

The Coming Day.

JUNE, 1892.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

THE IDEAL.

WE have received many hundreds of letters, and from many parts of the world, concerning Our Father's Church: nearly every one entirely sympathetic, and some offering devoted service. But many correspondents, on the other hand, have hesitated about joining, mainly because of partial want of agreement with The Ideal—this want of agreement being almost entirely concentrated about the last of the seven Principles. It was hoped that Section IV., on Consequences, would have fully barred the conclusion that any one would be entirely bound to full reception of every statement in The Ideal, inasmuch as that Section expressly says, "Our Father's Church does not expect uniformity of belief. It even invites differences of opinion, and seeks for 'the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.'"

But, in order to prevent any possibility of mistake, The Ideal has, in two places, been slightly revised. The opening paragraph of page 4 now reads, "OUR FATHER'S CHURCH is based on the perception and practical application of these Seven Guiding Principles; though its members are not pledged to the entire verbal acceptance of them," and the following words have been added on page 10 (after the statement, "The constant communion of kindred spirits in and between the unseen and the seen") "All the members of Our Father's Church will not be able to accept this in the same sense. It is not necessary. The essential thought in it is that there is an 'unseen' and that the way to it is open. That is the one thing needful to Religion, on the side of aspiration and hope."

We repeat the invitation to readers of The Coming Day to apply for a copy or copies of The Ideal, which is sent free to any part of the world. It may also be useful to repeat the notice that no money payment is needed for membership: and that no one, in joining Our Father's Church, need cease to be a Wesleyan or Unitarian or Baptist or Churchman. Is it necessary to add that distance is no barrier? Our members already include members of most of the "denominations," and they live in places as far apart as Australia and Paris, Canada and Italy, New Zealand and Scotland, Germany and Ireland, Hungary and Wales, British Columbia and London: and, every day, we expect to hear of members in India.

An ancient prophet said, "He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream"; ay! and let him strive to make it come true. This is our aim, and from it we shall never swerve. The disintegration of the sects is a good thing, but the revelation of the vital elements in all sects is a better; and this is the Gospel which by Our Father's Church is preached unto all.

Applications for copies of The Ideal should be sent to Lea Hurst, Leicester.

J. P. H.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

[SPOKEN AT LEICESTER, ON EASTER SUNDAY.]

THIS day is the very greatest day of the Christian year—greater even than Christmas day, for that commemorates the mortal birth in the sphere of the physical, while this celebrates the immortal birth in the sphere of the spiritual. And yet we, rationalists, are supposed to deny the event it commemorates; and, in many of our pulpits to-day, much ingenuity will probably be expended in explaining it away,—in shewing, for instance, that Jesus had only swooned from pain and loss of blood, and, after a careful and friendly interment, had recovered and disappeared. It is a pity; for it is the rationalist who has the explanation within his reach.

In any case, the story is a manifest inconsistency without the resurrection. The two halves of the story need that connecting link. At the cross and the grave all ended in collapse, and fear, and dismay: but, very soon after, the crushed and despairing disciples blazed forth with unheard-of tidings on their tongues. Something had happened. What was it? What they declared was, that Jesus had conquered death, and they made a risen Jesus the sum and substance of their revolutionary faith.

Look at it, for the purpose of weighing the value of their testimony: and bear in mind that their testimony was sudden, consistent, vital and unbroken. They said that Jesus had risen from the dead. Where they deceived? There were only three parties concerned: the Jews, Jesus, and themselves. The Jews had no motive for starting such a monstrous story, but the reverse. It was their business to maintain, if they could, that this upsetting reformer had been completely swept out of the way. Jesus was not a man likely to take any part in a deception. His whole life, of simplicity and courage, makes suspicion impossible. It is incredible that such a being as he was would end in deception and cowardly keeping out of the way. But were the disciples themselves deceived? Is it a simple case of honest delusion? That might be suspected if the disciples had expected something of the kind, or if they had been in a state of intense fervour, or if they were abnormal kind of men, as mystics and sentimentalists, likely to imagine visions. But the reverse was true. They expected nothing of the kind; they were hopelessly disheartened and crushed; when the women went to them to tell them what they had seen at the sepulchre, they believed them not, but "their words seemed to them as idle tales"; they were plain people, ordinary men of the world, called by the master from the seashore and the streets, not at all the men likely to fancy things, and to be carried away by a combined conspiracy of dreams.

But an alternative remains. Where they deceivers? But deceivers have motives and calculations. Why should they deceive? Did they want to maintain and back up their testimony? But they had never testified to anything like a resurrection. The farthest they had ever gone was set forth in that pathetic saying; "We thought

this had been he who would have delivered Israel." Or had they fame and the success of their cause to gain by their amazing lie? It is impossible to imagine they could have been so foolish as to think so. There could be no prospect of anything but contempt and scorn, or worse. The priests, the soldiers, the rulers, the mob, the gentlemen, would all be against them as the purveyors of so absurd a story. As for the "success of their cause," they went the right way to ruin it. But how could men who set out to teach a revolutionary righteousness build their faith on a great preliminary lie? As a matter of fact, however, they did not lay themselves out for gain and fame and success. They simply rushed on their ruin, and courted death itself, and welcomed all that the world desired to avoid, and gave up all that the world laboured to win. Why? They must have believed that what they said was true.

It is worth noting that the disciples actually proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus in the very city where he had just been murdered, and before the very people who had compassed it: and they seem never to have been effectually contradicted. All that happened was that the rulers beat them, and charged them to speak no more in this name: but they went forth "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake"; and "they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Once more, then, review the facts, with special reference to the entire change of tone, spirit, behaviour and conduct of the disciples. When Jesus was taken "they all forsook him and fled." In the judgment hall, only one ventured near, and he,—boaster, coward and liar that he was,—denied that he even knew him. At the crucifixion, they all but one "stood afar off"—John only venturing near. After his death, they met with locked doors "for fear of the Jews." On the road to Emmaus, the reported conversation only shews how entirely the disciples had lost heart and hope;—"We thought this had been he who would have delivered Israel." Then, all of a sudden, these dispirited and despairing cravens burst upon the world with their tremendous message—"We have seen him: we have seen him: he is alive." The men who forsook him; the men who had denied him or let him die almost alone; the men who slunk by night to the guarded meeting-place, now come out into the light of day, and declare that they are willing to die for their risen and victorious lord. It was the coward Peter, who swore he did not know him, who stood before the mob, and cried,—“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

But what was it that had happened? The story, in the main, indicates a resurrection of the body. But there are many indications of the contrary. He vanishes out of their sight. He appears, the doors being locked. He is never seen except suddenly and on occasions. He finally disappears, no one knows how. The story about the absence of his body is a stumbling block: but we are helpless as to that.

We have to make the best of, in any case, a fragmentary and not consistent story :— of a story perhaps not entirely comprehended by those who wrote it.

The explanation seems to me to be clear. The so-called resurrection was simply the spirit-appearance of Jesus to those who were in a condition to see him. What he was able to demonstrate was this, that death is not the last thing but life, and that to die is only to pass out of the body into the beautiful spirit-sphere beyond.

Religious people have clung to the idea of the physical resurrection of Jesus because they have argued that his resurrection is a type and pledge of our own : but that again is clung to because they are in bondage to the poor earthly body. The emancipation needed is a clear recognition of the truth that spirit-life is not only real but is the great reality, and that when the body is done with it is done with for ever.

What a glorious and delightful hope ! There is no death ! and this hope will prevail. Even the intense believers in the old creeds are unconsciously breaking away from the old clinging to the body, and are, inconsistently enough, ignoring it. There were remarkable testimonies to this after the death of Mr. Spurgeon. Dr. Angus, at a special service the day before the funeral, said ;—“ To-morrow we shall follow to the grave what is mortal of our leader. What is immortal is not here : ” and poor Mrs. Spurgeon wrote ;—“ With me it is an absolute necessity that I keep looking up. ‘ He is not here, he is risen, ’ is as true of my beloved as of my beloved’s Lord. To-day he has been a week in heaven. O the bliss, the rapture of seeing his Saviour’s face ! O the welcome home which awaited him, as he left this sad earth ! ” There is no room for the future resurrection of the body, if she is right. Yet that amazing superstition as to the resurrection of the body was once universal. The churchyards are full of it. The following lines I copied from a stone in Finchley Parish Churchyard ;—

“ Graves are lodgings to the blest,
Not of honour but of rest, —
Cabinets that safely keep
Mortals’ relics while they sleep.

When the trump shall all awake,
Every soul her flesh shall take,
And from that which putrifies,
Shall immortal bodies rise.

In this faith these lived and died,
In this hope they here reside.”

Finchley Parish Churchyard is, or was, a very pretty place, but not a nice place to “ reside ” in, especially underground. But, poor things ! the people who talk like this find better “ lodgings ” : and it is so unnecessary that they should

“ Linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.”

No ! we must grasp firmly the central truth—that the spirit persists—that it was the spirit of Jesus which persisted and was able to shew itself to those who loved him, and that the true resurrection is the natural and beautiful outpassing of the spirit into the intensely more real life beyond.

THE BEING AND THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

Most of our difficulties and all our anxieties concerning belief in God come of our want of appreciation of our necessarily stupendous ignorance. We assume that we ought to be able to prove, and then we are miserable because we cannot; or we put ourselves in the unreasonable position of denying or doubting; whereas, considering what mites we are and what magnitudes we face, we ought to hope and expect anything, and give every great thought the benefit of the doubt.

It is the wisest man who best knows that he can alter nothing and determine nothing. All he can do is to patiently find out some of the great thoughts, intents, and harmonies of nature, and follow on, learning and obeying. When Kepler listened and watched until he caught a sight of the mighty scheme, he cried out, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" It seemed to him that he had come upon the great Thinker of the Universe. Concerning that, Dr. Momerie well said, "Science is but a partial copy of an intellectual system which existed long before the birth of Man."

The one undoubted fact is that we are in the presence of energy which seems unbounded, allied to something which looks like intelligence and intention. If we cannot believe in God we have to account for that energy, and for that apparent intelligence and intention if we can. The more we know of the Universe the more are we forced to say, with Browning, that it "feels and knows"—or looks as though it did. It accumulates its tremendous forces, adjusts its sequences, establishes its laws, and then, through unimaginable centuries, patiently waits, and assuredly pushes on to the far-reaching result. The believer in God is one who closes with the great suggestion, and infers something adequate thereto. He says that the continuity is the persistence of some intelligent Power, that the progress is not an accident, but a process, and that the culmination, by whatever tortuous ways it may be reached, is never anything but sure; and, because that continuity and culmination relate to mental, moral and religious processes and results, as well as to physical results, the believer in God goes on to affirm that He somehow thinks, determines, and loves; and this he affirms all the more because it is perfectly clear that the supreme intelligence of the Universe is something altogether apart from and independent of mankind, seeing that we only come for a brief space and look on and pass away; while that mighty unity of energy and purpose goes on for ever.

Nor is the intelligent believer in God deterred by the fact that he cannot hope to know who or what is that supreme intelligence which he feels bound to infer; for he knows that the mystery of what he calls matter is just as great as the mystery of invisible spirit or mind. The unbeliever or agnostic says, "Matter we know and can understand, but spirit we can neither know nor understand." But he is in error. Matter he does not know. He only knows sensations in relation to what he calls matter; and, even granting that he does know matter as it appears to his senses, he

does not at all know what it is in itself. If he broke it down to the minutest speck, and drove it back until neither eye nor instrument could follow it, he would only be baffled more and more. The solidest granite or metal can be so driven away into invisible atoms by heat; and, at the back of every inconceivably tiny atom, there is something that is not matter at all—"a point of force," said Faraday—and we know no more about that infinitely little than we know about the infinitely great. All we can say is that we are *en rapport* with what we call matter, and therefore it seems the real. If we were differently made, or had our being on a different plane of existence, we might think that the now invisible things were the only real.

But now, in reality, it is not so difficult as many think to realise that signs of thought and intention and continuity in the Universe imply a thinking, intending, and persistent Being; for we ourselves are living illustrations of that very thing. Nothing is more familiar to us than that mind, everywhere in human life, dominates and uses matter. It is so with the body itself. It is an illusion that the body acts from itself. No; there is a master of the house, and there is an unfathomable abyss between thought and any physical changes or movements which are supposed to produce it, or which follow it. We know nothing about thought and mind in man, any more than we do about the Supreme Intelligence suggested by millions of indications of intelligence in Nature; but we infer both—driven thereto by what Tyndall has called "an intellectual necessity."

In one sense, then, God is unknowable, just as life is, or mind, or thought; but, in another sense, He is knowable, and, again, just as life is, or mind, or thought—as they are manifested by the physical mechanism. Thought becomes word; volition becomes action; desire becomes search. That is all we know of mind in man; and that is all we know of mind in relation to God. Both are known by their manifestations, and not at all as they are in themselves.

Think of the wonderful, sleepless "Mother-Nature," as we call her. Does she not, in her way, speak, caress, and seek, and desire, and act? In the very Winter, as one said, her "very breath is snow storms," and, in "Spring, her heart beats in violets;" and she grows and seasons and develops men, women, and children, just as she grows and seasons and develops violets, cornfields, and birds. And, in most startling ways, she seems to be always pressing for recognition—in her woods and meadows, and by her ocean-sands and river-sides—singing to us through her birds and breezes and waves—signalling to us from sunrises and sunsettings, from mountain-haze and purple, and glory of amber and azure sky; seeking us out in music and poetry, and heart-longings for brighter and purer things, pressing upon us for recognition until happy tears come into our eyes, we know not why; and then, in the fulness of time, the recognition breaks forth at last in cries of joy, in hymns and prayer and faith in God.

This was the secret of Jesus. "I am not alone," he said, "for the Father is always with me;" nay, but, in his perfect simplicity, he dared to say, "I and the Father are one," thus fully recognising the profoundest truth, that we all grow out from God—feeling the heart beneath the law, and seeing the face behind the material veil.

Here is the culminating thought, that all things proceed from one creative energy, intention, love, whatever that may be. The supreme Unitarian of the Universe is God himself. It is a fruitful saying of Herbert Spencer's, that the power which wells up in us as consciousness is the same as that which manifests itself elsewhere as mountain and tree. We talk of incarnations of God. Why, all things are incarnations of God; all things come forth from the Father; all things are modes of manifestations of God. "Three persons in one God"? Ay, millions! We are all "*dramatis personæ*" in the glorious drama of earthly existence,—men and women, forests and grasses, seas and skylarks, tigers and lambs, Caligulas and Christs. God is the inmost secret of everything. He is the melody of Music, the beauty of Art, the force of Gravitation, the security of Dynamics, the law of Ethics, the bond of Society, the "groaning" of the whole creation's travailing together in pain until now, the impelling power of Civilisation, the light of Reason, and the harmony of Love. It is all a mighty unity in a boundless Universe; and, underneath all, I perceive Order, and I infer Intention: and there I find God. I can go no farther; but I try and understand and fall in; and that, for me, is Religion.

God, then, is the great inference of the Universe; no more. There is no difficulty so long as we keep to that, so long as we say, We are compelled to infer intelligence where we see such overwhelming and persistent indications of it. It is only when we think we ought to know God in Himself that we get wrong, and, for our punishment, find only baffling and unbelief.

And now the way is fully open for our grave inquiry respecting *personality* as applied to God. And here, though it becomes us to be very heedful, it is now necessary that we should be very clear and frank. The Bible presents God, in the main, as a man—a gigantic man, it is true, but still a man. He walks in a garden, He comes down to see, He talks to a child at night, He writes on a tablet of stone, He is jealous, angry, vindictive, horribly cruel, open to remonstrance, and given to repent, He sits on "a great white throne." Christendom has only too surely stumbled on in the same path. It presents to the faithful the body and blood of God, or a book, the inspired and final "Word of God," and, in order to keep hold of deity, has deified a simple-hearted man. It is the survival of these crude imaginings that is responsible for the avowed and the secret unbelief that is spreading over Christendom, like a dense grey mist. The remedy is the clear confession of the truth that there is not and never was a God like this. Then, when the truth is faced, the real "Rock of Ages" will be seen—the real God will be known; known, not comprehended; a great inference, necessitated by an irresistible intellectual necessity, but not understood. It seems certain that, in whatever way there is a personal God, in that way we can never know anything about Him. How could we? God is, as we have said, a great inference, and we only know Him by and through His manifestations, though we may always leave a boundless margin for an unthinkable Personality beyond all modes of manifestation. That may suffice. We infer because we must; the rest we leave because we must. When we pray we do not know what relation our prayer has to Him. We only feel it is natural; and our only explanation is that in Him we all live and move and have our being, and that every good thought, every devout wish, every appeal to the highest and the best, must meet

with a response, if only from that divine influence which is in ourselves. But, beyond ourselves, there must be boundless oceans of spirit-force—unimaginable tides of divine inflowing, responsive to the appeal of the human longing for the divine.

Just as we infer God, then, as Supreme Intelligence because of the overwhelming manifestations of it, so we infer some kind of personality because we see that personality *has* come from that great universal cause; and that which is in the effect must be in the cause—that or something higher. We therefore conclude that if the cause of our personality is not a person such as we are, he is a person in a sense infinitely more subtle, glorious, and exalted; and, by so much as He is greater than we are, by so much must we expect to be unable even to imagine what His personality can be. All we have a right to do is to infer that He is, and that, in some transcendent sense, He thinks and plans, and knows and forecasts, and wins. "Personality," says a modern thinker, "is one of His local, finite manifestations"—just as all things are His manifestations: and that which is manifested must be in that which manifests, only, it may be, in some unspeakably higher degree or in some unspeakably higher way.

Here we may well be content. The God we infer is adequate, and more than sufficient, for all our needs at the present stage. Reverence, wonder, awe, delight, contemplation, hope, obedience, reliance, all are possible for us, though we know Him but as the unswerving power who manifests Himself only through that which proceeds from Him, and who is bound by the limitations of His own laws—not personal as an arbitrary Czar of Russia or a gracious Lady Bountiful could be, but personal as the supreme intelligence, the unyielding order, the eternal harmony because the eternal certainty of the Universe.

What the next stage in our spirit career may reveal to us, when we pass beyond the veil, none of us can tell: but it is surely enough for this stage—that the Power above, beyond and beneath us, meets us now and deals with us on the plane of our present existence, and that though we cannot know Him in Himself, His manifestations speak for Him, and will speak more and more plainly to us as we become thoughtful, teachable, and pure.

DR. CLIFFORD ON INSPIRATION AND THE BIBLE.*

DR. CLIFFORD'S interesting book on Inspiration ought to be a real comfort to the "heretics" who have long borne "the stings and arrows of outraged" orthodoxy;—not only because what Dr. Clifford has written expresses Dr. Clifford's opinions, but because Dr. Clifford, as a sharp and receptive man of the time, is as likely as any one to reflect the dawning light. The long-suffering "heretics" have all along said that the Bible is (1) an inconsistent book, (2) that it exhibits the normal stages of human development and not the abnormal characteristics of divine infallibility, (3) that our troubles about the Bible are due to "orthodox" assertions about Inspiration, (4) that one may be a true Christian and yet admit to the full the atrocities and

* "The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible." By John Clifford, M.A., LL.B., &c. London: J. Clarke & Co.

inaccuracies of many parts of the Old Testament, and (5) that honest readers of the Bible have found relief and deliverance through the "heretics" who patiently worked in the field of evolution, and boldly applied the doctrine of evolution or development to the structure of the Bible. Everyone of these assertions is plainly justified and endorsed by Dr. Clifford, in such paragraphs as the following, taken from his first dozen pages.

"I do not know anything more difficult or more urgent in Biblical study than perfect 'detachment of mind,' a going directly to the Book itself, and listening with purged ear and absolutely unprejudiced spirit to its message. I have found that ninety per cent. of the difficulties of young men with the Bible are not due to the Bible at all, but to the theories of men about its composition or inspiration, its theology or interpretation."

"The Bible is a library, a collection of the masterpieces of the literature of a people, packed into the smallest compass, but belonging to widely separated periods, and comprising nearly all forms of literature, and therefore is best examined in restricted but related portions, aided by the 'introductions' written by competent men. In this way we shall see the progress of revelation from the elementary and imperfect conceptions of God and of morality in the Old Testament to the full and perfect teaching of Christ Jesus in the Gospels."

"Some minds have entered into comfort and freedom by discovering that the question of the Inspiration of the Bible, either as to its nature or effects, is in no way fundamental to Christianity, least of all, to a personal experience of the grace and power of the Lord Jesus. It has been glad tidings to them that a man need not formulate a theory of Inspiration, verbal, plenary, or dynamic; nor even settle the quality or question of the fact of Inspiration, in order to become possessed by the Spirit and life of the Saviour." . . . "Like Paul, he knows whom he has believed, and does not depend for his assurance and joy on any external document or authority whatever, but on the Redeemer of men. Nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord; not the discrepancies in the accounts of the Last Supper, or the contradictions in Kings and Chronicles; not the cruelties of Deborah and Saul, or the 'cursings' of the Psalmists; not the paroxysms of despair in Ecclesiastes, or the unscientific records in Genesis. 'His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'"

"The Book of Esther is not cast in the same mould as the Gospel of Luke. Ecclesiastes is unspeakably inferior to the First Epistle of John. One is a cowardly moan, the other is a confident and piercing soldier-summons to battle for eternal truth and life."

"The New Testament compels us to affirm that such passages as 1 Kings xxii. 23, though historically accurate, and truly representing what men thought of God, and in what ways they then claimed His aid, yet contain gross misrepresentations of his character. Jephthah does not occupy the same platform as Isaiah. Jeremiah points to the arrival of the Lord our Righteousness; and so the Scriptures, in their development, carry us into the radiant presence of Christ Jesus, the one and only infallible Judge. The evolution dreaded by some, has certainly become the gracious deliverer of many a student of the Word."

It is true that Dr. Clifford also says, of man and the Bible, that "God desires him to know His revelation," and that the Bible is "an inspired and authoritative Revelation of God and man, made by the Father Himself to His child;" but then, as a set-off to that, he refers to "Nature" as "God's other Great Book"; and, besides, it is not our business to assume Dr. Clifford's consistency, or to suppose that he is altogether free from the pressure of an antiquated vocabulary. All we say is that if Dr. Clifford chooses to call such an imperfect book as he has described "an inspired and authoritative Revelation from God," he is welcome to do so; but, in that case, he gives us reason for watching him: and we may as well tell him plainly and affectionately, and in no spirit of glorying over him, that we think he has completely justified those of us who, for more than a generation, have been testifying to the very things he now, in the name of modern science and scholarship, admits.

We do not say it in any offensive spirit, we only say it frankly, that Dr. Clifford, Dr. Marcus Dods, Professor Drummond, and, in fact, the whole of what we may call "the modern orthodox school," in delivering the perplexed by emancipating them from the old theory of "Inspiration," are not entitled to go on using the old language about "revelation." If, as Dr. Clifford says, "the Book of Esther is not cast in the same mould as the Gospel of Luke," if Ecclesiastes is "a cowardly moan," if the 1st Book of Kings and other Books "contain gross misrepresentations of God's character," it is not right to go on talking about the Bible as the Word of God or God's revelation to man. The emancipation, in that case, has indeed come, but it is an emancipation, not from some old theory about Inspiration, but from the superstition that the Bible is, as a whole, in any supernatural or exceptional sense, inspired at all.

At Dr. Clifford's present stage, inconsistencies are unavoidable. For instance, in quite the old tiresome style, he says, "From this inspired volume we obtain accurate conceptions concerning God, the Source of all law, the Giver of life and light, the Father and Redeemer, the Ruler and Judge of men": and this he says as though that were the end of it, although we know perfectly well that by "inspired" he only means God-lit in places, and that by "accurate conceptions" he only means approximately accurate and sometimes even grossly inaccurate. In like manner, he occasionally drops into the old wearyful talk about the Bible as God's one communication to man, and yet, in an outburst of delightful rationality, he says, "As the sun is the fruitful source of all vegetable growth, so God is the universal mind-food, mind-stimulant, the 'energy' of all true intellectual activity. He is the guide—not a finger-post, dead, fixed, and to be found if we happen to go near it—but a living, man-seeking, man-discovering, and man-saving Guide. The Spirit is Immanuel, God with us, supporting us in the strenuous effort to know and do the Divine will, accompanying us, and stronger than all that are against us, for defence and for victory; and not only so, but God in us, flowing into and inspiring us; 'carrying us whither we would not,' making us ashamed of mean and low thoughts, of shuffling subterfuge, of selfish bias in reasoning, of cowardly prejudice, of jealous and envious feeling, constraining us to attempt the higher ranges of thought and aspiration, and awakening and utilizing the whole of our unused force in favour of truth in life and thought and deed. This is 'the Gospel for the day,' the most cheering message we have for men made melancholy by the loss of an 'old faith,' and hopeless of the discovery of a new. These are glad tidings of great joy." Precisely so, but if God inspired men to write the Bible, and with such varying degrees of success that one writer "grossly misrepresented" Him; and another only achieved "a cowardly moan," and if He inspires us now, as Dr. Clifford says, and with results of a similarly varied character, the dispute is at an end. "Inspiration" is now reduced to the constant and natural influence of the divine spirit, in the evolution of man. We never asked for more than that.

We willingly admit the superlative value of the Bible: we admitted it when we were driven to make a stand against its infallibility: we admitted it when the "orthodox" damned us for our honesty: but that is not the point: the point is that the Bible is now admittedly accepted as a book which contains fragments of every

kind of value, from gold to garbage, and that this is a bar to the current description of it as "God's revelation." It is clear that Dr. Clifford and his comrades of the new orthodoxy only mean that God is revealed in the Bible just as He is revealed in the tiger and the lamb, the prairie and the orchard, the garbage and the gold, and that He evolved the one as He evolved the other: in which case we can only say,— 'Welcome, brothers; we have been a long time waiting for you. Give us your hands!'

THE FLAGRANT WEED.

"THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT RISETH UP FOR EVER AND EVER."

THE tobacco nuisance has long been a question connected with public decency. It has now become a question of public morality. There is something sinister in the amount and quality of the inconsiderateness and selfishness engendered by the habit of resolute smoking. The smoker begins, as Ruskin says, by polluting the breath of a May morning, but ends by ignoring the feelings and wishes of man, woman and child at the breakfast table. On the continent, in public hotels, as soon as the smoker has finished his repast, he lights his cigar, and sits there, brutally ignoring everybody else: and, in England, half the seaside promenades are being made offensive with the silly stench.

A late writer in "The Open Court" has taken the right ground in relation to this matter. She says; "If my neighbours in the city like the smell of decaying garbage about their houses, or think it wholesome and pleasant to keep a dirty pig in the cellar, I can complain of them to the sanitary authorities, and have the nuisance removed, in spite of their personal tastes in the matter. But, if I take a sick baby into the country for pure air and wholesome surroundings, and the inmate of the room next mine chooses to poison the atmosphere of his own and my apartment through the open windows and thin partitions with a nasty pipe or a meaner cigarette, I have probably no redress but to change my boarding-place. So debauched is the public conscience in this regard that any complaint of the omnipresent pollution is considered a foolish personal idiosyncrasy, to be disregarded as soon and as often as desired. It is considered by the majority of hotel-keepers, railroad and steamboat officials and servants, and all who purvey to the taste of travellers and boarders, that the smoker has the right, and that the complainant is seeking to enforce a peculiar hobby of his own. The good-natured smoker will throw away his cigar if you frankly say it is disagreeable to you; but he very evidently thinks he is making concession to an extraordinary weakness on your part, and that that weakness will soon make you as disagreeable in his eyes as his cigar can be in your nostrils.

It is high time that this inversion of the principles of right was exposed to just light. It is high time that the man who uses a public place for the indulgence of a private habit which is positively injurious and disagreeable to many who have paid as high a price for their use of that public place as he, should understand that *he is the offender against right and propriety*, and not the person who complains of his pipe or cigar. . . . Let us 'strike' for . . . unconditional prohibition of smoking

in and about the pleasantest places of resort in hotels and public parks and gardens and all the nooks and corners where the non-smoking class most do congregate. And let this be demanded as a right, not begged as a kindness."

We are afraid, however, that the current runs the other way. Our "gentlemen" are taking to "smoking concerts"; and, in the name of "good fellowship," are shutting out friends or making them pay a penalty: and there are not a few political candidates who so far lower themselves and their audiences as to invite the pulling out of pipes. It is all very degrading. A late writer in *The Pall Mall Gazette* glorifies the Music Hall, and looks longingly forward to the time when the best singers as well as the best dancers and acrobats will be there. He asks for Antoinette Sterling as well as for Minnie Cunningham: but he also asks for "the charm of its freedom" and "the flavour of its Bohemianism"—euphuisms for the clatter of its promenaders and the stench of its tobacco. The foulest air in London at about 10 p.m. is probably to be found in its music halls. The writer of these lines wished to see Mrs. Abbott's magnetic experiments at a London music hall. Her appearance was delayed, and he was obliged to leave the place every ten minutes to avoid the sickening atmosphere, as well as to escape from the comic fools.

Mr. Irving, in his evidence before a Commission, lately said that he thought smoking and drinking in the auditorium would degrade the drama, as he understood the drama, and that actors and actresses of any value could not or would not act in such an atmosphere. He admitted that most theatres had smoking saloons detached from the auditorium, and drinking powers granted under an Act of William IV., but, in his case, although the rent derived from his bars might amount to £1,000 a year, or nearly one-fourth of his rental, he was quite willing to abandon this source of revenue. Well done, Mr. Irving!

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.—On Sunday, May 15th, Mr. Page Hopps spoke at Croydon, near London, on "Our Father's Church, an instance of evolution in Religion." The Address will probably appear next month. At Kettering also, on the 18th, another most delightful meeting was held.

A LABOUR OF LOVE FOR LABOUR.—We have received a few numbers of a little monthly magazine called "Brotherhood," edited by J. B. Wallace and published by Reeves, Fleet Street. It is brimfull of wise and sober thoughtfulness for toilers; all simple enough and a trifle utopian, but none the worse for that: the poorest labourer would be all the better for his bit of blue in his usually cloudy sky. It would be a good thing if "Brotherhood" could find its way to every working man's home.

CHRISTIAN CONCEIT.—The Bishop of Gloucester, in an Easter Sermon, set before his hearers an almost perfect specimen of what we may call the ultra-christian superstition. His subject was the recognition of friends beyond the veil. He seemed to postpone that completed joy of the new life to some vague period loosely indicated by the phrase "when he (Jesus) comes to this earth again": and then, only to be looked for by those who, in some particular way, believe in Christ. He says, "Is it not these only of whom the text is speaking; and if we be not living in Christ and humbly and trustfully hoping thus ourselves to be laid to sleep when life's work is over, what ground have we for expecting these holy meetings and re-unions hereafter?" The good Bishop seems to have no idea of any natural and universal

law in relation to the unseen. He appears to regard it as amenable only to some arbitrary process of christian favoritism and legerdemain. The dead "in Christ" sleep: they will be magically wakened and personally conducted; and then will be introduced to their lost friends—after, perhaps, thousands or millions of years of separation or vacancy. The humblest spiritualist knows more than this Bishop does, for he, at all events, knows that to die is to "shuffle off this mortal coil" and live (not sleep) ay, live intensely in the spirit-sphere, and that natural law obtains there as here, to reunite or separate us, Christ or no Christ, in harmony with spiritual laws that are as operative for Atheists and Unitarians as for Brahmins and Bishops.

MAY WE ASK FOR PRECISION?—A sermon by Mr. Aked, in *The Liverpool Pulpit*, supplies a very fair specimen of what passes now for belief in the dying doctrine that Jesus was the Almighty God in disguise. Mr. Aked uses the utterly vague phrase "divinity of Christ," as though he did not know that Peter said all christians are or might be "partakers of the divine nature." At the end of his sermon he has this curious sentence, "I would even go so far as to say it is unreasonable to think of Christ as God, but it is distressingly more unreasonable, infinitely unreasonable I will add, not to think of him as God. Facts are facts, and cannot be gainsaid. He has transformed the world; is it less unlikely that the author of the revolution should be a carpenter's son or the Son of God? And I answer, 'Son of God.'" It appears to us to be only slippery looseness to apply the word "God" and the words "Son of God" to the same being, especially when an apostle says, "Now are we sons of God." But there is a good deal of loose phrasing (and voting) going on just now.

WHAT WAS IT?—The following appeared in *The Christian Herald*, since the death of Mr. Spurgeon. "THE BULLFINCH AND OPAL RING.—Mr. Arthur Maw, Seven House, Ironbridge, Salop, writes: 'Some of the incidents in Mr. Spurgeon's life savoured of the miraculous. Parting one day from his invalid wife, on the usual round of visits to members of his congregation, he asked if she could suggest anything which could relieve the monotony of her sufferings. With apologies for the singularity of the idea, she replied that she had a fancy for the possession of a piping bullfinch and an opal ring, objects which the worthy minister would not have felt justified in buying. Having con-

cluded a visit to a family who were about to emigrate, he was recalled to hear that the lady had a piping bullfinch which she could not take with her, and requested permission to present it to Mrs. Spurgeon. On his return home, a member of the congregation called to submit a question of conscience to his minister. He had picked up an opal ring, which, failing the discovery of an owner by the police, had been returned to him. Was he justified in possessing it? On receiving the obvious assurance, he begged to present it to Mrs. Spurgeon.'" Concerning this, "Eliza Lutley Boucher" writes to *Light*;—"I well remember, several years ago, seeing in an issue of *The Christian Herald* an account similar in every essential particular to this more recent one. Being much interested in it, and knowing the value of an immediate verification, I at once wrote Mr. Spurgeon on the matter, and promptly received a reply from his secretary confirming the authenticity of the strange and almost incredible statement.

A NATURAL RATIONALIST. A writer in *The Parents' Review* lays his troubles before its readers. He has a son, aged eight and a half, who tackles his father in a most summary manner. "He has always been carefully taught by me," says this good man; but one morning, at the end of a reading about Jesus, he deliberately said "I never could believe that if Jesus was really God, he could have come down and have lived like a man." We wonder what book the unhappy father was reading from. Surely not the New Testament. No child, from a reading of the New Testament, would ever imagine that Jesus could be God. There is a trace of "careful teaching" in the catastrophe, as well as in the instruction.

A HERETIC VICAR.—The following, from a benefited clergyman, suggests many thoughts:—"I like the 'Real Jesus' much, and have no doubt it will be useful. The orthodox view is certainly doing harm, and becoming a stumbling block in the pathway of a living faith. It will bear no reasonable examination, and vanishes before a really free and unprejudiced reading of the Gospels. The word and work of Jesus are the power of God unto salvation in a very real and rational sense. We cannot reckon how much the world owes to the gift of God in the Man Christ Jesus, whose spirit dogmatic theology has so often disguised and hidden. But orthodoxy is in a state of tottering instability, notwithstanding its bold front and loud assertions. In our lifetime we have seen a wonderful advance as regards 'future punishment,'—an

advance equally important is now being made with reference to 'inspiration,'—and the old dogma of the Trinity is bound to follow in the overthrow and re-adjustment. Men will learn to see that the God whose inscrutable law in nature produces great leaders of mankind in science, statesmanship, and inventive discovery, produced the grandest of moral and spiritual leaders in Jesus Christ, without the dogmatic absurdities of theology entering into this method."

THE REAL "DOWN GRADE."—We heartily agree with a minister, quoted by *The Christian Life*.—"The question of importance is. How can an interest be developed that will fill the church from Sabbath to Sabbath with earnest and devout worshippers and willing and faithful workers? There is one way the house could be crowded at every service, but not especially with interested worshippers. A sensational subject, a double quartette, an orchestra and brass band, will more than fill the church every time. This is about what some Churches are now doing. The pulpit and the altar are in

the background. The minister is not even mentioned. The flaming notice is to the effect that a double quartette, assisted by a chorus choir of twenty voices, accompanied by an orchestra, and in some cases a brass band, will furnish the music to-morrow at the church thus-and-so. Next day after, the papers will announce a large audience which seemed to be greatly interested in the musical part of the programme. What are we coming to? What has become of the brilliancy, logic, and eloquence of the preacher, and the merits and importance of religion, of deep and sincere piety and fervent soul worship? Echo begins to answer back, 'Where, oh where can they be found?'"

It is often said that this descent to an entertainment is necessary, in order to attract. We do not believe it, any more than we believe that it is necessary to give up "preaching the Gospel" (in the true sense of that much-abused phrase) in favour of lectures on poetry and art. The people *want* religion: and, if we ourselves understood how to supply it, they would come.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"Quaker Strongholds." By Caroline E. Stephen. London: E. Hicks. A book worth reading. Its theological notions are occasionally somewhat quaint and old-fashioned, but with a fine aroma of sweet reasonableness hovering around, all the time. Its social and personal references chiefly interest us. The following on dress is delightful:—"It is a significant fact that there is really no such thing as a precisely defined Quaker costume. The dress certainly looks precise enough in itself, and to the naked eye of the outside observer it may appear to present an undeviating uniformity; but it is really not a uniform in the sense in which a nun's or a soldier's dress is a uniform. It is in all respects a growth, a tradition, a language; and it is subject to constant though slow modification. Any perfectly unadorned dress of quiet colour, without ornament or trimming, if habitually worn, is, in fact, to all intents and purposes, the Quaker costume, though one or two details have by a sort of accident acquired a traditional meaning as a badge, which one may adopt or not according to one's feeling about badges. Some Friends now-a-days object on principle to anything of the kind. Others still see a 'hedge' or shelter in them. Others, again, feel that they

serve a useful and innocent purpose in enabling Friends readily to recognise one another, and that it is not amiss for them to be easily recognised even by outsiders. But the one important matter of principle which the Society as a body have recognised is that it is a waste of time and money for which Christian women can hardly fail to find better employment, to condescend to be perpetually changing the fashion of one's garments in obedience to the caprice or the restlessness of the multitude. 'Plain Friends' are those who are resolved to dress according to the settled principles which commend themselves to their own minds, not enslaving themselves to passing fashions." "The freedom from the necessity of perpetual changes, which commends itself to Friends as suitable to the dignity of 'women professing godliness,' has also the lower advantage of admitting a gradual bringing to perfection of the settled costume itself. We all know how exquisite, within its severely limited range, can be the result. The spotless delicacy, the precision and perfection of plain fine needlework, the repose of the soft tints, combine, in the dress of some still lingering representatives of the old school of Quakerism, to produce a result whose quiet beauty appeals to both the mind and the

eye with a peculiar charm. I cannot think that such mute eloquence is to be despised." That is very pleasant, and contains more good sense in every way than volumes of "fashion books" which appear to be invented simply to occupy the minds of frivolous women, to get at the money of hard-working men, to find employment for otherwise useless people, and to make reasonable beings laugh.

"Messages to the multitude." By C. H. Spurgeon. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. In this volume, containing ten representative sermons selected at Mentone, and two unpublished addresses, any one may easily find the secret of Mr. Spurgeon's power—and, as easily, the secret of his fatal weakness. Every year will bring us nearer to Mr. Spurgeon's practical human sympathies: every year will take us farther away from his utterly nonsensical theological opinions. The former gleam and sing from a hundred pages in this book; the latter may be "sampled" by the following queer specimens taken at random, from the beginning and the end of the volume:—"Remember, your prayers at the best are nothing, apart from the grace of God, but a beggar's cry. Apart from what grace has done for you, you still stand as beggars at the gate of mercy, asking for the dole of God's charity, for the love of Jesus. He gives freely; yet He gives, not because of your prayers, but because of Christ's blood and Christ's merit. Your prayers are the empty vessels into which He puts the alms of His mercy; but the merit by which the mercy comes is in the veins of Christ, and nowhere else." "O souls, you have never counted Christ for what He is! You have put down your sins, but you have never counted what kind of a Christ He is who has come to save you. Rather do like Luther, who says that when the devil came to him, he brought him a long sheet containing a list of his sins, or of a great number of them, and Luther said to him, 'Is that all?' 'No,' said the devil. 'Well, go and fetch some more, then.' Away went Satan to bring him another long list, as long as your arm. Said Luther, 'Is that all?' 'Oh, no?' said the devil, 'I have more yet.' 'Well, go and bring them all,' said Luther. 'Fetch them all out, the whole list of them.' Then it was a very long black list. I think that I have heard that it would have gone round the world twice. I know that mine would. Well, what did Luther say when he saw them all? He said, 'Write at the bottom of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' It does not matter

how long the list is when you write those blessed words at the end of it. The sins are all gone then. Did you ever take up from your table a bill for a very large sum? You felt a kind of flush coming over your face. You looked down the list. It was a rather long list of items, perhaps, from a lawyer or a builder. But when you looked at it, you saw that there was a penny stamp at the bottom, and that the account was receipted. 'Oh!' you said, 'I do not care how long it is; for it is all paid.' So, though your sins are very many, if you have a receipt at the bottom,—if you have trusted Jesus,—your sins are all gone, drowned in the Red Sea of your Saviour's blood, and Christ is glorified in your salvation." "The multitude" have for ever passed beyond the reach of these ridiculous "messages"; and there will be very few men who will again try to deliver them.

The Humanitarian League's Publications. 1-3. "Humanitarianism: its general principles and progress" (6d). "Royal Sport: some facts concerning the Queen's buckhounds," (2d). "Rabbit Coursing," (2d). London: W. Reeve. Here we have the firstfruits of a heaven-born idea. We wish the League every possible success in its efforts to expose and put down wanton brutality. It will find plenty to do. We hope it will become rich enough to send its publications by post to all the clubs and reading rooms in the land, as well as to all known lovers of so-called "sport."

"Homilies of Science." By Dr. Paul Carus. Chicago: The Open Court publishing company. A very modern book, and a good deal ahead, indicating the way we are going, but with a bias to a turning to the left which has its dangers. Dr. Carus does not think he is an atheist, and perhaps, in a sense not yet developed, he is not, but he asks too much at present. His fifty or sixty "Homilies" on such subjects as "God and the world," "The soul and the laws of soul life," "Death and Immortality," "Ethics and practical life," "Society and faith," are exceedingly acute and serious in tone: and his readers need to be both acute and serious.

"Mystical lays: soul reveries and other poems." By A. F. Tindall. London: Co-operative Co., 30, Wyndham Street. Creditable efforts at poetry, in dramatic and lyrical form. The writer would probably be more at home in prose, and do good work.

MESSAGES FROM OUR FORERUNNERS.

GOD'S WORD—When God commands to take a trumpet, and blow a sonorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall say or what he shall conceal. *Milton.*

DEATH.—"Death, death! It is this harping on death I despise so much. This idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping! Why should we not change like everything else? In fiction, in poetry, in so much of both, French as well as English, and, I am told, in American art and literature, the shadow of death—call it what you will, despair negation, indifference—is upon us. But what fools who talk thus! Why, *amico mio*, you know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily, dying body is none the less alive, and ever recruiting new forces of existence. Without death, which is our crape-like church-yardly word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life." *Robert Browning.*

CHARITY IS UNITY.—Doctrine is one when all are principled in mutual love and charity; mutual love and charity are effective of unity or oneness even amongst varieties, uniting varieties into one. For let members be multiplied ever so much, even to thousands and tens of thousands—if they are all principled in charity or

mutual love, they have all one end, viz.: the common good, the kingdom of the Lord, and the Lord himself, in which case the varieties of doctrinals and worship are like the varieties of senses and viscera in man, which contribute to the perfection of the whole. *Svedenborg.*

CUNNING AND WISDOM.—We take cunning for a sinister, or crooked wisdom; and certainly there is a great difference between a cunning man and a wise man, not only in point of honesty, but in point of ability. *Lord Bacon.*

INSPIRED.—When the sincere man receives the truth of God into his soul, knowing it is God's truth, then it takes such a hold of him as nothing else can do. It makes the weak strong, the timid brave; men of slow tongue become full of power and persuasion. There is a new soul in the man, which takes him, as it were, by the hair of his head, and sets him down where the idea he wishes for demands. It takes the man away from the hall of comfort, the society of his friends,—makes him austere and lonely; cruel to himself, if need be; sleepless in his vigilance, unflinching in his toil; never resting from his work. It takes the rose out of the cheek, turns the man in on himself, and gives him more of truth. He must speak or he dies. *Theodore Parker.*

THOUGHTS IN LONDON STREETS.

Oh, brothers, whom I daily, hourly meet,
 Each on his own peculiar purpose bent,
 Each on his own or others' needs intent,
 And speeding on his way with hasting feet;
 One common lot is ours, one path we tread,
 One journey take, though some with ease and strength,
 While others, faltering, fear the journey's length
 And fain would rest, in death, the wearied head.
 But what the journey's end, and when, and where,
 To us unknown. But He who made us knows.
 We trust ourselves to Him. He will dispose
 Our future final lot, so we may share
 His bounty still when, freed at length from sin,
 We, *Life*, His gift, in fullest measure win.—B. S. O.