

Torch of Reason

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THURSDAY, JULY 27, E. M. 299.

THE INFLUENCE OF INGERSOLL.

The great Secularist is dead, but it seems as useless to write an ordinary obituary notice as it would be for a child to copy a well known poem and send it as a letter to his classmates. The readers of the Torch of Reason know of Robert G. Ingersoll's life better than our feeble pen can write it, nor will the general influence of his work for a higher civilization be much affected by any one's attempt; but we may be somewhat benefited and helped in carrying on the grand principles for which he labored, and in eradicating the evils against which he so successfully fought, by thinking of his far-reaching influence for good.

Freethinkers are neither god-worshippers nor hero-worshippers, but this only strengthens our power of appreciating whatever is good and noble in our fellow men; and taking him all in all we can but feel that this noble development of manhood was the greatest that ever lived, either in this or in past centuries. His influence, unlike the influence of Jesus, was almost entirely for good. "Peace on earth and good will to men", without the counteracting influence of the sword, was his mission. Not by declarations of his own greatness, but by his unconquerable words of reason and love, has he influenced his own and future generations for untold good. No blood of the innocent has been shed to establish the truths conceived by his great brain. He lived on the shore of that part of human history when the minds of many men and women

were ripe to receive the truth, and when priest and king were powerless to silence its silvery notes or stop the ears of those who have eagerly leaned forward and listened to its most welcome music.

Who can measure the influence of this one man? He might have held high political positions, but he chose rather to be honest and hold fast to his inalienable right to think and to express his honest thought. One who little understands the great influence of absolute honesty, might say, "How much better it would have been if he had smothered his convictions on the theological question and used his powers to place himself in an official position, where he might have had more power and thus have done more good"; but a hypocrite can do but little good in any position, and many feel that, as a radical friend of ours expressed it on hearing of Mr. Ingersoll's death, "we might better have lost the president, his cabinet and the whole outfit at Washington than to have lost Robert G. Ingersoll". It is not office nor the power that office gives that make men great. It is rather the truths that they discover and dare to advocate and practice, and here is a man who has had the ability, the bravery, the energy and the love of humanity necessary to discover truths of the most vital importance to mankind and to publish them to those who, we hope, will have the requisite intellect to convert the world to common sense. And what a grand world it will be when the lowest shall be an Ingersoll in intellect and in love for his fellow men!

Mr. Ingersoll is dead, but his intellectual force still acts on the levers of Freethought, and instead of grieving over-much at his loss, we should rather rejoice that he ever lived. A man who has done more for the world than any other to free it from the superstition and bigotry of priestcraft, the greatest enemy of both barbarous and civilized times, has done enough. How can we ask more? Every true Freethinker can and will, to the extent of his ability, push the campaign, of which our fallen hero has so long been captain, into the dark parts of the world. We will not court praise for the good we do nor expect eternal hell for our mistakes. The battle for human rights is, as our great Freethought champion has said, "a question of intellectual development".

Robert G. Ingersoll lived and died in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The world is better for his having lived, and, although we know not what discoveries, what inventions, what thoughts may leap from the brain of the world; we know not what garments of glory may be woven by the years to come; we can not dream of the victories to be won

upon the field of thought; we do know that, coming down the infinite sea of the future, there will never touch this "bank and shoal of time" a richer gift, a rarer blessing, than the liberty which he has so gloriously advocated — the liberty of man, woman and child.

MONEY AND PRINCIPLE.

What should be the main-spring of every action of every life? Should it not be a thought for others? Will not the world be a heaven indeed when all our actions are backed by motives of disinterested love for our fellow creatures?

As we come in contact with the characters that make up our social circle, we cannot help noting the various objects for which different men and women seem to be working. The majority of people, we believe, have a more noble object in life than appears on the surface. When we see men toiling away in their shops, on their farms, and in their offices day after day, scarcely taking time to attend to their health or social duties, we are apt to think that money is their god, and that they never have higher aspirations to secure the happiness that money cannot buy — the happiness of knowing that one is really loved and appreciated for the real worth they are to their friends and to the world. But if we could look into the minds of these workers, and see there the many beautiful pictures of what they will do when they but have the opportunity, we would condemn less and love and help more. But the necessary pursuit of money has given to many, through inheritance and cultivation, an unnatural acquisitiveness which is very dangerous to our race.

These abnormally developed men and women think of money, dream of money, talk of money, and will in one way or another make money. But of what use to the world, and of what use to themselves, is the money when they have gained it? If they have a million they want another fully as bad as they did the first, and the first is used to wring out of this unsuspecting man, or that unprotected and unadvised widow, or by some nook or crook, other amounts, until the second million is secured. The process is kept up until the poor victim's death, an event of more benefit perhaps to humanity than all the events of his life.

Under our present competitive system it is necessary for men and women to know how to earn money, but the faculties necessary to its acquisition should be balanced by a higher and nobler object in life. Money, without something better than money, will not produce happiness. Money is a cup used to bail out a boat, but it is not a boat, and those who successfully sail across the sea of life will find that

their lifeboat must be made of firer material than paper, silver or gold. Money will help secure the good things of life, but it will also help secure the bad things. One must know good from bad — the things which go to make happiness and the things which ruin his life, or money will only prove a curse. We should teach the young that money is only a thing to use, and not the object of life. Let us early inculcate the idea that true principles of right living, that self control, that self respect, that education are of far more value than all the money in the universe.

What can be the happiness of the wealthy miser, who has lately added a coin to his money bag, compared with the happiness of the student of nature, who has through the use of his microscope added to the world's wealth another great truth? To be sure money was necessary for the student to buy the microscope, but it was the microscope, or rather the knowledge it would reveal, that he worked for, and not the money; and this knowledge he enjoys in receiving and in giving. It is like a spring of pure water, its supply and purity is not lessened by what it gives. Then again, if one learns to have some aim in life higher than the mere gold or silver standard, he is fully as apt to secure and enjoy the good things that money buys. Young men and young women who neglect to go to school, who neglect the library, who forget to think of the great questions of reform, for the sake of acquiring wealth, are not those who make a success of life. The intellectual faculties of the men and women of our time need the training that the school, the library, and the earnest thought on live questions of our times gives, in order to successfully compete in any legitimate line of work; and the men and women who are known as the successful, happy, busy workers of the world, are those who have placed principle ahead of money.

IN-FOR-HELLS.

Sam Jones, in a recent harang in Portland, expressed great contempt for men and women who have no faith in his god. Some of the names he applied to such as we, are "in-for-hells," "infidels," "fools," etc., but a sure sign of the weakness of one's cause, or at least his inability to defend it, is to call names. Mr. Jones, like nearly all orthodox preachers, expresses many truths, but they are so mixed with error, superstition and slang that his work, like a parody, is taking the sanctimonious edge off the preachers' regular work for their savior.

In common with most of God's children, Sam believes in corporal punishment — in pounding little children — and the following expression shows the nature of the love that he draws from his loving Jesus: "Fathers, you had better go home tonight, pull your boys out of bed and tan their hides. If you don't, they'll go to hell by the carload." And "of such [as Sam Jones] is the kingdom of heaven".