

"Soft Words Turneth Away Wrath."

Editor Torch of Reason:

The late discussion between yourselves and Mr. Harnish in your issue of April 29th gives evidences of some differences in the ranks of co-workers. For, that Spiritualists and Secularists are co-workers up to a given point goes without saying, and that they should continue to co-operate up to the "parting of the ways" ought to require no arguments.

It is said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and that I may enjoy that blessing is the hope and incentive of this paper.

Secularism is defined by G. J. Holyoake thus: "That which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point as the immediate duty of life—which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality, apart from atheism, theism, or the Bible—which selects as its method of procedure the promotion of human improvement by material means and proposes these positive agreements as the common bond of union to all who would regulate life by reason, and ennoble it by service."

There is no hint here of a future life, but all effort is to be directed to the highest development and attainments of this life.

Up to this point every progressive Spiritualist can join hands and give help, for they and we all believe that he who stands at the head of his class when "school closes" here, enters "over there"—provided there be an "over there"—with the same high standing and honors, and takes rank accordingly. True, the Spiritualist will argue, that to stand at the head one must have communion with the other world before he goes over, but it must be remembered that Secularists hold to the doctrine of "one world at a time," although this doctrine does not or should not deny the possibility of another. It is equally absurd to deny or affirm in the absence of evidence. But in the mind of every Secularist there is room for the thought, that since there is always a tomorrow as long as this life lasts, his acts should be such today as to cause no blush of shame tomorrow; no regrets, no heartaches, no headaches, nothing but beautiful and refreshing memories. Then, if in the greatness and grandness of nature's law, there is after our last sleep here a more beautiful and enduring tomorrow—the possession of a well-stored mind, the consciousness of a well-filled and rounded life here, assures him recognition, and a life of usefulness and happiness there.

Spiritualists claim to be able to see across the border land and catch glimpses and hear voices of those who have passed the change we call death; and their teachings

and preachings are almost exclusively along this line.

Putting these things together, standing aloof from both sides, and looking at them without prejudice, it is easy to see why a Secular convention should place restrictions upon the employing of lecturers who teach the doctrine of a future life, without malice aforethought or any intention of "slapping" anybody, and I am disposed to believe that no slap was intended.

Personally I would have no objection to employing a Spiritualist to lecture on Secularism if he would avoid in his lectures all references to a future life.

Here, probably, lies the difficulty for while the Spiritualist is entirely compatible with the Secularist upon the affairs of this life, and as against orthodoxy, he is extremely fond of his own particularism and can hardly avoid placing that first as the uppermost of all isms. In this wise he may have done the secular cause harm as such without intending to do so; and now finds restrictions placed upon him.

It is a question in my mind, if the Secular society would not employ any good moral temperate man or woman who would agree to conform to the rule in his speeches, while in the service of the society, of one world at a time.

For certainly no Secularist pretends to teach that there is no future life. He may believe there is none, but he is unwise if he teaches there is none, until he can bring the proof. He does not know that this life is all, any more than the Spiritualist knows there is another life, and to be consistent he must teach as truth only that which he knows to be true.

As a Secularist I say to my brother Spiritualist, prove to me the truth of your teachings and I accept them as a part of Secularism; for if my relatives and friends do live again and can and do come back to me here, then, in so far as their lives come into mine, and affect me here, the future life becomes a part of this life. It is the duty of all Secularists to investigate all phenomena and accept as true whatever the phenomena reveal.

The burden of proof in the matter of a future life lies with the Spiritualist, but, the Secularist must not condemn until he brings the proof.

If there is a future life it is a natural fact and as such may be capable of demonstration, and no doubt every Secularist in the land would greet the demonstration with applause and accept the fact as the most important one man has discovered. Certainly the most confirmed materialist on earth would welcome another life, and receive its demonstration as the happiest moment of this life. Therefore let the Spiritualists go on searching after the proofs. Let

him if he will have houses and appliances made according to "instructions from the spirit world" that will put him in rapport with the spirit world, and make the best possible conditions for communications and if possible bring phenomena that shall prove beyond question a future existence.

But, just now the Secularists of Oregon are building a University, and its success will be an aid to all progressive societies of the state. Its success will be the beginning of other successes along the same line, and we cannot afford to quarrel over natural differences.

The "signs of the times" all point to the necessity of action; inertia on the part of progressive thinkers now may be the lasting regret of the future.

It should never be forgotten that the preachers of today are hirelings, that they work for pay; that their positions and their pay depend upon their abilities to hold the people; perhaps to coerce them into orthodoxy. The word "coerce" is hardly too strong, for when our citizens as employees feel that their positions as such depend upon their assent to orthodoxy, and their families are dependent upon those positions, are they not all but coerced to accept, at least to appear to accept, the opinions of those who would employ them? Time and again have I heard it preached that temporal prosperity depend upon joining the church. This is but an indirect way of saying to a young man, "to be popular now, you must join the church." Everywhere it is said without reserve, if you want to succeed as a doctor or a lawyer, as a teacher, a dentist, as any professional man—join the church. It is popular and it pays.

What a comment upon the Christian religion! What a reflection to a conscientious minister, that to maintain his position and salary he must go on, day by day, year by year, making hypocrites. Still, he too has chosen a profession, and expects it to yield him an income sufficient to maintain himself and family, and what can he do? If he would harbor an honest doubt; if in reading some of the thousands of impossible things that abound in the Bible, his mind brightens up a little and he says, "That cannot be," the next instant his thoughts turn upon his own dependent position, and a renewed "faith" (?) springs up where else the honest doubt would grow, and he exclaims, "Perish the thought."

But what is the lesson this must teach us? Can anything be plainer than that as long as this condition compasses us about, we must expect from the clergy of this once free country every effort to get God in the Constitution, to have enacted stringent Sunday laws, to even stop the issuance of Sunday papers, and in fact, and in short, to so tie up

the people of this country and of the world that everybody will have to go to church, and perhaps eventually, belong to the church?

It is not too much to expect that there will not only be a union of church and state, but that the church will swallow up the state. In nearly all the religious journals of the day we see advocated a union of churches. This is what this country does not want, for a union of churches will be a long step towards union of church and state, and the slavery of half of mankind.

Let it echo and re-echo down the "corridors of time" that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and let every progressive thinker of whatever clan or clime set those words in "letters of living light" to be his "pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night," for "verily, I say unto you," there is work to do.

Let the University be built, and let its benign influence go forth, and spread, and the good work of freedom go on everywhere until Secularism shall become popular.

And note the difference in the popularity of orthodoxy and free thought. A miniature picture of the former I have given, the grandeur of the latter let brighter men paint if they can. But it is worth something to us all to feel that our labors may help to bring about a condition in which no man's calling will be effected by his opinions when his uprightness, and intelligence will be his passport in ail society, when his fitness by nature and acquirements, rather than his church "letter," will open the road to fortune or to fame.

A. A. L.

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