

Elect Your Tag.

The Presbyterian brethren used to have a good dog story to help them over the doctrine of Election when they were shown that it made all of their preaching useless, because our eternal fate was settled at our creation, or before. "Yes," said they, "that is so; but we are a miscellaneous lot of dogs sent through on the "express train" of life. We were all tagged, perhaps, at the start—some for Heaven, some for Hell. But you see, in our young and ignorant scraps we lost our TAGS, and no one knows where we are to go now, and it won't do to put us off the train. If we are to go to Heaven, we must have a lot of preaching and preparation to make us at home there." The preparation for Hell goes easy, without saying; besides, the memory of those sermons on earth will only make its pangs the more exquisite, and thus increase the glory of the Creator and the joy of the saved at their own happy "election." The thing to do, therefore, is to keep all dogs on the train and under the training of Presbyterianism till the end of our life-route, when the omnipotence of the Creator will renew the tag and send each to his eternal destination. Thus preaching was necessary to complete either Heaven or Hell.

Thus argued the modern Jonathan Edwards. But it left this life in a fearful state of agonizing uncertainty. The Presbyterian spends his life in the vain and agonizing effort to find or recall that lost tag, so as to know whether his "calling and election is sure." How happy, in contrast, is the life of the Liberal! Instead of starting with a tag that marks and determines his election, he has the pleasure of electing his own tag—a tag that will largely determine his future—his influence before and after death. A wide choice of names is already open to him in the Liberal world of Thought. On our first page you will see that George J. Holyoake originated the word "Secularism" as a good name for us—that is English. Auguste Comte originated the name "Positivism" as our tag—that is French. David Strauss started the "New Faith," a good enough tag—that is German. John Fiske gave us the "Cosmic Philosophy," and hence "Cosmists"—which is American. All of these and other names give emphasis to certain true and good phases or aspects of Liberalism, as we might show if we could write a few pages, but you can see that in their names. Every one can see, too, because they are not generally adopted, that they are not generally satisfactory. So it is a part of every Liberal's pleasure and duty to elect and select his own tag. "Why his duty?" do you say. Because Liberals must learn to know each other and hang together

and work together, or the time is not far off when they "will hang separately," as B. Franklin sagely remarked of the original Republicans. Think of it! On our snug little planet there are one billion five hundred millions of humans—"mostly fools," as T. Carlyle would say, and most justly. And how many real scientific human Liberals are there, to be the leading, educating and finally REDEEMING VAN of these mighty hosts of Superstition and consequent ignorance? Well, possibly 100,000. What a mighty work is before them! At present they hardly know each other, because they have no common uniform or passwords—not even a tag. So, just as soon as it is a little rough or dusky, they begin to disown, and to fire into, each other; and so are hunted down and hanged in detail. If they had some common name-tag, they might hang together, make fight, and enlighten the ignorance which is the common danger.

Of the names proposed, as above stated, three have had some success in America and Europe, viz., Liberal (the American Liberal League), Secularist (the American Secular Union), Freethinker (the Freethought Federation of America). All these have gradually come together, and are to hold their congress next fall in Cincinnati, O. Then perhaps the tag may be elected, but it must first be selected by the mass through individual choice. It would seem that the first word, Liberal, is in more general use than any other word. It has two phases: One includes the Scientific, Secular, Positive, Humanitarian, Social, Ethical and, in a word, the CONSTRUCTIVE Liberals, and the other the Freethought, Infidel, Iconoclastic, Critical, Negative, disorganized, Anarchistic, in a word, the DESTRUCTIVE Liberals. And the word "Liberal" has, luckily, two meanings. (1) One is, that those taking that name are freed and emancipated (Latin, 'liber', free) from all of the old religions, creeds and dogmas. (2) That those are "Liberal" who are free to think as they will, and gladly permit and sustain all others in doing the same.

Now do not these phases of Liberalism show a hopeless contradiction? Is not President Remsburg at the head of an army utterly discordant, because of a hopeless divergence of purposes? It might at first seem so, and be so to some extent for consulting purposes; but in the end are they not concordant in a general result, and so the necessary forces of the same army of progress? What could be done unless the critical Liberals kept up their fire of doubt and intellect upon all the old superstitious religions and institutions? If they thereby obtain a habit of mind, feeling and thought which will not rest upon or build up anything, how fortunate that within the

same army and under the same commander, there are the constructive Liberals ready as never before, to build and hold the new forts and intrenchments, and thus to make sure the conquest of the New World by the institution of a New Life and of New Hopes and Aspirations.

Thus each division of the Grand Army of Liberty, Science and Humanity may see in each other the means of a common success, and rally under the common name, "Liberal," until a better tag or title can be found.

T. B. W.

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