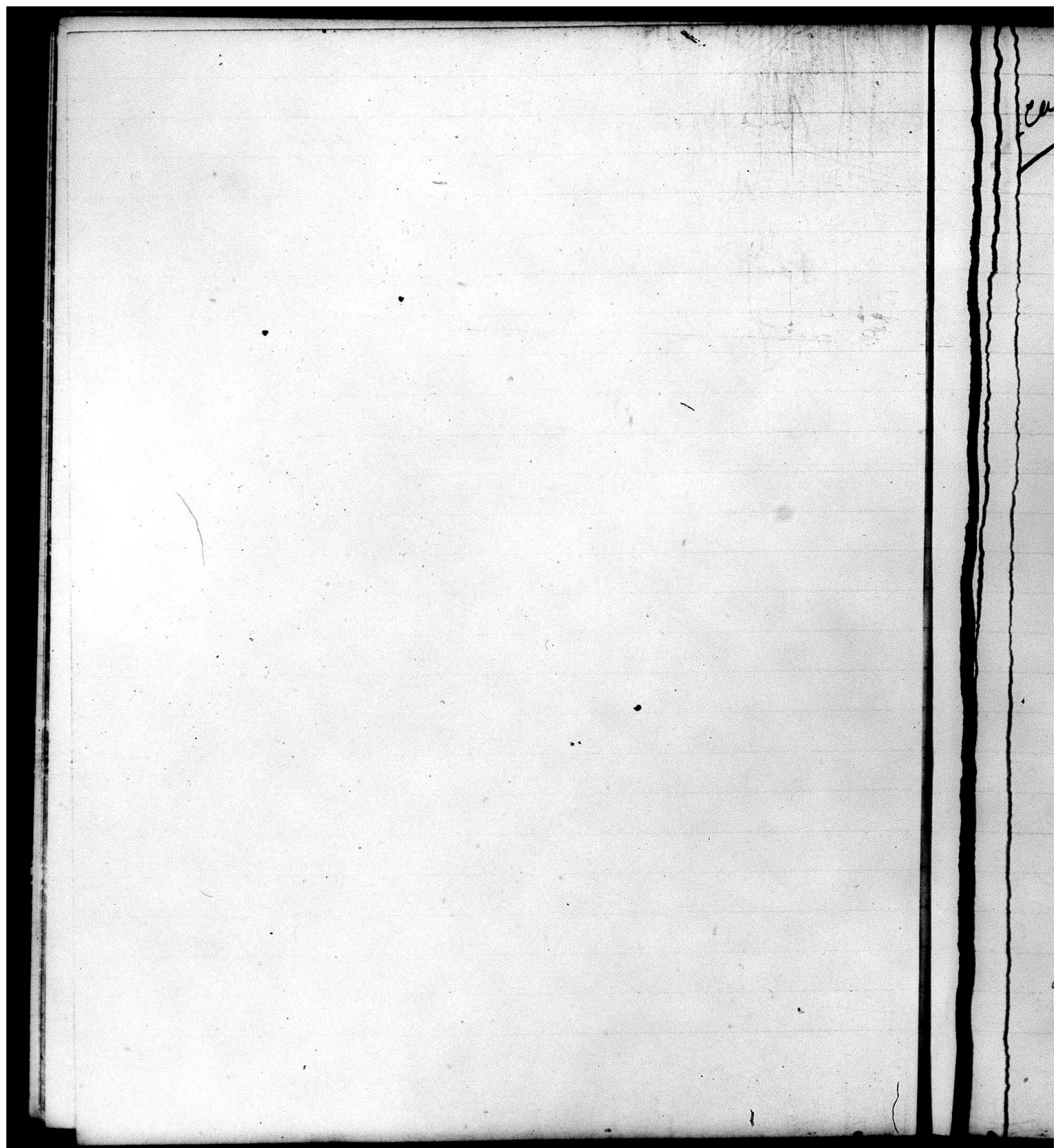




carbons

Salmonella

A death bed repentance.

According to the I.P., there was no hope for Timothy Bird. There was nothing the matter with him beyond the fact that he was 86 and that his weakness was alarming. People snuff out at all ages: accident apart, our vital clocks vary immensely in the matter of manspining.

The mind of Timothy Bird was extraordinarily clear and logical; in fact, so logical that he was unreasonable. He was unwilling to die until he had made one further effort to transform that which had most embittered his life into its coming joy. At the last moment, said he, God will surely touch the heart of

(do you interrupt?)

Why assert religious belief in a telegram?

Because ~~the~~ ~~you~~ the Holy Ghost may
'use' the telegram to 'reach' the clerks
in the Post Office. Enough of
such querulous query :: the facts!

my dear land.

He therefore telegraphed, with a faith
which 30 years of disappointment had
done nothing to shatter.

The telegram was worded thus

John Nelson Darby Bird 99 New Square
Lincoln's Inn

Jesus calls me at last / Come to your
father and your God Luke XIV Father

unless He come first

The anxious waiting of this message mirrored
infinitely the mind of Timothy Bird.

John Nelson Darby was the founder of the
'Brethren' called 'Plymouth Brethren' owing
to their early great successes having been
won in Plymouth. This excellent man
was a very great Hebrew scholar, to say

(Fund quote)

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nothing of Greek. His eminence ^{had} entitled him
to the offer of a seat on the Committee of
Revision of the Bible, but he had refused to
meet other scholars of heterodox theological
views, quoting ^{the apostle of} James - - to this effect.

His undoubtedly great all-round mind led him
to see that One Infallible Authority is
necessary to any religion. Rome had
this in the Pope; he ^{followed the apostasy of Luther, and} proposed the Bible.
Now, since the Bible is the actual word
of God, dictated by the Holy Ghost
— else where is its authority? — This word
must be taken literally in every part
as well as in the whole. Now you may
formulate a script from any one text,
and another script from any other. But

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a contradiction in your conclusions will
not invalidate either just ~~premises~~

This involves a somewhat complex
metaphysic, in spite of the fact that
metaphysic, being the work of a heathen
philosopher, was of its father the devil.

It is however impossible in practice
to convert a Plymouth Brother in these
^{or any other} ways because he scents danger from afar,
and replies with an argumentum ad
hominem on these simple lines:

I am saved

You are not - I.

Therefore, you are damned -

In these degenerate days fact is supposed
by the ignorant to be truer than fancy,
and one must therefore plead for belief

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by referring the skeptic to Mr Edmund Gosse's
"Father and Son". Reviewers of that book
cast doubt on the possibility of such
narrowmindedness as is shown by Philip
Gosse. But in ^{he of another writer of the Crisis} ~~the~~ ^{of the Brethren, the prophet of the} ~~any~~ ^{long} ~~work~~ ^{the name}
of Philip Gosse was a byword, a
scorn and a reproach; he was an
Awful Warning of the Evils of
Latitudinarianism.

"The World's Progress"

And Timothy Bird was of the
anti-Ravenite section of the Exclusive

Plymouth Brethren. He had been
the dominant voice of that Assembly
Judgment which gave Philip Gosse and
his kind to Satan for a season; and
he had been the mainstay of the
movement which expelled a
majority of the remainder when

referring the skeptic to Mr Edmund Gosse's
"The and Son". Reviewers of that book
at doubt in the possibility of such
courageousness as is shown by Philip
Gosse. But in ^{the of another writer speaking of the Crisis}
^{of the Brethren, they hold of the} ~~any~~ ^{name} ~~book~~ ^{the name}

Philip Gosse was a byword, a
reproach; he was an
unflinching warning of the evils of
bituminism.

And Timothy Bird was of the
opposite section of the Exclusive
Plymouth Brethren. He had been

"The name of the Brethren"

by referring the skeptic to Mr Edmund Gosse's
"Father and Son". Reviewers of that book
cast doubt on the possibility of such
narrowmindedness as is shown by Philip
Gosse. But in ^{the of another writer of the Crisis} ~~any~~ ^{of the Brethren, the host of the} ~~any~~ ^{name} ~~any~~ ^{name}
of Philip Gosse was a byword, a
scorn and a reproach; he was an
Awful Warning of the Evils of
Latitudinarianism.

"The name of Philip Gosse was a byword, a scorn and a reproach; he was an Awful Warning of the Evils of Latitudinarianism."

And Timothy Bird was of the
anti-Ravenite section of the Exclusive
Plymouth Brethren. He had been
the dominant voice of that Assembly
Judgment which gave Philip Gosse and
his kind to Satan for a season; and
he had been the mainstay of the
movement which expelled a
majority of the remainder when

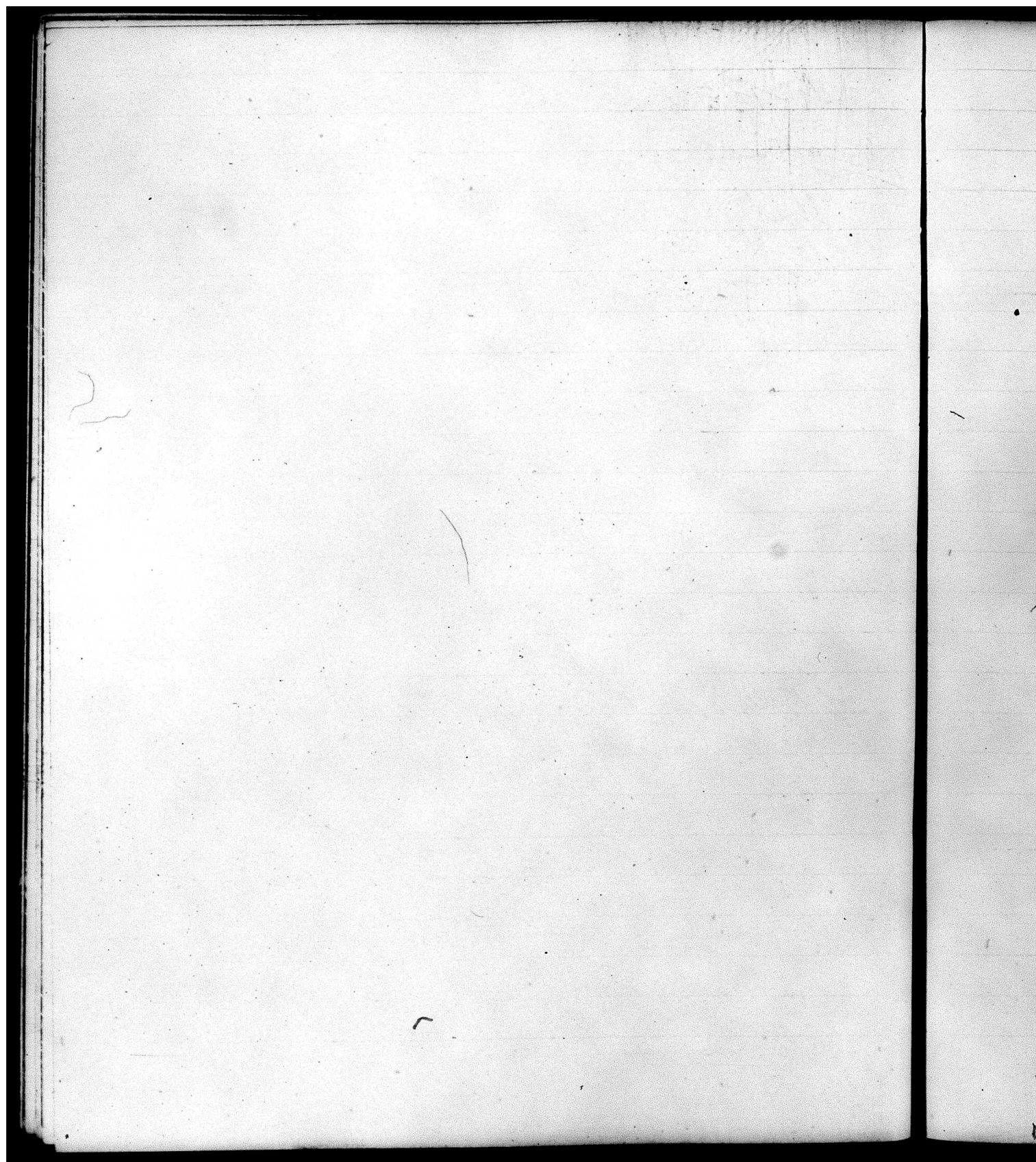
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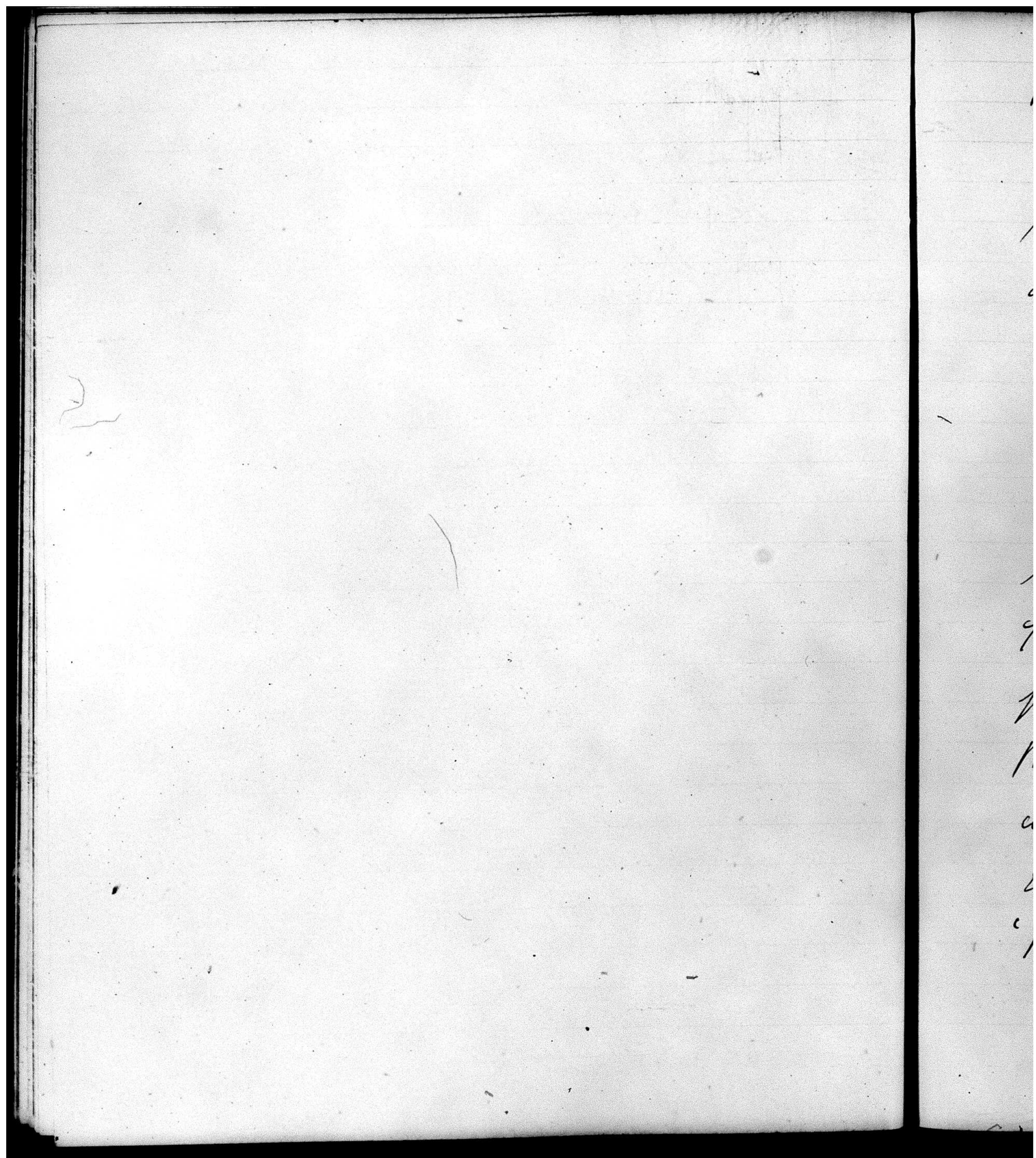
Mr F.E. Raven had 'blasphemed' in a manner so obscure and complex that not one in twenty of the most learned of the seceders ever gained even a Pargah glimpse of the nature of the controversy.

For Timothy Bird was indeed a Gallier in Lilliput. He had known John Nelson Darby intimately; he had been the close friend of Wigram and Crowley, ^{even} of Kelly before ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~heresy of the latter~~; ^{is} he was a scholar of merit if not of eminence; he was a baronet of the United Kingdom and a man of much property. Baronets not being mentioned in the New Testament, he had refused to use his title; but the other



brethren, at least those in the lower ^{middle} classes,
never forgot it.

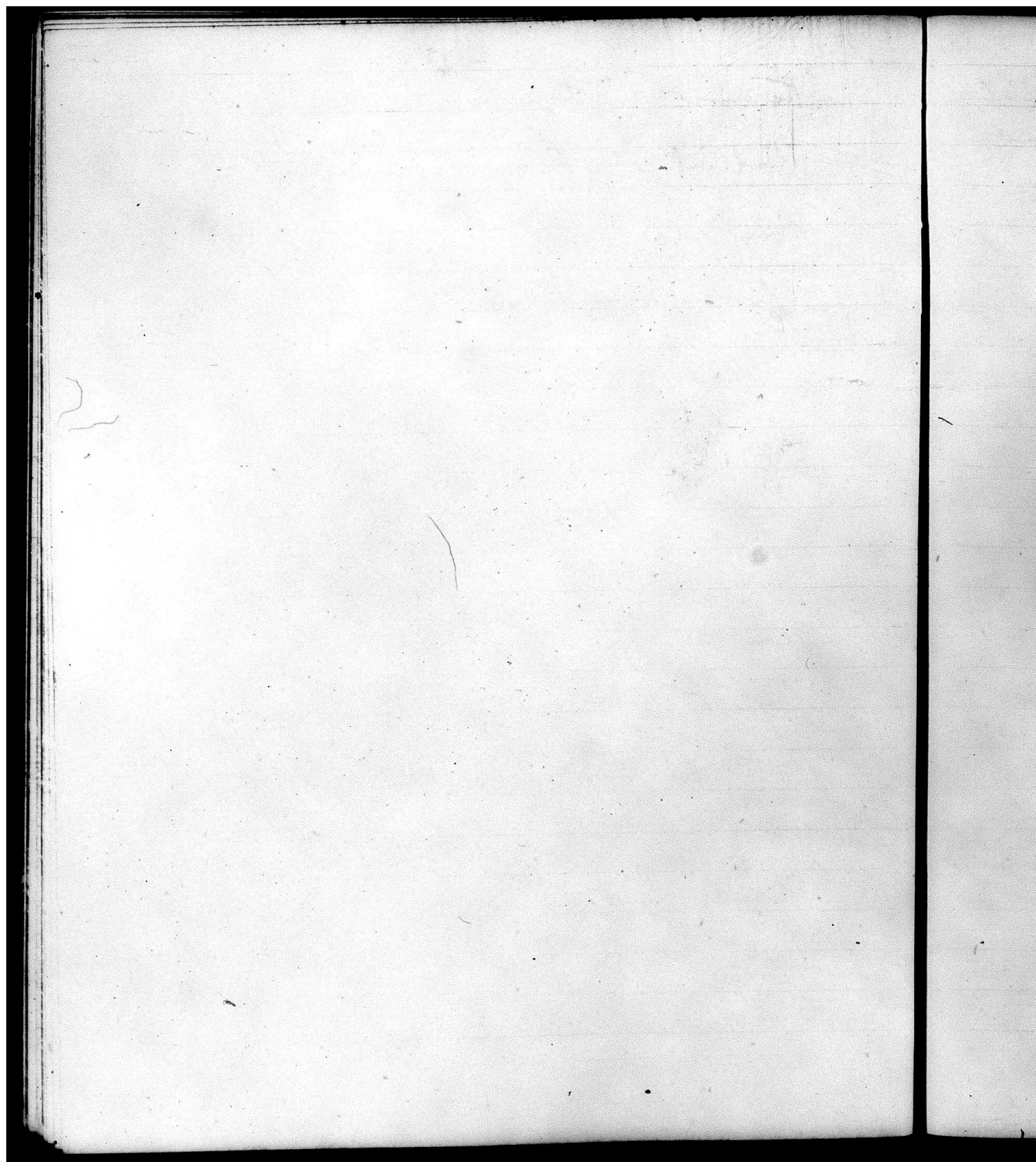
He lived simply, using his large income
principally for the distribution of tracts;
he evangelized greatly while he had
the strength, going from town to town to
establish or confirm the brethren. And
it was generally known that he had left
the whole of his great fortune in
trust to Arthur Home and Henry
Burton for the use of the brethren
to the entire exclusion of the
aforesaid John Nelson Darby Bird,
who had not only backslidden
but gone over wholly to Satan,
being in fact a barometer of repute.



the most distinguished member of the
Radicalist Press Association, and, worse
than all, a zealous and irrefutable
advocate of easy divorce.

His disinheritance weighed little with
the younger Bird who, at 44, was
earning some £5000 a year, and who
had such painful memories of eighteen
years of the most cruel (because
perfectly well-meaning) form of slavery
that the word 'home' was habitually
used by him in moments of
excitement instead of the familiar
'Hell' of the pious Englishman.

Now, as Herbert Spencer (a little late



in the day / maintained, "Action and
reaction are of equal and opposite";
and experience teaches that fatalism does
not escape this law. There are no
anti-Christians like the children of
Plymouth Brethren. They have the Bible
at their finger's ends; they quite agree that
Brethrenism is the only logical form of Bible
Christianity; and so they associate it with
every grand tyranny & petty spite of the
hated home; and so they are frankly of
Spain's party. ~~And~~ Terrible opponents they
make. The Plymouth Brother can find a
host of Scripture to buttress his slightest
act, and his son has consequently an
equal armoury of blasphemy, which, with
a little knowledge of Greek and Hebrew
and of various infidel writers, makes him
undoubtedly able in debate.

Timothy Bird had learnt to fear
his son. From the age of puberty he

had been in fierce revolt; it was the subtleties
of that five years' intense struggle that had
made him intellectually supreme, ^{both} in strategy
and tactics, the most dangerous advocate
at the Bar. He had become a fine psychologist
as well; he had ~~for~~ penetrated every blind
alley of his father's mind, and to that mind
he was merciless. He too was a fanatic. He
hated really wicked in a way to avenge the
torments of his boyhood; and perhaps he
felt that his emancipation was not complete
until he converted his teacher. However this
may be, year after year with ever gathering
strength he hurled battalion on battalion
at the stout blind citadel - to pre-empt
repulse. It was probably the parable
of the unfortunate widow, or the
endurance which his terrible boyhood

had fought him, that made him continue.
It is impossible to argue with a Plymouth
Brother, for his religion is really assimilated
to him, so that everything he says has the
question in, and you cannot get him to see
that it does so. This is not so unusual
as it appears; it requires a very good mind
to acquiesce, even for purposes of argument, in
a non-Euclidian geometry, so fixed is the
mind in its certainty that the whole is greater
than its part, and the like.

It is good to hear ~~these~~ discuss anything.
Propose the question of the Origin of Evil, your
Plymouth Brother will remark sooner or later
but always irrelevantly "God is a just God."
I imagine that his God is certainly not just,
or he would not have commanded the rape
of virgins by the thousand, or sent
beasts to devour forty and two little }

children whose sole fault was to call
attention to the baldness of a prophet.

This is unsensurable; give up the story, as
the better mind does, and you are launched
for atheism & mysticism; hold to it -
the Christian's only hope - and the ^{sole possible} reply
is "Shall not the judge of the whole
earth be right?" "Yes" you retort "That
is ^{just} my proof that your God is a total
failure, and not at all the judge of the
whole earth." The conversation, after a
selfish interlude, again rises to the
dignity of argument, and on some infinitely
subtle and obscure minor point which he
had never thought of before - I speak
of a rare incident much puzzled by wondrous

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you do really and truly prove to him from
Scripture that he is wrong.

Is he downhearted? No!

The moment any cloud upon his brow passes;
the glorious sun shines out amid the wreath:

"The devil can quote Scripture."

In vain you reply that this consuming bullet
invalidates the whole of his arguments,
which are all drawn from Scripture; and
his again admitting of no reply, the
warring man will continue to beat the out
lightnings & slaughter until physical
weariness bids him desist.

Yet it was the cherished belief of
John Nelson Darby Bird that the
last straw will break the camel's
back; or, more practically, ^{that} if you

sandpaper bricks at the base of a building
long enough, the building will suddenly
and without warning reel and fall.

You remember that Noah spent 120 years
building the ark - with hardly a shower.

When the flood came, it came suddenly.

J. N. D. Bird K. C. was quite ready to
go to the ant farm sluggard or to Noah
as circumstances might indicate.

Before he answered his father's telegram
he borrowed the billiard chalk from
the ~~far~~ waistcoat pocket of ~~the~~ his
clerk, whose sporting instincts had
got ~~on~~ the best briefs for his employer

in horsey and divorcey circles.
[Lord John Darcy v. the Members of the
Jockey Club. Riddell v. Riddell, Clay,
Arthur, Thompson, Batterby, Jacobs,
Bennett, de la Rue, Giggles, White,
Shutey, Williamson, Klein, Banks, Kennedy,
Gunn, Greg, and others. These ^{were the} remarkable
cases ^{but} established the reputation of Mr Bird.
His successful defence of Mr Riddell had
won him, in addition, a vice-Presidency of
the Anthropological Society.]

To those who are not Plymouth Brethren
it will not be obvious why John Bird
pocketed the billiard chalk, and a
new depression is becomes Cocker.

Chalk is the commonest form in which
Carbonate of Calcium is found in Nature.

Under the microscope it is seen to be composed of the dust of the shells of minute marine animals. Geologists consider it improbable that a layer of chalk 10,000 feet thick was deposited in the course of a week, or even in the course of, say, 4,000 years.

The year after John Bush was called to the Bar he had fleshed his maiden steel upon his father by taking a piece of chalk, a microscope, and 27 volumes of Geology to Cairns with Tomes for the Long Vacation. Father and son talked chalk day and night for nine weeks. It was a drawn battle.

The father had to admit the ^{facts} ~~truth~~ of geology. Then, said the son, I cannot believe that God wrote a lie upon the rocks.

Timothy replied "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" He also very ably urged that it was not a lie. If men of science were not blinded by the devil (owing to their seared consciences, & their quite gratuitous hatred of God) they would see, as he, Timothy Bird, saw, that it was obvious from the death itself that it had been created in a moment.

Alternatively, God had written a lie upon the rocks in order to blind them.

"God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie."

The immorality of this latter proceeding of course led to the old "God is a just God" line of argument with its inevitable

conclusion in School for the younger Bird.

Phoenix-like, however, he caused
Crumbs of chalk to be conveyed to his
father at irregular intervals; for he
saw with the astuteness that had
discomfited Lord John Dancy ~~that~~
~~that~~ that his father's belief had
really been shaken by the argument.
The outworks held; the citadel crumbled.
In the deepest ~~se~~ shrine of sub-consciousness
Timothy Bird, or rather, Something that
was in very truth not Timothy Bird,
knew that the world was not made
in six days, that the Book of
Genesis was a Jewish fable, that
the whole structure of the ^{'revelation' was a lie, that} Incarnation

and the atonement were but dreams.

Armed therefore with the integrity
described by Horace and the billiard
chalk ^{Solly Nelson Daily Bird} he went to Lamswith Towers
by the 3.45 for a final wrestle with the
Angel. II.

The old man was sitting up when his son
arrived. Arthur Home and Henry Buxton, the
one pale, the other tallow, the one stumpy and
fat, the other dried up, had come to pray
with him. The doctor, who was not of the
fold, appeared unseated at the auction of
the vultures, ^(before he left) and communicated a portion
of this feeling to the nurse who, although a
'Plymouth Sister', had experience in her
profession of the realities of life, and
consequently ^{to some extent} saw things, ^{through} ~~at~~ a dimly, as they

really were.

Barton was praying audibly as John Broth entered. Without moving a muscle, he directed the current of his supplications to a new channel.

"And, dear Jesus, we beseech Thee on behalf of me now among us, or perhaps now among us, or soon to be present among us [It would not do to admit that he knew of anything that was occurring in the room] one we truly fear dead in trespasses and sins and so it seems far indeed from the precious blood. May it please Thee that this Thine aged servant may at last be gladdened as he pass into his reward by Thy wonderful mercy working in this hard heart and unregenerate Adam."

With utter weariness of pantophiles and

repetitions, the prayer mumbled on
for another ten minutes. at last came the Amen.

Not until then did Timothy Bird open
his eyes and ~~weakly~~ greet his son.

Feeble as he was, he began instantly to
'plead with him' to 'come to Jesus'. The
son had a terrible temptation to acquiesce,
to spare the oldster 'useless' pain. In the
stern school of the Brethren, truth is what
passes for truth must outweigh all
human feeling, as if a sword were thrown
into a scale wherein two out-laws were
contending. The distressing lesson of those
5 terribly conscious years of revolt assisted
his decision to swing to that austerity
which here he thought was cruelty.

Father, said he, don't poison your last hours
by these delusions! If there be an God, it
is certain that he never trapped man as you
say he did.

Arthur Home interrupted "God is a just God".

Then why did he make venim? retorted
the barrister.

A long and laboured explanation followed
from the excellent Home, who never suspected
that the reporter was not part of the
argument.

It all wound its weary way back to the
old subject of the me and certain damnation
of John Bird.

The latter paid no heed. His human
feelings swamped all else. He knew
instinctively at that moment the
supreme human truth that the sin is

the father, literally identical of one substance.
Also, in the great presence of death there is
no place for religion of any kind. The
sham of it becomes patent - a hideous
masque and revelry of mocking thoughts.
Even where it is the strongest of all drugs;
it lowers, hypnotic ~~stone~~ cloud or levin
of storm, shines never as a sun of life.
The Pagans knew: try and write even a
letter of condolence to a friend bereaved, and
you will know it too. Elib consolations
are the work of shallow hypocrites, or ^{forwards}
too scared to face their fear; ~~which~~ they
break into a sweat of piety; their eyes
glaze with a film - the easy falsehood
of immortality. The idescent bubble of
faith is easily burst - woe to the

man who dares touch it by so much as
one word of truth on any serious subject.

"My son" began Timothy Bird, to whom
the approach of death now lent a majesty
indescribable - the feeble baronet might
have been a patriarch of the patriarchs -
"my life has failed. Its one desire has been
that God would bring my only son to His grace..
It was not His will. To that I bow; my
prayer is in His hand. His will, not mine, be
done. It may be that my death may be the
means -" and on he rambled the
well-worn paths of 'pleading with a soul',
things so hackneyed that John Bird,
facing his own problem as he was, hardly
heard them tickle through his ears.

ed a stumbling, a groaning

and a book of trouble and
ine interrupted; yet strangely - not so
it surely lighting down but as if a new
Surely the hand was near.

in himself seemed to show
ted his own weakness; he
t a sort of shame; he
ther himself for an effort.

d he firmly, "I shall not the
whole earth do my will."

He only marched a stumbling, a growing
hesitation, and a look of trouble and
It was a machine interrupted; get - strongly - not so
much as if it were tripping down but as if a new
of awe. Surely the end was near. a new
new end - the end!

The old man himself seemed to shrink
so. He detected his own weakness; he
flushed with a sort of shame; he
seemed to gather himself for an effort.

"John", said he firmly, "shall not the
judge of the whole earth do right?"

"You are a lawyer; you understand the
value of testimony. Here are we four,
~~said~~ three living and one almost gone to
be with Christ, all ready to lift up our
voices and testify to the saving grace
of God. Is it not so?"

Solemnly enough, Home, Butler, and the

nurse gave their assent.

"Will you not accept their witness?"

"I too have witnesses," replied John Bird;
and he drew the billiard chalk from
his pocket, and laid it on the
mantelpiece. "Let God be true," said
he, "and every man a liar!"

The light of fanaticism that blazed
from the eyes of the moulond flashed ^{once}
and went suddenly out. An incomprehending
stone replaced it. He seemed to search
the infinite. All thought he was
~~in extremis~~ at the extreme, and Home
and Butler, intent as they were on

their own plans, were frightened into silence.

John Bird returned to his problem: it was himself that was dying - and yet no, for the true self was living in himself.

And he understood that marriage is a sacrament, and must not be blasphemed by hedging^{it} about with laws of property, and canon prohibitions, and inspection and superintendence sacerdotal. Every man is a king and priest to God; every man is the shrine of a God, the guardian of an eternal flame, the never-extinguished lamp of the Rosicrucian allegory.

The eyes of the old man were still fixed on the chalk in an unmoving stare. His colour heightened, and his

breath came faster. Yet his muscles grew ever more rigid; he seemed to grip the arms of the chair in which he was propped by pillows.

It was he at last who broke the silence. "Nurse," he said, very slowly, but firmly and distinctly, "take my keys and open the locked cabinet!" The woman obeyed.

"Bring me the paper in the lower middle drawer!" She did so.

With perfect calm and deliberation, but with more vital energy than he had yet shown, and with his eyes shining now with a warm kindly lustre, he tore the paper across and across.

"Burn it!" said he. The nurse took it

to the flame of her spirit lamp, and consumed
the pieces.

The son understood what had been done.

"Father!" said he, "I don't want the money."
"I didn't come down here for that."

~~Then~~, Placidly came the amazing retort:
"Then give it to the Radical Press
Association!"

Home & Burton broke into a chill
tittering and rumbling of protest. His
mind is gone, was the burden of their
swan-song. The old man smiled, like
a God smiling at his puppets. Their
plaint turned to denunciation.

John Bird aroused himself. "You must
leave the house!" said he. With barely
a push they complied: they were too

aspired to do themselves justice.

The dying man beckoned his son.

"Your life must have been a hell," said he, "and I made it ^{so}. But it was blindness and not unkindness, Jack!"

His son had not heard 'Jack' for thirty years. He fell on his knees beside his father, and burst into strong sobs. These thirty years of strife and wrong and misunderstanding came back - singly, and in battalions too!

The old man's head had fallen back; a smile had softened the old stern expression; the eyes closed as if in ecstasy.

Even the nurse was mistaken; she
~~restored~~ touched the shoulder of the
hamster. But John would not move;
and suddenly she recognized that the
old man was breathing. ~~From~~ swift and
shallow it deepened to strong and slow:
a great sleep was upon him.

For three hours his son knelt by him,
his lips fastened on one hand; and of
the experiences of those three hours who
shall speak?

Then came the doctor, to pronounce the
patient 'wonderfully better'.

And indeed he lived three years,
sound, healthy, and strong.

I saw him the year after at the
annual dinner of the Rationalist Press

Association - the weight of his theories
rolled off the grand old shoulders..

And far down the table I saw Messrs
Horne and Barton; but not being
encouraged.

~~There is a cenotaph~~ There is a cenotaph
in the family vault. Following the
usual recital of the virtues of the
~~deceased~~ deceased, written in
smiling irony by his own hand,
comes this text:

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the
children's teeth are set on edge."

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