

A FEW WORDS TO A PREACHER.

FRIEND D.—Thee seems to deride the doctrine of evolution, and asks me to give thee one case of one species becoming another, and to point out the connecting link between the man and monkey. I must confess to some surprise at a person of thy intelligence asking such silly questions. Don't thee know that nature never takes sudden leaps? that all her changes are the slow growth and accretion of the ages? So gradual, quiet and imperceptible, as to seem ever the same from day to day, yet in summing up and comparing the result at different epochs or ages, we find strange and wonderful transformations. We hold a little babe in our arms to-day—to-morrow it is still apparently the same, and so on through several to-morrows, each day showing no perceptible alteration, yet when we look back after a few weeks we know it has changed. Years pass off, and still each day is as yesterday, but somehow the child has become a man, full grown and well developed. An evolution performed so gradually that none saw its daily progress. Yet there was a time when, in the fetus of that child, no scientist could discern any difference between it and that of a fish of the sea. Are not all things evolutions? science, art, religion, philosophy, mechanics, vegetable and animal growths? What are the present patent steam plows but an evolution of the crooked sticks of our ancestors? What is the big Corliss engine but an improvement of the tea kettle of Watts? What is the great clock that runs a hundred years without winding but an evolution of the water clock, or the hour glass of a few years ago that had to be turned upside down every sixty minutes. What are our wool-carding machines, with all their multiplicity of cylinders, rollers, wheels, bolts and bands, but an evolution from carding with the thumb and fingers, or with hand cards? What are our large, fine apples of to-day but an evolution from the little, sour, bitter crab of the tree which good old Mother Eve, in her desire for knowledge, robbed of a portion of its luscious (?) brethren? What are all our best flowers, fruits, and vegetables but evolutions, hybrids, and improvements? Do we not get our best race-horses by a process of evolution? It is but a few years since a 2:40 horse was thought to have reached the acme of equine speed; but that has been so much surpassed that it is impossible now to guess at what point the maximum will ultimately be found. The first men walked on all fours, as a baby now creeps, but evolution gave them lightning cars and swift balloons, and who shall say that they may not some day outstride the winds themselves? Once men had no real language, but were only able to utter coarse, uncouth sounds; now they can converse in softest, sweetest music through the telephone, and be heard from city to city, even as face to face. And was any step of these a leap from one point to another—from one species to another? Nay, in the "mills of the gods" a thousand million of years are as but a second of time with us, and though the "missing links" may never all be found, yet that will not disprove the great fact that all nature is an evolution! Men are but just beginning to reason upon natural principles. They are just dropping the idea that gods did all, created all, and moved all, and therefore it may be ages ere the science of evolution will be fully understood or explained; but year by year the "missing links" grow less and less, thus proving we are on the right road, while year by year your proofs and facts, or what you once deemed such, grew weaker and weaker, "smaller by degrees and beautifully less" and your "missing links" more and more apparent. Your God, Christ, Heaven and hell are proved to be myths. Your Bible a book of old fables, traditions and dogmas, with a patchwork of history, romance and proverbs intermixed, and your church, creed, and faith only an evolution from ancient Paganism—and yet in the face of all this thee pities me for my "faithless, helpless condition."

Why my friend, I never know what *real* happiness was till I became "faithless and helpless," as far as all gods, myths and superstitions are concerned. But I ask in all candor if it is "hopeless" to believe that all who live are born to be happy? Happy now and here, and as long as life abideth in them? Is it "hopeless" to believe that not one poor unfortunate will ever be

lost? Not one of all the millions and quintillions of beings that have lived, do live, and will live on this, our own beautiful earth. will suffer the endless torments of a burning, broiling, frizzling, sizzling hell, ten times ten million times hotter than any fire we can conceive of? Is it not intensely selfish of any one to rejoice in their own salvation when they know (?) that the great majority of those around them are thus doomed?

Just fancy thyself living in a costly palace surrounded by every imaginable source of comfort and enjoyment, while all around outside of thy happy home are throngs of starving, freezing, suffering ones, pleading, begging and beseeching for a crust of bread and a drop of water. Thy granaries teem with their loads, thy spring gushes forth its silvery floods. Thou has a plenty for all, yet selfishly hoards it up miser-like, and rejoices that thee is safe while others suffer!

"When'er I take my walks abroad how many poor I see,
What shall I render to my God for all his gifts to me."

Yes, this selfish, egotistic feeling glows in the heart of every hell-believer and and God-worshipper. For do they not think and say God has enough for all, and could make all virtuous, good and happy if he pleased to do so? What virtue is it of mine or thine that we were not born amidst the slums of some great city and reared in vice and iniquity? Nay, nay, think not I envy thee any hopes that are founded upon such misery as are the hopes of future happiness such as the Christian faith can give. I want none of it. Give me the good old world just as it is—governed by nature's inexorable and unchanging laws, and I will adapt myself to it as best I can, and make the most of it, and am only sorry all others cannot see as I see and do as I do, so that they might enjoy to the fullest life and all its splendid opportunities.

"Look around the fields of nature,
Pleasant scenes, how richly gay;
What a home for every creature
Doth the universe display!
See the earth with air surrounded,
Ocean with her deep profound;
All with life and joy abounding,
Happy millions all around."—*Abner Hawiland.*

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THE BIBLE.

BY G. W. GRIFFITHS.

Having been honored by a request from the conductors of the FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL that I should become one of the editorial contributors, I propose, in a series of articles as brief as may be consistent with the clearness necessary to the forcible statement of facts, to deal with certain episodes in the Bible in such a manner, as to expose the fallacy of the servile popular belief in their inspiration. Should the FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL be found able, as is devoutly to be hoped, to hold its own against orthodox violence and conventional cowardice, I will beg its readers to consider each of the articles which I propose to lay before them, as one of a connected series: designed to carry out a definite system of consideration of certain salient points of the Bible, on some of which are based the fundamental dogmas of the vulgar theology, while others disclose conceptions of Almighty attributes, which should cause the orthodox to blush for their blindness, ignorance, and credulity.

It is probable that the exigencies, on the one hand, of demonstration and illustration, and, on the other hand, of space, may at any time leave a particular subject unfinished, in a single issue. In such a case the patience of the reader is begged for the continuation. But it is hoped that, after some remarks on the Mosaic cosmogony, which it may be important not to curtail, few individual subjects will exceed the reasonable limits of a single article.

In order that we may clear the ground for a fair start, I desire, in the first instance, to record an emphatic protest against the practice of styling the Bible "a book." In the sense of being