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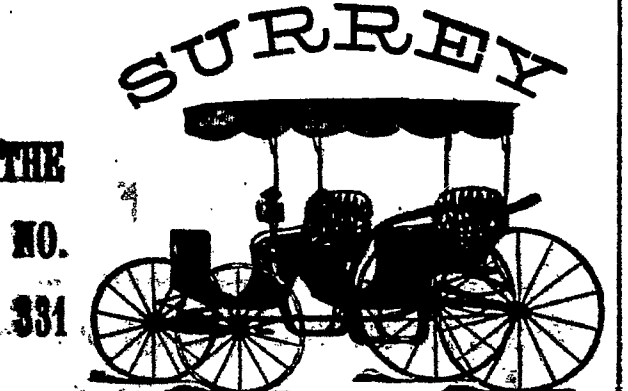
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ANGELS AND ATOMS.

If We May Believe in the Latter Why Not in the Former.

An Interesting Argument Against Censor of Scientists—Belief, Not Conviction of Reason, Necessary to the Understanding of Both Cases.

Atoms are at the bottom of all physical science. Chemists, geologists, astronomers, biologists, build up their sciences on the basis of a belief in atoms—belief, for no one has ever seen an atom. If I express my belief in angels, whom I have never seen, I have the whole pack of them, chemists, geologists, astronomers, biologists, bowling and yelping after me. I am classed with children who know no better, with women who feel, poor things, but do not reason, with imbeciles who lack intelligence, with helpless slaves under the domination of priestcraft. With a smattering of science I have some faith in atoms; perhaps with more science I should have a stouter belief in them; but I am fairly puzzled when scientific censors allow me to believe in atoms, and forbid me under penalty of a reputation for folly to believe in angels. They call it unreasonable to prostrate my intellect to what I cannot understand at the bidding of authority however great. They insist that angels are beyond the reach of proof, that they cannot be subjected to scientific tests, and that to assume their existence is unwarranted. Upon my reply, that I am content with the authority that declares that they exist, that I am satisfied with the evidence of their existence, and that I am as free to believe in angels as they are to believe in atoms, they dismiss me with a smile as impervious to argument.

On what grounds do I accept the existence of atoms? Competent men of science tell me that they exist; they themselves believe in them, and act on the belief by erecting scientific structures upon them. I turn to their manuals to learn whence they procure these atoms. Here I find that all known bodies are resolvable into some 70 substances incapable of further analysis, which are called elements. Any one of these elements, e. g., gold, is composed of an aggregate of minute particles which cohere by attraction to form the nugget. These particles are atoms and are so far intelligible. But what precisely is an individual atom in shape, size, properties? It is so infinitesimally small that the most perfect instrument cannot deal with it. An atom, then, has never been subjected to scientific examination, and our knowledge of it depends upon conjecture. It obviously eludes experiment. Are atoms material or immaterial? Material, certainly, for they are the ultimate particles of a substance, the beginnings of matter. Can you have half an atom? No, for they are the last product of analysis, and are assumed to be indivisible. Can you conceive a particle of real matter, however infinitesimal, that cannot be divided into halves? No, but scientific authorities teach that in order to form the basis of matter the ultimate particles are fixed, indestructible and indivisible. Surely we are now getting into the confines of the domain of reason. If atoms are not divisible reason halts at the supposition; if they are divisible what shall we call the parts and where are we to stop in the subdivision? The whole process begins to look very like faith, the acceptance of the unseen that is beyond the reach of reason on competent authority.

As far as depends on reason the existence of an angel has as good a basis as the existence of an atom. In the one we deal with a being that is not matter, in the other with an infinitesimal something that is not too small to cease to be matter, nor large enough to retain divisibility; an amphibious dotlet partly within the land of matter and partly within the ocean of spirit. An atom must have definite or indefinite dimensions. If it is a tenth, or a thousandth, or a millionth of an inch in diameter, or any fixed size, my acceptance of the statement would be on faith, for my reason would require some explanation of the particular dimensions. An indefinitely minute size lands you into the region of those fearful circulating decimals of school days that filled the slate with figures until you were helplessly convinced that there could be no end; but in atoms the end is the very thing required to make a beginning. Some scientists strive to evade the difficulty by calling atoms the penultimate stage of matter. Calling names never improves one's position. Besides snatching from the defenceless atom the privilege of being the last, or first, it leaves its constitution precisely where it was, with the addition of a doubt whether it is the last stage but one, two, or three. It shoves the difficulty without solving it. Atoms develop a further strain on the reasoning faculties. The 70 elementary bodies imply 70 different kinds of atoms. Although now rarely met with except in combination, theory supposes them to have existed separately anterior to their compounds, e. g., hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, before water and air. To be convinced of their existence my reason requires to understand how they came to be 70 or any definite number, how the difference between one and another arose—difference of density, expansion, qualities, etc. Again, what determines their combination? Why should an atom of oxygen be so sociable and ready to pick up with any companion, while others stand aloof refusing all communication, except with a select few? Be the number of elements few or many, the same difficulty holds. In the theory that atoms originally were uniform, it is equally difficult to account for their separation into 70 kinds. What determined the devolution of an atom of gold and an atom of oxygen from a common atom? What qualities in the common atom enabled it to produce 70 different kinds with varying qualities? All this I cannot understand, nor is any explanation offered that my reason can fathom. If I accept the doctrine of atoms it is not from the conviction of my reason, for I am launched into the regions that my reason cannot penetrate, not having sufficient data for a conclusion. Hence my acceptance of angels, and my acceptance of atoms rests on the same basis, that of faith—whether human or divine is a further question. In both I assent on competent authority to what my reason cannot understand.

Granting the 70 kinds of atoms, either originally existing or developed from a uniform atom, my reason further demands an explanation of their coalescing together into substances elementary or compound. Supposing the atoms somehow in existence, what power or properties had they to enable them to start? The complication of the arrangement into composite substances implies extreme intricacy and multiplicity of movement. Starting with a determinate number of atoms, for science teaches that the whole amount has neither diminished nor increased, my reason fails even to conjecture any process by which they all arrange themselves in their proper places. Imagine a limitless cosmic chaos, the term applied to the original state of things, extending from the farthest fixed star in the Zenith to the farthest fixed star in the Antipodes, and to the farthest fixed star all round the horizon, and that immense space crowded with the 70 kinds of atoms. Can imagination, much less reason, devise any process by which they could by their own power dispose themselves so as to ultimately form sun, moon, and stars in all their greatness, minuteness, and variety of structure? The mere assumption of the existence of atoms does not satisfy reason unless in some way their nature is explained so as to show how they come to fulfill their purpose. It is simple enough to assert that a nugget is composed of a multitude of atoms of gold clinging together by cohesion, or that water is composed of atoms of hydrogen and oxygen in fixed proportions.

Testing Congregational Candidates. When a man applies for an ordinary situation in the lay world, he is often compelled to represent his talents and achievements in glowing colors, and the shrewd employer will generally deduct a considerable percentage for exaggeration and self-appreciation rendered necessary by the exigencies of competition. That is all considered quite consistent with commercial morality, but when we turn to the religious ministry we look for a higher standard. The candidate for the cure of souls should not be required to blow his own trumpet; his qualities should be discovered by others rather than proclaimed by himself. A circular which has just been issued by a congregational committee in the north of Scotland seems to throw on the candidate the onus of advertising his own virtues. He has to answer a series of searching questions. He must give a short account of his personal appearance and manners. Now, who is the modest minister to consult on this point—his wife, his mother, or his mother-in-law? Then he must state his father's occupation—a rather ticklish inquiry if his paternal ancestor was a publican, a circus clown, a dancing master, or of some such occupation likely to be distasteful to a Scotch presbytery—Then there is the cruel inquiry—“Voice, whether loud, low, harsh, monotonous, whining, drawing, or squeaking.” Imagine an unfortunate man looking out for a “call” with a hundred a year or so having humbly and in writing to acknowledge that instead of the stentorian utterances of John Knox he merely whines and draws and squeaks. Surely this is too much self-abnegation to demand from erring mankind. We all are inclined to have a high opinion of ourselves, and if it were not so it is to be feared that no body else would form an exalted notion of our virtues and powers. As a rule, candidates will not admit or even suspect that they are drawing or squeaking, but is it not humiliating then, and necessarily to demand that they should formally repudiate the soft impeachment.

Lay Nursing in Roman Hospitals. A painful counterpart to the miserable stories of neglect and ill-treatment on the part of the lay hospital nurses towards their unhappy charges, which periodically reach us from Paris, is to be found in various incidents which have crept of late into the Italian papers concerning the hospitals in Rome from which all religious control has been ruthlessly banished. The violent ill-treatment, resulting in death, of a patient delirious with brain fever, the beating and subsequent dismissal of another patient who had interfered on his behalf, the gross neglect by which an old man who had fallen from his bed was allowed to remain five hours on the floor before he was picked up—such are a few examples of the existing regime as taken from the pages of the Fanfulla. It must be remembered that neither in Italy nor France does there exist a class of persons corresponding to our own body of refined and highly-trained lay nurses, nor is it possible at a moment's notice to call such a class into existence. In France there is every prospect that the perpetual complaints of patients, combined with the vigorous protests of ever free-thinking doctors, who find it impossible to have their instructions conscientiously carried out, will result before long in the reversal of the policy associated with the name of Jules Ferry; but the sick and suffering Roman poor may complain long and loudly before the present rulers of the Eternal City are likely to adopt the only possible cure for the present condition of affairs.

Revealed religion furnishes facts to other sciences which those sciences, left to themselves, would never reach. Thus, in the science of history, the preservation of our race in Noah's ark is an historical fact which history never would arrive at without revelation.—Cardinal Newman. One of the noblest sayings of Abraham Lincoln has come to light in his life by Herndon. It is as follows: “Die when I may, I want it said of me, by those who know me best, that I always plucked the thistle and planted a flower where a flower would grow.”

SOME GOOD STORIES.

A Compilation of Humor Originating in the School Room.

Some Not New, But All Worth Repeating. Out of the Mouths of Children and Youths—Even Would-be Teachers Cause Amusement.

A Toronto school inspector named J. L. Hughes has put together in The Canadian Magazine a considerable number of good stories. Some of them are not new, but most of them are well worth printing, for (as the Review of Reviews observes) a good story can hardly be told too often. The following samples are culled from his paper: Out of the Mouths of Babies and Sucklings.

“Who made you?” asked a primary teacher. The little girl addressed evidently wished to be accurate in her reply: “God made me so long”—indicating the length of a short baby—and I grew the rest.”

“Who were the foolish virgins?” brought the prompt answer from a wise little girl—“Them as didn't get married.”

“Boys,” said a teacher, “can any of you quote a verse from Scripture to prove that it is wrong for a man to have two wives?” He paused, and after a moment a bright boy raised his hand. “Well, Thomas,” said the teacher encouragingly. “Thomas stood up and said solemnly: ‘No man can serve two masters.’ The questioning ended here.

The words “His Satanic Majesty” occurred in a story read in one of the Toronto public schools. “How many know who His Satanic Majesty is?” said the teacher. Several hands were raised, and the first pupil named promptly replied: “The inspector.” It is encouraging to know that she was a very young child. History and Scripture were never more thoroughly mixed than by the boy who wrote: “There was a Roman Emperor—supposed to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews; his other name was Oates.”

School-Boy Science.

Here are a few answers culled at random:

“The food passes through your wind-pipe to the pores, and thus passes off your body by evaporation through a lot of little holes in the skin called capillaries.” “A circle is a round straight line with a hole in the middle.” “Things which are equal to each other are equal to anything else.” “In Austria the principal occupation is gathering Austrian feathers.” “The two most famous volcanoes of Europe are Sodom and Gomorrah.” “Climate lasts all the time, and weather only a few days.” “Columbus knew the earth was round because he balanced an egg on the table.” “Mrs. Browning wrote poetry to the pottery geese.” This was not complimentary to the Portuguese nor to the teacher's method of teaching literature: “The blood is putrefied in the lungs by inspired air,” sociology.

A poor boy was asked, “What is a gentleman?” “A fellow that has a watch and chain,” he replied, adding, when he saw that his answer was not perfectly satisfactory, “and loves Jesus.” “Medieval is a wicked man who has been tempted.” “A demagogue is a vessel containing beer and other liquids.” “Tom, use a sentence with responsibility in it.” Tom said: “When one suspender button is gone there is a great deal of responsibility on the other one.” “What is a lady?” inquired the teacher. A very small girl answered, “A thing for courting with.” “Give the future of drink.” “Present, he drinks; future, he will be drunk.” “The plural for pillow?” “Bolster.” “Compare ill.” “Ill, worse, dead.”

Politics and Philosophy. “Who was the first man?” said a Chicago teacher. “Washington,” promptly answered the young American. “No,” said the teacher; “Adam was the first man.” “Oh, well, I suppose you are right,” replied the undaunted patriot, “if you refer to furriers.” “How did that blot come on your copy-book, Sam?” “I think it is a tear, Miss Wallace.” “How could a tear be black, Sam?” “It must have been a colored boy who dropped it,” suggested the reflective Samuel. “What made the tower of Pisa lean?” “The famine in the land.” “Now, children,” said the teacher, “we have gone through the history of England—tell me in whose reign you would live if you could choose for yourself.” “In the reign of King James,” said philosophic Alec. “Because I read that education was very much neglected in his time.” “Count twenty when you are angry before you strike,” said the teacher. “Please, I think it is better to count forty if you can't lick the other fellow,” wisely added the cautious Harold. “Susan, if I were a little girl I would study my lessons,” said the teacher reprovingly. “Then I guess you are glad that you ain't a little girl,” shrewdly answered Susan. “If you wish to be good looking when you grow up you should go to bed early” was the advice of a lady teacher to her class in hygiene. Isabel rather rudely ventured to say in reply: “I expect you set up late when you was a girl.”

A Suggestion to Teachers. Mr. Hughes concludes his paper by the following suggestion, which we commend to the attention of English teachers:

The humor of the school-room is too valuable to be lost. Every teacher should record the humorous answers and the amusing incidents in connection with her class. Teachers' Association should appoint recorders of humor, to whom all teachers should send the merry sketches of their school-rooms. An hour spent in reading these stories in conventions would be profitably spent. The publication of a volume of such stories periodically would enrich the literature of humor. The best collection of extraordinary answers yet issued is that prepared by Miss Caroline B. Le Row, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

There is an interesting addendum to this Canadian paper—A few extracts from some samples of the examination

papers furnished to a writer in Macmillan's Magazine for August, by one of H. M. Inspectors. These samples of lack knowledge have all been culled from the examination papers of young women from 19 to 21, who wish to obtain certificates as teachers.

A girl of 21, for instance, when asked from what different sources Richard the First obtained money for his Crusade, made answer to this effect: “Richard the First, surnamed, Coeur de Lion, meaning Lion-Hearted, was a very powerful king. He obtained money in various ways for his Crusades who traveled a great deal.” From the same quarter came the following lucid explanation of the particular causes which rendered the Wicliff's teaching popular: “Wicliff's teaching became very well known, and was thought a great deal of, and no doubt it came in very useful and the people were very glad of it.”

But this is lucidity itself compared with the explanation given by one of the candidates of the main principles of Wolsey's foreign and domestic policy: “The main principles of Cardinal Wolsey's foreign policy were the manners in which he attacked his enemies. In the siege of Quebec he ascended the mountains, at dead of night, when his enemies were at rest, and took the town at daybreak. His home policy was conducted in a similar manner.” Another wrote, “Wolsey was found out by Henry, and charged with high treason for breaching against the Act of Præmunire.” But Hampden seems to have been as sore a puzzle as Wicliff or Wolsey. “(1) He was one of the Pilgrim Fathers. (2) He was a blacksmith who killed a tax-collector for insulting his daughter. (3) He figured very prominently in the reign of James the First. He refused to pay ship-money and was tried by twelve bishops. He held fast to his own rights, and though he suffered the extreme penalty, he convinced the people that James was exacting too large a sum to enrich his own person.” One candidate considered the chief battles of the Civil War to have been “St. Alban's, Edgehill, Bunker's Hill, and Camperdown.” Another wrote, “Both the Royalist and Parliamentarian parties in the Civil War suffered from internal dissensions because, their baggage being all swept away, they were pierced with cold and hunger.”

Nuns for the Congo.

It will be remembered that a few weeks ago in his address at the distribution of the vacation prizes at the Notre Dame Convent, Birkdale, Monsignor Nugent referred pathetically to the order which had gone forth that the Notre Dame nuns should send a contingent to the Congo. “The Congo” is a very innocent expression in itself but it means a great deal—great dangers as well as vast possibilities for Christian endeavor. It is a wide indefinite expression, too, for the country through which that wonderful river runs contains thousands of square miles. It is to be hoped that the nuns will be sent to some corner of that vast territory where civilization is entrenched or, in plain literal language, they may be eaten up. According to M. de Meuse, the Belgian explorer, cannibalism is practised in most repulsive forms in the upper reaches of the Congo. He says that during the three years and three months he was traveling in the country he everywhere saw that human life was held in the tightest possible regard—indeed human beings, both men and women were for sale in every village for the purpose of being killed and eaten. Purchasers could come and select which part of the living man's flesh they would buy, and when the poor fellow was killed the flesh indicated was apportioned out. The victim sat down with a tree branch round his neck and was generally killed by a sharp instrument being thrust into his side near the heart. Every effort was made to prevent the body losing blood so that the flesh would be more moist to eat. What an enormous task lies before the nuns and missionaries in trying to Christianize such beings. And yet the Church has done such things over and over from China to Peru. It is not frivolous maidens such as Miss Cusack has depicted that could dare to face the task. They must be and they are women of rare strength and mind and an all pervading sense of duty.

The Late Carl Muller.

Professor Carl Muller, Director of the Academy of Art at Dusseldorf, who died at Neuenahr recently was a great artist. His paintings, which deal almost exclusively with sacred subjects, are known all over the world. His first work of note was the completion of the beautiful frescoes in the Apollinaris Church at Ramagen. In 1857 Muller was appointed to the professorship. He painted for the Prince Bishop Forster, of Breslau, as a gift for Cardinal Viale Preila, a Madonna, with St. Hedwig and Heinrich, and also a Holy Family, with St. Elizabeth and John the Baptist. His Madonna at the Grotto is in the Prague Gallery, and the Remicrus Church in Bonn possesses his Our Blessed Lady, St. Joseph, St. Anne and the Infant Jesus. His picture of the Holy Family, which he painted for the Marquis of Bute, is celebrated. The “Rose Miracle of St. Elizabeth,” painted for the Princess Josephine of Hohenlohe, depicts the Hungarian saint conveying provisions to the poor in a basket which was opened by a suspicious person, and found to contain nothing but roses. Professor Muller also painted an altar piece for the church at Altona, representing the Queen of Heaven, and an Annunciation in the Dusseldorf Gallery. Carl Muller's brother, Andreas Muller, is also a religious artist of note. His “Woman Clothed With the Sun” is held by many to be the “finest modern picture of the Immaculate Conception.”

Let us resolve, first, to attain the grace of silence; second, to deem all fault-finding that does no good a sin, and to resolve, when we are ourselves happy, not to poison the atmosphere for our neighbors by calling upon them to remark every painful and disagreeable feature of their daily life; third, to practice grace and virtue of praise.

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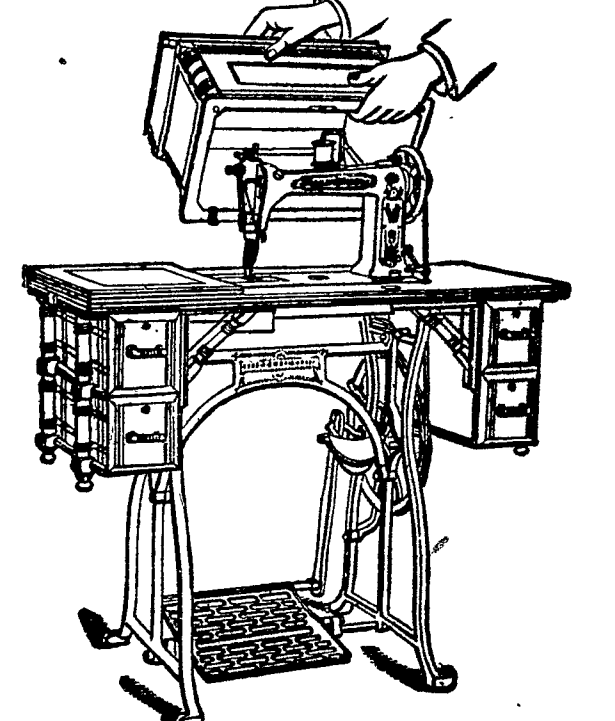
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