

The Old and the New.

Another year, with its attendant successes and failures, has been covered with the dust of time. The great earth, wheeling round the golden sun, speeding on through realms unmeasured and unexplored, flings the years, one by one, through the ever open portals of the silent and eternal past. Hopes and ambitions, interwoven with the warp and woof of love, fade away like the stars of descending night. The past is gone. The old must step aside to make way for the ever advancing new. The curtain is raised upon the first act in the new year. Spreading away in the dim twilight of the future lie the plans whereupon new battles are to be fought, new hopes and ambitions raised, new glories realized, new laurels won. Upon the site of old ruins, new mansions will be built; upon the failures of unwisely directed energy, new enterprises will build, with the tools of experience, the sublime the ever-enduring glories of the race. Upon this great picture of the past, we trace the outline of the faces of men and women who have given to the world the heritage of their intellectual achievements, and upon whose brow will forever rest the laurels of fame. Back in the gray dawn of the seventeenth century, when the minds of men were clouded with superstition and ignorance, when the intellect was the slave of fear and the honest doubt was silenced by the burning stake,—back in the dim past where only here and there the stars of truth shed their resplendent light athwart the gloom of centuries, a brave spirit shines fourth with the bright effulgence of the noonday sun. A light from out the darkness, a ray of hope from out the density of despair,—the first to break the chains of mental bondage by sacrificing his own blood, we see him, grand, immortal Bruno perishing amid a wild horde who bowed with fear and trembling before a God of hate.

On Thursday, the 17 day of February 1600, this illustrious man was burned at the stake. Upon the sacrificial altar of this martyr the Era of Man arose,—the light of a new dawn which was destined to dispel the shades of the long night of superstitious rule. Before the close of the century in which Giordano Bruno was burned, another intellectual force sprung in the midst of the corruption and slavery of France. For a thousand years the common people had been subjected until they were reduced to a condition in common with the beasts. Out of this nation of corruption and vice rose the immortal Voltaire, the hater of tyranny, the friend of the oppressed. He struck from the brain the fetters of faith, sympathized with and aided the oppressed, and labored to establish universal toleration. But the tide of progression has swept to the western shores of the Atlantic. Surging within the hearts of the American people was the spirit of conflict—the irresistible impulse of the new to free itself from the thralldom of the old. Where was the power that could direct the course of this restless and mighty tide and secure the birth of a republic? In 1737 a child was born in the south of England that was destined to become the liberator of his people—a child within whose brain was sown the seeds of the greatest characters in the world's history. Burned into his very heart was the feeling to which he gave utterance in the words: "Where liberty is not, there is my country." And so we find him in France and in America during the darkest days of their history. Bruno broke the fetters of mental bondage, Voltaire championed the cause of justice, but universal mental freedom, and universal liberty found an unparalleled exponent in the mighty brain of Thomas Paine.

I have briefly alluded to three of the

great powers which, perhaps more than all others, made possible the degree of freedom we have attained today. We have seen how the dark ages, the midnight of religious rule, were lighted with the torches of human lives. And amid it all we observe the irresistible onward sweep of progression's mighty law. Down through the centuries we trace its march and note with what heroism, with what bravery and courage it has been attended. We realize the price it has cost for man to be free. And why? Because humanity has preferred bondage to freedom? Because man is by nature, predisposed to work and act against his own interests? Ah, no, but simply because his educational facilities have been dictated and controlled by those of whose interests it was that he should acquire certain narrow and contracted views of life and its attendant duties. Man is largely a creature of education. The construction of duties. The construction of the human brain admits of almost any quality of thought and feeling that education and environment may dictate. Are we today less mindful of this fact and less willing to help secure the educational advantages necessary to the best moral and mental results, than were the men and women of the past whose heroic bravery in this line has lighted the world with the light of truth and liberty? I trust not. Today as in the days of Voltaire and Thomas Paine, the voices of the rising generations cry out to us for aid. We should be willing and anxious to help them. We should strive to give them the best possible advantages both social and educational. From a careful study of the past, we are convinced that this can be secured only through a system of instruction based exclusively upon nature and nature's laws. "Man know thyself", was given by a sage of old, and we have no better method by which to secure happiness.

That man may know himself in the full strength of his manly and noble nature, his mind must be free from the fetters of fear and faith. His reason must be at liberty to combat, accept or reject. That his reason may be able to decide upon any question he must be allowed to hear all sides. After hearing all sides and his opinion is formed, then he should be upheld and protected in the expression of that opinion, no matter to what extent it may differ from the opinions of others. This is the aim and object of Secularism: freedom of thought, freedom of speech.

When creeds shall be no more, when the rights of each shall be as sacred as the rights of all; when men and women shall be judged by motives and respected for what they are, rather than for what they pretend to be; when universal charity shall take the place of universal censure, when deeds of love and truth and kindness shall be the index to genuine manhood and womanhood, then will the memories of the present creed-cursed and hypocritical age recur to us as befitting a barbaric or semi-civilized race.

A grave responsibility, then, falls upon us as liberty-loving people, to guard the rights of our children to a broad, liberal education that shall enable them to make the very most of their natural powers to promote the happiness and welfare of humanity. To the attainment of this end we seek to establish a Liberal University and we are assured the true Secularists of this state and nation will give us their earnest and hearty co-operation.
NETTIE A. OLDS.

TURNER, Dec. 31. 1896:—To the Editor: If some kindly disposed neighbor of Silverton, or convenient vicinity, will come to Turner, with a wagon, and call on me I will send a few things to the University.
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