

The Coming Day.

DECEMBER, 1892.

“NO ROOM IN THE INN.”

ONE of the most touching and enlightening sayings in the story of the great and beautiful life which Christmas helps to keep in mind is that tiny record of the birth—“And Mary laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.” There never is. It is the way of the world. “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, but the destruction of the poor is his poverty.” The poor have no business in the inn. Are there not stables for these—and mangers? The people who have earned money, or made a name, or elbowed their way to the front, or who had fathers who were not carpenters, get into the inn. The young Christs, the struggling causes, the new truths, the hopes of the future, have to be laid in a manger. No room for them in the inn.

Poor world! It is not to be blamed for it. How is it to know? It must be, it is inevitable, that a proved millionaire must always be welcomed before the unproved Christ; and so the kings, the courtiers, the masters, the men and women with brazen faces, and hard knuckles, or well-filled pockets, get all the passes into the great world’s show; while, in the garrets, the cellars, the prisons, the mangers, the new Christs may be. That is not sentiment: it is history. It is the old, old story which has never ceased to be true. The creators of all the religions of the world have had to fight with the world; and knew, first its manger and then its cross. Buddha, born in the inn, has to leave it and become a tramp before he can do his divine work. The almost penniless Socrates was dismissed by the world with the draught of poison; and the great pathetic tragedy ended at Calvary. Nearly all the creative political geniuses of the world have come from the outhouses beyond the precincts of the inn. They have been “men of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” and they found their best friends and helpers amongst the poor lonely shepherds, keeping watch through the world’s long, dreary night. And, to a great extent, this is as true to-day as ever. Even the great creative geniuses in science have to begin in the manger, and eat the bread of sorrows. They are first neglected, then derided, then stared at; then—if they can live it out, and reach the inn at last—envied.

It is inevitable, but it is instructive. The history of the true kings of men, the mighty leaders of mankind, is a truly tragic one. The reformer, as a rule, is recognised too late—the redeemer known only after he is gone. As a rule, he is stoned by one generation, that another generation may pile up stones to his memory. But it is better so. The hard, rough school of self-denial and struggle is the right school in which to train the world’s redeeming athletes. But what a lesson for the grand people who now speak in the name of this manger-born reformer! Come and look on this sight, you popes and patriarchs, you bishops and priests, you princely

defenders of the faith. Come and see the simplicity of Nature and the loneliness of the really great. Come hither, you lovers of kings and worshipers of gold, you adorers of the gilded ornaments and trappings of courts and temples. Come and see where the highest lives. You have lost your God through pride and love of power; come, and really see Him where you profess to find Him—where you would disdain to be.

Yes, it is inevitable, but it is instructive. London has many mangers, and, for aught we know, some Christs. And they are not all in the mangers, let us hope. But, if that ardent soul who went forth from that old Bethlehem manger could come again, where would he find his work, and seek his own? Once more, I think, the wise men would have to say, "We have seen his star in the East!" He would do things and say things that would make the West—and Westminster—very uncomfortable. He would not forget his kinsmen of the manger. We talk, in church, of "the Redeemer," and we do well; but we have hardly commenced to learn what real redemption means. If we dared to believe in "the carpenter's son," and if we could bring ourselves to make him our leader, in the sphere of "practical politics" and real life, there might be some chance of London becoming Christian. But not now. The carpenter's son is in the manger still.

TENNYSON'S SIDE IN RELIGION.

ILLUSTRATED BY HIS LAST BOOK.

(Spoken at Croydon.)

THE world has yet to awake to full knowledge of the fact that Tennyson's culmination was in the sphere of Religion and not of Romance or Art. *In Memoriam* gave early and profound promise of this, but the later books, during the past ten years, have been inspirations and prophecies yet to be fulfilled and understood. The materialism, the agnosticism, and the pessimism of our time roused, fired, and commanded him. As I said six years ago, with reference to the poems *Rizpah*, *The Children's Hospital*, *Vastness*, and *The Ancient Sag*, "Tennyson is evidently writing with a purpose, and with his whole soul and intellect intent upon the grave religious problems of our day." And in this he was greatly helped by his growing indignation at the blasphemy of that odious doctrine of eternal torments which, he knew, only too surely tended to defile Religion and to create unbelief. Tennyson voiced with absolute perfection the growing human revolt against this old atrocity. Even in the presence of a hung and gibbeted criminal he fires up against it. He pictures a poor mother cowering and crying over the dead body of this criminal, and puts into her mouth the repudiation and refutation of the theory of God's eternal wrath. Well-meaning people came to care for her soul. But "Do you think that I care for my soul if the boy be gone to the fire?" she said.

"Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well,
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in Hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has looked into my care,
And he means me, I'm sure, to be happy with Willie, I know not where."

"I have been with God in the dark,—go, go, you may leave me alone—
You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone."

Tennyson was right. The mother's love, even for a gibbeted criminal, is a surer revelation of God than the dogmas constructed and voted by childless priests.

In the poem called *Despair*, Tennyson's fury against the Hell of orthodoxy is put into the mouth of an atheist,—

"Ah, yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for aught that I know.
But the God of Love and of Hell together;—they cannot be thought;
If there be such a God, may the great God curse him, and bring him to nought!"

The cure for these orthodox horrors and also for atheism and pessimism is one, and Tennyson has set it forth in flaming light. It is the old gospel of trust and hope explained and reinforced by the new gospel of evolution. 'All moves on,' has been Tennyson's cry; 'therefore is there no death, no eternal hell, no endless darkness, no final misery and sin.'

—"Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine,
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.
— Follow Light and do the Right—for man can half control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.
Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the past,
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last."

That fine gospel of five years ago is preached afresh in this last book, the first poem of which, *The Death of Cenone*, tells the story of the deathless force of early love—persisting through wrong and shame and separation and even hate—to death and beyond.

Tennyson's side in Religion is quite unmistakable though it relates to spirit, not to dogma. You could not take the Thirty-nine Articles, or the doctrinal points of Unitarianism, and say, from one to thirty-nine, this he did not and this he did believe. But the tone, the atmosphere, the spirit, are absolutely clear; and they present Tennyson as up in arms against the old monstrosities of orthodox Theology. He was supremely a "son of the morning," and never more so than when he climbed and overtopped the hill that marked his threescore years and ten,—a beautiful, hopeful, and shining old age!

This last book, though so disappointingly small, is noticeable for several things: one is its high standard of subjects (with a few strange and unfortunate exceptions). *St. Telemachus*, *Akbar's Dream*, and *Kapiolani* are specially notable as ideal instances of subjects for a great poet, whose fine duty it should surely be to rescue from oblivion the shining of distant human stars, to mark the first footsteps in the great highways of the world, and to show how the upper lights poured in on some, even in darkest days.

Here is *St. Telemachus*, a sheer ascetic, "who never changed a word with men," to whom the inner voice came.

"Wake
Thou deadless dreamer, lazying out a life
Of self-suppression, not of selfless love."

And again the voice comes,—“Rome”: and the old man arises, and drags himself along

“By waste and field and town of alien tongue;”

and a hundred sunrisings

“Struck from him his own shadow on to Rome.”

There he will shew the secret of the true ascetic, and how, by withdrawal of the inner self from the lust and passion of the time, the highest truth and heroism may be reached. For there at the very centre of Christendom, he saw the hellish spectacle of the Colosseum and its gladiators; he beheld

“The dust send up a steam of human blood,
The gladiators moving toward their fight,
And eighty thousand Christian faces watch
Man murder man.”

Then the wasted ascetic found his godlike mission. Into the arena he rushed,

“and flung himself between
The gladiatorial swords, and call'd ‘Forbear,
In the great name of Him who died for men,
Christ Jesus!’ For one moment afterward,
A silence followed as of death, and then
A hiss as from a wilderness of snakes,
Then one deep roar as of a breaking sea,
And then a shower of stones that stoned him dead,
And then once more a silence as of death.

His dream became a deed that woke the world,
For, while the frantic rabble in half-amaze
Stared at him dead, thro' all the nobler hearts
In that vast oval ran a shudder of shame.
The Baths, the Forum gabbled of his death,
And preachers lingered o'er his dying words,
Which would not die, but echo'd on to reach
Honorius, till he heard them, and decreed
That Rome no more should wallow in this old lust
Of Paganism, and make her festal hour
Dark with the blood of man who murder'd man.”

Akbar's Dream has evidently a strong personal tone and interest in it: Tennyson's unusual prose, in the form of copious notes, indicating more than merely artistic interest and work. The poem has, for introduction, a translation of an inscription for a temple in Kashmir, and it relates to a great Mogul Emperor who died nearly 300 years ago. He was a genial philosopher, a religious eclectic, and a most merciful ruler, sick of bigotry, wrangling and crude assumptions of infallibility. The inscription is a choice ray of sunlight from pure Theism:—

“O God, in every temple I see people that see thee, and in every language I hear spoken, people praise thee.

Polytheism and Islam feel after thee.

Each religion says, ‘Thou art one, without equal.’

If it be a mosque, people murmur the holy prayer, and if it be a Christian Church, people ring the bell from love to thee.

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the mosque.

But it is thou whom I search from temple to temple.
Thy elect have no dealings with either heresy or orthodoxy ; for neither of them stands behind the screen of thy truth.

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to the orthodox.
But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the perfume seller."

A heavenly ideal ! Forgive me if I claim that I have taught it exactly so for more than twenty years, and now more than ever teach it. Everywhere I see the one, great, all-pervading Spirit: everywhere, beneath and within all creeds, I discern Him ; and now, for myself, I only ask that "the dust of the rose-petal" shall cling "to the heart of the perfume seller."

Akbar says to his friend :—

" Well spake thy brother in his hymn to heaven,
— ' Thy glory baffles wisdom. All the tracks
Of science making toward Thy Perfectness
Are blinding desert sand ; we scarce can spell
The Alif of Thine alphabet of Love."

And, though

" every splinter'd fraction of a sect
Will clamour ' I am on the Perfect Way,
All else is to perdition,' "

none have sounded the mighty deep of His being. " Look," says Akbar,

" Look how the living pulse of Alla beats
Thro' all His world. If every single star
Should shriek its claim ' I only am in heaven,'
Why, that were such sphere-music as the Greek
Had hardly dream'd of. There is light in all,
And light, with more or less of shade, in all
Man-modes of worship ; but our Ulama,
Who, ' sitting on green sofas, contemplate
The torment of the damn'd ' already, these
Are like wild-beasts new caged—the narrower
The cage, the more their fury."

" Whene'er
In our free Hall, where each philosophy
And mood of faith may hold its own, they blurt
Their furious formalisms, I but hear
The clash of tides that meet in narrow seas,—
Not the Great Voice, not the true Deep."

The dream was the symbol of a great eclecticism. He says,

" I dream'd
That stone by stone I rear'd a sacred fane,
A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque, nor Church,
But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
To every breath from heaven, and Truth and Peace
And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein."

But, in his dream, the bigots and the smiters followed him, and pulled all down And then came "an alien race" (ourselves ?) who "fitted stone to stone again," and there were no more

" Fires of Súttee, nor wail of baby-wife,
Or Indian widow ; and in sleep I said
' All praise to Alla, by whatever hands
My mission be accomplished ; '"

and then the morning music is heard,

" morn
Has lifted the dark eyelash of the night
From off the rosy cheek of waking day.
Our hymn to the sun. They sing it. Let us go."

A third fine picture tells in brief the story of an enlightened and daring woman, a chieftainess of the Sandwich Islands at the beginning of this century, who broke the old bonds and crushed old superstitious terrors by defying a demon goddess, and doing the very things to which the old legends attached curses and terrors. Like a strong clarion note, Tennyson rings out the burden in his first three lines,—

" When from the terrors of Nature a people have fashion'd and worship a Spirit of Evil,
Blest be the voice of the Teacher who calls to them
' Set yourselves free ! '"

And this emancipated pagan woman was such an one.

'Accursed the woman,' said the old legend, 'accursed the woman, who handles the berries of Peelè : and accursed the woman who climbs to the mountain of Peelè : and accursed be this island when that shall be.' But this woman, on whom the light shone and who had become a Christian, resolved to break the bonds and lift off the terror of the curse. Up the mount of fire and cursing she climbed, all alone.

" Baffled her priesthood,
Broke the Taboo,
Dipt to the crater,
Call'd on the Power adored by the Christian, and, crying
' I dare her, let Peelè avenge herself ! '
Into the flame-billow dash'd the berries, and drove the demon from Hawa-i-ee."

The songs of progress in this tiny book are many and strong. That on *The Dawn* ends in a note we well know,—

" when shall we lay
The Ghost of the Brute that is walking and haunting us yet, and be free ?
In a hundred, a thousand winters ? Ah, what will our children be,
The men of a hundred thousand, a million summers away ! "

The Making of Man repeats the same note. He is not yet made : he is being made : and, one day, the voice of the great united human race will

" blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker. ' It is finish'd. Man is made. '"

In *The Dreamer*, with its fine refrain " Whirl, and follow the sun ! " that note appears again.

In another tone it penetrates a delicious poem entitled *Faith*—the very perfection of persuasive piety, with this at the heart of it :—

" Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest and the best,
Let not all that saddens Nature blight thy hope or break thy rest,"
" Neither mourn if human creeds be lower than the heart's desire.

Through the gates that bar the distance comes a gleam of what is higher.
 Wait till Death has flung them open, when the man will make the Maker
 Dark no more with human hatreds in the glare of deathless fire !”

In *The Silent Voices* we are led on to the very end. “Call me not back,” he says,

“Toward the lowland ways behind me,
 And the sunlight that is gone.
 Call me rather, silent voices,
 Forward to the starry track
 Glimmering up the heights beyond me,
 On, and always on !”

So we come to the culmination, in *God and the Universe* ;—

“Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
 Fear thou not the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
 Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the Gate.”

Tennyson's side, then, in Religion, is manifest. He had finally turned his back upon the old belief in an accursed earth, a doomed man, an angry God, and an endless hell. From his “mountain of the Lord” he saw the distant reaches of the sunlit land, the destiny unfilled, the promises sure, the “one far-off divine event” unfolding. If ever a man did, he belonged to “Our Father's Church,” and no one better prepared the way than he.

Before the Study of Tennyson, the following, on the highest function of the poet, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, was read as a “Lesson”—

It is the office of the poet, as it was of the Hebrew prophet, to appeal to the principles underlying the distorted forms of worship which he finds more or less prevalent in the communities about him. The proof of his divine message is found in the response it meets from human hearts. The creeds of the great councils and synods have done their best to degrade man in his own eyes, to picture him as a being odious to his Maker, born under a curse and destined for the most part to “darkness, death, and long despair.” Doubtless Christianity has done much to assist the progress of civilisation, but no less true is it that civilisation has had to react upon the Church with all the vigour of true humanity to lift it out of its inherited barbarisms. The struggle is going on constantly, on the one hand to Christianise humanity and on the other to humanise Christianity. The poet must be true to his human instincts, or “Thus saith the Lord” will not save his message from neglect or contempt.

Sixty-five years ago a Scotch poet—Robert Pollok—attempted to invest the doctrines of Calvinism with the sacredness of poetry, but his gospel of despair, listened to for a while as a sensation, has almost dropped out of human memory, while the songs of Burns are living in the hearts and on the lips of the Scotchman wherever he is found. In this country the poets who have been listened to have been the truest preachers of their time. No doubt there is room for all the various sects which intrench themselves in their strongholds of doctrine to do good work, each in its several way, among its own people, but there was needed a faith which should take down every barrier that tended to limit that larger belief in the fatherhood of the God who is love, and this is the faith which breathed through all the writings of our principal poets. Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, Whittier, Lowell, have all preached this gospel to their countrymen. The poets who are true to their better natures are the best expressions of the Divine intelligence. They, too, speak with authority, and not as the Scribes or the Sectarian specialists who parcel out the faiths of Christendom in their formulæ and catechisms. I compare their utterances with the dogmas over which men are quarreling, and accept their messages as human expressions of divine truth. So when Bryant speaks to his fellow-mortal, and tells him to

“Go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
 Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
 By an unfaltering trust,”

I thank him for the noble words, which I contrast with the shuddering accents of the "Dies Irae."

When Whittier preaches his life-long sermon in "Songs of Love and Hope," I think of the immortal legacy he has left his countrymen, and repeat in his own words, as applied to Roger Williams—

"Still echo in the hearts of men
The words that thou hast spoken;
No forge of hell can weld again
The fetters thou hast broken.

The pilgrim needs a pass no more
From Roman or Genevan;
Thought-free, no ghostly tollman keeps
Henceforth the road to Heaven."

PRAYERS.

CHIEFLY FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

For the opening of School.

ONCE more, O Father, the light of another day of rest shines upon us; once more this place receives us; once more we look upon the faces of teachers and of friends; once more we come to speak and hear words that may make us wiser, and better, and holier in Thy sight. Now, O Father, with this light of day, give us the inward light that shines into the darkest places of the soul; and, even as we have opened these doors for both the teacher and the taught, so may we all open our hearts to Thee.

May they who teach, to-day, feel their need of Thee: may they who are taught feel that God is teaching them through these earthly voices. Give these scholars attentive minds and open hearts; and mercifully send some message to each of them. We cannot teach, unless we are first taught by Thee: O then, make us wise, and give us light! We cannot be taught unless Thy good Spirit breathe life into our souls: O then, be near us and in us to give life to all we do this day! And when the day is done, may we all be indeed better and wiser because of the pure and uplifting thoughts that come to bless us here. Amen.

For a better following of Jesus, and of those who are like him.

O GOD, our Father, we thank Thee to-day for the examples of those who have gone before us in this good way of prayer and striving for a better life. We thank Thee for some now living with us upon this earth who, by their wise counsels and good lives, are shewing us the way to goodness and to God. We thank Thee for others who are only a memory to us, but whose gracious words linger in our hearts, and whose beautiful examples shine before our minds. We thank Thee for those whom we have never seen,—for holy souls in days gone by whose devoted lives were like lights shining in a dark place, who were faithful to God when the multitude disregarded Him, and who made plain the path of goodness through the wilderness of evil.

Above all, we thank Thee for the life of Jesus, our brother,—for his wonderful influence in the world; for the redeeming power of his teachings and example, in saving from sin, and for the way to God he made so plain and bright.

May we love to think of him, and of all who have been like him ; and may we ourselves become changed as we behold so much spiritual loveliness, and grow to be like that which we look upon and revere.

May we remember how patient Jesus was in adversity, how merciful, how pitiful, how ready to help, how constantly he thought of Thee, and how all his heart seemed to go out in the effort to please Thee. O that we may follow him in this ! that we may become more and more like him on earth, and at last find our way to him in heaven ! And this we ask in the spirit of his teachings, and as Thy children, too. Amen.

For forethought, and for preparation for the future stages of life.

God of our life, in whom we all live, and move, and have our being,—we come to Thee ; for we are but strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and know not what a day may bring forth. A little while ago, we were not ; and, after a little while, the place that knows us now will know us no more. Our life is but as a shadow that passes away.

We are going from this place, but we know not to what we are going. We know not what may befall us ere we come again : we know not whether we shall come again at all. Father, prepare us for all things,—for an early passing away in quietness and trust, or for a life of cheerful and faithful service.

Thou knowest the way in which we shall have to go, and the events we shall be called upon to face. Give us, then, the wisdom and the strength that shall serve us in our day of need. May each new duty find us ready for it, and each new trial find us brave to bear, wise to learn, and faithful to stand firm.

Help us to lay up in our minds pleasant memories and bright thoughts ; and to train the conscience to swiftly decide for us what is right and wrong. Help us to bear pain courageously, and to enjoy our pleasures purely. Teach us to put a right value upon all things, and to know what is best worth having ; that we may always make a wise choice, and be led by right reason and a good conscience.

From stage to stage of our life on earth may we pass as they who move ever onward and upward, bearing our burdens with a good heart, doing our duty cheerfully, hoping all things, and never losing our trust in Thee. Then, when the end shall come, may we pass on without despondency, or fear, or shame,—onward and upward still. Amen.

For a careful and guarded life.

ALMIGHTY and all-wise God, our Heavenly Father, to whom we all belong, and from whom must come all the strength and wisdom we require ;—going now from this place, and turning once more to the serious work of life, we come to Thee for that gift which we all together need,—the gift of a mind bent upon doing Thy will.

Without that, we shall be like the chaff which the wind driveth away, or like the house built upon the sand : but with it, we shall stand in the hour of trial, and be like the tree planted by the river of water, or like the house built upon the rock.

We often pray, O Father, for Thy help, but now teach us that Thy help will only come through our own cultivated powers,—through the enlightened mind and the safe-guarded conscience. May we, therefore, strive to control ourselves, to watch over our desires, to conquer our passions, to guard our lips, and to avoid even the appearance of evil. May we watch over the beginnings of wrong-doing, and suffer no stain of sin to defile the conscience, and no cloud of wilful ignorance to gather around the mind.

Help us to feel that the power to will, the power to choose, is a precious gift from God. May we never trifle with it; may we religiously use it, by always resolving to do what we feel to be right, and by standing fast by what we know to be good. So shall we defend ourselves from evil, and win our way to that life of goodness which is its own sweet reward. So, too, shall we prepare for that welcome word at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant," the crowning joy of those who are stedfast to the end. And these things we ask of Thy fatherly love and wisdom. Amen.

Parting.

OUR gracious Father, we thank Thee for this quiet day of rest, and for this peaceful hour. Because Thou callest, we answer; and because Thou hast put into our souls the desire to find, we seek.

May the thoughts that come to us here be remembered and chosen on other days and amid far different scenes;—when thankless tasks and ready temptations may make it hard to believe in goodness and in Thee.

We thank Thee for the voices that always call to us,—for those dear voices to-day, so easily heard when all is still—when only love urges and kindness pleads,—the blessed quiet voices of conscience and reason, and for the clear and steady light within, or for the light which only begins to shine. May we prize that precious light, and follow where it leads.

Above all, we thank Thee for Thy spirit which never ceases to help us to find our way to better things,—for the angel-voice within that pleads, and warns, and commands for Thee. Help us to watch for that voice,—to listen and obey.

And now, may we know that in our parting to-day we part not from Thee,—that Thou wilt always be near us, to help and comfort, to encourage and save. In that faith, may we now go, with a cheerful spirit, to the toils and pleasures, the joys and sorrows of our way. Amen.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

A LONG and, on the whole, friendly description (in *The Christian Register*) of a meeting in London of Our Father's Church, puts down on paper what is probably in many minds. The writer strongly suggests that the personal element is very marked in this movement: but he gives no help towards avoiding or ending that. The same suggestion has been made, time out of mind, regarding every reaching-out

after better things. Jesus Christ, in his day, uplifted his testimony concerning Our Father, and they killed him, as an interferer and a questioner of the established order. Poor foolish world! If every one who ever thought he saw a better path, and longed to see it taken, had flinched, where would the world have been?

People may say,—Why not be content with the Established Church, with the various forms of Nonconformity,—a varied choice!—or with Unitarianism? The answer is that all the sects are sects; and that, at this very hour, they need a testimony which goes beneath and beyond them all. The half scornful reply, that it is absurd to suppose that a testimony which is little more than personal can testify to anything higher and more far-reaching than all the churches, can best be answered by Calvary and by the never-ceasing lesson taught by all reforming movements. Always and everywhere some one must begin: always and everywhere some John the Baptist must go into the wilderness and cry, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord:” always and everywhere people ask, “And who are you, to question old customs, and the established order, and the overwhelming majority?” always and everywhere, it must be said to the testifying spirits, “You are egotists, difficult to work with, restless in harness, impatient of control.” All that is, again, as old as Calvary and as new as every movement towards better things.

Will men laugh or pity if we tell them plainly that we believe this message of *Our Father's Church* is from heaven,—that it voices the call of angels, speaks for Jesus Christ, and indicates “the highway for our God”? That is what we believe. In a sense, that is what we know: and nothing seems plainer than that all the churches urgently need the teaching which burns and glows even in the very name.

It is often said that there is no difference between the testimony of *Our Father's Church* and of Unitarianism. That is so: and it is not so. It is so because Unitarianism teaches the Fatherhood of God; and it is not so because Unitarianism is mainly doctrinal and critical, and because it has become exceedingly unspiritual. There is no Church in Christendom which less believes in the unseen, in angels, and in the “communion of saints:” and yet, amongst the Unitarians, there are perhaps, in proportion, more saints than are to be found elsewhere: but, in some way, they are repressed by their traditions, imprisoned in their chapels, and chilled by their loneliness. It is not all their fault. That is what time and circumstance have done. Their very name lays emphasis only upon an arithmetical quantity; and the spiritual vision of our day is not interested in that, and will probably never be interested in it again. We are passing beyond the stage at which it mattered whether God was called one or three: and we are rapidly advancing to the stage at which it will supremely interest the world to discern the vital truth, long hidden in that supreme saying of Paul's, “He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we (all) live and move and have our being.”

Doctrines are important, just as money is important: but, with money only, we might starve. Doctrines are only of use when they stand for living values, and procure useful supplies: and herein lies the secret of the great Unitarian failure—and, indeed, of the great Baptist failure—and the coming great Wesleyan failure—ay! the failure of Christianity, except in so far as it is saved by its sympathies and

charities, its reforming spirit and love of light, its championship of justice, and its practical insisting upon The Brotherhood of Man.

This is the meaning of *Our Father's Church*. It condemns no one: it tells no sect that it is utterly wrong; it is eclectic, and sees the good as well as the bad, the living as well as the dying elements in all the churches: it brings its fresh message from heaven to earth: it makes no claim except that it speaks for the Father; but that much it does claim, not for its own sake but for the sake of its message which the world so manifestly needs.

Once more, we appeal to all who sympathise with our testimony. A multitude of members are not necessary in order that this testimony may be made. In any case, it will be made. But all who join may be useful: and all are invited. Membership indicates no more than a general assent to *The Ideal* (copies of which will be sent to any part of the world free), and all that is necessary is the forwarding of name and address. A money payment is, in no sense, a necessity: but, as the work involves serious expenditure, help in that way will be acceptable. Part of our plan is to advertise *The Ideal* in public journals throughout the world—in English, German, Italian, and French.

Millions must, in their hearts, respond to the truth, the beauty, and the need of this "Ideal." To these, one and all, we say: Come in.

All communications, for the present, should be sent to John Page Hopps, South Norwood Hill, London, S.E.

THE NEW BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

SINCE the first half of *The New Book of Common Prayer* appeared in these pages, it has been not only completed but revised in a most searching manner by about forty experienced ministers. The result is a book which, we venture to say, deserves very serious consideration. The ideal aimed at may not be absolutely attained, but men and women, belonging to "schools of thought" very wide apart, have welcomed the book as one which interprets for them the common needs and aspirations of Prayer. This is as it should be. There is a common language of the affections, of devotion and of trust, which need know nothing of the stumbling blocks of doctrinal phraseology and "doubtful disputations."

It ought to be frankly confessed that the wide interchange of ideas indicated led to the discovery of unexpectedly prevalent difficulties connected with what may be called the entreating of God: and it cannot be denied that we have hitherto seemed to yield too readily to the old habit of praying to God as though He could be hard or unmindful, as though He could be personally arbitrary, and as though He needed to be moved by beseeching cries. From every side came the appeal,—“Let us have an honest book;—with no more clinging to the past than is compatible with sincerity in the present.” The problem was a difficult one. The loss of the old tenderness, simplicity and beauty would never have been atoned-for by any amount of rigid

adherence to mental accuracy : and yet the demand for perfect sincerity could not be evaded. That demand led to a larger revision of the book than was at one time intended, but it was happily found that, as one path closed, others that were brighter and safer were revealed ; and, to the joy of many, it was felt that the attempt to be faithful brought an accession of the very qualities we feared to lose. The rational thinker and the spiritual poet have, in this book, met and merged ; and it is our devout hope that the gain to the churches may be great.

There are twelve services for public worship, affording very considerable variety both of mood and treatment. In addition there are special services for Baptism or Dedication, Marriage, The Communion, The Burial of Adults, and the Burial of Children. A second book contains simple but scholarly musical responses, with tunes for all special chants and hymns. The books are published by Williams and Norgate, London. Specimen copies will be sent by post from Oak tree house, South Norwood Hill, London, S.E. One Shilling each.

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.—Meetings will be held during December. On Friday evening, 9th, in London, at the Marylebone Spiritual Hall, 88 High Street, Manchester Square, at eight o'clock. Free admission. Baker Street Station. On Monday, 19th, at Kettering.

On the 11th of November, a meeting was held in Peckham (London) at the Winchester Hall. Here is a copy of the handbill. It is, perhaps, the best indication of what is being aimed at :—

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

SYMPATHY. LIGHT. HOPE.

AT THE WINCHESTER HALL,
33 HIGH STREET, PECKHAM,
NEXT FRIDAY EVENING, Nov. 11 1892,
AT EIGHT O'CLOCK,

JOHN PAGE HOPPS

WILL SPEAK TO WORKING FOLK, ON
THE RELIGION OF COMMON LIFE
Without Superstition, Priest, or Fear.

In the course of the Evening, Mr. PAGE HOPPS will give some Poetical Readings from
LIZZIE DOTEN, FELIX ADLER, AND J.
GREENLEAF WHITTIER,
Including The Worker's Win, The Golden City, and The Soiled Reformer.

A Special Welcome is offered to Struggling People.

COME AND WELCOME.

The Hall was filled by an eager and most receptive audience.

"THE MINISTER": A DEFINITION.—A true minister of Religion is one who strives to discern and to assimilate the supremest inspiration and aspiration of his age, and who endeavours to make these common property for the common good.

VAMPIRE LONDON.—It is stated that during two snowy days last winter 15,000 larks were netted and sent into the London market to be eaten ! We regret to add that the statement does not include the announcement that the fashionable fools who could afford the impish "luxury" were choked as they committed their sin against the Holy Ghost.

A GOOD CAUSE.—Some of our readers have probably noticed the advertisement of a bazaar next March at Kilmarnock. We hate Bazaars, and have had our last agonies in that direction, but if other people care to undertake them and can get good out of them we do not object ; and, if they are people worth helping, we are willing to help—at a distance ;—Bazaars being like bagpipes—best when a long way off. Jestings apart, the minister at Kilmarnock is a real man, and though, happily, every one would not agree with all he says and does, he is, in the fine old wholesome sense, "a man of God" : and the congregation is like a light shining in a dark place. Will the readers of *The Coming Day* be good-natured, and send our far off friends a little help !

"SOCIETY."—There are several papers in London which affect to record what goes on in

"Society," but which really live mainly by inventing spicy lies. One of these, called "Society," a week or two ago, took the palm for mendacity in a paragraph which asserted that Mr. Page Hopps went to Ireland with Mr. John Dillon during the Tipperary riots. Mr. Page Hopps never went to Ireland at any time with John Dillon; he was never in Tipperary, and was not in Ireland at all during any disturbances in that place. John Bright's old reference to the "lying newspaper press" often needs repeating.

"PADDY."—A writer in *The Echo*, describing a late visit to Ireland, says; "And now a word as to the peasantry. For years the comic papers have caricatured the Irish peasant—drawn his features after the same low type, put on him the same battered hat, coarse, long-tailed coat, and breeches open at the knee. Fairs for pigs, rattle and sheep are frequent in Ireland, and at these, if anywhere, one may form a correct judgment. Not a tithe of the men are of the type suggested; on the contrary, they are remarkably handsome, and more especially the younger men. They are tall and muscular, with beardless, oval faces, dark hair and eyebrows, blue eyes with long silken lashes. The dress, too, is picturesque, not one in a score wearing the conventional garb. It is mostly of tweed, the head-gear being a Tam o' Shanter of rich red amber. Of the girls and women I forbear to say more than that the faces were comely, eyes blue, and darkly-lashed; and there was a pathos in the expression which is seldom seen on the face of English girls."

That one simple bit of homely fact is worth tons of mere speechifying, and acres of newspaper "leaders" and doctrinaire discussions; and is like a lamp from heaven compared with the rank torches of Mr. Chamberlain and *The Times*—and, alas! of *The Echo* itself.

UNIONS FOR WOMEN.—One of the brightest lights in England is "The Women's Trades' Union League"; and one of the keenest and most interesting little journals in England is its organ, called "The Women's Trades' Union Review", of which eight numbers have been published. There are hundreds of thousands of women in England who would in every way be benefited if they would cease their subscriptions to the "circulating library" for a year or two and sympathetically study this vivid monthly and such literature as is indicated by

it. For twelve months it will be sent for 1s. 6d. Communications should be sent to the office, 9 Fitzroy Square, London W.

ORTHODOXY BORDERING ON ATHEISM. Ultra "orthodox" preachers and tract-writers are fond of saying that "God in Christ is the only God they want," or even "is the only God they know." J. Denham Smith, in a tract, (in its 22nd thousand) bluntly says, "men speak of a God out of Christ, but there is no such God." We do not intend just now to push that home, but we warn the zealots who talk like that. Jesus was a man, the Gospels and Epistles being judges,—though an unusual man, and presently that will be admitted. It is bad policy to stake belief in God on the deity of a man. Besides, to do so is grossly unnecessary. The Universe reveals Him in a thousand ways.

THEODORE PARKER ON SPIRITUALISM.—In 1856, Theodore Parker wrote in his diary; "It seems now more likely that Spiritualism will become the religion of America than in 156 it did that Christianity would become the religion of the Roman Empire, or in 855 that Mohammedanism would be that of the Arabian population. 1. It has more evidence for its wonders than any historic form of religion hitherto. 2. It is throughout democratic, with no hierarchy, but inspiration open to all. 3. It does not claim to be a finality; it is not a *punctum stans*, but a *punctum fluens*. 4. It admits all the truths of morality and religion in all the world's sects."

THE SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN.—*The Women's Franchise League* is doing its best on behalf of good logic, good sense, and good citizenship, by pushing to the front, in connection with women suffrage, the undoubted claims of married women. Its draft of a bill is a model of simplicity. This is all:—

"A BILL

To Amend the Law relating to the Disabilities of Married Women in Municipal and other Local Elections.

Whereas it is clear that married women, if they possess the qualification, ought not to be omitted from any privilege conferred upon single women:

Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and

consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. In all Acts of Parliament relating to the right to vote at Municipal and other Local Elections no woman shall be subject to legal incapacity from voting at such elections by reason of coverture.

2. This Act may be cited as the Married Women's Disabilities Removal Act, 1892."

The *League* is also industriously circulating a quotation from a speech by Mr. Gladstone during a women franchise debate:—

"My hon. friend also said, that the property held by women requires to be represented. In the first place, I must observe, that if that be the principle on which the Bill is founded, it is my opinion it does not satisfy that principle, because it excludes all married women from the benefit—or evil, as the case may be—of the Bill. But if women are equally capable with men to exercise the franchise—if it is a function equally suitable for them—then why not recognise in married women that which you recognise in joint proprietorship, in joint trade, in joint tenancy, and allow both husbands and wives to vote in respect of property which is sufficiently valuable to give them the necessary qualification?" . . . "It is quite clear that married women, if they possessed the qualification, ought not to be omitted from any privilege conferred upon single women."

A FORERUNNER.—In the tiny village of Stretton, in Leicestershire, there is one of the very smallest chapels in England, standing by the road-side in a bit of wild country garden, and shut off with the homeliest of palings and a cottage gate. For many years, its rustic pulpit was occupied by the students from the Baptist college at Leicester, and Dr. Clifford, of Paddington and Mr. Page Hopps must have preached there many a time, years and years ago. Above the door, let into the gable, is a simple bit of stone, with this most notable inscription upon it:—

FREE CHAPEL.

Frustra laborat, qui omnibus placere studet.

This HOUSE of PRAY'r is set apart
For all who join in hand and heart
To worship God above;
Where party names shall cease to be,
And all shall join in unity
To sing redeeming love.

Erected at the expense of
GEORGE HUDSON, A D., 1811.

This was probably the first Free Christian Church in England. Blessed be the memory of the unknown George Hudson! and long life to his Latin which means,—He labours in vain who tries to please everybody!

"THY WILL BE DONE."—*The Church Reformer* prints the following new version of a well-known hymn. It is a sign of the times, and a welcome one, though it will make many of us uneasy:—

Great God, our Father, day by day,
As the Church moveth on her way,
Teach her with confidence to say,

"Thy will be done."

Though dark the path and sad men's lot,
Let her arise and falter not,
But speak the prayer divinely taught,

"Thy will be done."

No more will "sweated" women sigh,
Nor ill-paid workers longer cry,
If on the earth as up on high

"Thy will be done."

When pain and sickness waste away
Men's lives in premature decay,
Teach us to mend the drains and say,

"Thy will be done."

If Thou bid'st Mammon to resign
What most he prizes,—all is thine;
Teach him to say, "It is not mine;

Thy will be done."

Let every fainting heart be blest
With Thy free Spirit for its guest.

Till Thou dost reign let us not rest,

Thy will be done.

Renew our will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine and make away
Our highest joy on earth to say,

"Thy will be done."

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"The Discovered Country" and "Oceanides." By Carlyle Petersilea. London: J. Burns, Southampton Row. — Two strange books: "psychical novels" the author would perhaps call them: and yet it is difficult to draw the line between suggested fact and deliberate

fancy. We understand that Mr. Petersilea is an accomplished musician, and that he occupied important positions in "the musical world" before he gained, or thought he had gained, glimpses of what lies beyond the veil. Since then, he has had "a mission"—and we

know the rest. Somehow we do not care for "Oceanides": but "The Discovered Country," though highly fanciful, is deeply interesting. But books of the kind need to be read with extreme caution. "The Discovered Country" contains a portrait of the author which suggests a man of strong will and eager but forceful thoughtfulness; as little like a mere dreamer as possible.

"The secrets of the South. Australian poems." By Sydney Jephcott. London: W. Reeves. Poems, somewhat exaggerated in tone and expression, but in the neighbourhood of Swinburne, though, as yet, only "struggling to be free." They are all short;—some, mere snatches of song. Here is one; not a bad specimen of the writer's special faculty, felicity and failings:—

"HER RETURN.

Ah, at last, by her dear window going,
When hope had dwined to a dim desire,
Through the white curtains light was glowing,
As soft as snow and as warm as fire;
And the chill wind ceased repining,
And o'er the gloriofs orb'ing gloom
Like saints' souls the stars were shining,
And my heart's song-roses were all abloom!"

"Selections from the Letters of Geraldine E. Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle." Edited by Mrs. Alex. Ireland. London: Longmans, Green & Co.—Mrs. Thomas Carlyle was an inspired gipsy and Miss Jewsbury was an eloquent screamer, and they helped one another to plunge into mighty floods of verbal hysterics. That is the plain truth of it. Mrs. Carlyle wanted soothing, and she somehow fell into

the hands of people who excited her. Judging from these letters, Miss Jewsbury did Mrs. Carlyle an ill-turn when she undertook to bewail with her and counsel her. No wonder poor smoke-sodden, neuralgia-ridden Carlyle longed for silence. It was a miserable business, and it would have been well if a veil could have been thrown over it.

"Patricius: his religious progress." London: Williams & Norgate. A kind of general survey of the churches, faiths, professions, practices and performances of sectarian Christendom, done into easy verse which can be best described as the poetry of the cute commercial traveller. It is stuffed with common sense and is reeled off by the yard, apparently without pause: but it is not poetry. It could be easily turned into immensely taking prose: and would be better so.

"Revelation and the Bible." By R. F. Horton, M.A. London: T. Fisher Unwin.—A very notable, serious, scholarly, and amusing book: notable, as shewing how far the trusted and capable men of the once "orthodox" camp have gone, in giving up the consistency and supernatural inspiration of the Bible; serious, because men like Mr. Horton have a very difficult part to play, and are very much in earnest in playing it; scholarly, in so far as we have here the results of critical researches long denounced as dangerous if not impious; and amusing to those who have lived long enough to see how gratefully that is now welcomed which twenty years ago only excited horror.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

HEARD IN THREE HOMES.

Happy bells, peal out your tidings
This blessed morn!
Bring us the sweet old message;
"A child is born."
To happy mothers say, in English homes;—
Christ still is here—
In every baby-face that comes,
God still draws near.

Shout bells! and sing!
Welcome our King!
A child a King! Ah, yes:
All hearts confess
What rules the world.
Not mailed hand, nor sword;
Not wealth, how'er adored;
Not martial flag unfurled.
Love rules the world!

Dear friend, the music of the bells
To sorriest heart belongs;
Look up! and think of those who hear
In Heaven their Christmas songs.

J. P. H.