

Torch of Reason

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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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Do Not Condemn.

In our opinion there is no greater truth nor one that, when well learned, will be more beneficial to mankind, than the fact that people are not responsible for their thoughts nor for their actions. We are what we are; we do as we do; we think our thought, not because we have planned it so but because conditions compel us to think and act as we do. To be sure, we may have a desire to do good and also a counter desire to be bad, but the stronger impulse will decide our course, and this impulse comes not because we have a "free moral agency," but because our brains are as they have been made by conditions over which we have had no control.

But can we not, and do we not, choose what course we pursue, and do not some choose the good and some the bad? Yes, we choose our course but we cannot help our choice. That is beyond our control. We cannot help a single thought. You may choose or think you will think of other things, now that you have read this, but this is one of the many things that you have come in contact with, and it makes you think as you do.

"Why, if this is true and we are altogether creatures of circumstances, we will have just all the fun we can," says some believer in God and the free moral agency idea. "We will steal and lie and drink and do anything we choose." Ah, this is your idea of having a good time is it? Well, conditions have not been right or perhaps you would ENJOY DOING RIGHT, and would not be serving your master Fear, and only refraining from excess of all kinds, because you are

afraid of the law or of a god. You poor coward, I cannot help pitying you for your weakness.

"But this idea of not being to blame for our bad actions, and not particularly to be praised for our good conduct, will not do to teach to children," is the cry of some who have not yet learned to look into their minds and see there the product of conditions. We hold, and not without experience, that it is a benefit to young people to know that you feel sorry for all their weaknesses. If a child is saucy or disobedient, kind TREATMENT for his TROUBLES is more beneficial than PUNISHMENT for his CRIMES; and again, it is certain that as soon as a child's mind is capable of knowing the truth it is capable of using that truth to its own advantage, and if the truth is not understood there will be no harm done. Of course, if the matter is presented so as to leave a wrong impression, or if through an inherited weakness or early mistraiding, the child miscomprehends and misapplies the truth then the fault is not in the truth but in the previous conditions. We can conceive of cases where it would be better to develop great truths gradually to certain unfortunates, the same as we would gradually bring the light to bear upon one who was receiving treatment for the eyes, but these cases are very rare indeed, and as a rule the sunlight of truth is what we want and no fear of evil results need be anticipated.

When people understand what Robert G. Ingersoll and other great thinkers have been trying to impress upon our minds, that we are as we must be, then there will be no capital punishment in our families, in our schools, nor in our government. Will we never learn that the old hickory ruler and the old birch rod of our forefathers is not productive of good? Can we never comprehend that to hang one's brother, or his son, or his neighbor, does not make a better man—a better citizen? Fear is the weapon of tyrants and tyrants do not make a happy people. Go into a school room where the rod is most used and you will find one where it would appear to its advocates to be most needed; but go into the same school when the rod has been thrown away and love and reason substituted, and a motion of the hand, a glance of the eye is sufficient. The same is true of a nation. Kind treatment of the unfortunates, who through inherited disease or deformity of the brain, or who have been warped by conditions they found on their coming to this "vale of tears," will make a happy, progressive people, and eliminate the evils produced by the heathenish punishments of olden times.

Kind reader, can you grasp my thought, or have bad conditions

robbed me of the power to make my meaning clear to you? If they have, we beg of you to endeavor to think of this great subject until you solve it to your complete satisfaction. It is the great dividing line between Christianity and Secularism. Christianity has a god to whom we are responsible. He has given us "free will" to do as we please and we are responsible to him. He will bless us if we do right and damn us if we do wrong; but Secularism has no gods. We are creatures of evolution and as such man is not accountable at all for what he is. It is not the natural desire of man to do wrong. It is natural for us to want to do those things which are beneficial to us, and if we are not deceived by evil teachings we would all do right NATURALLY. If we have the desire to do right, we can no more help this desire than the criminal whose strongest impulse leads him to commit a crime. Can you help your thought at this moment? If you do change it you cannot help but change it, and to change it again only proves that the impulse to again change was the stronger and prevailed. Every action of our lives depends on the thought that impelled that action, and therefore our actions are what they are, not because we have planned it thus, we repeat, but because our strongest impulses, which are direct offsprings of our evolved inheritances, compel us to thus act. Ah, how kind and gentle and forgiving we will become when we have fully learned this great lesson. You, dear friend, are the same as we are. We have weaknesses that we may or we may not overcome. Our subsequent lives will tell the tale, and whether we are a help and a blessing to ourselves and to our fellow men depends altogether on what we are now and what our surroundings are to be. And when we are through, although our work will live on either for good or for evil, we will rest, but the great struggle upward toward the light, will be carried on by beings a little better, and a little stronger, and a little wiser, than we. The natural desire of man is to do right, and when artificial props and blocks are once removed, Mother Nature with loving hands will lead us to the fountain of eternal youth.

Good Results.

We do not wish to boast of the many good results of our work, but in order that our friends may know what is being accomplished it is well to place on exhibition some of the many things that the Secularists of Oregon are doing.

Last Sunday we listened to one of the best lectures ever delivered in Silverton. It was delivered by Miss Kate De Peatt, and this en-

thusiastic worker would not have been in the work if it had not been for the Liberal University. Then we have others with excellent ability, who will soon be ready to lecture if our friends are friendly enough. A number of students were added to our school this week and others will be here next Monday. Many very valuable books, not less than twenty, were added to the library, and everything seems in a growing, prosperous condition.

But perhaps the best feature of the whole work is the way the students are working. We wish our friends everywhere could see them digging away for the great gems of truth that go to make up a good education, and see their neat note books with the results of earnest, faithful endeavor. As we are writing one student comes into the room and exclaims, "O, it's not twelve yet; I will study awhile before dinner." The forenoon session closes at 11:30 a. m., you see, and she is now working, of her own free will, with a number of others, that she may lose no time.

There is not much danger of overwork, either, for all have two good periods each day in which they have systematic calisthenic exercises, which is the very best thing in the world to keep young and old in good health.

The Sunday school work is not to be overlooked. Who can estimate the Freethought work that will be done when the Sunday School and University students reach manhood and womanhood? Think of it! We never before have had trained workers! What will be the outcome? The Christian would say, "O, it will not amount to anything," but when he says it he is shaking in his boots for fear that it will, and half wishing that he could be free from superstition himself.

Eliza Mowry Bliven's work needs to be remembered. Do you know her plan means A GREAT VICTORY for freethought? She needs workers to make it a perfect success, but she will get them, for we discover that she has the staying qualities that are necessary in any great enterprise of this kind. Don't underestimate this work. Just think what it means if it is successful! Let's all join hands and make it a great success.

Next summer will see the new University building completed if we all do our best, and we may be able to buy the other four acres of land before our option expires.

Newspapers all over the country begin to notice our existence, many of them speaking of us in terms of commendation. Add to all this what we have learned in our year's work and we rejoice with our friends at the bright prospects for our school and our glorious cause.