

# Torch of Reason

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## Work Versus Talk.

A new order of things is being inaugurated in the work of liberating the mental slaves from their superstition. The old way has not been as successful as some might wish, and we hail the new way with delight, for it has the appearance of being just what is needed.

Formerly, lecturers who had more or less oratorical power and more or less (often less) moral character, have gone about howling against the evils of orthodoxy particularly, and occasionally touching on other evils. Sometimes these lecturers have aroused great enthusiasm and been the means of raising large sums of money for no other purpose than helping themselves, or perhaps to defray the expense of a debate, a picnic, or an aimless, nonproductive convention. We do not underestimate the good that some of these lone workers have done, but we do cry out against the method. It must be admitted that some of the lecturers have had rather weak moral characters and such people are not apt to cry out against their own vices; therefore many times their hue and cry against the church, supplemented by a bad record and bad habits, has done our cause more harm than good. We are satisfied that the cause would have been much better if some who have created great enthusiasm at times had never been born; for, after this excitement has died out it has left the work in a worse shape than before.

It is the same as religious excitement and the orthodox people know full well that something else is needed. That something else is the work of perfecting organizations.

Now this work does not need very great oratorical powers, and, in order to be successful, we must have men and women who are organizers instead of orators. Of course an organizer who is a good speaker can do more good than one who is not, but a plain ordinary man or woman, who has the right principles and loves the cause, may

do more good by being able to organize Secular Sunday schools than a great orator, for, out of one school may come more than one orator, organizer and teacher. It is the difference between isolated one-handed work and the work of a harmonious family. It is the difference between trying to save the victims of a shipwreck by widely separated fishermen, and a well drilled life-saving crew. It is the difference between a few citizens trying to put out a fire and a well equipped fire department. It is the difference between a few bushwhackers trying to capture a stronghold and a well organized army.

Let us then be up and doing. If we can succeed with our University, and we are doing better than we expected in so short a time, we will have quite a little army of young, stalwart soldiers who will become captains, lieutenants and generals in our future grand march to victory. Many who are not located in Silverton can not realize that we already have over twenty-five young men and women training their intellects here now in the Liberal University for the great contest between truth and error, between go(o)d and (d)evil, between science and superstition, between right and wrong.

If the Secularists will now see to it that their lecturers are men and women who are without reproach, if they will continue and persevere in the organization of Secular Sunday schools and churches, if they will place the Liberal University in a position to do its best work, there will be the greatest and best revival that the world has ever seen and the old false creeds will be crushed and their damning influence be felt no more forever.

## A Mistaken Friend.

The following letter from a christian lady shows how our work for humanity is viewed by those who have not yet come into the glad light of Secularism.

LENNOX, S. D., Feb. 18, 1897.—To the Editor: We have been receiving your little paper entitled "TORCH OF REASON" for some time. I earnestly request that it be discontinued at once. The paper has been coming to Oral Shank. I think it a perfect shame that such a paper be sent to a child. I think you must never have felt that God was your Saviour and felt his love in your heart or you never could publish a paper of this kind. Hoping and praying that you may be led to Christ.

I am yours truly,

ELSIE SHANK.

In regard to the charge of sending our paper to a child, we plead ignorance. Some friend of the Shanks subscribed for the TORCH and ordered it sent, and we were

not aware that the one receiving our "little paper" was too young to begin studying the truth. The writer makes another mistake when she supposes that we never have felt that God was our Saviour. We have felt just that way, but we now realize that we were victims of a deceitful clergy, who taking advantage of our youth, had forced upon us this foolish supernatural nonsense instead of teaching us to train our faculties and investigate for ourselves.

We supposed at one time that we felt God's love in our hearts, but after discovering that the heart is not the seat of the emotions we have concluded that it was "all in our minds."

We now have the love of humanity instead of love or fear for mythical beings, and this is the reason we publish a paper of this kind. We hope that the friends of Secularism will come to our aid and help us lead our poor deceived brothers and sisters to the light. Let us free them from the narrow, exclusive religion of hate. Let us teach them that the mumbling of useless prayers is a relic of our heathen ancestors and that a noble character should be considered man's highest ideal.

## Which is the Most Important?

In the Christian Herald of Feb. 24 there is a long article appealing for money to aid the natives of India. The first paragraph of the article is as follows:

"Recent reports from India encourage the hope that if the people can be carried over the next four months, the most terrible of the suffering will be alleviated. Rain has fallen over the greater part of the Punjab, and the prospects of crops in the Central Provinces, Behar and the North-west Provinces, is 'fair to good.' How many of the poor creatures will be alive to reap the crops in the latter part of June depends on the people of Christendom. They can be kept alive only by liberal contributions reaching them through the missionaries who know their extremity and whose hearts are aching to give them food"

The writer of this appeal then gives several examples of those who had given money to aid these poor Hindoos. Poor people who could not afford to give, gave in the name of their saviour. A poor working girl adds her mite (\$1.) and even the home for the Incurables, Brooklyn, N. Y. sent six dollars "with the prayer (which must enter the heart of the compassionate saviour), that god will stir up the hearts of people to give of their abundance to the distressed nation."

The article ends with an account of some little children who had saved \$2.87 to pay for an easter treat but on hearing about the

poor starving people across the ocean sent it to god's servants to be forwarded to the "ten missionaries" in India who will, we suppose, distribute it where it will do the most good. These ten missionaries received five thousand dollars last week and this week's Herald published a list which shows that the poor people of this country have sent away two thousand six hundred and thirteen dollars and sixty two cents more and that there are several hundred others whose gifts have not yet been acknowledged.

In order to touch the feelings of sympathetic people the article is illustrated with a picture showing six of the nearly naked, starving natives begging by the road side. The picture is a very sad one. The long gaunt arms are outstretched with the palms open to receive help and one not stopping to think would naturally want to drop any money he had handy right into that bony palm, but if one stops to think a little he begins to realize that the money goes into fat palms before it gets there and that there are many bony ones this side of India.

When we think of the time, the labor, the wealth that is squandered in sending bibles and preachers to save (?) the souls (?) of these natives of India when we have with us an amount of vice and crime that is perfectly appalling and that every cent taken out of this country by these missionaries causes our already suffering people to suffer more, and when we realize that according to their own doctrine they could, if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, remove all this mountain of suffering by prayer, it makes us feel as though there is much to be done. How long shall these self appointed agents drain our people of their substance and compel us to support jails, asylums and the many other costly institutions that always follow in the wake of poverty?

We feel sorry that the poor heathen are starving, but we feel more sorry that many of our own people are almost insane with a desire to work and no work to be found. We feel sorry that we are not able to civilize the whole world, but as long as one little boy or girl of America is hungry or being brought up in ignorance and crime, we should be very careful how we rob the poor working people of this country to save the heathen, in order to get a chance to raise other thousands to send bibles and missionaries to save their imaginary souls from an imaginary hell, and as long as we haven't better statesmen than the so-called law makers of Oregon, we had better build schools that our country be not entirely bankrupt and our own citizens be obliged to sit by the roadside and stretch a bony palm toward an insolvent government.