

The Coming Day.

MARCH, 1892.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

THE RESPONSE.

[SPOKEN BY J. PAGE HOPPS, AT THE CAVENDISH ROOMS, LONDON,
ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 1892.]

THE main purpose of this very serious gathering is to announce the formation of a church of a kind not as yet recognised in the religious world, but having a message for every church included in it. Many of us already know and love it, as **OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.**

That delightful name is all we need. It is itself a psalm, a gospel, a benediction and a prayer. Its heavenly universalism, its sublime simplicity, are, to me and to many, a kind of revelation which, standing alone, shew us the way out of the wilderness of sectarianism, unreasonableness, and fear. In lifting up this beacon light of **OUR FATHER'S CHURCH** we take Christendom at its word, and challenge it to trust that great "Lord's Prayer"—to trust itself, to trust the inspiring spirit, to trust the Master himself who has told us that, not in any particular mountain, nor in any favoured Jerusalem, should the Father be exclusively worshiped, but everywhere, in spirit and in truth.

Of whom, then, are we chiefly thinking, in offering **OUR FATHER'S CHURCH** to the world? First, the spiritually lonely who, for various reasons, intellectual and spiritual, can find no home or haven in the organised churches of their various localities, but who are, perhaps, even sensitively religious, and who could be greatly comforted and helped by being spiritually associated with others, and by the abiding thought, in their households and among their friends, that they are not entirely adrift in this vital matter of religion: and, second, the multitude, and the rapidly increasing multitude, in all the churches, who, while for various reasons they belong to those churches, have yet passed beyond their conventional creeds, and who might be profoundly helped by joining a spiritual church with its testimony to the deeper truths which bear witness to the Father beyond the "Denomination," and to His universal saving grace beyond the limits set by human creeds.

The question has been asked, "In what way will any one be advantaged by joining **OUR FATHER'S CHURCH**; and what can be the practical outcome of it?"—just as though it made no difference to a sensitive and thoughtful human being whether its life is isolated or related, or whether it made a good confession or none! God has so made us that we are all helped by the sense of sympathy, and the deliberate

taking of a side : and those of us who know human nature know well that the simple act of decision, the actual stretching out of willing hands to OUR FATHER'S CHURCH, may make all the difference to solitary or struggling souls, and to those who feel that the sect does *not* speak the deepest or highest word.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH is at once intensely practical and purely spiritual. It does not need this meeting for its visible establishment : and, when we separate, it will not be necessary that we shall ever meet again—though I hope we shall. It has no temple, no priestly order, no creed, no code of rules, no rites and ceremonies, no institutions : and it needs none. Its Church-work is the work of daily life, done, not as an operation of a church establishment, but as part of the life-work of a human being. Its members will be in all parts of the world. It will not matter that they may never meet. The bond of union will be the simple and happy confession ; “ I am a member of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH, and I try to do His will.” “ And what of that ? ” some will say. “ What of that ? ” Not much to those who think a thing is unreal until it is organised and officered,—a kingdom coming with “ observation.” Not much to those who live surrounded by like-minded and sympathetic friends. Not much, perhaps, to the strong and self-reliant ; but more than tongue can tell to those who stand aside from establishments and priests, and find no foothold with the multitude who go with the things that are seen ;—more than tongue can tell to those who feel mentally and spiritually alone—to those upon whom God has laid the sacred but isolating burden of independent thought. To these OUR FATHER'S CHURCH may be one of the greatest comforts upon earth, giving to lonely souls the sense of comradeship, though no minister's face be seen, no comrade's hands be held. “ Somewhere,” they will say, “ somewhere the kindred spirits live, and love, and hope, and battle onward, and aspire : and we, unknown, are with them.” In stormy seas, this might be, to thousands, the anchor which, though unseen, helps the voyager to hold on. Such, to me, is OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

What I have called “ The Ideal ” is a full statement of the principles, aims, and hopes of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. It has appeared in two forms, the final one of which is now being sent to every part of the world. The greater portion of it has been prominently printed in *The Echo*, *The Times*, *The Daily News*, and *The Modern Church*, and arrangements are being made for greatly extended advertisements of it, so that it may go wherever the English language is spoken. It will, probably, be translated into French and German, and freely circulated abroad. In short ; everything that can be done to make The Ideal known will be done, in the belief that it speaks the word for our time—the emancipating word and the reconciling word that may bring to us the real Jesus, and answer the cry which is as urgent to-day as it was in his days,—“ Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

The Ideal will, I hope and believe, speak for itself, but I should like to concentrate and make emphatic the following vital thoughts :—

First, that *Our Father's Church is not one more sect*. It is the very reverse. It is the expression or outcome of an attempt to find the foundation-fact in every sect. Its special testimony is, that within, beyond and above all sects, OUR FATHER'S CHURCH spreads its havening hands, and claims us all. Deeper than all our dividing shibboleths, we hear the uniting confession,—“ Our Father who art in heaven.”

The next thought is that *Human life is the supremely sacred thing*. Creeds, however sound ; rites, however sacred ; prayers, however sincere ; religious books, however ancient ; sacraments, however precious ; priesthoods, however venerable, are, at best, only aids to life : and "The life is more than the food, and the body than raiment." The man is more than the priest : the woman is more than the creed, the child is more than the sacrament, the place of honest work is more than the altar, the home is more than the Church. As says The Ideal, "The duties, toils, and struggles of our common life are the truest sanctities of the world, and the keenest and clearest revelations of the intentions of God."

The third thought is that *God is the unceasing inspirer of mankind*. In Him we all live and move and have our being. England is to Him as much as Palestine ever was. He teaches our statesmen and poets as truly as He taught Moses and David in ancient days. He is the living God of living men—still developing mankind, and still creating the world.

The fourth thought is that *The true church may not be visible at all*. The spirit is more than the form : the soul is more than the body : the idea is more than the organisation. It is not necessary that we should have either tabernacle or assembly. The ideal church may not be organised at all, needing no more than kindredness of spirit, and desiring the spiritual companionship of unseen comrades, only for consolation and good cheer, and because it cannot be good for any one to be spiritually alone.

In these thoughts we at once find the answer to the questions,—How can you be a Church without church organisations ? and, How can one belong to OUR FATHER'S CHURCH who is already a Church member as Wesleyan, or Baptist, or Unitarian ? In some cases it may be difficult, but there is really no vital and insuperable difficulty. OUR FATHER'S CHURCH is like our Father's Holy Spirit. It comes to every one who desires it : and it cannot be either appropriated by or excluded from any organisation. If, indeed, you make a rite, or a creed, or any visible embodiment (such as an Established Church) essential, then, of course, you might find a difficulty, but, unless you were alien in spirit, you would still belong to OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. You could not help yourself. You may be a member of the Established Church and of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. You may be a Baptist and a member of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. You may be a Wesleyan and a member of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. Nay, you may be a Jew or a Buddhist and a member of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH : for OUR FATHER'S CHURCH contains all the Father's adoring and seeking children,—and, in a sense, contains all the careless children, too. It is perfectly clear, then, that the Churchman, the Baptist, the Congregationalist, and all the rest, may say,—“We are also members of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH, and we rejoice to bear witness to it.” Every Englishman lives in his particular town and house ; but he does not find it difficult to be a patriot because he is a Londoner, or a Manchester man, or an inhabitant of Leicester. He knows that, beyond town and house, is the nation. So, beyond Established Church, or Baptist, or Unitarian, or Wesleyan, is OUR FATHER'S CHURCH ; and it is precisely this that needs to be recognised now. That, of itself, would end bigotry, silence dogmatism, put an end to condemning creeds, deepen and widen charity, bring to the front the vital things, and make loyalty to the Fatherhood and

the Brotherhood the test of nearness to God. The lifting up of this glorious testimony to-day may give new life and meaning to all the Churches, and be one of the Saviours of the world.

It has been put to me, by more than one, that it would have been better if I and those who are with me had left this Ideal to be worked out by The Established Church, or even by the strong nonconformist churches. "Why start a new movement?" they ask. The reply is, "We cannot help it." As The Ideal says; "The ordinary churches are hampered by Acts of Parliament, by Trust Deeds, by ghostly creeds, by rites and ceremonies, by tradition and habit"; and the lifting up of our testimony, like a beacon-light, is forced upon us. It was so with Jesus Christ. Why did he not stay in the Temple? He could not. He stood apart. He bore witness to the Father: and they killed him, but he won. It was so with Luther. He had to leave the old Church, and begin where others halted and left off. It was so with the Church of England itself, in breaking away from the mother Church of Rome. It was so with John Wesley, who had to take to the fields and the streets.

If any evidence were wanted as to the need and tendency of our Ideal, the many communications that have reached me during the past few weeks would abundantly suffice. These, almost entirely from strangers to me, shew, and frequently in a most touching way, how OUR FATHER'S CHURCH might become a mental and spiritual haven for *all*,—larger than any sect, more hospitable than any tabernacle, more human than any creed. Take some typical cases, from hundreds of letters that have lately come to me.

Here is an agnostic who pauses and at least wonders whether this may not prove a haven for him:—"I have been very much interested in the statement concerning 'Our Father's Church.' . . . I am not a Christian. Brought up in the Established Church, then becoming a member of various dissenting sects, I at last took refuge in the great Roman Church, and thought I had found rest; but, as time went on, my mind seemed more enlarged, and I could not believe that God would damn any of His creatures to an eternity of woe. So at present I am simply an agnostic, and wish to obtain more knowledge."

Here is a Churchman who sees in The Ideal a check to Atheism and a barrier against Ritualism:—"I thank you for the courage of your Ideal. Almost the precise belief it inculcates has been in my mind, unformulated, for years. I believe you will attract to your standard a vast number of thinking men. . . . An English Churchman by choice and bringing up, I have ceased to attend church, being convinced of its unsatisfying teaching and almost insolent dogmatism. . . . I rejoice to have the opportunity of saying what I think of your Ideal."

Here is a worried man of business, who shivers at the selfishness of the world, and turns to this as a possible haven:—"I have attended nearly every so-called Christian denomination in England and America,—all good in their way—yet I longed for something beyond them all; and am now happy to say, on this new year's day, that you, through the divine inspiration of the Father of all creation, have promulgated a doctrine which every intelligent and God-loving human being can accept."

Here is a worker in an Established Church mission who welcomes it as a cure for our doubts and the satisfaction of our longings :—"Your Ideal of Our Father's Church has struck a kindred chord in my breast. I belong to a Mission in connection with the Church of England. My thoughts and experiences, and that of others with whom I am associated, have been similar to those described in your statement. I should like my name enrolled as a member, and will do all I can to make the aim for which you are working known."

Here is a type of the nineteenth century man, desiring to be religious, but tired out with a faded Theology, and hoping that this may put reality into religion, for him and others :—"I should like to know all that is done in regard to the movement. I am one of the many members of orthodox churches who have kept up a connection with them only because, on the whole, their influence is thought to be good. But, of Theology, I am very tired, and hardly know what I believe"—a remarkably instructive and most typical case.

Here, evidently, is a disappointed thinker who is astonished to find that there are people in the world to whom Religion can be something so simple, human, just, and broad :—"How the copy of Our Father's Church came to me I know not : but this I know—I bless the sender, unaware. What a relief, to find such an embodiment of simple justice, love and duty, free from doctrine and metaphysics, inconceivable, yet perforce to be believed ! I had come to the conclusion that anything so simple was almost thought unworthy of a man with a brain. Most heartily do I wish this work prosperity."

Here is a poor woman, writing, she says, out of "bitterest sorrow," chiefly because she has not found unselfish sympathy amongst the sects :—"You invite the lonely and the struggling, but in one sense we are all lonely and struggling. If God does not open the eyes of others to see as we see, we are alone, and our struggle is sometimes very great. . . . I am a stranger to you, sir, and you are a stranger to me : but when you speak of 'Our Father's Church' all strangeness seems to vanish. I seem like one confounded at what I have found in the so-called 'Church of Christ.' It's a myth, a shadow : that is all it has been to me. It has made me cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?' But I hope to see a brighter time in future."

Here is a brave fighter for God, who, in trying to teach the higher truths to the unchurched mob, has not only been derided but beaten, not only howled at but stoned :—"All my soul moves me to respond at once to your Ideal of Our Father's Church. For such a consummation all the world is seeking, praying, weeping. Seven years ago I dreamed of its necessity, and, since that time, have struggled to formulate such an Ideal. In your letter, I found a baptism of the dew of heaven ; and I rejoiced to see that the day is breaking. I cannot say 'I will gladly sit at your feet in this noble enterprise'—you do not wish that, for we must all be up and doing, but I shall esteem it no small honour to place all my energies at your disposal, and work under the shadow of such a heaven-designed banner as you propose to unfurl."

Here is a plain man of the world, homely, neighbourly, and anxious to do good,

who discerns in it the possibility of a reconciling and attracting power for scattered men and women who, at present, need sympathy, guidance and encouragement:—"Please enrol me as a member. I feel convinced that great good can and will be done by this new departure. It has opened up quite a new field of good work, and will, I feel sure, help to bind together hundreds in this town for sympathy and help."

Here are three sisters who wrote, first to express their delight in the Ideal, and to say that they shrank from joining it, as they could do so little to support its work, and then to thank me for offering, to just such as they, a special welcome:—"Most hearty thanks for your gentle words. We were diffident about joining when we could do so little to promote the cause, though we could absorb so much of its teaching. Your Ideal is what we have felt but have had no power to express. Kindly enrol us, and think of us as grateful for the beautiful thoughts you have roused, and the encouragement to action."

Here is a cheery soul who has been gradually pinched out of the congregation, and has found his church in God's world, with human beings, and fresh air, and trees, and birds, and who yet feels that the Ideal finds him:—"It seems to me as near as we have yet got to an embodiment of the religious thought of the present day. It will, no doubt, be a real help to thousands."

Here is a good woman who shrinks from joining, on the ground that the Ideal is too high for her, but surrenders when she perceives the deepest thought of all, that the essence of love is *service*, and that it is precisely this which is possible for us all.

Here is a Baptist who has made the vital discovery that his Baptist chapel is his house, not his country, and who responds to the breadth and universalism of the Ideal:—"There is a broadness about the principles that I rejoice in. Although a Baptist myself, I have no sympathy with dogmatic 'isms.' I rarely find charity, either in deed or doctrine, very largely developed in a sectarian, from Plymouth brethren to Roman Catholics. The first law of love is spoiled by narrowness and jealousy."

Here is a man who describes himself as all alone in the fen country, so far as the thoughts set forth in the Ideal are concerned:—"Few could comprehend the aims and meaning of the proposals. I, however, shall continue to think over the teachings, and try to feel after the Ideal there set forth."

Here is an old seaman, in a tiny Welsh town, isolated, and looked upon as an infidel by his neighbours, who suddenly sees the sunshine break in with the Ideal of Our Father's Church. But, so used is he to the pressure of the excluding spirit, that he asks whether I would consider a man my brother if he held an opinion different from mine in some points!—"Brought up in my youth in the strict belief that the Church of England is the only true Church, I, in reading the Bible, began to doubt its infallibility: and, after reading Paine's works, was on the brink of becoming an atheist, if such a thing is possible; but, in my lonely hours at sea, I felt there was a Power which I could not comprehend, whose wisdom, goodness and love were not to be measured by my poor intellect. I felt that his ways were as far beyond my

reach as the differential calculus is to an Indian who has no numbers above three, and whose knowledge of time is only yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. I shall be very willing to do all I can to spread the doctrine of the Father's love. If you think fit to have some of your smaller works translated into Welsh, all I can do will be at your service."

And here, last of all, is a letter from that fine worker, Lady Sandhurst, with whom I was about to make an appointment on the morning when I heard of her broken life on earth. In that letter she expressed her very great interest in OUR FATHER'S CHURCH, and asked for an appointment and a conversation with regard to it. I have reasons for believing that she would have been one of the leaders in our heavenly crusade.

From such widely different spheres, within a few weeks, have these interesting recognitions come, demonstrating to me both the need and the uses of our Ideal. What may come of it, it is not for any of us to say. I know what might. All we can do is to put our hands to the plough that seems to stand in our furrow. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" is always the one clear message for us all. Happy should I be to see this work pass into better hands than mine, for I clearly see that its possibilities are illimitable. There are no bounds. Courage and self-sacrifice, adequate to the occasion, might put this testimony in the sky of Christendom—a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, to guide God's people into the promised land.

[Mr. J. Page Hopps will gladly send copies of THE IDEAL, free, to any part of the world.]

MR. SPURGEON.

[NOTES OF A DISCOURSE SPOKEN AT THE GREAT MEETING, LEICESTER, ON FEBRUARY 7TH.]

THERE are reasons why I, as a religious rationalist, should speak to-day in memory of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. When he came to London, I was his own age, and was on the lookout for signs of the times in religion and politics, and I took note of him from the first, and have followed his development ever since. Another reason is that I believe he marks an epoch, as the last of his race, theologically. There will be no more commanding men who will teach his Calvinism; and he lived long enough to see the whole of the religious world drift from his moorings; and he knew it. But his Calvinism was an accident. He was born into it as into an atmosphere or dialect. He breathed it, talked it, acted it, but it did not belong to the man himself. The best and most influential things in his life, and even in his sermons, were pure and simple humanities. Hence his grotesque inconsistencies. No man ever told more simply and sweetly the glad tidings of the love of God and the gentleness of Jesus, and yet no one ever made God and Jesus look so much like pitiless demons.

The real Spurgeon was a moralist and philanthropist who imagined he was a theologian and an expositor. His creed was in one sphere, while he was in another, and he was always alternating between the two. In his real world he was a loving and active humanitarian ; but he kept a private theatre, where he played his lurid melodrama ; and he was so used to it, and, in some respects, it so suited him, that he honestly persuaded himself his melodrama was not only real, but the main reality. His thunders of Sinai, his fire and brimstone, his rattlings of chains, were all stage properties, as anyone may see who will turn to the passages concerning them in his sermons. A man who intellectually and from his real heart believed in such things would not picture them as Spurgeon did, and yet he was perfectly honest. He could not distinguish between his melodrama and his mind.

His first and most ruling force was his temperament as an Englishman—shrewd, blunt, resolute, strong-willed, courageous, practical. But he was a marvellous speaker, and that does not seem very English, And yet Englishmen ought to be the best speakers in the world—weighty, direct, simple, convincing. Spurgeon had the courage to let the Englishman go, but he was well nourished on the raciest and sturdiest style in the world, as one who was brought up on Puritan literature. Next to his English temperament, his pure philanthropy was his dominant force. His college, his orphanages, his book missions, his schools, his alms-houses showed the real man. He was a fine administrator, an expert man of business, a teacher of practical morality and justice to working men and shopkeepers.

One of his conspicuous characteristics was his hearty brotherliness. His manner before a congregation of 5,000 people was a delight to see. The very reading of a hymn revealed his fine simplicity, his human sympathy. And how can I speak of his prayers ? It was a great generous brother who took us all in his arms to the Father. I sat one night in his Tabernacle, farthest away from him, near the entrance door, amongst some very poor people, and by my side sat a poor woman, who, as his strong and tender voice filled the place, pleading in prayer, sobbed quietly, it seemed to me, as a little child might, who had reached the mother's arms.

Much has been said of his humour—a delightful and helpful characteristic, but we must beware how we accept the silly stories that have been told of him. He had a breezy freshness of spirit that made humour natural, and that made sanctimonious conventionalism only a thing to be cuffed and brushed aside. As a rule, he was really dignified in speech, in the true sense of that misused word. There is a dignity that is silly ; but he was grave, impressive, almost colossal in his commanding power, as though one stood by his side greater than he. His jests were passing gleams of sunshine, but sunshine on solid rock.

The very important event that practically ended his career was most significant. He saw the churches all slipping from his old moorings. He knew it, and he could not understand it. One of his biographers said "He would not argue about it." He could not. Little as he knew it, his doctrines were not intellectual at all. They were his imagery and his dialect. And yet he had been insensibly influenced by the Time Spirit. He did not bring on to his stage, in later years, the rampant melodramatic brutalities and lurid hell-fire lavas of his earlier performances.

My own firm faith is that this fine, brave, brotherly spirit will be among the first to go and rescue those whom, on earth, he condemned to everlasting perdition. We have only got to follow him into the other world in order to find the antidote to all his teachings in that lurid chamber of imagery where he kept his Giant Despair and his hell.

It would not be right to pass over the lesson that ought to be learnt from the failure of such strenuous prayer as was offered on his behalf. On his partial recovery, Mr. Spurgeon, with curious jocularity, said that his praying friends had beaten the infidels and proved the power of prayer. He boasted too soon, and suggested perilous thoughts of which he was not aware. Prayer for the recovery of a sick man is useless and wrong. The only wise and really religious prayer, in such a case, is ; "Help me to understand, accept, and bear." But we may be sure that the future Spurgeons will have a clearer insight into the abiding certainties of natural law. They will become more entirely rational on all subjects. Let us hope they will be as unselfish, as brotherly, as superbly militant, as keenly practical, as finely religious as this man whom we have tried to understand to-day.

THE BROAD CHURCH.

A GLIMPSE OF THE COMING DAY.

I.

From a Clergyman.

"I do not think you seem to have fairly realised the mental position of such of us Anglicans as sympathise with you. I am not at all surprised at this, nor do I intend in the least to find fault with what was to be expected. But allow me to put the case from our own point of view.

At first sight our position appears to many to involve a flat contradiction—in fact, to be downright dishonest, and this inconsistency is straightway attributed to interested motives. I think that to impute such motives is wanting in charity, or at any rate in consideration. May it not well be that there are many who do not find themselves in precise harmony with the exactly formulated tenets of any sect or body, any more than with those of the Church, but whose general taste is more satisfied by the methods and surroundings of the Church of England than by those of any other body? It is probable that the limits of that Church are *practically* more widely inclusive than those of any other religious body in existence: and even if this is not *verbally* the case, yet the assent exacted is only of a general nature, and not an assent to each jot and tittle of the Articles and formularies: if this latter were exacted, there breathes surely no single individual who can be a sound Churchman. But a general assent does not exclude the right to see special weaknesses or errors. And so it becomes possible to tolerate, under protest, the existence of numerous survivals, which may be objectively false though possessing a historical

truth. The repetition of such passages as you cite—*e.g.*, such as refer in all good faith to the legend of Adam and Eve—is merely the use of language such as is intelligible to common hearers, and was looked on as absolute truth by the writers: and this is only yielded to provisionally—*i.e.*, until there has been time to have such anachronisms expunged. Now, were we to leave the Church, we could not be useful in getting them expunged. But this brings me to what is in fact the main position of conscientious Broad Churchmen, which remains to be noticed. It is this: the Church of England is, in our view, the church of the country, as its name denotes, and not the church of an exclusive clique. Whatever, therefore, forms any living part of the religious thought of the country has its rightful place in that church. It becomes, therefore, no less than a duty to assert that right, and not to leave our grand inheritance in the exclusive possession of its most literal, but, as we think, its least worthy members.

That many of its surviving formularies are inconsistent with this view is fully granted, because they were framed at a time when such diversity of thought was never contemplated. But if we are to represent the national thought in any way, these must obviously be modified: and that by God's help they shall be, granted only time to do it in: only that they never would be unless there were a strong party within the Church's limits that desired such modification. The duty, therefore, of that party seems to be to remain where they are and carry on a sturdy fight; and not to leave the Church drained of its lifeblood by their desertion, and certainly in that case destined eventually to collapse.

It comes, then, to this—that we mean to assert our absolute right, and, if you please, your absolute right, to a place in the nation's Church; and we mean, too, that in no very long time that Church shall think as we think.”

II.

From a Free Lance.

“Thank you for your interesting letter. I feel that our agreements are vital, and that our differences are verbal—with this exception, that your way of getting over a fence seems to me to be burglarious, your best plea being that the fence had to be got over: and compulsion, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. The very frequently used argument, that if men like you left the Church the chance of reform would be so much diminished, does not seem to me to be sound. It is hitting the ass that makes him go: and there never was either a House of lords or a House of ecclesiastics which did not need to be hit from without. An exodus would help us to Canaan. But the difficulties, I admit, are enormous: and yet what are we here for but to destroy ourselves in ‘forlorn hopes’? and these ‘forlorn hopes’ are the saviours of the world.

I entirely agree with you respecting the *National* Church. I want to enter into my inheritance, and I would there were more of my mind—wanting to go into the old home, and making the street ring with our protests against the gang of garrotters who keep the door.”

III.

From a Clergyman.

“On the whole I should be disposed to agree with your view of the logical position discussed, if the assent demanded were literal and not merely general, and if it did not appear a positive duty to maintain our right to be where we are at all risks, and in defiance of red-tape objections. The fact is things have drifted into so anomalous a position that there is no road out except by riding roughshod over obstacles.

But then it is not quite fair, if you will pardon me, to tell me that I have ‘got over a fence burglariously’ and so entered the jealously-guarded dwelling which ought to be free. I was born inside it and have abode there all my life, giving assent to Articles, &c., at a time when I had no question of them. But then it is not in a man’s power to undertake that he will think this or that in twenty years’ time.

Well, since that time I have come to differ a good deal in opinion from the rest of the inmates of the dwelling; but see no reason to leave it for a worse, nor do they attempt to put me out. Besides, though what you say as to outside pressure is perfectly true, I think this is not likely to end in anything but utter collapse of the structure, unless met halfway by effort from within.

I know the Church has no mind to set its house thoroughly in order as yet,—‘O that there were such a heart in them,’—and they never will be unless the existing leaven goes on permeating.”

IV.

From a Free Lance.

“The ‘fence’ to which I alluded is the barrier of ‘subscription’ which you admit you have to get over ‘by riding roughshod over obstacles.’ That is very much like what I said. It does not seem to me to make much difference that you were born in the Church, and that your act of ‘subscription’ occurred when you were a guileless youth. Legally and morally that act is vital all along, and is the standing condition of your being where you are.

I admit that there is something in your plea,—‘They do not attempt to turn me out’; and I can understand how you, as a perfectly honest man, can feel about that. You may say, ‘When I subscribed, I believed what I signed, or had not opened my eyes to what it involved: and now, *openly speaking my mind*, it is for the judges to turn me out if they think I have lapsed. No man is called upon to put himself on trial and pronounce his own condemnation.’ There is something in that: but there still remains this question,—‘When a religious teacher has ceased to believe in the creeds that are put into his mouth, and in the statements which he is compelled to make on the most solemn and sacred occasions in life, how can he bear to keep on?—nay, how can he keep on and retain his self-respect?’ That may be a brutal way of putting it; but what else can I say? Then, beyond that, there lies the still larger question,—‘How can men subscribe who, *in the very act of subscribing*, know that they do not believe the creeds and the statements which, nevertheless, they pledge themselves to recite and teach?’ I admit the misery of it all: but it seems as though God is always saving the world by way of Calvary and the cross.”

PRODUCTIVE CO-OPERATION.

WHAT is known as "distributive" co-operation, *i.e.*, amateur shop-keeping, is a proved, if not an overwhelming, success in the busiest parts of England—thanks, probably, to the keen and sturdy men of Lancashire and Yorkshire, who could do anything. But a tougher job is now on hand—and one of the hopefulest ever attempted in England. It is known as "productive" co-operation, and simply means, in its pure form, manufacture by and for the workers themselves, as profit-sharers. Not in all cases, however, is this pure form of it found. Time is wanted, to enable men to understand, to trust, and to save, so that they may find their own capital and plant.

We hold that this enterprise, which has already got well on the road in several trades, registers high-water mark in England. Nothing, to-day, in the commercial world, is more noteworthy and significant. Nothing is more vital, inasmuch as there is no question more vital or critical than the one; "What is to be done with this bitter feud between capital and labour?" We have no quarrel with the old system. The old master-system has been extremely useful—it has been necessary, and the most ardent co-operator in regard to production may rightly hold that the old system is not yet played out. We believe, however, that the new movement is destined to settle the old feud between capital and labour.

Co-operators produce two things;—the articles produced and themselves. That, in our judgment, is one of the most important facts about co-operative production. God has so made men that they are obliged to have a pride in their work; and this is increased in proportion as the relation between themselves and their work is direct and individual. If we encourage this tendency, in however small a degree, by making co-operative production a fact in the world, we get, as the result, men-making and women-making, men happy and elevated and women uplifted in the world. Touchstone in *As you like it*, when he presented his rather rough and rustic wife to the Duke, said; "An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own." He was a philosopher. Every one takes a special interest in what is his own.

We see in this movement another hopeful sign;—the arresting of the always strong tendency to concentrate trade and manufacture (like the ownership of land) in few hands. It is better that ten men should earn £200 a year than that one man should earn £2000,—that ten men should know the charm and have the incentive of ownership than that one man should pile up power and engage or cast off "hands."

There will be difficulties and troubles. All combinations, especially where money is concerned, need special knowledge, patience, confidence, and tenacity. But all the precious things come after toil and danger; and all progress means peril. The moment we begin to step a foot forward we find difficulties. The only way to secure ourselves against any troubles is to try and remain where we are, showing no energy and no ambition: but even then we shall get into trouble, because everyone would outstrip us, and serve us right. There will be plenty of difficulties. There is a

great rage in these days for two things, and both ought to be distasteful to true co-operators ;—the rage for cheapness and the rage for fineness. Of course we ought to try and make good things as cheaply as possible, and a man is a fool who does not buy a thing cheap if he could get it good at the same time. But the rather silly rage for cheapness constantly tempts the producer and the seller to cheat : and the way in which people are cheated with their eyes open is a constant wonder to a rational onlooker. Of course, the labourer must at length smart from the effect of this rage for cheapness at all costs, but the poor article has to suffer too. Co-operative production would do well to resist this rage for mere cheapness, and to try to educate the public, who, it is to be hoped, are not so utterly foolish that they could not be told, or so utterly obstinate that they could not be persuaded.

It would be a splendid thing if co-operators, in addition to the other services they will render society, could take their stand on quality of material and excellence of work. One notable example of this may be found at Huddersfield, in the case of the Woodhouse Mills, in one of whose reports we find these words ; “ Impress on all that behind our economic work there is a moral motive which makes itself felt, not only in our own industrial life, but in the character of the goods we produce.” Every one might be taught to take a pride in his work, by the use of honest materials and the striving for a high standard. No one really has it in his nature to like to do bad work, any more than a mother likes to send to school or work a bad, hungry, or starving child. It is when the workers think of the work as a mother thinks of the child that we shall get to the highest ideal point of co-operative production. Here we may find our way to the real emancipation of labour, because here we are taken down to the depth of a great principle ; and it is when we plant our feet on that great principle, and take delight in this poetry of life and work, that we find ourselves on the high road both to success in regard to money and, what is better still,—to a happy and noble life.

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

WORDS OF CHEER. We have to thank many unknown friends for letters of encouragement,—sometimes a little needed. Those from thoughtful toilers are always most welcome. Here is one :— ‘ Many thanks for the light we have received from you through the all-welcome *Coming Day*. It is with great joy I read from time to time the truths that are conveyed to the thinking mind. Some there are that want quantity ; no matter the quality, bulk is the thing in the paper market, or fine pictures. To my mind your books are full of grand and true pictures, if the reader will only allow himself time.’

THE NEW BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (second edition) is nearly ready. It will, first of all, be sent to about four hundred ministers, with an

invitation to contribute suggestions in the hope that the thoughts of many minds may lead to such a final form of the Book as may make it generally acceptable. A letter, just received from a cultured “ layman ” of very considerable experience, admirably sets forth one reason for preparing a new Book of Common Prayer. He says ;—“ Living in the country with a family of growing children, I have, after many spasmodic efforts to attend Church, (as the possible least of two evils) given it up entirely. The conception of our great loving Father involved in the use of the Church prayers, which seem to presuppose that He who knows us perfectly and is educating us by His providence needs to be urged and entreated ‘ to have mercy upon us,’ is so repulsive, and militates so against the cherishing of the idea of His ‘ over

cherishing loving care of His children,' that that alone keeps me away, and I have come to think that good as public worship would be, still the best part of religion is the cultivation of the idea of His tender care for each soul He has created, and the keeping open of all the soul's avenues by which He can, and does, speak individually to our natures."

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. A sympathiser writes: "It is a grand effort, and well worth trying. . . But, broad as the scheme is, could it not be made still broader by some modification such as would include a large class in the present day who refuse to admit the idea of a *personal* God, and who yet would accept all the items of The Ideal? Would it not be well to try and spread the net wide enough to catch these religious Positivists and Agnostics?" No. Our main object is to shake, enlighten, and guide the Churches; and it is necessary to begin on their ground. Our secondary object is to arrest, interest and hold isolated and drifting believers in God who have passed beyond the old creeds, and it is essential to hold fast by the two pillars—The Father and The Church. If we had taken another course, we should soon have been ourselves isolated and adrift. As it is, we have, by logic and by sympathy, a tremendous hold upon Christendom: and we shall make—we *are* making—millions think.

The next meeting of friends and inquirers will be held on Sunday evening, April 10th, at Clarence Road Church, Kentish Town, London. Full particulars next month.

A QUESTION. A. D. T. says; I have heard a story that in the Middle Ages a Dane named Radok was converted to Christianity, and was about to be baptised, when it occurred to him to ask what had become of his ancestors. He was told that they had all gone to hell, and thereupon exclaimed that he would have nothing to do with Christianity, but would fare as his ancestors had fared. Can any one tell me where this story is to be found?

MORRID HUMANITY. "From seven o'clock yesterday morning until seven o'clock last evening a constant stream of people passed into the Metropolitan Tabernacle to view the coffin containing the remains of the late Mr. Spurgeon. When the gates were closed last evening it was estimated that 50,000 persons had entered the building during the day." So said "the papers" of Feb. 10th. In one way, natural, taking poor human nature as it is:

but how essentially morbid! The eyes would see a coffin: the truthful imagination might see, beyond, a sight of unspeakable horror. Why look at either? Why should any one desire to make so much of the unclean disused shell? O for the blessed fire, to take it as speedily as is safe, that mortal eyes may look on it no more!

JESUS and WOMANKIND. A correspondent has put it to us whether, in The Bible, there are not many charming records that might be set off against our late references to this subject. We cheerfully admit it. The Bible is, on no subject, consistent. All we can say of any one subject is that, in the main, it is presented in this or that way in The Bible.

Another friend has drawn special attention to "Our Saviour's beneficence to women." That is indeed a beautiful subject. Very instructive and winsome are such records as Matthew ix, 18-25; xii, 46-50; xix, 3-9; xxiii, 14; xxvi, 7-13; xxvii, 55-61; xxviii, 1-10; Mark xii, 41-4; Luke vii, 12-15; viii, 1-3; x, 38-42; John iv, 5-29; viii, 2-11; xi, 1-36; xix, 25-7.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE. One writes asking for special help in the study of one of the Epistles: and asks in a way that indicates an appeal to the Epistles as an authority, as though the only question were; What does Paul here say? We confess to a lessening interest in any such appeal. We nowhere see authority, because we nowhere see consistency. The Bible abounds in points of view, glimpses, fragmentary truths, contradictions, moods, phases of faith. It is all precious, as shewing how many voyages of discovery there have always been.

BIBLE TEACHING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. An examiner, himself a Head-master of high standing, thus reports concerning Bible teaching in a public Grammar School:—"The answers of Form V. and IV. to the paper on the Gospel according to St. Mark show that the pupils have been taught with great care. They have a good knowledge, not only of the subject matter, but of the spiritual truths inculcated. A paper on the period of the Bible story from the Creation to the division of the land of Canaan was very well answered by Form III." "The spiritual truths inculcated" may cover anything, from Calvinism to Catholicism. We wonder what an enlightened master could honestly teach about "the Creation," with the Bible as a text book. The whole thing is a survival; and, in a public school, may easily be grossly oppressive and unfair.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"The march of man and other poems." By Alfred Hayes. London: Macmillan and Co. Decidedly above the average of poetry that may be regarded as experimental. Mr. Hayes is in harmony with the moving spirit of our time, and would help to give it wings. That impulse always marks the true poet. He has strength of grip, too, and a certain masterful richness of expression which may win for him recognition some day. Some people might regard him as a kind of glorified John Burns.

"Fundamental problems. The method of philosophy as a systematic arrangement of knowledge." By Dr. Paul Carus. Second edition. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company. Dr. Carus makes the very original remark; "The author's endeavor has been to avoid originality." What he means is, as he explains, that he has tried to introduce as little as possible of his own personality, and to use his head for the sole purpose of clarifying and analysing ideas. He is too modest. His book is really a kind of intellectual "milky way," full of stars or of the stuff which stars are made of; and he is the maker: but a good deal of it may not even be star stuff at all; though all is well worth looking at. The book takes us far afield in relation to Positivism, Agnosticism, Monism, and a score of subjects allied to them: and everywhere, whether we agree or not with him, one feels in touch with a keen and vivid mind. The following original-looking lines on the title page well indicate the lines on which the writer proceeds,—

No Agnosticism but Positive Science,

No Mysticism but Clear Thought.

Neither Supernaturalism nor Materialism,
but a Unitary Conception of the Word,

No Dogma but Religion,

No Creed but Faith.

"Jesus brought back. Meditations on The Problem of Problems." By J. H. Crooker. Chicago (U.S.): A. C. McClurg & Co. A serious-minded, critical, and devout little book, with a very distinct aim,— "to give intelligent and earnest inquirers . . . some of the most important results of recent scholarship" in relation to Jesus and the Gospels. The writer is fully aware of the destructive criticism of the day, and is prepared to face it, and to admit all that must be admitted, but he holds that it is a genuine loss to let "the man Jesus"

drift away with the theological drapery and masks that have too long hidden him. Hence this book, at once scholarly and simple, rational and religious, advanced and reverential.

"The New Era." A new monthly of much promise. True to the spirit of the hour, it proposes to be "a review of Social work and movements in the churches." It is a big two-penny worth, and will chiefly interest those who want to keep in touch with attempts to work out labour and poverty problems.

"More borrowings." Compiled by ladies of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California. San Francisco: C. A. Murdock & Co. A companion volume to "Borrowings" which attracted so much attention two years ago. The little book is exquisitely produced, and contains a delicious selection of about 250 fragments from such writers as Marcus Aurelius, Victor Hugo, Emerson, George Eliot, the Brownings, Thoreau, O. W. Holmes, Lowell, Tennyson and Aldrich.

"The lost ring, and other poems." By Caroline A. Mason. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. We should like to say a good deal about this winsome book; and only space forbids. It is at once deeply thoughtful and delightfully simple; the work of one who must have felt all she wrote. Here is no spinning of tricky fancies. All is real, wise, human, helpful,—and so charmingly expressed. We have marked a score of places, all good for quoting, but one dainty glimpse must suffice. It is a sonnet on May.

"I saw a child, once, that had lost its way

In a great city: ah, dear heaven, such eyes!—

A far-off look in them, as if the skies
Her birthplace were. So looks to me the May.
April is winsome, June is glad and gay;

May glides betwixt them in such wonder-
ing wise,

Lovely as dropped from some fair Paradise,
And knowing, all the while, herself astray.

Or is the fault with us? Nay, call it not
A fault, but a sweet trouble! Is it we,—

Catching some glimpse of our own destiny

In May's renewing touch, some yearning
thought

Of heaven, beneath her resurrecting hand,—
We who are aliens, lost in a strange land!"

"The burial of the dead: its duties and customs." London: The Ladies' Sanitary Association, 22, Berners Street, W. A sensible pamphlet, recommending early interments, the absence of barbaric pageantry and dress, the abolition of vaults and earth-resisting coffins, and the use of mortuaries. But the great reform wanted is that recommended by Hamlet; "O, reform it altogether." Cremation is the only remedy: and we are very glad to see that these ladies recommend it. They say; "There can be no doubt but that the speedier the lifeless body reverts to its elements, the greater is the security against its being a source of danger to the public health. The quickest and most certain method of accomplishing this is by cremation, a revival of one of the earliest modes of disposing of the dead; by it the stages of transition which occupy years in the grave, are condensed into an hour's work. Such an active destruction of the human

body may at first create a feeling of repulsion towards cremation, but on the other hand it robs death of all those offensive putrefactive changes which are much more repulsive, while in crowded communities it has decided sanitary advantages over earth burial. For these reasons cremation, as is the case in other countries, must become more increasingly used in our towns and cities. After cremation, the ashes of the dead may still be interred in a cemetery with the usual religious rites." As to that last suggestion, we would say, with every feeling of sympathy with those who cling to old customs and associations, that we hope the burial of ashes in a cemetery, after cremation at the crematory, will be discouraged. Let the religious service be held in the home, or at the place of cremation, and there let the curtain fall. The rest is only dust: let the rest be only silence.

THE CREATION OF MAN.

[FROM *Pilgrim Songs* BY JOHN PAGE HOPPS.]

Dear Master, Father, Friend,
In whom all journeys end,
Light, comfort, courage send,
For we are seeking Thee.

Through countless anxious years,
Mid terrors, toils and fears,
Sunshine, and rain of tears,
Earth has been seeking Thee.

Thy child from chaos born,
Thou madest sad and worn,
Heart-hungry and forlorn,
Driven on in seeking Thee.

Urged by the voice within,
Fighting with brutal sin,
Baffled by passion's din,
Yet ever seeking Thee.

Emerging from the beast,
He found life's human feast,
But still no longing ceased,
For he was seeking Thee.

Yea, in the weird dark night,
Strange gleams of faces bright
Shone in upon the sight
Of seers seeking Thee.

But the bright vision dies,
And hopeless dission cries
Confuse the careworn eyes
Of mourners seeking Thee.

And men cry once again,
"Our quest is still in vain,
Our trust is touched with pain,
While we are seeking Thee."

Tired feet still press the sands,
And still, with failing hands,
We toil, as in far lands;
Hard pressed in seeking Thee.

Yet never once defeat;
And ever music sweet
Wins the tired struggling feet
On, on, in seeking Thee.

Yea, Lord, in very deed,
Because Thy mercies plead,
Because Thine angels lead,
We still are seeking Thee.

Ay! in the land of light,
When faith is changed for sight,
On, past the strange delight,
We shall be seeking Thee.