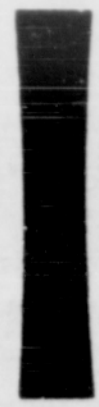


them is practical religion. The Christian doctrine of rewards and punishments is false, and the one great reason why I hate the Christian doctrines is because those doctrines do dishonor to the equity of nature by giving salvation to a man who has been a criminal all his life in return for a penitent belief in his last hour, while they deny it to one who has lived a whole life of self-saving wisdom if he is infidel to them, though faithful to his own convictions."

Much more he said in the same strain, and he concluded by giving me a copy of the Age of Reason and a few words of advice, but the latter was a superfluity. Fool that I was, I thought I knew enough to carry two men through life, not to speak of a boy.

Well, Wednesday evening came and I was ordered to get ready for prayermeeting. I objected. Objection was overruled. I wanted to argue. They wouldn't listen to argument. I wanted to arbitrate. They had nothing to arbitrate. I tried to beg off. They turned a deaf ear to my entreaty. I then refused pointblank to have anything to do with their prayermeeting. War was declared at once, and without any preliminaries hostilities began. The enemy sent out a detachment to turn my flank, but owing to his age and weight, he did not accomplish anything worth speaking of. Casualties, a broken chair, a skinned shin and a rising temperature on the part of the enemy. But in the change of position resulting from the first sortie, I discovered that I was too small in numbers to risk a set battle and the field entirely too limited to exercise my strategic manouvers to any great advantage, so I decided to make one brilliant move toward saving my shin anyhow and let the honor go by default. The general and staff were stationed at one door and the army at the other. There was a table in the center of the room. With an Apache wary I charged the general, letting fly a lovely copy of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which caught her amidstships. With a roar of rage the army came charging down one side of the table to her assistance. When he had almost reached the scene of action I executed a flank movement up the opposite side of the table and gained the door he had left unguarded. Just as I was going through the door the general let fly the staff (stove shovel). It was a good shot, well aimed and well timed, and it caught me in the back of the head, but fortunately it lacked force, and the only effect it had was to draw a few drops of blood and accelerate my speed. I congratulated myself on my escape and kept going. My fortune consisted of a jack knife, a Waterbury watch and chain, and \$1.35. That was sufficient. I never went back.

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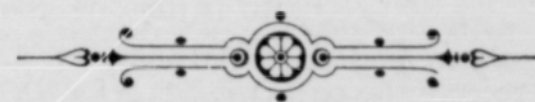
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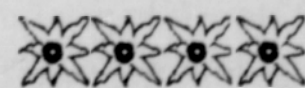
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