

The Licensed Preacher.

By Rev. Old Mortality.

MY LITTLE PETS:—Santa Claus has come and gone. The year 1898 is upon us. What have you done during the year just numbered with the past that you should be proud of? Girls, have you kept an open eye on your fathers? Have you lectured him on the subject of intemperance when you knew he spent his hard-earned money for liquor? Is it not true that some of you have a mother who is greatly in need of a "decent suit of clothes" to put on when she goes out upon the street? Do you not see that your mother is dying of shame and mortification because this father of yours is going to the Devil and taking the entire family along with him for company? I would talk to your father personally, but the holy bible recommends its adherents to "take a little wine for their stomachs' sake". This same god-written book also recommends strong drink for its feeble followers. Jesus Christ, whose father was said to be the Simon-pure god almighty of the Israelites, was an advocate of liquor-drinking; in fact, he was a moonshiner, for according to this holy book he manufactured wine at a wedding feast, and there is no account of his paying the revenue on the liquor.

My girls, should I talk to your poor, weak-minded father he would no doubt point to this Jew-made volume and request me to step down and out of my pulpit for being a meddling Infidel and a scoffer of the holy book of God. Thus I am compelled to see your short-sighted father play the role of fool and go down to a drunkard's grave, along with the 60,000 men and women who yearly kill themselves by the drink habit, which is recommended by this abominable book which is prized above all other books by distillers, brewers, saloon-keepers, slave-owners, polygamists, libertines and the vile and vicious of all lands. Wherever this infamous volume has been introduced, war has followed and cruel murder has been rampant.

Little boys, one word to you. If you wish your mother to remain a noble-hearted lady, and a shining light to the less fortunately-situated neighbors, furnish her with all the good books, magazines and newspapers that you are able to pay for. And if your mother is an up-to-date, educated woman place the Jew bible in her hands also, and by the time she has read it she will have become a disbeliever in its divinity. Soon after Col. R. G. Ingersoll had read this work of false claims he published his views upon it. As the work had been read but very little up to that date, the people brushed the dust off their bibles and read and pondered, after which they talked and wrote. And the

church trembled on its hitherto comparatively solid foundation. At this time we have two million Infidels, hundreds of empty churches to be seen in a week's travel and thousands of sky-scrapers out of a job. And now good schools and colleges are to be seen in every city, town, village, hamlet and cross roads in this beautiful country.

If your mother has not had the benefit of a good schooling it would be well for you and her that you keep this bible out of her hands, for if she be ignorant it will make her still more ignorant and superstitious, and life will become a burden to you and your good father. This book has been the means of enslaving women and keeping them in ignorance wherever it has secured a foothold.

When fifty years have come and gone you will no doubt wonder how and why it was that intelligent people of this day could believe this vile book to have been written by a just and all-wise being. And you will also wonder why such men as Voltaire, Paine and Ingersoll did not read this book and tell the world about it long before they did.

But, little boys, keep your eye cocked, for your mother is weak. I have discovered by years of observation that the best of women need a watch. The most foolish person I ever heard of was a woman. A woman who will sit on the grass and talk Hebrew to a bullsnake until that snake persuades her to climb an apple tree for its sole amusement is a little too foolish for a house pet. For further information on this subject see the Garden of Eden story. I would not dare talk so lightly to women, but Rev. Mrs. Roxey Jane Mortality is now out among the brewers, distillers and saloon-keepers soliciting ardent spirits, which she intends to send abroad for the use and conversion of the poor, untutored heathen. She mentions that "rum and the bible, judiciously manipulated, are the true weapons of the Lord." All this she proves by the bible. Well, as a preacher's wife Roxey is "onto her job", and no mistake. Perhaps you will be somewhat surprised when I tell you that she maintains that the good god of the Jews was a little intoxicated when he showed his back parts to Mr. Moses. For further knowledge of this delicate, modest and chaste procedure of the Hebrew god, see Exodus xxxiii. Some of these days I intend to write President McKinley and Postmaster-General Gary thus: "Gentlemen, why the devil don't you read this infernal Jew book and then prohibit its passage through the U. S. mails? Do you, sirs, not know that it is the most hellish compilation of obscenity that was ever hatched from the foul brains of hell-deserving monsters?"

Little ones, thus will I write to

these men, and if they pay no attention to my message, I will—perhaps I will—turn Infidel and write a book, or publish a paper, in which I will reproduce the infamous parts of this volume of Jewish ghosts, spirits and hobgoblins.

To conclude: Pets, be honest, be true, be kind, be studious, be up-to-date investigators, and you will be respected and honored by the wise and good of all lands. Amen.

Theology.

Not to know at large of things remote—
From use, obscure and subtle; but to know
That which before us lies, in daily life,
Is the prime of wisdom.—[Milton.]

The most simple and commonplace view of a subject is not infrequently the most accurate and useful one. Ask a child whose brain has never been perplexed with theological parrot-learning, when and how this world was made, and who made it. His simple reply will be, "I don't know." Ask the philosopher who has spent a lifetime in anxious researches—who has sounded the depths of polemical subtleties, weighed the result of antiquarian labors, and toiled through folios of legendary revelations—ask him the same question, and his answer will be as short as the child's. He also will give, as the only result of half a century spent in quest of what man cannot find, the reply, "I don't know."

When Socrates was accused of Atheism by his fickle and bigoted countrymen, before the tribunal of five hundred, his defense was that "while others boasted they were acquainted with everything, he himself knew nothing." But it is seldom that we meet a Socrates in this world. One of the last things a man learns is to be conscious of his own ignorance.

Others have taken infinite pains, by profound mythological and antiquarian researches, by comparisons instituted between the Egyptian and the Hindu superstitions and our own, by collating old manuscripts, unriddling ancient fables and allegories, deciphering hieroglyphics and tearing, as it were, the veil from antiquity, laboriously to disprove the divine origin of the peculiar ceremonies and doctrines which happen to be popular among us. We think it easier, and perhaps more useful, first to ask ourselves the question: "What does all this concern us?" Whatever particular meaning Milton may have attached to the words prefixed as a motto to this article, they convey an excellent and much neglected moral.

If we were gods, only of a nature somewhat inferior to those which, we are told, inhabit the high heavens, there might be some excuse for spiritual curiosity. But we are men, mortal men, inhabitants of the earth, finite beings. What have

we to do with gods, immortal spirits and infinite beings? Suppose that we could ascertain their existence, what would it profit us? How should we be the wiser or the better for it? Is it likely that we could understand their ways or profit by their example? Is it likely that their ways are as our ways or their thoughts as our thoughts? Can we rationally suppose they will trouble their heads about whether we know them or take cognizance of their doings or not? Should we be jealous or angry if the crawling caterpillar did not confess our existence and render homage to our superiority? Would it not be the extreme of silly pride and worse than childish vanity if we did? if, for instance, we crushed in our imbecile wrath the insect that spent its short life in basking in the sunbeams and seeking its leafy food, while we vain-gloriously imagined that it ought to have been admiring us and singing praises to our glory? And shall we first picture to ourselves an all-wise and all-powerful being, and then suppose him to be weaker and sillier than the weakest and silliest among ourselves?

There used to be prosecution for blasphemy: we think that the most rational ground (if any ground can be rational in a matter so foolish) on which to institute such prosecutions would have been to accuse those theologians of blasphemy who asserted God to be silly and vain enough to set great store by human adulations, and selfish and barbarous enough to put those to eternal tortures who neglected or refused to appear among his parasites.—[Investigator.]

The Strategic Advantage of a Freethought College.

The Congregationalist says:

"There is a world of truth in the remark made at the recent Methodist congress by Professor Coe, of Northwestern University, that the denomination 'that grants freedom of thought and puts the stress of its life on the development of Christian experience, will occupy a position of immense strategic advantage. It will at once satisfy the demands of the scientific spirit, and also secure itself against disintegrating speculation.' He hoped that the Methodist denomination would appreciate this truth. We trust that the Congregationalist churches will."

To all of which he it replied:

THE TORCH OF REASON is striving to give the world more and better truth than this. Not only does Liberal University grant the utmost freedom of thought, but its whole stress is to develop HUMAN experience and make the most of it that is possible, and thus it has a strategic advantage far superior to any school which limits itself by the Christian or any other name and dogma, and it secures itself against disintegration by keeping up to date. We trust that other institutions and communities will, in time, profit by its example.

JOHN P. GUILD.