

Torch of Reason

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Selfishness.

There seems to be two kinds of selfishness. One kind excludes every one except one's self, but although seeking one's own betterment this kind of selfishness destroys the very thing for which the victim is in search—happiness. This is a very serious matter, as it not only affects us individually but also as a people—as a race.

The man who said that "the world is dying of selfishness" meant this kind of selfishness and if we will take the pains to look around us and look into our own lives, we will see that the most prolific cause of the world's misery is this narrow, self-centering fellow-excluding attribute of the human mind. It spoils every thing that is good. Public speakers, teachers, officers and workers of all classes many times lose the opportunity of bringing about great reforms because they have not been trained in youth to yield their own comfort, or gain, for the good of the majority and so when the time comes, as it always does, for the worker to choose between some self gratification and the good that he might do by sacrificing, he yields to the short-lived pleasure and the world sustains the loss.

It might be said that life is short and if we do not make the most of it, blow our horn, look out for number one, etc., we will get left; but here comes in the legitimate kind of selfishness if it may be called such. Happiness is what every one wants and if it gives us the greater amount of happiness to exclude the welfare of others in our plans then it might be said to be better, but it does not. Our permanent happiness depends upon the happiness of others and if we are wise in our selfishness we will forego short-lived pleasure if necessary in order to make those around us happy.

Too high a value has been placed on one human life any way. If instead of being taught that our own individual happiness here and hereafter are the paramount concern of our lives, we had been taught that selfishly gaining wealth,

notoriety and at last a home in heaven, or any of the favorite phantoms that are being followed, were nothing in comparison with the good that we may do to this and coming generations by yielding our own petty pleasures and wisely planning to make the world better for our having lived, we would all now be enjoying the immeasurable fruits of the rightly applied energy that has been wasted. Secularists are selfish if by that we mean that we are seeking happiness, but our selfishness includes all mankind and we will live and die happy if we can do something to quench the fires of the selfishly developed torments that afflict the world.

To illustrate the vast difference between these two kinds of selfishness let us suppose that two persons are very desirous of making money. A shallow thinker might suppose that both are alike selfish, but one may be anxious to buy something for his own exclusive pleasure while the other may wish to buy a library and present it to the city in which he lives for the good it will do. So it is with our force of Secular workers. We hope in the next few months to raise thousands of dollars, not for any narrow, selfish motive but that we may have the indescribable happiness that comes from knowing that we have been instrumental in flooding the whole earth with the light from the dawn of a happier day.

The Tramp and the Preacher.

The tramp is a nuisance, but on account of the hard times, labor-saving machinery throwing men out of work, and the natural roving disposition, coupled with weak mental powers, inherited by some people, there seems to be some sort of an excuse for these poor unfortunates. These beggars, and they are nothing more or less, do some harm, but their actions are not apt to be imitated by the young, nor are their erroneous ideas apt to recommend themselves to any one. But there is a class which seems to combine all the elements of a perfect nuisance. They influence the people, and especially the young, and instill into their minds some of the most absurd and injurious ideas that could possibly be taught. Some places in our country seem almost free from tramps, but not so with these other nuisances. They are organized in such a way that if a place will not support them they assist each other from the fruits garnered from other fields. They tell pitiful stories and act out death-bed scenes to frighten people into doing what they want them to. The height of absurdity seems to be reached however when they pretend to know about a future life and a god, and a god's son, and angels, and a devil. O, how silly

it all is! And just think how these pretenders differ in opinion on very important parts of their story. Some claim that those who have made mistakes here are going to a place of torment. Others claim that there is no hell but there is a heaven. One class holds that the others are children of the devil, while at the same time they use almost the same methods in duping the people. One class claims that Jesus is soon to come back to earth and the others pooh pooh the idea. And all this comes from foolishly taking an unproven, unreasonable theory for a basis, and teaching it as the truth.

It is difficult to tell which is harder to get rid of the tramp or the priest and preacher. If the tramps could in some way be cleaned up and set to work at something they would enjoy, giving them plenty of time and opportunity to improve themselves, the country would gain not only the product of their labor but also save the total loss of their support. How this is to be done we will leave to the political economists, but we wish to venture a suggestion in regard to the preachers.

Let every business man in the country support only such institutions as he honestly believes in. Let not one nickel go into the hat just for the sake of popularity, and the preachers' business will wither and they will suddenly discover that they never did believe all those fish stories any way, and will fit themselves for Secular lecturers. What a gain this would be to the world. Just think how much good could be done if all the churches would become lecture halls where one could listen to a good scientific or moral lecture every Sunday. If these lectures were free from superstition and presumption, everybody would go and gladly learn the great lessons of life that all need so much.

Fellow gladiators in the accursed arena of a superstitious age, hark! hear ye yon fanatic roaring in his pulpit? 'Tis six days since he has had an opportunity to murder reason, set at naught the great discoveries of science so dearly purchased by the labors and blood of our forefathers, and ruin the weak and defenseless, by frightening and forcing them into becoming slaves of an imaginary, foreign power; but Sundays he breaks his fast and a dainty meal do our youths make for these descendants of the Inquisition.

If ye are beasts, then stand here like fat oxen waiting for the butcher's knife! If ye are lovers of truth and liberty, join our ranks! Strike down your guard of prejudice, gain the mountain passes of respect and there do noble work, as did our sires when they fought for political and religious freedom.

Is Americanism dead? Is the old love of liberty frozen in your

veins that you crouch and cower like a belabored hound beneath the preacher's lash? O, brothers! sisters! we must work. Let us work for Humanity! Let us fight every evil! And when we die, let it be under the clear sky, free from every cloud of superstition, by the bright waters of religious freedom, in noble, honorable peace.

Throw Off the Yoke.

A Christian who never hears any public lectures against superstition, who never reads a book unless it is orthodox, and who gets mad as soon as a word is said against his belief, should not be expected to be broad and liberal in his views.

What Secularists should do is to make lectures on Secularism very numerous; they should spread their literature everywhere; they should study to present their ideas without offense and as true as truth is better than a lie, the old ideas will crumble to decay and truth will make us free. It is sometimes a wonder to us that there is as much freethought in the world as there is, for the books that have been forced upon us when we were helpless children have been all one-sided. But few people realize what a stupendous crime is committed by our educators when they cram the young unfortified minds with such religious trash as may be found in our school readers.

If we knew that there is a God, if we were sure that the Bible is of more authority than the koran, if we knew that Jesus Christ is the son of a god, if we knew that there is a life after death, then it would be well to teach the young people these things as facts, but no man knows these things to be true, and it is a crime to teach them as facts.

Read the following extract from a school reader, and, after calling to mind the fact that this is only one out of many fully as absurd, see if you are not very well pleased with the advance that Freethought is making:

"THE UNBELIEVER."

"I pity the unbeliever—one who can gaze upon the grandeur, and glory, and beauty of the natural universe, and behold not the touches of his finger, who is over, and with, and above all; from my very heart I do commiserate his condition.

"The unbeliever!—one whose intellect the light of revelation never penetrated; who can gaze upon the sun, and moon, and stars, and upon the unfading and imperishable sky, spread out so magnificently above him, and say all this is the work of chance?

"The heart of such a being is a dreary and cheerless void. In him, mind—the god-like gift of intellect—is debased, destroyed; all is dark—a fearful chaotic labyrinth, rayless, cheerless, hopeless. No

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