

and every breath a blessing." He did not know, for he could not find him; that is what men have ever been saying, and Col. Ingersoll can find nothing but coarse and questionable wit to hurl at every expression of their endeavour to find that God whom he thinks may be on some far off shore.

A strange turn of argument was given by this champion of atheism, whose god is beauty and whose heaven is pleasure. Having stated that an eternal and infinite God is an absurdity and impossible, he slays the dead by recounting some of the theories men held about God—that he allowed men to starve—pulled up corn and blasted fruit in order to bring about a famine—permitted all sorts of crimes to be perpetrated and never interfered. He gave us a fancy picture something after this fashion:—You land on an island. You meet a man, and ask him what sort of a Governor they have in that place? "Oh, pretty good," he answers. "Powerful?" "Yes, all-powerful." "Wise?" "Wise! yes; he knows not only all we do, but everything we think." "Ah! pretty good place to live in probably." But as you pass along a family is starving, and you ask in amazement, "How is this? does the Governor know of it?" "Yes, knows all about it." And you see other sights still worse, until the climax is reached by the martyrdom of a woman whose only sin is loving the Governor too much, and who dies singing a hymn of praise to him. "What sort of a Governor would that be?" said the Col., and he thought he had settled the business and silenced all cavilling. The lecturer's idea is that if there is a God, All-wise and All-good and All-powerful, there ought to be no such thing as want and suffering and crime. An old idea let me say, and not much canvassed now among men. But let us give this Col. Ingersoll his way a little. He shall have a Governor after his own heart. He (the Col.) lands upon an island and meets a man, and asks about the Governor, and gets the answer as suggested—all-wise, all-good, all-powerful. A snug place to settle in he thinks. But while all are happy, all work for their living. He has a little money in his pocket, and puts up at the Windsor of that place. He feels a little depressed at all the surroundings—they are so strangely new, not at all like Boston or Chicago, and he decides to take something that will stir the blood; but no, the Governor knows that he had better not, and he must not. He asks that at least he may have this or that to eat. No, neither this nor that, for either would make him bilious, and when bilious he is likely to be bad-tempered and say cruel things to his neighbour. Col. Ingersoll must get his living, and as there is no army, and nobody wants a lawyer, he must needs turn to something else. He will farm. Being clever somewhat, he thinks some improvement can be made in the general manner of farming, and he makes up his mind to try a few experiments; but the Governor, who knows his mind, sends word that he must not attempt any experiments, but farm like all the rest, for the risk of a bad crop must not be run on any account. "Then," says Col. Ingersoll, "if I am to be treated like a baby at farming, I won't farm at all." What is to be done? The Col. thinks he will start on a lecturing tour, and goes to the bureau and says, "See here, I have a lot of pretty sentences and taking tricks, and I am going to speak in public, and it seems to me that it would be popular to lecture against your Governor here; he interferes too much; he don't let men be men, and have their own way and find out how to live; he has laid down the laws, and will take no account of our will and our ideas at all. I am going to speak against that sort of thing. If he aint all-good and all-powerful he can't hurt me for it, and if he is all-good and all-powerful he won't, so any way I am safe." But the lecturing bureau of that island says, "No, we can send out Beecher and Talmage, but we can have nothing to do with you, Col. Ingersoll; the Governor won't permit us." I can imagine with what haste the man of war would rush for the first boat that was leaving that island, saying, "I want to get back to the States; they don't do things like this in Boston; it may be right, I don't know; but there is something wrong some where."

It may seem to you that I am dealing with this matter in too light a manner, but I wanted to give you the opposite side to answer what was advanced. You can see that if men are to be men, if they are to be strong and wise, they must get it through trial and blunder and pain. We do not do everything for our children. We let them learn by experience, and if they fall now and then, or fail in a lesson, or get hurt, we notice but little the remark of some over-busybody that we ought to have prevented them from that. If children get the habit of attributing the result of their own blundering or ignorance or wilfulness to their fathers' will and law, what can you do but wait until they know better. Yes, in the olden times they said God was the author of famines and wars, and all sorts of dire distress; but what does that prove? "That there was no God at all," says Col. Ingersoll; but it would be more like the truth to say, "It proves that men had formed misconceptions of God; that they did not understand the working of laws and their own place in the universe." They could not see the unfolding of the divine plan of Redemption; they did not know their own greatness and the greatness of the world; they did not comprehend that humanity is set to an ascending scale, and from stage to stage of art, of science, of industry, and of goodness, it passes up with toil and pain until it is perfected in God. What they said of God three thousand years ago, or one hundred years ago, has nothing to do with the fact of God—no more than what Mr. Ingersoll said three days ago in Montreal.

2. The next point of attack in the lecture to which I am referring was the

Bible. Professing to trace the development of our religious idea, the lecturer told us, "and then they said, God wrote a book—the Bible"—I want to ask, who said that? Where did Mr. Ingersoll find the remark? What school of theology has ever promulgated the notion that God wrote a book? What church has ever put forth the doctrine that God wrote a book? The most extravagantly orthodox only claimed that the men who wrote these books were divinely inspired. Some still claim for it that it was verbal inspiration, a simple dictation of words, and they hold that all of it has come direct from God. But only a few in all the churches hold that. The majority of intelligent Christians hold that the Bible is made up of a series of books, covering a great sweep of time, and giving the history of man on the religious side of his nature and life. It is a history of the human struggle after righteousness, and a faithful record of man's weakness, and ignorance, and sins. It is a faithful transcript of the opinions men held, of the good and the evil they did, and of what they thought were the ways of God with men. Some stood forth in the name of truth, and righteousness, and in warning, in rebuke, in appeal, said, "Thus saith the Lord." They were men of deep and fervent piety, and spoke what they were sure was the mind of God, because, it was on the side of truth and purity. When they said, "Thus saith the Lord," they knew that God had inspired them to speak those words. When you say the Bible is an inspired Book—what do you mean? A large portion of it is simple history. Do you mean that God inspired the men to do what they did? or do you mean that he inspired them to record facts? The first you cannot mean—for the record is of sin as well as of good, and you will not say that God inspired men to do wrong; the latter may be, but it need not be; we do not require inspirations to write down what we know has occurred. Mr. Ingersoll thinks that the times have not changed since the days when men said: Take the Bible as it stands, altogether, every verse literally interpreted, every date as historically correct, and every figure arithmetically true; or, give it up altogether and write yourself down an infidel; but the times have changed. We have accepted the demonstrations of science. Mr. Ingersoll will have it that the Bible says, "out of nothing God made the world," but we know that the Bible says nothing of the sort—it puts forth the sublimely simple statement that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is not a book of science, but of religion; it is not a history, but a divine philosophy; it is not a treatise on ethnology, but on ethics; it deals with man in his relation to God, and truth, and the future. Mr. Ingersoll says: I do not believe this Bible to be a true Book, because I find some statements in it which I cannot believe to be true to fact? I can understand critical Dr. Johnson saying, when asked if he had read a book through which he did not like, he did not need to eat the whole of a leg of mutton to know if it is bad, but I cannot understand this man, who, because on a table which is laden with solid food he finds half a dozen dead nuts, will refuse to touch a morsel. Because some one wrote a story for children in order to teach them proper respect for old age, to the effect that once upon a time children had mocked a bald-headed prophet, and bears came out of the woods and devoured them—this great baby of a lecturer began to pull a solemn face, and almost cry, as he pictured the agony of the mothers who had been robbed of their children, and said—no—that cannot be true—and—and, there is no God. And then he told the history of Achan and the stolen wedge of gold, and cried again—"no, there is no God—these things are not true." And all this in the nineteenth century of common sense. I want to know, how does this affect the great question: Is there a God? Why, says Mr. Ingersoll, if I can show that a part of the Bible cannot be true to facts of history, then I have shown that the whole of it is false! Strange reasoning for a lawyer surely. But, what if we say—the Bible is true—some of it to actual history, and all of it to actual principle, the story of Achan and the wedge of gold, and the story of the children and the bears included—what then? If we say, all these things come under the caption of a divine philosophy, and that in every one and all there is teaching for the life we live upon earth—what then? Why then, the Bible is true, and we do not cling to the letter, but we find the spirit; we do not insist upon the form, but we hold to the substance; we are not careful as to the symbol, but with joy we lay hands upon the thing symbolised. Mr. Ingersoll said: "If I were in Turkey, and they were to put the Koran into my hands, and when I have read it I find that I cannot believe it? what am I to say? must I say that I do believe it when I do not?" I answer, no, Mr. Ingersoll, you must not; but, say your denial to those Turks in a gentlemanly manner. Do not insult them by coarse ridicule; do not commit a violent and vulgar assault upon teachings which their fathers lived and died by, and to them are dearer than life itself; and if you are going to assail them for their religious belief, do it in a reasonable way. But stay,—Mr. Ingersoll has read the Bible and does not believe it, because he finds that there are some very unbelievable things in it, and that Moses made some mistakes. Well, that may be, but I want to say to the lecturer, and to all here who heard him and shouted approval, read it again, just once more, with an earnest mind, and not in a spirit of mere flippancy; and search for great principles, not for small points of difference; remember that you are reading, not one book, but a series of books, written at different periods, by different men,—books containing the history of individuals and of a people, poems, dramas, sermons, confident