

Torch of Reason

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J. E. Hosmer, Editor
P. W. Geer, Manager

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Bits of Experience

Having been both orthodox and Secular we have met both classes of people and thus know from experience which class is the better; at least we have learned what class seems better to us and we think we understand the reasons.

The Christians think that they are children of God and having an infallible father are very set in their way and become very bigoted, narrow and oftentimes ungenerous and uncompromising. In fact in our experience with Christians in business, we have found them far more tricky and false to their trusts than most Infidels. Of course Christians will claim that such are not Christians but we are dealing now with Christians as a class. At one time a very pious church member in good standing exchanged property with an old gentleman. The bargain was all made; the old gentleman was ready to move; he had sold other property and been to quite an expense but he found he had put too much confidence in a Christian. The worst trick we've ever had played on us, was by a Christian when we were Christians ourselves. We were young and foolish and he was old and cunning. Perhaps our experience is an exception, but, honest true, the main active Christians in the different localities in which we have lived have turned out to be the worst frauds. We think now of Deacon S— who was one of the leading spirits for years in an active M. E. church, and who was detected in entering another man's chamber through a back window late at night. His most excellent wife applied for a divorce and it was granted. Another member of the same church

was tried and found wanting. Another was one of the most penurious, close-fisted men you ever saw and in this way became quite wealthy and was feared if not loved by all. Other members of this church had been very bad citizens during their lives but had joined the church and prayed and sniffled and talked about their experiences with the devil in a way that makes even some Christians "tired."

In the same city the church just across the way was presided over by a minister who loaned money on the bonus plan and was known to tell a man who was in a very "tight pinch" that he could make him (the preacher) a little present if he chose, after the poor fellow had paid the highest legal rate of interest as well as a big bonus. Another minister, who came after this one, left town in the night for fear of a mob as he had been too free with the young ladies of his "charge." In the same city we were told that a Catholic priest was invited to leave town for similar reasons and he went. If we were asked today to search for a mean, hypocritical, grasping, self-righteous pretender we would not neglect to go to the orthodox churches. In the same city with those described above, the very best men, those who make no pretensions, but who are kind and generous, and progressive are not orthodox. There are Christians who are good but they are those who say little about their religion and practice Secularism, and it is an honest fact that the best people that we have ever met are Secularists. There is nothing small about a real Secularist. Their ideas are broad. They are kind, honest, free to learn, generous and look upon trouble and the faults of others in a philosophical way. They do not try to scare people but their society gives one a sense of confidence, trust and happiness that is altogether lacking with the devotees of Jehovah. It has not been long since we left the orthodox ranks and we feel weak even as the grub when it has first burst the old integuments asunder and is trying to assume its new habiliments. The only excuse we have for having been Christian is our environment and that we were young, foolish grubs. We now feel that we have much better surroundings and much good may yet come to us. O, for a world of real true Secularists! Let us work.

Every human being seems to have a bad man and a good man within himself, as the old Indian says, and if we learn to allow the good man, that is our higher impulses, to control us, we may do much good before giving up our banner of Freethought to other hands. "No more important duty can be urged upon those who are entering the great theater of life than the simple loyalty to their best convictions."

Be Not Deceived.

The arguments in favor of the most absurd and ridiculous doctrines may deceive good and well-meaning people, if these arguments are given by experts under right conditions. To endeavor to save some who might fall into what to us seems one of the worst evils that could possibly befall our race, and one that is doing the work of Secularism much damage, do we write this short editorial, not as an argument, but as a suggestion and a warning.

There are parties who claim to be the only true Liberals who are advocating and sending out what to many, on account of their unhappy condition, seems to be plausible arguments in favor of ideas that, if adopted, would ruin our homes, our love and respect and our civilization itself. These writings come headed and clothed with language calculated to deceive the young and those who wish to justify their own mistakes. Under the head of "social freedom," "variety in love," "free love," etc., they advocate doctrines that would simply bring us back to the level of the brute. They even advocate the uselessness of wearing clothes, excepting for protection from the weather, and that all should learn to feel no shame in going as naked as the lowest savage. A man or woman who has any ability to use should be careful not to throw it away, or be led into error by such trash. The world needs our help to build up a higher civilization and happier homes, and to emancipate the slaves of priestcraft on the one side and the slaves of licentiousness and crime on the other. And think you that we can do this by upholding or catering to such retrogressive doctrines as these?

There is one thing of which we are very sorry indeed, and that is the deceit that has been taught to the children of parents who advocate these doctrines. Some of these people have been drilled in deceit until they conceive it to be a virtue, and an unsuspecting person may associate with them and not know that they are of that belief, but be subjected to a small dose at a time, as the crafty free-love priest or doctor may think his patient able to assimilate it. This deceit must be wrong, and we who are trying to build up Secular churches should be careful to have lecturers and teachers define their position on this subject before taking too much stock in their work. We have no ill will toward those holding these ideas; we believe in free speech and free press, but we also believe that this promiscuous doctrine is an extreme that would be far worse than the evils that it aims to correct, and would lead us back into the dark, degenerate state of barbarism. We think that most of these people are sincere and some of them are

not ashamed of their belief. Their numbers are growing, but the Christian papers seem to ignore the subject almost entirely, and whenever any reference is made to it, all Infidels are classed in with this "bad lot." Most of the Freethought papers seem to be afraid to condemn it, and some, perhaps, lean that way themselves; but we are in this work for the good we can do, and we wish that every Freethought journal and lecturer would be frank and open and let their readers and hearers know just where they stand. Then we can classify ourselves and thus become homogeneous enough to organize and sustain societies that will rapidly convert the world from its crime and superstition to justice and truth.

Much Work to be Done.

What to us is ancient was modern at one time, and people thought the same of their then modern ways as many do of ours, and anyone who tried to reform what seemed radically wrong were called by hard names, even as the crank is in our time; but looking back upon the crude ways of antiquity, we wonder how they could have thought their ways were all right, and there is no doubt that in twenty-five years people will look at some of our modern methods and systems as very crude indeed. Our business is to examine our present methods and as far as lies within our power, change them to better ways, and thus hasten the evolution to a higher life. Some are willing to let things just take their natural course, as they call it, and peg along in the old ways, but they do not realize the physical and mental suffering that is going on in the world on account of the crude methods and ideas of our modern civilization.

Baldwin says: "Our favorite systems, methods, and appliances will seem crude. Marvelous as has been the progress, especially during the last half century, still grander and vaster developments await well-directed effort. Today the masses of our race are barbarians. In the most enlightened of nations the millions are but semi-barbarous. Our mission is the elevation of the race. Stupendous work! Error is fleeting, truth endures. In so far as we reach truth, we build for the future. Truth alone benefits man. He is the greatest benefactor who eradicates most error and establishes most truth."

Many of our present systems remain only because of the willingness of the people to blindly trust instead of investigating. It is easier to put one's self into the hands of a priest, a doctor or a politician than it is to study, and so we have ALLOWED a priesthood to grow up along the lines of religion, medicine and law; and do you suppose that the priests are going to admit that they have been radically