

BURIAL REFORM.

Rev. F. Lawrence, Secretary of the Funeral Reform Association, London, Eng., preached on Thursday, the 13th Sept., 1888, in the English Cathedral, Quebec, from the text:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it."—Ecclesiastes xii. : 7.

That much loved form! How dear in life; how beautiful in death, "with that peculiar beauty which distinguishes the recently dead." You will not permit it to suffer indignity and injury by too long exposure to the air; nor will you, by cruel and unnecessary delay, mar your last recollection of that ineffable beauty. Therefore you will give it prompt burial, and your endeavour will be to give it back effectually to that kindly, motherly, earth whence it came, and of whose substance it is. So the coffin will be of the simplest, and such as shall speedily perish, that the earth may exercise upon the body its beneficent action. And this is what will happen:—through the earth above the air will filter, and when it reaches the body, will resolve it into new and harmless products, which will rise through the earth above, in air; and when some years have passed away the body will have literally risen again, and naught remain but harmless inorganic matter. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was."

For the funeral ceremonial itself call in the Christ an principles of Faith, Hope, and Love.

Faith.—Doubtless there will be heart-felt sorrow on the part of those who are left behind, for this is natural and scriptural. "Jesus wept" as He stood by the open grave of His friend Lazarus. But, instead of unmeaning pomp and dismal pageantry and the conventional exhibition of fashionable mourning attire, which neither mitigate grief nor manifest respect for the dead, there will be the outward manifestation of the Christian principle of faith:—Faith in the Father, "Whose love is as great as His power, and neither knows limit nor end." Faith in the Son who hath made known a full and free salvation to all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel. Faith in the Holy Spirit whose gifts are joy, peace, love. Oh, the boundless love of the Most High! It is He Who gave; it is He Who hath taken away. Can we not add, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." To yield to inordinate grief is to dishonour God. Faith in God, and zeal in the work He has given us to do on earth, will make the poignancy of our grief to pass away.

Hope.—If we had no hope we might darken the house, clothe all in black—even the little children, plume the hearse with black feathers, drape the cemetery chapel in black, and encase the coffin in black; for black is the symbol of despair. We spend much money, for this was the pagan way of striving to allay the pangs of despair which rent the soul. Or we might do our utmost to preserve the body, for this is supposed to comfort those who look not beyond the grave. All this if there were no hope. But thank God there is hope for the Christian. Christ came to bring to light life and immortality. Christ died and was buried: on the third day death could not hold Him. He stood on the earth alive again. He hath overcome death; therefore death is dead to all who have lived to Him here on earth. Therefore we use flowers which we cull from our own gardens—emblems of the infinitely varied and tender love of God; emblems also of the resurrection: and we sing a psalm or a hymn; and we do not place on the grave the pagan urn, nor the broken column, but some simple symbol expressing Christian hope.

Love.—Love manifests itself towards the departed, the bereaved, the bearers, the neighbours, and poorer brethren. Love for the de-

parted one suggests that regard be had to his wishes with respect to the avoidance of all ostentatious and expensive arrangements; that, wherever possible, relations or immediate friends perform the last offices: that no attempt be made to preserve the body in coffins of imperishable wood; and that there be no brick grave or vault, but that the body be placed in simple earth, to return naturally to the earth, whence it came—"Earth to earth: ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Love to the bereaved suggests that there be no intrusion upon their sorrow, but that friends meet at the church or cemetery rather than at the house of mourning. Love for the neighbours and poorer brethren suggests that simplicity, economy, and good taste be observed in every detail. Recognizing the fact that ostentation is repugnant to the higher feelings, the rich would think of others when they bury their own dead, and would prove by their example that the exercise of economy is no evidence of want of respect, or of love; and instead of lavishing much upon coffin, funeral ceremonial, and mourning apparel, they would show their respect for the dead by some gift which would benefit the living, some gift to God's Church, some gift to His poor.

Thus have I striven to rob death of some of his terrors; thus have I striven to put him before you as the "gate of life," towards which we should look with intense interest and hopeful trustfulness.

Jesus lives! no longer now
Can thy terrors, death, appal us.

This should be the aspect of our mind when we look forward to death:

As when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And taking new ones, sayeth,
"These will I wear to-day:"
So putteth by the Spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh.
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.

While we thus learn the true character of death to the Christian, it behoves us to take well to heart that this view of death can be held only by those who are humble, faithful followers of Christ, and who are day by day turning from sin and reaching forth to the perfect man which is in Christ Jesus. To him who is in sin death is, indeed, the king of terrors. Indeed, he who is yielding to sin is dead already. The wilful sinner is in the blackness of darkness of his own creating, with God blotted out. This, the death of sin, is to be feared with an awful r—the death of sin, the loss of all that is beautiful and good and God-like. Oh, to be delivered from this death!

But that other death we need not fear. Turn ye, truly, from your sin and believe with all your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ and follow Him, and the life which has been begun in you shall open out into a life of eternal bliss with God. Heaven has begun in you already, and when death approaches you may utter with confidence the sublime defiance, "Oh, death, where is thy sting? oh, grave, where is thy victory?" And may add also, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

EARL NELSON'S HOME REUNION NOTES.

No. 36.—THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM.

SIR,—Our Prayer-book tells us that a Sacrament is 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and yet what offences are thereby created! The Bishop of Liverpool hoped for a definition of the teaching of the Reformed Church in these matters which would have driven away more than it

held together, and would have been a distinctly retrograde step towards unity. We want no new definitions upon subjects that are beyond human thought, and the surest way to a true unity is to accept the wonderful revelation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and to leave the full revelation of the workings of that marvellous mystery to devout souls who, yearning after its full comprehension, can yet never fully realise 'what is the length and depth, and width and height of the love of God, which passeth knowledge.' Surely it is enough for us to know that all who do hold this great truth must essentially be one, and that we, who ought, therefore, to be bound together by the law of love, are specially sinning against that law if we allow our own selfish narrowness to prevail, and attempt to judge others by the present attainment of our own strivings after a fuller realisation of these truths.

Our Protestant Nonconformists, if I properly understand their position, ignore all sacramental grace, while we consider it a special outcome of the great doctrine of the Incarnation. They use outward signs—water in Baptism, bread and wine in the Holy Communion, the laying on of hands in the appointment of their ministers—but they are anxious to teach that no special grace is thereby given any more than by the faithful prayers of two or three gathered together in the Holy Name.

Our common standpoint is, that it is God's will to give His Holy Spirit in direct answer to prayer offered by two or three gathered together in His Name. But why are we to stop here? Where is the sinfulness of believing that special graces, also, in answer to united prayer, are linked with special outward acts? or why, we may ask, is God's power to be restricted, and such special grace denied to the outward and visible sign, which many believe to have been specially ordained by God Himself to symbolise the grace then given? Surely there is nothing in this view to unchristianise those who hold it. On the contrary, it is a very natural outcome of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Him Who made the worlds that visible gifts should be made to interpret the invisible, both alike being the outcome of His power.

The Church has held this view for centuries, and so far from this view being contrary to Holy Scripture, it seems to me that there is in the Bible overwhelming evidence in favor of it.

I doubt if there is evidence that any of our Lord's wonderful cures and miracles were ever worked without an outward sign of the grace given; to many of them there is direct evidence of the outward act. 'He stretched forth His hand and touched him, and the leper was cleansed.' He touched her hand and the fever left her. The ruler's daughter He took by the hand and raised her up. 'He touched the eyes of the blind, and they received sight.' And then we have the two miraculous feedings: 'And He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.' So, again, with the seven loaves, when 'He gave thanks and brake, and gave them to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude,' pointing in both to the connexion between the grace given and the outward act and special ministration. So, also, in the ministry of the Apostles. The laying on of hands is directly connected with special gifts of grace. In the confirmation of the converts at Samaria, and in setting apart the different orders of the ministry—the Seven, the Elders ordained in every place, Titus and Timothy.

I confess I am at a loss to understand why there should be divisions of the brethren on such a point as this, for those who believe that the Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer,