

## Abroad.

BY P. W. GEER.

I arrived at Brockton, Mass., Saturday afternoon, and it did not take long to find the home of our Secular poet, Grace E. Gruber. Our readers are quite familiar with her writings, and I am sure all of them would be delighted to have a visit with her. Although but seventeen years of age, she has the appearance of a young lady of at least twenty, and her bright intellect, advanced ideas, and winning ways, make her very interesting indeed. Her father and mother are young, and Miss Grace is often judged, by strangers, to be Mr. Gruber's sister instead of his daughter. The Gruber home is an ideal one, and the time I spent there was one round of pleasure. The evening of my arrival, Miss Grace and I took a stroll through the city, and on our rounds we visited the new city hall and the public library, which is very interesting to us both. A free public library is one of the best things a city can possess. It is needless to say that Miss Grace is quite familiar with Brockton's library. She is a great student and reader, and knows the kind of literature which is best for her to read. She does not stuff her head full of useless trash, and I am sure there is a bright future for her. She hasn't the faults of many of the young girls who start out in the work of reforming the world; she does not go to extremes. She has ideas on the questions of the day and is not afraid to express them, but she keeps within the bounds of reason, and does not fly from one thing to another. I am inclined to think that she has the good sense to behave herself. She knows that she is smart and has ability, but she also realizes that she does not know it all, and that she has a great deal to learn. The cause of Secularism may well be proud that it has Miss Grace E. Gruber as an advocate, and her prose as well as her poetry will some day be famous.

There is a little anecdote that I must tell, and I will leave the reader to judge whether the joke is on Miss Grace or on me. Some time ago I wrote to her asking for some poetry for the Torch of Reason, and incidentally informed her that she would find my picture and an account of my life in a recent number of the Freethought Magazine. In a short time I received an excellent letter from her, and a very cordial invitation to call if I ever visited the east. Of course I was sure that she had seen my picture and admired my beauty. I was still of this opinion until my recent visit, when I learned that instead of looking at my picture she had turned to that of a large portly man, sixty years of age, with a full beard, and took it to be a picture

of me. I wonder that she did not address me as "Grandpa" after that. Mr. and Mrs. Gruber joined in the invitation for me to visit at their home; and when I informed them that I would call, they resurrected all the old rocking chairs, laid in a supply of soft cushions, and made the surroundings comfortable for one so aged. They supposed, of course, that I was deaf, and had cultivated their voices for loud talking. A day or so before time for me to call, Miss Grace informed her cousin that an aged man from Oregon was to call soon, and went to her file of magazines to get my picture. To her surprise she had mistaken the name, and the old gentleman she had admired so much was not the one who was to call. She was at a loss to know what kind of a being was coming, and still had in mind an aged gentleman. Imagine her surprise when I arrived, and she beheld a tall, slim, long-legged, smooth-shaved youth. I am sorry to have so disappointed the whole family, but it is not my fault. It seems that people are bound to have erroneous opinions of me, and while it is often laughable, it is sometimes uncomfortable. I am continually being mistaken for a lady, and receive many letters addressed, "Dear Miss," and I have twice had offers of marriage from wealthy widowers, besides numerous sweet letters from young men.

In spite of the disappointment I was made welcome at the Gruber home, and Mr. Gruber was kind enough to show me the city and surrounding country. We went one evening to Highland Park and saw the electric fountain, the vaudeville entertainment, and other interesting features of the place. All of this is free and is well patronized by the people of the city, who are kept at work all day in the factories. Brockton is the great centre for shoe factories, and this is where the great "Douglas \$3 Shoe" is made. W. L. Douglas is one of Grace Gruber's best friends.

Sunday was a lovely day, and Mr. Gruber and I took a ride on an electric car to Taunton, sixteen miles to the southwest of Brockton. I had a splendid view of the country, and, in fact, it was the first good idea I got of New England. After I have seen the rest of it I will describe it for the Torch. Mr. Gruber and I tried to get into the insane asylum, but they would not let us in, so we looked over the wall and walked several miles around the grounds. Taunton used to be the location of iron foundries but they, having moved west, Taunton is losing population rapidly. New England is dependent almost entirely on factories, and when the factories move New England loses, for the soil is not productive, and there is barely room enough between the rocks for the grass to

grow to supply the cattle. Dairying is a good industry.

We visited the park at Taunton, but it is not equal in any way to the one at Brockton. We returned to Brockton through Bridgewater and had a view of a beautiful country and a lake, with a name too long to be remembered or written. Eastern Massachusetts is one vast network of railroads and electric lines and traveling is, indeed, convenient. Mr. Gruber is delightful company, and our tour over the country will always be remembered by me. Mrs. Gruber is excellent company and an ideal mother. She is justly proud of her daughter and seems to live for her.

I also found Mr. A. W. Dellquest of El Paso, Texas, at the Gruber home, and I was pleased to meet him and enjoy several good visits. He is a fine young man, and it is too bad we haven't thousands of Secularists like him. He is going to open a book store in Brockton and I hope he will do well. He is greatly in love with New England and Boston and we had some heated discussions on the subject.

Tuesday morning I went to Boston, arriving at the largest union depot in the world at 10 o'clock. Boston is a great place. I was not in love with the city at first, but I don't believe in love at first sight anyway, so I decided to get better acquainted with the place. I don't like Boston's crooked, narrow, dingy streets. I left the depot and started in the supposed direction of Boston Common. I passed Dewey Square, started up Federal street, got off on to Sumner street, wrestled with Bedford street awhile and finally landed on West street. I don't know how I did it and don't think I could do it again. Boston's streets are all curves and angles. I look up the street and saw a green streak and made for it with all haste. I landed on Boston Common, the most uncommon thing about Boston. I knew where I was and where I came from, but I don't know how I got there. The Common is in the center of the city and contains 48 acres, with beautiful trees and a fine carpet of grass. There are no signs, "Keep off the grass," and people were lying about under the shade of the trees. I have heard so much about Boston Common, and it is such a noted place, that I decided to enjoy it awhile. I stretched myself on the grass under the shade of an old elm tree and looked up into the clear sky. For a moment I enjoyed Boston, but my thoughts carried me back to "ye olden time" and I thought of Boston Common as in days gone by. I closed my eyes and imagined that I could see two heretics dangling from the gallows and Christians shouting with glee at their triumph over heresy. I could see people being flogged for their honest opinions and Quakers

placed in stocks or executed in the name of religion. If ever a place is subject to being haunted, Boston Common is surely the most appropriate place in the United States. While Boston in times past was the scene of many noble deeds, while it is the birthplace of Franklin and many noble patriots, and although it possessed the "Cradle of Liberty," still Puritanism has left a stain that could not be washed away by a thousand years of webfoot rain.

I awoke from my reverie and looked about to see a typical Bostonian looking at me through one eyeglass, and wondering if I were a real human being or a sea serpent strayed from the zoo. I got my long legs under me and started for Appleton street, where is located Paine Hall, the home of the Boston Investigator. I found Ralph Washburn Chainey in the office and enjoyed a visit with him until the arrival of Mr. L. K. Washburn, the editor-in-chief. Mr. Chainey is a bright, intelligent, young man, with good habits and splendid business ability. Mr. Washburn is well known to Freethinkers generally. He is a splendid worker, an able writer and one of our best lecturers. He is popular with all who know him, and although he never conceals his ideas, he is respected, and even admired, by Christians. His ideas in regard to carrying on the Secular work coincide with mine, and he and Mr. Chainey succeeded in making the Investigator a neat, clean, interesting paper. These gentlemen are deeply interested in the Liberal University and are going to use every effort to make it a success. I am proud to enlist their favor and get the support of the Boston Investigator in behalf of our work. How can they do otherwise than favor us? The Liberal University is a grand enterprise and receives the sanction and support of all right-thinking Secularists, both east and west. That makes me sure of success, and when I return to the west, which I hope will be soon, it will be with the satisfaction that I have succeeded in placing the Liberal University on so firm a basis that it will never be overturned.

The presence of policemen at a church function is not an unheard of thing, but one would hardly have expected Bishop Potter to provide thus for the ordination of a man to the Episcopalian priesthood, yet that is just what he did when Dr. Briggs was ordained, and the reason given for it was the fear of a disturbance growing out of the opposition to the doctor's ordination. The "gospel of peace" does not of itself insure peace among those who preach it. Even though Christ and the Holy Spirit be present, there is need of the police. Will the people never learn what a hollow sham the Christian religion is? —[Independent Pulpit.