

## Torch of Reason

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### RELIGIOUS INTOXICATION VS. SECULAR EXERCISE.

By fixing the attention on any object and holding it there for a long time, a person's mind may become unbalanced. Again, if people, without resting the mind, think of any one subject too long, they lose their mental equilibrium, and we say they are crazy. Of course, it is easier for a certain type of mind to lose its balance than for another, and the old saying that "fools never go crazy" shows that it is not necessary for one to be lacking in all the faculties to become unbalanced.

The excitement of the pleasurable emotions is a rest, and those who know how to fortify the trinity of the mind, with healthful mental and physical exercise, will last much longer and do much better work than he who ignorantly excites his emotional nature by false and unwholesome mental intoxicants.

Compare, for example, the healthful and elevating exercise of dancing, or of playing lawn tennis, with the frenzy of religious excitement. The one kind exercises body and mind with lasting effects for good. The dancer or player is excited, but still has perfect self-control. The mind is perfectly balanced, for there is no awful, unfathomable mystery to thwart or harass its processes. And if, as is sometimes the case, a young man weeps for the victory or the defeat of his club, or if a young lady feels sad because she does not get to dance as often as she would like, it is perfectly natural and perhaps only softens and

moulds the character into greater beauty.

How different is the intoxication, the delirium of religious excitement. Every mental process that weakens and prostrates the mind and body is present. Thoughts of a mysterious something called God; thoughts of death and its supposed awful consequences; thoughts of the victim's own weaknesses and past sins, which with many constitute the mainspring of their religious antics; and thoughts of humble submission to unseen and unknown powers—all these painful feelings, coupled with the false hope that the poor, weakened soul has found a panacea for his imaginary woes and spurred on by an exciting, earnest, tragical performance of a trained preacher, it is little wonder that such scenes take place as we still witness in nearly all the rural districts of our spook-ridden country. We recently witnessed such a performance, and when it was all over we felt weak and tired in body and mind; and how much more so were the men and women who took it seriously.

Women are more emotional than men, and this probably accounts for the "sixteen to one" manifestation in religion. The illogic of a sermon seems to make no discord in the minds of these sixteen women and one man, and they are ready to fall into the arms of God's agent and do or believe anything he says, provided he knows how to dance about the stage, flap his wings and shout in the proper manner.

The recent performance before mentioned was truly an example for a student of human nature to study. The performer, in addition to bringing onto the listeners' mental stage the gods and ghosts, also dug up their dead friends—old fathers and mothers and little babes; this, with a fearful picture of an Infidel, who had no Bible in his house and who was trying to summon up sufficient courage to commit suicide, and a goody-goody one of a Christian who had had sunshine in his soul for thirty-five years, a little sarcasm for seasoning, and all demonstrated, illustrated and emphasized with stamping of the feet, rapid movements of the body and wonderful expressions of countenance, unbalanced not a few. At first we were struck with the comic part, but a little deeper thought satisfied us that the damage thus done to humanity is simply appalling, and one who is inspired with the hope of making a heaven here is soon deep in the work of devising ways and means of combatting and flanking the evil effects of such gross superstitions, which are the main forces now pitted against the armies of progress.

Some preachers are hypocrites, some are semi-hypocrites, and some are almost entirely sincere in their

foolishness; but the damage they are doing in the world by unbalancing the already naturally emotional minds is beyond estimate or repair.

Secularists, our work is a great one. We yet have much rubbish to remove in order to build all that we wish to build, but we of the L. U. O. believe that some ground is ready and we are trying to make a start to build something better than the old emotional, degenerating delirium of superstitious religions. But our institution is young, and, like the eagle spoken of in "holy writ" (Deut. 32:11), the great body of Freethinkers, whose minds have learned to soar above the caves and crags of ancient myth, in the beautiful, clear sky, where the golden beams of the sun of eternal truth gilds their mental pinions, are bearing this little Luo eaglet upon their broad wing, and by and by the little bird will be strong enough to soar aloft and attract the attention of those who are grossly gorging themselves on the putrid remains of past ignorance; and those little babes who are continually coming to our world only to be corrupted by the foul breath of superstition, will be drawn, by the millions, toward the light of a brighter and happier day.

### DO SOMETHING NOW.

Our Freethought University is doing an untold amount of good. We have young men and women here who are developing into experts along the various lines of thought. Some are excellent in arithmetic and algebra, some in bookkeeping, some in botany, some in Latin, some in rhetoric and history, some in music, and many seem to excel in everything they undertake; and besides this and much more that could be truthfully said in regard to the studies of the sciences, the work is based upon the freedom of thought and speech which gives all such an inspiration to look further and become much better educated than those who must finally run up against religious authority.

But this work is yet being carried forward with many disadvantages. Besides those who have helped make our work thus far the success that it has been, there are many others who have expressed sympathy and approval of what we are doing, but we are sure if those who have thus been able to materially help, and others who have encouraged, knew just how much the success of the L. U. O. depends on their activity right now, they would scarcely rest till they had done all in their power to get the school onto a self-supporting basis. Every cent that we are able to raise by donations, printing, tuition, etc., is spent in trying to put up our building. Our actual, necessary expenses are kept at the lowest

possible point, and although we do not suffer, the expense is often too low for the real good of the institution.

Now, we do not believe in making the L. U. O. a nuisance or a burden to any one. The days of martyrdom ought to be past, and therefore we, who know about this work, its great need and its great needs, must do what we can easily do now, plan for the future and get others interested. There are enough of us, if we each do a little, to make the work a grand success, but many of us have never yet even heard of such a movement. Our success demands that every reader of the Torch act as our agent and at once do something to hasten the completion of the building and laying out of the grounds.

Please do something at once, if it is possible. Can't you write a letter now to a friend who will join our Torch procession? Or, better yet, go and see him or her as soon as you have leisure and talk about what we are working hard to accomplish. If each one will do what he or she can and then get others to work, soon our yoke will be easy and our burden light. In fact, we will be able to throw away our yoke and buy a Freethought automobile, and sail into our Secular heaven in a manner that will cast in the shade old Elijah and his chariot of fire.

Now, ready! Let's all lift together!

### OUR PLAYGROUND.

We have as yet no real good grounds for field sports, but we have begun to stake out one of the finest bicycle tracks, football grounds and baseball diamonds imaginable. Of course we do not expect to run to seed on athletics and neglect the mental faculties almost altogether, as some of the so-called colleges of our time do, but young people love sport, and under proper management, when properly limited in time, it is a good and wise thing, for, in order to do good mental work, a student must be well and happy.

We will therefore proceed to make a track which we hope will be good summer and winter. This will require considerable tiling, plowing, scraping and rolling, but when it is done it will be a joy forever to those who know how to properly mix labor and recreation.

Then we hope to be able, some time in the near future, to plant beautiful trees and flowers all around this playground, and we have in mind many pretty little cottages, with flower-trimmed walks leading thereto.

Our land is as level as a floor and very rich. We can raise most everything. All we need is the energy and enthusiasm that is born of a love for the good, the beautiful and the true.