

# Torch of Reason

The Only Paper of Its Kind.

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## Notice!

A hand pointing to this notice denotes that your subscription has expired. You are earnestly requested to renew so that you may receive the paper without interruption. We have decided that it is best for all concerned that we do not send papers longer than the time paid for unless so ordered. This will prevent any loss and we will know just where we stand.

We request you to send us the names of Secularists who might become subscribers and we will mail sample copies.

THURSDAY, JAN. 11, E. M. 300.

## ANOTHER VOLUME.

This issue of the Torch of Reason is No. 1 of Volume IV, and although our "little one" can not be called precocious, we believe it has grown in many ways and will continue to develop until it will wield a mighty influence for good over the minds of men and rid the world of much of the evil influences of the gods. We wish to thank those who have so kindly assisted in maintaining and building up the Torch. Three years is a short time in which to accomplish what our little paper has done, and it would have been impossible for it to have wielded such an influence if it had not been for our brave, priceless friends in the various parts of the world, who have stuck to us through thick and thin. There has not been the enlargement in the way of illustrations and number of pages that we had hoped for, nor has there been as large a gain in our number of subscribers as there should have been, but the outlook is excellent, and as the Torch has lightened many a dark corner, and as all our best friends are very enthusiastic over the prospects of the coming year, we feel that we have gained very much indeed.

We now have entered a new era—the Era of Man (E. M.); we have entered a new century (the 4th); we have entered a new year (300), and our Torch has entered its new volume (the 4th). What will this volume, this year, this century, this era bring forth? And what part of the great changes for the upbuilding of our University, our

cause, our country and our race will we each take?

The same great laws of nature will govern the universe. The fittest will survive and the strong in truth will keep driving the weak in error to the wall, until at last our earth will indeed be a fit dwelling place for man. To act in harmony with nature means our success. The Christians in civilized countries have succeeded in the past in their organizations, their power and influence, because their methods, their beliefs, their energies have as a whole been the fittest to succeed. The equilibrium of the different forces in the moral and social world follows the same law as does the equilibrium of the forces in all nature, and if we wish our Torch to continue to shine, increase in brilliancy, and grow in its power of dispelling the ghouls of superstition, if we wish our Liberal University to continuously graduate an ever-increasing army of ministers of the gospel of Humanity, if we wish our cause to be respectable, respected and to succeed, if we wish our beloved country to arise from the dominating influence of Christian popes of high and low degree, if we wish the world to become a decent place, in which decent people can live and be prosperous and happy, we must be the strongest, the noblest, the best.

All animals and plants that have become extinct had many strong points. The great dinosaurs, whose enormous bodies exhibited such strength of muscle as can scarcely be conceived, and whose masticating and digestive organs enabled them to secure and assimilate almost everything in the vegetable world around them, nevertheless became extinct and gave room for their muscular inferiors—the birds and smaller animals—because the conditions of the ever-changing world made them unfit to survive. They "broke down at their weakest point," and the old forms of governments, social systems and religions always do the same, and the new forms that take their places do so because they are better fitted for the new conditions. If our cause survives it will be because it can successfully withstand its enemies; therefore let us make it as strong at every point as possible.

The Torch during the coming year should have a much larger circulation; it should be illustrated and it should be improved in many ways. Our building should be finished next summer, and to this end we should begin to work at once. Our debts should all be paid at once, and the Ingersoll Fund attended to so as to have more help next year in the way of instructors. Good lecturers should be placed in the field as soon as possible and authorized to organize Secular Churches and Sunday Schools. Now if we can be thus strengthened, we

will progress at a wonderful rate and the old, weaker, degenerate forms will become extinct. This battle is the great battle of the universe, and we are in it whether we want to be or not.

The Torch has not been perfect. In our struggles we have at times been short of proper fuel; ugly errors, typographical, etc., have crept in. In many ways it can be made better, but if we can keep it aglow and help it to grow in the right direction, the influence of Volume IV can not be over-estimated.

## THE REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN DECAY.

In reviewing the reasons given by non-church goers in answer to the inquiries of a prominent newspaper we find the following to be the main ones given for the degeneracy and destruction of the Christian play-houses:

The lack of faith in right-living while much stress is placed on the faith in an over-ruling and punishing providence; Sunday newspapers, bicycles, and other amusements; too long sermons; too much music; social exclusiveness; the poor feeling themselves out of place; lack of faith; not enough preaching of the old-time gospel, etc., etc.; but one article written by some one signing himself "W," seems to hit the nail squarely on the head. He says in part that "the principal reason is, and the clergy know it, that men and women no longer believe either the clergy or the Bible, nor fear their threatening maledictions. When men and women cease believing and fearing the clergy, they cease dancing attendance upon them. This is the whole matter in a nutshell. The more important question still remains, 'Why do men cease to believe and to fear?' It is not natural that men should shrink from the truth. The fact is that the non-churchgoer intuitively and instinctively feels and knows that miracles, angels, spirits, hells and devils are all bosh, and just silently drops out. Some are ashamed to ridicule the belief they so long and publicly professed, and others do not wish to offend members of their families who still believe it, and others keep still for business reasons, and so, while they cease to affiliate, they do not openly antagonize; but they are out, and they are out for good. Nature made men to differ, so shaped and diversified brain matter that they would differ and could not help but suffer. The church proclaims an eternal punishment to every man and woman who differs with and opposes it. . . . This censorship of opinion, this audacious egotism of self-proclaimed and unsupported authority—drove me from the church when a child. It is driving millions now. Every soul

that is big with the impulse of intellectual liberty rebels against this presumptuous ownership of brain.

"Again, I do not go to church because I long ago wearied of hearing faith proclaimed the guide of reason. If a man be not guided by his reason, what more is he than a horse or any other animal that does not reason? Faith is only an attribute of reason, the same as hope, love, friendship, memory, etc. It is even subordinate to memory, for were it not for memory, there could be no such emotion as faith, Schoolboys know this. It is an insult to my intelligence to be told, 'You must have faith.' I 'must have' nothing before I submit it to my reason. Faith in anything is dangerous when not directed by caution. How often has faith in love, friendship and business woefully miscarried in nearly every person's experience. But of all faiths, there are none so flexible, inconstant and uncertain as religious faith. This becomes plain when we consider the many brands which the clergy offer to the public, and each 'the only true faith.'

"Again, I do not go to church because there is no hell. The clergy themselves are saying it. Of late the best minds within the church have renounced 'the monstrous doctrine,' as Beecher called it. If there be no hell, then there is no use for the church, and no use for Christianity, which is founded on hell; and to discard hell, is to discard Christ, whose sole mission was to save sinners from hell. This is the Christian doctrine pure and simple. Christianity, then, without hell, is a false religion, and with hell monstrously cruel and unjust. Hell being a myth, Christianity ceases to be a necessity, and the mission of Christ a grotesque anomaly. Intelligent men and women instinctively drop it. They won't go to hear that which they do not believe. When they cease to believe, they no longer fear; and once learning that they have been deceived by the Christ of an imaginary hell, they include every other supernatural bug-a-boo, in their contempt for the whole.

"Again, I do not go to church because I do not believe the intelligent clergy preach their honest thought. The preacher, generally, is the paid attorney of his flock, and reflects their thought instead of giving his own honest convictions and investigations. A well-established scientific fact may be shoved into their faces day after day, and if it antagonizes the Bible, or a church doctrine, they will not mention it. If, by public discussion, they are forced to speak of it, they either denounce it as an error, or cunningly attempt to show how nicely an antagonistic principle harmonizes with Scripture; and, further, to maintain and prove their position, they invariably tell