

say into the mysteries of the private life of the feminine luminaries of the burlesque stage. With the multitude, the influence of the stage is exercised in a different manner. While the villain of the play is always hissed, and the virtuous sympathies of the gallery are shown in the applause which greets each fragment of trite morality, the real lessons which the theatre teaches—so far as any real lessons can be said to be taught at all—are directly the reverse of moral, and positively mischievous. Popular melodrama, for instance, familiarises an audience with the idea of vice; and the performance of such a piece as *Drink*, if it does not actually deter from drunkenness, can only have, so far as the working men who witness it are concerned, a brutalising power. This, perhaps, may be easily exaggerated; but of the fact itself there can be no doubt. It may be quite right for newspaper writers and clergymen with a taste for theatricals, and speakers at social science congresses, to affect to believe that the playhouse is the foundation of moral instruction, and that there are certain negative moral advantages which it may possess. But between amusement, however artistic, and ethical instruction there is no connection, and it is amusement which it is the only business of the stage to provide.—*London World*.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.

Your contributor "Marib's" criticism on the "Spirit of Life" deserves attention, for it is redolent of thought. Still, if it was difficult to concentrate within two columns what he is good enough to say "would ordinarily be thought of sufficient value to occupy two volumes," it is still more impossible to answer fully the queries he propounds without wearying some at least of your readers, trespassing unduly on valuable space, and eliciting neither mild nor flattering expletives from compositors.

In this strait a union of Scotch and American subtlety must be the chosen refuge. Reply must be given in some measure by asking other questions.

In what age of the world's history has Religion been more discussed, searched into, criticised, condemned, and *lived*, than in this age? Amid so much smoke, is it possible there is no smouldering fire of that *love* which is the essence of all religion?

When the aim is to economise time and space in conveying thought, what better method is there than to assert what one sees, so that those whose eyes are already open may recognize help and sympathy, while others who are only as yet waking from sleep, rubbing their eyes, may spring up to criticise the dawn of day—to judge if it be but a passing candle or the real dawn?

Were Galileo, Copernicus, and Bruno filled with an ideal of usefulness to others—of ameliorating by their discoveries the condition of their fellows? Were they not simply honest men who dared to assert what they saw? All honour to them for their honesty. Honesty *is* usefulness. There have been great souls in *all* ages, however dark. Isolated in their grandeur, these were not the spirit of the life of their own age. They preserved the spirit of life for other ages.

Is oratory anything else but fireworks? Is it oratory or truth which seeks the most direct, simple, earnest and intense language by which to convey thoughts that burn with love of good life and true thought?

Are all men "working for a personal matter of loss or gain—particularly to avoid the loss"? Did "Marib" write that criticism of his either for loss or gain? Was it not a labour of love? Do all men find work a drudgery when they are doing it for others' gain, or to save others from loss?

Why tempt me with the "rag baby"? Is money a symbol, and not the *reality* of "labour, ability, character, in compact, portable, calculable shape"? Compared with this reality, the "rag baby" is a most uninteresting child. Still it *is* a PROMISING one—only that, and nothing more. Shall I write him an article on Finance? Perish the thought! The "rag baby" is likely enough to be dry-nursed out of existence. The soothing syrup of praise and advocacy will, ere long consign it to its last long sleep. Its well-wishers will smother it. Its enemies need not hunt it to death. Is not this a realistic age? How, then, can a "rag baby" breathe its atmosphere?

The more serious points which "Marib" disputes require, however, more serious answer. If any one has told "Marib" that we can only get faith by prayer, and that reasoning from the material facts of existence exercises no influence whatever in reaching that state of faith, surely it is not the Bible which has done so. That greatest of all teachers and preachers, Jehovah Himself, in His divine humanity, when He walked on earth, continually appealed both to reason and consciousness, and drew forth from the things known and experienced by His hearers the spiritual truths embodied in them. And the Apostle, who is generally considered the most powerful supporter and exponent of a present (yet really a past) supposed orthodoxy, states clearly "that the invisible things of Him (of God) from the *Creation* of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." It is only when we become "vain in our imaginations"—when self is strong within us—that "our foolish hearts are darkened, and professing *ourselves* to be wise we become fools." God *does* reveal Himself in the works and laws of Nature to those who do seek a rational cause for the existence of these. "The exterior natural

things are as it were a face in which interior spiritual things can see themselves; hence man has the power of thinking." The child first learns to know, recognise and distinguish between the natural objects by which it finds itself surrounded. Then the light of reason, flowing in through its spiritual being from God, forms intellectual sight or perception. As the child goes to its human father or teacher to be enlightened as to the causes of things it sees, and seeks his aid to reason regarding them, so the man who, studying Nature, longs to know how rightly to apprehend and use Nature for the good of others, turns to His Heavenly Father for light by which to read these realities of His Father's goodness towards His children. *In* Nature he finds no God. But Nature impels him, the more he knows it, to the realization of a goodness and a truth which are infinite; and these *are* God. It is indeed largely by what we know and experience in our material surroundings that we can come to see and know the perfect correspondence that exists between things natural and spiritual. To study to use things natural for good, and therefore unselfish ends, is the appointed means whereby influx of life and light to the inner or spiritual being of man alone becomes possible. Surely it is true that the Divine Word uses natural objects as the illustrative material in which to convey by metaphor the spiritual realities of will and thought. Of what use otherwise were the Divine Word to us? These natural symbols *are* the clouds through which there penetrates to us the light of the sun of righteousness. What more natural—natural in the true sense of adapted to the entire and complete laws of the universe—than that the spiritual world of *causes* should have its exact co-relative and correspondence in *effects* in the material world?

Practical scientists in this age bent upon the discovery of those useful laws of Nature which explain the causes of development in matter and can be used to transform or reform matter into higher forms of usefulness, have formed protoplasm. Yet, an honest search for the cause or origin of vivifying power in matter has already led some—will soon lead all—to the discovery that the cause of the disintegration and multiplication of this original egg is not the egg itself, but *within* it. They admit—they cannot but admit—that they are simply observing a *process* of evolution, the phenomena of matter. The *cause* of these phenomena has never—will never—be found in matter. But if these men were only in search of curious and interesting phenomena with which to render *themselves* famous, and cared nothing for absolute truth or living usefulness they would scarcely chronicle their baffled attempts to ascertain the origin of life. Usefulness *has* entered into science, and nothing but absolute truth to Natural Laws can satisfy its longings, or win respect from an age in which usefulness has become the vital principle. Scientists are driven to admit that beyond the natural, yet infilling it with life there is a separate degree of life or vitality, a spiritual substance that cannot be grasped by the material faculties of man. The merely carnal or natural mind is death—can grasp only material things which are in themselves dead—but if by the experience of natural things spiritual light is sought (and usefulness *is* spiritual life and light) it will be found. Natural Truth is the road to spiritual Truth. The search for natural truth, in order to act it out in usefulness, will always lead to spiritual truth, because the spiritual life of love to others is its animating power, its end, its aim, its *will*, its *Life*.

Surely our Lord God and Saviour in His Divine Humanity made all this plain enough. For, if the merely material idea be *all* that is conveyed by His words, such a statement as "I am the Light of the world" is (with all reverence I desire to say it) rendered into "my form shines with a natural radiance which gives men material light." We must exercise the spiritual part of our being to understand that He is the Light of that spiritual world of will and thought which is within men. "The Kingdom of God is within you"—not external, but internal—ruling from within outward, not from without inward. By voluntarily uniting our will and thought with His we can reduce all things external in our physical or material embodiment and surroundings into harmony with the life within. We thus come into the true order of our being, the will of God—our Father, Lord, Saviour—the One Jehovah, infusing His Life by voluntary conjunction with our wills, ruling our thoughts and flowing out into deeds till the external basis of conduct in material life is the pattern continent and ultimate of all our life. This is Religion. This is the New Church that already is in the world. That it is independent of, though not necessarily outside of, sect, one may readily believe and understand.

In so far as men do not yet carry out the will of God perfectly, it is impossible for them fully to know of the doctrine or to express Truth otherwise than by such things or symbols as they do know. These symbols are the clouds of the letter of the Divine Word, within which is concealed the spiritual meaning. Yet the words have been Divinely chosen, so as to be in exact correspondence with spiritual truth. Written according to appearance—that is, as it appeared to men from their own state of life—it is said that "God is angry with the wicked every day." So it *appeared* to the wicked, for natural laws seemed ever against them, and in these days they knew God as the author of Natural laws. It is also written "return unto Me and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah." "God is Love." "I am Jehovah, I change not." Love never changes to anger. The truth is, God is never angry with us, but we are angry with God, because the inherent laws of our being fit us only for love and service