

Torch of Reason

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How We Will Work.

On account of our expenses, we again close the school a little earlier than we expected. The war excitement has monopolized the attention of many of our friends, and help that we might have received has been withheld. In order to avoid debt, and to get to work on the new building, so as to have a place in which to hold our school next year, we gave the final examinations last week and closed school. The Y. P. S. S. C. also closed, as usual, Friday evening. After a short literary and musical program, the members celebrated the event by a very enjoyable dance. These little social parties are very beneficial to the students, as they close at an early hour—11:00 in this case,—and are strictly private, none but the members and invited friends being present.

Our school has been a splendid success this year, and we hear nothing but kind words of praise from students and their parents. We have had a larger number this year than we had last, in spite of the underhanded workings and lies of our enemies, and we closed with a larger number in regular attendance than we commenced with, although it is the time of year that some are obliged to stay out. Many regret that we were obliged to "stop short", but nearly all assure us that they will be back next year.

And now, "all hands on deck" to get a place in which to teach.

We have concluded to start a separate Lumber Fund, in addition to the Five Thousand Dollar Fund. The Five Thousand Dollar Fund must not be lost sight of, and we must hurry it along just as fast as we can, but although it is sure, we

fear it is too slow, and have concluded to call on our friends to help us raise One Thousand Dollars, in the following manner. Every one who can help, no matter how little or how much, may do so and the money will be placed in the bank and paid out only when the amount is raised to pay for the lumber. In this way we can surely raise the One Thousand Dollars, pay for our lumber and go ahead with our school work next year.

Now let every one do SOMETHING right away. The lumber is now being sawed, and will soon be on the ground, but we must pay for it or the work can not go on.

A Lesson to be Learned.

When all Freethinkers have learned to work for their principles with the same energy and perseverance that the Christians work for their Jesus, there will be a radical change in favor of reason and common sense. Many calling themselves Freethinkers care for nothing but their own immediate, personal welfare. There are good reasons for this. Conditions and perhaps inherited tendencies from Freethought ancestors, who have been forced to keep their mouths shut or lose their lives, have made it easy for millions to paddle their own canoe, steering clear of the burning lake of Faith and Fear themselves, but caring nothing for their poor fellow travelers struggling in the awful flames of a secular Hell. If this hell-fire was extinguished we all might live a free-from-care life, but it is not, and not only is our own life-boat in danger of being overcome by the fervent heat, but the children and the children's children are to be thought of. Then again, look at the desperate efforts being made to keep up the fire. Every city and country place has its regular Christian church and Sunday school services. People who love Jesus show by their actions that they are not ashamed of it, but many who know the truth—know that all supernatural religions are myths—seem to be insensible of the fact that these same myths are the mines from which all the sulphurous fuel is obtained to keep up the hell on earth, which is as bad as the mind of man is capable of conceiving. No hell can possibly be imagined in which the suffering is worse than what is right here in sight of us, and why must we see it continually? Simply because we have not yet learned what we must learn or never see the religion of Humanity and its beneficent effects on the earth.

And what is this lesson? It is the lesson of organized, co-operative, self-sacrificing labor against old lies, and for the upbuilding of educational, progressive Secularism.

Think what Christians are doing to convert people to belief in Jesus

and their holy book! Mr. Moody's church at Northfield, Mass., owns several large carriages, one in each district of the church going out every Sunday morning gathering up persons for worship. No charge is made to those who avail themselves of these conveyances.

Shall we allow these people to work thus for what we consider debasing falsehoods, while we lie on our oars and do nothing for what we believe to be the greatest of truths and the salvation of the whole human race?

No, let us, for humanity's sake, awake from the stupor in which the anæsthetic of superstition has held the world, and do valiant work for the cause of right. Where and how shall we begin? We should begin in the place which is freest from the enemy's submarine mines, by establishing an educational institution. Education is the only weapon by which ignorance can be destroyed.

Public Schools and their Enemies.

In the wild scramble for wealth and power, many men do not hesitate to utilize everything to further their purpose, and while we believe that man is slowly but surely growing wiser and better, as we grow older we are disappointed to find that our age, which we like to think of as advanced in civilization, is one that is filled with the civil war of political intrigue. Our public schools, the great hope of civilization and without exception the greatest safeguard of our republic, are no exception to the rule and are today throttled, gagged and controlled by partisan leaders and their cappers, and old orthodoxy is one of the principal tools with which this bank of treasures is forced open and used as political spoils.

In the state of Oregon, the public school system is a half-century behind what it should be, because every department, from that of the little schools in country districts to the highest office in the gift of the people, is largely controlled by political or financial sharks, rather than by those who have ability and educational enthusiasm.

Reader, we are at your mercy—call us a crank if you will, but if you know the facts you cannot but agree that we speak truly when we say that our schools are in the hands of politicians, instead of genuine educational promoters. But for fear that you will really think us cranky, when it is very far from the truth, perhaps we should mention some of the good that is to be found in our public schools. The best thing we can say is that the boys and girls of this state are hard to spoil and many of them will become good men and women in spite of neglect and "malpractice". Another thing that is very good is the

fact that there are many good teachers—natural teachers—who rather teach even in competition with those who are allowed by a poor system to "keep school". Then once in a while a county superintendent is elected who is interested in educational matters and really does something in the way of planning his campaign against ignorance, instead of going at it Indian-fashion.

What do we need? We need the schools of our land freed from religion and politics, and we need a uniform system throughout the United States; but our immediate needs in the state of Oregon, is an educational test for county superintendents; good school books furnished by the state free; or at a minimum price, instead of books filled with religious nonsense, made to sell, and by a company at exorbitant prices; a course of study for the common schools; a provision for County Institutes which will relieve the poorly-paid country teachers from paying for poorly-conducted harrangues of politicians; more difference in the grading, and the number of branches necessary in order to secure the higher grades of county certificates and the repeal of the absurd law which compels a teacher to secure a higher grade of certificate or stop teaching, thus throwing out experienced teachers, putting the schools continually in the hands of amateurs and placing a premium on cramming for examinations instead of ability to teach.

There is nothing too good for our young people, and to help them have the best chance possible, the PARENTS must take more interest in school work. They must post themselves in regard to these things; they must visit the schools and co-operate with the teachers in every way possible and when necessary for the good of the grandest cause on earth, that of true education, they should kindly criticise; and the male parent, who is generally supposed to be the least interested, should vote (he has the right) at all elections for his children's welfare.

The Liberal University is a warm friend of the public schools, and if it succeeds in accomplishing what its promoters desire, it will prove a great factor in freeing them, in this and other states, from their worst enemies.

Meddling with Holy Things.

The New York Voice, the big temperance paper, of the date of April 21, jumps onto the Catholic church with both feet. The trouble arises from the brewery run by the Benedictine Monks at St. Vincent's Abbey in western Pennsylvania. The holy monks started a theological seminary and brewery combined at Beatty, Pa., about 50