

Torch of Reason

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Prayer.

The most ignorant performance we have heard of in some time is the union prayermeeting which was held in Oaksdale, Washington, a few days ago. There was much grain down in that locality and God didn't seem to realize that the water that was below the firmament was wet and coming down, thus spoiling thousands of bushels of wheat that was up to 98 cents and still on the raise; so the good Christians concluded to jog the old fellow's memory by a good old-fashioned prayermeeting. The words of the father's eldest son that they should go into the closet wasn't heeded this time. You see, the dear old Santa Claus fellow is getting so feeble that he can't see into closets as he used to and it is necessary to talk right out loud in meeting. Great times these! The women of Oaksdale didn't "keep silent in the Churches," as Saint Paul thought was the proper thing for "old ribs" to do but they also used all their influence with Jehovah to save the 98-cent wheat from the wet water that was coming from below the firmament.

But the important question is whether the rain ceased or not. Of course it would stop sooner or later as it always does. But did God turn the stopcock as soon as he was notified of the trouble. No, and perhaps the reason is that a good man up in the mountains of Oregon needed water to run his sawmill. The small stream on which the mill is located was almost dry and this good man wanted to get out a little more lumber for the Liberal University and as God loves people who mind their own business he just concluded he'd send rain enough to raise the creek and let

those noisy Christians know that he don't approve of their talking to him right out in public when his boy, that is fully as old as his father, told them to go into their closets when they had any business to transact with his masculine parent.

We can't help thinking that God made a mistake, however, for he seems to have overlooked the fact that thousands and thousands of dollars worth of hops would be spoiled by his foolish notion of punishing a few fanatical Christians for not obeying his only begotten Jewish offspring. What difference could it possibly make with the boy, now that he has gone to his home in the sky and is having a good time with the angels, whether they prayed in their closets or not? And just think of the fine lager beer that "cheereth the heart of the dutchman," that will be cut off if the hops are not saved. But then again, perhaps the governor of the skies happened to think that one of his old-time friends said something about strong drink being raging, and concluded that the hop lice he had sent wasn't quite sufficient to spoil the Willamette crop and so let it pour. It is clearing up now, which again complicates the matter and with feelings of meekness (this may help us to inherit the earth) we give it up and conclude that we'll let God run his own business. We'll take what comes, let it be rain or hail, good crops or poor crops, the lies of our enemies, or a liberal donation to our Secular University.

Look in The Glass.

Although one may be perfect in wanting to do just right, yet no one is perfect; but if we wish to attain to the highest degree of perfection that we are capable of as Dr. Franklin tried, it might be a good plan to not only examine our thoughts with our mind's eye occasionally but also to look at ourselves in a good mirror once in awhile. Look at your forehead. Is it broad or narrow? Is it very low and sloping? What do the best authorities on this subject say in regard to your kind of a forehead? What does your experience with yourself say? Look at your nose. Is it wide and flat and are your lips thick and protruding? Have you anything to guard against in regard to what scientists say about the nose and lips? Have you a large, heavy jaw? Are you stubborn? What do your eyes say? How is your temper? Self-examination may be made a very profitable investment of the time used, provided we have the power to apply the knowledge thus gained; and what a great help parents and teachers may be to the children if they will take a little thought of their future and study their capabilities and natural weaknesses. The only angels we know anything about are good people. Let us do all we can to help ourselves and the boys and girls to become messengers of good.

The Highest Types.

The words Liberal, Freethinker, Infidel and Secularist are used many times as synonyms, but this is erroneous for there is a great difference in their meaning. There are many good Freethinkers, but the fact that a man has "no strings on his thoughts" does not necessarily make him a good man. His thoughts may be free but far from being true, beautiful or good. This is also true of an Infidel. Disbelief in the Christian religion does not necessarily make one good nor bad. Some of the meanest men—men who have the very lowest, meanest thoughts possible, are Infidels and hate the Christian church more for the good there is in it than for its evil, superstitious teachings; but there are people who are Freethinkers, Infidels and Liberals who are honest, kind, and interested in their fellowmen as individuals and as a race. These are Secularists.

A true Secularist is willing that all should think as they choose without persecution but he is not liberal to that extent that he is willing that his friends (all men are included in his friendship) should think evil or remain in darkness to their own and the world's detriment. Although liberal, a Secularist will never be heard to say, "if people will let me alone, they may believe as they choose." Secularists do not believe in letting things alone that are evil and preventing the happiness that may be enjoyed by the use of reason and taking thought for the morrow. In fact, the genuine Secularist is a reformer of reformers and we hope and believe that the words Liberalism, Freethought and Infidelity may be used more properly, and that we may have more occasion to use the word which includes all of these and much more. If we can become Secularists we will receive the reward that always goes with every upward step on nature's great ladder of evolution and that is the ability to organize and stay organized. Liberal, Freethinker, Infidel—these are too heterogeneous to do good work, but take from these their highest types and the extractions are homogeneous and of the best possible material out of which to form the advance guard of the human race.

Deception.

There are so many different ways of deceiving people that one almost loses confidence in everybody and everything; but one extreme evil should not drive us to another extreme that may become as great an evil. The right thing to do in selecting the objects of our confidence is to be careful and prove them; then, after being thoroughly satisfied, we should throw away all suspicion, that the companionship

may be complete. There are people who have that degree of trust in each other that nothing but absolute proof would cause even the least shadow of distrust. This state of honor and trust should exist between all men. It is possible for it to exist and it is not as far away as some suppose, for when the grand work of Secularism gets fully underway it is going to accomplish something better than the miracles of "holy writ."

A few people are beginning to catch the thought that the religion "to do good" means something, and as soon as a few people get in dead earnest about this matter it will become contagious and grow rapidly. The very first thing one should do is to eliminate all deception from his or her character, for when the average person is deceived a few times by those pretending to be Secularists, they lose confidence, and cannot do the grand work they might have done; and as we said before, there are so many ways of being deceived that one must be continually on his guard. If we are thrown into the society of a person it is natural that an interchange of ideas will take place. Now if one is deceptive he withholds some of his ideas until he learns what the other's ideas are and then shapes his deceptive medicine to suit the patient. Suppose, for instance, that one was radically opposed to the free love doctrine, and the other finding this out, although a radical free lover, very nicely avoids the issue and deceives his friend by saying that he believes just as Ingersoll does on the subject. Now this may be true, but it is not the whole truth, for although the deceiver believes just as Ingersoll does, he believes and practices things that Ingersoll scorns. So our work demands much thought to be able to detect mere selfish deceivers from those who honestly have the cause of Secularism at heart, and are frank and open advocates of the true principles of progress.

We believe in freethought and hold that everyone should be given a hearing, but we do not believe in deception, and our work now demands that the old blocks be removed from the wheels of our chariot of progress. "Knowledge is power," let us have a knowledge of each other and the mistakes of the past will be avoided. With prejudice toward none and charity for all, we pray you to help in the grand work of securing for the world the priceless jewel of simple honesty.

Friends of Secularism, you must remember that we have been very bold in advocating what we believe Secularism means, and therefore we have enemies who would be our friends had we been willing to go into the "soft soap" business. We need the help and encouragement of every true Secularist.