

An Agnostic's Tribute to Ingersoll.

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of the mean and designing men of both church and state, who have ever endeavored to enslave and enchain the minds of the ignorant by clothing all mystery with the supernatural, and by denying the people the right to criticise, think and investigate for themselves.

Against the allied powers of kingcraft and priestcraft, armed with the sceptre of justice and the shield of truth, Infidelity stands, a counsellor of the ignorant, a guide of reason, an advocate of independence, a proclaimer of liberty, and a defender of just government.

Like an armed warrior, like a plumed knight, Robert G. Ingersoll marched down the highway of progress, scattering the ghosts of dim ages like the morning sunlight scatters the mists of the valley. Full and fair upon the brazen foreheads of the monsters of superstition he threw his shining lance, and powerless they fell before him. The mailed giants of orthodoxy came out to do him battle, only to add to the wrecks that strewed his path. Down went England's great premier and America's great jurist, and few thereafter dared face this man of might, this man of men. From thicket and cave and far-off horizon the cohorts of miracle howled defiance, but the multitude of small voices disturbed him not. There were beating of wings and rattle of armor and blare of trumpets such as never broke silence in heaven before, but onward and undaunted he held his shining course. He was not the greatest scientist, nor the most profound scholar and exponent of Agnosticism in the ranks of Freethought — he was the masterful general that led the way.

Ask ye what he did? He unloosed the shackles of superstition with which Christianity imprisons the brain of childhood, and set millions free. The whole world of men is more free to think and speak since he first championed the cause of "Liberty for Man, Woman and Child". Let speech be free, and tyranny and superstition can not live. He who does most to free the mind of man from the gods and ghosts and hells and devils and fears of religion, does most to merit the love and praise of mankind.

Ask ye what he did? He gave more money to charity in one year than most preachers have brains to earn in a lifetime. Ask ye what he did? He lectured on Ghosts for two thousand dollars a night, when preachers who defame him could not command an audience of one hundred people with free admission.

Ask ye what he did? He taught men to think for themselves — to have opinions of their own, and so lifted the individuality and dignity of the race. By his fearless public example the timid grew brave. He

polarized free thought and free speech. He dispelled the odium and contempt which superstition had cast upon the Freethinker. He resurrected the fair fame of Thomas Paine from the mountain of lies under which malicious Christianity had buried it. He championed the despised side of modern thought and illustrated the power of one man, armed with the truth, against the entrenched and overwhelming forces of creed and greed. He stamped his individuality upon the age. He assisted Freethought toward organization, and helped it to become a force to be reckoned with. He broke the ice-bound harbor of orthodoxy and forced its port open to the free sailing of every craft. He aroused the whole world from its drowsy, drunken dream of faith, and opened its eyes to the fact that freedom of thought and free discussion of all subjects must be the basis of free government.

Ask ye what he did? What he did to the clergy, they well know. It is only a question of time when the Christian people will realize that he was their friend and their defender against the centuries of organized attempt to fasten upon their brains the miracles, the ghosts, the superstitions and the morbid beliefs of a barbarous and ignorant age, and so keep them humble and subservient to aristocratic and ecclesiastical power. What he did, for one man, was plenty; and well the powers of superstition realize it.

They are more or less happy that the voice that thrilled and charmed the world, and awakened it from the dull lethargy of blind belief to the sober realities of reason, is still ed forever; and freely they prophesy that his power and influence will expire with him. That fond delusion may serve for a time as their consolation. Ingersoll is dead; but the thousands of brains he freed are not. An influence so enormous can not die. It is beyond computation. It insures him a cherished memory and a fame which will forever brighten the track of time. In his day, presidents, crowned rulers and potentates, great theologians and great statesmen have lived and passed from the memory of man. He lived to see the great tribunes of orthodoxy, Jones and Talmage and Moody, become extinct existences. He lived to see thousands of the imaginary great who aspired to meet him in discussion pass into hopeless oblivion.

The good he has done for the world in liberalizing Christians and all classes of men can never be estimated. All the advanced thinkers of the church in this country are largely the result of his work. His example taught them to dare to tell the truth. He so liberated the minds of the laity that the clergy were forced to vacate illogical and false premises. He drove inspira-

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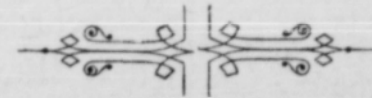
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