

WHENCE THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE?

There are those to-day who stand up "for a rigorous and exclusively scientific culture, and would make the scientific method our guide in life; not merely in things belonging to the physical order, but not less in the highest concerns of the human spirit."

Suppose it were perfectly understood, he says, "that the life and fortune of every one of us would, one day or another, depend upon his winning a game of chess, don't you think that we should all consider it a primary duty to learn, at least, the names and moves of the pieces; to have a notion of gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check?"

In such a game, modern science tells us, are the words of eternal life; and these rules are to be gotten by learning the rules of this mighty game. The fortunate and happy man, then, according to Prof. Huxley, is he that has been so trained in his youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work which it, as a mechanism, is capable of;

cal world? Why, then, talk about a tender conscience, and the hating of all villainy, and the loving of all beauty, if a man is only a body and intellect? There are spiritual facts. We have the testimonies of all histories as proof. The best of our race—the select men and women of every age, witness to their existence. But, if there be spiritual facts, there must be a spiritual nature. This spiritual being of ours has needs peculiar to itself—cravings, higher than those of the intellect; aspirations, reaching out far beyond the kingdoms of nature. What provisions does Prof. Huxley's theory make for these?

In such a system, how vain to seek for words of life—words which can make the soul of man leap up from its deadness, with powers renewed, and go forth rejoicing! Again, in this mighty game of life, so graphically described by the scientist, the power on the other side is hidden from view. Who he is, we are not told. Spencer calls him the unknown and the unknowable, and Mr. Huxley merely styles him the hidden player. To both alike, he is the force behind the phenomena. What his character is, they cannot say, and plainly hold cannot be determined, neither can his mind be known. At any rate, the most we can ascertain concerning whatever purpose the great chess-player may have, is solely by scientific investigation of the laws of nature. But these laws, at best, only show how he moves the pieces on the chess-board. The rules of the game are rigid, exacting, merciless; and, since he never deviates from these rules, we know him only as an antagonist who never overlooks a mistake, makes no allowance for ignorance, and, finally, checkmates, without remorse, the unskilled player. He never gives us any practice-lessons, or any suggestions about good moves; or, in the perplexities of the game, shows the better way and whispers words of cheer. No; there sits forever the cold-hearted, unrelenting, unmerciful, exacting, stern player, watching for the first opportunity to force us into check. And this is the God of science—a God without sympathy for the weak and erring, a God without compassion for the troubled, suffering souls; a soulless, loveless something, that contests the game of life with weary, heavy-laden humanity. This is the God for whom the heart of man yearns, after whom go out the noblest aspirations of our being, for whom the souls of men are athirst, exclaiming, "Oh, that I might find Him, and awake in His likeness!"

Shame, that science seems to belittle the dignity of man, and do such violence to the most sacred feelings of the human soul! Shame, that the longings of the ages should be so outraged, the seekings of every generation trampled under foot, and the inquiring voices of old and young after a living God should be silenced by these chattering of so-called scientists about the great chess-player of the universe!

If this be all the God there is, a something who is neither interested in our success, nor cares for us, nor loves us, how foolish to concern ourselves about words of eternal life! If this be the one who plays with us the game of life, then let the famous picture of Retzsch stand without change. Substitute no angel of love who would rather lose than win. The great painter was right! It is the mocking fiend who plays to win the priceless stakes. In all this what is there to satisfy the immortal nature of man?

But further, this theory of highest living leaves out of the account the most startling fact of human life—sin. Indeed, one perusing the moral teachings of science would not suspect even that any such disorder pervades the whole history of man—that it enters into the life of every individual. Say what we may, sin is a terrible fact. It needs no argument to prove its existence. It is here. Here, in my soul and your soul; in my life and your life. It is here, as certainly as you and I are here. There needs to be no other proof. No man can reason it out of existence—no philosopher can speculate it out of the universe—no scientist can experiment it out of my soul, or your soul, or his own soul. Sin is here; and it is this which makes the problem of life so difficult.

"Culture, culture, this is the one thing needful," is the deafening cry which comes up from many quarters. Give us culture, say the scientists, and we will save the race, and usher in the long looked for Golden Age. Ah, yes, culture! that is what Athens had, and perished. That is what Paris has, and as Carlyle says, is crazy. That is what Germany has, and still is full of the worst ills. That is what England has, and yet England is neither satisfied nor happy. That is what we have, and still these spirits of ours crave something higher, stronger, purer, better. That is what this age of ours has, and withal is blind and weak, and restless as the storm-tossed sea.

WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS.

THE SECOND LECTURE OF PROF. RICH. A. PROCTOR'S COURSE.

PREDICTING A BRILLIANT DISPLAY OF METEORS—THE MOON NOT A SUBJECT OF THE EARTH—THE STARS DISTANCES. The title of Prof. Richard A. Proctor's second lecture in Chickerling Hall was "The Imminency of space."

The lecturer suggested on the start that a very convenient way of fixing the relative dimensions of the solar system is to imagine the earth as a ball one inch in diameter. Then the sun would be three yards in diameter, and the distance between the two would be 324 yards. On such a scale all the works of man on the earth would be invisible, and a powerful microscope would be required to show the Himalaya Mountains. The remotest member of the solar system yet discovered, Neptune, would on such a scale be about five miles from the sun. If the sun, instead of the earth, be supposed to be one inch in diameter, then the earth would be less than the hundredth of an inch in diameter, and situated three yards from the sun, and the entire diameter of the solar system would be about 180 yards.

Yet from such a comparatively little ball as the earth astronomers have been able to determine with approximate accuracy the distance of the sun and other known members of our system. The lecturer suggested that we may not yet know all the members of the sun's family, to which we belong, and that there may be planets, yet unseen by man, travelling in orbits far beyond Neptune.

Some of the methods by which the sun's distance is measured were then explained. The means by which the surveyors work, Prof. Proctor said is his base line. Give him a base line and the angles and he will tell you the distance of an inaccessible object. But the surveyor likes to get a base line to work from so that he shall have no angle to deal with less than about 20 degrees. He dislikes to handle smaller angles than that. But the longest base line that the astronomer can obtain is, 6,000 or 7,000 miles, and that makes an angle at the distance of the sun of less than one-third of a minute, which is more than 3,600 times smaller than an angle of 20 degrees. For this reason astronomers are obliged to say that their estimates of the sun's distance may be 200,000 or 300,000 miles out of the way on one side or the other. Such an error is comparatively slight, being in fact equal to only about one-third of the sun diameter, yet astronomers are trying hard to do away with it as far as possible.

Prof. Newcomb of Washington, the lecturer said, probably knows more about this subject of the sun's distance than any other man, and he gives us the result of his calculations of the sun's distance about ninety-two and one-third millions of miles. There is one method of measuring the sun's distance that the lecturer said he gave because it is peculiarly interesting in this country on the occasion of the transit of Venus on Dec. 6, 1882, which will be well seen in all parts of the United States. Venus in passing across the sun's disk, serves as a sort of index and astronomer stationed far apart on the earth made observations of its apparent place at given times, and the reduction of these observations gives a kind of triangulation from which the distance of the dial (that is the sun's disk) may be calculated by simple mathematical rules. Another way of getting at the sun's distance is by measuring the time that it takes light to travel from the sun to the earth.

The brilliant magic lantern views were then resorted to to illustrate the lecturer's remarks. The first two or three pictures represented exterior and interior views of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. The lecturer said he had no doubt that this pyramid was intended for an astronomical observatory, although it probably had other purposes also. It is evident that its builders were men who knew how to make use of astronomical principles, for they set the great mass of masonry four squares to the cardinal points of the compass, and did that work four times as accurately as Tycho Brahe was able to do in the sixteenth century with all his great instruments, and seven times as accurately as the Greek astronomers ages later could do it. He recently asked himself what he would do, supposing that he had the command of unlimited means and labor in order to make the best substitute for a modern telescope for astronomical observations, and after much thought he arrived at the conclusion that such a building as the Great Pyramid would be precisely what he should want.

A PLEASANT PICTURE

"There is a man," said his neighbor, speaking of a village carpenter, "who has done more good, I really believe, in this community than any other person who ever lived in it. He cannot talk very well in prayer-meeting, and he doesn't often try. He is not worth two thousand dollars, and it's very little that he can put down on subscription papers for any object. But a new family never moves into the village that he does not find them out, to give them a neighborly welcome, and offer any little service he can render. And is usually on the lookout to give strangers a seat in his pew at church. He is always ready to watch with a sick neighbor, and look after his affairs for him, and I've sometimes thought he and his wife keep house-plants in winter just for the sake of being able to send little bouquets to invalids. He finds time for a pleasant word for every child he meets, and you'll always see them climbing into his one-horse wagon when he has no other load. He really seems to have a genius for helping folks in all sorts of common ways, and it does me good every day just to meet him on the street."

THE HILDESHEIM FIND.

In the year 1868 some Prussian soldiers, who were digging the ground at Hildesheim for a German military purpose, came upon a number of silver vessels—cups, vases, dishes, a tray, parts of a candelabrum, and other articles of table furniture of the most elegant description. Although the general character of the workmanship is the same throughout, they do not appear to all belong to the same period, the oldest dating, perhaps, from the first century, the other pieces a century or two later. At first the real historic value of the treasure was hardly appreciated, but when examination showed them to belong to a high period of Roman art in metal the importance of the discovery was realized, and after being partially restored they were lodged in the Museum of Berlin, where they now rest.

This "Treasure of Hildesheim," as it is called, numbers thirty pieces and conjectures as to their original ownership have been various. Being evidently the work of master Roman smiths it is difficult to account for their having been taken so far away from the Imperial City, although the theory has been advanced that they may have been a part of the treasure of some great religious house to which they had been contributed or again that they may have belonged to some Roman diplomat traveling on a mission into Germany, or of the camp equipage of a general in command of troops, from either of whom they might have been plundered and then concealed and the record of them lost or in time forgotten. But at all events they constitute a valuable accession to antique art work, and how or why they were transported to Hildesheim is a matter of comparatively little importance to us. The most beautiful piece is the one we have illustrated here, a bowl with flower ornamentation on the outside presenting an appearance from the side not unlike a water lily and enriched within with a splendid figure of Minerva and a fringe formed of modifications of the Grecian honey suckle. All the pieces of the treasure have been reproduced by Messrs. Chrisoffle & Co., of Paris, who made the most admirable fac similes of those interesting objects. — National Repository for November.

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Views representing the comparative size of the sun and the various planets were passed rapidly across the screen, and the spectators were asked to observe how very much some of the spots that it requires a telescope to show on the sun exceed the earth in size.

The lecturer then proceeded to show that, while the whole solar system is the domain of the sun, ruled by him, there are smaller domains within this great system which are ruled by the planets. The earth for instance, has a domain within which she rules supreme. The boundary of this domain is the place where the attractive power of the earth exactly balances that of the sun. This place is 150,000 miles from the earth; so that the diameter of the earth's domain is about 300,000 miles. From this results a curious fact. It seems that the moon, which we have been accustomed to regard as a subject of the earth, is really an independent planet, since it lies entirely outside the limits of the earth's domain. So we cannot claim that the moon belongs to us, for she is clearly beyond the jurisdiction of our globe. This is not the case with the moons of any other of the planets. The domain of Jupiter is 29,000,000 miles in diameter, and his four moons all fall far within it. The domain of Saturn is also 29,000,000 miles in diameter, and as his eight moons all lie far within that distance, he keeps them well in hand. So all the planets that have moons govern them independent of the sun, except the earth, and her moon owes allegiance not to the

earth but to the sun himself. She is not the inferior but the peer of the earth. Prof. Proctor next spoke of the meteor systems. He said that he had recently been led to adopt the opinion that some of the meteoric stones that fall upon the earth had their origin in the earth itself, in the youthful volcanic period of her existence years ago. Since then they have swung in i s orbits around the sun, and, as the earth's orbits crosses theirs, it happens that at times some of them are called by her attraction, and so they cease their wand'ring, and fall to rest on the bosom of their mother. On the night of Nov. 27th, the lecturer said, we may expect to see a brilliant display of meteors radiating from a point near the star Gamma, in the right foot of the constellation Andromeda, which is now nearly overhead at about 10 o'clock at night. It has been ascertained that meteors follow in files in the track of comets. In 1846 Biela's comet was observed to split in two. The parts each had a head and a tail, and they rushed on side by side, now one appearing the brighter and now the other, until they disappeared. In 1852 they were yet keeping up their swift race, but they had very much changed in form. In 1859 their perihelion passage was too near the sun to permit them to be observed. In 1865 when they should have been seen again, they could not be found. They were also missed in 1871. But it had occurred to Alexander Herschel and to Prof. Proctor that at the time when the earth crossed the path of those comets it would be well to look out for meteors. Meteors were looked for, and a very brilliant display was seen on Nov. 27. A German astronomer was so sure that this display was caused by the earth meeting the fragments of the missing comets that he telegraphed to an observer stationed in the southern hemisphere, "Biela touched the earth Nov. 27th. Look out for it in the opposite quarter." The astronomer looked in the direction indicated, and saw a patch of light, like a cloudlet of little stars, moving rapidly across the heavens. It sped on until it disappeared. It had come rushing out of the north and disappeared in the south. Prof. Proctor thinks that the great mass of the dissipated comet did not meet the earth, but it passed so close that the outlying parts of the cluster touched the earth.

CONTINUE IN PRAYER.

A tree does not always drop its fruit at the first shake you give it. Shake it again man; give it another shake! And sometimes, when the tree is loaded, and is pretty firm in the earth, you have to shake it to and fro, and at least plant your feet, and get a hold of it, and shake with might and main, till you strain every muscle and sinew, to get the fruit down. And that is the way to pray. Shake the tree of life until the mercy drops into your lap. Christ loves for men to be hard. You cannot be too importunate. That which might be disagreeable to your fellow creatures when you beg of them will be agreeable to Christ. O! get ye to your chambers, ye that have not found Christ! to your bedchambers, to your closets, and seek the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near!" May the Spirit of God constrain you to pray. May he constrain you to continue in prayer. Jesus must hear you. The gates of heaven are open to the sturdy knocker that will not take a denial. The Lord enable you now to plead that at last you will say, "Thou hast heard my voice and my supplication; thou hast inclined thine ear unto me; therefore will I call upon thee as long as I live."

We were exposed last week to a pitiless storm, that wet our feet and stockings, and indeed our person all over. In fact we took a cracking cold, which brought sore throat and severe symptoms of fever. The good wife asserted her authority, plunged our feet into hot water, wrapped us in hot blankets, and sent our faithful son for a bottle of AYER'S CURE. It is a splendid medicine, pleasant to take, and did the job. We slept soundly through the night and awoke well the next morning. We know we owe our quick recovery to the Pectoral, and shall not hesitate to recommend it to all who need such a medicine.—Tehuacana (Texas) Presbyterian.

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