

The Coming Day.

JULY, 1892.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH.

AN INSTANCE OF EVOLUTION IN RELIGION.

Spoken by J. Page Hopps, at Croydon.

"SHEW US THE FATHER, AND IT SUFFICETH US."—*John xiv. 8.*

DID there ever tremble from human lips a more pathetic and yet a profounder saying? Jesus had just been talking to his disciples about the Father,—how the Father had sent him, and given him all that he had; how, in the Father's great house, there were many homes; and how, through him, the Father looked out on them: and some wondered: and Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us:" and then the wise teacher went on to shew them that there was nothing magical in it, and that he only meant to teach them how, from all things, the Father spake, and how, from all things, the Father shone.

Jesus understood the world's heart-hunger: he felt it himself, and he only satisfied it by finding the Father in all things, and by gathering all things up into the Father's arms. But that heart-hunger has never ceased. How could it? It is natural to us, and yet it seems so hard to understand and satisfy. Look along these 1800 years since Philip gave expression to man's deepest want, and since Jesus gave him guidance. What has happened? Poor humanity needed the Father, asked for the Father, entreated the Church to shew it the Father: and, instead of Him, the Church gave books, and rituals, and ceremonies, and creeds, and popes, and priests. Humanity asked for bread, and the Church gave it a stone, and, for centuries, that has been the Church's misery and the world's sorrow. There would have been no excommunicating priests and damnable creeds, no Inquisition and martyr fire, no excluding sectarianisms here and burning flames hereafter, if the teachers and rulers in the Church had known the Father and had been willing to reveal Him.

It was with Christianity as it was with government or social life. Stages of human development and spiritual insight determined opinions and actions. Mediæval Christianity was like mediæval society,—entangled with the savage and the brute: and that sorrowful entanglement is not yet at an end. The christian rulers put into their creeds and polity what the political rulers put into their methods and forces of government: and the dominant motives were ascendancy and self. The ruler wielded the sword; the priest hurled his excommunication; God kept hot His hell. There was a Father nowhere: and, if we look closely into it, we shall find that it was the longing for the Father which led men to become rebels and reformers. The human mind and heart hungered all along for something more merciful and just—for something that would release them from the thralldom of the brutalities of mere self-will.

The spiritual secret of all religious reformations has been the same : they have all been promoted by the longing for the Father, beyond the biting self-assertions and the dry dogmatisms of priests and theologians. Luther's great testimony seemed to be theological, but it was not. It was the uprising of human nature, in its hunger and unrest, urged by the longing to find the Father beyond the pope, the priest, the barren form, the heartless tyranny of an ecclesiastical corporation. Protestantism was really the protest of the soul. One might call it Humanitarianism : for the response to it was only the response of hungry and thirsty humanity, in its deep need,—keenly conscious of the failure of the Church to spiritually feed the world.

Puritanism was born of the same felt need. It was the spiritual protest of the soul against mere formalism. It was inspired by the sense of personality in religion. The Church, with its hierarchy and its ceremonialism, barred the way to God and kept the individual soul from the Father, and the Puritan, dropping all veils, passing beyond all mediators, ignoring all forms, cried, as of old, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

The reformation under Wesley was in no respect different. From first to last, it was the effort of the soul to find its God—the cry of the child longing for the Father. The English language has nothing that surpasses the hymns of Charles Wesley as heaven-assailing entreaties for the Father: and these hymns, more accurately than John Wesley's sermons, reveal the deepest significance of Methodism.

So, all along, we see the same fact,—and there is never any break in it—that mankind, (within, at all events, the sphere of Christendom,) has never ceased to long for the Father ; and that, for want of the Father, or the knowledge of Him, men have gone wrong ;—setting up their own self-will, their own authority, even their own instruments of oppression,—hardening beliefs into dogmas, and dogmas into terms of communion, and terms of communion into conditions of being allowed to live, until prisons and scaffolds and fires became as much a part of the mechanism of the Church, as cathedrals and altars and pulpits ;—all hiding the Father, and verifying that pregnant saying of the Apostle, "Whosoever denieth the son, the same hath not the Father," which some, narrowing the sense and losing the spirit, have taken to mean,—He who fails to believe in Jesus cannot believe in God. But the deeper truth is that the ideas of Father and son are vitally related. If we know we have a heavenly Father we shall recognise in one another His children : and if we see that we are brothers and sisters we shall see and tread the shining way that leads to the Father.

Here, then, I am persuaded, we have the deepest message for our day. The work of reformation is far from finished. It never will be finished till we accomplish the ideal of Jesus, whose last recorded words were practically, "I go unto my Father and your Father." If we could only grasp that, believe that, act up to that, all would soon be well, both in the Church and the world ; for, in this knowledge of the Father, and in the recognition and acceptance of the tremendous inference, that we are all brethren, we may find the cure for all our tyrannies, selfishnesses, defrauds, and hatreds.

Looking carefully along the lines of march to-day, we may be very hopeful that the blessed work is going on. In all the churches, a divine unrest is undermining the old inherited barbarities, the old inherited ceremonials, the old inherited creeds, the old inherited barriers between man and his Maker. The old theory of the fall of man is disappearing because faith in the heavenly Father no longer allows us to believe in the curse which it implies. The old theory of the Atonement, or the salvation of man from that curse by the suffering of its penalty by an innocent victim, is disappearing because faith in the heavenly Father cannot admit the possibility of the injustice involved in such a "plan of salvation." The shocking old atrocity of an eternal hell, prepared and maintained by God for the reception and torture of His failures, is disappearing because faith in the heavenly Father is becoming deep enough and urgent enough to put out any and every fire of cruelty or wrath. The old belief in the exceptional inspiration of the Bible is disappearing, in favour of belief in an inspiration by God which never ceases, because faith in the heavenly Father breaks down every barrier, opens up every avenue, restores every mercy, denies every limitation, and makes the child and the Father for ever one.

There is, then, in relation to the religious, as in relation to the physical sphere, a law of development which never ceases its beneficent work. A Religion is as truly a growth or an unfolding as a new species of beetle or butterfly. Not only Christ, but all things, come naturally "in the fulness of time." There were reformers before the Reformation, just as there was an English language before Chaucer or Johnson's Dictionary : and, precisely in the same way, Christianity was made possible by Judaism, ay ! and by the religious experiments of Greece and Rome. So, it took a Catholic Church to make a Protestant, and a Jonathan Edwards to make a Channing, and a Channing to make a Theodore Parker. And the process is going on.

Christendom, by a perfectly natural process of evolution, has had its churches of every form and spirit and hue : churches intellectual and emotional, spectacular and fanatical, severe and ritualistic, ambitious and humble, imperious and self-surrendering, dogmatic and spiritual : and it is a simple fact that the reign of dogma, creed, and mere authority, is passing away. The various churches are blending or are losing vital energy. Creeds are felt to be burdensome, and are steadily being transformed. All around us it is keenly felt that the age is ready for something deeper and more spiritual. The grave defect of nearly all the Churches is, as we have seen, that they have testified too much to palpably perishing things—rites, creeds, priesthoods, artificial ways of salvation : and this is true to-day. The very names of the churches prove it. Thus, the Episcopal Church puts in the forefront an official, a bishop ; the Baptist takes his name from a ceremony ; the Wesleyan from a man ; the Independent, Congregationalist, or Presbyterian, from a mode of Church-government ; while the Unitarian elevates to the highest place an arithmetical reference to the Deity. It surely must be all imperfect or wrong.

The hour has come for an advance to the essential things—from the earthly to the heavenly, from letter to spirit, from man to God. That is specially true for Unitarians who are in constant danger from the tyranny of the letter and the evaporation of the spirit. Unitarians are really misrepresented by their name,—or ought to be. The best part of their testimony is not their arithmetic but their

religious rationality—and (if they only understood themselves and their mission) their fine discovery of the real meaning of the Fatherhood of God. Why should they put in the forefront a mere matter of arithmetic? What God is like, spiritually and morally, is a million times more important than what God is like in relation to arithmetical quantities. The unity of God is a profound truth, but it has little if any relation to spiritual religion. Indeed, it might be argued that unless we connect the notion of the unity of God with a wider doctrine—or, as I prefer to put it, with a deeper perception—of incarnation, or the manifestation of God in man, that notion might promote religious dryness and sterility: and it is arguable that we have evidence for this in the present condition of the Unitarian Church, which not only makes but little progress but also gives several indications of decay of faith in things unseen. For that Church, the one thing needful is spiritual insight and a vivid realisation of spiritual things. Of all the churches in Christendom, it needs to cry "Shew us the Father,"—not only as the one God, who is one and not three, but as the God of angels in the glorious unseen spheres, and the Father of our spirits who is not far from every one of us.

It was long pondering upon this that led me gradually on to the clear perception of the opening path: and that path I found in the revelation of "Our Father's Church" which appears to me to be a natural, necessary, and most beautiful new birth from the old. It says; Let us pass beyond the arithmetic of God, and go on to our spiritual affinity with Him: let us see Him manifested in millions of Jesus Christs: let us admit that, in a new spiritual sense, there are myriads of persons in one God: let us believe in the inspiration of angels as well as in the grip of Theology, and in the unseen as well as the seen: let us shake ourselves free from the conventional conservatisms of sectarians, and be simply human beings, touched with love to God and love to man: let us willingly admit that we have changed our ground, or developed on the side of spiritual insight and understanding: and, above all, let us challenge Christendom—or, if not Christendom, then all harassed, tired, and lonely souls, to come to the Father. It is "Our Father" that we want—and therefore "Our Father's Church." The testimony has been made, and, already, the response admits of no doubts or fears. It has been demonstrated that there is virtue in the very name—that, by itself, it is a programme, a Gospel, and a hope. It disarms opposition, and suggests an infinite hope. It is a divine Ideal, and only good can come of it. It is not "one more sect"; it points away from all sectarianism, to that which may be far ahead, but which is the final goal. To bear witness to that is something worth living for, and blessed are they who are called to it. It may not become one of the great organisations of Christendom, but it is and it will be to all Christendom a beacon light, and perhaps its truest work will be that of John the Baptist once again, in bearing witness to "the Christ that is to be,"—this time, not a man, but Humanity, "clothed and in its right mind," at the feet of the world-redeeming King.

ANCIENT AND MODERN IDEAS OF MIRACLE.

THERE are wonderful contrasts in the ideas of men in ancient and in modern times in relation to God and Nature. The ancients knew little of Nature compared with the knowledge men have in modern times. The consequences were that miraculous agencies formed a large part of ancient religions. As Sir John Bowring says: "Miracles have always been claimed in half informed ages by those who professed to have messages to deliver from heaven." It is the same now with races who are on the same mental level. Sir John goes on to say, "I once saw a companion smitten with dumbness, and his speech restored after some time by a green-turbaned magician, a supposed descendant of Mahomet, and in the supposed miracle I am quite sure there was no collusion between the parties. I collected evidence in the East of the display of the necromantic art which would appear incredible to European intelligence. But let a believing, weak, timid, and ignorant man be delivered over to one whom he fancies to be possessed of supernatural power, and the prostration will exhibit itself in forms marvellous and seemingly miraculous." The Romish Church, even in Europe, and in our own day, appeals to miracles as her credentials. Even so enlightened a mind as the late Cardinal Newman declared that the Church could intervene in Nature's course and suspend its laws. Edmund Burke used to say that "superstition is the religion of the feeble." But feeble though it be, yet Nature, which is the time-side of God, the finite manifestation of His power and skill, is outraged and defied by it.

Still, it may be that the ancients were not so literally credulous as on the surface they appear to have been. Bacon observes that "in the past ages all things abounded with fables, parables, similes, comparisons, and allusions, which were not intended to conceal but to inform and teach, while the minds of men continued rude and unpractical in matters of subtlety and speculation; and even impatient, and in a manner incapable of receiving such things as did not fall under and directly strike the senses." There is truth in these words. We do not apply the term false to fable or parable, although they may not exactly correspond to outward facts; they are intended to represent principles, not to record facts. They are not history but ideas. But it has more than once happened that the literalising tendencies of the modern European mind have given the ancients the appearance of believing in miracle when they did not do so. Still, with their small knowledge of nature, much that they saw and felt made an impression upon them different from what would be made upon men in our day by the like occurrences. Where they saw diversity we see unity; where we note a change of conditions they saw the direct interposition of those intelligences by whom all Nature's wonders were wrought.

Some years ago a gardener on the coast of Jersey found that some of his strawberry plants bore fruit of a larger size and a finer flavour than the rest. In ancient times this would have been set down to the direct agency of supernatural powers. The gardener was an intelligent man and had modern ideas of the way in which God worked through Nature, and he set to work in order to find out by what means the

improvement had been brought about. He made several experiments without avail, but at last it came out that the children of his assistant had deposited bunches of seaweed on the spot where the superior strawberries had grown. From that time he had all his strawberry plants manured with seaweed, with gain to himself and the gratification of his customers. This particular man, believing that Nature is a realm of order, added to the world's wealth. If he had been a believer in miracle he would have sung a votage offering to his patron saint in some Romish church, and there would have been an end of it.

In ancient times every element was held to be inhabited or attended by its own special spirit. There was a sylvan deity to preside over all botanical growth, and every tree and shrub had its special spirit as well. Each stream, lake, and sea had its own special spirit, while a deity lorded it over the whole. Each nation had its own individual god, and each tribe and clan its own deity. The consequence of this was to confuse the thinkings of men. A conflict of wills seemed to pervade the universe, and things that would have been utterly incredible in our day were accepted as a matter of course. If there was an effort of the mind at all in the way of questioning, it was to ascertain whether the results had been brought about by an evil rather than by a good power.

At the time the New Testament was written, men believed in miracles as a matter of course, and fell back upon them to account for events, without the slightest hesitation. The miracles therein recorded are minor marvels compared with many universally believed. So far as they refer to the cure of persons afflicted with nervous diseases, they may be accepted as having solid facts at their roots. The strong personality of Jesus, his life of supreme goodness, will account for much with regard to them; but the cures wrought by Paul's handkerchief or Peter's shadow belong to another order of things. Men then believed in miracles because they had no better means of accounting for occurrences which at once astonished, awed, and lifted them above themselves.

In modern times, the idea of Nature is one of essential unity, and the consequent harmony of all its parts. One God pervades the universe and breathes His life throughout it. So are we in the constant presence of God, and witnessing His never-pausing work, while the ancients caught only occasional glimpses of the spiritual through what they deemed to be miracle. In place of the divided energies of Nature we see it under the guidance of one all-perfect Will, acting harmoniously, while it gradually grows towards perfection. God is a God of order—there is no shade of change in Him. The more perfect is a moral will, the more steadfast it is, and so the more reliable and the less given to change; while an absolutely perfect will changes not at all. It even adheres to a given course, and where there is sufficient intelligence to trace its workings they will be found to be calculable. Thus we find that the only miracle possible under a perfect Providence is Sin. The only departure from the will of God possible is in the moral world, where freewill acts. And even there the range is but small, for, in the restraints imposed, so many checks are received, so many obstacles are providentially placed in the way, that long continuance in the same course leads to utter disablement. This is firmly established—a fact that can no more be doubted than that contradictory statements can be

true at the same time, or that falsehood and cruelty are morally wrong. But may there not be exceptional cases in Nature? Certainly, at least what seem to be so, and men in the past have been misled by them. But they turn out to be no exceptions when thoroughly examined, but illustrations, rather, of the various results brought about by the same laws under different conditions. The very same pull of matter which holds up one building straight and strong because there is sound, honest work in it, and its walls are in the plumb-line, will crumble another into ruins, inasmuch as it is dishonest work—badly built, and out of harmony with the mathematical laws of the universe. The physical laws are all on the side of morality, and they cannot be defied with impunity. We know that much which the ancients thought to be miraculous is in strict accordance with Nature's order. That order is but the expression of the changeless will of God. The laws of physiology and chemistry are so clear to the minds of men now that few can conceive the possibility of their reversal. Hence the instantaneous cure of a long-standing physical disease, or the raising of a dead body to life and sweet health after decomposition had set in, are counted impossible now even by those who believe that such events happened long centuries ago, when men's resources were much less than they are now. The light of science has led men to look on Nature and Life with other eyes than those of their fathers'. The pious man, knowing that the will of God is perfect, knows that for it to change would be to give up the higher for the lower; and is more than content to accept His providence on His terms without insisting on extra natural proof of it. In this way he shows his deeper trust, his loftier faith, his more healthy piety. More and more men rely on the infallibility of Nature's order as to what is possible as physical fact, for is it not the expression of the will of God Himself? More and more do they rely on the inner life of man for the moral, the spiritual facts that are His revelation of the realm of love, righteousness, and truth,—the ever-abiding world, which is the source of all phenomenal being. Human testimony is liable to mistake, and, when the occasion passes, to doubt and debate, but these are ever present for re-reading and constant correction of mistakes that may have been made; and unconsciously many bear testimony to this who make the strongest assertions as to their belief in the miracle-stories of the Old and New Testaments, accepting them as history rather than as teaching parables; or as revelations as to what men in the past thought; for when they deal with similar relations in the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, or Mormon scriptures, they reject them with unwise contempt, even though the testimony be as strong in the one case as the other.

If we consider, we may perhaps find a reason why men in ancient times readily believed in miracle, while it is hard, if not impossible, for enlightened men to believe in it now. The ancient Eastern mind reasoned more through its imagination. Hence its language was poetic, picturesque, adjectival and tropical. A small number of men were spoken of as more numerous than the sands on the sea shore, or in multitude like the hosts of heaven. In the modern mind the imagination is more subject to the understanding. Hence ancient literature with its parables and tropes is apt to be turned by it into history. Poetry is resolved into prose, and parables into records of events; the meaning, the intention,—the teaching of principles and conveying of ideas—of the writers are thwarted by the medium they have to pass

through. But, however it be, the great principles of religion remain, whether miracles ever took place or not. God is God, and He is Love : filial affection for Him in the human heart ; trust in Him and the spirit of obedience to all the known laws of body and of mind ; faith in the immortality of the soul ; good will to men, disinterested service for them ; justice, gentleness and truth ; worship and aspiration after perfection ; repentance for sin and endeavour after purity of life—these and many other virtues, and the examples of the glorious hosts of the pious ones of the past ; and more than all, the direct and immediate communion of the individual spirit with the Father of all, remain and abide whatever of ancient thought we discard or retain. They are the permanent essentials, all else but the accidents of a period, the conditions of a given locality.

W.M.

WHAT DOES THE SUFFRAGE MEAN ?

BY O. ESLIE-NELHAM.

IT is occasionally asserted—by those out of touch with the spirit of the times—that public opinion is against woman's suffrage. Having heard that assertion, it occurs to the thinker to inquire : What is public opinion ? It may, in the first place, be asserted that public opinion is an unknown quantity ; because, throughout the centuries that are gone, public opinion has never been heard. The world has listened to man's opinion, it has heard the one-sided views of the one half of its inhabitants, but it has never heard public opinion. Women, brought up in ignorance, have never been allowed to express their ideas ; they have been instructed that it was an intolerable and unwomanly proceeding to think for themselves, and with piteous patience they have suited their hearts to endurance, and have echoed man's opinion on most matters.

Of late, the feminine portion of humanity have taken the law into their own hands ; they have begun to think, they have begun to speak, and have bravely uttered words that are not only the echo of the prejudiced, selfish and one-sided notions that stood for popular opinion in the past. If we listen attentively now we can hear the first wavering accents of public opinion, and when we investigate their meaning we see that the primary utterance of public opinion is a cry for justice. Public opinion accounts it a scandal that any rights should have to be agitated for at the end of the nineteenth century ; public opinion says that mere force has ruled the earth too long, and that it is time that a nobler sovereignty shall arise, that justice shall be the supreme power in every land, and that justice which has no knowledge of sex. Noble-minded women have come staunchly forward of late : it is for the more common-place ones now to echo the ideas of the valiant feminine vanguard.

Masculine supremacy has had its day, masculine supremacy has degraded womanhood. Let every woman clearly realize that ; let her recognize her true friends ; let her espouse their advanced views ; let her echo them and ponder them gratefully in her own heart, and turn in noble indignation from the ignoble notions of the

masterful ruck of men. All great-souled, fair-minded persons, masculine or feminine, desire her true weal, are opposed to oppression and autocracy, and champion the cause of the weak. Let not the weak prove unworthy of such championship ; let them not, by narrow obstinacy, cause their zealous knights to lose heart, and to think "that slavery is fit for those who seemingly desire to be slaves still."

The weak have tried to attain to man's poor standard—misnamed "womanliness"—and, through the very conscientiousness of their desire to be good women, they have become false to their higher selves. They have taken man's self-interested teaching so effectually to heart that they think they dishonour themselves when they aspire to be something beyond a useful convenience to some special man. They have allowed themselves to be fashioned into "womanly" puppets, they who might have been such grand and lofty beings. They have allowed the world to be defrauded of feminine wisdom—a good and ennobling power. Owing to their slavish subservience, the world has lost something which it will require long centuries to regain. They have become so slavish that they think it right to take no interest in the affairs of the nation of which they form part, and if they were asked to-morrow whether they want a vote they would probably answer in the negative, adding that politics had no interest for them. When people affirm that they take no interest in politics, it strikes one very forcibly that they do not realize what the term politics signifies. If they understood the matter they would see clearly that it is not only the privilege of the few, but the lofty right and duty of every human being to take an interest in the national politics.

The term politics has been degraded so that we are now inclined to associate it with noise and strife and clamour, with noisy self-seeking and low personalities. Politics have been abused like many other things ; but, when we consider a term, we do not consider it in its corrupt sense, but we look at it in its pure and original form and try to understand its true significance. Politics is defined as "The science of government ; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a nation or state, for the preservation of its safety, peace, and prosperity ; comprehending the defence of its rights and independence against foreign control or conquest, the augmentation of its strength or resources, and the protection of its citizens in their rights with the preservation and improvement of their morals." Many great men have lately given it as their opinion that women, by taking part in politics, would be improved and refined. It is generally allowed that women cast a refining influence upon all undertakings with which they are associated : they may therefore feel that a great work lies before them ; that it may be possible for them to raise the meaning of politics to the noble significance given to that word before corruption set in. They have indeed already given proof that their champions' confidence is justified : "In the Isle of Man, women have had the vote for the last ten years, and the experiment has answered so well that the former governor of the island is now doing his utmost to introduce the reform in Australia. In the State of Wyoming also women have the vote, and statistics prove that the State is freer from crime, immorality, and drunkenness than any other in the Union."

Knowing that politics want them, that good men require and demand their help,

that serious public work lies ready to be taken up, will they shrink from a little personal inconvenience and responsibility? Instead of answering the call with happy, eager zest, will they meanly echo the fallacies of mean autocrats and say foolishly that politics do not come within a woman's sphere? If they act in such wise, now that brave strong hands of help are held out, now that opportunity is given them of proving what metal they are made of, they will, by their moral cowardice, seem to justify the fictitious stigma of inferiority that has been put upon them. No man can lay the bounds to a woman's sphere, because that sphere is limitless—as his own is; and, although short-sighted males in the past have drawn imaginary limits about that which was illimitable, the masculine thinkers of these times are more far-seeing; they say that talents shall not be wasted by being forced into wrong grooves, that the world shall not be defrauded of capacity when it happens to reside in feminine brains, and they assert that incapacity is the sole thing that can set limits to the individual's sphere.

Women have been made, by those who have degraded them, such incomplete women, such helpless, feeble beings, that those generous men who interest themselves in procuring the suffrage for their sisters will do better to take no account of the utterances of the bulk of femininity in this matter. They have been defrauded of their rights of citizenship, and are poor and unworthy citizens in consequence. Their present ideas are of little account. They do not desire the suffrage simply because they do not understand what the suffrage means; they require instruction, and those who are anxious to help must judge of them by the thoughtful units who have been enabled to free their thoughts from the cruel autocracy of sentiment that has ruled over feminine interests in place of reason. Those broad-minded units understand the dignity and power of true womanhood, and realize what is its due. The words of those worthy citizens, who are still defrauded of a citizens right, may well be quoted to the unthinking who have no regard for their own dignity. These latter have a horror of intruding themselves anywhere: they shrink from publicity of whatever kind, and they feel that it does not much matter whether they give practical preference to one candidate or another of those who are to take part in making England's laws. They only feel such and such things. This, however, is a matter wherewith feeling has nothing to do; it is not a personal matter at all, but one of the widest interest, affecting not only the feminine portion of humanity, but the entire human race. As has been said: "It may seem to matter very little to a woman personally whether she has a vote or not, but it matters very much to all women as a class if they are to be considered outside the law, with no real influence on the government of the nation of which they form a part; and, whether we individually possess the legal qualification for voting or not, we are all sufferers from the unconscious degradation to which the treatment of some women subjects all others—the fact of being of a class which may lawfully be called on to fulfil burdens without enjoying their attendant privileges." It may seem a small matter to the individual that she has no vote, but the most dense and selfish feminine unit must be able to appreciate the insult offered to her sex when it is pointed out to her that the want of the suffrage brackets women—in public esteem—with convicts, lunatics, and idiots as the only adult creatures incapable of helping to right wrongs: of taking an intelligent interest in the laws that powerfully affect them.

Lady Henry Somerset, and others in her position, cultured philanthropic gentle-women with a comprehensive understanding of things that qualifies them to act and speak for the public good, are placed on a par with convicts and idiots, and deprived of the vote which the meanest and most selfish male ignoramus on their estate has, simply because he possesses more brute strength than they do. The differences of sex have resolved themselves merely into that—a difference of physical force ; the oft-referred-to mental superiority of the unfair sex having shewn itself to be a hollow vaunt now that the fair are, by unanimous acclaim, allowed to be mentally equal to their brothers.

Many human beings are egotistical, but it is ignorance rather than egotism, ignorance rather than lack of public spirit, that prompts the average woman to be indifferent regarding the suffrage. Let her try and realise that the right of duly qualified feminine persons to vote reflects upon the well-being of women at large ; that it raises their status, makes their opinions of value, their predilections worthy of attention, their anger and indignation things to be feared, their favour of importance,—that, in fact, the suffrage commands for them consideration, and confers upon them something that no other thing in all the world is capable of giving. Generosity and chivalry are good things ; but, as their very names imply, they are things given out of kindness to those requiring indulgence. Women have been put off with—so-called—generosity and chivalry too long ; they must no longer be satisfied with the system that subjects them to the caprice of masculine rulers, some of whom may give them amiable concessions which succeeding ones may wrest from them. Those who rely on generosity lay the foundations of their well-being on sand. Legal right is the rock to build on, the only reliable foundation. Women must co-operate and must unanimously insist upon having the birthright of which they have been defrauded—the birthright that shall free them from the indignity of accepting concessions, the birthright that shall make their life full and wide and helpful, that shall enable them to give practical protection to their humbler sisters who stand so urgently in need of sisterly guardianship.

Right to take part in the councils of the nation—in the person of the representative whom they have themselves seen fit to elect—is, as has been fitly said, their indisputable right, not because they may happen to have such and such virtues, but simply because they are human beings. Enfranchisement is the due of every self-supporting, house-holding, tax-paying citizen, whether feminine or masculine. Women can no longer afford to trust to generosity and chivalry ; because, although individual legislators are chivalrous and generous, humanity at large is neither generous nor chivalrous. Humanity at large is above all things self-interested ; and is, usually, unable to look at things from an impersonal point of view.

Those persons therefore who know what human nature is are aware that justice will never be given to any class who rely on generosity only, who have no legal right to enforce their claims. Legislators are stained with self-interest, as their constituents are, and when there is question of attending to the exactions of those whose disapproval can unseat them, or of attending to the necessities of some absent, unrepresented, unimportant persons whose dissatisfaction has no practical results, they naturally consider the demands of the former, and leave an investiga-

tion into the wrongs of the latter to some more convenient opportunity, to some opportunity, in fact, that never arises, because, as matters stand, the represented have always wrongs demanding attention. Every class of the community to have fair dealing given them must be represented. At present there is no one whose duty it is to see to feminine interests, and feminine interests are consequently invariably overlooked, as instanced in this very matter of giving the suffrage. When the subject is referred to, imperative representatives of other rights (dreading their constituents' wrath) insist upon being heard, and easily silence the claims of those for whom no one is actually responsible.

(To be concluded next month.)

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

ANOTHER sign of the times. Professor Ryle is teaching at the very fountain-head. He repeats many of the old phrases, and in the old tone ; but he is one more proof that the old assertions concerning the Bible are doomed. He builds his book on the apparently harmless but really revolutionary doctrine that the authority of the Bible does not depend upon the manner of its coming into existence. He says :—

“ After all, whether a book has had a simple or a complex history, whether or no the analysis of its structure reveals the existence of successive compilation, adaptation and revision, are only secondary questions, of great literary interest indeed, but yet of subordinate importance, if they do not affect the relation of Scripture to the Church. They are literary problems. They need not necessarily invite the interest of the Christian student.”

Professor Ryle has a kind of mild and serene contempt for what he calls the “ popular assumption.” He says :—

“ Popular assumption pictures to itself the whole Canon of the Old Testament as an unbroken succession of sacred writing ; as a continuous stream, fed, in each generation, by tributaries from the most holy men, from Moses and Joshua down to Ezra and Malachi ; as a mighty deposit, to which each age, by the hand of its holiest representative, has contributed an additional layer, until, in the days of Ezra and Malachi, the whole orderly work was brought to a conclusion. For the purpose of a true conception of the history of the Canon, such unsupported assumptions, it is needless to say, are alike inadequate and misleading. We need not waste time with their refutation. They are contradicted by what we know both of the history of the people and of the analysis of the individual books.”

He proceeds to shew that the Old Testament came into existence in a very different way. In what way, the following extracts will indicate.

“ Let us in all reverence endeavour to bear in mind throughout this discussion that, in the formation and transmission of the Old Testament Canon, as in that of the New, we must expect to find the continual operation of the same natural laws, through which the Divine purpose is unceasingly being fulfilled on earth.”

“ For the most part the compilation of a Hebrew narrative was a complex and artistic process. Previously written accounts were condensed or expanded, revised or re-written before they could be inserted in the new history.”

* “The Canon of the Old Testament,” by H. E. Ryle, B.D., Hulsean Professor of Divinity, &c., Cambridge
London : Macmillan and Co.

'The habit of preserving ancient portions of the law in a place of sanctity was not identical with investing them with Canonical authority. Let us take the case of the Decalogue. It is open to question, whether even this sacred nucleus of the law was, in all times, regarded by the people of Israel as authoritative. If it was, it is strange that its authority should not have been more generally recognised, that appeals to its prohibition of idolatry should not have been made by kings and prophets who were bent upon the purification of religion. Certainly, if its position had been that which later usage learned to ascribe to it, it is quite unaccountable that so little allusion is made to its claims.'

"The characteristic feature of the Deuteronomic 'book of the law' is its homiletic setting. Its oratorical style, so smooth, so copious and redundant, and yet so impassioned, distinguishes its literary form from that of any formal official code. It forbids us to assign Deuteronomic literature to any early date. It marks at once the age from which its composition springs. It conveys no less clearly the purpose of popular exhortation, with which some ardent prophet moulded into its present shape a collection of his people's laws."

"The Book of Ezekiel shows with what freedom a prophet could handle the priestly tradition. It shows that he could not have regarded it as a fixed code admitting of no substantial alteration. Changes so complete as those which he contemplates in his Vision would bring with them changes in worship, and he has no compunction in propounding them."

"From the composite character of the historical books we may infer the existence of abundant narrative material at the period when their compilation took place."

"The writings of Zechariah (i-viii) received an extensive addition (ix-xiv) of uncertain date and unknown authorship from the hands of a compiler. This must have been effected when the recollection of what were and what were not Zechariah's writings had become indistinct; probably, therefore, later than the fifth century B.C."

"The author of Koheleth (Ecclesiastes), writing probably in the third century B.C., sighs over the number of books and the weariness of the flesh resulting from their study (Eccles. xii, 12). The great historical narrative of the Chronicler, comprising our Books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, had probably been completed in the early part of the same century (cf. Neh. xii, 11, 22). Perhaps from the same period had come the Book of Esther. The Books of Job and Proverbs had long been well known to Jewish readers, and the influence of the Book of Proverbs, in particular, has left its mark upon the Wisdom of Sirach. Large portions of the Psalter were doubtless well known, especially through the Temple services. The Book of Lamentations was commonly supposed to record the elegy of Jeremiah over the destruction of Jerusalem. In the Song of Songs had come down one of the most perfect specimens of early Hebrew poetry; and in the Book of Ruth a charming idyll of early prose narrative. These writings, which are so well known to us, were probably only samples, though doubtless the choicest ones, of an abundant literature to which every Jew at the end of the third century B.C. had access."

"The Psalter is the most important book of the 'Kethubim,' at the head of which it stands in our Hebrew Bibles. We have little doubt that the Psalter was the first book in the third group to obtain admission to the rank of Scripture. The Psalter has hitherto been used as the service book of the Temple singers. Henceforward it was to become the hymn book of Israel."

"Evidence to show that the Psalter had been finally compiled, or was treated as authoritative Scripture, is lacking before the Maccabean era."

"The Pentateuch was probably the only certainly recognised Canon at the middle of the third cent. B.C."

"We take the year 100 A.D. as representing as nearly as possible, the *terminus a quo* in the gradual formation of the Canon. It marks, however, only the official conclusion. Practically, we may be sure, its bounds had long before been decided by popular use."

Any intelligent reader, with these extracts before him, will be able to see several straws, and something heavier than straws, on the stream, and will be in no doubt as to whither the current is leading.

Professor Ryle's book is painstaking, judicial, scholarly, and very informing ; and all that is necessary, in reading it, is to allow the usual traditional discount off the usual traditional surrender to old phrases and an old theory. But it would save a good deal of confusion and trouble if the new men would mark their goods in plain figures. What the men of the new orthodoxy really mean is this—that the spirit of God is everywhere active and forceful—that it is the fruitful source of every germ of life, of every progressive impulse—and that He is, therefore, everywhere revealed : but then, in discussing the Bible, they use words and phrases which, not long ago, meant that the spirit of God was abnormally and exceptionally active and forceful in the giving of the Bible to the human race, so that it alone is His revelation. This is confusing, and we entreat them not to confuse us, but to be perfectly simple and frank over this business, and to tell the world plainly that the Bible, with its glory and shame, is a divine book just in the same way that the human body, or mind, or conscience, is a divine creation, or in the same way that ancient and modern civilisations and sciences have been and are divine.

THOUGHTS BY THE WAY.

A KEEN friend writes, concerning *The Coming Day*, "This is indeed something better than the old dry Unitarianism which has repelled so many people. Spiritism separates us, I fear. But I have no ill-will towards Spiritist ideas. Dear friends of mine have been that way disposed. I have taken in Spiritist papers for many years, but am farther than ever from accepting their doctrines. Again, your politics—as I suppose—form a barrier. Politics and education are, to me, branches of religion, which is either all or nothing. Secular education is to me a deadly error. As to handing over my poor country (Ireland) to the Roman priests, I hope that if I have strength to carry a rifle, I shall be found among those who intend to resist to the last extremity. Again, Pantheism and Theism are two different things, though they have much in common. It is useless to ignore these differences, but they ought not to prevent our uniting, as far as may be, to oppose the common foe, Orthodoxy."

We take note of this because it puts briefly and bluntly what many think or say : but the writer is hardly emancipated yet. What he calls "Spiritism" has nothing to do with "doctrines." We only want facts ; we do not want to pick and choose. We broke away from "orthodoxy" only because it asserted and did not prove—because, in fact, it was not rational : and if we are inclined to believe in so-called "Spiritism" we are so only in so far as it is

rational—and proves. We have only one policy and one programme ;—Prove all things and hold fast that which is proved.

As for "secular education," how can that be "deadly error" ? We might as well say that breakfast is deadly error because dinner is also necessary, as that secular education is deadly error because religious education is also necessary. Let us have both, but each one in its place. And yet, after all, what is "religious education," in the deepest sense ? We can see the possibility of making so-called "secular education" deeply religious. Is it not a religious thing to lead a child out of animal darkness into the intellect's marvellous light ?

The reference to priests and rifles certainly gives food for thought. We have always held that the shortest cut to checkmating of priests is the enfranchisement of peoples. Home-rule is not only *not* Rome-rule, but it is the opposite of Home-rule. Already we see that in the very struggle for Home-rule. Already, some of the keenest Catholics have sharply told Rome to mind its own business. A self-governing people is the best barrier against the tyranny of priests. Our friend should save the expense of a rifle, and, instead of it, subscribe for a year or so to *The Freeman*. Anyhow, there will be no fighting in Ireland when Home-rule is at work. Even Belfast will wipe its mouth, and quietly say grace when it has swallowed a Home-rule Bill.

The brief reference to Pantheism has much behind it. We are of opinion that Pantheism, in a somewhat new form—Pantheism illumined and vivified by Spiritualism—is about to play a very important part in the coming day. Much of the restlessness of the present time is

the result of old human conceptions of God. The word "personality" will have to be revised, in relation to God; and that revision will be the spiritual centre of a religious revolution.

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

MIRACLES. "W.M." in his paper on Miracles, is, of course, thoughtful and, probably, to a considerable extent, accurate: but the old standing belief in so-called "Miracle" remains unaccounted for. This is essentially a mechanical, a scientific, and therefore a materialistic age, and the effect of that may be seen, not only in our superiority to superstition, but in the actual temporary closing of avenues that made "signs and wonders" possible. In the coming days, we may have a fresh liberation of human spirit-forces, and we shall then, perhaps, not only work what are called "miracles" but understand them. We shall certainly get rid of nonsensical talk about "the supernatural." All is natural;—the working of God behind the veil as well as the working of man before it.

OUR FATHER'S CHURCH—Mr. R. F. Horton, M.A., with as much depth as delightfulness, says in "The Lyndhurst Road Pulpit," "To call God 'Father' is the sum of all Religion, because it puts man in his right relation to God, and Religion is the right relation between man and God;" and "when we say 'Our Father,' we have the secret to all moral conduct—we find a key to our relation with one another, which constitutes ethics or morality."

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.—A thoughtful correspondent, referring to our explanation of the resurrection of Jesus, asks what became of the body if, as we said, his body did not "rise again," and if what happened was that Jesus was able to manifest himself, as a purely spiritual being, to his disciples. We did not omit that difficulty, but frankly said, "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." We might invent half-a-dozen theories, but what would they avail? Anyhow the story is not a harmony: all we can do is to make the best of it on the whole,

and let details go. For all we know, the Jews were accidentally right when they bribed the keepers of the sepulchre to say that some one had stolen the body, but wrong when they said the disciples did it. But, in either case, it matters little. Our explanation stands.

FOR SELF AND CO. The Bishop of Durham is so very sensible a man that he must have laughed a little at the uncouth newspapers whose praise of him, as a meditator in the late coal strike, was certainly overdone. The scoffers have made great fun of it all. A certain "Sunday Chronicle," for instance, says, "It is so soothing and consoling to read in the leader columns of your smug London daily: 'When a Bishop steps in to offer his mediatory offices in, or to put an end to, a devastating labour warfare, even the worst foes of the Establishment may acknowledge that, viewed in this light, the Church of England is worth preserving.' We think not. We think that viewed in this light, the Church of England is simply a thief, like the rest of the Royalty mongers of England, and ought to be compelled to make restitution accordingly." The point of this is that the Bishopric of Durham is to a large extent financed by mining royalties. So this scoffer says, "The Durham coal-miners' strike is over, thanks to the philanthropic intervention of the Bishop of the diocese, whose mercy endureth for ever. The men have agreed to go to work at a reduction of 10 per cent. from their previous wages, but the Bishop's income of £240 a week is safe." "There is to be no reduction in the royalty on coal in Durham, and the Bishop takes most of his £7,000 a year from royalty on coal. Why do the heathen rage so furiously together?" But, apart from this sinister interpretation of the Bishop's intervention, it is highly probable that the masters were very glad of a decent excuse for making their modest surrender. The poor colliers will get hit to the extent of 10 per cent. instead of 13 $\frac{1}{2}$. They have not much to thank the Bishop for, anyhow.

IRISH DISSENSIONS AND ULSTER.—It is said that the dissensions in the Irish Nationalist camp will do great harm at the coming General Election. They may, but we fail to see why they should. The so-called "dissensions" disprove the favourite theory of the anti-Homeroopers, that the Nationalists are simply a gang of hypocritical plunderers. They have been acting very much like ordinary English politicians and partisans, and have supplied excellent evidence that in a Home-rule Parliament there will be the usual healthy differences of opinion. The half silly and half wicked talk about Ulster is really very pitiable. We, in England, have had our violent religious and other divisions, bitter and deadly enough, and

we have overcome them by being forced into united action for the general good. In so far as Ulster separatism is genuine, it gives us the best of all reasons for insisting that Ulster shall not be treated separately, because its separatist tendencies show that it needs teaching and experience in the larger sphere of nation-making. As for separatists like Mr. Chamberlain, who talk like old-fashioned bigots, and encourage Ulster to fight for sectarian isolation, we can only say, "Father, forgive them": we wish we could add, "for they know not what they do": we say with grief that we believe they *do* know what they do, and that they know they are poisoning the wells.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

"The Bible and its Theology as Popularly Taught: a Review, Comparison, and Re-Statement," &c.; by G. Vance Smith, B.A., Philos. and Theol. Doct. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. The writer of this book is a well-known and trusty guide along the crumbling and craggy road of Biblical analysis and criticism; and there is probably no man in England who could be more safely accepted as a student and critic, at once sound in scholarship, impartial in temper, and serenely free in spirit. Although the present work is partially a reproduction of a very useful book published in 1871, it is virtually a new work, fully abreast of the new men and their new ideas. Dr. Vance Smith, with forceful calmness, tells the story of Bible manipulation up to date, and puts Dr. Lindon, Mr. Gore, Lord Hatherley and some other apologists into very queer corners, a process which has its melancholy as well as its instructive side, and yet is often as amusing as it is melancholy. Indeed, if it were not for the unmixed gravity of the subject and the mixed gravity of the performers, the performances of the "orthodox" would just now be excessively entertaining. But Dr. Smith does not spend all his time and space over the play and the players: he is mainly concerned with the subject-matter on which the whole turns, and we can only say that those who want to know most of the latest results of our Biblical voyages of discovery, or who wish to be posted up on the most modern view of the "vital" doctrines supposed to be

taught by the Bible, could not do better than read this clear-headed book.

"A Christening gift." By Julia S. Visher. Chicago (U.S.): Searle & Gorton. A delightful and dainty little book in pure white and gold, containing over twenty delicious touches of poetry about babies and little people generally, with a page for some particular baby's name. The tiny volume would do the parents good, and then it might be saved up till baby could read; then, in fifty years, how interesting it would be! We fancy it could be ordered for about sixpence from any good bookseller who could get it from the agents in London.

"Hymns and choral songs." London: Sunday School Association, Essex Street, Strand. A useful collection of 190 sensible and pretty hymns, for the nominal price of 3d., in cloth. We believe there is a cheap tune book to match.

"The oracles of Christ." By Alfred Hood. London: Essex Hall. Four wholesome sermons on the practical teachings of Christ, minus dogma and disputed topics. A thoughtful little Introduction usefully discriminates between "The Oracles" and the Gospels as we have them. The Book, though good, in a mild way, for grown women and men, might be very profitably used in a senior class. It would supply matter, for reading and comment, for eight meetings.