

Correspondence.

P. W. GEER.—Dear Friend: Since I had the pleasure of forming your acquaintance when you were here on your lecturing tour, I have often resolved to write to you and have as often put it off; but at last I will try to do so.

It pleases us very much to see that your labor and capacity in the great cause of Mental Liberty has been duly appreciated in our national, as well as in our state organizations. That is as it should be. We are keeping up our organization here, if it is small. We have Sunday School every other Sunday, and meetings every other week on Saturday night, both well attended considering the small neighborhood. In the school-house above Vale where you delivered a lecture, they have had christian revival meetings lately lasting from day to day for nearly a week, and the poor preacher notwithstanding all his begging, coaxing, and persuasions failed to get one of the "miserable sinners" to come forward to the seat of mercy to be prayed for; but there was one thing he did not forget, and that was to abuse the Free thinkers from first to last. According to his own statement he had been an Infidel, and at that time was a drunkard, a gambler, and guilty of other vices. He declared that Infidels do not have more than half a teaspoonful of brains in their heads.

As his estimate of Infidels must have been from his own experience, I was led to wonder if he was still empty-headed, or if his brain had started growing when he became converted; but I think the former was the case, for he declared that he would never enter into controversy, or debate with an Infidel, and advised others to do the same for they would be defeated, and the Infidels would get the best of them every time. At his last meeting I sent to have arrangements made to get the school-house, and notice given out that I would lecture to them on the following Sunday. To this, one pious brother objected; the result was that after some consultation on the subject one member of the school board present withdrew his consent for me to get the house, only on condition that I would not speak in favor of Free-thought, so I let the matter drop for the present.

Your friend and well wisher,
MICHAEL JOHNSON.
Vale, Oregon.

ED. TORCH OF REASON. Dear Sir:—When we remember the great strides that civil and mental liberty have taken in the last decade, we should then and there remember to be charitable to those of a different belief from ourselves. I do not mean that we should view superstition and ignorance with any less degree of abhorance,

but that we should remember that in their present manifestations at least, they are but the outgrowth of centuries of religious training, coupled with the barbaric, superstitious tendency of the human race. It would seem that some of the ancient belief in an unathomable combination of Deistic attributes has, by atavism, or some similar process, become the heritage of a great portion of our great human brotherhood. To eradicate this from the mental and moral man, should be our thoughtful and earnest task. If the task sometimes seems to be a thankless one, we have only to gaze backward through the cycles of time at the slippery steps which have been left behind and compared to which our present road is a broad turnpike, to feel encouraged and press forward in the glorious march of Liberty and Justice, as if we could see a "light about our feet." We realize our limitations, and should work accordingly, for we cannot all be Ingersolls, able to make our words burn into man's consciousness, with a realizing sense of their eternal truth, but if we will, we can clear a small space in front of our own dwelling, so that the weary traveler's feet will be gladdened thereby.

Ah, soul-sick and heavy-hearted brother, you must keep yourself out of your "slough of despond." You are only held there by your own beliefs and isms. Come out on the dry land of reason. Let that same reason be a land of hope and promise flowing with milk and honey. You have only to grasp your opportunities and lo! the cup of happiness hath been found.

Z. J. M.

ED. TORCH OF REASON, Dear Sir:—Night before last I went out to hear the "Rev. A. W. Snyder, the "Evangelist" (whatever that may mean,) who is holding "gospel meetings" at the Baptist church here. He is a fairly good looking middle-aged gentleman, with a bald head a rather high-keyed voice, a big mustache, and small forensic power. His discourse was neither new nor brilliant. Only a fair average. The only noteworthy thing he said was, that people usually "get religion" in their youth. He said the age of fifteen was the most susceptible. After that the liability declines with years, and most people "get religion" from fifteen to twenty-five; and after the age of forty years, they seldom have it.

It is about the same way only more so, with children in their beliefs in Santa Claus and the proverbial "Black-man." As age strengthens their minds they outgrow these infantile conceptions, put them away as "childish things" and never return to them.

So "children of a larger growth" emerge from their early taught hallucinations regarding the christian

conception of God, of Jesus Christ, and the Devil. And once outgrown, the hallucination never returns, and the terrors of the christian's god, his devil, or his hell, moves them no more. What a blessing for innocent, loving and trusting childhood, to be free from these imaginary ghostly terrors.

Hence the need of freethought schools, to dispel these priest-made delusions, and tide the young over this early period of their lives. To this humane end freethinkers in every school district should work harmoniously together to run Sunday schools, and make them useful and entertaining. It doesn't take but a few persons to do it, if they only will take hold and work and persevere. The opposition of the christians will avail but little, if they manage well. Spread the light. And by all means support the University. Everyone can do something. Do it, however little, and the school will live and thrive. You will be glad of it; brother freethinker in after years.

F. S. MATTESON.

Charity.

[FOR THE TORCH OF REASON.]

There is a kind of charity that gives scanty meals and half worn-out clothing to poor people. Those who practice this kind of charity usually look upon the poorer classes as different beings than themselves. They regard them not as brothers and sisters in the great human family, but as an inferior class created for the express purpose of affording the wealthy an opportunity for exercising their feelings of pity. Ministers do not hesitate to say from the pulpit, that God created the poor for the benefit of the rich, that they might have some one upon whom to bestow charity. And so the poor are taught to be contented with their condition and the rich are encouraged in the idea that it is perfectly right they should remain so. This kind of education has tended to divide the feelings and sympathies of the human race. It has set up a moral as well as social barrier between equally good and honest people in all countries and climes. It has fostered institutions entirely foreign to individual and national welfare—institutions of so called charity and philanthropy which are but festering heads of social corruption. It has discounted genuine moral worth and purchased the name of honor for a few paltry nuggets of gold. It has narrowed the conception of justice, and smothered the kindlier promptings of the human heart.

True charity, which is better explained by the word justice, does not measure a man's worth by the number of dollars he possesses, nor does it deem the deeds of philanthropy and love as especially meritorious. The man who withholds aid from his needy fellowmen, exhibits traits

of greed and selfishness, and is himself an object of compassion; but he who extends the helping hand whenever needed, without question of rank or race, does so from the promptings of his strong moral and benevolent nature, nor considers it ought but what, being a member of the human family, it became his duty and pleasure to do. This kind of charity, instead of humiliating the unfortunate ones, cultivates the better traits of their natures and strengthens their power for usefulness; while with the more fortunate it elevates and ennobles every part of their being, making their lives a leverage in the great work of reformation and human progress.

Charity in this broad and comprehensive sense is one of the underlying principles in the true religion of humanity.

NETTIE A. OLDS

Chicago News.

To the Editor; Professor Chaney is giving a course of lectures before the Secular Union. The Professor is an astrologer and took for his subject last Sunday evening "The Fiction of Creation." The lecture was illustrated by a map showing the signs of the zodiac and the apparent path of the sun through the heaven and I honestly believe I learned more about heaven during that lecture than I would learn by going to church every Sunday for a thousand years. The lecturer claimed that the Bible was simply a story based on astronomical observations of the ancients and that the story of creation and all the subsequent disasters recorded in the Bible were fully explained in the signs of the zodiac no god no devil no nothing was necessary in the beginning for there wasn't any beginning.

After the lecture the Professor read a horoscope prepared for the occasion by one of his pupils. He described very accurately President Gammage, who was the subject of the horoscope, without any knowledge of who the subject was, nor did the man who prepared the chart know. I don't know how he did it, but he did.

The ministers of this city seem to think something must be done so they have decided to hold a series of revivals throughout the city. At a meeting held for that purpose 300 of the gentlemen who want other people to rest on Sunday, made preliminary arrangements for a great awakening. The president explained the objects to be "to make conversions and promote the growth of higher life in the churches." Dr. P. S. Henson said: "Bumptious intellectuality is our besetting sin" "the early church" he said "had no higher critics." I wonder if the Rev. Doctor thinks that the absence of the two above mentioned obstacles is what made the early church such a howling success.

J. B. B.