

tion; (2) Its slight variations, with the consequent chance of modification; (3) Its capacity for transmitting new peculiarities. A word as to the first two of these. Simple and regular as the vital acts of protoplasm per se may be, they involve nevertheless more or less perceptible differences. Nutrition has its irregularities; the nutrient particles are not always seized and ingested at equal intervals of time nor always on the same side; the elaborated products are not always disposed with perfect uniformity from the circumference to the center. Variability thus appears a primitive property. As to transmission, or heredity, it is involved in the fact of the reproduction of individuals like the parent protoplasm, as it exists at the moment; thus we have another primitive property.

Nor is this all. From the union of all these properties, now numbering seven, but more particularly from the growth of the protoplasm, from its repeated reproduction or multiplication, and from its adaptation, results not the last, but the most fecund and the most general of the primitive properties of protoplasm—its power of indefinite development, that is progressive evolution.

Evolution! Without which living beings on our planet would never perhaps have emerged from the unicellular state, and which has caused the growth from the protists of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, of the vertebrates, and at last of man. Titanic power always in action, always alert, profiting by the least circumstance, yet whimsical, capricious, seemingly groping and without set purpose; employing sometimes the most insignificant means and neglecting at other times the most direct; pursuing different lines in its advance—curved lines, straight lines, crooked lines, parallels, divergents—yet frequently arriving at the same result; limited only by absolute impossibility for the time being; having but one guide, that which is good and directly useful to the present individual, and but one sanction—success!—[Science and Faith.

Says the Advance: "A special burdeu has been laid upon the Christian churches of the country to secure the expulsion of the polygamist, Brigham H. Roberts, from the next Congress. Unless the churches shall arouse public sentiment to this end, it probably will not be done." As there are ten sanctions of polygamy in the Bible to one passage against it, it is not easy to see just what ground the Advance has for proceeding against this eminently Christian practice. What right have Christians to go against Bible teachings, and thus fly incontinently in the face of Providence? Is not all scripture given by inspiration?—[Boston Investigator.

For the Torch of Reason.

How Prayers are Answered.

BY D. PRIESTLEY.

The following is from "Questions and Answers," in the last Christian Herald:

"Troubled One, Oberlin, Ohio.—Does not the promise that whatsoever we ask in Christ's name hold good now? What am I to think when my prayers are not answered?"

"Reply: God reserves to himself the right to give or withhold the boon for which we pray. It is well that he does so, otherwise we might suffer more than we do. He knows better than we do what it would be for our good to receive. As the wise father does not grant every request his child makes, so God does not answer all our prayers. Even so faithful a servant as Paul did not get his thorn in the flesh removed though he asked thrice for it (Cor. xxxv., 12-18.) What you are to think when your prayers are not answered is that your heavenly Father has some wise purpose to serve in not granting your petition, and that you should acquiesce in his will, whatever it may be."

The Secular answer: Yes; the promise is as good as it ever was. It has stood for eighteen centuries and has never been redeemed once. What you are to think when your prayers are not answered is:—that your prayers are not answered. The promise is that whatsoever you ask you shall receive. When you pray and fail to get an answer you have demonstrated that the promise is a fraud or a gigantic mistake. Jesus said, pray in secret and your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly. The modern Christian prays openly, and when he fails to get an open answer pretends that he has received a secret one. Thinking does very little good unless you observe facts and draw inferences from them. You are to look around and observe that yours is not an isolated case. That thousands and millions are praying and not one prayer is ever answered. That your prayers are not answered should occasion no surprise. The surprising thing would be if one of your prayers should be answered and thus make you the sole exception in the whole world, in all ages, all nations and all languages.

Jesus inquires whether if a child asks for bread his father will give him a stone? The most stupidly pitiful hypocrisy in the world is the case of a petitioner praying for bread and receiving the hardest kind of a stone, and pretending that God knew that the stone would agree with his digestion better than the bread. Does he think God mistakes him for an ostrich?

If God reserves to himself the right to give or to withhold, then

why did Jesus say that he would give whatever was called for? If it is much better that the prayers of the saints should not be answered, then why do they not pray him not to answer? If he knows better than we do, then our prayers are an impertinence. According to Dr. Talmage's idea, the only prayers that would stand any show of being answered would be the very humble petition that the Almighty would, for Christ's dear sake, please do as he has a mind to.

The wise father does not grant every request a child makes, nor does he promise to do so and then break his promise. The wise father would think he had begotten an idiot if his child should be crawling about on his knees begging him for grub and clothes or any necessities or comforts of life which he was able to supply.

Of course Paul did not get his petition granted. Why did he pray three times? Did he expect to worry God into acquiescence? What we are compelled to think, if we have the courage to think at all, is that Jehovah and his son, like all other gods and sons of gods are back numbers, and that prayer is a "useless agitation of the air"

"It was but a helpless case. He had seen it and made up his mind, and he turned to me roughly. 'The child will need little more of your care.' 'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek the Lord Jesus in prayer: They are all his children here, and I pray for them all as my own.' But he turned to me: 'Ay, good woman, can prayer set a broken bone?' Then he muttered, half to himself, but I knew that I heard him say, 'All very well, but the good Lord Jesus has had his day!'"

—Tennyson.

The A. S. U. and F. F. Congress.

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

I have just returned from the three days congress of the American Secular Union and Freethought Federation, and I hasten to send you such account as I can.

The number present was very small, except Sunday afternoon and evening, when fair audiences of Boston people came in to see what was going on, among them being Elder Johnson, of Utah, who has been exploiting the Mormon faith on the common. However, what the congress lacked in numbers it made up in intensity, and according to President Rensburg, was the best yet convened. Tho' little business was done and but small money raised, and no outlook for large immediate expansion seen, there was an almost unbroken harmony among participants and a degree of mutual understanding reached and outside interest, by the aid of the press, awakened to encourage all workers for our principles. Many very interesting and instructive letters from notable friends were read, among them being H. L. Green, Ella E. Gibson, Mr. Vau Ness, J. D. Shaw, and most

important and best listened to of all, Prof. Wakeman, who was declared by the chair to be the ablest exponent of our Liberal Philosophy on this continent.

At the first session the following resolution, introduced by J. P. Guild and W. A. Croffut was adopted:

Whereas, the 17th of February next is the tri-centennial of the death of Giordano Bruno, therefore be it

Resolved, that the American Secular Union and Freethought Federation earnestly recommends all subordinate branches and kindred associations to celebrate that anniversary in grateful recognition of the life and services of that fearless martyr, who was burned at the stake by the church because he advocated the claims of science and demanded the emancipation of the human intellect.

It was thought best not to be at the expense of a national gathering in honor of Bruno, but Mr. Croffut, speaking for his Washington City fraternity, cordially invited all who might care to do so to meet with them on that occasion. If not on that particular day of the month, the Sunday preceding or following will be fixed upon by each body as they see fit.

At the Saturday afternoon meeting, the old officers were all reelected, with the addition of E. M. Macdonald as 1st vice-president. The president recounted the situation in an offhand speech. Mr. W. B. Wellman, of Nashua, N. H., financial secretary of the New Hampshire Secular Union, gave an interesting talk, urging the need of harmony of action. John P. Guild read a paper on "Freethought's Mission and Liberals' Labors Today."

Fanny Allyn and Dr. Dean Clarke were delegates from the Spiritualist camp and made some interesting speeches. A resolution instructing the Board of Directors to act in regard to a Freethought and Secular Lecture Bureau was adopted.

The Sunday meeting was devoted principally to Ingersoll speeches, among them being the one delivered by Prof. T. B. Wakeman, and read by President Rensburg. The Boston Herald reports one of the speeches as follows:

"In the evening Mr. W. A. Croffut described Ingersoll as "Destroyer and Builder." The speaker dealt first with Ingersoll's private life, mentioned his exquisite sensibility, his love of art, of music and nature. Then he replied to the statement that Ingersoll was merely a literary vandal—had destroyed and had given us nothing in return, arranging the material under six heads. In the first place, Ingersoll had tried to destroy the belief in hell. Instead of giving nothing in its place, Ingersoll had offered sympathy and safety in place of retribution; for a hell of