

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

[SECOND EDITION.]

“BREAKING THE FETTERS.”

A POWERFUL DISCOURSE ON RELIGION
PAST AND PRESENT, BY



(From a Photograph by SARONY of New York).

COLONEL INGERSOLL.

The great American Orator, Freethinker and Wit.

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BREAKING THE FETTERS,

A LECTURE BY

COLONEL INGERSOLL.

Precisely to the minute the Colonel walked on the stage, and experienced his usual cordial reception from the densely packed audience. He gracefully acknowledged the warmth of the greeting, and after a slight pause proceeded as follows :—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I AM well aware that whoever attacks the prevailing religious opinions of his time must, in his turn expect to be attacked. We haven't yet outgrown the barbarism that argument can be answered by personal abuse. The religious world of to-day has not yet outgrown the belief that you have to answer every argument not by showing that it is bad, but by showing that the man who makes it is bad.

It makes no difference whether the maker of an arithmetic turned out to be a rascal or not, we should still have to believe that ten times ten is a hundred. (Applause).

I expected to be attacked and I have not been disappointed. I had always supposed religion taught men to love their enemies, or, at least, treat their friends decently; but I never knew of a minister who ever loved me, or who could forgive me. In return I only want them to act so that I won't have to forgive them. I don't pretend to love my enemies for I find it hard work to love my friends, and if I have the same feelings towards my enemies as towards my friends, I have no humanity in me.

I deny that any man is under obligation to love his enemies. I believe in returning good for good, and for evil the doctrine of Confucius—exact justice, without any admixture of revenge.

I have made up my mind to say my say, I shall do it kindly, distinctly, but I am going to do it. I know there are thousands of men who substantially agree with me, but who are not in a condition to express their thoughts. They are poor; they are in business; and they know that

should they tell their honest thought, persons will refuse to patronise them—to trade with them; they wish to get bread for their little children; they wish to take care of their wives; they wish to have homes and the comforts of life. Every such person is a certificate of the meanness of the community in which he resides. And yet I do not blame these people for not expressing their thought. I say to them; “keep your ideas to yourselves; feed and clothe the ones you love; I will do your talking for you. The church cannot touch; cannot crush; cannot starve; cannot stop or stay me; I will express your thoughts.” (Loud cheers).

All I ask of the Christian world is simply to tell the truth, but that is a good deal more than they will ever do. There was a time when falsehood from the pulpit smote like a sword, but now it has become almost an innocent amusement. Lying is now the last weapon left in the arsenal of Theology. They say I am in favour of too much liberty, but I am only in favour of justice, liberty, society.

You can't make men good by slavery; there is no regeneration in the chain. You can't make a man honest by tying his hands behind him. Good laws don't make good people, but good people make good laws. There is no reformation in force or in fear. You might scare a man so that he would not do a thing, but you could not scare him so that he would not want to do it. (Laughter.)

A few years ago the people were afraid to question the king, afraid to question the priest, afraid to investigate a creed, afraid to denounce a dogma, afraid to reason, afraid to think. Before wealth they bowed to the very earth, and in the presence of titles they became abject. All this is slowly but surely changing. We no longer bow to men simply because they are rich. Our fathers worshipped the golden calf. The worst you can say of an American now is, he worships the gold of the calf. Even the calf is beginning to see this distinction.

It no longer satisfies the ambition of a great man to be king or emperor. The last Napoleon was not satisfied with being the emperor of the French. He was not satisfied with having a circlet of gold about his head. He wanted some evidence that he had something of value within his head. So he wrote the life of Julius Cæsar, that he might become a member of the French Academy. The emperors, the kings, the popes, no longer tower above their fellows. Compare King William with the philosopher Haeckel. The king is one of the anointed by the most high, as they claim—one upon whose head has been poured the divine petroleum of authority. Compare this king with Haeckel, who towers an intellectual colossus above the crowned mediocrity. Compare George Eliot with Queen Victoria. The queen is clothed in garments given her by blind fortune and unreasoning chance, while George Eliot wears robes of glory woven in the loom of her own genius. (Continued applause.)

The world is beginning to pay homage to intellect, to genius.

There is no slavery but ignorance. Liberty is the child of intelligence.

The history of man is simply the history of slavery, of injustice and brutality, together with the means by which he has, through the dead and desolate years, slowly and painfully advanced. He has been the

sport and prey of priest and king, the food of superstition and cruel might. Crowned force has governed ignorance through fear. Hypocrisy and tyranny—two vultures—have fed upon the liberties of man. From all these there has been, and is, but one means of escape—intellectual development. Upon the back of industry has been the whip. Upon the brain have been the fetters of superstition. Nothing has been left undone by the enemies of freedom. Every art and artifice, every cruelty and outrage has been practised and perpetrated to destroy the rights of man. In this great struggle every crime has been rewarded and every virtue has been punished. Reading, writing, thinking and investigating have all been crimes.

Every science has been an outcast.

All the altars and all the thrones united to arrest the forward march of the human race. The king said that mankind must not work for themselves. The priest said that mankind must not think for themselves. One forged chains for the hands, the other for the soul. Under this infamous *regime* the eagle of the human intellect was for ages a slimy serpent of hypocrisy.

The human race was imprisoned. Through some of the prison bars came a few struggling rays of light. Against these bars science pressed its pale and thoughtful face, wooed by the holy dawn of human advancement. Bar after bar was broken away. A few grand men escaped and devoted their lives to the liberation of their fellows.

Standing in the presence of the Unknown, all have the same right to think, and all are equally interested in the great question of origin and destiny. All I claim, all I plead for, is liberty of thought and expression. That is all. I do not pretend to tell what is absolutely true, but what I think is true. I do not pretend to tell all the truth.

I do not claim that I have floated level with the heights of thought, or that I have descended to the very depths of things. I simply claim that what ideas I have, I have a right to express; and that any man who denies that right to me is an intellectual thief and robber. That is all. (Cheers).

Take those chains from the human soul. Break those fetters. If I have no right to think, why have I a brain? If I have no such right, have three or four men, or any number, who may get together, and sign a creed, and build a house, and put a steeple upon it, and a bell in it—have they the right to think? The good men, the good women, are tired of the whip and lash in the realm of thought. They remember the chain and faggot with a shudder. They are free, and they give liberty to others. Whoever claims any right that he is unwilling to accord to his fellow men is dishonest and infamous. (Great applause).

In the good old times, our fathers had the idea that they could make people believe to suit them. Our ancestors, in the ages that are gone, really believed that by force you could convince a man. You cannot change the conclusions of the brain by torture; nor by social ostracism. But I will tell you what you *can* do by these, and what you have done. You can make hypocrites by the million. You can make a man say he has changed his mind: but he remains of the same opinion still. Put fetters all over him; crush his feet in iron boots; stretch him to the

last gasp upon the body rack ; burn him, if you please, but his ashes will be of the same opinion still.

I oppose the Church because she is the enemy of liberty ; because her dogmas are infamous and cruel ; because she humiliates and degrades women ; because she teaches the doctrine of eternal torment and the natural depravity of man ; because she insists upon the absurd the impossible and senseless ; because she is arrogant and revengeful ; because she resorts to falsehood and slander ; because she allows men to sin on credit ; because she discourages self-reliance, and laughs at good works ; because she believes in vicarious virtue and vicarious vice—vicarious punishment and vicarious reward ; because she regards repentance of more importance than restitution, and because she sacrifices the world we have to one we know not of.

The free and generous, the tender and affectionate, will understand me. Those who have escaped from the grated cells of a creed will appreciate my motives.

Most of the clergy are, or seem to be, utterly incapable of discussing anything in a fair and catholic spirit. They appeal, not to reason, but to prejudice ; not to facts but to passages of scripture. They can conceive of no goodness, of no spiritual exaltation beyond the horizon of their creed. Whoever differs from them upon what they are pleased to call "fundamental truths," is, in their opinion, a base and infamous man. To re-enact the tragedies of the sixteenth century, they lack only the power. Bigotry in all ages has been the same. Christianity simply transferred the brutality of the Colosseum to the Inquisition. For the murderous combat of the gladiators, the saints substituted the *auto de fe*. What has been called religion, is, after all, but the organization of the wild beast in man. The perfumed blossom of arrogance is Heaven. Hell is the consummation of revenge. The chief business of the clergy has always been to destroy the joy of life, and multiply and magnify the terrors and tortures of death and perdition. They have polluted the heart and paralyzed the brain ; and upon the ignorant altars of the Past and the Dead, they have endeavoured to sacrifice the Present and the Living.

Nothing can exceed the mendacity of the religious press. With one or two exceptions I never knew an honest editor of a religious paper ; if truth was red-hot it would never scorch *them*. (Laughter).

I have had some little experience with political editors, and am forced to say, that until I read the religious papers, I did not know what malicious and slimy falsehoods could be constructed from ordinary words. The ingenuity with which the real and apparent meaning can be tortured out of language, is simply amazing. The average religious editor is intolerant and insolent ; he knows nothing of affairs ; he has the envy of failure, the malice of impotence, and always accounts for the brave and generous actions of unbelievers, by low, base, and unworthy motives.

By this time, even the clergy should know that the intellect of the Nineteenth Century needs no guardian. They should cease to regard themselves as shepherds defending flocks of weak, silly and timid sheep from the claws and teeth of ravening wolves. By this time they should

know that the religion of the ignorant and brutal Past no longer satisfies the heart and brain; that the miracles have become contemptible; that the "evidences" have ceased to convince; that the spirit of investigation cannot be stopped or stayed; that the church is losing her power; that the young are holding in a kind of tender contempt the sacred follies of the old; that the pulpit and pews no longer represent the culture and morality of the world, and that the brand of intellectual inferiority is upon the orthodox brain.

Men should be liberated from the aristocracy of the air. Every chain of superstition should be broken. The rights of men and women should be equal and sacred—marriage should be a perfect partnership—children should be governed by kindness,—every family should be a republic—every fireside a democracy. (Loud applause).

The doctrine of eternal punishment has been taught in the name of religion, in the name of universal forgiveness, in the name of love and charity. Do not, I pray you, soil the minds of your children with this dogma. Let them read for themselves; let them think for themselves.

Jonathan Edwards the dear old soul, who, if his doctrine is true, is now in heaven rubbing his holy hands with glee as he hears the cries of the damned, preached this doctrine; and he said: "Can the believing husband in heaven be happy, with his unbelieving wife in hell? Can the believing father in heaven be happy with the unbelieving children in hell? Can the loving wife in heaven be happy with her unbelieving husband in hell?" And he replies: "I tell you, yea, such will be their sense of justice, that it will increase rather than diminish their bliss." There is no wild beast in the jungles of Africa whose reputation would not be tarnished by the expression of such a doctrine.

Where did that doctrine of eternal punishment for men and women and children come from? It came from the low and beastly skull of the naked savage in the dug-out. Where did he get it? It was a souvenir from the animals. The doctrine of eternal punishment was born in the glittering eyes of snakes—snakes that hung in fearful coils watching for their prey. It was born of the howl and bark and growl of wild beasts. It was born of the grin of hyenas and of the depraved chatter of unclean baboons. I despise it with every drop of my blood. Tell me there is a God in the serene heavens that will damn his children for ever for the expression of an honest belief! More men have died in their sins, judged by your orthodox creeds, than there are leaves on all the forests in the wide world ten thousand times over. Tell me these men are in hell; that these men are in torment; that these children are in eternal pain, and that they are to be punished for ever and ever and ever! I denounce this doctrine to night as the most infamous of lies. (Great applause).

The human race has been guilty of almost countless crimes, but I have some excuse for mankind. This world after all, is not very well adapted to raising good people. In the first place nearly all of it is water. It is much better adapted to fish culture than to the production of folks. Of that portion which is land, not one eighth has suitable soil and climate to produce great men and women. You cannot raise men and women of genius without the proper soil and climate, any more

than you can raise corn and wheat upon the icefields of the Arctic sea. You must have the necessary conditions and surroundings. Man is a product; you must have the soil and food. The obstacles presented by nature must not be so great that man cannot by reasonable industry and courage, overcome them. There is upon this world only a narrow belt of land, circling zigzag the globe, upon which you can produce men and women of talent. In the Southern Hemisphere the real climate that man needs falls mostly upon the sea, and the result is that the southern half of our world has never produced a man or woman of great genius. In the far north there is no genius—it is too cold. In the far south there is no genius—it is too warm. There must be winter and there must be summer. In a country where man needs no coverlet but a cloud, revolution is his normal condition. Winter is the mother of industry and prudence. Above all, it is the mother of the family relation. Winter holds in its icy arms the husband and wife and the sweet children. If upon this earth we ever have a glimpse of heaven, it is when we pass a home in winter, at night, and through the windows, the curtains drawn aside, we see the family about the pleasant hearth; the old lady knitting; the cat playing with the yarn; the children wishing they had as many dolls as dollars or knives or somethings, as there are sparks going out to join the roaring blast; the father reading and smoking and the clouds rising like incense from the altar of domestic joy. I never passed such a house without feeling I had received a benediction.

Civilization, liberty, justice, charity, intellectual advancement, are all flowers that blossom in the drifted snow.

I do not know that I can better illustrate the great truth that only part of the world is adapted to the production of great men and women than by calling your attention to the difference between vegetation in the valleys and upon the mountains. In the valley you find the oak and elm tossing their branches defiantly to the storm, and as you advance up the mountain side the hemlock, the pine, the birch, the spruce, the fir, and finally you come to little dwarfed trees, that look like other trees seen through a telescope reversed—every limb twisted as though in pain—getting a scanty subsistence from the miserly crevices of the rocks. You go on and on, until at last the highest crag is freckled with a kind of moss, and vegetation ends. You might as well try to raise oaks and elms where the mosses grow, as to raise great men and great women where their surroundings are unfavorable. You must have the proper climate and soil.

A few years ago we were talking about the annexation of Santo Domingo to this country. I was in Washington at the time. I was opposed to it. I was told that it was a most delicious climate; that the soil produced everything. But I said "We don't want it; it is not the right kind of country to raise American citizens. Such a climate would debauch us. You might go there with five thousand Congregational preachers; five thousand ruling elders; five thousand professors of Colleges; five thousand of the solid men of Boston and their wives; settle them all in Santo Domingo, and you will see the second generation riding upon a mule, bareback, no shoes, a grape vine

bridle, hair sticking out of the tops of their hats, with a rooster under each arm, going to a cock fight on Sunday. Such is the influence of climate. (Laughter).

Science, however, is gradually widening the area within which men of genius can be produced. We are conquering the north with houses, clothing, food and fuel. We are in many ways overcoming the south. If we attend to this world instead of another, we may in time cover the land with men and women of genius.

I have still another excuse. I believe that man came from the lower animals. I do not say this as a fact. I simply say I believe it to be a fact. Upon that question I stand about eight to seven, which for all practical purposes is very near a certainty.

When I first heard of that doctrine I did not like it. My heart was filled with sympathy for those people who have nothing to be proud of except their ancestors. I thought how terrible this will be upon the nobility of the old world. Think of their being forced to trace their ancestry back to the duke Orang-Outang, or to the princess Chimpanzee! (Roars of laughter).

After thinking it all over, I came to the conclusion that I liked that doctrine. I became convinced in spite of myself. I read about the rudimentary bones and muscles. I was told that everybody had rudimentary muscles extending from the ear into the cheek. I asked "What are they?" I was told: "They are the remains of muscles; that they became rudimentary from lack of use; they went into bankruptcy. They are the muscles with which your ancestors used to flap their ears." (Laughter). I do not so much wonder that we once had them as that we have outgrown them.

After all I had rather belong to a race that started from the skullless vertebrates in the dim Laurentian seas, vertebrates wiggling without knowing why they wiggled, swimming without knowing where they were going, but that in some way begun to develop, and began to get a little higher and a little higher in the scale of existence; that came up by degrees through millions of ages, through all the animal world, through all that crawls and swims and floats and climbs and walks, and finally produced the gentleman in the dug-out; and then from this man, getting a little grander, and each one below calling every one who had made a little advance, an infidel or an atheist—for in the history of this world, the man who is a-head has always been called a heretic.

I would rather come up from a race that started from that skullless vertebrate, and came up and up and up and finally produced Shakespeare, the man who found the human intellect dwelling in a hut, touched it with the wand of his genius, and it became a palace domed and pinnacled. Shakespeare, who harvested all the fields of dramatic thought, and from whose day to this, there have been only gleaners of straw and chaff. I would rather belong to that race that commenced a skullless vertebrate and produced Shakespeare, a race that has before it an infinite future, with angels of progress leaning from the far horizon, beckoning men forward, upward, and onward for ever. I had rather belong to such a race, commencing there, pro-

ducing this, and with that hope, than to have sprung from a perfect pair upon which the Lord has lost every moment from that day to this. (Applause).

Only a few years ago there was a great awakening of the human mind. Men began to enquire by what right a crowned robber made them work for him? The man who asked this question was called a traitor. Others asked by what right does a robed hypocrite rule my thought? such men were called infidels. The priest said, and the king said, where is this spirit of investigation to stop? They said then, and they say now, that it is dangerous for man to be free. I deny it. Out on the intellectual sea there is room for every sail. In the intellectual air there is space enough for every wing.

The man who does not do his own thinking is a slave, and is a traitor to himself and to his fellow man.

What would have become of the people five hundred years ago if they had followed strictly the advice of the doctors? They would all have been dead. What would the people have been, if at any age of the world they had followed implicitly the direction of the church? They would have all been idiots. It is a splendid thing that there is always some grand man who will not mind, and who will think for himself. (Cheers).

Every man should stand under the blue and stars, under the infinite flag of nature, the peer of every other man.

I will tell you another thing—It is not necessary to be rich, or to be great, or to be powerful, to be happy. The happy man is the successful man. Joy is wealth.

A little while ago, I stood by the grave of the old Napoleon—a magnificent tomb of gilt and gold, fit almost for a dead deity—and gazed upon the sarcophagus of rare and nameless marble, where rest at last the ashes of that restless man. I leaned over the balustrade and thought about the career of the greatest soldier of the modern world.

I saw him walking upon the banks of the Seine, contemplating suicide. I saw him at Toulon—I saw him putting down the mob in the streets of Paris—I saw him at the head of the army of Italy—I saw him crossing the bridge of Lodi with the tri-color in his hand—I saw him in Egypt in the shadows of the pyramids—I saw him conquer the Alps and mingle the eagles of France with the eagles of the crags. I saw him at Marengo—at Ulm and Austerlitz. I saw him in Russia, where the infantry of the snow and the cavalry of the wild blast scattered his legions like winter's withered leaves. I saw him at Leipsic in defeat and disaster driven by a million bayonets back upon Paris—clutched like a wild beast—banished to Elba. I saw him escape and retake an empire by the force of his genius. I saw him on the frightful field of Waterloo, where chance and fate combined to wreck the fortunes of their former King. And I saw him at St. Helena, gazing out upon the sad and solemn sea.

I thought of the orphans and widows he had made—of the tears that had been shed for his glory, and of the only woman who ever loved him, pushed from his breast by the cold hand of ambition. And I said I would rather have been a French peasant and worn wooden shoes.

I would rather have lived in a hut with a vine growing over the door, and the grapes growing purple in the kisses of the autumn sun. I would rather have been that poor peasant with my loving wife by my side, knitting as the day died out of the sky—with my children upon my knees and their arms about me—I would rather have been that man, and gone down to the tongueless silence of the dreamless dust, than to have been that imperial impersonation of force and murder. (Great applause).

It is not necessary to be great to be happy; it is not necessary to be rich to be just and generous. Free labor will give us wealth. Free thought will give us truth.

Give me the storm and tempest of thought and action, rather than the dead calm of ignorance and faith! Banish me from Eden when you will; but first let me eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge!

As long as man believes the Bible to be infallible, that book is his master. The civilization of this century is not the child of faith, but of unbelief—the result of free thought. (Cheers).

As long as woman regards the bible as the charter of her rights, she will be the slave of man. The bible was not written by a woman. Within its lids there is nothing but humiliation and shame for her. She is regarded as the property of man. She is as much below her husband as her husband is below Christ. She is not allowed to speak. The gospel is too pure to be spoken by her polluted lips. Women must learn in silence.

In the bible will be found no description of a civilized home. The free mother, surrounded by free and loving children, adored by a free man, her husband, was unknown to the inspired writers of the bible. They did not believe in the democracy of home—in the republicanism of the fireside.

If any orthodox clergyman will read to his congregation certain passages in the bible that I will select, I will pay him one hundred dollars in gold. There would not be a lady left in the church, and if a man stayed, it would be to chastise the man for insulting the women.

Let us go back to the time when society was first formed a long time ago. Blackstone and Locke have always taken the ground that society was first formed by contract; that animals formed themselves into flocks and herds by agreement. How did men originally come to act together? By contract? No. By necessity? Yes. When men first formed themselves into society they were not equal to the beasts. No man ever worshiped anything he did not believe to be his superior.

Let us get to the foundation of this idea of worship. When man first looked upon a lion he saw an animal that had greater strength than himself. When he saw the serpent climb without hands, run without feet, and live apparently without food, it struck him with awe, and he felt the serpent was superior to him. When he saw the powerful eagle flying against the storms, and gazing at the blazing sun, he saw something that was superior to him. He didn't know how they got their living. He was filled with wonder and admiration, and the result was he began to worship beasts, and made gods out of lions, snakes, and eagles.

The story of the serpent in the garden, of Eden, and of the brazen

serpent in the wilderness, are but reminiscences of an old serpent worship. Almost all kinds of animals were deified. The old Jews themselves—including Moses—worshipped Jehovah in the form of a bull. That accounts for “the horns on the altar.”

They not only worshipped that God but many others. Even in the time of Solomon and Jeroboam there were thirty temples in which other gods were worshipped besides Jehovah. After men found out that one animal by itself was not their superior, they began to make gods composed of several animals. They took the lion for strength, the eagle for swiftness, and the serpent for cunning or long life, making together an animal that could not be killed.

Take the Mexican Indians. What is their name for God? Stone Spirit. One who wore an armour of stone. Where did they get that idea from? The Armadillo, that could not be pierced with their arrows; something they could not kill. I want to convince you all, as we go along, that we manufacture these gods ourselves, and every one of them is a poor job. (Laughter).

After men got through worshipping beasts, simple and compound, they begun worshipping man, the bestial qualities in man as well as the good ones. The gods were first beasts, then men. Right here let me tell you that there is not a person in this house who can think of God only in the form of a man. Why? Because that is the highest intellectual form you are acquainted with. (Applause).

You can't think of God on four legs, or as a woman. Why? Because man made all the religions. We haven't yet become civilized enough to worship a principle. If we worshipped God as a woman, I should be apt to join some church myself.

Now having traced the origin of god, the next question is, Does this God interfere in the affairs of this world? For upon this depends the great question of human rights. The savage has always believed it. When his poor hut was blown down he thought God was mad with him or one of his neighbours. Just think of the infinite maker of every shining world getting mad at this poor savage and pulling up his home!

I tell you this world has been mightily abused, and it almost makes one die of pity to read its religious history.

When that train of railway cars went down recently in Scotland the pulpit resounded with talk about divine judgments for violating the sabbath. One of the passengers was a sailor coming home to see his widowed mother, to take care of her in her declining years. Just think of God killing that man for crossing a bridge on a Sunday. (Cheers). Imagine some rosy-cheeked little boys in a boat on a Sunday fishing. At the end of their lines are fastened pin hooks, and an infinite being descends and keels over their boat because it is a Sunday! Our fathers had no idea of religious liberty in their time, and their descendants to day have not. (Applause).

I can't believe in a personal God in any land where there is injustice; where innocence is not safe, where honest men toil and rogues ride in carriages, where hypocrisy is crowned and sincerity degraded. I can't conceive of this world being governed by an infinite being. If any good has to be done man has got to do it. We must depend on our-

selves. We musn't consider the lilies of the field—we must sow the field and reap and harvest the crop ourselves.

I want to show you the extent to which the Church has gone. Religion has never relied upon argument. Protestantism never gained an inch of soil except at the mouth of the cannon or the point of the bayonet. Religion of love has always been shot into nations. (Applause).

Who are the most warlike nations in the world to day? Christian nations. Does any one of you wish to be a millionaire and famous for the rest of his life? Then invent a cannon that will blow more Christian brains into froth than the best cannon will, and your fortune is made, and your name will become famous. In the last eight years the national debts of Christendom have increased over six thousand million dollars.

What Catholic nation is the most orthodox to day? Spain. And is there any meaner nation. What next? Italy, the land covered with brigands, every one of which carries an image of the Virgin Mary or some favorite saint, and who crosses himself with holy water in the cathedral before he starts on his brigand work. What next? Ireland, poor Ireland, crushed beneath the heel of oppression for hundreds of years. Why? Simply because her oppressor was of a different religion. It is religion which has reduced Spain to a guitar, Italy to a hand organ, and Ireland to exile. (Immense applause).

Which is the most orthodox Protestant nation to day? Scotland; and in 1879 there were twelve thousand women arrested for drunkenness. What nation is the most infidel to day? France. And which is the most prosperous country in Europe to day? France.

There is another Christian nation, Russia. Go with me to Siberia. Who are these poor creatures drawing wagons, on their hands and knees. Girls of sixteen, seventeen and eighteen or twenty; what are they there for? For having said a word in favour of human liberty. That is all. Do you blame the lovers or the parents of these girls if they endeavour to send a bullet to the heart of the Czar who allows such brutality? In such a case my sympathies are closest around the point of the dagger. (Cheers.)

I tell you that when I think of how much this world has suffered; when I think of how long our fathers were slaves, of how they cringed and crawled at the foot of the throne, and in the dust of the altar, of how they abased themselves, of how abjectly they stood in the presence of superstition robed and crowned, I am amazed.

This world has not been fit to live in fifty years. It was not until the year 1808 that Great Britain abolished the slave trade. Up to that time her judges, sitting upon the bench in the name of justice, her priests occupying her pulpits in the name of universal love, owned stock in the slave ships, and luxuriated upon the profits of piracy and murder. It was not until the same year that the United States of America abolished the slave trade between this and other countries, but carefully preserved it as between the States. It was not until the 27th day of August, 1833 that Great Britain abolished slavery in her colonies; and it was not until the 1st day of January, 1863, that Abraham Lincoln, sustained by the sublime and heroic North, rendered our flag pure as

the sky in which it floats. (Immense applause).

Abraham Lincoln, was, in my judgment, in many respects, the grandest man ever President of the United States. Upon his monument should be written: "Here sleeps the only man in the history of the world, who, having been clothed with almost absolute power, never abused it, except upon the side of mercy." (Loud cheers).

Think how long we clung to the institution of human slavery, how long lashes upon the naked back were a legal tender for labor performed. Think of it! The pulpit of this country deliberately and willingly, for a hundred years, turned the cross of Christ into a whipping post.

The Americans founded the first secular government that was ever founded in this world, recollect that. The first secular government! the first government that said every church has exactly the same rights and no more; every religion has the same rights and no more. In other words, our fathers were the first men who had the sense, had the genius, to know that no church should be allowed to have a sword; that it should be allowed only to exert its moral influence.

No government should be united with religion. You might as well have a government united by force with Art, or with Poetry, or with Oratory, as with Religion. Religion should have the influence upon mankind that its goodness, that its morality, its justice, its charity, its reason, and its argument give it, and no more. (Cheers). The religion that has to be supported by law is without value, not only, but a fraud and a curse. The religious argument that has to be supported by a musket is hardly worth making. A prayer that has a cannon behind it better never be uttered. Forgiveness ought not to go in partnership with shot and shell. Love need not carry knives and revolvers.

So our fathers' said: "We will form a secular government, and under the flag with which we are going to enrich the air, we will allow every man to worship God as he thinks best." They said, "Religion is an individual thing between each man and his Creator, and he can worship as he pleases and as he desires."

And why did they do this? The history of the world warned them that the liberty of man was not safe in the clutch or grasp of any church. They had read of and seen the thumb screws, the racks, and the dungeons of the inquisition. They knew all about the hypocrisy of the olden time. They knew that the church had stood side by side with the throne; that the high priests were hypocrites, and that the kings were robbers. They also knew that if they gave to any church power, it would corrupt the best church in the world. And so they said that power must not reside in a church, nor in a sect, but power must be wherever humanity is,—in the great body of the people. And the officers and servants of the people must be responsible to them as they derived all their authority from the people.

Thus they did away for ever with the theological idea of government.

I thank every one of them from the bottom of my heart for their courage—for their patriotism—for their wisdom—for the splendid confidence in themselves and in the human race. I thank them for what they did and for what we have received—for what they suffered, and for what we enjoy. (Cheers).

What would we have been if we had remained colonists and subjects? What would we have been to-day? Nobodies,—ready to get down on our hands and knees and crawl in the very dust at the sight of somebody that was supposed to have in him some drop of blood that flowed in the veins of that mailed marauder, that royal robber, William the Conqueror. (Loud applause).

They signed the declaration of independance although they knew it would produce a long, terrible, and bloody war. They looked forward and saw poverty, deprivation, gloom and death. But they also saw, on the wrecked clouds of war, the beautiful bow of freedom.

These grand men were enthusiasts; and the world has only been raised by enthusiasts. In every country there have been a few who have given a national aspiration to the people. The enthusiasts of 1776 were the builders and framers of this great and splendid government; and they were the men who saw, although others did not, the golden fringe of the mantle of glory that will finally cover this world. They knew, they felt, they believed that they would give a new constellation to the political heavens—that they would make the Americans a grand people—grand as the continent upon which they lived. (Great Applause).

Seven long years of war—fighting for what? For the principle that all men are created equal—a truth that nobody ever disputed except a scoundrel; nobody, nobody in the entire history of the world. No man ever denied that truth who was not a rascal, and at heart a thief; never, never, and never will. What else were they fighting for? Simply that in America every man should have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Nobody ever denied that except a villain; never, never. It has been denied by kings—they were thieves. It has been denied by statesmen—they were liars. It has been denied by priests, by clergymen, by cardinals, by bishops, and by popes—they were hypocrites.

We must progress. We are just at the commencement of invention. The steam engine—the telegraph—these are but the toys with which science has been amused. Wait; there will be grander things; there will be wider and higher culture—a grander standard of character, of literature, and art.

The history of civilization is the history of the slow and painful enfranchisement of the human race. In the olden times the family was a monarchy, the father being the monarch, the mother and children were the veriest slaves. The will of the father was the supreme law. He had the power of life and death. It took thousands of years to civilize the father, thousands of years to make the condition of wife and mother and child even tolerable. A few families constituted a tribe; the tribe had a chief; the chief was a tyrant; a few tribes formed a nation; the nation was governed by a king, who was also a tyrant. A strong nation robbed, plundered, and took captive the weaker ones. This was the commencement of human slavery.

I say it took millions of years to come from the condition of abject slavery up to the condition of marriage. Ladies, the ornaments you wear upon your persons to-night are but the souvenirs of your mothers' bondage. The chains around your necks, and the bracelets clasped upon

your white arms by the thrilled hand of love, have been changed by the wand of civilization from iron to shining glittering gold.

I believe in marriage, and I hold in utter contempt the opinion of those long haired men and short haired women who denounce the institution of marriage.

There is no success in life without love and marriage. You had better be the emperor of one loving and tender heart, and she the empress of yours than to be the king of the world. The man who has really won the love of one good woman in the world, I do not care if he dies in the ditch a beggar, his life has been a success.

It is not possible for the human imagination to conceive of the horrors of slavery. It has left no possible crime uncommitted, no possible cruelty unperpetrated. It has been practised and defended by all nations. It has been defended by nearly every pulpit. From the profits derived from the slave trade churches have been built, cathedrals reared, and priests paid. Slavery has been blessed by bishop, by cardinal, and by pope. It has received the sanction of statesmen, of kings, and of queens. It has been defended by the throne, the pulpit, and the bench. Monarchs have shared in the profits. Clergymen have taken their part of the spoil, reciting passages of scripture in its defence at the same time.

Only a few years ago our ancestors were slaves. They belonged to the soil like coal under it and rocks on it. Only a few years ago they were treated like beasts of burden, far worse than we treat our animals at the present day. Only a few years ago it was a crime in England for a man to have a bible in his house, a crime for which men were hanged, and their bodies afterwards burned. Only a few years ago fathers could and did sell their children. Only a few years ago our ancestors were not allowed to speak or write their thoughts—that being a crime. To be honest, at least in the expression of your ideas, was a felony. To do right was a capital offence; and in those days chains and whips were the incentives to labor, and the preventative to thought. Honesty was a vagrant, justice a fugitive, and liberty in chains. Only a few years ago men were denounced because they doubted the inspiration of the bible—because they denied miracles and laughed at the wonders recounted by the ancient Jews

Only a few years ago a man had to believe in the total depravity of the human heart in order to be respectable. Only a few years ago people who thought God too good to punish in eternal flames an unbaptised child were considered infamous.

As soon as our ancestors began to get free they began to enslave others. With an inconsistency that defies explanation, they practiced upon others the same outrages that had been perpetrated upon them. As soon as white slavery began to be abolished, black slavery commenced. In this infamous traffic nearly every nation in Europe embarked. Fortunes were quickly realized; the avarice and cupidity of Europe were excited; all ideas of justice were discarded; pity fled from the human breast; a few good, brave men recited the horrors of the trade, but avarice was deaf; religion refused to hear; the trade went on; the governments of Europe upheld it in the name of commerce—in the

name of civilization and religion.

With every drop of my blood I hate and execrate every form of slavery. I hate dictation. I love liberty. (Cheers).

What do I mean by liberty? By physical liberty I mean the right to do anything which does not interfere with the happiness of another. By intellectual liberty I mean the right to think right and the right to think wrong. Thought is the means by which we endeavour to arrive at truth. If we know the truth already we need not think. All that can be required is honesty of purpose. You ask my opinion about anything; I examine it honestly, and when my mind is made up, what should I tell you? Should I tell you my real thought? What should I do? Here is a book put into my hands. I am told it is the Koran; that it was written by inspiration. I read it, and when I get through, suppose that I think in my heart and in my brain, that it is utterly untrue, and you then ask me, "What do you think?" Now supposing that I live in Turkey, and have no chance to get any office unless I am on the side of the Koran, what should I say? Should I make a clean breast and say that upon my honor I do not believe it? What would you think then of my fellow citizens if they said: "That man is dangerous, he is dishonest."

Suppose I read the book called the Bible, and when I get through I make up my mind that it was written by men, a minister asks me "Did you read the Bible?" I answer that I did. "Do you think it divinely inspired?" What should I reply? Should I say to myself, "If I deny the inspiration of the scriptures, the people will never clothe me with power." What ought I to answer? Ought I not to say like a man: "I have read it; I do not believe it." Should I not give the real transcript of my mind? Or should I turn hypocrite and pretend what I do not feel, and hate myself for ever after for being a cringing coward.

For my part I would rather a man would tell me what he honestly thinks. I would rather he would preserve his manhood. I had a thousand times rather be a manly unbeliever than an unmanly believer. And if there is a judgment day, a time when all will stand before some supreme being, I believe I will stand higher, and have a better chance of getting my case decided in my favor, than any man sneaking through life pretending to believe what he does not. (Loud cheers).

As an excuse for tyranny, as a justification of slavery the church has taught that man is totally depraved. Of the truth of that doctrine the church has furnished the only evidence there is. (Laughter). The truth is, we are both good and bad. The worst are capable of some good deeds, and the best are capable of bad. The lowest can rise, and the highest may fall. That mankind may be divided into two great classes, sinners and saints, is an utter falsehood.

In times of great disaster, called it may be, by the despairing voices of women, men, denounced by the church as totally depraved, rush to death as to a festival. By such men deeds are done so filled with self sacrifice and generous daring, that millions pay them the tribute, not only of admiration but of tears. Above all creeds, above all religions, after all is that divine thing,—Humanity; and now and then in shipwreck on the wide, wild sea, or 'mid the rocks and breakers of some cruel shore,

or where the serpents of flame writhe and hiss, some glorious heart, some chivalric soul does a deed that glitters like a star, and gives the lie to all the dogmas of superstition. All these frightful doctrines have been used to degrade and to enslave mankind.

Away, for ever away with the creeds and books and laws and religions that take from the soul liberty and reason. Down with the idea that thought is dangerous! Perish the infamous doctrine that man can have property in man. Let us resent with indignation every effort to put a chain upon our minds. If there is no God, certainly we should not bow and cringe and crawl. If there is a God, there should be no slaves!

[As the Colonel left the stage, the audience rose *en masse*, and waving their hats and handkerchiefs "applauded to the echo that applauded again," and as he returned and bowed his acknowledgments, he was greeted with renewed enthusiasm.]

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