

Torch of Reason

The Only Paper of Its Kind.

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Notice!

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, MARCH 10, E. M. 298

The Twelfth Psalm.

To the Freethinkers called Secularists.

Help, ere goodness ceaseth;
Make greed and hypocrisy quail;
Help, for the liar increaseth;
Help, ere the faithful fail.

With vanity the enemy speaketh;
They talk with flattering lip;
With double hearts deceiveth,
And many their poison sip.

These liars destruction worketh:
Astray they lead the youth,
And the tongue that vanity speaketh
Must be taught to speak the truth.

Then help the poor and needy;
Don't wait for one above.
Arise; speak words of silver
That are tried in the furnace, love.

The wicked on all sides walketh
When the vilest ones have power,
But with you, gods of earth, we pleadeth—
Our hope and sheltering tower.

A Suggestion.

Our work of building the Liberal University is in a very prosperous condition.

The lumber for finishing the dining hall is being sawed and will be on the ground next week, the carpenter work will again commence as soon as the inside lumber seasons; the rest of the stone for the main building will be moved from the quarry this week and in a short time occupy its permanent home in the foundation of the only purely secular educational institution in the world of which we have any knowledge.

The five thousand dollar fund is not growing as fast as some of our friends would like to see it grow, and the carpenter work on the main building may be delayed on account of our not wishing to order the lumber until we are sure not to get into debt. We must not have debts hanging over this institution. It must be free in order to

be a Freethought institution, and debt means slavery. We hope that all who can help even a little without robbing themselves will do it now, for the good of our cause demands that we have the building ready for next year's work.

Those who cannot put \$50 on the list can club with others and put in their individual names or the name of the club. One of our best friends from Cincinnati, Dr. B. L. Hjermstad, wants to club with some one who will put in \$25 with him. An extract from his kind letter will explain matters:

"It seems to me that the \$50 subscription to the University goes too slow to ever get there. Now I think there are many of us who cannot subscribe \$50 who would be glad to give \$25. Now can't you start a \$25 list? This is just a suggestion, and take it for what it is worth. I will gladly give \$25, but that is all I can afford. If you don't think the \$25 list practical, and you can find a side partner for the other half, I am yours for \$25, to be paid when called upon."

Now who will join with our friend and strike another fifty-dollar blow for mental liberty, and who will get up another club and thus help to educate the Freethought boys and girls, and through them teach the world the great lesson of progress? It is evidence of a philanthropic mind to give food to a starving little one, but think of the thousands and millions—the countless generations that will feast on the luscious fruits of our labor if we succeed. Truly the Secularist has much to make him happy. He is a god, building a heaven for those who are to enter the golden gates of secular life, while the Christian is a slave, crazed by his torments in an earthly bondage and wildly gazing on a mirage of superstitious longings. Let us redouble our energies. Let us ask each other to help educate these young Secular gods and goddesses, that the earthly paradise may soon swing wide its golden gates and welcome all mankind.

Some Causes of Past Failures.

The greatest cause for the failure of organizations among Freethinkers is the fact that many who claim to be Freethinkers are not willing that others should have the same privilege that they ask for themselves and take foul means to break down every society which those who believe in organization try to promote. Most of the critics of our work are those who do not believe in organization, and many of these are so unprincipled that they do not hesitate to set themselves up as dictators of those who do, and who have labored hard to arouse the people to unite in their fight against organized evils, with unorganized forces.

Some have the idea that for a

crowd of people, whose bond of union is no stronger than a hate for the orthodox church, to meet and have a "big time" is all that is necessary, but the orthodox churches have a stronger bond than this and will laugh to scorn such organizations(?) as the many conglomerate masses of purposeless meetings which have been held by Secularists, Infidels, Freethinkers, Nothingites and Anythingarians. Before our work can stop the absurd and damaging doctrines of orthodoxy and be a prime factor in checking crime and misery of all kinds, we must have active organizations composed of moral, conscientious, sacrificing Secularists and these organizations must not only have a test of membership, but must have regular meetings, and the oftener they can be held the better. In fact, the work of saving the world from the effects of ignorance must be attended to like any other business, or it will continually fail. The adoption of a basis, excluding those who from a business point of view are detrimental to these societies, does not necessarily mean that the members are narrow-minded nor that they do not wish the excluded ones well, but it must be clear to every thinking person that in order to succeed every society must have some test of membership besides simply signing a blank, for if a society prospers it will gain property, own its own hall, etc., and without a test of membership, enemies that would otherwise be debarred will join in order to steal the property or convert the society into one of their own. We find that thousands of Secular institutions have been broken up or turned from their purpose in just this way.

Now what kind of a test of membership do our societies need? We think that we should first of all debar those who are not of good moral character, for if we do not the moral part soon becomes disgusted, drop out, and the Freethinkers' efforts again become a laughing stock. The test should also debar that which is not purely Secular, for one of the most prolific causes of our failures has been the enmity and struggles between the Secular and non-Secular elements in Freethought institutions. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

The work of those who do not believe in organization is the hardest perhaps to combat, for they very often join, are elected to office and then sit down and, like the dog in the manger, neither do anything themselves nor let any one else if they can help it. Ten persons who can work together, firmly stand on the great principles of Secularism and yet are willing to yield their little whims to the majority, are worth a society of thousands who cannot work together. Let all Secularists carefully study the causes

of past failures, draw closer together, meet and discuss ways and means oftener and success will follow every honest effort.

Conundrums.

Armstrong's Autonomist promulgates a conundrum for the "modern Infidel", and it may not be amiss to give him one or two. He supposes that if a man sat down and wrote page after page, day after day, to tear them up when written, the "modern Infidel" would consider him insane, because "laboring without a sensible purpose". Now his conundrum is, "Why is not the modern Infidel, who lives out this life without the hope of immortality, equally insane?"

Taking it for granted that the two cases are perfectly analagous, he concludes: "Sanity is, therefore, not possible except on the basis of immortality. The soul must survive the 'wreck of matter and ruin of worlds', or we are the monomaniacs of time. If life ends in death, and death is nothing, then life is a cause without an effect."

Mr. Armstrong should know what insanity is before attempting to discuss it. Insanity is simply abnormality. Now it remains to decide whether the life of the "modern Infidel" is normal or not. By comparison we do not find any striking dissimilarities from other lives. They do not differ more from the immortalists than the immortalists differ one from another; and the principal differences can be accounted for on grounds of temperament and degree of enlightenment. But in the case of writing-mania he supposes, there is a decided abnormality. Hence his analogy does not hold good.

But if the prospect of immortality (for he admits it is only a conjecture and unprovable) gives purpose and sanity to earthly life and makes it worth living, why may not the probability, the reasonable assurance, of life a year hence do as much for the present day? And if, failing immortality, we are "the monomaniacs of time", with immortality, why would we not be the monomaniacs of eternity? Any way, if immortality is unprovable, wouldn't we have to wait a long time to find out whether or not we were fit subjects for a madhouse? If immortality is unprovable, and if Armstrong makes any claim to reason, he is necessarily in doubt as to his own sanity. The suspense must be terrible! Again, if death renders life of non-effect, how would immortality render it effective, and what would be the effect, since the fact is admittedly unknowable?

J. H. M.