

Torch of Reason

The Only Paper of Its Kind.

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Notice!

A hand pointing to this notice denotes that your subscription has expired. 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, MAY 11, E. M. 299.

A VOICE FROM THE PULPIT.

Our fellow Liberal, Mr. J. D. Shaw, of the Independent Pulpit, again attacks us. We are sorry that Mr. Shaw misunderstands us, but we do not blame him nor wonder at it much, for the quotations he gives from others who are pleased to fight against our work show the basis of his false reasoning and poor judgment. He thinks there is no need of a Liberal University, and there would have been none if our enemies had their way. We think there should be a Liberal University, and we, with the help of our friends, are now building what we believe to be the grandest institution under the sun. Why should we be considered "inconsistent" in trying to educate young people free from the religious influences which are in nearly every other school, both public and private, in the United States?

We were obliged to take the work into our hands or let it die. We put a long article in the Torch of Reason telling just how and why it was done. We have published every week thereafter at the head of this page the publishers of the Torch of Reason, and we did not suppose that it was any more of a crime for us to publish a paper and conduct a school than for Mr. Shaw to publish the Independent Pulpit. In a former editorial we did not speak of Mr. Shaw or name his paper in making reference to it, because we do not wish to be personal excepting in self-defense and when the case urgently demands it; but as Mr. Shaw seems very much displeased that we did not advertise

his paper, let us try to please him by saying that it seems to contain many good articles, and we advise every Liberal to help support it. No doubt Mr. Shaw makes mistakes, as he did a few weeks ago in changing Mr. Wettstein's copy and in his seeming caterings to some who are properly outside of the Secular camp, but we would not begin to say the mean things about Mr. Shaw that he did of us, for he is, personally, a stranger to us as we are to him. We hope that our friend will practice what he says he believes Liberalism to stand for—truth, honor, purity, justice, benevolence and freedom.

All of Mr. Shaw's insinuations, misrepresentations and false notions can be successfully answered, and although we will be injured, and unjustly so, by his article and the one he quotes from Mrs. William Haight, of McMinnville, Oregon, yet it will do us no permanent injury, for we are doing nothing wrong in establishing a Liberal University and asking the friends of Freethought to help us do it.

Our University is small at present, but so was Mr. Shaw at one time. It has increased over 300 per cent since it started three years ago, however, and will double next year if we can get our building finished. Mr. Shaw doesn't seem to think much of our personal ability, etc. Well, we don't know very much, and we might as well own up. We wish we knew more, and we will study the Freethought books of science we now have in the Liberal University library and those that we will get during the remaining years of our life. We will also read the Independent Pulpit occasionally.

PLAIN ANSWERS TO MR. SHAW'S "PLAIN QUESTIONS."

Question.—Do you expect sensible people to believe you when you hint now that in petitioning the Oregon legislature for five thousand dollars you had no idea of obtaining it, and that you took that course simply to "set thousands of people to thinking about how wrong it is for the people to pay thousands and millions of dollars to the support of schools that are really and truly sectarian?"

Answer.—Yes. Sensible people who know most about it, know that we did not really expect to get an appropriation from the legislature of Oregon. We did set thousands of people to thinking about "how wrong it is for people to pay taxes to support sectarian schools."

Q.—If you answer the foregoing question affirmatively, please tell us, outright, whether or not you would have accepted the five thousand dollars asked for, had it been offered you.

A.—Yes, we would have gladly accepted five thousand or five hundred thousand dollars, had it been offered.

Q.—If you were sincere in asking what you did of the legislature, then you wanted it to do for you what, as a good Liberal, you are not willing that it should do for the Christians. Do you consider that to be right, on ethical grounds?

A.—If the legislature of any state wishes to appropriate money for the establishment of schools, either public or private, I have no objection. I think it right as long as these said schools do not force any religion or creed upon the students, that is, if it is a Freethought (non-sectarian) school in the broadest sense of the term. We honestly think we did no wrong and that the state would have profited much by helping us.

Q.—If you intended to refuse the appropriation in case it was granted, were you not deceiving the legislature?

A.—We would not have refused the five thousand dollars, nor did we deceive any one.

Q.—Now, should you justify all this on the ground that the end you had in view was a good one, were you not practicing the methods of the Jesuits, who do evil that good may come of it?

A.—We do not believe in doing evil, and no good ever comes from evil.

Q.—If it is wrong for the people, through their legislatures, to pay out money for the support of Christian institutions, is it right for them to do so for Liberal institutions?

A.—It is right for the legislatures to support Liberal institutions if strictly Secular and non-sectarian, but they should support no Christian institutions as they now do in every state of the union. Pshaw! Can't you see the point?

Q.—In asking for that appropriation, were you representing the organized Liberals of Oregon, known as the Oregon State Secular Union?

A.—The Oregon State Secular Union had nothing to do in asking for the appropriation. It sanctioned our work last year, however, and adopted the Torch of Reason as its official organ.

Q.—Does what you call the Liberal University belong to the Oregon State Secular Union or to a company of individuals having no official relation to that body?

A.—The Liberal University is owned and operated by the Liberal University Company, whose members are all members of the Oregon State Secular Union, two of them officers, by and with its approval. There are a few purely iconoclastic Liberals, some of them members, who neither do anything themselves nor let any one else if they can help it, and the Independent Pulpit seems to be but an echo of the barks and snarls of these dogs in the manger.

We are honestly trying to do

good, and if Mr. Shaw and our friends can overlook our many weaknesses and assist us what they can without injury to themselves, we may be able, before we go to rest, to make the world a little better—a little more liberal—a little freer from ignorance and superstition.

THE VALUE OF CREEDS.

There has been much written against creeds, but perhaps there is one thing that has been overlooked by many. No matter how false a creed is, if it is thoroughly believed it serves as a definite thing for which its advocates can work, and thus it binds them together in a strong brotherhood. It is like a well-organized army. It matters not how wrong their principles, a well-drilled army all enthused with the same idea of conquering their enemy and establishing their principles, false though they be, will conquer a mob, it matters not how just its cause.

It might be asked, then, how do we evolve to higher things if the eternal truth does not always conquer? Evolution is a slow process; it comes after many defeats. Wrong principles may enthuse and bind together for a time, but truth, like murder, "will out," and reorganization, containing more truth and less error, takes place. Thus, little by little, human society has evolved to its present state.

The two greatest hindrances to progress is lack of union and that portion of most supernatural creeds that holds to the idea of never changing. The Chinese method of clinging to the old doctrines of the Bible, and to the Bible itself, is the worst part of the Christian creeds, but at last, even in the ranks of orthodoxy, the ambassadors of more civilized thoughts are allowed to enter, and soon the old conservative method will give way to standards more in accord with modern thought. And now that Freethinkers are learning the value of having some definite aim, something which appeals to their reason and enthuses them with the energy born of the natural desire to have all believe the truth, we will certainly accomplish much. We must make Secularism mean something definite; we must have something on which we can, and will, strongly unite; we must not only believe in good, but we must define and live up to that which we conceive to be good. There is no danger in rejecting every evil, nor in accepting too much of the truth. If a thing is bad, let us away with it, no matter what it costs; if a thing is good, let us incorporate it into our rules of action, using our reason and the highest scientific authority as our guide.