



What Matters It?

BY J. A. EDGERTON.

What matters it if joy or grief
Should fall unto our portion?
If happiness is only brief,
As fleeting is misfortune.
At any rate, the self-same fate
Stands at the verge before us.
'Tis but a little while to wait,
His shadow settles o'er us.
'Tis just as well to wear a smile
And all life's tempests weather
Untroubled. In a little while
We'll all be dead together.

What matters it? A few days more,
The chapter may be ended.
Across oblivion's boundless shore
Our dreams will all be blended.
Howe'er we seek to mend our lot,
In spite of our endeavor,
We age, we die, and are forgot
Forever and forever.
'Tis just as well to be content,
Nor seek to break the tether
That binds us. When the years are spent,
We'll all be dead together.

What matters it? For when we go
New men will take our places;
And, in a million years or so,
Will come new lands and races;
And when, within some later time,
The earth dies, dropp'g sun-ward,
From out the womb of the sublime
New worlds will hasten onward.
A moment in eternity,
Our life is but a feather
Blown from us. Through the long to-be,
We'll all be dead together.

What matters it? For, at the best,
Soon ceases joy and sorrow.
We pass to everlasting rest,
Or to a brighter morrow.
'Tis but the stopping of the breath,
And ended is the story;
We journey through the gates of death
To dreamless sleep or glory.
So what's the use of sighs and tears?
The fates await us, whether
We smile or weep. A hundred years,
We'll all be dead together.
—[Investigator.]

Changing of the Chameleon.

BY B. F. UNDERWOOD.

A writer on animals and their habits, C. F. Holden, contributes a paper to the *Scientific American*, explaining how chameleons change their color.

The American chameleon, well known in Florida and other southern states, which is about five inches long and of a dark green hue shading to gray, have the peculiarity of assimilating slowly the color of the objects upon which they rest. At night their color may be supposed to be their normal one, and that is a beautiful green.

Says Mr. Holden: "There is something mysterious and even uncanny in watching the change of color. When placed on a green twig, the little creature would immediately draw itself out, extend its front and hind legs at full length, and become to all intents a part of the twig or branch, so that it was difficult to distinguish it. Meanwhile the mysterious blush of green was deepening and stealing over its back and sides, making the resemblance more striking."

When the little creature was blindfolded it assumed the same tint as at night and did not change when placed upon the most striking colors, showing that the eye was the medium through which the tints were obtained.

The first thought of one who has not made the chameleon an object of special attention is that there must be an intelligent act associated with the change, that the creature glances around and seeing that it presents a contrast unfavorable to its safety, assumes a color for protection. But the fact is, the change is involuntary, and the adaptations are the effects which certain colors have upon the pigment cells of the animal. These pigment cells vary in color in different animals, and may be red, brown, green, yellow, black, or various shades of these colors. These pigment cells are distributed all over the body, and as they expand or contract, the color of the animal changes.

Just how these changes in animals that adapt themselves to the color of their surroundings is produced is unknown, but Mr. Holden's observations confirm the conclusion that certain colors through the medium of the optic nerve produce contraction or expansion, and cause the protective tint which resembles that upon which the animal is resting. The stimulus or impression which is received by the eye passes from the optic nerve to the sympathetic nerve and so reaches the various series of pigment cells.

Canker at Presbyterian Vitals.

It is obvious, as the Rev. Dr. Cox of Brooklyn has remarked, that the Presbyterian church is face to face with a revolutionary movement within the ranks of its clergy and divinity teachers, directed against the very foundations of its religious belief. This rationalistic "leaven", as another Presbyterian minister describes it, must be expelled by heroic measures or it will surely leaven the whole lump.

Dr. McGiffert's treatment of the last supper as a simple social meal, without any mysterious significance or symbolism, marks simply the advanced position of the revolutionists as it now is; but they must go much further. If the same method of analysis is applied to all the gospel narratives of supernatural occurrences, what is left of them? Dr. Briggs prepared the way in his rationalistic criticism of the scrip-

tures, though he avoided the logical conclusions to which it led indisputably. Of course, if the bible is to be tested after the scientific method to determine its title to credibility, its whole supernatural character goes by the board. If it presents only the imaginings of men as to the mysteries of a world outside the reach of sense, and not the positive and absolute truth revealed by an omniscient god to its inspired writers, it is not the word of God, but merely a record of the groping of human intelligence after undiscoverable truth. None of the occurrences described as supernatural in the scriptures comes within the requirements of scientific demonstration. Dr. McGiffert's reduction of the last supper to a matter-of-fact meal purely is only a single instance of the wholesale destruction of the supernaturalism on which Christianity rests. His method of approach would destroy every miracle; the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the whole scheme of salvation as propounded in the scriptures and developed by theology.

This leaven of unbelief has entered into the Presbyterian church, but it has not yet been attacked squarely, much less expelled. It is working more and more powerfully. It may not have affected the great body of the Presbyterian laity, more especially that part of it at a distance from the great urban centres, and probably the older school of ministers are generally free from it; but it is discoverable among the most scholarly and influential of Presbyterian theologians, and appears unmistakably in the more important Presbyterian theological seminaries, either in frank confession or in tolerance which indicates that it is not unwelcome. The Rev. Dr. Warfield, the professor of didactic and polemical theology in Princeton Theological Seminary, is quoted as saying that nothing shows better "how deeply the canker has eaten into our church" than the circumstance that "now-a-days some Presbyterians write of Jesus in a manner indistinguishable from Unitarianism"; and the remark is sustained by the declaration of a Unitarian minister, preaching in New York last Sunday, that Dr. McGiffert "has turned on the sunlight, has dispelled the fog".—[*New York World*.]

If the church had never gone into politics, religious persecution would never have been a political proceeding.—[Ex.]

Hereafter.

If our existence is to be continued after death without these senses, what will our existence amount to? Let any man ask himself what life would be worth if he could neither see, hear, taste, smell nor feel anything. There would be neither pleasant nor unpleasant sounds or sights; nothing agreeabler nor disagreeable to taste or smell. We could not suffer, for we could not feel. In short, it would be impossible for a man to tell whether he existed or not; neither could he know anything. Could there be any heaven or hell under such conditions? How could a man wear a crown? He could not tell a crown from a hornet's nest, and would not know whether it was on or off any more than a post. How could he twang a harp? He could not tell the sound of a harp from the croaking of a frog.

If there is a hereafter, we may be sure that there will not be a heaven for the few and hell for the multitude. If there is hell for one, it will be hell for all. Nature never does anything by halves. She is often cruel, but never partial. She has no favorites. The rain descends upon the just and the unjust. The sun shines for all—the birds sing for all. The flood sweeps everything before it and shows neither mercy nor favor. The drought does not favor one and then parch another. More churches are struck by lightning than theatres. Build both alike and the chances will be equal. All things fare alike under the same conditions when the same causes are at work. All the Christian schemes ever devised cannot thwart the plans of nature. She is "whole hog" in her operations, and never splits differences to favor men, gods or devils. Gods and ghosts, angels and devils, are a phantasm. Life beyond the grave is an illusion; heaven is nowhere, and hell is played out. The bible is as much the word of the devil as the word of God. Christianity is a fraud, ministers are mountebanks, and churches are organizations to trap the unwary. He that hath eyes to see, let him see.—[John Peck, in *Freethinker*.]

Logical consequences are the scarecrow of fools and the beacons of wise men. The only question which any wise man can ask himself is, whether a doctrine is true or false. Consequences will take care of themselves.—[Huxley.]