

Torch of Reason

The Only Paper of Its Kind.

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A pencil mark here denotes that your subscription will expire with the next number. You are earnestly requested to renew so that you may receive the paper without interruption. We have decided that it is best for all concerned that we do not send papers longer than the time paid for unless so ordered. This will prevent any loss and we will know just where we stand.

We request you to send us the names of Secularists who might become subscribers and we will mail sample copies.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 23, E. M. 297

Gone, but Not Forgotten.

Our editor has gone. God didn't take him, as he did Enoch, but his father-in-law took him. The facts in the case are just these: Early Thursday morning—not so early but that the chickens had left their roosts and begun to “carol forth their lays”—the editor and his wife, with Father Page, boarded what we “Webfooters” call a hack, behind a lively little team, and sped away down the street. Their destination was the Pacific ocean, and we hope they will not go farther west.

Kind reader, if there is anything in the TORCH this week that you don't admire, just consider the editor's absence. If there is anything that you do admire, just consider that the days of miracles have returned. We hope that the editor will soon return loaded with a few stories of fish, if not a few fish stories, and that he will content himself with wielding the editorial pen while the writer wields the scissors.

A Good Work.

Mrs. Eliza Mowry Bliven, who is doing so much for the “Promotion of Scientific Wisdom,” is receiving help and encouragement from some and discouragement from others, but she goes steadily ahead in the work of carrying out her “plan,” and we will not be surprised to see her make a great success of the tracts she is to have prepared and distributed. It will be well for people to understand that Mrs. Bliven is in this work for the good she can do, and while she may be capable of writing some splendid tracts from her own knowledge, yet she needs the help of all friends of humanity, in order that the tracts may contain the best arguments possible against the religions and superstitions of the day.

Mrs. Bliven takes the stand that

it is better to educate people out of their follies and superstitions, by good, sound reasoning, than to provoke them to anger by ridiculing what is to them very sacred. Surely now, if one woman can devote so much time and energy to this grand effort, the Secularists in general can encourage her by sending her \$1 and receiving in return fifty of the tracts to distribute each month for one year. Study her plan, and see for yourselves that if it succeeds it will be a grand victory for Secularism. The title of the first tract is, “Can Sins be Forgiven?” If you have anything bearing on the subject that will help her, send it to her; it will be thankfully received.

What It Was and What It is Becoming.

A short time ago a friend of the Oregon State Secular Union wrote us a very nice letter and incidentally wanted to know what had become of certain members, mentioning three or four, who were once active in the work. He expressed a desire to know why he did not see their names mentioned in the TORCH and other Freethought journals as in times of old; and thinking it might be of interest to many of our readers we venture a few words of explanation. The last time we saw one of the members our friend mentioned, he was drunk, and drunk where drunkenness was very much out of place. This member and a few others are much offended at our Ethical Basis and stand aloof from such “Puritanical” people who are trying to make the Oregon State Secular Union what it ought to be. Then another is something of a Spiritualist and cannot work with an organization that is really Secular. A few others are freelovers or libertines and are now busy working against our “too orthodox” society. Those mentioned above and those weak enough to be influenced by them, are doing nothing for the cause and probably never will; but our taking a firm stand against all superstitions and impurities is resulting just as we expected. While a few are joining with the Christians in trying to stop our work, hundreds of real Secularists are flocking to our ranks and it is unnecessary to point out to a thinker the grand results that will certainly follow.

We have not the least feeling of hatred toward those who are making bad mistakes, for we realize that “every man is as he must be,” but we must make this an organization that will be a real power in saving, not only our Christian brothers and sisters from their fanaticism and its awful effects, but also our other brothers and sisters who have embraced as foolish superstitions, or fallen into the slimy pools of gross sensuality.

Counterfeits.

Christianity is no more responsible for the frauds which have used her fair name to mask their baseness, than is the United States mint responsible for the counterfeit coins which rogues have put into circulation. The very fact that there have been and are spurious Christians, is proof of the value of genuine Christianity. A United States coin is counterfeited because, for the rogue's purpose, it is worth counterfeiting. For the same reason there are counterfeit Christians. But who ever heard of a counterfeit “Freethinker?”—American Sentinel.

A counterfeiter follows his trade because there is “money in it,” and people very often pretend to be Christians for the same reason. We will agree with the Sentinel that as a money making scheme, Christianity has been a great success, and it is safe to say that a majority of the members of the Christian churches are in the church for that purpose. Take away from Christianity or any other religion its popularity and it becomes a poor investment. Hypocrites will not flock to it then, and the ones who remain will do so for principle's sake only.

Certainly you do not find “counterfeit Freethinkers.” The cause of Freethought is not popular, and for that reason it is not filled with hypocrites. When a man tells you he is a Freethinker, and is not afraid to announce it openly, you may be pretty sure that he is not afraid of the devil, nor seeking popularity—he is a Freethinker.

In a country where Mohammedanism is the prevailing religion, you will find counterfeit Mohammedans while in such a country a man will be a Christian because he truly believes that way and there you will not find “spurious Christians.” With the Sentinel's line of argument, one can prove the genuineness of any religion if he will take for example a country or locality where that religion is popular.

* Of course Christianity is not responsible for all the crime that has been committed by Christians, but it is responsible for the lack of moral education. Education has been based upon fear and for that reason there is more crime in the world than there would be if people had been taught to do right for right's sake, and not through fear of punishment or hope of reward.

P. W. G.

Scientific Wisdom.

Helps toward the tract “Can Sins be Forgiven,” from Mrs. M. M. Turner, Washington, D. C.

In tilting science against all religions we shall have to prove that religion does not mean the practice and love of the virtues, but the belief in and worship of a power, who requires worship to keep him from doing harm to the people, or to win him to bestow some good to his favorites. W. K. Clifford says: “It shall be proved that the community is the sole and supreme object of

the allegiance of conscience.” Tennyson asks:

Ah! when shall all men's good be each man's rule,
And universal peace lie like a shaft of light across the land?

Justice, integrity, humanity and the other virtues have been developed by man “by the practice of comradeship through long centuries of social life” for the benefit of man now and here.

The editor of Popular Science Monthly asks in last May number: “When do our learned men propose to swoop down from their heights with culture in their wings for the help and inspiration of the masses of their countrymen?”

The Inquisition, religious persecutions and revenge are in keeping with Leviticus xxxvi: 27-29. When the mother restrains the child, or even spats its hands, does she do it in this spirit of revenge? The results of Scientific teaching will lead our courts to feel that they have no right to revenge, or inflict physical torture. We should feel toward the criminals as we do toward those afflicted by smallpox, leprosy and other diseases; we do not let them go free to spread these loathsome diseases. Science has proved that very few criminals are so from choice and in spite of all favorable surroundings. Criminality is the result of many lives leading from the past. The criminal is the victim of many causes. Human love and law should come to his rescue, treat him as diseased, and not with revenge and to torture him. When human allegiance is turned to humanity, when we have Men-worship instead of God-worship, we will have fewer criminals. To get rid of the Bible as the word of God is a necessity for justice to mankind.

As regards “Forgiveness of Sins” I send the following as the best I know of on the subject: Passages copied from “The Moral Standard” by William H. Hudson, professor in the Stanford University:

“Moral conduct, I therefore conceive to be, in a single phrase, conduct which betters existence, which adds to its sum total of happiness, or decreases its sum total of pain. Action which makes life as a whole, more fully worth living is, as such, right action; action which diminishes its value, is as such, wrong. The results upon which morality then bases its incentives and restraints are therefore the actual results involved in the very constitution of things, and not consequences artificially imposed by any external power. We reach in this way the ultimate conception of the imminent moral law, and for myself, I see no way either of avoiding the resolution of all other possible criteria of conduct into the criterion thus established, or of getting behind such a standard in search of a final principle of a more universal, fundamental and axiomatic character. Here, and here alone,