

The Coming Day.

FEBRUARY, 1891.

WE have to thank many for generous words and offers of friendly help. To some we have not been able to respond. Will these accept this general acknowledgment?

The reception of **THE COMING DAY** has surpassed our most sanguine hope; but we shall need the co-operation of every one who wishes us success. Something can be done by advertising, but much more can be done by the personal efforts of friends. In our first number we said; "The Editor asks for the hearty co-operation of all who approve of **THE COMING DAY**. Valuable help can be given in two ways;—1. Speak about it to friends; 2. Buy two or three copies instead of one, and pass them on to thoughtful and open-minded readers." There is nothing particularly heroic in that, but it has in it the germ of success: and, as our enterprise is a purely unselfish one, having in it, for the Editor, no prospect of anything but gratuitous hard work, and not a little risk, the appeal will bear stating just once more.

As we are taking readers and friends into our confidence we will give three specimens of letters, mainly for the purpose of illustrating the uses of **THE COMING DAY**.

"To us the cessation of **THE TRUTHSEEKER** was as if a dear, sympathetic friend had ceased to make a monthly visit to our home. I possess twenty three volumes; and the very sight of them refreshes my spirit with the thought of the help they were to me when I was passing through the sorrows of doubt. I am very grateful that "The Voice" inspires you to send another monthly message to *the people*. Bless God for "The Voice"! I pray that **THE COMING DAY** may so articulate "The Voice" that many struggling and depressed souls may see "the way unto the Father," and be led to look for a "new earth" as well as a "new heaven."

"It was a very kind thought of yours—to send me **THE COMING DAY**. Ethel had been asking me what being "religious" meant, and I was perplexed how to make it plain without frightening her*. Then, when I saw your Article, I found the answer,—so clear and beautiful; and the child's mind is filled and satisfied,—satisfied with the explanation, but with a desire created to make her own life fuller and better."

"The only fault of **THE COMING DAY** is that it is too small. I like especially the opening leader: I shall read it to-morrow to the congregation."

* Mark that!—(Editor.)

SERMONS FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT.

UNWILLING UNBELIEF.

“My soul thirsteth for Thee. . . . in a dry and weary land.”—*Ps. lxxiii. 1.*

I HAVE often thought that it would be well if we who try to teach Religion would deal occasionally—and even frequently—with real and personal cases of experience ; and, especially, if we would bring before the people such representative letters as most religious teachers receive. I often wonder whether some of these Epistles, from modern English men and English women, would not be really more useful to us than the Epistles of Paul, as revealing the needs, and perhaps the remedies, for our own very hard-pressed and difficult days :—and showing, at all events, what is passing in the minds and hearts of anxious and thoughtful men and women now. If you could look over my shoulders, as the weeks go by, you would see many such letters ;—no longer letters of horror at my heresy, or letters of wonder at my audacity, but letters of tender and thoughtful appeal from longing souls who really thirst for God, in “a dry and weary land,” where it is hard either to see or believe in Him :—letters from gentle and sensitive but resolute spirits who cannot lie to themselves,—who cannot pretend to a faith they have not,—who, without knowing it, are really religious, and whose religiousness, strange to say, has drifted them away from religion. I will tell you how.

For instance, just after that Sunday morning sermon on the Parable of the wise and foolish maidens, by a strange coincidence, one wrote to me—almost a stranger to me, from a place 150 miles away—and this is what he said ; “My lamp has gone out : yours is shining : give me of your oil : for my fault is not that I have slept.” That is one of the most touching and one of the truest things imaginable ; and it could be said by many thousands now : for much of the unbelief of to-day, much of the unreadiness of to-day, much of the failure to go with the rejoicing throng to the heavenly feast to-day—is not that the oilless have slept. These of whom I have been thinking have been too wakeful and anxious ; and the result, for the present, is that the old lamps and oil have disappeared. They are not careless : they are almost painfully in earnest. They thirst for God, but they cannot see Him in such “a dry and weary land.”

To this anxious seeker I had sent a prayer, entitled “I cannot find Thee”—in which are these words, “There are times, O God, when the very heavens above me are as brass ; when the tenderness of the earth seems only an accident ; when the wonderful laws of Nature seem wonderfully blind ; when the infinite Providence hardens into an invincible Force. . . . It must needs be a world of struggle for me, O my God ; but at least may I struggle towards Thee. Take all my hard thoughts away, and uphold me with the hope that what I know not now I shall know hereafter.”

What is the reply? "Tired and parched with metaphysical husks, I drank it in with avidity. But, alas, the seas of doubt seem overwhelming to such small barques as mine. The burden of its aspiration points to something awaiting us above our present understanding, and counsels patience, since what we know not now we may know hereafter—so that the eternal harmony will all be rendered manifest in time. If it were only in this wise I could be patient—but, alas, it is what goes on around me that appears so contrary to the very elements of right and wrong—that chokes our weaker aspirations, and shakes our faith to the foundations;" and then he confesses himself baffled in "the effort to reconcile omnipotence, and what we understand by love, with all the vice, injustice, and callous brutality adopted in the methods of Nature." Is not that an almost perfect picture of the state of mind of thousands, perhaps of millions, now?

Now think what has induced that state of mind:—not the worsening but the bettering of the human being. The men of the old time but seldom felt the difficulty. They were too used to pitilessness and hardness for that. They even revelled in the thought of God as "the Lord of hosts," and a "man of war." In the Bible you have chants of praise to the frightful warrior-God, and glorifyings of the awful Butcher of the Universe. This, for instance, is from one of the prophets:—"The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah: I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast: I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea. . . . The great day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

And these are specimens from the Psalms:—

"The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. But God shall wound the head of His enemies: and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same."

The Old Testament abounds in such atrocities. The middle ages of modern history are wrinkled with human misery: and, through even the greater part of our English history, men found it not very difficult to believe in God because of Nature's barbarities. Nay, they loved to describe religion as "The fear of God."

Sympathy, tenderness, pitifulness, sensitiveness to wrong, are really, to a considerable extent, modern growths—on the large scale: and there are not wanting those who say that, for the first time in the history of the world, we are in danger of carrying these latest-born characteristics of humanity too far.

Turn back now to the words I just read from this letter. Did you notice the distinction the writer draws between being patient before the mysteries above and being unmoved by the miseries below? His faith is not hindered by the one, but it is destroyed by the other. "In a word," he says, "it is not the transcendency that forms the great difficulty, but the contradiction that meets one on the very threshold of inquiry, and undermines our hope." This distinction, however, is more apparent than real. The difficulty must be taken as a whole: because it is precisely the "contradiction" between the two things that is confessedly the stumbling-block. The real want is some point of view which will enable us to take more in, so that the mind and heart shall not be baffled by isolated details. The human race is not out on a pleasure excursion, but on a campaign; and we need the large reckonings and the deep insights.

The more I think of it, the more I feel that we are all and always at school, and that the sorrows and difficulties of men in the world are like the sorrows and difficulties of children in the class-room. I knew a boy who, with a grunt, said to his father, "love, indeed!" when told that love dictated a course which curbed desire: and that sharply reminded me of such letters as this. When the boy comes to the larger reckonings and the deeper insights, he will see the larger necessities and the deeper plans: and that is the very want of the man who stands aghast at life's miseries. It is true that the child has not to grapple with anything more perplexing than discipline, while the man is perplexed before Nature's apparent brutality; but the problem is the same; for the problem is, as this writer says, a "contradiction." But I press the fact that the whole life of the race is as much too large for the man to take in and comprehend, as the whole of the life of the individual is too large for the child to take in and comprehend.

"Look," says the sensitive spirit, "look at the vice, the injustice, the drunkenness, the cruelty of man, on the one hand, and think of the awful barbarity of Nature on the other hand." But what if these are inevitable, as parts of a tremendous process in which they take their place as necessary incidents? It is quite conceivable that if we could take in the whole scheme, with all the results, a bloody battle would, in the life and development of the race, rank with a cut finger in the life of a man,—that an explosion in a mine might rank with the singeing of a boy's hand with a squib,—and that a shipwreck might seem no more than the coming of a child's toy-boat to grief. It is hard to think so: and, to say it, seems like callousness. But the analogy may go even deeper than I am suggesting: for the cut finger, the burnt hand, and the ruined toy, come in the necessary process of man-development, and could not and ought not to be altogether prevented: and what are bloody battles, and mine explosions, and shipwrecks but painful and very necessary incidents in the tremendous process of race-development? But could not the miseries of the process have been spared us? How? It is difficult to see how men and women could be created in any other way—though chronometers might be. How blessed is sympathy!

but sympathy involves antipathy. You cannot have the one current of emotion without the other. Tragedy is only the working out, in other spheres, of the feelings and outlooks upon life which elsewhere become comedy and song: and you could not have the one without the other, in the life of a creature who is being developed. And so with the fine appreciation of the good, which is produced (yes, actually produced) by contact with and experience of the evil. How could it be otherwise?

“Nature is cruel,” it is said: yes, but who could say with such pathos as she: “I must be cruel, only to be kind”? Wheels that carry also crush: and they ought to crush. It is best for us that Nature should hold her balance true, and stop not even to save a dear child’s life. Fire burns: and it ought always to burn; and it is best for us that Nature should let her laws go on unchecked. The human race could not afford to pay the ruinous price of pitiful suspensions. Carry that thought out with firm brain, and add man’s need of education by personal experience and responsibility, and the darkest half of the problem will disappear. Mr. Ingersoll, intending an indictment against Nature, said that if he had made the world he would have made health as contagious as disease. That sounds both clever and kind: but it is very doubtful whether that would have been an improvement. What enormous lessons of thoughtfulness, and prudence, and self-restraint, and intentional purity, we should have missed if we could have secured health by hiring a wholesome rustic to keep us well! We are not only cattle, to be kept in condition; we are human beings working out our salvation; and it is the “working out” of it that is the main point in regard to the real creation or development of the human being. But, as to the contagiousness of health, that is a fact, in the profoundest sense. Through knowledge, thought, combination, charity and effort—and especially by the resolute understanding of and obedience to Nature’s laws,—health is being more and more made common property—by which we do arrive at the contagiousness of health, not by the working of unknown laws which might keep us ignorantly well, but by the working of known laws, and moral and intellectual forces, that not only preserve the body but uplift and train and save the soul. And that could not be if the race had been spared the battle with disease.

The great truth is that life is a tremendous process of development; and everything is to be examined in the light of that, and to be measured against that. Huxley compares it to the playing of a mighty game with an unseen player, for amazing stakes. “It is,” he says, “a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But we know to our cost that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid with that overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated, without haste, but without remorse. My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which Retsch has depicted Satan playing chess with a man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking

fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love, as we say, who would rather lose than win, and I should accept it as an image of human life."

Now, then, what do you think would happen if the player on the other side took no notice of our bad play ; or if he made things pleasant by letting us win and laugh all the time ? That would be the programme of a fool or a child. No ; the great and awful game goes on, for our good. It is the real education : and the stakes are the emergence of a wise, emancipated, uplifted, self-reliant, and happy human race. But the stakes must be won : they cannot be given : for the playing, with all its care and waiting, and disappointment, and anxiety, is itself the creation and the winning of the stakes. It could not be otherwise. The alternative is effortless nothingness or blank death.

One more thought. The writer of this letter goes on to say that the difficulty is deepened by men like Herbert Spencer, who demonstrate that "the whole is simply the outcome of certain conditions : Spencer not only confirming but extending the field of the same principle—that ethical laws are as much a matter of simple evolution as the physical organism ;—that individual preservation naturally leads to the communal form of life ; and the preservation of the community to the growth and ultimate establishment of moral law. Selfishness, pure and simple, dies in the mother's love, and, in time, extends into the purely altruistic, which, in turn, embraces the Christian and all that is highest in man." A glorious programme ! Does he not see how he replies to himself ? See how Nature works for the highest ! lifting the brute up to man,—bringing savage man into communal life, and thence into the self-denying moralities, till self dies in the mother's love ! Where is the ghastly prospect now ? This, this is Nature's aim ; and the sorrows of the process are only the price she has to pay.

But where is God in all this ? It seems to have come by itself. Ah, then, is it really a difficulty that there are no signs of interference and miracle ? Is there no revelation of Divine wisdom, and power, and goodness in the grand certainties of Nature ? Would mechanic adjustments from without prove God, while He is not needed for far-reaching processes which work from within ? Is the evidence of a Divine presence less because we find that, instead of a manufacturing, we have an inspiring God—who does not so much make things, as make things make themselves ?

Slowly, slowly, through the countless ages, some one's grand dream seems coming true. It is dim and blurred, at times, but, from age to age, it clears, and gains coherence, and sometimes the glory shines from behind the veil, as though, at last, it would all come true : and, to listening ears, there is music that breathes from the inner spheres, though broken with pathetic sobs and moans. But the splendour deepens, the prospect broadens, the music wins, and leads in blest captivity the very sobs and moans that were once the sorrowful dissonances : and the grand dream promises to end in the light and triumph of the perfect day.

Nor is this only fancy and hope. It is fact : and I appeal to the history of the race. That history is the history of a superb development. Is it then, I repeat, is it any difficulty that this development has been attained by inner forces ? Why,

that is precisely what is wanted. A mechanic God might have made a statue or a chronometer from without, but it needs a spirit-God to evolve a real man from within; and by such glorious stages, too!—all the way from the brute in the forest to the mother in whose breast self dies. Could any ideal God, however active,—could any Creator, however wise—have done it better? But see what it involves. How could the brute egotist, with his bone and his cave, grow into a member of a community, but by the sorrowful path of suffering? How could the community develop the sense of right, and work up to a moral law, except by painful experiences of tyranny and wrong? The great aim was the natural creation or development of man: and the path taken was the only path possible. There was no other way. That is really the whole of the problem: and, though the explanations are not all before us, the methods by which the explanations may be discovered are.

This letter concludes with the naive remark:—"It is the little learning that has proved so dangerous to us . . . and I am drifting with no other guide or compass than a try at duty." True. In some respects, the age is like a child who has found out something; and, for the moment, it bulks too largely in its eyes. We have just turned another leaf of the mighty book, and are dazed and dazzled with the new suggestions of Science that have ruined the old suggestions of Theology. For the moment, we seem to have turned God out of the workshop. But we shall have to look elsewhere, and calculate vaster orbits in vaster spaces, and talk not only of the hereafter, but of the herein: and we shall find Him there.

Meantime, the writer of this letter has found the "one thing needful," so keenly described as "a try at duty." That is simply perfect. The rest will come. Gradually, such as he will see how the great tendencies of things lead onward and upward; and on that they will build their trust and hope. True religion, by the path of sympathy and pity, has led them away from faith; but true religion, by the path of trust and hope, will bring them back.

A SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF BELIEF IN A FUTURE LIFE.

II.

The Subject is essentially a scientific one.

THE need of a scientific basis of belief in an unseen universe, and of continued personal existence in it, may, then, be considered urgent; but, having said that, I desire to deprecate the inference that I am going to try to supply all that is wanted. I am too conscious of the gravity of the need, and the immensity of the evidence required, to profess any such thing. I shall be content if I can indicate a road, and give one or two hints about what may be found in it. My one object will be to show that the very Science which seems to be destroying is destined to be the glorious upbuilder of our faith. I shall try to at

least throw a ray of light upon this great fact—that Science is carrying us in every direction into an unseen universe, and that this unseen universe is everywhere felt to be the sphere of causes, and the source and centre of all the essential elements and activities of Creation. And here it is important to remark that the inquiry into a Future Life or an unseen universe is a strictly scientific one; and is, as one has said, “a proper branch of the physiology of the species.” It is only the accident of its connection with the question of rewards and punishments, and with considerations relating to the being and providence of God, that has made it a religious question. Rightly regarded, then, the subject of a future existence is a purely scientific one, and might be and ought to be investigated as a part of the great inquiry into the physiological or psychological development of Man. If we are to live again after what we call death; or, better still, if we are to live on through and beyond it, the cause of the persistence or continuity of being must be perfectly natural, and must be at this very moment in ourselves; and this is entirely an object of experiment and research.

To Science then we turn, believing that Science can only destroy our hope by giving us knowledge, and that it will only make an end of our faith by giving us evidence. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that our faculties are limited, and that Science is relative to these capacities. We are children of earth as yet, and all our finer parts are incased in matter, and the spirit can only act and know within the poor limitations of the flesh: so that even though there could be a science of the spirit, a science of the Unseen, that at present, to a great extent, must be considered as beyond us, seeing that Science itself is perpetually narrowed and dwarfed by reason of the limited faculties of the investigator.

But, beyond this natural and inevitable limitation to scientific knowledge, another limitation is imposed upon us by the fact that hitherto Science has been pursued almost entirely in the realm of matter in its grosser forms; and that we are altogether new to the witness borne by it to the unseen universe. For this and many other reasons, I shall content myself with being elementary and suggestive, expecting to demonstrate nothing, but hoping to indicate much, knowing that, in addition to the difficulty created by our as yet very limited acquaintance with what we call Science, but what is really only the outer rind and surface of Science, I have also to contend against the fact that the large majority even of religious persons are only in the elementary stages of knowledge as to the philosophy of spirit;—as witness their infantile belief in the “resurrection at the last day” as the only way of restoring the dead to life, and the only way by which God will or can judge mankind. What can at present be said to people whose conception of a Future Life is the “rising again” of the scattered atoms of the body? or who, without reflection, and as by a coarse animal instinct, laugh to scorn the assertion that “a spirit” is a greater reality than a body? or who tell us they must give up belief in Immortality altogether if the texts of Scripture they rely upon are in a book that is not infallible? It does not matter how good, or devout, or otherwise cultivated these people are; their ideas concerning spirit and spirit-life shew that in relation to this tremendous subject they are only children.

The first thing to do is to take the whole subject out of the realm of mystery,

unreality, fantasy, and awe, and to make it the object of cool thought, and, if possible, of scientific experiment. Perhaps this will, at first, result in an apparent loss of sanctity and poetry; but consider the enormous gain in the direction of certainty and reality! We have too long been accustomed to talk of the dead in a vague, dreamy, unreal way; and I fear that already many of our phrases have been emptied of definite meaning, and that if we relentlessly examined them they would be found to be as desolate as a forsaken grave. We have talked of the dead as though, if they really existed at all, they existed in a sacred, solemn, and stately way, in a condition of being so unlike ours that we should feel it would be almost shocking to talk of them, for instance, as laughing. I put that as a test; and I think it will reveal the fact that we have been making up for a want of reality by an exuberance of solemnity, and that underneath all our poetry and many-sided expressions of sentiment, there lies the very thinnest vein of solid reality and clear thought.

Now I want to help to alter that. I want to get myself and others accustomed to the thought that if people exist in another world they exist there as "people," not as fantastic, stately, solemn, or dreamy spectres:—that if a man exists beyond the change called death, he is still a man, unchanged except that he has put off his body, and glided behind the veil. For a Future Life can only mean one thing, if it is to be a reality, and not a mere sentiment and solemn self-delusion,—it can only mean *the actual going-on of the human being in spite of the incident called "death."* If it is not that, it is nothing: if it is not that, we are only indulging in vain fancies: if it is not that, we may be pleasant poets singing of a fairy land, but we are not actual pilgrims going to "a better country, that is a heavenly."

The mournful superstition of the resurrection of the body is not only, as I have said, an indication of the low earthly condition of the average believer, so far as the Future Life is concerned, but it is, in itself, a hindrance to a more spiritual conception of the real nature of the unseen world. For want of the most elementary ideas about the glorious realities of that world, and of human life in it, the belief in the resurrection of the body is clung to, as in sheer desperation. The *Church Times*, writing about cremation and the effect of it upon belief in the resurrection, gravely suggested that "if the few particles of dust which in process of time are all that remain of the corpse that has been lowered into the grave with Christian burial, will rise again *with the germ of the same body as it possessed in life*, so also will the ashes in the urn *representing the corpse* which has undergone burning."

Is it not pitiful,—this earthly pottering about an old "grave," or an old "urn," in order to keep some hold upon existence? O, ye poor children of the dust, lift up your eyes and see! This earth-life is only the dusty road on which ye travel to the glorious city. When your journey is done, and you have shaken off the dust from your souls, graves and urns will be no more to you than the dust that the king's son brushes from his feet, as he passes from the streets into the palace of the king.

The word "Death" has its associations in *cessation* of being, in the *extinction* of faculties, in the *failure* of life; but the extent to which those associations prevail measures in any case the misapprehension which exists as to the real nature of the universe. We are the inhabitants of one of the humblest of the infinity of worlds.

Above us shine the points of light that have now, by Science, been resolved into glorious worlds. It is a great thought, but a thought based upon severest scientific deductions, that infinitude everywhere surrounds us. An *end* is everywhere absolutely unthinkable: in every direction we find ourselves always compelled to go on. We cannot, to ourselves, limit either time or space; for there is always the possibility of a time prior to every conceivable period, just as there is always the possibility of something beyond the farthest reach of space to which discovery or imagination can go. We cannot conceive of boundless time, of time unbeginning, or of boundless space, of space unending, and yet we are absolutely bound to infer both: so it is with life. Boundless, infinite, and full everywhere is the universe of space and time; and boundless, infinite, and full everywhere, we may conclude, is the universe of *life*,—no round of the ladder unoccupied, no link missing, no ocean of force without its freight of conscious existence:—the infinite Power that has flooded the universe with numberless manifestations of beauty and power and harmony, the Creator also of forms of life as varied and as wonderful.

It is that view of the universe,—strictly in harmony with the very loftiest and grandest reaches of modern Science,—that makes the possibilities of life boundless, that connects man with forms of force and modes of existence that are practically infinite, and that, as I shall hope to shew, makes it possible to conceive of a real and higher kind of life beyond the incident called “death.”

THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

The Spectator's references to the correspondence we printed last month are interesting and entertaining:—“interesting” because they deal with a subject which the *Spectator* always takes seriously, and “entertaining” because, while attempting to buttress up “supernaturalism,” it shews that it has emptied out of the supernatural nearly everything that ever made it worth anybody's while to talk about it as something different from the natural.

In one of his letters, Mr. Hopps said that “in the sphere of Science we have advanced from the theory of catastrophe and miracle to the perception of the steady flow of natural law; and, in the sphere of Religion, a similar advance seems inevitable”: whereupon *The Spectator* takes “catastrophe” to mean a kind of accident, and asks; “how are we to get rid of catastrophe while we recognise facts at all?” But Mr. Hopps was not referring to the breaking of a tea-cup or the occurrence of an earthquake: he was manifestly referring to the method or order of creation, and to the choice between development by orderly progress and change produced by something like spasms of smash and putting together. We believe in the former.

The Spectator's Article, however, was evidently written in order to oppose the view that “all is natural.” It still clings to the “supernatural”: but *what* a supernatural! It finds “a trace of the supernatural” in “the interference of a

higher kind of nature with a lower kind of nature," and it is not afraid to say that "there is something supernatural in the domestication of animals;" also that "there is something that is supernatural in the phenomena of what is now called hypnotism": and, in all this, *The Spectator* seems very serious! But does *The Spectator* really mean to say that rigid natural law is not at the bottom of the influence of a man over a horse; or that the domestication of a cat is not a natural process, for every stage of which natural law would account; or that hypnotism is not as much conditioned by natural law as breathing or sleeping?

But, after all, it depends upon the meaning of words: and *The Spectator* seems to have a new dictionary. For instance, it says; "Mr. Hopps says that science has disposed of the idea of miracle. It certainly has not disposed of the fact that higher natures can alter the whole bent of lower natures, that the power of spirit totally transfigures the body; that there is a transubstantiating power in mind which pours grace and spiritual influence into mere material things, and that what is called miracle is nothing but the use of this transubstantiating power to heal the weaknesses and sufferings of human life." We can only say that if this is so we have no objection to belief in miracles. All we contend for is that an angel is as natural a being as a Zulu, and that if water could be turned into wine there would somewhere be a natural law which would accurately account for it. If "supernatural" is to mean that which is superior—say Herbert Spencer in relation to a Zulu, or an angel in relation to Herbert Spencer,—and if "miracle" is to mean the production of moral and spiritual changes, we are willing to give up the controversy. But let it be clearly understood that we do so because there is no longer anything to controvert. The superstition has disappeared.

AN AGNOSTIC'S MARRIAGE DIFFICULTY.

AFTERTHOUGHTS.

THE curious thing is that an Agnostic, when, on principle, he has made up his mind to a "civil marriage," should want or tolerate the pretence of being married over again at a chapel. Surely, the view that leads him to the registrar's office for the reality should make it impossible for him to go to the chapel, after all, for a sham! His special testimony is that marriage is a civil matter,—an affair of the State: but what a slur he casts upon the civil marriage and upon the State, and how gravely he discounts or invalidates his testimony, if he immediately turns round, and speaks the effective declarations of marriage over again in a chapel! We can quite understand the opinion that marriage is an affair of the State, and that the clergyman or minister should not interfere; and this is logically and properly followed by the choice of "a civil marriage." People who see that, and act upon it, may win only respect. But their logic and their views all go to pieces when they first decline the chapel, and then go back to it. We hope it is not unkind to say that we cannot understand it except on the not very elevated ground that the Agnostic is willing to

take off his hat to the prejudices of the world, or that he is willing to face a sham in order to sooth a superstition. But it is very doubtful whether that desire ought to be gratified, even if it could be. The minister of religion might very reasonably say; 'No: I will marry you with pleasure; but I do object to have the reality taken from the church, and to have nothing left to it but a ceremony that looks unpleasantly like a pretence:—a devout and pretty pretence, it may be, but still a pretence.'

Besides, on the Agnostic's own ground, if he comes to the church or chapel at all, why should he object to pronounce the legal words there? To all intents and purposes, t'at part of the "religious service" in which the effective legal words occur is a "civil marriage," for the civil officer, the registrar, stands by, as an Act of Parliament officer,—the minister only acting as his deputy—; and the appointed words are Act of Parliament words,—the very same as those that would be spoken in the registrar's office. What difference, then, could it make to an Agnostic where he spoke those words? He is anxious to recognise marriage as an affair of the State. Very well; he would do so at the chapel; for, at the chapel, as in the office, the State prescribes the official and the form.

We can only come to the conclusion that the Agnostic must make his choice. He can go to church or chapel, and have the "civil service" there, *plus* something called a "religious service," and no one will bar his way. But if he holds that marriage is purely a civil affair, and that he *must*, any how, go to the civil officer's office for marriage, he not only ought to abide by his choice, but the law gives him no option, and no one ought to try to make it seem otherwise. Least of all should the nonconformist minister try to make it seem otherwise. The nonconformist minister has no occult ecclesiastical sanctions to offer. Above all things, he is for realities, and his special protest is against ceremonial shams. We can quite understand a priest liking an ecclesiastical marriage after the civil one. Consistently enough, he believes in some hidden sanctity which the Church alone can give, and which he may be honestly anxious to impart: but the genuine nonconformist knows nothing of "sacramental efficacy" and sacerdotal sanctity, and he ought to be rather ashamed of playing at marrying people who are already married. Yes; and the Agnostic should be the last man in the world to ask him for that solemn sham.

We will only add that nothing we have said is intended to disparage an honest religious service at the chapel after a marriage service at the registrar's office. Such a service might be made a very pleasant and beautiful thing. We have only referred to the use of a marriage service in which declarations are made which have already been effectively made, and in which marrying clauses occur which, when used by or for people who are already married, can only be a pretence. That ought to be entirely distasteful to every honest and self-respecting man: and it ought to be simply impossible to every honest and self-respecting minister.

A NEW BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

II.

I CANNOT find Thee! Still on restless
pinion

My spirit beats the void where Thou
dost dwell:

I wander lost through all Thy vast
dominion,
And shrink beneath Thy light in-
effable.

I cannot find Thee! E'en, when, most
adoring,

Before Thy shrine I bend in lowliest
prayer,

Beyond these bounds of thought my
thought upsoaring

From furthest quest comes back:
Thou art not there.

Yet high above the limits of my seeing,
And folded far within the inmost
heart,

And deep below the deeps of conscious
being,

Thy splendour shineth: There, O God
Thou art!

I cannot lose Thee! Still in Thee abiding,
The end is clear, how wide sæ'er I
room:

The law that holds the worlds my steps
is guiding,

And I must rest at last in Thee, my
home.—*Amen.*

By the Minister (*all standing.*)

I WILL arise and go to my father, and
will say unto him; Father, I have sin-
ned against heaven and before Thee, and
am no more worthy to be called Thy son.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto

the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy
name, O most High; to shew forth Thy
loving-kindness in the morning, and
Thy faithfulness every night.

(*All kneeling or seated.*)

Minister—For this day of calm we
bless Thee, O Lord our God;—for its
quiet hours, its holy communion, its
blessed foreshadowings of some better
thing. We feel once more how blest
are they who turn their feet into the
way of Thy praise, and who, through
the dim emblems of our imperfect earthly
worship, seek some clearer knowledge of
the perfect communion of Thy saints in
heaven.

People—Thy face, O Lord, will we seek.

Minister—With longing souls we turn
to Thee. In Thy loving-kindness and
tender mercy help us now to rise above
our doubts and fears, and to find
deliverance from our sins.

People—O Lord, save thy people.

Minister—Subdue in us all impurity
of thought or desire; all envy, pride,
and hypocrisy; all falsehood and deceit,
all malice and anger; everything that is
contrary to Thy will, O most holy God.

People—Lord, make clean our hearts
within us.

Minister—In all times of trouble and
heavy care, in poverty and in wealth,
in all affliction of body or mind, in the
days of darkness, and in the hour of
death, be thou our help and our stay.

People—O Lord, our hope is in Thee.

Minister—Bless all who are called to

minister in holy things. Grant them great gifts of wisdom and holiness, that, both by preaching and living, they may be teachers of righteousness.

People—We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.

Minister—We pray for all sorts and conditions of people, especially for those who are in authority, for our statesmen and magistrates, and for all who are called to provide for the happiness and well-being of the people. Endue them richly with those graces and virtues which will enable them to discharge their several trusts, so as to promote the true honour, peace, and prosperity of this land.

People—Father in heaven, bless our native land.

Minister—We commend to Thy Fatherly goodness all who are in trouble, need, sickness, or danger. Comfort and help the weak-hearted; raise up the fallen; give Thine effectual aid to all that be bowed down; have mercy upon the poor, the orphan, the widow, and all who have no earthly friend.

People—Friend of the friendless, hear our prayer.

Minister—While we enjoy the bountiful gifts of Thy providence, may we do so with wise moderation, and with grateful hearts; and so endue us with the grace of Thy holy Spirit, that all our days may be days of earnest work for Thee, and loving trust and hope in Thee. Faithfully may we do every duty, patiently bear every cross, and honourably discharge every trust, so that at the last our account to Thee may be rendered with joy, and not with grief and shame.

People—Father in heaven, hear our prayer.

By the Minister.

ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love that which Thou dost command, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, at Thy right hand for evermore. *Amen.*

By Minister and People.

OUR Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses; as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom; the power and the glory; for ever and ever. *Amen.*

By the Minister.

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with us all, from God our Father, and from the indwelling in us of the spirit of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

CHANT.

WE praise THEE in Thy | power · O |
God! || WE | praise · Thee | in · Thy |
sanctity:

WE praise Thee who reign-EST in the |
fur-est | heaven, || we praise Thee who
DWELL-est | in · our | in · -most | souls.

Our LORD and | hid · -den | Com-
forter! || no VOICE can | duly · pro- |
-claim · Thy | greatness.

No heart can COM-pre- | -hend · Thy |
goodness, || O Thou FA-ther of | all · — |
our · — | spirits!

The longings of the SPIRIT are |
in · -ex- | -haustible; || ON-ly | Thou ·
canst | fill · the | heart.

When it is emp-ty and | aching · for |
Thee, || then Thou FILL-est | it · with |
peace · un- | -speakable.

With Thee, there is no MIS-ery |
to the · dis- | -tressed, || but sorrow is
hallow-ED, and | pain · — | is · — |
sweetened ;

And hardship is ASSUAGED, and | fear ·
is | calmed ; || FOR | thine · own | nature ·
is | blessedness.

Yea, blessed is Thy pre-SENCE, O |
Lord, · most | holy, || blessed is it to
Dwell with | Thee · and to | know · — |
Thee.

Blessed shall the nations be WHEN Thy |

glory · is | known, || when all who
love Thee u-NITE to | succour · and |
raise · the | weak.

Strengthen us in life and death, in
THIS and | ev- · -ery | life, || to be Thine
in FACT as | we · are | Thine · in | right ;

To obey cheerful-LY, to | strive · — |
loyally, || to suffer meek-LY, to en-
-joy · — | thank- · -ful | -ly.

So shall we LOVE Thee | while · we |
live, || and partake of Thy JOY, and |
tri- · -umph | o- · -ver | sorrow,

And fulfil Thy work, and be NUM-
bered | with · Thy | saints, || AND |
die · — | on · Thy | bosom. Amen.

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

STRIKES.—The substantial and masterful persons who are represented by *The Times*, are in the habit of talking of a strike as sheer insolence—a kind of rebellion against authority which has to be re-sented and punished. A generation ago, the very act of combination was regarded and treated as a crime; and the early days of Trades Unions were days of struggle against indignant masters and frightened capitalists. But the world moves. Let it be freely admitted—as John Burns admitted in Scotland—that a strike is a hateful expedient. The real question is; Can it be helped? In the absence of representative bodies, to adjust differences, what are the men to do? Single-handed, they crumble away before the pressure of competition and compulsion. Standing together, their only lever at present is combined refusal to work under conditions they dislike. That spells *Strike*. Someday, representative bodies of men and masters will decide all

disputes, and fix hours and wages. At the present stage of our civilisation, the only remedy seems to be force.

Then comes the question whether strikers, as a rule, are reasonable. Turning, generally, upon wages and hours, we see signs of progress and a desire for improvement in the very revolt which incenses *The Times* and its clients. Men want more leisure: they long for an occasional breathing space: they are restive under labour-conditions which really leave very little margin for the man as distinct from the labourer. The dissatisfactions of working men are their “growing pains”: and they will more and more resent the attempt to keep them at work for twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day; and to reward them, even then, with only sufficient oil to keep the human machine from becoming useless.

The combinations, without which strikes would be impossible, have their noble and touching characteristics. At the

heart of them is the spirit of comradeship which is becoming one of the notable signs of the times. Self-interest is, of course, not absent in the rally to the rescue and support of oppressed fellow-men; but the courage, the self-denial, the superb loyalty of strikers and their supporters, might well be acknowledged even by those who think them unreasonable and dangerous. People who do not really understand working men, talk of compulsion, as though some few tyrannical officials and rough malcontents frightened them into combinations and revolt. No greater mistake could be made. Trades Unions are the recognised strongholds of labour, and, for their sake, working men will run risks and make sacrifices that put many great statesmen and celebrated Christians to shame.

The struggle against cruelly long hours is, to us, specially interesting. Life is too precious to be spent in ceaseless toil. The human animal needs variety, time to breathe, to think, to be quiet, to re-create. We wish the rebels success; "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts."

MR. GLADSTONE.—The letter we printed last month contained the interesting and promising statement that Mr. Gladstone, "before embracing the proposition" we laid before him, would "wish to consider it much more carefully and thoroughly." That was written six months ago; but

we fear we must give up the hope of receiving, at present, the result of Mr. Gladstone's careful and thorough consideration. In a communication just received, he says; "The subject is too large for me now to examine, and too grave for any conclusion without examination." That, perhaps, is as remarkable and as interesting a statement as any that could be made on the subject, by the author of "The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." It is significant that Mr. Gladstone's mind is, after all, not made up as to the vital point. What has happened? But he is not the man to flinch eventually before a problem because it is "too large" or "grave."

HARTLEPOOL.—The result of the election at Hartlepool is a sign which no one will mistake. It is John Morley's promised beacon. The sky was black and the wind was high in England, just before that event; and everything was against us at Hartlepool; but now see! It is a veritable triumph of solid English sense and resolution which refused to be bewildered or turned aside. It was solely a Home Rule election; and the stalwarts of Hartlepool said; "We shall not allow Mr. Parnell to confuse us or to hurt the cause of Ireland." Has not the time come for a meeting between Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury, to decide upon the details of the inevitable Home Rule Bill?

HAVE FAITH!

Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
An' bear ye a' life's changes wi' a calm an' tranquil mind.
Though press'd an' hemm'd on every side,
Ha'e faith an' ye'll win through,
For ilka blade of grass keeps its ain drap o' dew.

JAMES BALLANTYNE.