

A PHILOSOPHICAL FABLE.

"Which things are an allegory."—IV Galatians 24 verse.

A very remarkable meeting of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINES was held in the Engine house at East town on Sunday evening last, which must be highly gratifying to "spiritists," as proving that not only chairs and tables, but more complex structures, are becoming endowed with thought and the power of giving it expression, but this is a detail, and our object in giving a report of the proceedings is not to substantiate such well-known facts, but to show how conclusive were the arguments used on the occasion in favor of the immortality of Locomotives.

The building, in which a considerable number of locomotives were assembled, was dimly lighted by one oil lamp and the glow from the recently raked-out fires, while the uncouth forms of the various funnels and steam-domes, half lost to view in the smoke-stained roof, gave a weird and solemn effect to the scene. Amid the profoundest silence an aged and much worn locomotive addressed the assembly as follows:—"Friends and fellow engines. A long life on the rail has enabled me to see many men and a few cities, and it has often occurred to me that we locomotives moving about as we do ought to assert ourselves a little and not consider ourselves mere machines, like a drill, or a lathe, or even a steam hammer, but that we are in our degree *living beings*, like those feeble creatures we call men who are at once our masters and our slaves!" (Loud whistles of approval, and in the excitement of the moment several engines blew off steam.) "Thinking thus," continued the locomotive, "I was much struck by an appeal made by the captain of a large body of Salvationists whom I had taken down to hear what he called 'the truth.' He assured his hearers that what they thought was the real world was a delusion, and that the real world in which they would really live would only begin for them after they were dead. He was so earnest in urging this that I thought he must have just come from the place he described so vividly, and I was not a little disappointed when I found he had only read all this in a book, which book it seems was written in dead tongues a long time ago by no one quite knows who, but that perhaps was of less consequence than it seemed, as what took with his audience was the pleasant prospect he offered them of exchanging a hard life for one of luxury and enjoyment. It is true that he declared that if they did not believe what he told them, though they would live again they would be tortured for ever in a fierce fire, but then belief was so easy that no man ran the least risk of meeting with what must appear to them so horrible a fate, so that practically they were quite safe, and, as he said, supposing he was wrong no harm was done, but supposing those who did not credit his assertions were wrong? What a terrible mistake they would find they had made if he proved to be right! This argument seemed to convince everyone. Now it appears to me that we locomotives have just as much right to believe in a future state as men have, especially as we are told in a book—as credible as the Salvationists'—called *Erewhon*, that machines had at one time arrived at such a pitch of perfection that mankind became jealous of them, fearing to become their slaves—as we know with good reason—and so put a stop to their development, and in fact kept our race down, (steam hisses and a few angry puffs from the locomotives) and what I say is we ought to use human logic and assert our rights and assume our true position in the world. (Loud whistles of approval) For what are the facts? I move, therefore I live. We all live, why then should we not continue to live indefinitely, nay eternally? We are told we are mere mechanism, but who tells us? Not the man who stokes us, not the man who oils our bearings, not the man who drives us. These all recognise our vitality and speak of us as *she*. We might prefer being called *he*, but '*she*' is better than *it*. In short, those who know us most intimately speak most respectfully of us. It is the professional engineer who degrades us. The man of science! I *hate* men of science. Always prying, and improving, and taking us to pieces, and resolving us into elements and atoms and forces. Give me the honest stoker who knows what I am and if he calls me '*she*' means it kindly. Away with scientific jargon, the Salvationist is right. What we wish to be true *is* true. We locomotives are not what we seem, a mere complex contrivance for converting heat into motion, that heat having itself been

motion derived from the sun. On the contrary in each of us is an *invisible locomotive*, our real motive power, made by the original locomotive—the old old one—whose children we are, small and weak no doubt compared with him but of essentially the same nature. Can it be thought possible that he the great original source of all locomotives, the essence of locomotivity would suffer such beautiful pieces of mechanism as we are to become simply old iron? Perish the thought, degrading to ourselves as to our maker. No, depend upon it that what we *wish* to be *will* be. We may wear out or rust out, be smashed in a collision or be shattered by an explosion, but that is nothing. The invisible locomotive, our real self, will continue its career on invisible rails stretching into infinite space, and only then will our real life begin when needing no coal or water we shall be the embodiment of force divorced from matter! How simple and consoling is this theory of our real nature compared with that of the man of science, who content with seeing what is, ignores what may be. If proof is asked for I say with my Salvationist captain, why ask for proof when to seek for it can only cause painful doubts? Enough that what I say cannot be disproved. Faith is all we need. Like oil it makes all things work easily. We locomotives have, too, this advantage over man. No fire will hurt us. We are used to it and like it. Then too how useful is such a belief in *this* life. The greatest crime a locomotive can commit is to leave the metals; and what locomotive will do this when he believes in an infinite line of rails? For my part nothing but such a belief could keep me on the line when I toil up an incline like the Wangachu hill, steep enough to burst my boiler. It is all very well for a locomotive which has just begun its work to pride itself upon doing its best because 'it is its nature to,' but when one's pistons are wearing out, and one's fire-bars are burning away, one wants more encouragement to do one's duty—and our drivers well know what the *duty* of an engine is—than mere coal and water or even oil will supply. I am convinced that when the faith in the immortality of locomotives is firmly established we shall be as exact in the performance of all that we ought to do as man himself. Railway accidents will be as unknown as crime among men, and for similar reasons. A good locomotive will no more take to running down hill because it is easy and pleasant than a man takes to bad courses because they are. Having invisible rails always before us we shall run straight on those we see. We shall in short follow the example of mankind and being guided by similar motives may at last attain to similar perfection." Here a new locomotive hoped engines wouldn't take to getting drunk and reeling about "all over the shop" as *his* driver had done on one occasion, thereby nearly wrecking the train, but his remarks were considered irrelevant, and he was quietly shunted into a corner, after much puffing from the majority of the locomotives present. There was some discussion after this, in which "responsibility" and the "freedom of the will" and similar phrases were heard, but as no locomotive seemed to know exactly what any one else meant, or even what he meant himself, no particular result was arrived at, and shortly after the meeting broke up and all was silence.

R. P.

DOUBT.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me doubt is devil-born.

I know not; one indeed I knew,
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true.

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out,
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone.

Tennyson.