

Sunday Reading.

LYNN'S LABOR CHURCH.

The Socialistic, Anti-Anarchical Address of Mr. Casson.

(Montreal Witness.)

'A labor church in Boston! Never heard of such a thing. Must be a mistake.' This from a business man. And this the general opinion, but one minister, whose life is spent working among the poor, said, 'Yes, I did hear of one, which was started this year, a purely sectarian movement.' The Rev. Mr. Bliss, of the Church of the Carpenter, will be likely to know about it.

The Church of the Carpenter was found, away down near the Common, a little gathering in a Masonic hall. There were more than twenty present, and to a stranger the Episcopal service and white-robed minister contrasted oddly with the socialism of the sermon or lecture. Mr. Bliss just knew that there was a labor church not in Boston but in Lynn, which had as leader Mr. Casson, who was, he said, an earnest, intelligent young man, whom he much respected though he differed from him in opinion and belief. After a little more searching the fact that the church met at twelve o'clock on Sunday, was discovered. When I arrived at the hall where the service was held, after an hour's ride in the electric car through a fog and drizzle, I found that in spite of the weather the hall, which was capable of seating over two hundred, was nearly full. The greater part of the audience was composed of men, though some women were present and ten or twelve children. They listened quietly and earnestly for the most part, though now and then came a suppressed murmur of approbation, as Mr. Casson made some point that showed the underlying current of intense feeling.

The address was an earnest one, pleading that the gospel of Christ was a 'gospel' indeed. It was 'good news,' and good news to the poor. It was not a gospel of threats. The common people heard him gladly. Would they have so heard a gospel of threats? Jesus came to the poor. Why? How could he bring good news to the selfish rich? Justice can not be good news to the sinner; purity to the libertine. He came to gladden the oppressed, not those who trample on them. Now, has the gospel of Christ, said the speaker, been good news, as it had been preached in the churches? Was it good news the Puritan preached who would have no one smile on the Sabbath? Was it good news the monk and inquisitor had for the people? Was it good news that Calvin brought when he laid a black cloud on the hearts of mothers whose babes died, for he taught that the unlearned babes were doomed to fire? What is the gospel for the poor today? Edward Atkinson would have it that it is the fact that they can live on three cents a day. The associated charities have theirs. It is that if you answer a catechism they will give you something. Dr. Donald says, 'be patient, only so can you be good.' The gospel of Mr. Cleveland's Government is free trade, and in this many men think they have found the best. Again, McKinley pleads for protection as the only good news. The partial trades unions think they have it, but they are like the people of a city in Belgium who built a strong wall around their city, leaving only ten feet not enclosed, and through that ten feet came in the enemy.

What is the gospel of the labor church? continued Mr. Casson. It is the good news of the overthrow of oppression. That God is not a respecter of persons but a just God. It is the gospel of the co-operative commonwealth of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. Many reformers are growing desperate over the signs of the times. They see men thrown into prison on flimsy pretences because they are reformers; an increase of the military forces and the government tightening its hold in every direction. They are in danger of losing hope, not seeing that these clouds are big with mercy. It is the rich who should lose hope, for rightly interpreted it is good news, not bad, and indicates that thousands cannot govern millions forever. Hope is the mother of socialism, but despair is the mother of anarchy. It is my duty to warn you that if you allow the germ of passionate protest within you to grow without hope and a belief that the right will triumph, then an outbreak will come that will put back the country a century. With a belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men we will turn our backs on Anarchy, which would have us bring down everything in dust, in the hope that we may be the first to jump up.

Thank God for the troublous times. We have no more to fear from treacherous tranquility. We must needs pass through the valley of the shadow ere we reach heaven. If we have hope and belief it will prove a divine discontent, a stirring of action against stagnation. There must needs be pain when a nation is born again. The foolish man today is the workingman who is afraid of socialism. He is like the horse who trampled to death the fireman who came to liberate him, and so was burned. Never was there so high an ideal as there is in workingmen's minds today. All former revolutions asked for a little less abuse, a little more liberty. Now they ask for justice and equality of rights. We shall better understand Christ's 'Blessed are the poor.' Even now compare the questions being discussed by the rich in their magazines with those discussed and thought out by the workingmen. The first ask, and they are almost too bored even to ask, 'Is life worth living? Is marriage a failure?' The second are working out the problem of laying the foundation of a society where life will be worth living. Mr. Casson then implored those present to

be true to the voice within them. Call it what they might it was as truly the voice of God as that which Moses heard.

After the address two hymns were sung from a little blue book gotten up by the Manchester Labor Church. Among the verses I noticed Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life,' Norman McLeod's 'Trust in God and do the right,' and others by Whittier, Lowell and Longfellow.

Mr. Casson is a tall young man, originally from Ontario, with kindly eyes behind spectacles, and a face which, though strong is ready to smile than frown. It is good to see the handshake he gives each as the audience pass out and hear the invitations he receives, to 'drop in and see us' or 'come up and see our folks,' and better still the way the little ones cling to him, proud of being allowed to take charge of the labor pamphlets and report to him how many were taken. There is only a moment or two to spare before he must take charge of a class of economics in one room, while some of the helpers organize the Sunday-school. In these few moments I find out that though he has taken the name from the Manchester Labor Church, yet he had thought the work out and had planned before he knew there was any other. The Manchester Church distinctly claims in its principles that the labor movement is not a class movement, while he believes it is. He found the people ready and had only two months' work or struggle to get the church going. Since then it had grown to what I saw with eighty regular members. They held a meeting in another district during the week and there had been started a branch church in Providence. The trouble was not to get the churches together, but to find speakers. The principles of the labor church and Christian socialism are not the same. Christian socialism takes its stand in the Church as a divinely sanctioned institution, while the labor church places itself in the center of the labor movement, and says 'God is here.' The principles of the Lynn Church are:

1. God is the cause and strength of the labor movement, and whatever institution or individual opposes the labor movement, opposes him.

2. All who are working for the abolition of wage-slavery are, consciously or unconsciously, working together with him, and are, therefore, members of the real Church.

3. The improvement of personal character and of social conditions are both necessary to secure the freedom from moral and social bondage.

4. All that is good in the present Christian Church, and in the history of our country, is on the side of the workingman, and his struggle for justice and brotherhood. These will be seen are slightly different from those of the Manchester Church, as given in the Witness some time ago. For the Sunday-school they will get some simple text book on economics, but intend even then to take two lessons out of every three from the New Testament.

A few minutes were spent in the economics class where twenty men, young and old, and three women questioned as to what true morality was, how it was to be measured, how attained; and then I went off out into the rain.

AN ILLINOIS GHOST STORY.

Fanciful Tale of a Remarkable Coffin Performance.

A despatch from Plymouth, Ill., to the Chicago Times says:

Among the early settlers of this part of Hancock county was one William Ford. He had no relatives living when he settled here, so far as could ever be ascertained. Ford was a very quiet and uncommunicative man. He was a bachelor, living on a little farm not far from Plymouth, and seldom coming to town except when necessity required. One day he was found dead in his little cabin. In those primeval times there was not much need of the law's delay in ascertaining the cause of death. Ford had died a natural death, that was plain to all the neighbors who gathered in to pay the last offices of respect to the man. A pioneer minister said a few words over the rude coffin, but there were no mourners. Some of the women sang a familiar hymn.

It was decided to bury the man on his little forty-acre farm that he had purchased when he first came. But when the six sturdy pall-bearers came to lift the rudely fashioned coffin it was all they could do to budge it. Ford was an ordinarily sized man. The coffin was opened. The corpse looked natural enough. But what made it so heavy? Someone whispered that it might be that there was a mystery connected with Ford's life. But a dead man must be buried, and so the services of two more men were secured and the coffin carried to a corner of the farm. Ford had died May 27, 1838, just a year before Joe Smith and the Mormons had come to Illinois and Hancock county from Missouri. So on May 27, 1838, just fifty-six years ago, William Ford was buried in his wheat field near this town. The men who dug the grave cut away the growing wheat a bit, but when the grave was again covered up the wheat seemed to be growing close up about the grave.

It was more noticeable in a few days thereafter, when someone in crossing the field discovered that the wheat for a considerable space around the grave had absolutely withered and dried up. It looked as if it might have been scorched. As the season advanced the wheat in the field grew high, and by the time it was nearly ready for a reaper a strange spectacle was presented near William Ford's grave. The wheat had grown up all around the grave again, but in the exact shape of a coffin. The space that the coffin would naturally occupy was as bare as a board. Not a living thing would grow upon it. Some good neighbor had placed a bunch of flowers on the grave. They were withered away in an hour's time. Efforts to grow anything on the grave were fruitless. The dead man, it seems, did leave a nephew in Indiana, and the young fellow came on, made proofs to the property, sold it and went away and has never since been seen. But a change of ownership had no effect on

William Ford's grave. It is doubtful whether a handful of dust yet remains in the grave. Nevertheless, nothing can be grown on that spot. If you go along that way when the field is filled with waving grain you will see, outlined distinctly in one corner of the field, a coffin—a coffin made by the bare earth that is simply surrounded by the grain.

And now comes the strangest part of all. Not only can this coffin be seen every year when the cropping season comes around, but some of the neighbors declare that on dark nights they have seen a vision of this coffin in the air hanging over the spot where Ford lies buried. One man describes it as a most beautiful light surrounding the coffin, and he also declares that the lid of the coffin was opened and the face of Ford exposed to view. As the strange light passed over the spot where the grave is, a sort of a wraith arose from the earth and went twisting upward until it enveloped the light enshrouding the coffin. Then suddenly all grew dark. The man who saw this vision had the nerve to go up to the grave and he says that the wheat, which was then about half a foot high, was scorched for several feet in the vicinity of the grave.

Hundreds of people have visited the locality in the last ten or fifteen years. Some people who come to see the phenomenon pretend that they see nothing. But, in all seriousness, this strange apparition hanging over the grave of the pioneer William Ford has excited great curiosity and the fact that no living thing will grow on the grave is something for scientists to explain.

Messages of Help for the Week.

"And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue; and many hearing him were astonished."—Mark 6: 7.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."—Psalm 51: 1, 2.

"So teach us to remember our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."—Psalm 90: 14.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5: 1, 2.

"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."—Rom. 5: 19.

"So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. . . . If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."—Rom. 6: 3, 4, 8.

"If any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given unto him."—Jas. 1: 5.

"LEFT BEHIND."

How John Wesley Aided in Necessary Equivocation.

The following is told by a grandchild of a friend of John Wesley:—

One evening, as Wesley and his friend were tramping across Salisbury Plain, the latter remarked that he hoped that none of the highwaymen, at that time infesting the neighbourhood, would trouble them.

"For my part it matters little," said Wesley, "for I have nothing of value about me."

"Nor have I," replied his friend, "except my watch, which I prize very much; I wish it were safe at home."

After a moment's thought he exclaimed—"I have an idea."

Then taking the watch from his pocket, he hid it in the back of his coat. Strangely enough they were stopped by one of the "gentlemen of the road" shortly afterwards, to whom our friend replied that all their valuables were left behind!

Nor was the watch discovered, for it is still in the possession of his family.

Mission Work in Burmah.

When Great Britain annexed Upper Burmah seven years ago, the Rev. W. R. Winston, a Wesleyan missionary in Ceylon, volunteered to begin missionary work in the new territory. He has steadily continued the work ever since then, and has been the gratified observer of all the great changes by which that country has been delivered from lawlessness and brought into a condition of comparative civilization. In a recent number of the 'Indian Methodist Times' Mr. Winston gives an account of these beneficent changes. The Dacoit bands are no more. Roads and railways, post and telegraphs are bringing distant places near together, and opening up the whole country. Irrigation works, municipal institutions, courts of justice, markets, hospitals and schools are transforming the country. Burmah has rapidly emerged from the insignificant and lawless country to an important and progressive province of our Indian Empire.

"Is the Story True, Robin?"

According to the Berks and Oxon Advertiser, as a family was entering their seat in Thame Park chapel a few Sundays since, they were surprised to see a partially-built robin's nest on the book-ledge, against a prayer-book and a hymn-book. The family immediately decided to occupy another seat, and to leave the little red-breast unmolested in its strange abode. On the following Sunday the nest was completed and contained five eggs, and on the succeeding Sunday to this the bird sat on the eggs during the whole of the service. On Sunday last it was found that the bird had hatched four young ones, and the mother flew in and out of the church during the service with food for her offspring.

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THE POWER OF THE PRESS.

The Sharp Rebuke Had Its Desired Effect Upon the Erring Tradesman.

A rather good story is going the rounds of a certain man of public position, who never fails to fulfil every engagement he makes with the most scrupulous punctuality. Some time since he called on one of his tradespeople, who was widely known for his neglect of almost every promise made in matters of business, and by whom he had been often deceived.

"Now, when can I really have this work finished and sent home? I have no wish to hurry you, but you must definitely tell me, as I must not be put off in this instance."

"Well," replied the tradesman, "there is not the slightest doubt that you shall have it on Friday next. If I am living it shall not on any account be later than that day."

The Friday evening came, but the work was not forthcoming, in spite of the positive promise.

Late at night the disappointed gentleman went to the office of the local paper, and requested him to announce in Saturday's issue the death of the tradesman; and what was the surprise of the latter, on looking over the paper the next morning to find his own death recorded.

On demanding an explanation, he was referred to the gentleman, who, immediately he appeared, professed to be astounded at seeing him alive.

"For," said he, "you promised in the most positive and solemn manner that if you were living you would send me the work on Friday."

The sharp rebuke had its desired effect upon the erring tradesman.

A Gentleman

Who formerly resided in Connecticut, but who now resides in Honolulu, writes: "For

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