

for fun," are capable of being interested in a very silly species of amusement. Those who place any dependence in the "fortunes" told by newspapers will generally be found to have low, retreating foreheads, and a corresponding poverty of brains and purse. Fortune-telling, like the vices of drinking and smoking, seems to flourish by being exposed and condemned.

THE VACANT LOT REMEDY.

Living Issues suggests an ordinance requiring owners of vacant lots in this city to keep them clear of weeds, for the purpose of compelling land speculators to cultivate the lots, or allow others to do so. The alleged object of this is to abolish poverty in the city. The paper claims that there is vacant land enough within the corporate limits to feed every needy family in the city, and that there consequently is no need for those without employment to go out into the country and take up land.

Without discussing the question of the propriety of compelling people to plant potatoes or sow wheat on their vacant lots, it may be asked of what real benefit would that be to the class of people referred to, except as a temporary means of bridging them over a deep place? What they need is an opportunity to establish themselves somewhere, not in a vacant lot, the price of which may be beyond their reach, but in the country where there is an opportunity for energy and brains to build a home, secure a permanent living and independence. The Pingree potato patch plan may have much to recommend it from a charitable point of view, but when the question is of devising a scheme by which the employment question is to be settled permanently, the vacant city lots are not to be depended on.

The argument in behalf of the unemployed is significant as showing the shallowness of some modern propositions to remedy a serious condition. While claiming to be radical, they touch only the surface. While professing to remove evils they aggravate them by arraying class against class and preparing the way perhaps for a destructive combat.

SANITATION

According to Dr. Dalby, the retiring head of the health department, the City Council has not made adequate provision for the proper cleaning of the city. The "News" is not prepared to say how well founded this representation is, but it hopes that the City Council will see that it has no basis at all in future. While every taxpayer desires economy in the management of the affairs of the city, not one of them possessing good judgment or ordinary intelligence, to say nothing of sentiments of philanthropy, will desire to see economy carried so far that the health of the people will not be properly guarded.

To allow sickness to spread among the inhabitants of the city would be a deplorable way of relieving the taxpayers; it would not only add to their financial burdens, but it would occasion much suffering and death. The mayor of Johnstown, Pa., in order to present, in cogent form, the arguments in favor of more perfectly protecting the water supply of that city, prepared the following report on an epidemic of typhoid fever that took place in it:

"During the last year there have been twenty-one deaths from typhoid fever in Johnstown. At the average rate of mortality from typhoid in that city, twenty-one deaths represent two hundred cases of fever. It is estimated that

the cash value to the community of the average life is \$2,000. The average cost of burial at Johnstown is \$30. The average duration of a case of typhoid that recovers is forty-three days in Pennsylvania; the average value of the patient's time is \$1 a day, and the average cost of medical attendance and nursing is \$30 on a very low estimate. So that the Johnstown account stands thus:

Value of twenty-one lives at \$2,000.....	\$42,000
Twenty-one burials at \$30.....	630
Two hundred cases, losing forty-three days at \$1 a day.....	8,600
Attendance and nursing, \$30 a case.....	6,000

Cost of typhoid fever to Johnstown, 1896.....\$57,230

"If it were proposed that some one should be given the privilege of coming into the community and levying a tax on the people equal to the cost of a preventable disease for one year, there would be a general uprising. But if the community could substitute such a tax for the cost of a preventable disease, it would be the gainer. The tax imposed by preventable disease is one that should not be endured because it need not be endured."

What authority is relied upon for fixing "the cash value to the community of the average life" at \$2,000, is not stated. As a rule parents would not give the life of a child, nor would children give the life of a parent, for so small a sum; and in railroad damage suits a human life is usually reckoned at \$5,000 and up. As to the other items in the report, it may be said that they also are all very conservative, and the report as a whole no more than fairly states the cash cost of the epidemic.

The breaking up of winter and the sweating, steaming and fermenting of the piles of filth and garbage that have been accumulating for months past, will begin with the advent of warm weather. By all means the city should be cleaned, and all its back yards should be renovated. Disease comes from germs and they come from filth. Cleanliness is akin to godliness and indispensable to health; and a reasonable force of men and suitable measures should be provided for the coming spring cleaning under the auspices of the health department.

A MOMENTOUS CRISIS.

Dr. Isidore Singer, a noted Jewish scholar and author, recently made a most remarkable statement regarding the Mosaic religion in its present status. The great question of the day, he says, is this: "Can and ought Judaism to continue its existence in modern times upon those bases which have served as its foundation in the past? If not, what new form shall Judaism be made to assume in order to advance both the general progress of humanity and the welfare of our children and grand children?"

The doctor notes that the children of his people are disinclined to espouse and suffer for those principles which were dear to their ancestors, and the consequence will be that those principles in the near future will cease to be more than historical memories. He calls attention to the fact that the Hebrews in the past were grouped about the Torah and the Talmud, literary works regarded as of divine origin; at present the contact of the Jews with Christian society and with the life of the nineteenth century, has dealt, he says, a mortal blow to Judaism; the observance of the Sabbath and the numerous rites have become a burden, while a critical study of the Old Testament and the comparative history of religions have shaken the faith of the

people regarding the origin of the sacred books, until parents find themselves unable to answer the questions of their children, leaving the latter to extricate themselves as best they can from the maze of skepticism in which they have been caught. He concludes as follows:

"It is for us who still belong to a generation which has both seen and lived the ancient religious life of the parents, to determine whether we shall in our turn transmit to our offspring that 'Ez Chayim,' that 'Tree of Life,' which served as the mainstay of our ancestors in the darkest periods of their existence, or whether we shall base the religious education of our descendants upon the famous 'help thyself' principle. If the latter be our choice, let us at least have the courage to carry out that principle to its logical conclusion; let us then say to our children in all frankness: 'Our religion, the religion of your elders, does not accord with your ideas. We have neither the power nor the desire to impose it upon you. Make your peace with your God and your conscience as best you can,' and, that said, let us cease to erect new synagogues, let us close our seminaries of theology, and let us disintegrate, little by little, our ancient communal organizations."

The whole trend of the argument reveals the fact that in the opinion of the foremost Jewish thinkers the nation is approaching one of the most momentous crises of its history. And what renders the situation still more serious is the other fact that modern Christianity offers no solution of the questions that confront a perplexed adherent of Judaism. The Christians are in a similar situation to that of their Mosaic brethren. Uncertainty regarding vital truths marks the creeds; skepticism alternates with blind superstition; unbelief in scientific discoveries invades the institutes of learning and the pulpits. The result is that although the prevalent Christianity offers to make the "burdens" of Judaism easier in most respects, it has no real resting-place for the weary wanderer. The greatest mistake of the Hebrews would be to discard the religion for which their fathers suffered for the various creeds that really received their seal at a time when pagan philosophy was substituted for primitive Christianity. It would amount to a calamity to them, if not to the whole human race.

Judaism still has within easy reach the principles of truth which ultimately are to supply power for the regeneration of the world. It is impossible to study the Torah, or law, without being impressed with this fact. When all the various traditions of men are set aside and we penetrate through the complex ceremonial rites and behold in their full significance the moral precepts, the statutes relating to property, to debt, to warfare, to courts of justice and various social relations between man and man, we can understand the saying of one of the New Testament writers, himself a Jew: "For if the casting away of them [the Hebrews] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" And this seems to be the future mission of the chosen descendants of Abraham in the world. It is to bring about a resurrection, as it were; a complete change as from death to life. This clearly cannot be done, however, by giving up one error and embracing another. It can only be done by returning to Israel's God in all sincerity and listening to the Prophets He has raised up in this age, as the fathers heard Moses and the ancient inspired men, and then dedicating the splendid mental, intellectual and material achievements on