

The Liberal University.

C. Elton Blanchard in Freethought Magazine.

The Freethinkers of the United States may congratulate themselves that one state in the Union has courage and interest sufficient to undertake the establishment of an institution of learning which may not only from the first, but throughout its whole career, serve humanity, entirely free from religious superstition and creed; that one organization of liberal-minded men, the Oregon State Secular Union, has taken the first step in a work that good men the world over should encourage and commend.

When Stephen Girard willed several million dollars to the founding of a college under the condition that no minister, missionary or priest should ever visit the institution, he doubtless surprised the ecclesiastical world. Mr. Girard would be more surprised should he know that Christian authorities now control the college; that theology is taught and has a chapel where Christian services are conducted therein. Thus orthodoxy follows the same old philosophy, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ."

Now, as in the past, the Christian can ask with no little force: "What excuse had Stephen Girard to make such narrow-minded provisions in his will? Have not colleges and schools been founded by the Christian world as fast as they are needed? Who has led in education, in philanthropy, in reform, and who are leading today? Have priests and ministers been such enemies of the young that they must be prohibited from setting foot on a proposed college campus?"

These same men can now turn to the Liberal University movement, asking: "Has the country no schools and colleges doing good enough work to suit the Infidels? Has Oregon no state colleges, no non-sectarian schools, to say nothing of several denominational schools, that satisfy the needs of that sparsely settled country? What justifies this so-called sacrifice to a cause, or rather a supposed cause; this struggle, work and worry to found a Liberal University (emphasis on the word Liberal)—this agitation up and down the land about human need, etc.—what justifies it?"

Even Liberals will, without thinking, feel inclined to judge the attempt on the part of the Oregon State Secular Union as uncalled for, and visionary. It is a fact to deplore that Freethought is anarchistic in its tendency. Its disciples too often refuse to make sacrifice or to labor that others may be free and intelligent as themselves. They feel as if it was a battle for the individual alone, and if a man is fool enough to submit to priestcraft and church burdens, let him

submit! I want my fellowmen to let me alone and I will let them alone. This is the reasoning.

Dogmatic faith, however, and fear of hell, have made zealots, and zealots, in adding stars to the heavenly diadems, have ground the masses to found colleges, hospitals and other institutions of an ethical character. Now that science has largely driven out dogmatism, the colleges under church control are doubtless doing the race as much, or nearly as much, good as if no pretention of Christian faith was made.

It will be confessed by all thinking men, Christian or Liberal, that the teaching of the Christian faith will sooner or later be entirely eliminated from all institutions of learning and churches will evolutionize into places of social and ethical culture. Dogmatic faith is dying. Only about one-third of our population are communicants in all the twenty-one protestant denominations and the Catholic church combined. A large part of these are merely members for other reasons than that they have faith and actual belief in the dogmatic creed they profess as members. Why then undertake at this time such a work as the Liberals of Oregon have undertaken, the founding of a Liberal University?

We are thus prepared by these few words of introduction, to appreciate the defense I am about to make for the new college. Natural evolution is retarded by creedism. Past history, such as the Reformation, the story of the Puritans, Separatists, Quakers, etc., has proven that retarded evolution culminates in catastrophe. Just as the waters of the river may be held back by the ice-jam until at last the great force thus generated sweeps everything before it, so mankind, if held back in its natural development and progress by some unnatural obstruction, will at last break away, and usually with loss of life and widespread suffering and sorrow. The A. P. A. and other every-day indications tell the thoughtful man that such obstructions now impede our progress.

If the clergy develops a man who dares to teach disregard for dogma, and we have seen them coming to the surface here and there of late, the "powers that be" punish the bold fellow by trial for heresy, blasphemy or in some other effective manner silence the unruly clerical.

It now becomes the duty of every Freethinker to become constructive. We have seen too much time wasted in contention and idle bickering. The time has come to demonstrate to the world that education, culture and civilization are not results of Christianity, but came in spite of it. We should now show the church that one college can be conducted

successfully with no bibles, prayer-books or confessions of faith laid in its cornerstone.

How easy it would be if all men were awake to the importance of such a demonstration. In the way of contrast, remembering that one-third only of our population are confessors of faith, which portion of course includes a large per cent of hypocrites, while two-thirds are not willing to subscribe to the creed of any church, it may seem strange that the one-third of Christian confessors support about 1,500 religious newspapers, while the non-confessing two-thirds support eight Freethought papers, and these are often in great need of funds, if the urgent calls for subscriptions past due is any indication.

I feel safe in saying that 20,000,000 is not a large estimate of the number of able men and women who are rejectors of dogmatic faith, and who could support Liberal papers. Suppose each should give the very small sum of one dollar a year to the Liberal University, it would mean only the value of a postage stamp a week, half the price of a poor cigar, half the cost of a drink of beer—a trifle—yet if sent each year in the small sum of one dollar no school in the world could equal the Liberal University at Silverton, Oregon. Leland Stanford University, or any other, could not compare for worth and greatness with it. The Christian church demands one-tenth of our income as belonging to the Lord. Is Freethought asking very much when it asks for two pennies a week for the Liberal University? A volunteer does not wait until an army of a certain size is in the field, nor does a true Liberal wait before doing his part, until somebody else has given a certain amount. The ground for the first building for the university is being broken. Would it not be a satisfaction to know that in the cornerstone of this first building, among others, your name could be found as one who had given one dollar, five dollars, one hundred dollars, or whatever sum your means allowed? Is it not worth our while to be able to point to at least one successful college wherein no dogma is taught, and where Christianity is studied, just as Buddhism or any other religion, for whatever good it may contain?

I understand that Silverton people are heartily interested in the coming university, and one of its respected citizens, Mr. John Hicks, Silverton, Oregon, is the proper person to whom your "tithe" should be sent.* I am also satisfied that the men who are giving their time and energy to the founding of this school, and sacrificing the best years

* The above was written by Mr. Blanchard before the change of administration last June, and from this time on all communications, donations, etc., should be sent to the Liberal University Company.

of their lives, and I venture with no financial results that would tempt even a dry goods clerk to exchange places for that reason, are most worthy of and fitted for the duties that the Oregon State Secular Union has assigned them. I said something about sacrifice, but I am certain that these men, as would any man with the religion of humanity in his heart, count it a pleasure to work for a cause so dear to us.

If this college can be successfully founded, and if others in the different states follow, men will rapidly gain courage to be free. Hypocrites hate their hypocrisy. Many a deacon gets up to pray cursing himself for being too much a coward to assert his real convictions. Such a movement will save the country from a crisis which will surely come if reason is much longer outraged.

The Liberal University is started. Its organization is perfected. The rest is growth, now the tree is planted. The ground is opened for the foundation of the new building. The foundation principle of the college is to know law. Science, as the search for this truth, will be taught within its walls. The guide—the only safe one—is Reason, and the chief assistant is Experience.

To enumerate in brief then:

We need the Liberal University to prove to the world that men can be educated, cultured and progressive without dogma.

We need it to hasten the elimination of Christian dogmatism from already organized educational institutions.

The work is begun and it is in worthy hands.

The location is excellent for the Pacific coast states, and can be readily reached by even those of Atlantic states.

Two cents a week from liberal-minded men would give it an annuity of \$20,000,000.

When Stephen Girard came to die, though many times a millionaire, his fortune gave him no comfort. He disposed of it as his best judgment said was wisest. Yet I firmly believe that those Liberals who help one, five or several hundred dollars worth in founding the Liberal University will find, while still alive, a greater comfort in the thought that their aid was a part of this school's success, and this will be at least one solace.

Freethought holds no crucifix over dying men and women extorting legacies from them. Freethought appeals to our reason, asking us in the name of the Brotherhood of Man to lend a hand. Just now the Liberal University at Silverton, Oregon, needs, deserves and expects your co-operation. Will it be disappointed? Answer for yourself and let your neighbor do likewise.