

I. Monacelli photo copy

"Will deliver his famous lecture, 'The Liberty of Man, Woman and Child', at Bordwell's Hall, on Tuesday evening, Jan. 20th. Mr. Ingersoll needs no eulogy at our hand...his reputation, as one of America's ablest orators, is not only national, but world-wide, and now the people of Albion have an opportunity of listening to his eloquence in their public hall. We expect a large gathering will welcome him. In order that all may have a chance to hear this eloquent orator, the price of admission has been placed at 50 cents."

This news clipping dating back to the 1870's indicates that the people of Orleans County were exposed to one of the finest orators and free thinkers of all time. Mark Twain, Thomas Edison and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were among those who idolized him, and crowds would gather to hear this "Great Agnostic."

However, no man of history has probably been so misjudged as Ingersoll for his iconoclastic philosophy. He labored against superstition, hypocrisy and in particular, fundamentalism. He pleaded for civil rights, rights of women and children, responsible and responsive government, and he espoused humane, liberal, rational and agnostic opinions. Looking back one hundred years, his beliefs place him in the vanguard of futuristic thinkers.

He was born in Yates County, N.Y. in 1833 and died at Dobb's Ferry-on-the-Hudson in 1899. He was a teacher, lawyer, soldier, statesman, diplomat, author and lecturer.

Below are some excerpts from his speech "The Liberty of Man, Woman and Child" which the people of Albion heard over one hundred years ago: "Call me infidel, call me atheist, call me what you will, I intend to so treat my children that they can come to my grave and truthfully say: 'He who sleeps here never gave us a moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word!'"

"I believe in the fireside. I believe in the democracy of home. I believe in the republicanism of the family. I believe in liberty, equality and love." "It is not necessary to be great to be happy; it is not necessary to be rich to be just and generous and to have a heart filled with divine affection."

"I hate above all things a cross man. What right has he to murder the sunshine of the day? What right has he to assassinate the glory of life?" "I know not what discoveries, what inventions, what thoughts, may leap from the brain of the world. I know not what garments of glory may be woven by the years to come. I cannot dream of the victories to be won upon the fields of thought; but I do know, that coming from the infinite sea of the future, there will never touch this 'bank and shoal of time' a richer gift, a rarer blessing than liberty for man, for woman and for child."

Several readings from Ingersoll will be used during the tenth Annual Patriotic Program at the Cobblestone Church in Childs on Sunday July 5th at 11:00 A.M. Mr. Michael J. Kogutek National Commander of The American Legion will be the featured guest speaker.

Rethinking of Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



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