

Torch of Reason

UNIVERSAL MENTAL LIBERTY.

ONE WORLD AT A TIME.

The Only Secular Paper Published on the Pacific Coast.

Published Weekly by the Oregon State Secular Union.

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P. W. GEER - - - Business Manager.

Entered at the postoffice at Silverton, Oregon, as second class mail matter.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.
One Year, in advance \$1.00
Six Months, in advance 50
Three Months, in advance 25
In Clubs of 5 or more one year, in advance. . . 75
Money should be sent by registered letter or money order.
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THURSDAY . . . JANUARY 14, E. M. 297

Our Work.

The work of establishing our university has thus far been very successful and we all feel very much encouraged. Of course there are many things that we need and some of us are doing too much work to produce the very best results, but the great machinery of an organization which is composed of workers from Maine to California is started and as it moves slowly but surely the different parts will gradually take up their work and almost before we realize it a fine prosperous university, in a fine modern building, will be standing, a living monument, declaring to the world the advent of a happier and higher civilization.

The Character of Christian Proof.

In a little work entitled, "The Word and Works of God," by Gilbert S. Bailey, D. D. we find these words: "There is no other truth in the world upon any subject that rests on so much and such satisfactory proof as the divine authority of the Bible."

As our idea is just the opposite and we believe in examining all sides of a question, let us examine some of the proofs he offers. He says: "If a man were accused of the crime of murder and arraigned before a court for trial, and a dozen of your best citizens—the most truthful and upright appear as witnesses, and each one testifies that he saw the accused kill his victim in broad daylight; they saw him do it, it is a matter of their personal knowledge,—do you think that any court or jury would doubt the fact to which they testified? By no means. Their testimony would be conclusive that he did the deed.

Now, there are not merely a dozen men but hundreds and thousands,

who testify to their personal knowledge and experience of the truth of the bible and the divine reality of the religion which it teaches."

"We believe that this is as good proof as can be given, but we consider it no proof whatever, for, with the same kind of reasoning, we could prove any religion and all cannot be true. Is Mohammedism true? A follower of Mohammed could use the same proof. And again, if the dozen or hundreds of the best citizens spoken of, would testify that they had seen witches, as no doubt many even of our time would, would our D. D. believe in witches?"

The fact is, that when it comes to the reality of religion, such testimony is no good whatever and there is no judge or jury in our laud that would change their religious belief on account of that kind of evidence and men who are hood-winked into believing, by this kind of proof, deserves our pity.

Another proof offered is that of the fulfillment of prophecy. He says that all the grand outlines of the history of the world, and much of the minute details, were predicted in the bible more than two thousand years ago. Now is this true? Many of us have read the bible and can see no such wonderful fulfillment, and in fact the more we read, the more we see that those old writers knew nothing about what was to come to pass.

The facts of science, the great inventions, the discovery of America, none of these are mentioned and although these old writings are twisted and changed to fit everything that takes place there is no definite mention of anything and no matter what might occur they could be made to fit fully as well as they do the actual happenings. To us it is absurd to say that men can, or ever could, look into the future and tell what would take place; but the fact that those old writings are hard to understand on account of the miserable, disjointed, disconnected fragmentary way in which they are written makes them somewhat mysterious to the masses and so the D. D's take advantage of this and try to make us believe that it means just what suits their purpose. It is an old trick to pretend to be good and many of these good (?) men are like some of the prophets themselves who could have written their prophecies after the event transpired, and then making it appear that it was written long before, point out the wonderful likeness.

Such reasoning as is offered as proof of the statements of theology, only cause thinking people to doubt their truth and the ministers of rural districts must learn to do as their city brothers do i. e., mix but little superstition in a secular lec-

ture and call it a gospel sermon or their flocks will dwindle to a handful of ignorant, superstitious fanatics.

The Last and Best.

During the predominance of any religion, in any country, the literature of that country, at that time, would be expected to contain much of the prevailing religious thought of the time; and as in old Roman times the literature was pagan, so in christian lands the literature for many years has been full of christian doctrines.

The time came however in Roman history when in spite of pagan literature, the ideas of many gods and other foolish notions taught to the common people, by the pagan teachers, gave way, and the more simple belief in one god, his son Jesus, the devil and the two places of future existence, heaven and hell, were substituted; and perhaps this was a step forward. At least it was a change and furnishes the world a valuable lesson. Finally men such as the great founders of our republic, and the great scientists of their day, conceived the idea that there was great weakness in the doctrines of the christian churches and they came to believe in a still more simple and reasonable religion i. e., the belief in god and humanity—the belief in the fatherhood of god and the brotherhood of man. This simplified belief did not make the world worse but it made it better, for in simplifying the religion, it gave men more time to devote to the upbuilding of humanity, and such men as Thomas Paine put in their time writing messages of love, liberty and justice to their fellow-men.

Thus the world through their efforts has advanced. More liberty of thought gave us more knowledge of science. Science gave us the railroad, the telegraph, the steamship, the telephone. These great inventions made us more cosmopolitan and, as we become acquainted with our brothers from other parts of the world, we learned to have more of a brotherly feeling toward them, and thus the great "brotherhood of man" idea is overshadowing all others, and the practical religion of Secularism is taking the place of all unproven and unprovable theories of theology. Welcome Secularism, thou beautiful daughter of Science and Love!

Wise Use of Wealth.

Says the Christian Leader: "The time has come when the millionaire who goes into his grave, and not a penny left for any beneficent and humanitarian uses will leave behind a name at the mention of which wise and good people revolt.

This is true. Wealth is the stored up product of the labor of many heads and hands through

many generations of men. Those who have, under existing industrial conditions, come into possession of riches should use them, as far as they can without injury to themselves and their dependents, for educational, charitable or other good purposes in the interests of the people. They cannot take their wealth out of this world. They may hoard it and leave it perhaps to be wasted or misapplied when they are numbered with the dead. How much better while alive to give generously to some good cause, and live the closing years of life with the pleasant consciousness of having contributed liberally to make the world better for having lived.

Let freethinkers who have in their power to help destroy superstition and promote intellectual freedom, consider whether they have done what they could to uphold the hands of those engaged in the work of diffusing liberal principles. It is an unrewarded work, and those engaged in it should be aided by all who are in sympathy with liberal thought and are able to render financial help. It is much wiser to give when one is alive and can see, as Peter Cooper for instance did, the beneficent results of his generosity.

How many liberals are there in Oregon and in other states who will make handsome contributions for the support of the "TORCH OF REASON," and for establishing and sustaining the liberal educational work begun at Silverton?

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Good News From England.

The following is selected from the Freethinker, a paper published in England. Mr. Foote, speaking of the Secular Congress held at Chicago, says: "Another speaker was Mr Pearl W. Geer, President of the Oregon Secular Union. He is a young man, about twenty five years of age, and his account of positive Secular work, fifteen hundred miles west of Chicago was most interesting. The Secular Union there is incorporated; a good deal of money has been raised, lecturers have been planted in various parts of the State, Sunday schools have been established, and the foundation has been laid of a Liberal University. A quarterly magazine ministers to the literary wants of the Sunday schools, and the popular propaganda is carried on by a weekly paper called THE TORCH OF REASON. The whole of the Union's publications are turned out from its own printing press. I am sorry I cannot visit Oregon to see the Secular work there with my own eyes. I regard it as auguring success for my own project of incorporating a Secular Society in England; a project which I hope to carry into effect immediately on my return to the old country."

You see that our work in Oregon is not local. Its influence is being felt all over the world. This should encourage us to press forward and help to bear the TORCH OF REASON into every home.