

attempt this year should by no means be withheld. Besides the more obvious economical and moral benefit in substituting self-support for support by alms, there is an important educational benefit in the agricultural training, whereby the unskilled become good farm laborers. There is an unsupplied demand for these, and men who have been trained on these vacant-lot farms can obtain good situations in the country. Furthermore, the new pleasures and desires awakened by a season in the green fields have actually resulted in the transplantation of families from the slums to the country. Thus the vacant-lot farms are not a new charity, but a substitute for many charities. "Back to the land" is the best thing for the congested population, if only attainable. "The Detroit plan" is at least a partial opening of the closed way.



## Death Interpreted by Easter

"The Transfigured Valley," by the Rev. William Miller, of Glasgow, is an inspiring book for Easter reading, and an appropriate Easter gift to those who have known the sorrow which death brings, and to whom friends would minister the blessedness of Christian comfort. It is a very simple little book, looking at death through the clear atmosphere of New Testament teaching, and interpreting it in the terms of New Testament symbolism. So interpreted, what is the meaning of death?

Death is a sleep. "She is not dead, but sleepeth," Christ said of the maiden. "Our friend sleepeth," he said of Lazarus. Stephen "fell asleep," is the climax of the sacred writer's account of the martyrdom. Before the New Testament an unknown Hebrew poet had given to death the same interpretation—"He giveth his beloved sleep." The day is drawing to its close; the setting sun is casting its long shadows across the lawn; the little child is weary with his play, fretful, tired, needing sleep and knowing it not. The mother stands at the door and calls him. Reluctantly he turns away from the surfeit of his day's enjoyment, and with laggard feet comes to her; and yet she calls him that she may give him what her love knows he needs as preparation for a good to-morrow; and when at last he is undressed, and she takes him in her lap and sings softly to him, though still reluctant, still resisting, he succumbs to his own weariness and his mother's love, and falls into the sweet unconsciousness which God has provided for his children. Death is the voice of Christ calling to the weary child, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Reluctant and resisting, we come at the call to take the gift he gives to his beloved.

Death is an exodus. On the Mount of Transfiguration they spoke of the "exodus" which Christ should accomplish at Jerusalem. "I will endeavor," says Peter, "that ye may be able after my exodus to have these things always in remembrance." The Christian is in a land of bondage. He is but half emancipated from the animal condition out of which he is emerging. Like the butterfly which has just broken loose from the chrysalis is he—bound about with silken threads—winged and yet held a prisoner. Like the seed imprisoned in the soil is he—his life cannot be perfected until his soul breaks from its prison-house and emerges into the upper air and light. Death comes to this captive as Moses came to Israel, and bids him depart from the land of his bondage; it tells him he need no longer be half man, half animal; it breaks the silken bands which bind his wings, and gives him flight; it summons him as the sunlight summons the plant to leave burrowing and the darkness, and come forth into the light

of perfect day. What we call life is dying, for the body is in perpetual flux, passing from life to death through all the years from the cradle to the coffin. What we call death is life, for it delivers from the decaying tabernacle, and him who was before half mortal, half immortal, it crowns conqueror over death. In dying death is swallowed up in victory.

Death is an unmooring. "The time of my unmooring," says the Apostle Paul, "is at hand." Like a ship on the stocks is man upon the earth; he is in the process of making. If he were always to stay upon the stocks, he would be an idle and useless thing. Before he is completed, but not before he is ready for launching, death knocks the underpinning away. He slips through the ways and plunges into the ocean. This is his true element. Now is he free, for now is the promise of his earthly preparation fulfilled in him and for him.

Death is a home-coming. "In my Father's house are many dwelling-places; I go to prepare a place for you," says Christ. He has been preparing a place for most of those who will read this article. The land will not be a foreign land; certainly not a land of strangers. From this shore to that he takes the emigrants, one by one. Home is where love is, and love in heaven waits for the coming of the loved ones from earth. If there is no recognition of friends in heaven, then heaven is not home, for friends make home. There the mother waits for her child, and the child for the mother; there the husband and the wife for the lifelong companion; there the pastor for some of his flock, and some of the flock for their pastor. When we step on board the mystic ship which sails away from this shore upon the unknown ocean, it is not to go to an unknown land, but to a home prepared for us, not by outward fittings, but by the equipments of love. How strange would seem the contrast to us if for a moment, amid the tears and the farewells of earth, we could only look upon the radiant expectation and the welcoming greetings of heaven!

Such are some of the symbols of the New Testament. Such is death as seen through these prophets' eyes, as interpreted in the light of the Easter morn.



## A Beneficent Heresy Trial

We give considerable space this week to the report of the result of the Council in the case of the Rev. William T. Brown, who was put on trial for heresy in the State of Connecticut. We do so not only because the result of the Council indicates the beneficent consequence of converting a heresy trial into a friendly Christian conciliatory council, but also because the minutes of the Council contain such an admirable statement of the spirit in which both progressives and conservatives in the Church of Christ should act during such a period of intellectual transition as the present. In this case a bitter and apparently irreconcilable controversy had arisen in a church. The majority of the church united with the minority in asking the friendly counsel of neighboring churches. The aggrieved minority were advised to put their case, with the evidences on which it was based, into the hands of the pastor of a neighboring church, that he might put it into form for trial and issue. The Rev. Mr. Blake, of New London, who was reported by some of the daily papers as being the chief inquisitor in the case, simply undertook this thankless task at the request of wise counselors in other churches, and not a little of the beneficent result finally reached is due to the good judgment and Christian spirit with which he sifted out what was irrele-

vant, succeeded in keeping down what was personal, and accomplished the not easy task of bringing all the essential facts before the Council in perfect fairness to all parties. The Council itself was what is known in Congregational circles as a mutual one; that is, both parties in the church agreed to submit the question to its arbitrament. The case was rather a heresy arbitration than a heresy trial. The Council was not a court for the trial of an accused, but a body of advisers called in to give their Christian counsel to a church in perplexity. This is the first and perhaps the most important fact in this case. A church quarrel has been obviated, a bitter dispute which might easily have extended to other churches has been wholly healed, by this wise employment of a Christian method in a Christian spirit, in lieu of the method borrowed from civil tribunals, in which issues are sharply defined for the very purpose of formulating a controversy and securing a definite victory for one party or the other.

The other result of the Council is equally significant. It indicates that theologically the Congregational churches at least have come to agreement, not on all points of doctrine, but on this point, that Congregationalism is sufficiently large and sufficiently flexible to allow the most perfect fellowship between the Old and the New Theology. It indicates that there is no longer any controversy, at least in that branch of the Christian Church, respecting liberty both of study and interpretation of the Scriptures. Upon this point there seems to have been no practical difference in the Council, and none really in the Church after the issue was clearly and in a kindly spirit presented to it. The only question that remains is, How the liberty which both parties ungrudgingly allow one another can be used with the largest spiritual benefit and the least spiritual injury to all concerned? The practical recommendations of the Council in these respects are worthy, not only of wide reading among all Congregational churches, but of reading, pondering, and accepting in all churches of Christ, of whatever faith or order.



## The Poor Man and the Schools

The Outlook protests against the discussion of the question of school reform in the city of New York from the standpoint of any class in the community. The Constitution of the State says that the common schools are for the education of the children of all citizens of the State. The present discussion of the reform of the administration of the common schools of New York has, unfortunately, taken the form of class discussion among the few so-called "poor men" who have given the subject any thought, and among the politicians who have opposed the abolition of the school trustees. The hearings before the Senate Committee at Albany were revelations of the bitterness of feeling which the petty politicians can arouse, who are in power because there is a poor man's vote, or, rather, we should say, an ignorant man's vote. It is the petty politician who engenders and nurses class feeling among his constituents; his power, to a great degree, depends on the prevalence of this class feeling among his supporters.

The abolition of the school trustee system is opposed on the ground that the poor man should be "in touch with the schools." Why? Because he is poor? Does poverty procure for him peculiar rights in the administration of common interests? Does poverty qualify him to judge on pedagogic questions? Has his interest in educational matters been so active that he has protected the rights of his children as against the local politician? The truth is, the

attitude of some poor men toward the system of education in the common schools has been that of almost absolute indifference. Had they been alive during the past fifty years to the importance of the education of their children, would the present condition of educational affairs in New York City have been possible? Where are school accommodations inadequate? In the sections of the city where the poor man's vote decides every question between the State and his own home. Where are unsanitary conditions and ill lighting, injustice as between pupil and teacher, incompetent teachers, tolerated? Where the poor man lives in greatest numbers.

Has the demand for the improvement of the schools come from the poor man? Has the demand for more and better educational opportunities come from the poor man? The truth is that he has troubled himself but little as to the methods by which, or the conditions under which, his children are being educated. The demand for school reform has come from the men and women who have dedicated leisure and education to improve the conditions and environments surrounding the home of the poor man. These men and women were impressed with the natural intelligence of many of the men and women, boys and girls, they met, and they constantly recognized the inadequacy of the system of education as judged by the results in its products. Having made these discoveries, it was natural that demands for reform should be made. Honesty and good motives, even unselfishness, do not make a man competent to judge of the qualifications of a teacher, nor of the studies that best develop the mind. Local control cannot be higher or more responsible than the character of the section it represents. The needs of the children demand the employment of expert knowledge and experience in their behalf. That is the whole of the question of school reform in New York City.

The trouble with the poor man is that he looks at himself objectively. He will lend his voice against legislation in the interests of his home and his own rights, because some local politician, who makes his living by politics, and could not make it in any other way, presents a measure as coming from a rich man or men, though that particular measure is the result of unselfish work and effort given voluntarily to the service of the poor man's family. It is the poor man's ignorance that makes him the easy victim of shrewd politicians. When the common-school system provides true education for the children of the poor, the man who classes himself under that head will be emancipated from the control of the politicians, and will discriminate between the legislation that is against him as a class, and the legislation that is for him as a man.



The April Magazine Number of The Outlook will have two leading illustrated features of strong timeliness. Mr. H. E. Krehbiel, the well-known musical critic, will tell in an interesting way the story of the origin and influence of the Cincinnati Musical Festival, which will be held this year May 19-23. The article will be illustrated by many portraits of famous musicians and by other pictures. The second article referred to is by Kenyon West, and is called out by the hundredth anniversary of the birth of William H. Prescott, the American historian (May 4, 1896). The article is partly critical and partly biographical. It will be illustrated by several portraits of Prescott and of his parents, reproductions of the Ball and Greenough busts, sketches of the historian's home and of his study, and other pictures. Most of these are now published for the first time, and are from originals kindly furnished by members of the Prescott family. Other illustrated features of the April Magazine Number will be an article on The Higher Life of New Orleans by Miss Grace King, a second article on Bicycling for Women by Dr. R. L. Dickinson, and a paper by Dean Farrar on John Wesley, in the Prophets of the Christian Faith series.