

Sunday Schools.

D. E.

No more important topic was taken up at the recent meeting of the Oregon State Secular Union, than that of Secular Sunday Schools, so feelingly presented by President Hosmer. In the nature of the case but little can be done at present. But if each person in sympathy with the work will do what he can, without waiting for formal organization and direction, much can be accomplished even now. Let any man or woman, in any place, where there is now no Sunday school, start one and stay with it. The staying power of the leader is the great essential.

Where there is now a Christian Sunday school, let Liberals stay with it, not to criticize and dispute, but in charity forbearing, with gentle insistence to witness for the Truth. Kind reader, this means you. Keep peace with all men but work, work.

I think about these Liberal Sunday Schools all the more since attending a Christian Sunday school convention this week. Messrs Reed and Winan, of Salem, (Sunday school workers) were there, and told of the Home Department for Sunday schools, as now being established. The idea seems to be to have persons connected by card or letter correspondence with the school when they live too far away to attend personally. Why is not this a good idea? Why cannot I, for instance, though I live forty miles away, be connected with your Sunday school at Silverton, if no other is nearer, and be informed of the studies you are pursuing and follow the same in my own home. There must be many Liberals all over the State, in places where it is not practicable to maintain a Liberal Sunday school, who would be benefited by such a connection. Hunt them up, enroll them, and set them to studying.

The Excommunication of Tolstoi.

The excommunication of Count Tolstoi from the Greek church has attracted but little attention, doubtless because it was not unexpected. Tolstoi, a visionary reformer, has long attacked the church to which he ostensibly belonged, and there was nothing for the churchmen to do but dis sever him from their organization. But we find in the current issue of the Independent a comment which is worth reproducing:

"The Russian church is a human institution, ruled by human will and human force. As such an institution its self-preservation requires it to expel Tolstoi, and it is justified. As a human institution the Roman Catholic church

was justified in expelling Luther and Calvin; and in the same way the Presbyterian church was justified in silencing Prof. Briggs. These human institutions had no option, unless they changed their own constitution.

"So when we blame the Russian church for excommunicating Count Tolstoi, or the Presbyterian church for silencing Prof. Briggs, we blame them only for not reforming their constitution. With their constitution they could not do otherwise; it is their constitution that needs enlarging. No body of men ought to call itself a church, or the church of Christ, and then drive out of its membership those who love God and are disciples of his son, Jesus Christ. The Russian church ought to have made itself roomy enough so that Tolstoi would not be crowded; the Roman church should have been wide enough to allow Luther and Calvin to swing their arms about; The Presbyterian church ought to have broadened its limits so that Prof. Briggs might have served god in it and yet have partitioned the Pentateuch as the powers would partition China. Being as they are, the churches may properly—that is consistently—excommunicate those who love God and try to serve his son; the trouble is that they should not be as they are."

Some worthy people will undoubtedly be shocked at the suggestion that the church, which is supposed to be divine, should accommodate itself to the human individual rather than the latter should follow its tenets. The truth is however, that the narrow and bigoted confines of churchism are being daily broken down. Tolerance and sympathy are increasing. The test of Christianity nowadays is to love god and thy neighbor as thyself. Sects continue to exist, as they always will, but baptism or immersion is no longer regarded as deciding the reward or damnation of the human soul. It is better for the world that this is so. It means more widespread happiness, less bitterness, and a greater degree of Christ-like fellowship than the world has ever known.

The above clipping from the Independent, and comment by the Washington D. C. Post of the 5th inst., shows the drift of religious thought among thinking people and gives evidence of effective work done by Freethought, and which can be further advanced by such institutions as the Liberal University. G.

The Gospel of Discontent.

BY B. F. UNDERWOOD.

The charge is sometimes made against certain political candidates

that they excite discontent among the masses. And it is not uncommon to hear this given as a reason why they should be defeated.

Yet discontent is a state of mind very necessary to progress. Where this discontent exists there is hope. When discontent disappears there is no possibility of progress.

Discontent spurs men to thought and action. Its presence means thought, hope and effort. Its absence means acquiescence, subjection, lethargy, and submission to injustice and wrong; and it is favorable to despotism, which, as Wendell Phillips used to say, 'steals like a mist over a nation.'

Slaves only, those who have no aspirations for freedom, represent the nearest approach to absolute contentment,—satisfaction with existing conditions.

The following satirical lines by Dickens summarize the teachings of the clergy of the established church in England to the poor, in the novelist's time at least,—

Oh! let us love our occupations,
Bless the squire and his relations,
Live upon our daily rations,
And always know our proper stations.

An intelligent English writer, Mr William Clark, says that this kind of teaching has produced the dull, boorish existence of the English rural districts, from which the towns have been saved by the vitality of town life, the growth of dissent, and the development of modern industry.

Where there is the least discontent, as in Oriental countries, there is the least progress. A people satisfied with existing conditions is a people hopelessly wedded to existing superstitions and social and political ills. Only by the "discontent impulse" is emergence from bad conditions possible. The gospel of content is the gospel of stationaries, or worse still, of retrogression and decadence. The gospel of discontent is the gospel of meliorism and progress.

In all ages despots, great and small, have inveighed against popular discontent; and the American newspapers that denounce the dissatisfaction of the "masses" with things as they are, and discourage popular aspirations for better conditions than exist, are American representatives of that Bourbonism which has cursed Europe by its hostility to freedom and progress.

It was only when the "discontent impulse" exerted itself in the ancient world that the status yielded to public discussion, and a higher political and social order was evolved, as in Greece, where "freedom rose like sunrise on the sea." The Grecian civilization was initiated and sustained by the agitation of thought which has been declared to be the beginning of wisdom.

There is a Mephistophelian spirit, a cynical, pessimistic state of mind, a chronic desire to find fault with

whatever exists, as is illustrated by Sydney Smith's complaint against the solar system, when he said to his friend Jeffrey: "Damn the solar system! Bad lights, planet too distant, pestered with comets, feeble contrivance. Could make a better with ease."

Such speculative fault-finding should not, of course, be confounded with earnest and practical protests against social, political or religious conditions which belong to the order of human life, and can be changed by human effort.

All this talk about the "discontent of the masses," and the evil results which may follow denunciation of established institutions and prevailing conditions, should be promptly met with the declaration that this is a government of the people, by the people, for the people, and that it is not only the right, but the duty of American citizens to protest just as long as they can see anything wrong to protest against.

Desire and efforts to improve the world must be preceded with dissatisfaction with existing conditions. "Where liberty is, there is my country," quoted one of the founders of this republic. "Where liberty is not, there is my country," said Paine; "and thither I hasten, that I may help to establish it." These words express the spirit of the reformer.

Discontent may be unreasonable and movements may be untimely or unwise; but men learn through their mistakes. It is always safe to discourage apathy, inaction, and fixation, and to encourage the people to keep their eyes open to wrongs and abuses, and to the possibilities of improvement.

DIAMONDS.

One of the rarest gifts is the talent to judge accurately a diamond in all its various qualities. As genius for music or painting must be inborn to produce the great artist, so the faculty to produce the great artist, so the faculty to correctly determine a diamond in all its diversified detail and characteristics can never be acquired, unless by the rare few who are gifted in this direction. A dealer may be a good jeweler, a successful merchant and an honest man, and yet deceive you on a diamond, simply because he himself is deceived. I have been in the business forty years. I could no more be deceived on a diamond than the cashier of the Bank of England could be on a bank note. When buying diamonds I use no glasses, ask no questions except the price; my acute vision instantly detects the slightest difference in color every flaw and imperfection. Your interests will be protected if you buy of me. If you want a Ring, Pin, Stud, etc., for \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100 or up, send to me. I will send you the goods prepaid. Keep them a week or two, and if you are not satisfied that I undersell all competitors, return and get your money.

Send for my price list of Watches, Chains, Jewelry, Silverware, Freethought Badges, Ingersoll Spoon, and my tract, "Theism in the Crucible," free.

Otto Wettstein,

Rochelle, Ill.