

ANGELS, OR OTHERWISE?

ONE VIEW OF A MATTER ON WHICH PEOPLE ARE NOT AGREED.

A Man who Believes that Visions of the Sick and Dying are Not Mere Delusions - He Also Intimates that the Prayers of the Righteous Will Bring Rain.

Is PROGRESS getting too progressive? Is it gently inserting the thin edge of an agnostic propaganda? Is it destined to be the future vehicle of "free thought," in what is known as the unpleasant sense of the word? Its friends answer hopefully, "No," and even emphatically, "No!" They fondly look to see it the steadfast upholder of generally accepted truth and the friend of religion and social institutions founded upon the same. The pens that busily ply for it, often freely, for its own sake, have hitherto given many a stroke "mightier" than a "sword's" on behalf of the oppressed and weak, and against hypocrisy, high-handedness, riot, lust and pride. The founts of its inspiration have been found of pure, generous, vigorous quality, unmingled with any corrosive element of idle scoffing, and untainted with germs of insidious unbelief. Upon these lines there is a great work before it. But how dreadful if justice should develop into "bullying," plain speech into impertinence, freedom of thought into light handling of those beliefs which make life bright and bearable to poor, weary, tried men and women. Dear PROGRESS, bear with a friend's anxieties and searchings of heart! You like to make us, parsons and all, "see ourselves as others see us." You are too good-natured not to let us say, many eyes are on you, and see you in a light you may, in the rush of effort and action, not always clearly recollect.

There is a "Thomas" among your honored company—no offence to him. Perhaps a "Thomas" is a needful member, or an unavoidable member, of every conclave, human or divine. So it seems to have been. So will it doubtless be. So it is. Thomas wrote a few weeks ago, a perplexed allusion to us all, on prayer. When we felt the drought a burden, we prayed to be released from it, and "Thomas" was shocked to see the impetuosity of the answer. If there had been a tender drizzle, or a good square fog, or a few showers by way of a feeler, the matter might have passed. But such a downpour was "too thin." The clergy were trying to come to it over their innocent hearers. They must be "adapted to the needs of the nineteenth century." Though the church and the Bible say pray, though reason would say pray, and a belief in Providence the same, still we want you to understand that we don't think your prayers, or anybody else's had, or could have, anything to do with it whatever.

And this week "Thomas" is to the fore, because some poor man thought he saw angels hovering over him. He hastens to assure us that such a thing could not be, that to think such a thing could be is necessarily superstition, and that such a belief is opposed to practical christianity. The christian church, or nine tenths of it, has lately been keeping the festival of St. Michael or All Angels. She has put it into the mouths of her children to say, "Grant that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us upon earth." Yet if a dying person is vouchsafed a glimpse of those helpers and protectors near him, he must be, according to "Thomas" suffering a mere illusion of the brain.

Mind, I am not saying, in this special instance, that the man really did see what he thought he did. It may have been as "Thomas" says. But it is out of his power to prove, unless he rejects the Christian Revelation—and the Jewish for that matter—that the vision was not a veritable one; and he asserts a good deal more than he has a right to, when he deals with such apparitions in the particular fashion he chooses to adopt. Christianity is founded on "solid facts" without a doubt, but those facts are testified to, and manifested by a cloud of visions. From beginning to end the bible is a history of angelic interpositions and visitations. At the creation angels! at the institution of the olden dispensations angels! at times in the lives of all the Patriarchs and prophets, angels! At the annunciation, angels! at the nativity, angels! in the agony, angels! at the resurrection, angels! at the ascension angels!

I cannot tell why one good man is rich and another poor, but I know it is so. I cannot say why one has abundant happiness and another boundless misery, but so I have found it "under the sun." One man has a gift of poetry, another of painting, another of music, another of magnetism and mesmerism. The gift of seeing visions has been, and is, given (I believe so, and from experience) to some, though why I may not be able to say.

Can anything be done for "Thomas"? Do you think it would be possible to "arrange" a convincing little ghost for his benefit? Or if, dear editor, you are a friend of his, as no doubt you are, can you not introduce him to some charming lady acquaintance who would prove to him by analogy that there may be angels in heaven as there are on earth, and so soften his unbelieving heart.

It is true there is an abuse of visions now-a-days. The appearances we are sometimes asked to believe in are false and superstitious enough. But it seems a pity to go to the extreme of casting doubt upon what is at least warp of Holy Writ, and which being rent out would leave but rags of the fabric.

Noel Pilgrim. If you want a situation, invest 10 cents in "Progress" want.

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pronounce patients unconscious, and afterwards it has been shown that the latter heard every whisper and felt every touch. Doctors have pronounced the soul departed from the body when it was still within its fleshly prison bars. Doctors have said that men have no souls, and that all their spiritual hopes and aspirations were "illusions" and phantasies of the "brain."

But look a moment at Thomas's reasoning. He begins by saying that the gentleman who saw the vision was a good and holy man, and adds that "if ever a man deserved to be welcomed by the angels it was he." Then he admits that there is one condition at least of a man being likely to see angels by genuine goodness. Now the proverb has it "good people are scarce," and I suppose "Thomas" is not disposed to dispute the truth of the "saw."

Then comparatively few people will see angels—if angels are seen. Yet further down he remarks, "The very fact that such instances are not very common, would be enough to shake belief in them."

And again, where the mass of people are believing Christians, and where so many die of ordinary diseases like fevers and consumption—which diseases are prone to phantasies—it would be expected that there would be a great many who would see such visions. Whereas there are very few. I am not apologising for Christianity. I am only endeavouring to show that "Thomas" in his eagerness for "doubting" has pressed his point beyond bounds, and while he is quite assured, may be quite mistaken. On the testimony of revealed religion, he may be mistaken, and his "evidences" carried into other matters might carry him further than he would like to follow.

Neither am I accounting for the event—if true—or giving a practical reason for apparition. Why should "Thomas" or I be expected to give a reason for every act or movement of Divine Omnipotence?

One wiser and more gifted than either of us said, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, Horatio." (I believe the name comes before, but never mind, I am a little excited.)

Property owners who possessed wells padlocked them with unassuming promptitude, and a water famine was proclaimed. The supply was cut off from the sugar refinery and the railway, and the awful news went forth that the reservoir had given out, and until spring we should buy water by the quart.

Nothing is ever quite as bad, however, as we thought it was going to be, and by Sunday morning the diligent householder who was up betimes caught little drops of water in a pail placed under the tap. On Monday a thin stream issued languidly from the pipes, and now, with economy and rain—we shall be able to get enough water to prevent the water mark from rising too high above the immaculate whiteness of the shirt collar.

THEY DO NOT LOVE WATER.

But for All That, They Don't Want to be Totally Deprived of It.

The typical small boy, who lies night after night in his little white bed, dreaming sweet dreams of a possible paradise where soap is not, and washing is unheard of—where the dreaded ordeal of the Saturday night's tub is merely a disagreeable memory, and a boy's ears are permitted to remain in a state of nature, as far as dirt is concerned. This small boy, I say, had better come to Moncton, not "in June," but now, in October. Here will he find the Mecca of his dreams! and say with a long sigh of utter content, like the "Lotus Eaters," "Here will we rest; we will not wander more."

Not a small boy, or girl either, was admitted to the order of the bath, in our town, last Saturday night, and for the excellent reason that there was nothing to bathe them in. For milk has risen a cent a quart, "on account of the scarcity of water," the milkmen say, and the rigid enforcement of the Scott act has made whiskey unattainable.

Indeed there were parents so opposed to the introduction of alcoholic stimulants into the human system that they would have objected to immersing their off-spring in the ardent fluid, even as a cleansing medium, lest haply they might "take it in at the pores," like the celebrated Mr. Laddle, and become confirmed drunkards, literally as well as figuratively soaking themselves in the flowing bowl. But these were mainly members of the W. C. T. U. In the words of some of our popular novelists, "To render myself intelligible, I must go back at least three days."

Last Friday, a wave of fish swept over Moncton. Friday was a singularly appropriate day for such an occurrence, and never before in the history of the town had fish been so cheap. The very poorest people had them by the quart, and fish patties were at a discount. Everyone who had a tap in his kitchen had fish in abundance, and great was the harvest for the plumbers. No cold snap in winter could begin to compare with it. The fish were so eager to escape from their prison that they crowded together by the dozen in the water pipes and perished in the conflict, so that golden store poured into the coffers of the indigent plumber for removing the bodies of the slain.

Now when the citizens awakened on Saturday morning there were no more fish, neither was there any water, and those humble christians who are in the habit of washing themselves bewailed loudly, and vowed vengeance upon the water company, while those who were not in the habit preserved their usual equanimity and advised moderation.

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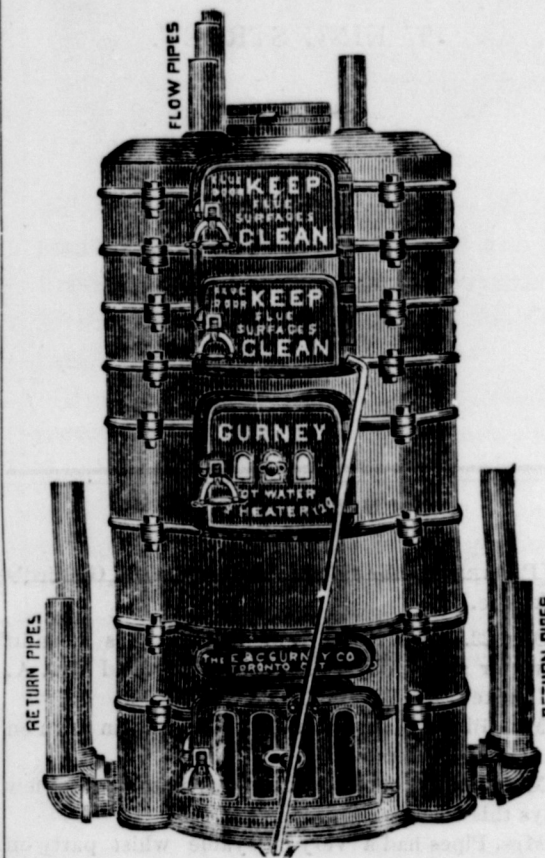
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