not tortured or his life taken away? No, while you would want him restrained and kept from injuring others you would want him fed and clothed comfortably and have all the chances to become a better man.

If there is in the world anything that is heathen it is the doctrine of being saved without our own merit but by the merit of the lamb. It fills our lunatic asylums and our prisons, it fills our idiotic asylums and our reform schools.

Think of it! could any heathen people do worse than to advocate doctrines that produce criminals and then inflict unreasonable and unjust punishments?

Religion In our Public Schools.

In order for people to be religious they must have religious teaching when young, and no one knows this better than the leaders of the christian churches; therefore it has come to pass that our public schools are controlled largely by those who see to it that the fundamental principles of Christianity i. e., the ideas of God, only begotten son, the resurrection, heaven and eternal punishment etc., are taught to the children and the result is very advantageous to

the christian churches who compete with each other in securing the children when they are old enough to become members of a church.

This control of our public schools by the one religious sect called christians has not been accomplished because the christians have a majority, but because of their stratagem and activity and the natural inactivity of liberals who are too often willing to allow others to do, as well as to think, as they please.

But the time has come for liberals to act, and as a rule they are not slow to act when they are fully convinced that action is necessary in order to preserve their own liberty.

The thing for us to do then is to arouse our slumbering hosts in time to prevent the old rusty chains of religious slavery from being fastened around our necks.

If the Jews should force their religious doctrines, which teach unbelief in the divinity of Jesus, upon our public schools, there would be a howl go up from the very ones who are now forcing the christian religion upon our defenseless children in every way possible. And when their creed is not openly taught in violation of the law other ways are employed. Some of the honorable (?) ways are shown in the following from White's Pedagogy: "At least three avenues are open for the introduction of religious idea and sanctions into all our schools. These are sacred songs, the literature of Christendom, and, best of all, faithful and fearless christian teachers, the living epistles of the truth. Against these there is no law."

Here And Now.

As long as there is suffering in the world, as long as there are miserable unhappy people, just so long is there need for Secularism. Secularists know that for every effect there is an efficient cause and there has never been a cause of more dissension than the false religious ideas of mankind.

Now Secularism will overcome all this for it is based upon the idea of the brotherhood of man, and while each is allowed perfect liberty of thought, yet all will have learned to respect the ideas of others and to love one another none the less for an honest difference of opinion; while everyone will join hands in the great work of destroying our enemies of ignorance and error. Come and help to overcome the monster evils that are damning our race here and now.

With a little help from each a great work may be accomplished. Let us start in the new year by doing all we can.