

THE FINGER OF GOD.

"He's been quite merry all the morning, doctor. Do you not think he seems much better to-day?"

But the words were spoken with a tremor of voice, and accompanied by a deprecating look, that contradicted the hopefulness implied in them, and the kind-hearted medical man could but gently parry the question, and reply as cheerily as the truthfulness of his nature would allow him. Yet it was not that he doubted of the bodily condition of his patient; this, although not unusually robust, was still sufficiently firm to promise the endurance of an ordinary life-time, and probably the supposed invalid would survive for years the delicate nurse who watched him with an untold tenderness. It was that the doctor's skilful eye detected that what had been mistaken for infirmity of body was, in fact, disease of the mind, and that the boy, to whom his mother clung so passionately, was a confirmed idiot.

And this was to be the end of her life's story. She, in whose couch of strewn roses it had once appeared as if no shrivelled petal would ever be found, whose beauty and refinement had been surrounded by every luxury of admiration and friendship, now widowed and still in her youth,—she must pass her days alone, the companion of one so afflicted that none but herself could bear to keep him company, and for whose sake she would find herself deserted of all.

But, oh! the depth of that Father's love, which has made provision for such as was this mother, and planted in the hearts of His rational creatures the germ of a pity so divine that it throws a halo round the utmost deformity and finds therein loveliness only. It is true, as the *Erdgeist* says, that God may be seen in His "garment" of creation, and they who look upon the universe with such intent will find in it a wondrous beauty and a sublime meaning, but nowhere may we discover Him more evident, more adorable, more clearly our Father, than in this capability of miraculous love with which He has endowed our being; this provision He has made that the hearts of the parents shall be knit to such of their children as most need their care, to such as are at once their reproach, their hindrance, and—by His mercy—their delight. Here is God's finger manifest, and they who feel it at work within them may know themselves cherished of Heaven.

And this wondrous germ probably exists in most of those who are human; oftenest lying there a latent force, as light and heat that come to earth from the sun lie concealed age after age, until accident calls them into activity, that they may become the sources of comfort in places that otherwise were dark and cheerless.

FIDES.

A TRUE CORNISH MAN AND HIS WIFE.

Among the many distinguished members of the Anglican Clerical body who have of late years joined the Church, few are more worthy of notice than the late Mr. Hawker, Vicar of Morwanstow, in Cornwall. He was seventy years of age when he entered the Church. He was a poet of no mean order. His ballads on Sir Jonathan Trelawny, one of the seven Bishops imprisoned by James II, was at first published anonymously, and both Lord Macaulay and Sir Walter Scott supposed it to be an ancient one. They greatly admired it. He was also a contributor to many periodicals. He long clung to the High Church section of the Established Church. There was much to pain him in the conflicting teaching and denial of vital truths countenanced by English Bishops and Courts, which, says his biographer, Dr. Lee, "have shaken the faith of thousands; and sent hundreds of our most devoted, learned, and self-sacrificing clergy and thousands of our laity to the ranks of the Church of Rome." "There is scarcely," adds Dr. Lee, "a family in England among the aristocracy and gentry in which one or more converts are not to be found." A year before his death Mr. Hawker wrote the following curious letter to a friend:—"A traveller in Yorkshire in 1852 encountered on a moor a person who seemed to him to be a pedlar carrying a pack. They sat down on a rock and conversed. Said the stranger: 'In 50 years from this time the great mass of the English people will be divided into two armies, and their names will be Catholic and Infidel.' The traveller knew not who the stranger might be, nor did he touch him so far as to ascertain that he was really a man. Soon after—but how he could not tell—he had glided away." I read this book of travels and have often thought of it since." I wonder what the note writer in the *Otago Witness* would say to this "apparition." Mr. Hawker visited his brother, Mr. Claud Hawker, of Penally, Boscastle, and returning home by way of Plymouth, he was unable to proceed further and lay down to die in the old town that 70 years before had witnessed his birth. There he was received into the Catholic Church by Canon Mansfield. Twelve hours after he peacefully expired on the feast of the Assumption. He left a beloved wife, who some time before had entered the Church, and whose sole ambition, as she said, was that her three little girls might grow up good Catholics, and do what they could to "spread the faith in that tardy and desolate Cornish land, whose people were the last to abandon it, and under the inscrutable ruling of Divine Providence, seemed likely to be the last to return to it again."

LAIC.

THE Supreme Court Hotel, Stuart-street, Dunedin, is now open. Mr. C. O'Driscoll, the proprietor, has spared neither trouble nor expense in building and fitting up this establishment. It is admirably furnished and supplied with hot and cold baths; the rooms are spacious and convenient, and private accommodation has been provided for ladies and for families. The situation is central, and at a trifling distance from the railway station.

MESSRS. NIMMO & BLAIR have lately received a large supply of valuable clover seeds. They have also on hand farming implements of the newest and most improved construction.

THE ETERNITY OF HELL.

(Continued.)

With respect to the second point indicated in your letter, I do not agree with you that a punishment of limited duration would exercise on the minds of men, with regard to the regulation of their conduct, an equivalent impression of identical results. You hold that if it were accompanied with the circumstances of long duration or terrible torture, it would be sufficient to curb unruly passions, and impose a limit on wicked desires; and with this observation you think you upset the reason assigned by Catholics for the existence of hell, viz., that it is a safeguard of morality. But it appears to me you have not gone deeply enough into this subject, and you don't seem to remark that though it is true the idea of torment frightens and terrifies us when it has to be suffered in this life, it makes but a very slight impression if it is reserved for the other. I shall give you two proofs of this—one experimental, the other scientific.

The doctrine of purgatory involves a terrible idea; and books of devotion and preachers are constantly painting that place of expiation in frightful colours. The faithful believe it so; they hear it incessantly; they pray for their departed relatives and friends who may be detained in it; but, frankly, is the fear people have of purgatory very great? Would it of itself be a strong enough dyke to oppose the impetuosity of the passions? Let each one answer from his own experience, and let those who have had occasion to observe it answer for others. We are told the pains endured there are terrible—it is true; their duration may be very long—certainly; the soul shall not escape without paying the last farthing—undoubtedly; but those pains shall have an end; we are sure they cannot last for ever; and placed between the risk of long sufferings in the other life, and the necessity of bearing slight annoyances in the present, we prefer a thousand times to run the risk than to endure the annoyances.

Reason points out the causes of what every-day experience places before our eyes; and to know them, a very slight consideration of human nature is sufficient. While we live on this earth our soul is united to our body, which unceasingly transmits the impressions it receives from everything around it. It is true our soul possesses some faculties, which, elevated by nature above things corporeal and sensible, are directed by other principles; are employed on more lofty objects, and inhabit, if we may say so, a region which of itself has no connection with anything of a material or earthly nature. Without ignoring the dignity of these faculties, or the sublimity of the region in which they dwell, we must confess, such is the influence exercised on them by others of an inferior order, that they often compel them to descend from their elevation; and instead of obeying them as their mistresses, reduce them to a state of slavery. When things do not come to this extreme, at least it frequently happens that the superior faculties remain without performing their functions, as if they were sleeping, so that the intellect scarcely descends in obscure luxuriance the truths which form its principal and most noble object, and the will does not tend towards it except with great carelessness and sloth. There is a hell to fear, a heaven to hope for; but all this is in the other life and reserved for a distant period: they are things which belong to an entirely distinct order in a new world in which we firmly believe, but from which we derive no direct actual impressions; and hence we require to make an effort of concentration and reflection to impress on ourselves the immense interest they have for us, incomparably beyond everything that surrounds us. In the meantime some earthly object strikes our imagination or our senses; now, impressing us with some fear, now soothing us with some pleasure; the other world disappears from our sight; the intellect falls back into its sluggishness, the will into its languor; and if either is excited anew it is to contribute to the greater expansion of the other faculties.

Man is almost always guided by the impressions of the moment; and when he weighs in the scales of his judgment the advantages and inconveniences an action can produce for him, the distance or proximity of their realisation is one of the circumstances that influence his action most. And why should not this occur with regard to the affairs of the other life, when it happens with respect to those of the present? Is not the number of those who sacrifice riches, honour, health, and life itself, to a momentary pleasure infinite? And why is this? Because the object that seduces is present, and the evils distant; and man deludes himself with the hope of avoiding, or resigns himself to suffer them, like a person who casts himself down a precipice blindfolded.

From this we may infer it is not true, as you said, that the fear of a long punishment would be capable of producing an equal effect with the eternity of hell. It is not true; on the contrary, it may be asserted that from the moment the idea of eternity is separated from that of pain, it loses the greater part of its horror, and is reduced to the same class as that of purgatory. If the chastisements of the other life are to produce a fear capable of restraining us in our depraved inclinations, they must have a formidable character, the mere recollection of which, presenting itself to our mind now and then, may produce a salutary shudder, which will be felt in the midst of the dissipations and distractions of life, as the sound of sonorous metal vibrates long after the stroke is given.

(To be continued.)

Father Bernard, S.J., has recently been appointed Director of the Royal Museum at Brussels. The appointment is significant, as indicating the scientific attainments of the learned Jesuit. Father De Smedt, Bollandist, in a recent article in the *Scientific Review* of Brussels, has solidly refuted the theories recently advanced by Dr. Draper, of New York.