

The Coming Day.

MAY, 1892.

GOD IN THE STREETS OF LONDON.

*(Spoken in London, to inquirers, and to members and friends of OUR FATHER'S CHURCH,
on April 10th, 1892.)*

THE mere fact that the subject for this evening has appeared to some to be over-familiar and even a little irreverent, is of itself evidence that we keenly need it. God and the angels have got too far off, and one of our urgent needs is a resolute attempt to make God and the angels real to us. If they are not in London, they are nowhere:—then our dreamy faith is only a sentimental illusion,—our far-off anticipation is only a pretty mirage. “Where is God?” asks a modern prophet. “He is where a man needs something; He is where a man is ignorant, and needs teaching; He is where a man is wounded, and needs to be bound up; He is where a man is depraved and degraded, and needs to be lifted up towards heaven. God is anywhere where there is human need; He is anywhere where you can help your fellow-men.” Here or nowhere: now or never: that is the plain truth about God: and we must face it if Religion and the Church are to survive.

The thought of God is enormously old. We cannot go back far enough, to detect the place or time of its birth. And there have been countless ways of representing Him. The Ideal is never long the same. Despot, Lover, Ogre, Shepherd, Man of War, Jehovah, Father: He has been all in turns: and even now, to multitudes in Christian England, He is either the merciless tormentor of His failures or the oriental despot seated on His “great white throne.”

These pictures of God have all been, and are, emanations from the brain of man, not revelations direct from God. In Himself, God never can be known. He is the great inference. All we can say is—He must be. Him we can never know. The nearest we can get to a spiritual definition of God is that He is the inmost of everything, the best in everything, the mysterious, almighty, uplifting and progressive element everywhere. Therefore in London: ay! in Hell.

“Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” asked the old Hebrew poet. “If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.”

I know what many would like to say, in reply to my great claim "God in the streets of London": 'How can it be,' they would say, 'if God is just or powerful or good?' And I admit there is much that makes it hard to believe in a present God—especially in London, where the misery, the struggle, the heart-break and the sin are simply awful. But we need to tread carefully here, where, indeed, "things are not what they seem":—as I have said in my study of the question, entitled, "What would the atheist or agnostic have?"

It is certainly a fact that misery exists only in reference to habits of body and states of mind; that what is misery to one would be tolerable to another, or even luxury to a third; and that, therefore, an enormous proportion of the apparent misery of the world is either not misery at all, or is misery of a very different kind from that which we take it to be. A refined woman, if unaccustomed to the sight, might look with horror on any one of a hundred streets or lanes of a great town, and might be frightened to see how much earth could be made like hell. And, truly, it is pitiable enough; but, as regards misery, she would utterly miscalculate. Those dirty, dingy little houses are havens of refuge to hundreds; the food they eat is what they are used to, and like best—when they can get enough of it; the smells are not noticeable, except by a few; and as for that reeking den, called a public-house, it probably gives as much enjoyment as does her husband's club. It is sad enough, even so; but, as regards misery, her impression needs an enormous rectification. She might go home, with tears in her eyes, and a thrill of thankfulness in her heart, to look on her children there. But her sum would be all wrong; her multiplication and subtraction alike inaccurate. The terrace-children seem to have all the multiplication, and the poor little gutter-children all the subtraction; but, so far as real conscious pleasure goes, it may be rather the other way; for, after all, still confining our attention to mere animal enjoyment, it is very doubtful whether the nurseries of the world have given more pleasure than the streets. Nature—shall we say God?—is very good to her gutter-children. She teaches them to get out of the way of horses, where ours would infallibly be run over; she gives them, by instinct, to know the way home, so that they may have the joy of following the band a mile, where our children can hardly be trusted to leave the gate. She helps them to get strange joys out of a bit of string, a few chips, and some shells; while, with endless story-books and costly contrivances for giving delight, we often fail to keep ours 'good.' She makes them thrive on thick pieces of bread, when they can get it, while ours need the doctor on four meals a day. So with the men and women who are fathers and mothers of these children. Troubles enough they have, it is true, but not in the way we imagine. True, they live in dreary lanes, with polluted air and narrow rooms and endless noises; many of them have no Sunday clothes, and they live from hand to mouth, and lay by nothing for an evil day. But all this is commonplace to them. 'Familiarity' breeds more than 'contempt.' They get many pleasures, too, in their way,—cheap enough, and not ideally admirable, but producing in them the same thrills, and ministering to the same feelings as those known in the so-called 'higher circles.'

I once saw this vividly illustrated in this very London. I had just handed in to a London paper an article on the shady side of this Babylon and the misery it contained. Coming from the office, I turned into the Strand, and, almost immediately, saw four boys, as dirty and ragged as any I ever saw, just passing under a narrow entry to a dismal court which seemed to contain some wretched-looking houses. It made one shudder even to glance at it, but these boys were dancing and singing under that entry as my own four boys never did in the fields. As though an angel flashed light upon the scene, I saw God there, in His wonderful adjustments, and visibly perceived how true it is that misery is relative to experience and use.

But there is something deeper. Much of this life of struggle is purely educational and creative. We must make a great effort to get rid of the delusion that the object of life is to be comfortable. The object of life is to live, and to live more and more intensely. The human animal is not a finished article. He is not created:

he is being created, and, as The Ideal says, "the instruments of his creation are struggle and possession, sorrow and joy, death and life." Yes, God in the streets of London as they are, hammering us into shape, ensuring the emergence at last, not of a gallery of automata but of a race of conscious and competent human beings: and the kind of London that it is necessary for the process: and God could no more secure the end without the means than He could make 2 and 2 count 5.

We doubt God in the presence of the world's struggle and misery: but struggle and misery are inevitable, if the human problem is to be worked out,—if, in fact, the human personality is to be created. It is by means of the struggle that we come to distinguish, to learn, to find the right roads and know why they are right, to be keenly conscious of the differences between right and wrong, to know what pathos is, and sympathy, and hope. Yes! it is the world's struggle and misery that have developed and still develop the human race: and this could have been accomplished in no other way.

I know that still a pathetic problem remains,—that there is a dark and sorrowful borderland of what seems to be sheer misery,—that a tragic host of these struggling men and women are baffled and beaten, and come to no repayment of advancement here—who have only striven and borne burdens, and who, bowed and broken, have gone down unblest to "dusky death." In the mighty wine-press of human life they may somehow have yielded their few drops of precious wine to the race, but they themselves seem to be cast out as refuse on the void. Even so, and if that be all, before the tremendous whole we might bow the head and say, It is well. But that is not our answer. Our answer is that this poor experiment of life is not the whole—that it is only one stage in a boundless career, and that for them it will be well that they should pass out of great tribulation into the all-revealing world beyond.

But, taking the great account as it stands for the life that now is, it is enough to see the tendency of the tremendous process: and I say the tendency is towards the production of a keener, stronger, and more self-reliant race, hammered into tenacity and shape by the very struggles of this sorrow-breeding life. See what fine characters emerge from it! It was a sensitive woman who said;

" All glory, too,
To that transmuting power which brings
Such sweetness from such bitter things."

" Press the grape, the sweet wine flows ;
Break the ground, the harvest grows ;
Crush the shell, the kernel shews.

As with nature, so with man ;
Such God's universal plan
Ever since the race began."

Look what has come from the dockers' miseries! Apart from the knowledge and wisdom and education of the men, is there much to choose between John Morley and John Burns as types of character? or between Lord Rosebery and Tom Mann? And see how these struggling men, once fighting one another for a job, are learning the laws of union and the virtue of comradeship and co-operation! Is not God here,

before our very eyes, still creating man, and breathing into him the breath of life, that he may become a living soul?

But now, as to the God who is amongst us. As with the misery of London so with its goodness; we may as easily underrate the one as we overrate the other. The whirl and struggle and push of life hide whole continents of genuine human goodness. Go into the homes of the poor in Bethnal Green, in Shadwell, in Shoreditch, and really know the people. Misery enough, no doubt, brutality enough, drunkenness enough, ignorance enough, no doubt; but rivulets of love and kindness, too: good, brave, hard-working fathers coming home to the little shelter as to a blessed haven: poor tired women, patient with the children, pressing the baby to the breast, content to be at home: good lads and girls coming in from school or work, and quietly glad to be together. Yes, God in the streets, and even amongst the roughs, who can take a pride in a dog or in their pigeons, and would knock you down if you hurt a child;—who hate injustice, stick to their mates, fight for their union, and love even a lord if he will only be brotherly and sympathetic. I declare I have seen and heard more of God in London, sitting by the side of a cabman or an omnibus driver, than I ever saw or heard in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's. Only know what stops to pull out, and what keys to touch, and you may get rarest revelations of human simplicity and affection in the streets. The poor cabman wants to overcharge you because he is overcharged, because he is haunted all day by the spectre of not making a shilling beyond the heavy amount he has to pay at night for his horse and cab. He is irritable because so many people are inconsiderate and suspicious and mean. Hundreds of these men are good patient creatures who are heroically fighting the battle of life against cruel odds. Look and listen, and you may find God in the streets of London in most unlikely places—sometimes more manifest up there by the side of the numbed driver, who, if you let him, will talk about his "missis" and his boy, than in the gorgeous church, listening to a discourse on the power of the priesthood or the "conditions of acceptance with God." If we believed in goodness more, we should find it more: and if we believed more in God we should be more likely to see Him in the streets. He is, as I said, the inmost of everything, the best in everything, the uplifting and progressive element everywhere; and we may find Him in every human heart. We talk of revelations from God, but He is most truly revealed in the inner self; for it is His life which comes to vision and sense and sympathy in us, since in Him we live and move and have our being: and He lives and moves and has His being in us.

In that great thought we may find the truth which will bring the agnostic home. We are losing God because He has been placed too far away. That is why the world clings to Christ, the God-man. The God beyond him seems so distant, dim, and unapproachable. But bring Him from "the great white throne" to London—from the clouds of adoring angels to the crowds of struggling men—find Him within the little world of your own conscious being, and God will be restored. "That in you which thinks, that in you which loves, that in you which makes the hard duty easy, that in a man which makes it luxury to die that the right may live inviolate,—*that* is the moral nature of things enstructured in *you*! To see this is to make the great recognition of 'God.'"

And that God is working night and day, not only in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem above, but in the sordid streets of our Babylon below. He works through the thousands of devoted souls who do His will,—

“ The passing of whose gracious feet
Blesses the pavement of the street : ”

who, in uncounted ways, go on His errands of mercy, of whom Jesus would say—“ Behold my brother, and sister, and mother.” He works through the merciful agencies for sheltering the sick, and educating the children of the poor, and providing havens for the insane. He works through the innumerable centres from which radiate sympathy, consolation and hope,—the missions for the poor, the humble religious homes, unreckoned by the world, but dear to multitudes who live in the shadows. He works through the Trade Unions for protecting the helpless many against the mighty few, and fosters the spirit of comradeship and sympathy and loyalty and unity thereby. He works through the poor men of St. George’s in the East, and Bethnal Green, and Whitechapel, commanding the County Council to make London a wholesomer and more righteous place to live in. He works through that sinister sign of the times, the Socialism that looks like Anarchy : for, beneath the crude theories, the impossible demands, the cynical or brutal temper of some kinds of Socialism, there runs a divine impatience against the masterfulness of the rich, the tyranny of the successful, the dangerous absorbing power of employers of labour, the ugly working out in modern times of the old law of nature that “ to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath ”—a ghastly suggestion, too often realised, of sucking labour’s orange, and casting the peel away, against which God protests by the mouth of his servant, Socialist ; though His final message will come in other ways, and as a “ still small voice ; ” for “ the secret of the Lord is with them that revere Him.”

Yes, He is answering the old-time prayer, “ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.” The will is being done : the kingdom is coming ; and often in unexpected ways. Rebels advance it as well as poets, and the people who “ strike ” and look ugly, as well as the people who set good examples and look beautiful. In very deed, “ the day of the Lord is at hand.” Paul spoke of “ Christ in us, the hope of glory ” : and that, rightly understood, is true : but let us add, *God* in us, the hope of glory,—the mighty, urgent, unresting, uplifting Power in us, the hope and the prophecy of ever advancing and glorious life.

At Antwerp, lately, among the wondrous pictures there that delighted my eyes, I saw one that keenly touched my heart. It was the picture of a dead Christ, scarred and bleeding : and, near by, stood a child-angel, the symbol of love, gently wiping the bloody spear. In that dead Christ I saw, not dead, but scarred and bleeding Humanity, by whose side love ever stands, wiping the spear that wounds us. I saw the meaning of past heart-break and agony. I saw that, all through the ages, Humanity has been suffering in the hard school-house of experience, that it might find its perfected life. I saw that love made the hard lesson imperative,—that love watched over the battle-field and kept the spear. I saw that our Christ of Humanity—like

that dear brother Christ of Jerusalem—shall be made perfect by suffering; and, by the path of agony, reach the shining goal.

I blest that picture with my tears, and came back to London, and saw—and see—it all. Our Christ wounded and bleeding; now crying, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me”; and now, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” But love stands by, and love will win; and we shall one day see that only so could there come the true creation of man,—that only so could there emerge from the creative process a being wise to understand, strong to bear, competent to achieve the conquest and the use of all the forces of the world; and then, in its separate and happy life, rich with all the experience of the life that now is, to pass on to the great promotion beyond.

THE PEDIGREE OF JESUS.

A CAREFUL study of the Bible has led all thoughtful students in England to abandon the old ideas that the Bible is all inspired and all true, and that Jesus was a divine being in human form. Instead thereof, we believe that Jesus was a religious teacher like Mohammed, Gautama, Zoroaster, and others; and that the Bible is a collection of human writings, containing much that is good and true, but also many human errors, and indeed not a few human fabrications. But as there are still amongst us many who hold the old views, it may be useful to give a specimen of the evidence upon which we rely.

THE PEDIGREE OF JESUS.

The first gospel opens with a pedigree of Jesus, tracing his descent from Abraham, and concludes it with the remark—“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” (Matt. i. 17.)

It will be well for us at once to write out the names which occur in this pedigree, numbering them according to the division here made of three periods of fourteen each.

FIRST PERIOD.	SECOND PERIOD.	THIRD PERIOD.
1. Abraham	1. Solomon	1. Salathiel
2. Isaac	2. Roboam	2. Zorobabel
3. Jacob	3. Abia	3. Abiud
4. Judas	4. Asa	4. Eliakim
5. Phares	5. Josaphat	5. Azor
6. Esrom	6. Joram	6. Sadoc
7. Aram	7. Ozias	7. Achim
8. Aminadab	8. Joatham	8. Eliud
9. Naason	9. Achaz	9. Eleazar
10. Salmon	10. Ezekias	10. Matthan
11. Boaz	11. Manasses	11. Jacob
12. Obed	12. Amon	12. Joseph
13. Jesse	13. Josias	13. Jesus
14. David	14. Jechonias	

It will be seen that, as the names stand, it is necessary to count Jechonias twice, in order to make three periods of fourteen generations each; but this remark should be considered with the other criticisms mentioned below. For the moment, we should observe that the mention of Jechonias is as follows (v. 11)—“And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon.”

We will proceed now to consider each of these periods in order.

In the first period the writer has faithfully copied the pedigrees in the Old Testament from Abraham to David. This period presents a great chronological difficulty, inasmuch as Naasson, or Nahshon, appears in the Old Testament as a contemporary of Moses, and the events narrated between the times of Moses and David appear to require some 400 years for their accomplishment; and the pedigree gives only six generations. But this difficulty belongs to the Old Testament and not to the New. The writer of the first gospel has had recourse to the Old Testament and copied it correctly. There is, however, one addition which he makes to the pedigree, namely, that Rachab was the mother of Boaz. Now the Rachab here mentioned can only mean the Rahab of the Old Testament who figures in the story of the capture of Jericho, as being a harlot residing in that town, and also as harbouring the spies, whom the Israelites sent out with the view of invading the country (Joshua ii.). It certainly shows a strong Jewish partizanship on the part of the writer that he considers it an honour to his Messiah to have such a woman for an ancestress. We shall find Jewish predilections displayed in other parts of the first gospel; and we can use this introduction of Rachab into the pedigree, as showing that such predilections are attributable to the writer of the gospel and not to Jesus himself. The following is one of the passages showing Jewish predilections (Matt. xxiii. 1-3). “Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.”

We pass on now to the second period of the pedigree above set out. In this second period the writer has again had recourse to the Old Testament, and gives the line of the kings of Judah. But there are two noticeable mistakes in it. Three kings are left out between Joram and Ozias—nos. six and seven in the pedigree—namely, Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah; and one king is left out between Josiah and Jechoniah, namely, Jehoiakim. All these are distinctly mentioned in the Old Testament, and each is said to be the son of his predecessor. The omission of Jehoiakim may be easily accounted for, for both he and his son Jechonias appear under different names and are liable to be confused together. Moreover, the introduction of one more generation at this point will set right the division of the whole into three periods of fourteen each, which has been mentioned above. The omission of the three names of Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah is a more serious matter. The first writer of the pedigree must have looked into the Old Testament in compiling this portion of it, and cannot have failed to notice these three kings, whose united reigns cover a long and eventful period. The reasonable presumption, therefore, is that these names originally occurred in the pedigree, but were afterwards accidentally omitted by some copyist owing to the similarity of the names of Ahaziah and Ozias. It will follow from this that the seventeenth verse, making the

division into three periods of fourteen generations each, was added after the slip had occurred. We thus notice at once a trace of two hands being employed in the composition of this book, one of whom may be called the original author and the other the recensor. We shall be able to distinguish the work of these two hands in other parts of the books. We may observe at once that the recensor did not turn to the Old Testament to verify his enumeration of the generations, and that the original author did so turn to draw up the original pedigree.

Before leaving this portion of the subject, it is worth mentioning that in Jeremiah xxii. 30 we find the following imprecation upon Jechonias:—"Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." There is certainly something very incongruous in the theories of our Christolatrous neighbours, when they represent God as inspiring Jeremiah to utter this curse upon the posterity of Jechonias, and at the same time having a scheme of salvation under which the Messiah was to appear as a descendant of Jechonias.

We will next consider the third period of the pedigree. It opens with the name of Salathiel as son of Jechonias, and Zerobabel as son of Salathiel. On turning to the Old Testament we find a list of descendants of Jechonias in 1 Chron. iii. 17. These include a Salathiel and Zerubbabel, but Salathiel is a grandson of Jechonias, and Zerubbabel a son of Pedaiah. Again, in Ezra iii. 2, iv. 2, and v. 2, we find a Zerubbabel, the son of Sheathiel, figuring as the leader of the Jews in rebuilding the temple after the captivity; but there is not a word to connect him with Jechonias the former king. We do not find any Abiud mentioned as a son of Zerubbabel anywhere in the Old Testament, and the rest of the pedigree, down to Jesus, consists of names which cannot be identified with any found elsewhere. Altogether this portion of the pedigree appears to be very untrustworthy. First, it is difficult to imagine that any authentic family records existed at the time of Jesus, running back to Zerobabel through a list of names not preserved in either the Old Testament or the Apocrypha. Secondly, the birth of Jechonias must have taken place about 606 B.C., so that we have an average of upwards of forty-seven years for the age of each man mentioned in the pedigree at the time of the birth of his son who is next mentioned. Such a series of late births may not have been impossible even in Judæa during the last six centuries B.C., but it is certainly in the highest degree improbable. Thirdly, we find in the Gospel of Luke iii., 23-30, a totally different pedigree of Jesus, from David downwards, on which we will make some remarks below.

Before leaving the pedigree in Matthew, it will be well to call attention to the last link in it, namely chap. i. verse 16—"And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Considering that the chapter opens with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," it is noticeable to find that the pedigree is the pedigree of Joseph, who, according to the story which follows, was not the father of Jesus and had nothing to do with him. The only reasonable explanation of this is a somewhat startling one, namely, that the pedigree was compiled before the story of the

miraculous birth was concocted. After the concoction of the story, no one would have made a pedigree of Joseph at all, but if any pedigree had been drawn up it would have been a pedigree of Mary. The existing pedigree is only to be explained on the supposition that it was drawn up as a pedigree of Jesus through Joseph, and originally ended with the words, "and Joseph begat Jesus, who is called Christ"; and that after the story of the miraculous birth was invented, it was altered to its present form. There are other grounds for attributing the birth stories in this gospel to the recensor, who has been mentioned above, and considering that the original writer of the gospel was unaware of the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus. One of these grounds is the expression in Matthew xiii. 55, where, on the occasion of the visit of Jesus to Nazareth, it is related that the townspeople said—"Is not this the carpenter's son?" with a further mention of his brothers and sisters.

Turning now to the pedigree of Jesus in the third gospel (Luke iii. 23-38), we find that it traces Joseph the father of Jesus up to Nathan a son of David, giving forty-one generations between David and Jesus. It will be seen that the pedigree in the first gospel gave only twenty-six generations in this interval, but it clearly omitted four names, which would make the number up to thirty. The names which occur in the two pedigrees are also entirely different, except that Zorobabel the son of Salathiel appears in both. In the third gospel there are twenty-one generations between David and Zorobabel, and nineteen between Zorobabel and Jesus. This would place the Zorobabel the son of Salathiel of the pedigree somewhere about the date of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the restorer of the Temple mentioned in the Old Testament (Ezra iii. v.). Zerubbabel, the restorer of the Temple, was doubtless regarded as a national hero, whom every one was proud to claim as an ancestor. Assuming this Zerubbabel to be intended by the pedigree, we can divide the years which elapsed by the number of generations, and find that, after allowing for a little uncertainty in the dates, we have about twenty-eight years to a generation in the period from Zerobabel to Jesus, and about twenty-four years to a generation in the period from David to Zerobabel. There is nothing unlikely in either of these numbers. We also find that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (i. 3), speaks of Jesus as being made of the seed of David according to the flesh. St. Paul, therefore, had heard that the family of Jesus was reputed to be descended from David, and it is quite possible that a reputed pedigree was preserved in the family, and that this pedigree is recorded in the third gospel. There is one circumstance indeed which makes it tolerably clear that the pedigree was not drawn up by the writer of the third gospel; and that circumstance is that the pedigree is a pedigree of Joseph and not of Mary, although the third gospel opens with an account of the miraculous birth of Jesus, quite different, by the way, from that in the first gospel, and the pedigree comes after the story of the miraculous birth. If the writer of the gospel had drawn up the pedigree he would have made it a pedigree of Mary. And here we may observe that we do not find in the third gospel the marks of two hands, as in the first gospel, but the third gospel appears to be composed by one writer having a number of earlier materials with which to work. However, whether the pedigree in the third gospel embodies a pedigree of Joseph preserved in his family, or was drawn up by some early Christian writer, it is impossible to regard it as a really authentic pedigree. It is very difficult to imagine that the family of Joseph can have

preserved an authentic list of ancestors, going back to Zerubbabel; and still more difficult to imagine that they possessed a genealogy showing Zerubbabel to be descended from David through a series of names of which none are found in the Old Testament, except Nathan the son of David, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.

To sum up shortly our investigation of the pedigrees of Jesus, we find two discordant pedigrees, of which one at least must be fictitious. On investigating them we find the pedigree in the first gospel so full of difficulties that we have no hesitation in pronouncing against its authenticity; while that in the third gospel, though a possible pedigree, presents one great difficulty, which prevents us from pronouncing an opinion in its favour.

A. D. TRSSEN.

THE FLOWING TIDE.

BY CHARLES STRONG, D.D.

CHRISTIAN Theology has, during this century, been modified in many ways. The creeds remain apparently unmoved. The clergy and elders of the Presbyterian Church sign them and swear eternal loyalty to them; the clergy and people of the Church of England repeat them Sunday by Sunday. Sums of money are annually expended to endow pulpits and chairs, from which trained advocates may assert, maintain, and defend them. But the tide flows, though kings sit in royal state within watermark: and, though Galileo has to recant on bended knees before the Roman hierarchy, and declare that the earth does not go round the sun, he is quietly heard muttering, "All the same the earth *does* move."

We have only to read some of the popular religious works of fifty or sixty years ago, to read history, to study the Westminster Confession, or the Prayer-book and Thirty-nine Articles, and compare these with modern ways of speaking and thinking, to see that a change has come over the Christian conception of God, and of man's relation to God, which is the meaning of theology. Theology has always been liable to change. There never has been one theology, or theory of God and man in their relation to each other, which has been accepted at all times, everywhere, and by all Christians. There was a time when the Trinity dogma, for instance, was an open question, and it never was accepted by all Christians. There was a time when the dogma of Atonement was in a fluid state, and to-day, even in orthodox circles, views differ on this subject. There was a time when there was no dogma of infallible Bible, or infallible Pope. But to-day, the change in theology is more striking than perhaps in any other century of Christian history, and it is more radical.

It is a change all along the line, and not merely in any one theological tenet. It is a change which goes down to the very foundations of theological thought, a change greater, so far at least as our consciousness of it is concerned, than that from Augustine to Luther, from Laud to Calvin, from the Puritan Fathers to Channing. The old creeds are no longer intellectually living. The old creeds are still repeated,

still sworn to, still spoken of as the essentials and foundations of the faith, but in reality they are like ships that have dipped beneath the horizon, which we can get a glimpse of only by going to the top of some high hill. People tolerate them, because they never think about them, and because the creeds don't come between them and their daily business or pleasures. This is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of theological reform—the loss of living interest in theology, and the intellectual indifference to what is “said or sung” in church, on the part of the majority of churchgoers. Pity that it should be so, for the effect is to demoralise the Church, to drive away the intellectually earnest, and to create an atmosphere of unreality, and even of insincerity.

Some might be inclined to attribute the altered standpoint of theology to “an evil heart of unbelief,” and to interpret the theology of to-day as a sign of the apostasy to be looked for “in the last days.” But reflection shows us that the change is not arbitrary nor dependent on the will of man, and that a true piety and faith must recognise change as from God. It is the result of many causes. Some years ago, an old clergyman said to me, “Ten years hence there will be nothing more of this,” of course referring to what he considered novelties and innovations in doctrine. His words were true, but not in the sense in which he meant them. In ten years, twenty years, fifty years, the questions which have agitated the nineteenth century Church will be swallowed up by the flowing tide, like sandbanks and rocks over which the advancing ocean swells. We cannot help these changes. To fight against them seems like fighting against God. And if we regard this life as a school, must we not look upon change as inevitable, and natural as is the passage from infancy to boyhood and girlhood, and from boyhood and girlhood to manhood and womanhood?

The rise of the modern study of Comparative Theology has greatly influenced Christian theology. Within this century, the religions of the world have been carefully studied, the sacred books of all nations have been translated, and English and German scholars know as much about foreign theologies as they do about their own. The result has been to destroy the notion that truth resides only with Christians. No one can now regard the mythology of Greece and Rome as altogether error, the work of the devil. And even, while we may regard our religion as the purest form of truth, we cannot ignore the beauty and truth which are in the religions of Buddhists, Brahmins, and the followers of Confucius.

Is there not here again a relief to our faith? What Christian heart can now bear to think that the Father has suffered His children to wander all these centuries in utter darkness, or that, to be a Christian, one must believe in the damnation of his fellow-men? Is there not some help to faith in being taught that our religion is in harmony with the deepest instincts, thoughts, and aspirations of the best men and women of all times?

Some changes in theology are due to the quickening of the Moral and Religious Sense. The doctrine of eternal punishment, for instance, is felt to be absolutely irreconcilable with Christian trust in the fatherhood of God, and with the modern faith in the dignity of man. The same may be said of the theological doctrine as to

the fate of heretics, schismatics, Jews, and infidels. No sooner do the ideas, instilled into us by Jesus, that God is our Father, that man is our brother, and that love is the great commandment, take full possession of us, than they break down the middle walls of partition, and among men of many races and many creeds we begin to look for God's children and our brothers. The growth of Christian feeling, the fuller reception of the spirit of Jesus, thus cracks the narrow shell of Christian creeds and churches—Christian in name, but really often pagan and pre-Christian in character, adulterated with Roman law, and lower-plane conceptions of morals, and worldly religion, and ancient metaphysics—and leads us forth into a larger and more Catholic faith. The more we trust in God as the Spirit of all truth, all beauty, and all love, and the more we trust in the high calling of man, seeing, in all, our brothers and sisters, the less possible does it become for us to believe that God cares only for us, that the scheme of the universe is wrapped up in our nutshell of a theology, or that any doctrine which dishonours man can be honouring to God.

Thus Theology has changed. But what use to recognise and understand that old things have passed away, save that we may make all things new? It is little good to see that the old theology is dead, unless we go on to a larger, truer form of trust in God. On the ruins of old theologies let us try to rise, as on stepping-stones, to a conception of God and of man, worthy of our rational nature as men and women, worthy of those who have been taught that God is Light, that God is Love, worthy of the knowledge which God has given us, worthy of those whom God has delivered from many old prejudices and slavish fears, worthy of the age in which God has cast our lot. We do not wish to be less religious than our fathers, but, if possible, religious in a larger, fuller way. We do not want to be less Christian, but more fully to realise, both in thought and practice, the Christian ideal. It will profit us little to leave the temples of the past if we do not seek to build up new temples of the Holy Spirit, in which the men and women of to-day can worship with heart and mind.

BEYOND THE VEIL.

The Rev. H. Kendall, in the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review*, has a very noteworthy article on Spirit-communion. Here is the substance of it:—

“Suppose that the ultimate verdict, not only of the Society of Psychical Research, but of intelligent men generally, shall be that in a considerable proportion of instances the strange sights seen and sounds heard which have been the subject of investigation, have an objective reality, and demonstrate the activity of what is ordinarily termed the supernatural within the sphere of human observation—how do the facts compare with the statements of Scripture on the same subject?

“I. First, it will have to be admitted that there is an invisible sphere peopled with intelligent life, and that there are spiritual beings who are ordinarily unseen to us, but who have power to manifest themselves to living men, and from time to time are doing this.

“(a) If the judgment finally pronounced shall be affirmative it will have been scientifically demonstrated that there is a spirit in man capable of separation from the body, and of existence independent of it, and that this spirit, which is the real man, does actually survive the body's dissolution with augmented powers.

“(b) Strong evidence is afforded by psychical phenomena, not only that the spirits of men survive the dissolution of the body, but that there are among them the prime distinctions of good and evil, happy and unhappy. It is shown in many cases that the disposition, whether kind or malign, displayed in this life, has been projected into the next.

“(c) There are several strange and striking details connected with supernatural appearances, as recorded in Scripture, abundantly confirmed by facts we are now receiving through psychical research.

“II. The power of foreseeing future events is one that psychical research shows to be frequently exercised, both by persons still living in the body and by departed spirits.

“III. The truth of telepathy is pretty satisfactory, and a moment's reflection may serve to show the significance of it in reference to some of the most important aspects of religion: for it is the law which affirms the possibility of one mind influencing another, irrespective of distance, and apart from sensory organs. Christian experience has its own evidence of the reality of these higher influences, independent of scientific discoveries. But the law of telepathy, so far as it goes, harmonises with the transcendental teachings of religion, and removes the objection that there is nothing in ordinary experience to support the idea that mind can touch mind, and spirit answer to spirit, without any physical means of communication between them. It is shown that they can and do influence one another without this medium in common life, and a presumption arises that they will do the same in the spiritual life and in religious experience.”

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.—Meetings of *Our Father's Church* have been held at Kettering and in London; the former at the London road Hall and the latter at the Free Christian Church, Kentish Town. Both the meetings were eminently successful in every way. The very name of the Church seems not only to disarm opposition but to invite and win. It is a moral certainty that if the Unitarians would put aside their arithmetical designation, and go out to the world, not as militant for a doctrine, but as testifying to an unsectarian and all-inclusive spiritual truth, it would make a profound impression and compel very grave attention. But there are multitudes beyond

the Unitarians who are ready for it. The problem is—How to reach them, and teach them to combine.

WORSHIPER OR WORSHIPPER?—Occasionally we receive a gentle protest against our mode of spelling “worshiping” or “worshiper.” Our critics want two p's. We never can tell why. The words have nothing to do with shipping or a shipper, and are not pronounced as though they had. The accent is on the first syllable, and the final consonant should not be repeated. If “worshipper” and “worshipping,” why not “deliverer” and “deliverring”? or “gardener” and “gardenning”? Webster has the

following curt but sensible note on the word :—
 “Worshiper. Written also, but incorrectly,
worshipper.”

HOME COLONISATION.—It is pleasant to hear that the long-deferred scheme, associated with the name and advocacy of Mr. Herbert V. Mills, is likely to have a trial. Property has been or is being purchased within six miles of Kendal, including corn, drying, oil cake, and saw mills, with joiner's and blacksmith's shop, &c., and sixty acres of very promising land, suitable for fruit-growing, with a prospect of obtaining a tract of neighbouring raw peat land, for clearing and cultivation. Mr. Mills says; “The Colonists on this estate will number about 40 or 50, of different trades, most of whom I shall obtain from the unemployed labouring class; and I shall take as many as possible from the custody of the Poor Law Guardians in the neighbouring towns of Kendal and Milnthorpe. In regard to remuneration, I shall follow the example of General Booth at Hadleigh Farm Colony; giving board, lodging and clothing to all colonists, and a small sum of money per week, to be raised by the sale of surplus products; these money wages to be increased from time to time as a reward for industry and permanent settlement.

“The colonists shall be made to feel that they are labouring not only to relieve their own poverty, but to serve their country, to help in the reform of the Poor-Law, and to make an honest life easier to the deserving unemployed poor.” “In the event of the success of the experiment, the Trust will make provision for the purchase of additional land, and the accommodation of more colonists, the land and capital to be used always for the benefit of the able-bodied unemployed poor.”

Are there any of our readers who will help on this interesting experiment! Mr. Mills will gladly send all information. His address is “Anchorite's Well, Kendal.” As the work is in hand, help should be given speedily.

MR. STEAD'S GHOST STORIES.—We have not yet been able to read the whole of Mr. Stead's two publications; but we have read enough to convince us that he has brought together a mass of evidence which only the very thoughtless can afford to ignore. We like his reply to the objectors who say that these things ought not to be looked into—that, in fact, it is impious to look into them. “No,” says Mr. Stead, “there is a subtle impiety in the refusal to face phenomena whether natural or

supernatural. Either these things exist or they do not. If they do not exist, then obviously there can be no harm in a searching examination of the delusion which possessed the mind of almost every worthy in the Old Testament, and which was constantly affirmed by the authors of the New. If, on the other hand, they do exist, and are perceptible under certain conditions to our senses, it will be difficult to affirm the impiety of endeavouring to ascertain what is their nature, and what light they are able to throw upon the kingdom of the unseemly. We have no right to shut our eyes to facts and close our ears to evidence merely because Moses forbade the Hebrews to allow witches to live, or because some of the phenomena carry with them suggestions that do not altogether harmonise with the conventional orthodox theories of a future life. The whole question that lies at the bottom is whether this world is divine or diabolic. Those who believe it divine are bound by that belief to regard every phenomenon as a window through which man may gain fresh glimpses of the wonder and the glory of the Infinite. In this region, as in all others, faith and fear go ill together.”

We understand, from Mr. Stead's remarks concerning his investigations, that though he began his project in a semi-jocular state of mind, he is very much in earnest now. He says; “I can only speak for myself when I say the net result of the careful examination of the narratives which I have received, and some of which I shall publish, has been to place the whole matter on a far more solid basis than I ever dreamed it would have had.”

PILGRIM SONGS.—The London *Daily Chronicle* has a very gracious Article on “Pilgrim songs.” We can only hope that its high praise is deserved. The writer, however, is evidently a little inclined to lower the cheery and hopeful tone of the poems; and, not unjustly, suggests that there are many things in nature and society which ought to check a too rosy optimism. We agree with him: but our equation is found in a long account-keeping with nature and God, and in looking in a somewhat novel direction for consolations and compensations, as the Address on “God in the streets of London” shews. We want “Pilgrim songs” to be better known.

MR. GLADSTONE'S PAMPHLET.—The sudden chorus, announcing the deadly effect of Mr. Gladstone's assault upon the Women's Suffrage Bill, may be more than a little premature. Mr. Gladstone, with all his wisdom and insight

does not seem to know what has happened on this question. We would even respectfully and humbly suggest that he does not seem to see the root from which this (in his eyes) sinister plant has sprung. Womanhood, as womanhood, he would shield from harsh contacts with the soiling and hardening elements in practical life. A gracious desire! but what if millions of women are already struggling amid those soiling and hardening elements,

handicapped by their disfranchisement! what if womanhood, as womanhood, is now receiving, from the mysterious unseen source of all progress, a mandate to go forward, expressed in this very crusade for political influence and power? and what if the soiling and hardening elements of practical life themselves need her? But, in any case, the movement and the desire are deeper and wider than Mr. Gladstone seems to imagine—as we shall soon see.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

“Womanhood and the Bible.” By Libra. London: Theosophical Publishing Society. A thoughtful pamphlet, but somewhat difficult to comprehend. The application of what we cannot but regard as a fanciful “science of correspondences” to the Bible cannot end in legitimate or steady criticism. The Bible is a very plain book, and we believe it to be innocent of subtle meanings: and the men who wrote it were, for the most part, neither very spiritual nor very consistent. “Libra” has some acute and wholesome ideas concerning the emancipation of woman.

“Poverty, wealth, and taxation. A political conversation.” By the Rev. James Macdonald. With two unspoken addresses on “Jesus a Socialist” and “Rational Religion.” London: Wm. Reeves. If any one would understand what is seething in the social cauldron, and what may presently be turned out for Society’s dinner, let him read this terrific book—the hottest possible mixture of Socialism and Christianity, Walt Whitman and Dr. Giffin, Herbert Spencer and Henry George. The author’s own share is well done, but perhaps the most interesting feature of the book is its really precious collection of brilliant extracts from the writings and speeches of notable men.

“Industrial conditions and social reform.” By A. Baker, M.A. Taunton: *Somerset Express Office* (2d.). There is more in this tiny pamphlet than in many a long-winded volume of Philosophical Essays and Theological Sermons. It is true that Mr. Baker only recounts some of the miseries of our modern life, and helps us but little to a remedy; but it is something to really see what is wrong, and to see that as it is. This sorrowful service is here well done. We quote the following as food for thought. It is a glimpse of life as it is for millions, in the very heart of nineteenth-century civilisation:—“The existence of the masses of

our people is wasted in the dreary round of work and sleep and food, and, save that they breathe and eat, their life might be death itself. Yet they have capacities for a higher life to which they are dead, faculties which might be developed, and a power of apprehension which is dwarfed and stunted within the narrow limits of their mental horizon. . . . If we look more closely at the industrial conditions which mar the hopes of social reform, we shall find three specific obstacles which stand in the way of every effort to raise the moral and intellectual level of our people. The first of these is want of means. Many a worker has to choose between boots for his children and books for himself, between the requirements of the mere body, and a dim and often dumb craving, perhaps even to his own nature but half revealed, for some share in the heart-life of thought or music or art. And when hard times come to him, as under a system of unorganised competition they cannot but come, it is the books and pictures that are the first to go, and all his efforts to enlarge his mental horizon and gain a grasp of something beyond his lower self are cramped by the fatal lethargy of despair. The second obstacle is want of leisure. The tramway-man, who can scarcely reach his home by midnight and quits it again at early dawn, is no unique product of our industrial life; so long as wages are based on a system of competition which by setting man against man drives the lot of all to the lowest depth compatible with continued existence, so long the majority of our industrial population will be bound to accept any and every condition of work, because it is the sole alternative to absolute starvation. Hence in the lives of many there is no leisure for the things of the mind; and even when the evening is free, the hard pressure of unceasing toil demands physical compensation, and the drunkenness of our land is but the natural reaction against conditions of life and work which press for a

powerful antidote. The third obstacle is want of certainty of employment. No man can be expected to form any consistent aim in life, to cherish a definite purpose, to devote his powers to a fixed end, if he cannot tell what are the means on which he may count or how many steps it is from his door to the workhouse. It is no wonder that this uncertainty of livelihood leads to an aimless and miserable life, gross and extravagant in fitful periods of prosperity, brutal and savage, by reason of hope deferred, in the long nights of adverse times. We have seen the din of the battle of life penetrate even to the wise man's cell, and strike its discordant note on the harp that bewitches and enthral a listening world. Yet with such men it has not been a question of utter need; but a fall in stocks that threatened a mere superfluity of income has been sufficient to spoil the music of higher things. What shall we expect then of those whose unpractised hand is but essaying to sweep the strings for the first time, when the larring note speaks not of a mere docking of luxuries, but of the workhouse and the streets? The doubt of what the coming dawn may bring cannot but ever destroy that restfulness of heart which is the first requisite for any continuous course of study or thought, whereby the mind shall soar beyond the fogs and mists of material surroundings into the clear sunlight of a purer and higher life. Lastly, the poisonous atmosphere of competitive industry blights our very nature, and leaves its desolating mark on the evolution of the race. We are told that the form and character of a plant are modified through countless generations by the nature of its environment; on stony ground, for instance, the weakest vegetation dies out, but the more hardy varieties remain and develop the characteristics that best fit them for the soil; the tender shoots of a tree that find no nourishment are gradually discarded, its more sturdy parts encroach on the province thus left vacant, and ultimately a new species is the result. So it is with the character of man. The elements of his nature that meet with no response in the world around him wither and decay, the passions and affections that are ever being called into play are disproportionately developed and usurp a commanding position that should never have been theirs. Thus the character of man is very largely the product of his environment, and what there is in it of hereditary tendencies is the product of hereditary environment, that is, of the surroundings which moulded and fashioned his ancestors; and so long as the mould into which the raw material of humanity is run remains ugly and

awry, the product will retain the same characteristics. Now our environment is essentially one of competition, where push and graspingness and greed secure every prize, where self-sacrifice and gentleness and brotherhood are dwarfed and withered and crushed out in the natures which fall under its control. It is in vain for the preacher to tell of the beauties of co-operation, of working together for mutual good, when in the school of life but one lesson is taught, competition for mutual harm. The qualities adapted to the environment are those that will be fostered and matured, and these qualities are selfishness of soul, narrowness of mind and hardness of heart. It may be that competitive industry combines the maximum of production with the minimum of cost; but the maximum of production is not the sole end of man. If the vast superstructure of our material civilisation cannot rest on any other foundation than the moral and physical degradation of the working-class, if no mortar can cement it other than the sweat and tears of ceaseless toil, it were better to abandon conditions of industry which deaden the higher energies, blunt the unselfish capacities, and brutalise every faculty of heart and soul. The days of chivalry, we are told, are past; there are no fair maidens left to be rescued by valorous knights, no dragons to overcome, no heathen paynims to be expelled from their lordship over earth's most sacred spots, no Holy Graal to be the quest of every pure and adventurous heart. But it is only the outward husk of these noble dreams and exploits that is gone from us, their inner kernel and underlying spirit is for all time. We have dragons to contend with, the dragons of our material environment that prey on every endeavour to compass a higher life; we have still fair maidens to rescue, labour enslaved by competition that grinds all beneath a heel of iron; we have still a Holy Graal to stir the ambition of all whose gaze is not earthward, the co-operative commonwealth which shall realise the ideal of the brotherhood of man."

"Sunday flowers for Sunday hours. A Sunday book for little folk." By Jennett Humphreys. London: Sunday School Association. An entirely wholesome book for children from four to six or seven years of age. The snatches of poetry are all original, and the prose bits of Bible story are produced by Miss Humphreys in a way of her own. The little pictures are genuinely pretty. The workmanship is of the best: the cover attractive with nice dainty colours and well used gold.