／# The Coming Day.

APRIL, 1892.

OUR LIFE-STORY.

"WE SPEND OUR YEARS AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD."—*Psalm xc., 9.*

(SPOKEN AT LEICESTER, ON THE LAST SUNDAY IN 1891).

AN old text!—but one that is sure to stand good while this planet stands clear of the ice-ocean which will, one day, pinch the life out of the last resisting man.

And that reminds me—that it is as true of the planet itself as of the man who plays his little part upon it. Compared with the stupendous periods of the Universe, its period is only like a few spare hours. So also, compared with the mighty drama that is being played on the whole, the planet's programme is only like a passing tale. And the planet is "spending" its years: for, as surely as the story book comes to an end, so surely will this story of the earth's life be one day told.

How much more true is it of the life of a human being! Poor little creature! Of him we might say, not only that he spends his years as a tale that is told, but, to adopt one keen translation of these words;—he spends his years as a broken cry.

But, in one sense, the tale of a human life is more like a tiny library,—and such a mixture!—a spelling book, a nonsense story, a fairy tale, a book of adventures, a prospectus and balance sheet, a biography or two, and a book of travels—and then a last will and testament! Such is life!

There are two senses in which a human life is a tale. It is short and simple, and is always modelled on the same plan—a birth, a schooling, a going out to work, a few adventures, an ebbing of power, the curtains drawn, a few tears, somebody sorry for awhile, and a grave:—an old, old story!

But there is a deeper sense in which a human life is a tale. "We spend our years as a tale," said this old Hebrew. Yes, but that spending of the years, that tale which is told, is not the real life. All that outward life is only the story—a mere tale, and often with very little truth in it: but the real life is not told,—that is all recorded within. And sometimes how different from the tale that is told!

A human being's life is like his first book. The first thing a child has to do is to become conscious, to become a distinct personality, and to know it. The life, at that stage of the tale, goes on like the book. At first, the child learns mere names,—man, dog, girl, cat, rat: then events,—"the cat kills the rat;" equivalent to the later on—"Brutus killed Cæsar." And only that seems to be what is happening at this stage,—a child learning to read. But no. It is a child learning to cease to be

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a child, a child learning its boundaries, and the meaning of them. The first five or six years are mainly spent over prattle;—bits of toys and spelling, toddling and kisses, dolls and wooden horses, "You must" and "You mustn't,"—but all that is only on the surface—that is the tale. Behind all that—and by means of all that—a human being is coming into real existence. The one is only the spending of the years,—the other is the building up of personality, and coming into rudimentary relations with the world.

Then come the nonsense books and the fairy tales—Grimm's goblins, and Jack the giant killer, Alice in wonderland, or stirring, enthralling tales of impossible heroines and heroes:—shiny bits of palpable incongruities,—then overpowering magnitudes of colour and detail—mighty records of strength, swiftness, magnanimity,—then the haze and glamour of romance,—alluring pastoral symphonies—mystic touches of poetry—perhaps tearful sympathies or dizzy raptures or dreamy longings. Here we get behind the external play which is getting itself performed—behind the tale that is being told by this queer reading and romancing of life's early stages. Books and pictures and tales will all pass away—and that which is never seen, never to be estimated, will remain,—not the tale that is told but the life which has been all stored up. The little maiden cuddles her dolly; that is the tale which is told. The little maiden inheriting the maternal instincts of millions of years, and practising—that is the real event:—and the lad, with his books of pirates and mighty exploits by land and sea, is only feeling his feet, getting his measurements, setting up his standards of comparison, and storing up his idealisms. He seems to be amusing himself;—yes, that is the tale that is told, but, in reality, he is land-surveying, getting his focus, and adjusting his instruments.

In very many cases this period of life is most precious, and, in some respects, the best. For millions of people, high water mark is spiritually reached at 15. After that, they get ashamed of the flushes of romance and imagination. They learn all the rules of the game—and play them. They subside into common-place and get over their dreams. They only believe in things they can see, and get hardened into the belief that the chief end of life is to find how much everything is worth. Then they become creditably practical, and tame, and insipid, and receive their reward. And, in innumerable cases, life then becomes only a tale that is told:—next to nothing goes on within. The tamed creature lives on the little stock of romance and poetry and imagination and heroism happily stored up from 5 to 15—and, for the rest of life, only spends the years as a tale that is told.

But, thank God, it is not so with all. A man passes on to his shop or his office,—his manufactory or his travelling;—a woman passes on to her housekeeping, her teaching, her telegraphy, her desk, or her mending and stitching—and the poor tales seem to be simply, and sometimes sordidly, told. Is it so? No: not always.

Behind those account-books, prospectuses, statements of account, operations of building, weaving, baking, mending—what is really going on? All these are tools, manipulating hands, rough processes, for man-making and woman-making. You think the main things are the books, the figures, the cotton, the iron, the leather, the brick and stone work. Important enough, and beautiful and precious enough,—but

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all that is only the tale that is told. Nature is amusing you with illusions. She gives you bricks to play with, and you build; and counters, and you call them money: and she makes you think the tale you are telling is the real thing. But her real business is going on behind all that; for behind all that lies the great main thing done—the creation and development of human beings. What fine things are being woven behind the external weaving!—what precious things being built behind the structure of brick and wood and stone!—what reckonings and balances within—what priceless lessons in discrimination, patience, courage, steadiness! You think you are earning a living: ah, yes, but, if you are living rightly, you are earning yourself.

What, presently, will be the thing which will come out of it all? You say,—A splendid business: or a fortune. Ah, no: what will march out, when the process is complete, will be a human being—the finished product—yourself.

Then comes the last chapter of the story which, to be normal and happy, should end very much in the vein of the opening chapters, but wiser, with all the experiences which the progress of the story brought. Thus Shakspeare puts it—that the aging man is "full of wise saws and modern instances"—or deeper still, full of romance and legend and poetry and pathos,—the old pilgrim creeping back to the chimney corner, with a contented laugh,—not with the old books, but with that out of which all good books are made—experience.

But we have not yet learned to make a natural and happy ending. Some day the world will learn it; and the old wayfarer will come home, to be a child again, not rebellious and sorry, but glad to make the chain of life complete. The old people ought to be all poets and romancists, but of a wiser and deeper order,—having exchanged Grimm's goblins for Spenser's Faery Queene—seeing the real meaning of the tale that is told, and bringing, out of their treasury of the inner self, things new and old.

But, however this may be, it is a supreme consolation, as we get on in life, that the tale is not really ending, but is only beginning,—that, in fact, we have yet to read it. It is written in no book that any eyes could read: it is not made up of the incidents that the world calls the life: it is within. Surely that is what the seer meant when he wrote that tremendous verse: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." Yes! we shall be, and we shall have, only what we are: but, such as it is, we shall not miss that: so that death will be, not a wreck, but a great step on Of course, it is only natural that a certain amount of pathos should gather about what seems the closing of the tale. It cannot be altogether free from pathos even to the firmest believer in a life beyond.

In one of Oliver Wendell Holmes' books (telling the story of a visit to England) occurs a touching passage, describing the effect upon him of a discovery which brought home to him the closing up of two of the gates of life. He says; "One incident of our excursion to Stonehenge had a significance for me which renders it memorable in my personal experience. As we drove over the barren plain, one of the party sud-

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denly exclaimed, 'Look! Look! See the lark rising!' I looked up with the rest. There was the bright blue sky, but not a speck upon it which my eyes could distinguish. Again, one called out, 'Hark! Hark! Hear him singing!' I listened, but not a sound reached my ear. Was it strange that I felt a momentary pang? Those that look out of the windows are darkened, and all the daughters of music are brought low. Was I never to see or hear again the soaring songster at Heaven's gate—unless—unless—(if our mild humanised theology promises truly), I may perhaps hereafter listen to him singing far down beneath me? For in whatever world I may find myself, I hope I shall always love our poor little spheroid, so long my home, which some kind angel may point out to me as a gilded globule swimming in the sunlight far away. After walking the streets of pure gold in the new Jerusalem, might one not like a short vacation, to visit the well-remembered green fields and flowery meadows? I had a very sweet emotion of self-pity, which took the sting out of my painful discovery that the orchestra of my pleasing life-entertainment was unstringing its instruments, and its lights were being extinguished—that the show was almost over. All this I kept to myself, of course, except so far as I whispered it to the unseen presence which we all feel is in sympathy with us, and which, as it seemed to my fancy, was looking into my eyes, and through them into my soul, with the tender, tearful smile of a mother who for the first time gently presses back the longing lips of her as yet unweaned infant." But that action of dear mother nature is for our highest good. Yes, we are all spending our years as a tale that is told. What a mercy! How delightful to think that in a few more years we shall try a fresh experiment—turn over a new leaf, and continue the story in full possession of our powers!

ONE WOMAN, ONE VOTE.

THE LOGIC OF IT.

A CONVERSATION.

An extremely pretty and somewhat "imposing" mansion in the beautiful county of Kent. A charming summer evening, enjoyed by seven or eight friends on an enticing terrace that had palpably asked us to come out and enjoy the declining radiance, the quiet trees, the soft dreamy hills. Host and hostess had led the way, followed by their daughter, Angela, Mr. Ion Mighty, a local notable, his wife, our host's son, Jack, and a queer friend of his, a Professor of Logic.

The slow ripple of remark gradually broadened into conversation, and presently into argument, rousing enough in one way though as quiet as the trees, but always tending to be as lasting as the light. Angela began it by pointing out in the distance a new building, lately erected as a college for girls, as a half-way house to Newnham and Girton—or farther. That soon led on to the Primrose League, beloved of Mrs. Ion Mighty, and to the Women's Liberal Association, shivered at by our host. The bridge connecting all that with Women's Suffrage was soon past, and we were fairly in for it.

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The Professor quietly put in at an early stage. "Apart from mere sentiment, and whatever may be involved in the flexible word 'rights,'" said he, "there is really only one sound and logical plea open to the advocates of the suffrage for women:— that it is unjust, unfair, and uncivilised to make womanhood of itself a disqualification. At present, there is no denying that this is what is done: and what is done needs a great deal of justifying. Florence Nightingale's sweep has a vote because he is a ratepayer: but Florence Nightingale, whatever rates she might pay, is not allowed to have her name on the list of voters. Why? Simply because she is a woman."

"Quite right, too," said Jack. "What do women want with fussing about polling booths and public meetings?"

"Yes," said our hostess, "Florence Nightingale was 'a ministering angel.' She could not have done what she did if she had been a political woman and a mover of resolutions."

"Perhaps not," replied the Professor. "And yet she had some pretty strong opinions, and she gave pretty strong expression to them. She hammered away at mal-administration just as earnestly as she watched over her sick soldiers: and she would have been glad of the help that a share of political power would have given her."

"She would only have interfered with the proper authorities," said Mr. Ion Mighty, "and would have produced the mischief which always ensues where that is allowed."

"The evidence of that is not as clear as that bit of lilac sky yonder," said the Professor, "but, anyhow, I think our first business is to get a good look at a case of palpable injustice and bad logic. The man-drunkard, wife-beater, ignoramus, or fool, has his vote as a matter of course. The woman-artist, bread-winner, poet, or political economist, has no vote as a matter of course. Her womanhood is a disqualification. The man who can ponder that, and not have a bad taste in his mouth, would require some studying: and yet, in this country, where 'use and wont' are our guardian angels, or guides, philosophers and friends, some of the best of men still deliberately back up the insolent disqualification."

"But we don't feel it to be 'insolent,'" said Angela.

"That may be very good of you," said the Professor, "but it may also be rather thoughtless of you. Why should Jack here qualify as a lodger, and his mother be unable any way to have a vote?"

"But you don't mean to say your Women's Suffrage proposal includes married women," gasped our host.

"Why not?" replied the Professor. "Is marriage a crime, deepening the disqualification involved in being a woman?"

"O, but that won't do at all," cried Jack, "that will set everybody against you."

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"It will not make it easy for us, I admit," said the Professor. "Many of the opponents of the suffrage for women are mere jesters, or prejudiced persons, or sheer lovers of power,—or fossils: but many are serious, and really feel beset with difficulties; and I confess that these have by no means been helped by the inevitable turn in the road which has introduced into the question a new element of difficulty and doubt. Hitherto, in the simplicity of their hearts, the advocates of Women's Suffrage talked only of women who kept house on their own account—spinsters and widows who paid rates as men did, having all the duties of householders and perhaps shopkeepers: and people were gradually coming to see the justice of the claim that if ratepaying qualified a man it ought to qualify a woman: and many others, who did not feel very much troubled about the injustice of disqualifying the woman-ratepayer simply because she was a woman, were beginning to be ashamed of the meanness of that disqualifying. No one seemed to think of the married woman till one day certain logical persons, who had been looking into recent legislation in relation to property-holding by women, and into the various kinds of qualifications for the suffrage, calmly proposed to carry out to the full the doctrine that womanhood should be no disqualification. What more reasonable? But that would mean the suffrage for married women in many cases. What more logical? Hence doubts, hesitations, divisions. Even some of the old advocates, looking along the line of the logic of it,

'Linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.'"

"No wonder," said Jack; "you are in for a rough voyage, and not one of you can tell us anything about your port of destination."

"That is often the case," was the Professor's grave reply. All the great redemptions of the world have been 'leaps in the dark' In this case, I see no place for halting. Logic, sense, and fairness, compel us to include *all* women when we say that womanhood of itself ought not to be a disqualification. Married women, therefore, if they possess the legal qualification as to property-holding or rate-paying, should be allowed to vote. Why not? It may, of course, be a little startling, at first sight, that husband and wife should both be voters: but again I ask; 'Why not?' If we unflinchingly probe the objection to the root, we shall find that survivals of the old subjection of women are at the bottom of it. Your genuine ancient Briton has too much of the old Adam in him to swallow easily the idea of his wife neutralising his vote. Not very long ago, it was felt to be intolerable that a wife should have a separate purse—in fact, earn money and keep it, or buy houses and retain them in her own name. We have nearly got over that; and the rest will follow. The vote must follow the qualification, whether John Bull likes it or not: and it may be for his good to teach him the needed lesson."

"I think, sir," said Mr. Ion Mighty, "I think, sir, this kind of thing would break up our homes. Man is the natural head of the house, and represents the woman."

"Perhaps he is," said the Professor, "and perhaps he does, but it is not absolutely clear: and, indeed, when one comes to think of it, it cannot be true as a matter of course, always and altogether. 'Head of the house' is a conventional phrase, with

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a reputation for solid British veracity, but it has always been liable to be cornered and made a little ashamed of itself by the phrase 'mistress of the house' which has always commanded a good deal of recognition not altogether conventional (Here Jack laughed.) And, as to the man representing the woman, no one now seems to know exactly what it means. John Bright appeared to mean something by it, but even he never made its intention plain. If a man is the head of the house, and, on that account, represents the wife, how comes it to pass that he does not also represent his sons, who may lodge in his house? Jack here, by paying an acknowledgment for his bedroom, can get a vote as a lodger. Why do we not say that his father represents him? and how comes it to pass that Angela could not qualify for a vote as well as Jack? Does the head of the house represent daughters and not sons? No: the plain English of it is, not that the head of the house represents the wife, but that womanhood, whether as wife or daughter, is a disqualification, simply as womanhood: and the honest truth is that the whole thing is a survival of the old chattel idea of woman's position in relation to man. But, even if the husband *is* the natural head of the house, and does somehow represent the woman in relation thereto, it can hardly be contended now that he is her head and representative with regard to the property which modern legislation has secured to her, and which, under an honest and decent Women's Suffrage Bill, would give her the vote."

"But," said Mrs. Ion Mighty, with just a suggestion of quick breathing, "I am sure the possession of a vote by a married woman would lead to division and irritation."

"Possibly," replied the Professor: "but that may only shew how much men need to be educated out of their tendency to domineer. (Here Angela hid her face behind a big vase of geraniums.) Would it not be very useful to the husband himself to be accustomed to the spectacle of his wife, not only having a mind of her own, but having the power to give personal effect to her opinion? The poor man would get used to it in time: and the measure of his misery during the process would really measure his need of going through it. (Here Mr. Ion Mighty took a long gaze at the new structure in the distance.) But even taking things as they are, unless the wife has to keep her mind as clean as her unused note paper, or her tongue as still as her slippers, are there not differences of opinion now? and ought not people to learn to respect one another's freedom even if they cannot love one another's opinions? It is not absolutely necessary that a woman should be a fool in order that she should be charming, or that she should give a man his own way in relation to politics in order that she should be an agreeable companion. The opinion is gaining ground that women would be improved if they would take an interest in the serious practical subjects of life. If that is so, surely the element of bitterness would come in, not by treating her fairly, but by first encouraging her to be rational and well-informed, and then flatly refusing to allow her to give effect to her opinions, ideas, and hopes."

"But what have they to gain?" said Jack. "Men do not want to be unjust to women."

"They may not want to be unjust," replied the Professor; "I only say they

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have been. The laws made by men have been very cruel as against women. Even judges, in administering those laws, have branded them as unjust and cruel, especially in relation to the custody of children: and, to this day, women are cheated out of the University honours and emoluments to which they are entitled as successful scholars."

"That may be true," said Jack, "but is it not a fact, as, I remember, *The Speaker* assured us, that woman is politically disqualified by nature in various ways, and especially as she does not and cannot share with man the maintenance of our national existence by force?"

"Many of the 'various ways' alluded to are more calculated to raise a laugh than to carry grave conviction," replied the Professor, "and, in spite of many disclaimers, really betray the vein of contempt which runs through this particular form of objection:—a woman is emotional, or imaginative, or sentimental, or she may have to suckle a baby, or she could not be 'of the smallest service in the field or on the sea'; all of which I remember *The Speaker* did solemnly set forth to deter us from ruining the country by allowing women to vote. Pursuing this line of—shall we, out of courtesy, say argument?—a formidable case could be made out against male suffrage;—so many men being masterful, ignorant, drunken, dissolute, sordid, conceited, and utterly absorbed in business and family cares, and entirely unfit either to fight on land or go to sea. In fact, it might be argued that the suffrage should be restricted to medical men, bankers, officers in the army and navy, members of the Stock Exchange, editors of newspapers, and the House of Lords."

"Sir," said Mr. Ion Mighty, "all that this nation has it has won by the sword, and it must be kept by the sword. All government rests on force."

"That may have been true in days gone by," interposed Angela, "but surely the great business of this country now is not the defence of it."

"I think you are right, Angela," said her mother. "What we should now aim at is the development and direction of its moral life—the creation of something worth defending, or that shall be its own defence."

"Who can doubt it?" said the Professor.

"And yet," said our hostess, "the woman's sphere is surely home."

"I do not grant that home is her only sphere," he replied. "But, admitting it, it seems to me that what we very much need is an infusion of home-life into political life. It is or ought to be perfectly manifest that the womanhood of the nation is precisely the influence we need, to moderate the selfishness and rancours of mere party politics, and to bring to bear upon the political arena precisely those emotions and sentiments which are said to disqualify women for political life, only because political life is confessedly too brutal for them."

"That sounds nice, Professor," said Jack, "but I don't think women are fit for politics."

"I do not quite follow you," he replied. 'Fit' may refer to so many things. For instance, what do you say to the Queen, who is our political chief? And yet, however you take it, what do you say to all men being fit?"

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"Well done, Professor," cried Angela, "I am sure mother is every bit as fit to form an opinion as old Joe Grubbins or one half the men in the village."

"I should think so," said the Professor, "but the surprising thing is that no one proposes tests of fitness. An educational franchise I could understand, but Jack's Liberals would scout it to a man, as a 'fancy franchise.' We should be quite willing to go in for a franchise based on fitness, if they will only give us the standard."

"Well, perhaps 'fit' is hardly the word," said Jack, "supposing we say——" but he hesitated.

"O, don't trouble," said the Professor, "it really does not matter, because, put it as you will, it comes round to this—that a man is a man and a woman is a woman. But, frankly now, why did you advocate the suffrage for working men and labourers? Your only sound argument was—and the argument you won with was—that a person who had to obey the laws, and who might be hurt by bad laws or helped by good laws, ought to have a voice in making them. You excluded property, education, character, and, in fact, everything else but the liability to be hurt or helped; and upon that you based *a right*. But, upon that basis, a woman has a special right to the vote."

Our hostess here looked very grave, and said; "There is a great deal in what you say, but is there not ground for believing that women are deteriorated by entering into the turmoils of public life?"

"That is a matter which it is not easy to discuss," replied the Professor, "because any useful discussion of it would require a citation of instances sufficiently numerous to warrant a generalisation. But, admitting that the militant pioneers are made less agreeable and winsome, may that not be the fault of men? A woman who has to demand, and protest, and stand up to the fight, may possibly become less charming as a companion, less engaging as a lover, and less delightsome as a wife: but it does not follow that she has deteriorated, because she has ceased to be a lovely plaything, and become a devoted pioneer. But what would happen if the struggle were over, and if women were welcomed as the natural co-workers with men? Let men try that, and see."

"I hope not," broke in Jack. "Women are altogether too open to influence. The parson and the doctor would poll the lot of them. Now I don't mind telling the honest truth, and confessing that I am opposed to it because I know the women would vote Tory and spoil our chance."

"And that," said the Professor, "is said by a good Liberal!—by a Liberal who helped to give votes to country labourers! Jack! thou art a rank Tory in spite of thy radical paint, though thou layest it on with a trowel. When it was proposed to give the vote to poor artisans and labourers, the Tory cry was, 'They will cast a dangerous vote:' and the Liberal's reply was, 'What is that to you? If it is right to give the vote, give it, and do not ask what will be done with it.' Why don't they say that now, like men? As for being under influence, Radicals are always insisting upon it that the villages of England are hotbeds, not only of 'influence,' but of oppression: and yet not one of them ever proposes to disfranchise the labourer because

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he is under his master's thumb. If the vote ought to be denied to women because they would be under the influence of parsons and doctors, what about the men who are under the influence of the publican and the squire? But is it true that women are so enormously under influence? Some married men have a very different tale to tell; and the satirist never ceases to depict the triumphs of man's 'better half.' In truth, the world is not without shrewd observers who suggest that the widespread opposition of married men to Women's Suffrage is the result of vivid personal experience, and of a natural instinct of self-defence on, as yet, uninvaded ground."

There was an uncomfortable pause for full three minutes; and then Mrs. Ion Mighty said; "But what is the use of troubling about it? Women, after all, do not want the suffrage."

"Is that so?" asked the Professor. "Is the demand really confined to the women who are publicly known as its advocates? It might suffice to appeal to the results of the agitation all over the country. Everywhere, amongst women, the challenge has found but one response, and we have yet to see the strange sight of sensible women refusing the offer of a privilege which they need not make practically effective unless they desire it."

"I think you are right there," said Angela. "If I do not want the vote I need not use it: but it might come in handy. And as to women wanting it, I remember my friend Jenny Armitage telling me that in one fairly average English town in the Midlands the question was put, at home, to nearly every woman ratepayer, and that the result was a strong declaration on the part of the overwhelming majority, that the suffrage was desired."

"I remember the case," said the Professor. "But if women do not want it, why resist the offer? It could do no harm to confer a privilege they would not care to use."

"That reminds me," said our hostess, "of a passage in one of Olive Schreiner's books; 'They say that women do not wish for the sphere and freedom we ask for them, and would not use it. If the bird *does* like its cage, and *does* like its sugar, and will not leave it, why keep the door so very carefully shut? Why not open it, only a little? Do they know, there is many a bird will not break its wings against the bars, but would fly if the doors were open?' When I read that," added our hostess, "I felt half inclined to agree with her: and, indeed, I must confess that if all men could see it so, I should be willing."

"A sensible conclusion," said the Professor: "and yet this is a matter which ought not to turn upon general consent. It is simply a question of right, justice, or common fairness. No; the proposal to abolish the custom or the law which insults and wrongs womanhood by making it anywhere a disqualification for the suffrage ought to be considered on its merits, and altogether apart from anybody's feelings or personal wishes—especially men's. For, in truth, that men do not like it, but, on the contrary, chafe at it and resent it, may only shew that they are afflicted with a spirit of masterfulness, and need the chastening discipline of seeing and getting used to women thinking and acting for themselves."

Then Mrs. Ion Mighty said she felt a little chill,—and we went in for a rubber at whist.

J. P. H.

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THE COMING REFORMATION.

ALL the signs of the times point one way,—to the conclusion that every church in Christendom is on its trial, and on the verge of possible reconstruction or condemnation. Nothing can save them but a shedding of the old theological or ceremonial shell, and an advance to human realities. While the sects are disputing about vestments and rituals and terms of communion and the meaning of words and the perpetuity of dogmas, the world is quietly drifting away into unbelief or unconcern.

Something seems wanted if only as a testimony—a kind of John the Baptist crying, "Prepare ye the way." Protestant dissent is busy putting the new wine into old bottles, or trying to turn old bottles into new, or to make it out that the new are the old. The Established Church is escaping from its theological confusions and embarrassments by providing spectacular celebrations of worship, and setting unbelievable doctrines to fascinating music. The Unitarians continue their justifiable protest, and, with rare fidelity, stand apart on the old campaigning ground, but, strangely enough, seem to shrink from the onset, and hesitate to adapt either their message or their methods to the age. The Salvation Army is drifting towards huge crude experiments in Socialism, and is more and more manifestly dependent upon the fervours of fanaticism and the showman's drum.

On the other hand, Agnosticism of many types, some pathetic enough, is slowly producing an atrophy of faith and hope; and not only in laboratories and clubs, but even in pulpits and pews. And that must go on until the bankrupt theologies and the impossible priesthoods consent to go—or radically reform.

The crisis is at a critical stage; and no one can really foresee the end. All we know is that the world is going one way and the Churches another, though, as yet, this is not seen externally because of the conventional respect that is still largely paid to existing "sacred institutions." The probability is that the reformation will come from within, but only after resolute and very uncompromising movements without. The Churches must be taught to be human, not sectarian; scientific, not dogmatic; practical, not sacramental; simple, not metaphysical; modern, not mediæval; loving, not masterful. It must become, in name or in spirit, OUR FATHER'S CHURCH; and it must look out upon this mighty mass of struggling human beings as His children in some tremendously real sense,—all in process of creation—all destined to be taught, educated, uplifted, saved.

WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH IT?

THE tornado of laughter that greeted Mr. Balfour's Bill may have been well deserved: but that Bill is not altogether the "joke" Sir William Harcourt declared it to be. As it stands, it is a grotesque Bill, and a bad Bill because it is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual temper that is radically vicious: but it contains a precious boon. It is a culminating object-lesson, shewing us, by a crowning mercy, what a policy of contempt amounts to: but it opens a door.

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Local Government is one of the latest and most delightful achievements of modern civilisation, and indicates, on the one hand, confidence in the people, and, on the other hand, the conquest of popular rights and fitness for the possession of them: and yet here is this exponent of government by masterfulness flinging Local Government at the heads of "rebels," as though he said, "Here is rope; go and hang yourselves: but, see, we have arranged to cut you down." Of course, that is enough to make every sober-minded Englishman give in to the advice to resent and defeat this Bill. But is that good policy? The Bill goes an enormous way towards Home Rule: and, at this very moment, the hole into which the Government has dropped shews us how inevitably the Bill will lead to Home Rule, which simply means an extension of the powers of Mr. Balfour's County Councils, and the creation of a Central Representative Body to which they shall be responsible. Let us get the County Councils established on as broad and popular a basis as possible. The rest will follow.

Even if the Bill passed with all its absurdities, it would be easier to haul down Mr. Balfour's pirate skull and cross-bones from the masthead, and to steer the ship aright when we get aboard, than to launch the ship. Let us get all we can out of them before they go.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S RELIGION.

Colonel Ingersoll, whom we have always regarded as an unbeliever in self-defence, as against the atrocities of "orthodoxy," was lately invited by the New York Unitarian Church, to speak to its members on Religion. With his usual keenness, audacity, and brilliancy, he spoke to the following effect:—

In the first place, I wish to tender my thanks to this club for having generosity and sense enough to invite me to speak this evening. It is probably the best thing the club has ever done. You have shown that you are not afraid of a man simply because he does not happen to agree entirely with you. Imagine the distance the religious world has travelled in the last few years to make a thing of this kind possible! You know—I presume every one of you knows—that I have no religion; not enough to last a minute—none whatever,—that is, in the ordinary sense of that word. And yet you have become so nearly civilised that you are willing to hear what I have to say; and I have become so nearly civilised that I am willing to say what I think.

In the second place, let me say that I have great respect for the Unitarian Church. I have great respect for the memory of Theodore Parker. I have great respect for every man who has assisted in reaving the heavens of an infinite monster. I have great respect for every man who has helped to put out the fires of hell. In other words, I have great respect for every man who has tried to civilise the race. The Unitarian Church has done more than any other church—and maybe more than all other churches—to substitute character for creed, and to say that a man should be judged by his spirit; by the climate of his heart; by the autumn of his generosity; by the spring of his hope; that he should be judged by what he does; by the influence that he exerts rather than by the mythology he may believe. And, whether there be one God or a million, I am perfectly satisfied that every duty that devolves upon me is within my reach. I want to thank the Unitarian Church for what it has done; and I want to thank the Universalist Church, too. They at least believe in a God who is a gentleman. They believe, at least, in a heavenly Father who will leave the latchstring out until the last child gets home; and, as that lets me in, I have great respect for that church.

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Man originally was an idealist, as every man is to-day an idealist. Every man in savage or civilised time, commencing with the first that ever crawled out of a cave and pushed the hair back from his forehead to look at the sun, and from that cave to the soul that lives in this temple,—every one has been an idealist, and has endeavoured to account in some way for what he saw and for what he felt; in other words, for the phenomena of nature. The cheapest way to account for it, by the rudest savage, is the very way it has been accounted for to-night. What makes the river run? There's a god in it. What makes the tree grow? There's a god in it. What makes the star shine? There's a god in it. What makes the sun rise? Why, he's a god himself; and the moon. And what makes the nightingale sing until the air is faint with melody? There's a god in it.

The gods that were first made after the image of man were not made after the pattern of very good men; but they were good men according to the standard of that time, because, as I will show you in a moment, all these things are relative. The qualities or things that we call mercy, justice, charity, and religion are all relative. There was a time when the victor on the field of battle was exceedingly merciful if he failed to eat his prisoner; he was regarded as a very charitable gentleman if he refused to eat the man he had captured in battle. Afterward he was regarded as an exceedingly benevolent person if he would spare a prisoner's life and make him a slave. So that—but you all know it as well as I do, or you wouldn't be Unitarians—all this has simply been a growth from year to year, from generation to generation, from age to age. And let me tell you the first thing about these gods, that they were made after the image of men. After a time there were men on the earth who were better than these gods in heaven. As man became more just, or nearer just, as he became more charitable, or nearer charitable, his god grew to be a little better and a little better. And then men went to work, finally, to civilise their gods, to civilise heaven, to give heaven the benefit of the freedom of this brave world. That's what we did. We wanted to civilise religion,—civilise what is known as Christianity. And nothing on earth needed civilisation more; and nothing needs it more than that to-night.

Now, there was a time when our ancestors,—good people,—were happy in their belief that nearly everybody was to be lost, and that a few, including themselves, were to be saved. That religion, I say, fitted that time. It fitted their geology. It was a very good running mate for their astronomy. It was a good match for their chemistry. In other words, they were about equal in every department of human ignorance.

Then came these divisions, simply because men began to think. They began to grow,—to have new ideas of mercy, kindness, justice; new ideas of duty, new ideas of life. The old gods, after we got past the civilisation of the Greeks,—past their mythology, and it is the best mythology that man has ever made,—cared very little about women. Women occupied no place in the State,—no place by the hearth, except one of subordination, and almost slavery. So the early churches made god after that image who held women in contempt. It was only natural (I am not blaming anybody),—they had to do it; it was part of the *must!*

Now, I say, that we have advanced up to the point that we demand, not only intelligence, but justice and mercy, in the sky. Then comes my trouble. I want to be honest about it. If I should see a man praying to a stone image or to a stuffed serpent, with that man's wife or child lying at the point of death, and that poor savage on his knees imploring that image or that stuffed serpent to save his child or his wife, there is nothing in my heart that could suggest the slightest scorn, or any other feeling than that of sympathy, any other feeling than that of grief that the stuffed serpent could not answer the prayer, and that the stone image did not feel. I want that understood. And wherever man prays for the right, no matter to whom or what he prays; where he prays for strength to conquer the wrong,—I hope his prayer may be heard. And, if I think there is no one to hear it, I will hear it; and I am willing to help answer it to the extent of my power.

Now, then, what is religion? I say, religion is all here in this world, right here; and that all our duties are right here to our fellow-men; that the man who builds a home, marries the girl that he loves, takes good care of her, likes the family, stays home nights as a general thing, pays his debts, tries to find out what he can, gets all the beautiful ideas and thoughts that his mind will hold, turns a part of his brain into a gallery of the fine arts, has a host of statues there and paintings, then has another niche devoted to music,—a magnificent dome filled with winged notes that rise to glory,—now the man who does that is what I call a religious man, because he makes the world better, happier. He put the dimples of joy in the cheeks of the ones he loves, and lets the gods run heaven to suit themselves. That

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is all the religion I have. It is to make somebody else happier, if I can.

I divide this world into two classes,—the cruel and kind; and I think a thousand times more of a kind man than I do simply of an intelligent man. I think more of kindness than I do of genius. I think more of real good human nature in that way,—of one who is willing to lend a helping hand, and who goes through the world with a face that looks as if its owner was willing to answer a decent question,—I think a thousand times more of that than I do of being theologically right, because I do not care whether I am theologically right or not. It is something that is not worth talking about, because it is something that I never, never, never shall understand. And every one of you will die, and you won't understand it, either—until after you die, at any rate. I do not know what will happen then. I am not denying anything.

There is another ideal, and it is a beautiful ideal. It is the greatest dream that ever entered the heart or brain of man,—the dream of Immortality. It was born of human affection. It did not come to us from heaven. It was born of the human heart. When he who loved kissed the lips of her who was dead, there came into his heart the dream, "We may meet again." And let me tell you that hope of Immortality never came from any religion. That hope of Immortality has helped to make religions. It has been the great oak around which have climbed the poisonous vines of superstition. That hope of Immortality is the great oak.

And yet the moment a man expresses a doubt about the truth of Joshua or Jonah, or the three other fellows in a furnace, up jumps some poor little wretch and says, "Why, he doesn't want to live any more: he wants to die and go down like a dog, and that is the end of him and his wife and children." They really seem to think that the moment a man is what they call an infidel he has no affections, no heart, no feeling, no hope,—nothing, —nothing. Just anxious to be annihilated! But, if the orthodox creed be true, and I have to make my choice between heaven and hell, I make my choice to-night. I take hell.

That is my idea, in a general way, about religion; and I want the imagination to go to work upon it, taking the perfections of one church, of one school, of one system and putting them together,—just as they make a great painting of a landscape by putting a river in this place instead of over there, changing the location of a tree, and improving on what they call nature,—that is to say, simply by adding to, taking from, that is all we can do. But let us go on doing that until there shall be a church in sympathy with the best human heart and in harmony with the best human brain.

And, what's more, let us have that religion for the world we live in. Right here! Let us have that religion until it cannot be said that they who do the most work have the least to eat. Let us have that religion here until hundreds and thousands of women are not compelled to make a living with the needle that has been called "the asp for the breast of the poor," and to live in tenements, in filth, where modesty is impossible.

I say, let us preach that religion here until men will be ashamed to have forty or fifty millions of dollars more than they need, while their brethren lack bread, while their sisters die from want. Let us preach that religion here until man will have more ambition to become wise and good than to become rich and powerful. Let us preach that religion here among ourselves until there are no abused and beaten wives. Let us preach that religion until children are no longer afraid of their own parents, and until there is no back of a child bearing the scars of a father's lash. Let us preach it, I say, until we understand and know that every man does as he must, and that, if we want better men and women, we must have better conditions.

Let us preach this grand religion until everywhere—the world over—men are just and kind to each other. And then, if there be another world, we shall be prepared for it. And, if I come into the presence of an infinite, good, and wise being, he will say: "Well you did the best you could. There is plenty of work for you to do here. Try to get a little higher than you were before." Let us preach that one drop of restitution is worth an ocean of repentance. And, if there is a life of eternal progress before us, I shall be as glad as any other angel to find that out. But I will not sacrifice the world I have for one I know not of. I will not live here in fear when I do not know that that which I fear lives. I am going to live a perfectly free man. I am going to reap the harvest of my mind, no no matter how poor it is, whether it is wheat or corn or worthless weeds. And I am going to scatter it. Some may "fall on stony ground." But I think I have struck good soi. to-night.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you a thousand times for your attention I beg that you will forgive the time that I have taken, and allow me to say once more that this event marks an epoch in religious liberty in the United States.

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LIGHT ON THE PATH.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH. On Sunday evening, April 10th, there will be a gathering of friends and inquirers at the Free Christian Church, Clarence Road, Kentish Town Road, London, at a quarter to seven, when Mr. J. Page Hopps will conduct a religious service and speak on this subject :—*God in the streets of London.* A special welcome is offered to those who feel the need of something more rational, spiritual, and modern than the conventional Christianity of the sects. All seats free. Voluntary offerings to defray expenses. The Church is close to Kentish Town Road, and near to Camden Town and Kentish Town Stations. Trams and omnibuses from many parts of London pass quite near.

THOMAS PAINE. A valued old friend writes ;—"One of your correspondents, in writing to you concerning 'Our Father's Church,' seems to imply that Mr. Thomas Paine—'Tom Paine' as he is called—was an Atheist. Your correspondent, like many others, must have read Paine's books with little attention, I think, to have formed that opinion ; for, not only has he stated on the very first page of the first part of the *Age of Reason*, in so many words, his belief in God and a future state, but there are many passages in other portions of this part, as well as in the second, which not only shew his belief in but also a great reverence for the Deity, and I think no one who has read his 'Conclusion' to the second part can have any reason to doubt his belief in God. There is no doubt that Paine's language is generally violent and often both coarse and offensive, but that was his style, which often defeated its object, but we must remember that the time in which he wrote was peculiar. I have no wish to defend him in this respect, but when I hear him called an Atheist, I deny it. He lived considerably before his time and suffered for it, but if I mistake not, many of the principles he laid down in his two leading works, the *Rights of Man* and the *Age of Reason*, will eventually become politically and religiously orthodox."

"OLD MOORE'S" PROPHECIES. In "Old Moore's" almanac for 1892 (T. Roberts & Co.), the January picture is very curious, but the explanation given is uncanny as well as curious :—"Notice the baubles placed upon the table—why are these here ? In all probability this is given as a sign that there will be some quite unexpected and altogether unwelcome news in reference to the Royal surroundings." The "baubles" are the symbols of royalty,—the crown and sceptre, and the orb and cross. The phrase "the Royal surroundings" is creepily indicative of an heir about as remote as the Prince of Wales' son. In "Raphael's" almanac for 1891, and for the quarter commencing last December, the following occurs ; "The Sun lord of the 10th, and afflicted by Saturn in elevation, will cause sickness or death in Royal circles."

THE report of the Japanese Commission, sent to England to investigate and report concerning our wonderful civilisation, contains the following noteworthy sentence :—"Having carefully studied the state of the people of London, living under the Christian religion, we cannot recommend the adoption of this religion by our Government."

EDUCATION AND A HOME BY THE SEA. For girls who would be benefited by fine sea air and an educational home with not too many pupils in it, we recommend Suffield Park School, Cromer, managed by Miss Clark.

We had written thus far when, by a curious coincidence, we received from Miss Clark the following reply to A.,D. T's question on page 46 : "The story asked for is to be found in Motley's Dutch Republic—Historical Introduction V. Large edition, Vol. I., page 20 :"—"Yet the feeble Merovingians would have been powerless against rugged Friesland, had not their dynasty already merged in that puissant family of Brabant, which long wielded their power before it assumed their crown. It was Pepin of Heristal, grandson of the Netherlander, Pepin of Landen. who conquered the Frisian Radbod (A.D. 692) and forced him to exchange his royal for the ducal title. It was Pepin's bastard, Charles the Hammer, whose tremendous blows completed his father's work. The new mayor of the palace soon drove the Frisian chief into submission, and even into Christianity. A bishop's indiscretion, however, neutralized the apostolic blows of the mayor. The pagan Radbod had already immersed one of his royal legs in the baptismal font, when a thought struck him. 'Where are my dead forefathers at present ?' he said, turning suddenly upon Bishop Wolfran. 'In Hell, with all other unbelievers,' was the imprudent answer. 'Mighty well,' replied

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Radbod, removing his leg, 'then will I rather feast with my ancestors in the halls of Woden than dwell with your little starveling band of Christians in Heaven.' Entreaties and threats were unavailing. The Frisian declined positively a rite which was to cause an eternal separation from his buried kindred, and he died as he had lived, a heathen."

ALWAYS THE MEN. This, from the *New York World*, is good:—"A new hospital called the St. Andrew's Infirmary for Women is to be established in New York city. The funny part about this infirmary for sick women is that its board of managers is a board of man-agers indeed—not a woman on it. It consists of a number of doctors of divinity, lawyers, etc. How much these distinguished gentlemen will know about directing a hospital for sick women, to be sure! We owe to women the invention of the superior street sweeper, the improved method of heating cars, a chain elevator, a reaper and mower, a machine for feeding cattle on the cars, a practical fire escape and the much used paper bag:—but they will get off the cars backward just the same."

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"David Grieve." By Mrs. Humphrey Ward. London: Smith, Elder & Co. This book is an advance on "Robert Elsmere," viewed as a literary effort, or as a novel pure and simple. But the same keynote is struck in both books, viz:—the all importance of "Religion in Common Life" as Caird once put it in his famous sermon;—and it is in its religious aspect that this book is especially interesting to us. The characters, though possessing each a distinct individuality, are generally types of belief, unbelief, doubt, inquiry, bigotry, indifference or blank atheism. David himself, however, stands out as a type of Manhood, in its inherent nobility and its lower passions, its inherited tendencies and temperament; its aspirations, and struggles, falls and retrievals. This history is an epitome of life, and enforces the old, old lesson that each of us in turn has to learn anew;—that the one help and hope for humankind lies in *right doing*; that out of this alone true Faith is born; and that by a steady persistence in it alone we at length come to see the Divine Spirit moving as of old over the troubled waters of our mortal lives, and touching them with light and hope.

"The secret of the East; or the origin of the Christian religion, and the significance of its rise and decline." By F. L. Oswald. New York: The Truth Seeker Co. An iconoclastic and over-destructive book, one of a class for which irrational dogmatists and persecuting priests are really responsible. The writer of it, like Mr. Ingersoll, sees Christianity mainly through the veil of the Middle Ages and its survivals; and he is militant accordingly. "The secret of the East" is that "the Prophet of Nazareth was a Buddhistic emissary, and preached his gospel in the name of Buddha Sakyamuni." If so, he kept his secret well. It is interesting, however, to have the subject discussed; and some curious results reward the patient inquirer.

I CANNOT SEE THEE.

In dreams I oft recall thy every act;
I pass with thee o'er all our former haunts;
I hear thy voice, low and distinct as erst,
But, never to my sight art thou revealed!
O! could I *see* thee once thus in my dreams,—
See those dear features, *see* those glorious eyes
Send brightest, sympathetic glances round,
And those lips move with utterance slow and calm,
When feeling deep and earnest stirred thy soul
To harmony with all things grand and true!—
Thus, but for once,—one moment would I see.
I know divinest melodies are there,
Unbroken by discordant sounds of earth;
I know, to thine enraptured gaze, the forms
Of Heaven's divinest beauty shine around,—
But, ne'er to my sad, tear-dimmed eyes 'tis given
To *see* thee once, midst all this radiant light.
Beloved spirit! why to sight alone,
In slumber's hour art thou to me denied?
'Twould soothe my sorrow, stem my bitter tears,
Could my eyes see what slumber's hour recalls.

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