

SPIRITUALISM.

A Self-Confessed Fraud.

One of our common inconsistencies is manifest in the way many refuse truth and accept error. Often people who are suspicious, or skeptical, or hostile, when some teaching of solid and proven worth is offered them, will eagerly embrace not only error but assertions that are absolutely fraudulent.

Spiritualism has produced numerous instances of this kind. Dr. I. K. Funk attracted some little attention, a while ago, by his investigations of Spiritualism, and has been accused of leaning somewhat too far in that direction. Some time ago the card of a dealer in all sorts of spiritualistic paraphernalia came into his possession, and he asked his brother, Mr. B. F. Funk, to look into the matter. The latter did so, and in the October *Homiletic Review* he gives an account of his investigation.

Apparently the business was carefully safeguarded to avoid exposure for Mr. Funk was able to see the "radium expert" in charge, only by appointment. When they finally met, Mr. Funk found a bright young fellow, who was very cautious in the opening conversation. At last, as if feeling himself safe, he told freely how mediums imposed on their dupes. When asked if good and genuine mediums used this sort of means, the man stated that he knew no other kind of mediums but "good" and "genuine." He also stated that all the mediums in Chicago came to him. Mr. Funk reports a part of their conversation as follows:

"Is there no difficulty in manipulating this machinery or paraphernalia?"

"It is so simple you will wonder why it is that people do not at once detect it. When you understand it, and understand the modus operandi of handling it, you will be much amused."

"How about slate-writing?"

"Perfectly simple."

"With the tied slates, glued and sealed?"

"Yes, oh, yes. I have laughed until my sides ached after a seance at the remembrance of how easily and completely the d. e.'s ('dead eases') were fooled. To see a doting father take the materialized form of his dead child on his knee, and pet it and kiss it, and then hear the little one say, 'Now papa, I must go to; I feel I am getting weak, and then see the child slip from his lap and disappear, to the infinite surprise of all the faithful—it is more laughable than an Artemus Ward 'wax-figger show.'"

Upon Mr. Funk's pressing the question as to whether it was not all fraudulent, stating that he would not want to have a party he represented "do any wrong, the "expert" defended the whole miserable business by this sort of sophistry:

"Certainly not, certainly not; I understand. I have many such among my clientele. It is my business to help mediums make a good show. They do not do wrong; on the contrary, they are doing a great deal of good in getting people to believe that their friends who have died are really alive. I have seen mothers made happy at the sight of their dead children, husbands at the sight of their departed wives. It has

often brought tears to my eyes to see the simple faith of these people. If a man is a philanthropist who can multiply blades of grass, surely I or a medium should be entitled to praise if we cause rejoicing where there are tears. Why, my dear fellow, spiritualists are the happiest people in the world. Why deceive them? They are in heaven. It does them no hurt, but much good, to believe these things. My business is to put clever people in the way of making the world happier."

It seems to be a law of the human heart that, by refusing to listen to truth, it particularly prepares itself to receive the seeds of error. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared as with a hot iron." 1 Timothy 4: 1, 2.

"THE NEW THEOLOGY."

What does it mean, asks the *Journal and Messenger*, that just when we are hearing that "the old doctrines" have become effete, and that "the old methods" will not reach the needs of the present day, we are hearing great lamentations over the low estate of our religious life and over the small number of those seeking a place among the people of God? Why do not our new teachers give us an illustration of the effectiveness of their doctrines, or the negotiations which they are seeking to exploit. When we find that "the new theology" is effective in winning souls to Christ, and that the most successful evangelists are of that order, we may relax some of our antagonism to it. But until then we can but believe with the *Religious Telescope*, when it says: "Pastors, brethren, in your preaching do not forget or fail to lay special emphasis on the great truth that heaven and hell are tremendous realities. The failure to do this is the secret of the failure of so much sermonizing of today—the reason why the pulpit does not draw, the reason why sinners are not converted."

DESTITUTE SCHOOLCHILDREN.—According to the *Evening News*, of London, England, there were, a few weeks ago, in the schools of that city 2,590 boys and girls without boots; 29,947 whose boots were almost worse than useless, especially in wet weather; 16,380 who were in rags; 3,125 who went to school without any breakfast at all; 11,500 who were fatherless, and of the fathers who had children in the London schools over 33,000 were out of work. The publication of these and other harrowing details has greatly stirred up public feeling, and a hopeful crusade of improvement is under way. The *News* itself has made a gift of two thousand pairs of shoes.

—Natives in Uganda become Mohammedans simply because they say they cannot endure having only one wife. Mohammedans, they say, can have four. The prophet Mohammed was shrewd when he made this provision, saying that God wills to make religion easy for Mohammedans. The cry of the world is for an easy religion.

What Others Say.

MUST DO BETTER.

It is often said that a man is all right if he does the best he knows how. But nobody is all right unless he tries to do a great deal better than he knows how. —*Chris. Register.*

THE CHURCH PAPER.

Any man who does not keep posted on the religious life of his church and other churches is not likely to render intelligent service, and is robbing his own spiritual life.—*The Wesleyan.*

CHURCH UNION.

The man who sets up battle against a church-union movement would do well twice to bethink himself of what he is doing. He is pretty certain to discover sooner or later that he has engaged the stars in their courses.—*The Interior.*

THE LEAD PENCIL.

The dim, dull lead pencil is still much in evidence, as our mails often testify, despite our oft-repeated request to the brethren to give it a good long rest. Well, it affords a fine opportunity to "let patience have her perfect work."—*Rel. Telescope.*

THE SERMON.

If we get no good out of the sermon we are more to blame than the preacher. If we had gone into the house of God in the spirit of worship, no matter what the sermon, we would have returned to our homes with a blessing. The church is a place to worship God, not to hear what the preacher has to say. But when the sermon is listened to in the spirit of worship, God will always use it as a medium through which he will reach us and speak helpfully to us. If we approach it in the spirit of criticism we have shut the door of our hearts against the entrance of good. Even a child may tear the most beautiful rose to pieces, but in doing so it has gained nothing and ruined the rose.—*United Presbyterian.*

NEGATIVELY GOOD.

Such will never set things on fire. Very good, to be sure, but they can't or don't do anything. Negatively good. They are pious because they can't help it.

*Pious, but never pray;
Very good, but never pay.*

To depend upon such people in church work is like leaning on broken sticks. They are good, but good for nothing. Christianity is a positive religion, a self-assertive, aggressive force. We want good people in the ranks, but they must be good for something.—*The Telescope.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.—The editor of the *Wesleyan* says:

Once upon a time we were in receipt of many gifts at Christmas, but that festive season has passed since we ceased to be a pastor. We do not wish to be lonesome and would like to have some Christmas gifts as well as other folks. If you feel like satisfying our craving just send us some new subscribers, and that will make us happy.

This editor has the same story to tell. A lot of new subscribers for the *INTELLIGENCER* will be regarded as just the right kind of Christmas and New Year presents. One new name from each present subscriber would be great.

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