

Abroad.

BY P. W. GEER.

Ohio is a great state for old maids and thunderstorms. I went out driving with two of the former and we came in contact with one of the latter. Miss McElroy has been in Oregon and knows that we have no lightning and thunder here, to amount to anything, and when we three started out in a buggy that was intended for two she was cruel enough to wish that we could have a hard storm for my benefit. We had traveled only a few miles to the north, when a little cloud, not big enough to disturb the slumbers of an Oregon barometer, could be seen near the horizon ahead of us. The old maids immediately took notice of the cloud and declared that their wish would be granted. I supposed they were only attempting to scare me, for I had never seen storms which amount to anything come up so suddenly. In Oregon we can always tell a day or so ahead what the weather is going to be, especially in Silverton, where Trenton Hibbard's barometer and Alonzo Brown keep us posted. This combination has often been successful in keeping a storm back for several days, and sometimes warding it off entirely, and I told the ladies that I'd bet that if Alonzo had been there we wouldn't have had any storm.

I never in my life saw a cloud grow so fast. In less than half an hour it had spread all over the northern sky and far enough south to cover the sun and make it quite dark where we were. Looking back, I saw a patch of blue sky where the sun was shining, and I wanted to turn around and drive in that direction, but the ladies said the proper way out that storm was to go through it and not follow it. I supposed they were playing a trick on me and only wanted to give me a wetting, but I knew they would get wet too, and as Miss McElroy held the lines I allowed her to drive on.

The lightning flashed and the thunder cracked all around us. The ladies would jump and Miss Van Ness would utter a little scream every time the lightning would dart by us. I thought they were acting scared to affect me, and I didn't have sense enough to be afraid.

Presently the rain began to come down in great drops, and I was ordered out to put up the rain curtains. I expected that the horse would become frightened (accidentally on purpose) and run off and leave me standing in the rain without shelter, but I obeyed orders through respect to my superiors (in age), but kept one eye on the horse and one hand firmly on the buggy. By the time I had the

curtains adjusted and had again taken my seat in the buggy, it was raining harder than it ever rains in Oregon, and the lightning made one think of the evening of July 4th.

The ladies really did look scared, and I began to think at times they were in earnest, and I felt a little frightened myself, but still I didn't realize the danger. In Oregon the lightning comes in sheets and makes quite a flash, but it doesn't strike anything unless it is off in the mountains somewhere. This Ohio lightning came in little streaks and made a terrible fuss about it every time it came, but I thought, "A barking dog never bites," so I wasn't greatly alarmed. Pretty soon we came to an open gate in front of a large house and barn, and the ladies proposed that we drive in. I thought they were only fooling and I contended that we ought to drive on, but my arguments were vetoed and into the yard we went. A man came and took the horse and buggy, while we went into the house, where we staid in the dry while the elements kept up the serenade outside.

In half an hour or so the storm had passed over and the patch of blue sky was so accommodating that it had shifted around to the direction in which we wished to go, while the storm was marching at double-quick time toward the south. The sun soon appeared over the cloud and seemed to be glad to see us again.

The Ohio pike roads are soon dry after a storm, and as the air was fresh and the horse rested, we had a lovely drive that afternoon, visiting the old home of my friend Mr. Kimball and stopping at Woodstock, where we visited with the Misses Cranston, with whom we had a delightful half-hour's talk. These ladies are very pleasant company, are quite liberal in their religious views, and have a lovely home. We visited several neat and well-kept houses on our rounds which deserve better description, but I have only room to say that they are typical Ohio homes, and that expresses a great deal.

We arrived at Miss McElroy's home in time to dine and then spent a delightful evening visiting with the family. It was a nice moonlight drive to the Van Ness home later in the evening, where the story was told of our narrow escape from being struck by lightning. I thought it was only told to scare me, but the next morning when the neighbors called they had great tales to tell about the lightning striking a barn, which burned to the ground. This scared a team, which ran away and killed a man. Another man lost a lot of sheep, which had gathered under a tree to escape the storm. Lightning struck the tree and killed the sheep. I

was somewhat thunderstruck at these reports and really began to be scared, and now when I think of what happened all around me I tremble with fear, and writing this account of it makes my hair stand up like the editor's after he has spent half a day revising a poorly-written article. I think another Ohio storm would frighten me so that I wouldn't stay in the buggy, even if it did have the attraction of two old maids!

The rest of the time I spent in Ohio was very pleasant to me, but would be uninteresting to readers of the Torch of Reason. I visited the birthplace of my father and found many of my relatives as usual. London is a pretty little city and so is Mechanicsburg. I met very pleasant people in both places, and will be pleased to visit them again. Mr. Geo. Van Ness and family live in Mechanicsburg, and all are Freethinkers.

Saturday morning, Miss Van Ness took me to Irwin and shipped me to Springfield. I changed cars for Cincinnati, where I arrived a little before noon. I was disappointed in this city more than any I visited on my whole trip. I always had the impression that Cincinnati was a clean city. I suppose the name gave me that impression, because it really sounds clean. The "Seven Hills" almost hide the town and seem to confine the smoke of the factories and mills to the valley, where it is mixed with the air to be breathed by the inhabitants of the city. Across the Ohio river to the south are the Kentucky hills, covered with houses, where many of the Cincinnati business men have their residences. The people are cleaner, and their ideas brighter than the appearance of the city would lead one to believe. Sunday is used as a holiday, instead of a holy-day, and one can go on an excursion, a picnic, or to a baseball game on that day.

I was not long in finding the office of Dr. B. L. Hjermsstad, with whom I was fairly well acquainted by correspondence, but I had misjudged him in regard to size and age. I had him pictured as a large, portly man, with a full beard, and at least fifty years of age. I only missed it by a hundred pounds and twenty-one years. He is small, young, and attractive, and I don't blame his wife for falling in love with him. He had a wrong impression of me too, but I don't think he expected to see a woman, as some did. Dr. Hjermsstad took me to the Levi Brothers' store, where he left me until later in the day. I had met one of the Levi Brothers in Chicago in '96, and was glad of the opportunity of renewing his acquaintance and also to meet his brother Charles E., with whom I had a splendid time. We went to the ball game, where the Washingtons defeated the Cincinnati

after a hotly contested game. Mr. Levi took me to his house, where I had a short visit with his wife, who seems to be as deeply interested in the Freethought work as Mr. Levi is himself.

I spent Saturday night with Dr. Hjermsstad at his home in Kentucky. The doctor has a family to be proud of, and he knows it too. This helps to make a pleasant home which we all like to see. Mrs. Hjermsstad shares her husband's belief, and the two little children appear to be too bright to ever be very orthodox.

Sunday morning I went with Mr. Andrew Hogg to the Vine Street Congregational Church to hear a so-called Liberal preacher attempt to harmonize the Bible with modern literature and common sense with nonsense. He may as well attempt to make a square circle. This is the church Mr. James R. Allen joined, and claims that he is just as much a Liberal as ever although a member of a real Congregational Church. Mr. Allen was for some time the secretary of the Ohio Liberal Society, but dropped that society for the present one. The present minister of the church is really Liberal, in fact too Liberal for a Congregationalist, but I don't think Mr. Allen or any other professed Liberal is warranted in joining that church or any other which is under the wing of orthodoxy. What would Mr. Allen do if the church would change ministers and get one who is real orthodox? I will agree with him that this one is too Liberal to be even a Congregationalist, but that doesn't change the Congregational Church. It might be used to prove the hypocrisy of either the church or this particular minister. I will admit that these "higher critics" in the Liberal churches are doing good, but does that warrant us in joining their churches, accepting their tenets, and becoming members of their flocks? Of course Mr. Allen has a right to do as he chooses in this case, but I am myself doubting the wisdom of the rest of us following his example. This preacher talked a great deal and said a few things, but there are many things he didn't say which his arguments led up to. Perhaps the things he didn't say are what he didn't dare to say. On the whole, I think these Liberal orthodox preachers are too Liberal for their churches and not Liberal enough for the people, so they have slim audiences as a rule. I hoped to have a long visit with my friend Allen, but lack of time and opportunity prevented, and I only had a chance to exchange greetings with him and his wife after the meeting. Mr. Hogg and I went to Dr. Hjermsstad's office, where we talked the whole matter over, and decided that Liberal societies were the proper places for Liberals. This decision isn't law and Liberals needn't abide