

GENERAL READING.

A GREAT CHEMICAL DISCOVERY.

A great discovery in chemistry is claimed by Prof. Norman Lockyer, which has astonished the scientific world, and which, if his claim proves correct, will entirely overthrow all the theories of chemistry at present accepted.

In a series of investigations, extending over some years, into the nature of the spectra of the sun, of other celestial bodies, and the artificial spectra of different simple bodies at various degrees of temperature, Mr. Lockyer has arrived at the conviction that all the elementary bodies recognized by chemists are neither more nor less than hydrogen at various degrees of condensation.

The report goes on to say: For the moment he furnishes no specific details, but he promises very soon to present material, physical and chemical proofs of this extraordinary fact, which he states is already placed beyond the domain of probabilities, and will inaugurate a new chemistry, giving us a far more expanded idea of the simplicity of the proceedings by which the world in which we live was gradually formed.

The greatest anxiety was expressed to be made acquainted with the nature of the experiments which had led the learned investigator to come to such conclusions. The startling nature of the announcement is sufficient to excite great astonishment, as it is utterly opposed to all our preconceived notions of the chemistry of the universe, and very naturally makes us think that the ancient astrologers, with their notions of the transmutation of metals, were not such visionaries after all as they have been generally considered—only they turned their efforts in a wrong direction.

CONCENTRATE YOUR EFFORT.

When Agassiz was asked to give his opinion on a question in chemistry, he persistently declined. "I am no chemist," was his only reply. This resolute concentration of his power in a few well-defined channels was one of the secrets of his eminence. In this age, when knowledge goes on adding province after province to her vast empire, one can hope to explore but a little space. There are no longer any universal conquerors. Goethe and Humboldt have left no successors, and if they themselves were to return, they could not possibly take the positions they once held.

THE AFGHANISTANS.

In their government and customs they resemble other Mohammedan nations, but though proud of their devotion to Islam, they do not hesitate to break all its laws when their inclinations prompt them, notably in their large consumption of intoxicating liquors. In character the Afghan is bigoted and revengeful. His treachery is proverbial in the East, and hardly less notorious is his readiness to join in plunder or murder.

Their marriage customs are similar to those of most Mohammedan countries; wives are purchased and regarded as property; a man marries the widow of his deceased brother, and it is a mortal affront for any other man to take her to wife. Polygamy is permitted, but not largely practiced, the poor labor both in the household and in the field.

Education is conducted much as in the conterminous countries, the children of the poor are taught by a moollah (schoolmaster) to read the Koran and say their prayers; the rich employ private tutors, while students intended for the learned professions go to colleges. Literature is at a very low ebb. The Pooostoo language is an original stock, embracing a good deal of Persian, with some Zend and Sanskrit words, and the character used in writing it is the Niskee form of the Persian Alphabet. Very few words of repute exist in the language. The Afghans are all Mohammedans of the Soonce persuasion, but they are very tolerant of other faiths. Christians sustain neither persecution nor reproach; they being called people of the book, as deriving their tenets from a written source, which the natives themselves respect. The Afghans are very social in their habits, they delight in dinner parties and are fond of listening to songs sung to an accompaniment of guitars, fiddles, and hautboys; and the marvelous fairy tales of the professional story tellers. They smoke a great deal and take much snuff. They are also fond of engaging in the chase, and all kinds of sports, and they habitually train cocks, quails, rams, dogs, and even camels to engage in mutual combat. —National Repository for January.

FAMILY READING.

OVERRULED.

The threads our hands in blindness spin No self-determined plan weave in; The shuttle of the unseen powers Works out a pattern not as ours.

Ah! small the choice of him who sings What sounds shall have the smitten strings; Fate holds and guides the hand of art; The singer's is the servant's part.

The wind-harp chooses not the tone That though its trembling threads is blown; The patient organ cannot guess What hand its passive keys shall press.

Though wish, resolve, and act, our will Is moved by undreamed forces still; And no man measures in advance His strength with untied circumstance.

As streams take hue from shade and sun, As runs the life the song must run; But glad or sad, to his good end God grant the varying notes may tend!

A RITUALISTIC HYMN.

(From the London correspondent of the "North British Mail.")

When the late Dr. Guthrie made a tour of the Ritualistic churches in London a few years ago, he declared that the most of the men he saw in those places were just like the pictures of them given in Punch, persons whose poor physiques and retreated foreheads were indicative of small intelligence. The state of mental imbecility to which some of them have sunk is indicated by the fact that in the Christmas and New Year's services at St. Stephen's in Rochester Row, Westminster, a church founded by the Baroness Burdett Coutts, the following was among the hymns sung by the adult congregation:

"Joseph was an old man, An old man was he; He married sweet Mary, And a virgin was she.

"As they went a walking In the garden so gay, Maid Mary spied cherries Hanging over yon tree.

"Mary said to Joseph With her sweet lip so mild, Pluck these cherries, Joseph, For to give to my child.

"Oh, then," replied Joseph, With words so unkind, "I will pluck no cherries For to give to thy Child."

"Mary said to cherry-tree, "Bow down to my knee, That I may pluck cherries, By one, two, and three.

"The uppermost sprig then Bow'd down to her knee; Thus y'at may see, Joseph, These cherries are for me."

"Oh eat your cherries, Mary, Oh eat your cherries, now; Oh eat your cherries, Mary, That grow upon the bough!"

The hymn contains seven verses more of the same character. To show that there are lower depths still in Ritualism, the Christian World of this week relates the following anecdote, for the truth of which it says it is prepared to vouch:—A London artisan, whose child had been sent by her mother to a neighboring Ritualistic Sunday School, asked her what she was taught there; and all he could get out of the little one was, "Why they took me into a dark room, and made me kneel before a dolly!" We suppose dolly is a playful contraction of idol; at all events it was an idol they made this English child "bow down unto," though no doubt, like the Hindoo in the Times, they would protest it was not to "worship" it. We should like to know

what a sensible lady like the Baroness Coutts thinks of the use that is being made of her church in Westminster; and we would further ask how long this Protestant nation will suffer these absurdities and such manifest idolatry to be practised in its name and with the authority of the State?—Belfast Weekly News.

ORIGIN OF THE HYMN "ABIDE WITH ME."

As many of our readers do not know the origin of these beautiful lines, and many have never seen them, we think they will be of interest:

In the autumn of 1847, the Rev. Mr. Lyte was advised to go for a time to the south of France, in the hope that a warmer climate would strengthen his failing health. Before leaving England he wished once more to preach to his people. His family feared what the result of such an effort might be, but he gently insisted, and was able to go through with the service. He knew that he was preaching for the last time, and his sermon was full of solemn and tender appeals to those whom he had guided and instructed for many years. At the end of the service he retired exhausted in body, but with his soul sweetly resting on that Saviour whom he had preached with his dying breath. As the evening drew on, he handed to a member of his family the following beautiful hymn, which he had just written:

ABIDE WITH ME.

Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide; The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide!

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day, Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;

Change and decay in all around I see; Oh, Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word, But as Thou dwelt with Thy disciples, Lord, Familiar, condescending, patient, free, Come, not to sojourn, but abide with me!

Come not in terrors as the King of kings; But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings; Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea; Come, Friend of sinners, and thus abide with me!

Thou or my head in early youth didst smite, And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile, Thou hast not left me, oft as I left thee; On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!

I need Thy presence every passing hour; What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power? Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless, Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness; Where is death's sting? where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold then Thy cross before my closing eyes, Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies; Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; In life and death, O Lord, abide with me.

This was his last hymn on earth.—He reached Nice, and shortly after his spirit entered into rest. He pointed upward as he passed away, and whispered, "Peace, joy!" Thus he went to abide forever with Him who has declared it to be his divine will that his followers be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory.—Times of Refreshing.

A PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR.

O Lord, God of heaven and earth, we beseech Thee, to look down in mercy on all mankind; and open the eyes of their understanding to know and consider, that they cannot become converted to true Christianity and heirs of eternal glory; except they use the talents thou hast given them, as thou requiest them to do, by thy Holy Word.

For by the light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world; one of the first steps towards conversion to God, is to pay a strict attention to truth and justice, in all the common affairs of life, without any shadow of deception. For by truth in the heart, it is preparing the heart for the seed of Divine truth, to fall into good ground, and to bring forth abundantly some 30, 60 and a hundred fold; and to lead us to become justified loyal and royal subjects of King Jesus, the King of truth.

For Moses tells us, God is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. And David says, The Lord is a God of truth; and he desireth truth in the inward parts. And he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, shall dwell

with the Lord: for all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his testimonies.

And Jesus Christ says to us, If ye continue in my word ye shall know the truth (that is divine truth), and the truth shall make you free, (that is free from the bondage of Satan.) And if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed. For he is the truth and the life. And he will give us the Holy Comforter, the Spirit of truth, which will guide us into all truth, from faith to faith, in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

O Lord sanctify us through thy truth, for thy word is truth; and guide us while we remain here below, to continue faithful unto the end, worshipping Thee in spirit and in truth, in the inner man; for Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer's sake. Amen. Com. by W. L. P.

At the age of three score.

THE FAMISHED WANDERER.

"I should like very much to hear a story," said a fickle and thoughtless youth to his teacher. "I hate serious instruction; I cannot bear preaching." "Listen, then," said the teacher.—"A wanderer filled his travelling pouch with savory meats and fruits, as his way would lead him across a wild desert. During the first few days he journeyed through the smiling, fertile fields. Instead of packing the fruits which nature here offered for the refreshment of the traveller, he found it more convenient to eat of the provisions which he carried with him. He soon reached the desert.—After journeying onward for a few days, his whole store of food was exhausted. He now began to wail and lament, for nowhere sprouted a blade of grass; everything was covered with burning sand. After suffering for two long days in torments of hunger and thirst he expired."

"It was foolish in him," said the youth, "to forget that he had to cross the desert."

"Do you act more wisely?" asked the teacher in an earnest tone; "you are setting forth on the journey of this life, a journey that leads to eternity. Now is the time when you should seek after knowledge, and collect the treasures of wisdom; but the labor affrights you, and you prefer to trifle away the springtide of your years amid useless and childish pleasures. Continue to act thus, and you will yet, upon the journey of life, when wisdom and virtue fail you, fare like that hapless wanderer.—Student and Schoolmate.

A SUNDAY MORNING WITH THE QUAKERS.

FROM OUR PERIPATETIC CORRESPONDENT (From the London Methodist.)

In the ordinary course of my wanderings, I went to one of the "Friends'" meeting-houses on a recent "First-day (Sunday) morning." Where the particular "meeting-house" in question is situated is quite immaterial, one service being very much like another. The Friends are opposed to ecclesiasticism in any form; yet, despite all their efforts, they are not altogether successful in preventing the interior of their meeting-houses from having a somewhat "churchy" appearance. At the meeting-house I attended the seats consisted of polished pine forms with backs, and at the top of the room was a raised gallery of three tiers, occupied, I presume, by the elders and other officers of the church. There was a gallery round three sides of the building, which added considerably to its ecclesiastical appearance. As most people are aware, a cruel custom is in vogue among these Christians—husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, lovers, and other friends of both sexes, may walk together to the door, then they have to separate, the males occupying one side of the building, the females the other. (I may here observe that the seats were cushioned on the female side only.) I next noticed that the men kept their hats on—most of them just long enough to maintain the right, but some kept them on all through the service, except during public prayer. And the short, silent prayer, customary in most churches, was altogether dispensed with.

"Silence reigned supreme" for about a quarter of an hour after the stated time for commencing the service, then a sister offered a simple prayer asking for forgiveness for the past, expressing thankfulness for all mercies, and desiring a blessing upon the service. (I should add, during the prayer all stood up.) After another silent interval a brother arose and repeated from memory the words: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God" (1 John iii. 20, 21), and spoke for a few minutes upon them. Another long pause followed, and then a brother in the centre of the room prayed in an almost inaudible manner. A long full stop: then a brother rose, and said he had been much impressed by these words, "And there followed Him a

certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on Him. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." He had wondered, he said, what the commentators had said about these words, and what they were in the original tongue; they seemed to him to mean that people commenced to follow Christ in haste, and leave Him abruptly; that there should be calmness and deliberation in all we do. He spoke for a short time in this strain. An aged sister then engaged in prayer in a very calm and thoughtful manner. A sister then spoke for a short time upon John xiv. 21, quoting other kindred passages. A brother spoke very well upon 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4, in conjunction with Rom. viii. 1. After a long pause, one of the brethren who had spoken prayed that God would guide the Council of Parliament aright in all its deliberations. Another pause ensued, and then one of the brethren on the platform shook hands with one of the sisters, and the service was at an end. It lasted nearly an hour and a half. During this time four prayers were offered, and four addresses given, neither of which occupied more than six minutes, so that more than half of the time was taken up by silent meditation. The long pauses were at first rather irritating to me, but they soon appeared to be soothing. I could not help thinking that we Methodists might do well if we had a little more of calmness and time for silent meditation, instead of the unseemly haste which so often characterises so many of our services. Yet I would not exchange our heavy services for the often frigid meetings of the Friends, even if I did not believe, as I do, that they are fundamentally wrong in rejecting a stated ministry, the sacraments, and public praise expressed in song.

I could not help noticing that "the spirit of the age," so called, has affected the Friends. Whilst most of the elderly ladies wore the old coal-scuttle, or sugar-scoop bonnets, I only noticed one young lady who had not fallen a victim (?) to the vagaries of modern fashion. So it must be. Sharply defined angles of distinction get rubbed smooth from constant friction with the views of that larger number who are equally good, but not so peculiar. Z.

GOD'S MEASURE A BLESSING.

Read the 103rd psalm, and mark how the psalmist bids us "forget not all his benefits." Some one has said we cannot remember them all, but we must not forget them all—they are too numerous to keep them all in mind, but let us keep some of them in mind. Observe five things, in 3rd, 4th and 5th verses of this psalm: (1.) "He forgiveth all thine iniquities." (2.) "He healeth all thy diseases." (3.) "He redeemeth thy life from destruction." (4.) "He crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." But there are very many crowned heads that are still not satisfied. God, therefore, does more, (5.) "He satisfieth thy soul. What more can we have than that?"

WORK FOR IT.—Ruskin never said a truer thing than this: "If you want knowledge you must toil for it; and if pleasure you must toil for it." Toil is the law. Pleasure comes through toil, and not by self-indulgence and idleness. When one gets to love work his life is a happy one. Said a poor man in Brooklyn the other day, with a family of eleven to provide for, "If I were worth a million dollars I should not wish to do much different from what I do now every day, working hour after hour. I love it a thousand times better than rest." He has for nearly half a century been surrounded by workers, and has got the spirit of industry. He loves his work as he loves his food and sleep. He is happy who has conquered laziness once and forever!

Much of the happiness of life depends on our outward demeanour. We have all experienced the charm of gentle and courteous conduct; we have been drawn irresistibly towards those who are affable, and sympathetic in their demeanour. The friendly grasp, the warm welcome, the cheery tone, the encouraging word, the respectful manner, bear no small share in increasing the joy of life, while the austere tone, the stern rebuke, the sharp and acrid remark, the cold and indifferent manner, the curt and disrespectful air, the supercilious and scornful bearing are responsible for more human distress, despair, and woe than their transient natures might seem to warrant.

BRAIN WORK, and that of the clearest kind, comes into profitable play quite as well on the farm as any where else. Look ahead—get a fair view of the position; have plowing, sowing, harvesting, and selling all done at the proper time; never hurry; but always drive work ahead. Know in the evening what you intend to do next day. Have your rainy day and your clear day work designed beforehand. Always bring into requisition the full means for compassing the desired end. In short, study and understand your business, and you will enjoy it and thrive on it.—Cincinnati G. Z.

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