

### BILL NYE

Reports an interview with the Authorities at Balsam Lake in regard to Official Religion!

Up in Polk county, Wisconsin, not long ago, a man who had lost eight children by diphtheria, while the ninth hovered between life and death with the same disease, went to the health officer of the town and asked aid to prevent the spread of the terrible scourge. The health officer was cool and collected. He did not get excited over the anguish of the father whose last child was at that moment hovering upon the outskirts of immortality. He calmly investigated the matter, and never for a moment lost sight of the fact that he was a town officer and a professed Christian.

"You ask aid, I understand," said he, "to prevent the spread of the disease, and also that the town shall assist you in procuring new and necessary clothing to replace that which you have been compelled to burn in order to stop the further inroads of diphtheria. Am I right?"

The poor man answered affirmatively. "May I ask if your boys who died were good Christian boys, and whether they improved their gospel opportunities and attended the Sabbath school, or whether they were profane and given over to Sabbath-breaking?"

The bereft father said that his boys had never made a profession of Christianity; that they were hardly old enough to do so; and that they might have missed some gospel opportunities, owing to the fact that they were poor and hadn't clothes fit to wear to Sabbath school. Possibly, too, they had met with wicked companions and had been taught to swear; he could not say that they had sworn, although he thought they would have turned out good boys had they lived.

"I am sorry that the case is so bad," said the health officer. "I am led to believe that God has seen fit to visit you with affliction in order to express His divine disapproval, and I cannot help you. It will become us poor, weak worms of the dust to meddle with the just judgments of God. Whether as an individual or as a quasi corporation, it is well to allow the Almighty to work out His great plan of salvation, and to avoid all carnal interference with the works of God."

The old man went back to his desolate home and to the bedside of his only living child.

I met him yesterday and he told about it all.

"I am not a professor of religion," said he, "but I tell you, Mr. Nye, I can't believe that this board of health has used me right. Somehow I ain't worried about the little fellers any more, and they was not posted on the plan of salvation, but they was always kind and always minded me and their mother. If God is using diphtheria agin perfanity this season they didn't know it. They was too young to know about it and I was too poor to take the papers, so I didn't know it nuther. I just thought that Christ was partial to little kids like mine, just as he used to be two thousand years ago, when the country was new. I admit that my little shavers never went to Sabbath school much, and I wasn't scholar enough to throw much light on God's system of retribution, but I told 'em to behave themselves, and they did, and we had a good deal of fun together, me and the boys, and they was so square and cute that I didn't see how they could fall under divine wrath, and I don't believe they did."

"I could tell you lots of smart little tricks that they used to do to Mr. Nye, but they wa'n't mean or cussed. They was just frolicky and gay sometimes because they felt good. I don't believe that God had it in for 'em bekas they was like other boys, do you? For if I thought so it would kind of

harden the old lady and me and make us sour on all creation.

"Mind you, I don't kick because I am left alone here in the woods, and the sun don't seem to shine, and the birds seem a little backward about singing this spring, and the house is so quiet, and she is still all the time and cries in the night when she thinks I am asleep. All this is tough, Mr. Nye—tough as the old Harry, too—but it's so, and I ain't murmurin', but when the board of health says to me that the ruler of the universe is makin' a tour of northern Wisconsin, mowin' down little boys with sore throats because they say 'gosh,' I can't believe it.

"I know that people who ain't familiar with the facts will shake their heads and say I am a child of wrath, but I can't help it. All I can do is to go up there under the trees where them little graves is, and think how all-fired pleasant to me them little short lives was, and how every one of them little fellers was welcome when he come, poor as I was, and how I rasted with poor crops and pine stumps to buy cloze for 'em, and didn't care a cent for style as long as they were well. That's the kind of a heretic I am, and if God is like a father, that settles it. He wouldn't wipe out my family to establish discipline, I don't believe. The plan of creation must be on a bigger scale than that, it seems to me, or else its more or less a fizzle.

"The board of health is better read than I am. It takes the papers and can add up figgers, and do lots of things that I can't do, but when them fellers tells me that they represent the town of Balsam Lake and the Kingdom of Heaven, my morbid curiosity is aroused and I want to see their stiffy kits of election."

A Cleveland robber, caught at work, said that he had been sent to America by the St. Charles Christian society of London. He had been in Portsmouth prison for robbery. After leaving prison he was on ticket-of-leave for eighteen months, and under police surveillance for five years. Therefore, when the society proposed to give him £30 "for good conduct" if he would emigrate, "of course he came at once." He said that four other convicts came over in the same ship. To a question, he said a good many rogues were sent to America in the above way, adding: "They don't like to leave the old country, but they are allowed more money by the government if they do, and get a free passage from the Christian societies." Our glorious republic is wide and broad, but there is not a foot of it so useless as to afford standing-room for a pauper or criminal from the old world.

Mrs. Mary Lynch died at Séran-ton, Pa., last Saturday, in her 110th year. She probably was the oldest person in the United States of whose age there was accurate data. She was born in Sussex county, N. J., in March, 1774. Her father, Jacob Bunsick, served in the revolution, and her husband, James Lynch, was a soldier in the war of 1812. She was the mother of eight children, four of whom are living, the youngest being 75 years of age. She retained her mental faculties in a remarkable degree, used no glasses, and refused to use a cane when walking. Her health has always been good, and three days before her death she refused to eat, and lay down and calmly passed to rest.

"For a number of years I suffered with rheumatism of the back and hip," said Mr. Thomas Morgan, Superintendent of streets, Cincinnati, Ohio. "I was waited on by physicians, but they gave no permanent relief. It was in a fit of desperation that I resolved to try St. Jacobs Oil. My rheumatism began to weaken at the first attack of its great enemy—St. Jacobs Oil—and soon I was as well as ever."

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### A Queer Tree.

The queerest of trees must be the baobab, or monkey bread. It grows to the height of forty feet but its girth is entirely out of proportion to its height, some trees being thirty feet in diameter. An old baobab in Africa is, then, more like a forest than a single tree. Their age is incalculable. Humboldt considers them as "the oldest living organic monument of our planet." Some trees are believed to be 5,000 years old. You can cut a good-sized room into the trunks of the baobab, with comfortable accommodations for thirty men and the tree lives on and flourishes. It produces a fruit about a foot long, which is edible. As an example of slow growth in England, a baobab at Kew, though more than eighty years old, has only attained a height of four and a half feet. A kindred species to the Africa baobab grows in Australia. They have been measured, being thirty feet high, with a girth of eighty-five feet.

Mary Crowell won the literary essay prize at the Vanderbilt university, over 121 young men, and still they call woman the weaker vessel, who cannot safely be trusted with the ballot.

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An experimenter says: "I discovered many years ago that wood could be made to last longer than iron in the ground, but thought the process so simple that it was not well to make a stir about it. I would as soon have poplar, basswood or ash, as any other kind of timber for fence posts. I have taken out basswood posts, after having been set seven years, that were as sound when taken out as when first put in the ground. Time and weather seemed to have no effect on them. The posts can be prepared for less than two cents apiece. This is the recipe. Take boiled linseed oil and stir in pulverized coal to the consistency of paint. Put a coat of this over the timber, and there is not a man who will live to see it rot."

### A LETTER FROM GERMANY.

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