

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

THE CRIMES OF INGERSOLL.

JUDGE C. B. WAITE, one of our highly esteemed editorial contributors, sends to us the following communication, which we notice has been published in the Truth Seeker and the Boston Investigator :

POLITICS AND FREETHOUGHT.

Question.

How long will the American Secular Union and Free Thought Federation continue to employ at its own expense speakers to attend Ingersoll memorial meetings, who go upon the platform with a political dagger under the sleeve, to be used upon eminent deceased statesmen with whose opinions they do not agree, and upon Ingersoll himself, as soon the speaker shall have said enough in favor of Ingersoll so that he thinks the audience will bear it?

C. B. Waite.

Chicago, Nov. 29, 1900.

We learn this "question" refers to an address delivered by Clarence S. Darrow, at the Ingersoll Memorial meeting, held in connection with the recent Free Thought Congress, at Cincinnati.

We are a strenuous advocate of free speech, and even in an obituary notice, or an address delivered at a memorial meeting of the dead, we contend it is right and proper to note any actual defects in the character of the distinguished individual whose memory we are considering; but such defects, to entitle them to such notice, must be of so serious a nature that they greatly damaged the life-work of the deceased and brought more or less disgrace to the cause that he advocated, and shame and sorrow to his friends and co-workers; and then such reference should not be made for the purpose of tarnishing the character of the dead, but as a warning to the living. Did Colonel Ingersoll have any such defects of character? What are the serious charges that Mr. Darrow brings against the noted Agnostic? We learn that they are these: That he made the speech that put in nomination James G. Blaine for the office of President of the United States, and that he delivered a memorial oration on Roscoe Conkling. Who were these two men whose characters are thus brought in question by Mr. Darrow? They are the two ablest statesmen this country has produced since Henry Clay and Daniel Webster were in the political field.

We had it from as good authority as Col. Ingersoll that in his re-

ligious views James G. Blaine was an Agnostic—that he perfectly agreed with Ingersoll in his religious views, and we remember that his not being a Christian was brought up against him when he was running for the Presidency. As to Roscoe Conkling, we were quite well acquainted with him for some years—meeting him often in the courts, when we were practicing law in Syracuse, N. Y., and we learned then that he, too, was a skeptic in religion, never having joined any church or professed the Christian religion. Conkling's father was an Atheist, and for many years was a subscriber to the Boston Investigator, and Roscoe was therefore brought up in Liberalism. The great political crime that Roscoe Conkling committed was in refusing to bow the knee at the dictation of the only preacher President that this country ever elected.

From our personal acquaintance with Conkling we think Col. Ingersoll described his character correctly when he said, in his memorial oration :

Roscoe Conkling was a man of superb courage. He not only acted without fear, but he had that fortitude of soul that bears the consequences of the course pursued without complaint. He was charged with being proud. The charge was true—he was proud. His knees were as inflexible as the "unwedgeable and gnarled oak," but he was not vain. Vanity rests on the opinion of others; pride on our own. The source of vanity is from without—of pride from within. Vanity is a vane that turns, a willow that bends with every breeze; pride is the oak that defies the storm. One is cloud—the other rock. One is weakness—the other strength.

This imperious man entered public life in the dawn of the reformation, at a time when the country needed men of pride, of principle and courage. The institution of slavery had poisoned all the springs of power. Before this crime ambition fell upon its knees—politicians, judges, clergymen and merchant princes bowed low and humbly, with their hats in their hands. The real friend of man was denounced as the enemy of his country—the real enemy of the human race was called a statesman and patriot. Slavery was the bond and pledge of peace, of union and national greatness. The temple of American liberty was finished—the auction block was the corner-stone.

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He abhorred the Pharisee and loathed all conscientious fraud. He had a profound aversion for those who insist on putting base motives back of the good deeds of others. He wore no mask. He knew his friends—his enemies knew him. He had no patience with pretense—with patriotic reasons for unmanly acts. He did his work and bravely spake his thoughts.

Sensitive to the last degree, he keenly felt the blows and stabs of the envious and obscure, of the smallest, of the weakest, but the greatest could

not drive him from conviction's field. He would not stoop to ask or give an explanation. He left his words and deeds to justify themselves. He held in light esteem a friend who heard with half-believing ears the slander of a foe. He walked a highway of his own and kept the company of his self-respect. He would not turn aside to avoid a foe—to greet or gain a friend. In his nature there was no compromise. To him there were but two paths—the right and the wrong. He was maligned, misrepresented and misunderstood—but he would not answer. He knew that character speaks louder far than any words. He was as silent then as he is now—and his silence better than any form of speech refuted every charge.

He was an American, proud of his country, that was and ever will be proud of him. He did not find perfection only in other lands. He did not grow small and shrunken, withered and apologetic, in the presence of those upon whom greatness had been thrust by chance. He could not be overawed by dukes or lords, nor flattered into vertebrateless subserviency by the patronizing smiles of kings. In the midst of conventionalities he had the feeling of suffocation. He believed in the royalty of men, in the sovereignty of the citizen, and in the matchless greatness of this Republic.

But we suppose the real crime of Ingersoll, with Mr. Darrow, is the fact that he was a Republican in his political views. But the time was, before the civil war, when Ingersoll was a Democrat, but when a large majority of that party joined the South in its attempt to break up the Union. Col. Ingersoll left that party—the party that once made him their candidate for Congress—and joined the then party of freedom, and not only joined the party but enlisted in the Federal army and put his life in jeopardy to save the Union.

The Liberal papers report that Mr. Darrow made a most eloquent speech at Cincinnati, and some compare him to Ingersoll as a brilliant orator, and we are glad to learn the fact, for now that the great, unequalled orator is gone, who so eloquently championed our cause, we are much in need of men, and women, too, who are gifted with attractive and eloquent speech, and as for myself I care not whether they be Democrats or Republicans, rich men or poor men—the important thing is that they be honest advocates of Free Thought and the Religion of Humanity.

And now we desire to submit to Mr. Darrow this question: If it should come to pass, in the future, that Clarence S. Darrow should prove to be the man to take the mantle of Ingersoll: if in the years to come he should improve in the power of expression until thousands should gather in our largest halls and theaters to listen to his burning words in favor of the great cause of Universal Mental Liberty and the Religion of Humanity, and then, after he had spent a long life in the cause he loved, he at last was compelled, by death, to retire to that bourne from which no trav-

eler returns, and the friends that he left behind him should assemble to pay a tribute to his memory, suppose at that gathering some hot-headed Republican, who was also an earnest and eloquent Freethinker, should in his oration bring it up against the departed Darrow as a crime that in his lifetime he was a zealous advocate of the Bryan heresy of silver, at 16 to 1, and also of that other political doctrine of Henry George, known as the "Single Tax." We want to ask Mr. Darrow if he thinks that would be a proper subject to discuss on that solemn occasion? To quote Ingersoll's noted expression: "Let us be honest."
