

Torch of Reason

The Only Paper of Its Kind.

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

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A REVIEW.

This issue of the TORCH OF REASON is the last of the first volume, and it is well for us and our friends to review the year's work, ascertain what mistakes have been made, what victories have been won; and then decide, as best we can, what shall be the plan of our future campaign against ignorance, superstition and their resultant evils.

There have been many Secularists who have thought that it would be a grand thing for our cause if we could start a school, and thus demonstrate that a higher educational institution could be built and maintained by Secularists, and at the same time educate young men and women for the coming struggle against hypocrisy and greed—educate them free from the prejudices of the old creeds; for many of us realize that in order to save ourselves from a future slavery, the people must be united, and nothing keeps us so far apart as the priestly creeds and narrow, castiron dogmas of the old religions. We, in common with many others, thought that such a school would be a grand thing, and the establishment of such a school having been one of our fixed purposes in life, even long before we heard of the Oregon State Secular Union, we were very much enthused over the idea, when, after joining this band of Secular workers, we found that there were many others of the same opinion. But while many thought it would be a grand thing, not many thought it could be done now. "Too hard times to start just now," said some. Others thought that it would be all right if some rich old Infidel would die and leave a million dollars, or at least a few thousands, to get

the thing started, but they couldn't see just how it could be done without money. There was one person in the ranks, however, who agreed with us that now is just as good a time to start as any; and that person was P. W. Geer, our present co-worker and friend.

After discussing how best to commence such a great undertaking, we decided that the first thing to do was to get a Secular newspaper started. In order to raise money for the proposed university, we concluded to get some blanks printed, calling for help from the Liberals everywhere. This was done, although we were advised by a then high official in our ranks that there was no use trying, etc., etc. We got the blanks printed, and having only enough money to pay for half the printing we induced the Liberal printer to donate the other half. The next thing was to see about getting the blanks signed, and to get possession of a printing outfit. After much searching and many interviews with printers who wished to sell out, we had almost concluded to run in debt for a fine large outfit in a good location in the city of Portland; but we finally concluded, and we think wisely, that the outfit was too large to start with, and that the jobwork necessary to keep the number of presses going and the necessary workmen busy would detract from our other work rather than help it. So we waited, and Mr. Geer, thinking that Silverton, being a very liberal town, would help perhaps more than any other place, we concluded that it would pay to investigate a little before deciding definitely to undertake our work in Portland. Many of the citizens of Silverton encouraged the enterprise, and Mr. J. D. Guiss, president of the Silverton Secular Church, said that the people of his city would raise the \$5,000 that we thought necessary before starting the building. Meanwhile we had decided to make Miss Nettie Olds a visit at her home about two miles from McMinnville, and see if she would help us. Personally we opposed the proposed visit, for many of our warmest friends in Portland had told us that Miss Olds was a Freeloader, and believed and put in practice many ideas that we do not consider Secularism; but knowing that many workers, and especially in the Freethought ranks, are misrepresented, we concluded that perhaps after all we had no proof that Miss Olds was not in perfect harmony with the true ideas of Secularism, and as she was a good lecturer and able to help us much, we should not let prejudice or hearsay hinder the progress of the cause. It must be remembered also that we were then very young in the work and scarcely realized what dangers beset Secular organizations. We did not know that many creeds claiming to be foremost in the ranks

of Liberalism were acting as huge stones around the neck of true Secularism; and so we were deceived, and in spite of the warnings of our friends, and what that tireless but unfortunate worker, Katie Kehm Smith, had said before her death, we, in our enthusiasm for the cause, made our worst mistake, and took into the work one whose ideas of Secularism are as far from what we think is right as the liberty of the savage is from the liberty of a civilized American citizen.

Everything seemed in our favor at this time, however, and after calling the convention at Silverton, and discussing the matter with the Liberals in the meetings, we were induced to put the whole work into the hands of the Oregon State Secular Union, and offer our services one year free, excepting actual necessary expenses. This was accepted and we four were given full charge of the educational department of the Oregon State Secular Union. The printing press and outfit was bought and about \$35 donated to help pay for it. The TORCH OF REASON was started and we worked very hard to do even as well as we did, working under the great disadvantage of not having the money to get what we needed, and many times working nearly all night to get the paper out on time; worrying for fear our inexperience in newspaper work would cause serious mistakes and knowing full well that if in our hurry even a comma should be misplaced our orthodox friends would be glad to make it known to the world. Well, the work went on; friends brought us potatoes, flour, vegetables, a good cow, paid our rent, etc., but no money was yet raised for the university, although quite a goodly number had promised to pay, some ten, some twenty-five, some fifty, and some one hundred dollars.

About this time Mr. Wm. Haight, a Spiritualist, came from Chicago, whom, having been recommended by Miss Olds, we thought of engaging in our work, but the majority deciding that it was not best to retain Mr. Haight, imagine our astonishment to hear Miss Olds declare their engagement. They were to be married in six months, but the majority did not fancy the idea of the engaged couple undertaking to work at the business of being engaged and our work at the same time, in the same house, and so we urged immediate marriage, and failing in this we thought it best that Miss Olds should start out on a lecturing tour. The fact is, we hardly knew what to do, for we needed her help in the school, but it was decided that it was better for the cause, so they went to her home where she was to rest awhile and then start out on her trip. She intended to come back in a few weeks, but we insisted that it was best for our work for her to stay

until after she was married. The lecture tour was made, and by collections for the lectures, subscriptions to the Torch and Little Candle, etc., we received \$85. The school, meanwhile, had started with twenty pupils and rapidly increased to thirty-nine.

Mr. Geer, president of the O. S. S. U., called a convention, and after the usual advertising, it was held here at Silverton. Although it was not as well attended as the board had hoped, yet it proved a very important one, for at this meeting the Secularists took the most important step in the history of the organization; and that was the adoption of the ethical basis. But although it was passed with a large majority, it was bitterly opposed by Miss Olds and one or two others. This bitter opposition did not cease with the convention, and Miss Olds and those of her belief have since done everything in their power to prevent the work going on. They declared the convention illegal; claimed that because it was decided best not to hold an election of officers until the next convention that the president railroaded the thing through in order to hold his office, etc., etc. Of course, this bitter opposition called forth something in self-defense, and Miss Olds' license to lecture having expired, she was notified by the president of the examining board that under the present amended by-laws she would be obliged to take an examination in order to lecture further for the organization. This she refused to do, saying she could not stand on the new by-laws, thus ostracizing herself from the organization. But still the work of opposition went on, and a number of letters from Spiritualists and Freelothers, quoting largely Miss Olds' words, came in criticising our work, claiming that we were narrow, etc. Some, of whom we had never heard, and who must be very poor Secularists, took pains to write us friendly (?) letters, in which they used language we took as an insult, and consigned to the waste basket.

But our work moved right along, and although we had some trouble settling about where to locate, we at last were ready to buy the land; but those who opposed the ethical basis, and others who were led into taking up the warcry against us, seemed bound that we should not build a school at all, and when we went to collect the money that had been promised, the parties said that certain stories had been told them that must be straightened up before they could pay the money. Some said that Miss Olds had told them that we were anarchists. Others said they had heard that the university was working in opposition to the public schools; others that we were getting up a scheme to sell Liberal Hall, and

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