

Robert G. Ingersoll and the Fight Against Death.

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means so that his work, words and purposes can reach and be known to the masses of the people—the immortality of even the brave, gallant, glorious Emancipator, Ingersoll, will not prevail against Death enthroned upon Ignorance, Superstition, Fear, Cowardice, Greed and Detraction—all of whose ministering Demons, in pulpits and out, are now trying to capture or destroy the soul of Ingersoll, as did the Devils of Hell and Mephistopheles the soul of Faust;—and his soul must be saved in the same way—the hearts, heads and hands of those who stand or wish to stand upon Liberty, Love, Science and Humanity,—that is, all the children of Freedom and of Light, must now rally together, and see that the soul of Ingersoll helps to make and so shall reach that better world to be, in which “MAN shall be the PROVIDENCE of Man”. It is only by such use and translation of the souls of our great leaders and liberators that they can become really immortal, and the “Earthly Paradise” become a reality,—become other than a myth of the future, as the fabled Eden was a myth of the past.

How this is to be accomplished is the matter for early conference and consideration. One thing is evident, that is, that Liberalism must become more active, scientific, educative and constructive in its character. Our friend, James Parton, the biographical historian, once said to me, “What a pity that Science and Voltaire did not lead our generation instead of Wesley and superstition—but superstition organized, and Voltaire did not.”

There we have it—“organized!” Without organization there can be no effective diffusion of literature, nor education, nor helpful co-operation in human affairs. The motive for Liberal organization is now stronger and more manifest than ever, since our great Liberal spokesman has gone—to speak through us.

Now certainly those who were his friends, admirers and co-believers should meet and confer how to realize his career and make it it effective. They must make his death the condition and means of his immortality. The next Congress of the American Secular Union at Boston, should not fail to take some active measures, not only for the praise but for the continuation of Ingersoll. If ignorant credulity and hypocrisy can keep up their organizations to fight a mythic hell and heaven, certainly those who can now plainly feel the hell on earth, and see the heaven which only can replace it, ought not to hesitate to organize so as to make that better future our present as soon and as far as we begin its

reality—and to begin that reality at once.

Nor let any friend say that Ingersoll was not an active organizer. He was a friend of all practical efforts in that behalf. He was for years the President of our Liberal League, the predecessor of our present Secular Union. When he found a really “Liberal church” he always said, “I would like to be a member of it.” He aided every work he could in that direction, without making that work his special province. He always gave his voice and cheer in behalf of Liberal Education* and helpfulness. In his later days his tendency was ever in this direction: “Hold the fort and advance the lines!” may be said to be his last wish and order.

But he had during his life his special and grander work of speech from the platform. It was his mission to sow the seed. His followers and successors will fail of the duty he left to them if they do not reap. He had that work to do, and he did it nobly; and it has devolved a noble work upon his survivors—a work which he could not have done. He who best made manifest the “Mistakes of Moses” equalled the wisdom of that fabled leader. Moses did not himself try to lead into the promised land. His years were spent in arousing, marshalling and inspiring his people, and in leading the way to the very borders of the goodly heritage they were to possess and enjoy. That heritage he pointed out, and from the highest mountain top he had reached he made plain, to his leaders and his people, the methods, valley-ways and defiles by which they should enter. Then into his people passed his soul as and with the work and purpose of his life, for no other immortality did that leader know—

“And no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day!”

So has our SEPULCHERLESS HERO from the highest mountain of our time and knowledge plainly indicated the Land of Promise which his work and will has made it our future to enter, possess and enjoy. It was for him to call forth from the old Egypt of Bondage, of Ignorance and Superstition the CHILDREN OF LIBERTY AND LIGHT, to give to them words of wisdom, inspiration and patience, for forty years; and then in the fullness of time to pass his life into theirs, so that he would enter as they enter, and make their better world his enduring monument, and their higher life his assured immortality.

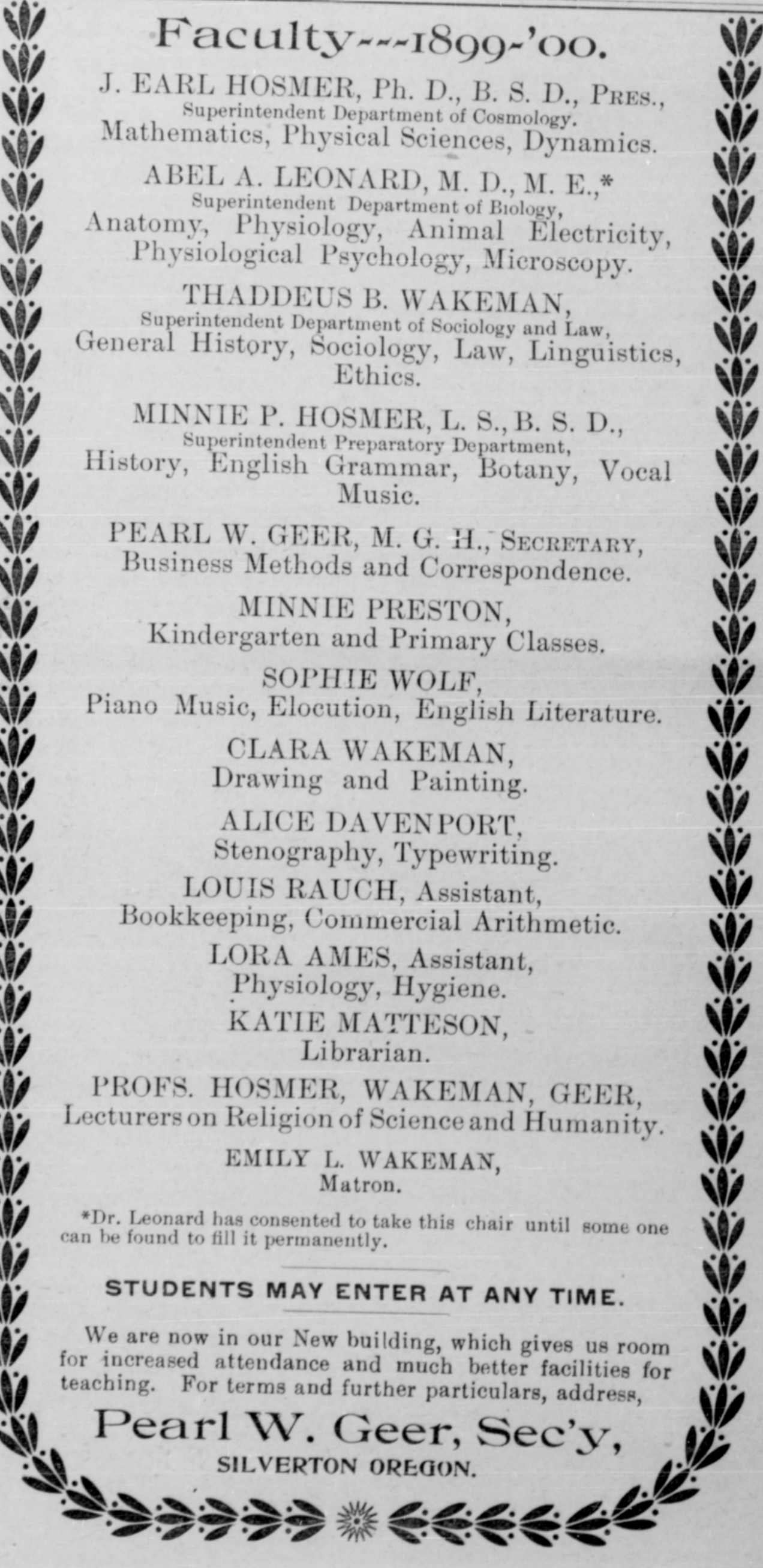
*One of the incidents very pleasing to me, near the close of his life, was his great interest in the Liberal University, at Silverton, Oregon, and his warm approval of my becoming one of its instructors. He had Mr. P. W. Geer, one of its organizers, explain the Institution fully to him, and promised to give a lecture in its behalf as soon as it could be properly arranged.



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