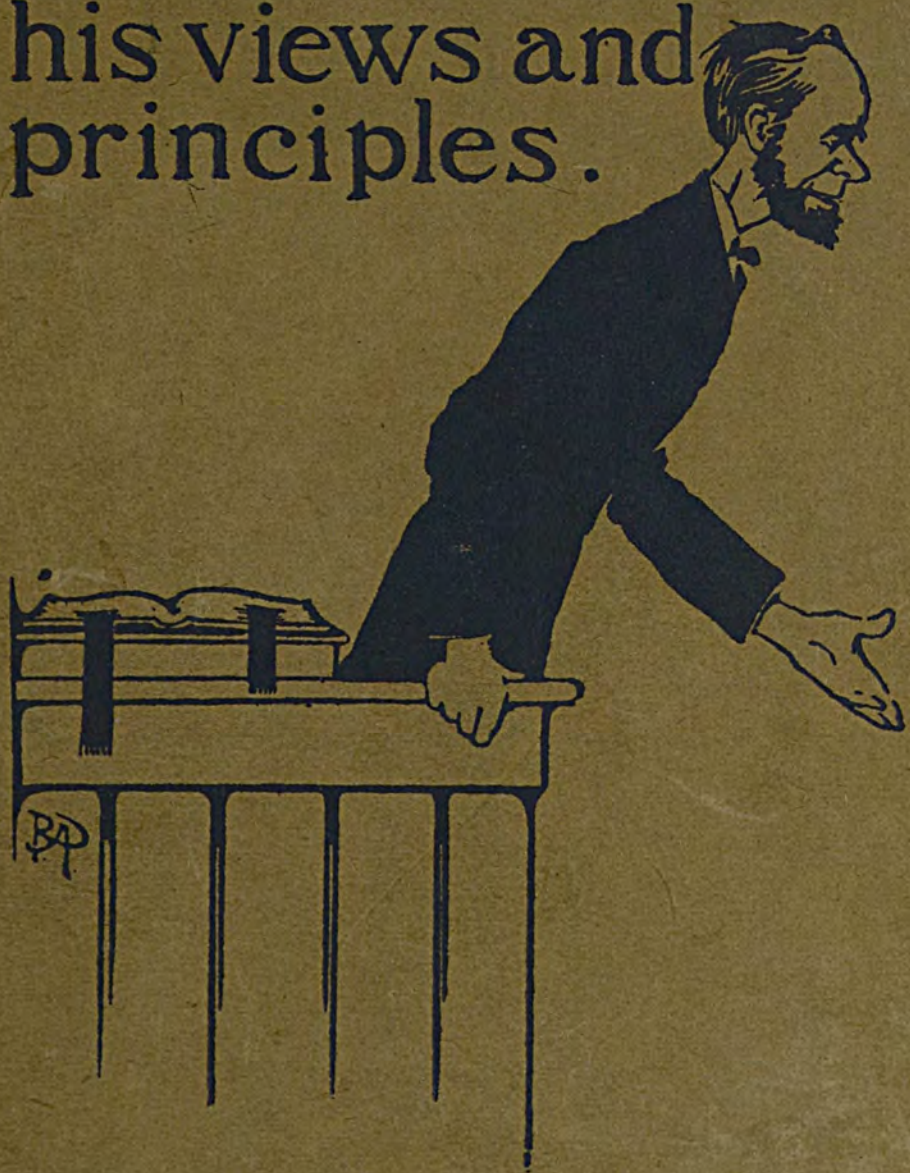
Dr. STIGGINS:
his views and principles.



ARTHUR MACHEN.

DR. STIGGINS

HIS VIEWS AND PRINCIPLES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY

HIEROGLYPHICS

THE HOUSE OF SOULS

Including "The Great God Pan" and "The Three Impostors"

Dr. Stiggins: his Views and Principles. A Series of Interviews by Arthur Machen

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CONTENTS

I

PROTESTANTISM AND PRESERVED MEAT—MORAL AND POLITICAL DIGNITY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1

II

HISTORY MUST GO—A LITTLE CHRISTIAN'S THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN 21

III

A POPISH POET—DEMOCRACY THE TOUCHSTONE OF OUR FAITH—FREE CHURCHES IN HEAVEN 37

IV

WHAT IS TRUE PATRIOTISM?—OUR CORRUPT STAGE—SUPERSTITION IN THE NEWSPAPER 64

V

Immoral Sculptures—The Domesticated Critic—The Right Place for Shakespeare 89

VI

The Free Churches the heirs of Evolution, and the only Catholic Church of to-day 118

Dr. STIGGINS

HIS VIEWS AND PRINCIPLES

Deus venerunt Gentes in hæreditatem tuam, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum, posuerunt Jerusalem in pomorum custodiam.—Psalmus lxxviii.

Vineam de Ægypto transtulisti, ejecisti Gentes, et plantasti eam . . . Exterminavit eam aper de silva, et singularis ferus depastus est eam.—Psalmus lxxix.

The beastly Covenanters . . . hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved.—Sir Walter Scott.

DR. STIGGINS

I

Protestantism and Preserved Meat—Moral and Political Dignity of the United States of America.

I have been watching for some time past, and with considerable anxiety, the discussion of the so-called "Meat Packing Scandals" in America. You, as an earnest Liberal and as a Free Churchman, must have seen the reports to which I allude, for I am sure you agree with me that the rivers of printer's ink are not the least amongst those which, the Inspired Writer tells us, make glad the City of God. No; you are right; I am far from using the phrase in any of the superstitious senses dear to the mediævalists or pseudo-primitive writers. Holy Writ, as has been well observed, is not only a kernel but a shell, not only an eternal message, but a local and (shall we say?) a temporary pronouncement. The author of these words was, no doubt, thinking of Jerusalem, a city whose largely imaginary

glories would not compensate a modern thinker for the lack of the elements of sanitation and of democratic government. The dogmas of the writer were no doubt clearly enough defined—to us, of course, they would be impossible—but we have no reason to suppose that his drains were in the like case. Indeed, it is highly improbable that such things existed in any form at the period in which these words were written, and I need scarcely remind you that the sense of Liberalism and of the Free Churches is not uncertain on the point of Dogma versus Drains. The "City of God" then, as the Inspired Writer viewed it, was, probably, something very different from the City of God to which modern progress is daily approximating; and I need scarcely say that the visions of mediæval dreamers, of men who lived in the heated opium den of Catholicism and Feudalism, are still less likely to image forth the Model City of to-day. The old Hebrew who used the phrase thought of Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish Patriotism, the seat of the Temple with its Holy of Holies, its hidden rites performed by a sacerdotal hierarchy; the writer of the Middle Ages had in his mind some pinnacled and climbing town that rose roof by roof, gable by gable, spire by spire to the vast far-lifted towers of the cathedral, where the idolatrous mass was daily offered: we, wiser far than Jew or Catholic, read the words and think of Manchester or

Leeds or Sheffield. Why do you start? You are surely not deluded by what has been called the superstition of antiquity, by the false glamour which a few writers have unfortunately woven about past centuries and forgotten arts? The mediæval city was dirty and insanitary in a high degree, liberty was unknown, cruelty was rampant, a degrading superstition had usurped the place of true religion, Free Churchmen were unheard of. Can such a place as this symbolise to us the City of God? Surely not. Again, I say, Manchester must present a far more appropriate image of that ideal to which creation moves. Flourishing and prosperous, surrounded by the princely mansions of those whom honest toil, business instincts, and enlightened piety have raised to a high place, watered by streams whose refreshing blackness testifies that they no longer minister to the selfish pleasures and the cruel sports of the feudal lord; this, surely, is the true *Civitas Dei* to which the old Hebrew unconsciously looked forward. The æsthete will tell you Manchester is smoky. It is true that it is veiled, but so was the Temple of Jerusalem. The jets of steam that shoot out from apertures in those sturdy walls whisper to me the names of Cobden and Bright, Cobden and Bright; and these, let me tell you, were truer and holier saints than any that Rome commemorates in her storied calendars. Jerusalem was on a hill; it was aris-

tocratic; Manchester stands on a democratic plain. Walk through her ways, note how street is a facsimile of street and house of house. No proud castle scowls from its sullen battlements on the peaceful citizens, no flaunting spire rises high above every roof denying with each stone the great Evangel of Equality; even Owen's College does not oppress the humble workman with a superhuman (and therefore offensive) sense of beauty. On every side the busy hum of labour; to our ears more solemn than the rolling organ, holier than the sound of the harps in the strange vision of the Jewish fakir which closes our Bibles; more solemn and more holy because every rattle of the improved machinery tells us that some supporter of enlightened policy and Liberal religious organisations is getting richer and richer every moment. Here, indeed, we have the true City of God; and this is the city which, as I observed, is made glad by those inky rivers which flow through the columns of a free press.

And this brings me back to the point from which I set out. I took it for granted that you are a diligent student of the newspaper, and such being the case you must have followed the reports of what are called the Chicago Packing Scandals; and I hope I shall convince you of the very bad effect those reports must have had. I may surprise you by saying that I wish it had been found possible to suppress or at least to

minimise the whole affair. I may perhaps surprise you still more by saying that I wish with still greater fervour that a body of representative Free Churchmen could be appointed to regulate in some measure the publication of news and comment that is likely to be harmful to the best interests of the people. The Freedom of the Press! My dear friend, do not let us be slaves either to a phrase or to a false appearance of consistency; do not let us be the slaves of anything or anybody, but "Liberals," Free Men, in deed and word. I agree with you with all my heart in reprobating any system which remotely resembles the censorship of the press and of that free speech which is every Englishman's birthright. Remember that every Free Churchman is a descendant of Milton; I rejoice in it, I make my boast of it all the day long, but remember also that the great Milton, that "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies," that prophet who saw the day of the Divorce Court from afar off and was glad; remember, I say, that Milton served a Government—England's noblest Government—that made the recitation of the Prayer Book, the "mass in masquerade," a penal offence. You see, don't you, the wide distinction between the censorship of tyrants and bigots such as Charles and Laud, with their detestable Star Chamber, and the wise restraints of England's great Captain Cromwell? But I am afraid that if you are not

quite clear upon this point you must have failed to grasp those basic principles which lie at the root of all true Liberalism and Protestantism. Let us go a little farther back in the past: the ordinary observer sees, perhaps, but little difference between Queen Mary's executions by fire and Queen Elizabeth's executions by tearing the heart from the living man. But if we are Protestants we know that the former were the monstrous cruelties of devils in human form, while the latter were entirely justifiable punishments. Again, the Liberal knows that the severities of the feudal law in France were the work of fiends, while the so-called massacres in the prisons during the Revolution were a melancholy necessity, and the wholesale executions under what has been called "The Terror" in reality deeds of mercy. I hope I have convinced you of the need of being on your guard against confusing things which are really essentially distinct in spite of surface similarities. Perhaps a more modern instance may be helpful: your blood must often have boiled at the way in which the late government packed the magistracy with Tories. But you surely do not see any resemblance between this most flagitious proceeding and the efforts of the friends of the present administration to ensure that Liberalism shall be efficiently represented on the Bench? Good; then I hope you will not confuse my proposition for a Board of Press

Overseers with the tyrannical and abominable system of the censorship.

Besides, we have already the elements of such a system worked in a rough and ready way by the editors themselves. You must have noticed that few Liberal journals devote much space to meetings of Tories and Churchmen, and every effort is very properly made to minimise the importance of such gatherings—a proceeding which, I need not tell you, is entirely different from the boycotting tactics of the Conservative Press. I say, then, that this most salutary system should be extended and regulated; and I do not think that Englishmen need be afraid to entrust the liberties of the press to the hands of a committee chosen from the Free Church Council, seeing that they have virtually already entrusted their whole destinies to the care of the great Evangelical bodies.

This granted, then, I want to shew you what infinite harm might have been avoided if such a committee had been in existence lately, for I cannot doubt that it would have reduced the reports of the so-called scandals of Chicago to a very modest compass—if indeed it allowed any mention of this most unfortunate matter to appear at all. You think these reports were for the general good, that their publication tended to check the poisoning of the public, that the "Trusts" which make vast fortunes by selling indescribable filth as food should be "shown

up"? Are you quite sure that you see the direction in which you are tending? Where did these alleged scandals take place? In America. And what is the government of that favoured land? You surely cannot be ignorant of the fact that it is perhaps the only country in existence which enjoys the inestimable blessings of a pure democracy. France, it is true, is Republican; but France is an old country bound by the galling chains of history and tradition, bound still more grievously by the chains of that accursed system of clericalism which, as one of our most respected leaders observed the other day, is indeed "the enemy." In spite of the crowning mercy of the Revolution, in spite of the work accomplished by such heroes as Danton, Marat, Robespierre, one must fear that the past is not altogether blotted from the National Memory; the chimerical glories of knights and nobles and kings still linger, I am afraid, in the minds of the people; those great decorated rubbish-heaps called cathedrals still cumber the land, witnesses to the hypocrisy and superstition and wastefulness of the past; and cunning bigoted priests such as Francis of Sales and Fénélon, with hysterical women of doubtful character like Joan of Arc, still have their deluded votaries. England, certainly, has many blessings—at the present moment her destinies are practically guided by our good friend Dr. Clifford, and a Sunday

afternoon in London is always a cheering and a helpful spectacle—but how much of what I have said of France applies to our own country. We, too, have our wretched traditions of kings, and knights, and "saints," we too have our cathedrals and our churches, survivals from a Reformation that was far too lax in its work, and I am afraid I must add, we have a sovereign who countenances that awful institution called the Turf. No; it is in America alone that one may observe the fine flavour of democracy, untainted, and unalloyed. The great States have no history of rapine, plunder, adultery, and cruelty to dazzle their eyes under the specious name of chivalry. No "kings" or "knights" freed that happy country; but stern men of business with an eye to the main chance. Nay; let us go further back into history: in Mexico and in South America the poor Indian still survives to bear witness to the Popish cruelty which was exercised on his ancestors; but vainly will you seek for the nation of the Massachusetts in the neighbourhood of Boston; the Pilgrim Fathers scorned to use the "devildoms of Spain," and saw that swift extermination was the greatest mercy to the unhappy race of whose country they had taken possession. The Englishman blushes, unless he is a flunkey, at the "Dieu et Mon Droit" which denies Democracy from the walls of every Police Station. How much nobler were the

device: "Simple Bible teaching and the London County Council"; how much nobler *is* the American motto: "The Spoils to the Victors." Ah! there are no murderous Edwards or Henrys, no tyrant Charleses or Jameses on the roll of American Presidents: there you see names like Jackson and Pierce and Buchanan, which make the cheek glow and the heart beat high. They talk of the statesmanship, of the power of kings: what statesmanship, what power can compare with Lincoln's great action when with a stroke of the pen he transmuted a race of ignorant, incapable, "impossible" negroes into free American citizens with votes to give or to sell, with heads which, though woolly, were as high as the heads of any white man? I know that there is a legend to the effect that the negroes turned the Legislatures into orgies, and ruined the finances of the Southern States for years; but I need scarcely point out that this cannot be true, since if it were so, all men would not be equal—which is absurd, and a proposition which would land us in the inexpressibly grotesque conclusion that there may be something to be said for our House of Lords.

Well, we all know what a great country America is; and we know that it is great because it is at once Protestant and Democratic. It is great because in place of our parasitical Establishment it has a powerful Oil Trust under

the control of a professed member of the Baptist Church, it is great because instead of a hereditary monarch it has a President who relies on no ancestral claims or storied pedigree, but on judicious arrangements with the benevolent Trust I have mentioned. It is great because instead of a corrupt House of Lords it has a Senate and a Congress composed entirely of professional politicians whose incomes depend on the acuteness of their business instincts; it is great because it produces a larger proportion of lunatics than any country on earth; and if you have read your Wendell Holmes you will remember that a high lunacy rate is an unfailing test of a country's intellectual supremacy. You are right; all Protestant countries shew their mental superiority to Popery in this striking and convincing manner. And what a moral dignity the Americans have! You remember how the whole land rose in its righteous indignation over the long martyrdom of the unhappy Cubans. There was no counting of the cost, no dread of the haughty power of Spain; it was enough for America that the Cuban rebels were not given exactly what they wanted, and at such devilish cruelty as this the heart of the States grew hot. What do you say of the Filipinos? Don't you know that they had groaned for centuries under the hideous Spanish yoke, and that America set them free? My dear friend, if you doubt such

a proposition as that, you will end by doubting that every monastery communicated by a secret passage with a nunnery, you will deny the well-known fact that in these nunneries the walling-up of live nuns was a part of the daily routine of the establishment, you will hesitate to say that every confessor is a monster of cunning and debauchery. Do you know or do you not know that the San Francisco earthquake and the Tory Press are alike the work of the Jesuits; whose motto is, as you are aware, "the end justifies the means"? Well, that being so, I repeat that America freed the Filipinos from Spanish tyranny. They didn't want to be free after the American pattern of freedom? So much the worse for them. What they want is not of the slightest consequence to anybody. Haven't you seen it laid down by a consensus of Liberal journalists and politicians that the Chinese coolies in South Africa are miserable slaves who pant for freedom? It is true that the coolies themselves decline to be free; but that, as you will have seen, does not affect the question in the least. So, if the Filipinos, as you say, object to be free citizens of the greatest country in the world, they must be convinced of their error by such methods of suasion as are available. But I do not believe for a moment in the report that the American soldiers tortured their prisoners; and if large quantities of water were poured down the throats of these

misguided persons with the very laudable object of gaining important information, I am sure that the water in question was of very superior quality to any fluid used in a somewhat similar manner in the dungeons of the accursed Inquisition. In fact you may depend upon it that the Inquisitors never employed anything so innocent as water in their devilries. The great Temperance Movement has never flourished (how could it?) under the Upas Tree of Romanism, and I should not be surprised to hear that many a martyr's torments were aggravated by the diabolical refinement of compelling him to swallow enormous quantities of the best sherry.

But we were considering the moral dignity of the United States of America. I don't think there is anything grander in history than the American People rebuking Russia for its cruel treatment of the Jews. Let me tell you there is no common or customary greatness here. You have doubtless read the very interesting accounts of the summary executions of negroes in the Southern States—"lynchings" I think they are called in the purer, more vivid English of the Great Republic. Well, I have no doubt that these summary executions are a necessity, though perhaps a painful one. Indeed, they *must* be both necessary and justifiable, for they are the will of the people. You know the adage: *Vox populi vox Dei*, you know as well as I do that the People are always right. It is for that

reason that we are Liberals, that we base all our principles upon the absolute, eternal, infallible supremacy of the people's will. *Ergo*, as the old logicians say, if the people of America choose to burn negroes alive with what some would call refinements of slow and lingering torment: then the people of America must be right in doing so. But mark: while the left hand, as it were, of this great nation dribbles a little more kerosene on the slowly carbonizing form of its free and equal (but coloured) citizen, the other, raised aloft in all the awfulness of intense moral dignity rebukes the cruelties of guilty Russia and takes the poor hunted Jew under the protecting folds of the banner of the Great Republic! Am I not right? Is not such a picture unique in the world's history?

The Higher Criticism teaches us that the collection known popularly as "Isaiah" was in reality written by fifty-two persons of the same name, who all prophesied many years after the event. But could the whole fifty-two, with the assistance of "Ezekiel" and "Jeremiah," ever have reached such a splendid height of denunciation as that to which I have drawn your attention?

I do not know whether I need elaborate the greatness of this splendid Democracy. You know what the marriage law of America is like: there are variations, of course, in the different States, and I am told that in one commonwealth

divorce is as restricted as the cunning priests would have it in England. Still, in most States the law stands as though Milton had framed it. The good sense, the inspiration rather, of the people has triumphed, and vice has shrunk back affrighted to her accustomed haunts of clericalism and reaction: for who would be a libertine in a land where a divorce is as easily obtainable as a dog license, who would risk the shame, the moral degradation, the expense of keeping a mistress when all the worldly advantages of such a course can be obtained by going through a holy and harmless ceremony? You understand now the moral altitude of every American; you comprehend the height from which the citizen of New York and of San Francisco looks down on the deplorable corruption of our effete aristocracy. The fellow-countrymen of Tweed and Oakey Hall carry their own moral atmosphere with them; they would perish else when they condescend to visit the gilded infection of our House of Lords.

Yes! America is Democracy triumphant; the goal to which we are pressing here, the ideal towards which all noble hearts are striving. But—how long can we proclaim the glad tidings of liberty if the offensive and doubtless exaggerated details to which I have alluded are made public in the press? You and I are staunch, I know; I am sure that there is not a member of the Free Church Council who would not see his

friends eating ordure, poisoned rat, preserved Lithuanian packer, spittle, diseased meat, and noxious chemicals gladly, joyfully, thankfully; knowing, as he would know, that Protestantism was making a handsome profit, that the Eagles of the Great Republic were laughing consumedly. Yes, yes; the Free Churches have always been on the side of Free Trade, and I am sure that they always will be. Cobden and Bright did not live and work in vain, and so long as a mixture of glucose and vitriol is called beer, while tallow and beastliness in general is sold as butter, while thousands of superfluous babies fall yearly victims to interesting and complicated chemical formulæ disguised as milk, while gangrened sausages shew the way to glory (and a pretty profit)—so long shall their names be "freshly remembered" in flowing bowls of substitutes. "Adulteration is a form of competition": the man who denies that great axiom is certainly a Tory, and probably a Churchman or a Romanist. Those were the words of honest John Bright; and so long as England emblazons them on her banner all will be well with her.

But how about the thoughtless masses? Have they the self-sacrifice, the moral strength, the confidence in Liberal principles that are requisite in such a crisis? Can we not imagine them declaring that if democracy implies the poisoning and adulteration of every conceivable article of food and drink they would rather be without

democracy? Here, they may say, is a great free nation, a great commonwealth of sovereign citizens; without king or lords or Established Church; a government for the people, by the people, through the people. And the result seems to be that the sovereign citizens in question have to feed on dung, poisoned rat, and tuberculous cow; while the representatives of the sovereign citizens aforesaid grow rich on the bribes administered by the purveyors of these delicacies. Cannot you see the deplorable results that may follow from this specious though fallacious reasoning? I am older than you, and I have learned to dread the devilish strength of the forces of reaction. Believe me, the enemy is always on the alert; there are not wanting those who have read the annals of Popery and Tyranny with, I am afraid, no honest aims. In the bad old days, in the ages described so justly as dark, they tell us that adulteration was a crime, that "making a corner" was a felony, that our worthy friends in Chicago would certainly have been hanged to the nearest tree. Ah, I see you shudder, and you do well; but have you forgotten the fleshpots of Egypt, after which some writer (who lived many centuries after the probably mythical Moses), tells us the children of Israel lusted? Believe me, the old Hebrew Book has not lost its freshness; here in England, as in some possible desert which could not have been near

Sinai, we have many who are willing and ready to lust after the fleshpots, to clamour for beef which is not tuberculous, to scorn the poisoned but spicy rat, to murmur against fragments of their brother men appearing on the breakfast table under the comely disguise of chicken and tongue. The fleshpots of Egypt! Yes, my friend, even though the Higher Criticism should inform us that Egypt in the traditional sense never existed, that the Red Sea is a forgery of P^1 J^2 L^4 and P^6, that Moses was either a Stone Pillar or the Midnight Sky (all of which conclusions seem to me, I confess, infinitely nobler than the traditional view): even then how true the moral remains. Yes; now, as then, the people are a stiff-necked generation, ready, as ever, to place their carnal appetites above their eternal gain. The so-called Israelites in the old fable wearied of the Heavenly Manna, and forgot the Promised Land: and so the mob to day may weary of the gifts of Packingtown: formaldehyde has ceased, they may say, to charm our palates, glucose is sweet for us no longer, oil of vitriol and gangrened pork will not serve our dainty and luxurious taste, we are weary of the dung of rats. We should like healthy beef, not potted Scandinavian, we want real milk in our tea, we wish for beer with our dinner, not chemical reactions, we are anhungered for pork which is not green with gangrene —in a word, for the flesh-pots of Egypt. And

at last they may declare that if Chicago and its products are the results of Liberalism and Protestantism then they would rather not be Protestants or Liberals!

Ah! that old writer who could not have been Moses knew the human heart; knew the terrible appeal of fleshly lusts. Before the eyes of the wandering tribesmen the tempter dangled the Egyptian feasts: can we be sure that he will not repeat his infernal artifice in our day? There are prophets of Baal who are only too ready to insinuate their praises of old English beef and beer, home-grown and home-brewed (the vile Protectionists!) who dispute the well-known fact that in the Dark Ages the people were cowed, half-starved slaves by their stories of yeomen who fought at Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt (trust me the Devil never lacks an argument); who fill foolish ears with mischievous fables of some imagined time when honey was made by the bee, butter of milk, and bread of wheat. Nay, some of them go further still, and picture to their dupes, say, the Spanish peasant living in content on the produce of his garden, drinking the light red wine from his own vineyard; indifferent to the mineral wealth of his country, not anxious to live in Manchester, careless as to doing business, happy in an atmosphere almost devoid of sulphur and carbonic acid gas, unwilling to be a Baptist, not clamouring for tinned products, crossing himself when he

passes the village crucifix—sunken, in fact, in every conceivable degradation, as you and I know. Yes, there are men who are willing to compare this poor unhappy wretch with the blest denizens of Chicago, who dare to dispute the glories of democracy; and who shall say whether such insidious arguments as these may not prevail?

And now, I think, I have made you understand my regret at the publication of these deplorable details. I am convinced that this so-called scandal is the work of the forces of reaction; I suspect a conspiracy between the Jesuits and the English Church Union. I demand the immediate passing of two short Acts—one to make it a penal offence to manufacture or to sell any pure article of food or drink, the other for the humanising and liberalising of all churches and cathedrals belonging to the Anglican and Romanist denominations—half of them to become places of meeting for the Free Churches, the other half to be converted into miniature Packingtowns. Dr. Clifford shall preach in St. Paul's Cathedral, and rivers of putrid lard shall make glad the idolatrous pile at Westminster.

II

History must go—A little Christian's thoughts of Heaven.

Have you realised, do you think, the full extent to which we poison the streams at the very fountain-heads? Listen to this:—

"The history of England has been too often written in the 'drum and trumpet style,' and that of the English people too much neglected. Numberless books have been written, and the imagination racked to idealise in visionary style the doubtful deeds of a class who were quite apart from the real life of the nation. Romanticists deal with episodes in the careers of that class, adopt artificial standards of virtue and morals, and by their genius cast a glamour of greatness and nobility over deeds which, judged by a righteous standard, are little short of ruffianism."

Excellent, you say, but again I ask, do you quite see where these admirable sentiments should lead you? It is easy enough to say that history should be recast, that it has been too long in the hands of the Tories and the Churchmen; but the question arises, how is this to be done? Consider the origins of our history.

Were the early Britons Protestants? Truth forces us to declare that they were Pagans, and not merely Pagans but subject to that most revolting of all influences, a sacerdotal caste—the famous or infamous Druids. Little, I believe, is known of this priestly order; still there is enough for our purpose. We know that it was not permissible for any Briton without education, without training, without authority to rise and proclaim himself as good a Druid as any of those beings who celebrated their mysterious rites in the groves of Mona; we know that the priests kept education in their own hands and exacted elaborate trials from their neophytes; we know that the practice of human sacrifice was only too common. What is all this system but the Church of England in an undeveloped state, exacting its tale of infant souls to be bound up and sacrificed in the rigid framework of dogma, proud of its pompous ordinations, arrogant in repelling the claims of better men to the full privileges of the Gospel. Look again to the organisation of the State; what do we hear but stories of chieftains and princely families, of Caractacus and Boadicea? Why is there nothing said of Caractacus's cook? Why is history silent as to Boadicea's lady's maid? Always the same story; the people are neglected; and when Britain was invaded, have we a list of the private soldiers' names? No, indeed, this island was invaded by Julius

Cæsar, as if the patient legionaries were nothing —and so the story goes on; a roll of so-called "great men," while the mass of the people is forgotten and despised. I declare to you that the reading of history makes my blood boil: century after century tells the same story, in sickening monotony illustrious name follows illustrious name on the slavish page, saint and hero, king and poet and knight, in an endless repetition, till one is forced to cry out in indignant remonstrance, to ask the historian whether he has forgotten that the English People ever existed.

Yet this is the farrago that we teach our children, this is the food on which we expect to rear good Free Churchmen and Liberals. Only the other day my little boy came home from school, as I could see, in a state of perplexity and distress. At first I was inclined to think that the master (who I believe to be a Jesuit in disguise), had been revolting the child's mind with the fetichism of Infant Baptism, or with some such degrading dogma, but I found that I was mistaken. The child had been learning about the Norman Conquest, and as he told me the story he burst into tears, and said at last: "But, papa, why didn't the County Council pass a resolution forbidding that bad man to conquer England? and was Mr. John Burns away for his holiday when they did it?" What could I say to the poor boy? I have brought

him up in the belief that the County Council, the Free Churches, and John Burns have made England what it is, and was I to try his childish faith by confessing that none of these was in existence in the year 1066? I do not know whether I was right or wrong, but, right or wrong, I told him that the Norman Conquest was the result of the Tories being in office, and with that answer he was content.

But you see my point: the whole trend of history is absolutely undemocratic; it falsifies modern and enlightened principles on every page and in every chapter. The tendency of modern thought goes to show that the people are everything. To them the wisdom of the nation has given the supreme power; from them, we believe, all inspiration in things political and ecclesiastical proceeds. We scoff, and we scoff rightly, at the old aristocratic-sacerdotal idea that all good gifts are from above, that the universe is a hierarchy, an ordered system of graded functions and powers, in which there are varied excellencies and functions, one star exceeding another star in glory, the oak having one splendour, the daisy another. On the contrary: we affirm that all good gifts are from below, we say that wisdom is to be found in great masses of people after due preparation by political agencies, that the ministerial functions are delegated by the populace. With all due reverence, we decline to consider the lilies; we

prefer to consider the cabbages and the Spanish onions. Lilies are picturesque? I daresay they are; some people have found the monarchy and the papacy picturesque; but have these things benefited the people? We refuse then this analogy *in toto*, as we used to say at college; we declare that daisies make excellent timber, that the blossom of the potato surpasses the proudest blooms in aristocratic gardens, that the oak is a shameless and useless consumer of the soil. Yes; but with what heart can we go on preaching these truths while at the same time we allow our children to read the so-called History of England, which diametrically opposes every one of these conclusions? We might bear to read of the conquest of England, if it were described as an irresistible popular movement; how can we honestly teach our children that this fair land was subdued by William the Conqueror?

You ask my remedy. It is a simple one enough: I would abolish history. Nay; why do you start? Is the world always to be the slave of the past? Is generation after generation to be bound fast in the swaddling bands of antiquity? There was a worthy Puritan in the seventeenth century who proposed that the new order should be consolidated by the burning of all the records of England, and I heartily wish that this most sensible suggestion had been carried out. I confess I grind my teeth when I pass the Record Office; for what is it but a

great storehouse of evil precedents; an armoury from which the enemy draws arguments to support his infamous and absurd conclusions. A Romanist Cardinal once said that the appeal to history was treason to the church; I say it is treason to the people and the people's cause. We know that all Kings were remorseless tyrants; the antiquary with his wretched parchments proves many of them to have been eminently human beings, brave, courteous, and wise. We know that the Church is and always has been a conspiracy against the human race; we are confronted with documents shewing how the Church fed the hungry and clothed the naked. Nay; the minds of the people are poisoned from the same source with tales of old time merriment, of kindly traffic between rich and poor, of days when there were more spires than factory chimneys, of charity given with love and received without shame.

I say, once for all, in the words of our classical professor, *Delenda est Carthago*—history must be abolished. After all, our part is in the future, is it not? We are not placed in this world to delve in the graves of the past, that our minds may be enslaved by ghosts of the bad old days that are gone for ever, that in poring over the inflated records of an imaginary chivalry we may forget our Burns and our Bannerman, our Clifford and our Macnamara. Let us take example by our brothers across the

ocean, who have given the world such a wonderful lesson in progress and virtue. The American child's lessons in history are simple enough; he is briefly taught that all Kings are bad, that all aristocrats are bad, that all priests are bad; that the dawn of the world's true history begins with the Declaration of Independence, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is a picturesque way of alluding to the United States. See that great nation freed from all the toils of tradition, from all the bigotry and tyranny of the past; and consider what we should be if we could escape in like manner from our dismal roll of conquests and victories, of battles and pageants, of kings and warriors, of saints and bishops. Soon, I hope, we shall have done a great deal; we shall have substituted for the unintelligible utterances of an obsolete dogmatism called creeds the simpler, more human profession of:—"I believe in the County Council Syllabus"; but how much more remains to be accomplished. Let us, I say, shut up the poisonous wells, let the springs of history be condemned, let us begin our text-books with the simple sentence:—"Once upon a time there was a very good man named Campbell-Bannerman."

And why should not this system be carried right through the books we give our children. I can remember an old geography book from which I learned the lesson that all Protestant

countries were prosperous and that all Popish ones were poor, shewing that Protestantism is true Christianity, since Protestants have naturally inherited all the blessings pronounced on the very rich in the New Testament. Thus we children were shewn how everywhere Protestants had overcome the world in accordance with the Gospel precept, and I remember my good mother telling me that Romanists never had anything better to eat than frogs or potatoes. Surely there is a good deal to be said for such a system of education as this; surely it ought to be the basis of all our education if England is to maintain that Protestant character which has made the nation what it is. We know (for Miss Corelli has told us) that a great conspiracy is on foot, that Romish gold is being lavished throughout the country, that most of the parsons are in direct correspondence with the Vatican. Indeed, it is impossible for the most casual observer to avoid the impression that mischief is in the air; as one passes along the streets one sees church doors open on every side, the mutter of the confessional sounds like the hiss of some venomous snake through the wholesome turmoil of business, and only the other day a friend of mine pointed out to me that a piano-organ in the street was playing a Popish anthem called *Gloria in excelsis*. Are we not to strike a blow for our homes and hearths? Are the men of England

asleep? Unless we are beware we shall wake up too late, and find the monasteries have replaced factories, that the brave glow of the blast-furnace has given way to the infernal fires of the Inquisition.

I ask, then, for a scheme of education permeated by Protestantism. A little child was once asked why John was such a good man, and the answer came swiftly: "Because he was a Baptist." That is the right spirit, and I want to see it diffused through all that we teach our children. I want the children to grow up with the love of the healthier England of to-day; I would sternly restrain the teachers who proposed to bewilder those infant minds with the catalogue of crimes and villainies which masquerade as history. It may be necessary for them to learn these things, when they are older; when in the poet's words "shadows of the penitentiary" close around them; it is, unfortunately, necessary that we should make ourselves acquainted with many forms of evil as we descend through the vale of life. But why should we perplex and distress these tender little souls with the "deeds which are little short of ruffianism"—to use the words of the author I quoted a little while ago? We do not teach the little ones the story of Charles Peace or of Sixteen-String Jack, we do not force them to acquire the technique of coining or of forgery, and I have yet to learn that the

Newgate Calendar is an indispensable volume in our Sunday School Libraries. Then why should we insist on these little vessels being defiled with tales which are even more flagitious and disgraceful to our common humanity? Why should books be placed within reach of the young which can only minister poison? Why should their minds, at the most impressionable age, be forced to batten on such horrors as Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, Trafalgar and Waterloo, on the (probably imaginary) achievements of the Black Prince and the Duke of Wellington? Why should we stain their imaginations with accounts of the landing of Augustine and his gang of idolatrous monks? You talk of the love of country; we know only too well what a chapter of iniquities that phrase covers, and for my part I heartily wish that the phrase and all that it implies could be forgotten. It may be necessary, as I say, that, later on, they should acquire some knowledge of these things; some wise and tender friend, perhaps the mother, may break to them by degrees the orgie of abominations, the roll of shame which we call the history of England. Then, with but little danger, they may learn how their misguided and brutal forefathers fought and died for their country, how they drank pure beer and ate beef all the year round, how they were plunged in darkness, superstition, and ignorance till the "Gospel light first shone from

Boleyn's eyes," as someone beautifully expresses it. Then they may be informed of the terrible fact that there were no Free Churches in the Dark Ages—no Free Churches, no processions of unemployed, no workhouses, no East End, no submerged tenth, no margarine, no great factories, none of the things that make us so happy in these better days that we live in. Then they may hear—and I am sure they will hear with horror—that there are things called bishops still suffered to pollute the air, that in every parish a sham-priest still hides his head from the scorn of honest men—but with the poison will come the antidote, for they will be old enough to understand that the darkness of the Dark Ages was due to the absence of all the blessings I have enumerated; their principles will have been firmly established, and they will be fired with a holy zeal to complete the good work that has been so well begun.

But let them not be taught all this while they are young; not while they are lisping at their mothers' knees their little hymns, their undenominational prayers, their simple Bible teaching about "a good man who lived long ago." No; I would have all children taught as I have taught mine. The past with all its horrors is veiled from their eyes; they know that God loves them and that the County Council cares for them; that though Earth hath many a noble city Battersea doth all excel; and last but not

least they know that Mr. John Burns is always near them. For them these simple streets about us are all the world, and though I have heard Lavender Dale called monotonous I am sure it is not so to them. The architecture of the Baptist Church to which my ministry is given represents to them the last word of beauty in building; its combination of cast-iron tracery, classic columns in stucco, and fancy design in vari-coloured bricks will always remain in their minds as a vision of celestial loveliness. Last Sunday I had been telling the little ones about Heaven, and after the lesson my boy Albert came up to me with his eyes brimming over with tears, and his lip trembling. I asked the little man what was the matter. "Oh, father,' he sobbed, "I've been thinking of what you told us, and I'm sure I know what heaven will be really like." I was a good deal touched, and patting the brave little fellow on the head, I answered: "Are you, my son? Will you tell father about it?" Gulping down his tears, he replied: "I think it will be like Battersea Park, only ever so much larger. And there won't be any games at all going on, and all the gentlemen and ladies, and little boys and girls will be dressed like they are on Sunday. The gentlemen will all be in such beautiful shiny black clothes, with bright silk hats and white shirts, every one of them, and the young ones will have fair moustaches and small chins

and bright blue silk ties, and all the old gentlemen will have white beards like fringes all round their throats, and every one will have a Bible in one hand and an umbrella in the other, though the sun will shine just as it did at Clacton when we went on the Sunday School excursion last summer. And the ladies will be in lovely dresses like mother's best; red and blue and green, all new, like the parlour curtains, with large roses in their hats, and all the little boys and girls will be in velveteen and lace. And the flowers in the beds will be ever so much larger than they are now; there will be geraniums as big as breakfast cups, and double dahlias bigger than my hat, and all sorts of flowers, as bright as they were at the Wesleyan Flower Show at Clapham Rise, and much brighter than any of the flowers that the bad rich people have in their horrid hothouses. And Gawd will sit on a great white throne in the middle, almost as fine as the Albert Memorial that I saw when you took us to Hyde Park, and Dr. Clifford will tell everybody how bad the Tories were, and Mr. John Burns will talk about the House of Lords, and everybody will be so happy that they will say 'cheers,' and 'laughter,' and 'hear, hear' for ever and ever. There won't be any bishops or priests or popes there, because they are all burning in the bad place, and very bad people like Father Damien you told me about when I was

naughty will be burnt worse than anybody, because they tried to deceive the good people, only the nice, good Presbyterian minister found him out. There will be thousands and thousands of angels, like ladies in nightgowns, with very large wings, flying about everywhere as if they were so happy they didn't know what to do; but they will talk a good deal to the ministers, who will all be there. And there will be ever so many harmoniums, and American organs, all playing beautiful hymns, and the little children will give services of song in a large beautiful building just like our church; all about the Kings of Israel and Judah and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Amorites, which will make people feel very good. Then some very nice gentlemen from America will come in and say they come from God's own country, which is almost as good as heaven, and all the angels and the ministers will sing the Glory Song, and then everybody will have tea, with lots of jam."

Do you know that I could scarcely answer my little son? I do not know whether it is a father's partiality, but it seemed to me that in these few simple words, bubbling up from the child's heart, there was more spiritual truth than in all the works of foreign Romanist poets whom it seems the fashion to praise nowadays. I have looked into the works of Dante—you know the book to which I allude—a book oddly,

and I cannot but think irreverently, entitled the *Divine Comedy*. The title, with its theatrical associations, could not fail to jar upon me, as you may imagine, but when I came to examine the work itself I confess I was astonished that such a book should be so openly and widely circulated. You have heard my little son's vision—for so I dare to call it—and you must have been struck, I think, by the total absence of dogma, of that passion for definition which has been the plague of Christianity in the past, and is so still. God sits on a great throne, good men inculcate the duties of citizenship, all raise the voice of praise to the accompaniment of rare and exquisite music, there are services which delight the emotions and instil a knowledge of Bible History. Nay, the picture may be in a sense fanciful, it may not in all respects correspond to the latest conclusions of philosophical thought; but at all events there are no creeds here, no cramping, disturbing dogmas, no pseudo-scientific "theology," no arrogant assumption of authority. And, after all, criticism apart, the English Sunday that our good Puritan ancestors won for us is, to my mind at all events, no bad symbol of that heavenly home for which we are all bound. A child may do much worse than think of heaven as an eternal Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. This, then, I say is the result of the teaching that I would give to the little ones; you will

notice that there is no thought of kings or saints or heroes in the child's mind, no pompous cathedral stuns and dwarfs his imagination, popes and priests are present only as vague embodiments of evil, destined to final punishment; he thinks of the good people about him, of the simple music he has heard Sunday after Sunday, of the eloquent discourses of which I have told him, and thus forms a picture which for all I know, is as "inspired" as the vision of John. I do not understand why Battersea should not be as holy as Patmos, and a Christian child in the England of to-day may, for all I know, have a clearer vision than the Eastern solitary of the first century.

But when I turn from little Albert's simple story to the so-called *Divine Comedy* of Dante; what a gulf yawns between them!

But this opens up a new vista before us, and I think I will defer my remarks on this subject to some succeeding afternoon.

III

A Popish Poet—Democracy the Touchstone of our Faith—Free Churches in Heaven

I think that when you were last kind enough to come and see me I promised, rashly enough, perhaps, to offer some remarks on the Vision of the Italian of the thirteenth century, as contrasted with the Vision of a little child in the England of to-day. I have been considering the subject with some care in the interim, and I hope I shall redeem my promise to your satisfaction, but before I do so I want to say that my phrase, "kind enough to come and see me" is no mere idle compliment. You have been so good as to promise to do your best to put my views before the world, and I assure you that I regard this as a very great service. For, I have long felt that we Free Church ministers have pushed the virtues of modesty and humility so far that in us they have almost become vices. You remember the parable of the Talent in the Napkin? Well, I am not quite sure whether, in the classic phrase, we ministers ought not to say *de nobis fabula narratur;* we have shrunk so sedulously into the shade, we have so strenuously avoided the pitfalls of advertise-

ment, that I am really afraid that we are in danger of hiding the Talent and concealing our Light. I am not speaking at haphazard, for the question has been before me for some time, and I have gone rather carefully through the files of the leading Liberal organs for the past few weeks. What is the result? Here is my analysis of the paper which is said to be most closely identified with the cause of the Free Churches. You see that in the last three weeks Dr. Clifford's name occurs but twenty-five times, and that the total number of times that other Free Church ministers' names are mentioned is only two hundred. The case is much the same with this other journal which is also popularly supposed to be a supporter of Liberalism and the Cause of Humanity in politics and religion; and I do not wonder that some of our friends are beginning to suspect the existence of wire-pulling and to hint at a deliberate boycott. I say I do not wonder at the existence of such a state of feeling, and I must say that I have known a very good case made out on feebler evidence than this. For what do we find in these papers? Here is "News from the Vatican" occurring three times in three weeks; here is "The Pope's Health" twice; here, and here again is a "Pronouncement of the Most Holy Synod," and here we have "Pastoral Letter of the Patriarch of Jerusalem"; a valuable piece of news which you will find in

three papers which call themselves Liberal. "Liberal"; save the mark! What, I ask, has the health of that unhappy old man, the self-styled "Prisoner of the Vatican," to do with Protestant Englishmen? Did Hampden die, did the stern, sure justice of England lead the wretched Laud to the block, in order that the degenerate Englishmen of to-day should be informed as to the pronouncements of him whom our sturdy ancestors called "the Man of Sin"? You have read how our good old Puritan forefathers abolished the semi-Pagan, semi-Popish, wholly superstitious observance of Christmas, how good men, even in our day, have refused to allow the accursed thing, plum pudding, to enter their doors, you know what an example of serious household discipline the great Milton set to the world, how the unutterable infamy of pleasure on the Sabbath was prohibited, how the plague-spot of the theatre was stamped out by those stout Commonwealth's men. And, I ask, was all this done that Englishmen and Protestants should be regaled with the doings of Cardinals, with the movements of a person calling himself Merry del Val? Merry del Val! What a name for a professing Christian! There is offence in the very sound of it; it seems to suggest to the densest ear the noise of the unholy revelries of the Vatican, surpassing the worst orgies of Nero and Tiberius; it reminds me of the book

of which I shall shortly speak more fully—Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Rome is unchangeable; the Papist of the thirteenth century writes a *Divine Comedy*, and the Cardinal of the twentieth century is named Merry del Val! *Verb. sat. sap.*

And again, what have we to do with "most Holy Synods," with the decrees of decayed and corrupt churches, which are well known to have remained in a state of absolute immobility since tne sixth or seventh century, to be fossilised relics, as it were, of the darkest ages, when the very elements of modern science were unknown, when the possibilities of steam had not dawned on the minds of the wildest dreamers? What has Jerusalem or its "Patriarch" to say to Battersea? Are we to be instructed in the simple religion of the Gospel by a city which has not the elements of popular government, which has never heard of the Nonconformist Conscience, which would regard a Church Tea on the day called Good Friday as an outrage? Let Jerusalem shew us the rude beginnings of progress, the mere outlines of civilisation, before we listen to her dictates. What manufactures can that once proud city now display? I am aware of none, save of superstitious objects made of cedar wood growing on a hill which is traditionally called the Mount of Olives, and therefore, of course, cannot be anything of the kind. Is there anything remotely resembling our Boards

of Guardians at Jerusalem, are there electric trams, is there even an efficient service of steamboats run on the brook Kishon? We know there is not, and I tell you that my blood boils when I see so-called Liberal journals devoting their space to the utterances of the "Patriarch" of such a decayed village as this, while the proceedings of the Evangelical Churches in Protestant and Progressive Battersea are slighted and neglected. Only a week ago the female workers of my own church were entertained at tea by Mr. Josiah Gupp, one of my principal deacons, and a wealthy manufacturer of imitation leather. The proceedings were of the most interesting kind; we all drove over to Mr. Gupp's palatial villa at Clapham, and I assure you that I have never seen a more pleasant sight than the innocent mirth of our maidens—they had brought a few gentlemen friends with them —as they sported in the shade of Mr. Gupp's back-garden. Tea was served in the parlour, with ham and tarts galore, and afterwards all joined in the singing of the grand old psalm:—

> Ten thousand at left-hand shall fall,
> Ten thousand at thy right,
> But none shall harm thee not at all,
> Nor nothing thee affright.

Then there were the speeches; a gentleman told us about the hardships of a missionary's life in the South Seas, of the bitter persecution to which he himself had been subjected by a

Popish Power, for the "offence" of causing a law to be passed by which drawing water on the Sabbath Day was made punishable by hard labour for life. Then a young gentleman, a student, I believe, of the Guildhall School, and evidently a person of great talents, sang us "The Holy City," and I said a few words on "Institutional Christianity: or, It Doth not Appear what we shall be," words which I trust may not be altogether fruitless. Your interest is very kind: I merely demonstrated that we had good reasons for believing that Christianity, which in the earliest days was a pleasant social club on a liberal basis, would probably return to these lines after centuries of error, and find its centre in the social tea, the true sacrament of our enlightened times, the *Agape* of the Protestant Christian. Well; to return to this especial gathering; harmless games were resumed by the young people in the dusk of the evening, the garden resounded with their simple mirth, and so a happy day came to a close. Will you believe me, I searched the morning papers in vain for any account of our proceedings; and yet in one paper there was a long review of some work on the Early Fathers by a Dean of the Establishment, while another contained an article not only advocating Socialism, but (by sly hints), dogmatic Christianity!

Are you surprised, then, that some of us suspect wheels within wheels, and a carefully

organised scheme for the suppression of Free Church news? The instance which I have cited might seem to many evidence almost conclusive of the existence of such a dastardly plot; and when I tell you that a few weeks ago I was present at a meeting of the Peckham Congregational Church, which unanimously passed resolutions demanding the immediate dethronement of the Czar, the Sultan, the Shah, and the Empress of China, at the same time requiring the whole of British India to be handed over to the Bengali Baboos and the Grand Lama of Tibet; when I tell you that merely the briefest references to this most important and representative gathering appeared in two or three papers, you will not, I imagine, be far from a conviction that the boycotting hypothesis is proven up to the hilt.

And yet, I do not myself believe that this is the case. I cannot think that convinced Christians, as the editors and staffs of Liberal journals of course must be, would lend themselves to any such nefarious schemes; I have come to the conclusion that we ourselves, the ministers of the Free Churches, are to blame, and as I told you just now it seems to me that we have shrunk too long in obscurity. Everyone is aware that the Establishment has long since cast dignity to the winds in this matter, that every country parsonage is a centre of bold and blatant self-advertisement. That being so,

we must meet them on their own ground; we shall not, I hope, descend quite so low as "Father" Lowder, "Father" Mackonochie, or "Father" Dolling; still, we must make our voices heard, and in no uncertain tones. It is for this reason that I welcome your presence here, that I thank you for your promise to make my opinions known to the world.

Now, at last, then, we can begin to consider the subject to which I invited your attention. I told you the other day how my little Albert described to me his simple vision of the heavenly country, and I mentioned the shock it gave me to turn from his simple undenominational piety to the work of the Popish poet, Dante. Ah! what a change. See; I open the volume at haphazard. What does my eye light on? The scene is in Hell, and Dante hears the sighs:

"That tremble made the everlasting air"

rising from a great multitude of people. His guide informs him that none of these persons had sinned:

"—and if they merit had,
'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism,
Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest."

But what is this but the sacramentalism of the Church Catechism? To what end have we strained every nerve and sinew to put a stop to the teaching of such doctrine as this in the People's Schools if we are to encourage our young men and maidens to subject themselves

to the same contagion in another form, under the specious pretext that this work we are examining is a literary masterpiece. But the fact is that from beginning to end this *Divine Comedy* literally bristles with dogma and dogmatic definition. One is absolutely amazed at the glib manner in which the words of the Great Book are taken in their crude, material signification, as for example in the passage I have just quoted; and there is another passage, a whole canto indeed, in which the woman Beatrice is made to discourse of the Incarnation, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection of the Body, each of these dubious and questionable terms being understood in its literal sense; apparently in utter ignorance of the higher spiritual meaning that a liberal theology has shewn to be latent in such phrases as these. Definition is piled on definition, dogma on dogma; nay, Tests of all kinds are rampant, for in three Cantos Dante is examined by Peter, James, and John upon Faith, Hope, and Charity! And the whole poem is permeated by the spirit of the deplorable and ridiculous scholastic philosophy which enslaved Europe for so many centuries, which discussed such questions as "How many angels can dance upon the point of a needle?" by the spirit of the idolatrous mass, by quotations from Popish hymns and from the Romish version of the Psalms. All this may be Christianity, but it is

certainly not the Christianity of Battersea! I have been informed that there was a Dean of the Establishment who devoted his life to the study of this Dante; I can only say that I can quite believe it! One can understand that such a man would be a rancorous opponent of Simple Bible Teaching in the People's Schools.

And now the question I ask is this—and you will pardon me if I ask it with indignation—how long are the Protestant People of England going to bear the free circulation of this book? Are the efforts of Free Churchmen and Liberals to be stultified, is our great success at the polls to be nullified by teaching such as I have indicated, not only sown broadcast throughout the land, but recommended by persons in high places, and enforced by the shadowy terrors of an imposing reputation? Is England Protestant and Undenominational or not? If it claims these titles, and I think it has done so in no doubtful manner, let there be an end of all this; let us not suffer the Evil Thing which we are pitching out of the school windows to come in again by the study door. It is of little use, believe me, to insist on Simple Bible Teaching at one moment, and to teach the Baptismal Figment at the next, even though this pernicious doctrine appear on the pages of an Italian Poet. As for Freedom, I suppose you do not wish for freedom to sell poisons, freedom to vend arsenic and strychnine? If we

are Protestants the Divine Comedy should be suppressed. Is not the spirit—the immortal soul—of higher import than the perishing and transitory body? Shall we shut the public-house door, and open the leaves of this book, which reeks of Catholic Dogma from the first page to the last?

I think that the rock on which you and many others are inclined to split is a very dangerous one, and I believe it would be as well if I "charted" it once for all, so that you and those who think with you may avoid the peril for the future. The rock in question is this: you and indeed many excellent people have, I think, some vague and ill-defined idea to the effect that License, misnamed Toleration, is, or should be, one of the special marks of Liberals and Protestants. I do not quite know how this idea originated, possibly from such phrases as "the intolerance of Rome," "the tyranny of kings and nobles," which are often used, and very properly used, by Liberals and Evangelical writers. Of course, all kings and nobles are tyrants, and cruel tyrants to boot; but you surely would not have their opponents, the oppressed people, endeavour to govern by the methods of the jelly fish? We know that the Czar of Russia and the bureaucrats are remorseless tyrants, guilty of the most infamous cruelties; but do you suggest that their miserable victims should throw bombs charged with rosewater?

At any rate, if you search history you will find no justification for this very curious theory of yours. I don't think there was much "tolerance" about Bluff King Hal when he had to deal with recalcitrant abbots and friars; Queen Elizabeth, unless I am mistaken, stamped out Popery without much hesitation, as Tyburn Tree could bear witness, and the triumphant and glorious Puritans of the seventeenth century (sturdy followers of good old John Knox), suppressed the idolatrous worship of Rome and Canterbury under the sanctions of death and transportation. Again, in France, during the Revolution I fear you would miss your favourite virtue (as you think it), in the actions of the Revolutionary Government, in the so-called "massacres," in the prisons, in the thousands of executions which took place under the very insignia of triumphant Liberty. And to-day, in the United States, the freest country in the world, perhaps the only country which is truly free, I am told that there are not wanting certain instruments of coercion which can be applied, if need be, to those who deliberately set themselves against popular sentiment. It is not many weeks ago since I saw the very interesting account of the proceedings taken by Mr. Comstock and the Society for the Suppression of Vice against a certain Art Club which had committed the gross indecency of making studies from the nude. Now the American

People (very wisely, in my opinion) does not approve of Art, suspecting, and rightly suspecting, that the word in nine cases out of ten is used as a veil for obscenity; the consequence is that the disgusting publications of this self-styled "Art Club" have been seized, and the members of the society bound over for prosecution. Again, you will have noted the case of Maxim Gorky. Sacerdotalists have said hard things about the American Marriage Laws, which indeed breathe the genial spirit of an advanced and liberalised Christianity, and are, therefore, naturally unacceptable to our friends the priests. Yet, there is a moral sentiment in America which puts us to the blush, and the Russian having outraged that sentiment, found himself homeless—in the freest country in the earth.

Well, you see my point, do you not? I hope I have convinced you that at no time and in no country has the prevalence of Protestant and Liberal opinions been accompanied by that languid acquiescence in evil which masquerades under the name of "tolerance"; we are not "tolerant" now, we never have been "tolerant," and unless under compulsion, we never will be. We fight for the Good and the True, and (as Liberal leader-writers say when a Liberal Government is in office) wars cannot be made with rosewater. I trust that by this time I have quite convinced you that there was nothing

inconsistent with Liberal and Protestant principles in my demand for the suppression of the works of Dante.

I do not wish to stifle a reverent curiosity as to the Future Life. Far from it; I have told you how my boy's anticipation of his Heavenly Home touched and pleased me, and, as I said, why should not the vision of an English child, attached to a Free Church, a member of a well-governed community, be as acceptable and as probable as that of the old time seer, who must have lived under conditions that we should deem revolting? At all events, to the earnest Christian there are many sources of information open; let him read "The Gates Ajar," for example; a touching anticipation that life in Heaven will be extremely like life in the smaller villages of the United States of America. And, if we consider the matter seriously, can we find much amiss in such an anticipation? I have often felt that many of my brothers are unduly timorous when speaking on this subject; modern, enlightened, and advanced in most matters, they seem, if I may say so, still somewhat under the bondage of ecclesiastical tradition when they approach the question of eschatology. They use, I mean, the figures and the symbols which John uses, which no doubt may have appealed forcibly enough to the uneducated, unscientific Christians of the early centuries; to men whose eyes were dazed, as it

were, with the barbaric pomp of the Temple services, or with the gorgeous pageantry of pagan Rome. Of course, this is a subject which requires delicate handling, but perhaps you will remember that I have already pointed out to you that in Holy Writ (which I need not say is the Life and Inspiration of all Evangelical Churches), one must, it may be, be prepared to recognise certain elements as local and temporary in their scope. Nor do I think this view need present much difficulty to the earnest enquirer; it is surely not an impossible task to disentangle the great Basic Principles of Christianity from the setting of brilliant Orientalisms which, no doubt, recommended these principles to the particular audience to which they were first addressed. Shall I give you my test? Well, it seems simple enough. Ask yourself these questions:—Does such or such a doctrine or utterance appeal to me personally as finely Christian? Is it in accord with the modern spirit? Can I imagine such an utterance being received with "loud and continued applause" at a Liberal meeting? Would this doctrine satisfy the ethical demands of a modern man of science? Can I conceive of such a rite as this suggesting itself spontaneously to a representative assembly of Free Churchmen? And perhaps best of all—the final and conclusive test—Is this a doctrine on which the party could go to the country, with the

certainty of being returned by a triumphant, a "thumping" majority? I do not claim this test as an absolute discovery; indeed, I am very glad to be able to call the testimony of a distinguished brother minister, the Rev. C. H. Kelly, ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, who in his charge to the newly-ordained ministers, is reported to have said that "they had to preach to an age that was antagonistic to formality. Men would not listen to doctrinal statements unless they were practical. It was a democratic age. Crowns and lawn sleeves did not count for much to-day. If Paul or Wesley returned to the earth now, they would have to act differently. If Martin Luther came back to Germany, he would have to act differently, if for no other reason than from the fact that the Kaiser was living."

Yes; there does seem some slight inconsistency between the sentence about "crowns" and the sentence about the Kaiser; but that apart, note how the preacher goes to the root of the matter, how he gives in practice the same rule that I have given in theory. "Tell the democracy what the democracy wants to hear," is the Rev. C. H. Kelly's message: "Test the Bible by the judgment of the democracy," is mine. How far and how well we have travelled from the spirit of the text (no doubt adapted to Syrian modes of thought) which bids us beware when all men speak well of us, and tells us to

rejoice in being evilly spoken of, maltreated, persecuted, imprisoned, put to death! The preaching of Paul brought him bonds, and beatings, and execution; Luther no doubt ran great risks, even Wesley was pelted, insulted, reviled. How different the stories of such men from the career of the late venerated Pastor of the City Temple! Yes, Democracy and Protestantism have led us far.

Well; to apply our test to the particular matter under consideration. I said that my brother ministers seemed to be unduly bound by obsolete ecclesiastical tradition in discussing the sublime subject of our future eternal happiness; and I should like to ask some of them whether they honestly think they would be really happy in such a heaven as John (if it be John) describes for us. You know the vision: the description of the glowing and bejewelled Court of Heaven, the elders in white robes with crowns of gold, the seven lamps of fire, the vials full of odours (incense, I am afraid, were the truer translation), the prostration and adoration of the elders, the angel with the censer to whom was given much incense. If we are quite sincere, we must confess that all this is a description of a gorgeous and elaborate ceremonial; and I must add that it reads much more like an account of "High Mass" in a Romish or Ritualistic Church than anything else with

which I am acquainted. I need scarcely say that neither I, nor any Free Church minister known to me, would be at all happy or even comfortable during the performance of such a ceremonial as John describes. Taking into consideration the fact that we spend our whole lives in denouncing such ceremonial, in warning our people against its insidious, meretricious, and theatrical attractions (whoredoms of the Scarlet Woman, our plain-spoken forefathers called such rites), considering that our Puritan ancestors fought and bled and died and feared not even kings, so that such abominations should be swept out of the land, considering that even in these days stout John Kensit was martyred for his efforts to make all such idolatries impossible; considering all this, I say, is it not a little ridiculous that we should bid our people look forward to certain things as the perpetual joys of heaven, while, with what seems to me startling inconsistency, we order them to shun these very things like the pestilence on earth?

Why should we not be candid? Why do we not confess that John's symbols are ill-chosen and dangerous, for our times at all events; that the Congregationalists of Peckham, the Baptists of Battersea, the Wesleyans of Tooting have long passed beyond the spiritual region which was occupied by half-clad, ignorant, uncivilised fellahin and fakirs in the Syria of the first

century. But do we quite realise this? Are we not, even the best of us, bound by that superstitious reverence for the past which has been responsible for so much mischief and error, which has enslaved and still enslaves the souls and bodies of men? Would it not be as well if we realised, once for all, that the average seventh standard boy or girl from the school over the way is in many respects the superior of the whole body of the Apostles? I believe there are persons, even in this age, who despise or pretend to despise modern progress, who assert that main drainage, pure water, electric trams—in fact, all the results of applied science—are entirely unimportant. But we are not concerned with the pseudo-mediævalists, but with the British Democracy, and I think it is time that we appealed to them on their own ground, that we shewed ourselves not merely spiritual but also practical, when we wish to set forth the Reward that is in store.

I heard a story once that pleased me. An American Revivalist was endeavouring to excite the devotion of his congregation by dwelling on the heaven of John. In the midst of his most eloquent passage a sturdy, ringing voice came from the back of the hall: "What's the matter with Kentucky? It's God's own state, anyway, and that's good enough for me!" I cordially sympathise with the utterer of that sentiment; I sympathise too with a little American boy in

a somewhat similar story. The child came crying to the Sunday School Superintendent, and said he didn't want to go to heaven because his teacher had told him that there would be no chewing-gum there, nor any Britishers to whip.

My good friend, we shall all say, if we are sincere, "what's the matter with Kentucky" (or Battersea!); we shall all demand our chewing-gum and our Britishers to whip. For otherwise, do we not confess that we are ashamed of our daily occupations, of our daily interests in life; do we not, in fact, plead guilty to leading lives that are essentially wrong and distorted? Unless we are ready to join the Eastern fakir and the Western monk in their miserable blasphemy, we are far from pleading guilty to any such accusation. On the contrary, we say boldly that we are placed in this world to use it, to get on in it, to better its condition by healthy political activities, to make money in it by the judicious exercise of the faculties that have been given us. The world has always worshipped success, and the world has been right; and I have no doubt that these goodly activities in which we have joined together below will be prolonged eternally in heaven. We cannot say how it can be so, but we know that it will be so, and in perfect measure. There will be no violent break, no sudden dislocation of all our interests and all our activities, as John imagined,

and as many excellent but mistaken people imagine to this day. The respectable suburban citizen, who has read "Self-Help" to advantage, who has realised the inner meaning of the Parable of the Talents, has amassed an honest fortune by his successful handling of some useful product, and has been the prop and stay of some excellent Evangelical cause—a man like this will not be hurled suddenly into a world to which business methods are altogether unknown, in which the simple Gospel service of the Free Churches is replaced by complicated and mysterious rites, which seem to outvie the impious splendours of Popery. No; "Work without worry" will be, I think, the motto of the Heavenly City. Even the Romish Monk realised in his dark and contracted fashion something of the limitations of this earthly sphere:—

> Brief life is here our portion,
> Brief sorrow, short-lived care:

Though, of course, his is a pessimism coloured by the gloomy superstition of Rome. Yet, in spite of the advances that have been made, we must confess that the faithful Christian has still many trials, many difficulties to overcome. I once knew a good man who was interested in milk, and I am sure that his life was as innocent and simple as the product in which he dealt. He is now, I trust, in the enjoyment of glory; his heirs are certainly in the enjoyment of con-

siderable affluence. The father was a Christian man; his descendants, I regret to say, have attached themselves to the Establishment. Well, I have known this worthy gentleman come to me with tears in his eyes while he recounted the annoyances and hindrances that were thrown in his way by the harassing and un-English methods of the Government Inspectors.

"What do they want, doctor?" I have heard him say: "What *will* satisfy them? That's what I want to know. We have a poor fellow in our employment who has been consumptive for the last three years; he's a handy man, and naturally I don't pay him full wages, as he's getting rather weak now. You can't expect a man to pay a full day's wage for a half-day's work—at least, not out of the Parables. After all, if you only give a man a penny a day it's hardly worth while paying a fellow to keep the time-sheet. You don't often find out the Good Book in a mistake, do you, doctor? But I wish I knew how the owner of that vineyard managed to keep down wages as he did. The unions wouldn't stand it now for a moment. But I suppose we shall know all about it when we get to heaven."

My friend was a shrewd man-of-the-world, and I often derived great benefit from listening to such keen commentaries as these on the Scripture story. But on this occasion to which I am referring, he grew almost beside himself

with indignation as he told me that he was threatened with "trouble" because he persisted in keeping on his unfortunate assistant, who was slowly dying of consumption. "Do they want me to throw the poor fellow out into the street?" he exclaimed. I sympathised with him to the best of my ability, and then he went on to say that this was the least of his worries. There was trouble about the comparatively harmless chemicals that he used to preserve the lacteal fluid in its pristine freshness, there was trouble about a case of typhoid occurring in a cottage adjoining the dairy, and an impertinent person who had made a kind of domiciliary visit to the cowsheds had gone away talking of "disgusting substances from diseased udders" finding their way into the milk. Then there was the question of attenuation; my poor old friend pointed out that milk "stuffed with cream" (as he put it) wasn't wholesome. "The public don't want it," he said, "they wouldn't look at it if they got it; any more than they'd drink beer made out of malt and hops, whiskey made of malt, or brandy distilled from wine."

"Ah," he concluded; "the world's a hard place, and what with the rates and taxes, I don't think we get much out of it in the end."

I comforted him, as I say, and when I reminded him of that stream which waters Paradise and makes the angels sing, suggesting that he might be placed in charge of its source,

and that there would be no sighing or sorrow there, he looked more cheerful. He knew that there would be no Inspectors among the Shining Ones. Yes; earthly Trusts may be threatened; but no powers of evil will be suffered to break the everlasting "Corners" of our Heavenly Mansion.

There will be no break, no solution of continuity. Science has wiped the dimness from our eyes; we no longer look for the instantaneous scene-shifting, if I may use the expression, which seems to have characterised earlier and less enlightened views—views which seem to have regarded heaven as a transformation scene in a celestial pantomime. The trumpet will *not* sound; we shall *not* all be changed in the twinkling of an eye, for Science teaches us that the Divine Process is a gradual one, and heaven is, after all, but the grand goal of Evolution. Trumpets, of course, are quite impossible, and out of the question.

And need I say that the principle applies (as how should it not) to the religious world as to the secular. Here again I am inclined to think that some of my brother ministers are a little inconsistent. Again and again I have heard sermons and read papers which seem to look forward to a final abolition of all denominational ties, to a union of all into one vast and eternal denomination. We are asked to imagine a heaven in which there will neither be Baptists

or Methodists, Congregationalists or Bible Christians, where Presbyterians will be unknown, and Sandemanianism will be sought for in vain. But if this is the ideal, why do we not try to realise it on earth? If such is the goal to which we are moving, to what purpose the labour and expense involved in building churches and administering the affairs of the three hundred denominations which make such a brave show in the useful Whittaker? If we are to be One (in this mechanical sense), hereafter, why do we not endeavour to be One now and on earth? I must say that the inconsistency is too apparent to escape remark.

The truth is, of course, that a merely mechanical unity is not recommended to us on earth, nor promised as a reward hereafter. Let us leave such unity as that to slaves and priests: Christianity is not a thing to be governed by the cast-iron rules of the mathematicians, and in the purely spiritual order in which Evangelical Christians move and have their being, two and two are constantly making five. In this spiritual sense, in the vital sense (the only one which really matters), all the Free Churches are already One, as the Enemy has found to his cost, as the polling booths testified not very long ago. As for the phrase, "our unhappy divisions," I repudiate it altogether. Our divisions are most happy; they are but another witness to the infinite Diversity in Unity which

characterises the whole of Creation. Do we wish that all flowers had been roses, all trees oaks, all metals gold, all places of worship exactly like the City Temple, all pastors perfect duplicates of Dr. Clifford, all hills Primrose Hills, all suburbs Batterseas? No, a thousand times no! Not in this dull mechanical sense was the great Aspiration for Unity uttered, and so far am I from deploring the divisions amongst us, that I wish that I could read each morning of the rise of a new denomination—of a new and dewy bud, as it were, shooting forth from the parent stem, with the freshness and innocence of the dawn still lingering like a glory about its yet unopened petals, rare with the prospect of future usefulness and beauty, promising a rich crop of churches to add still fresh graces to our imposing streets, to delight the world with more unheard of discoveries in the art of architectural ornament. No: many are the colours, the lights and the shades that go to the painting of a great picture—"The Doctor" is not of one uniform hue—and each Protestant Denomination is but a varying pigment in the Great Masterpiece which will at last be exhibited to the angels.

As in earth, so in heaven. We may alter a hymn which has always pleased me, because though written, I believe, in the Dark Ages, it offers a fine witness to the sanctity of the

Sabbath. Still, for the moment, let us read it thus:—

> O what the joy and the glory must be,
> Endless Free Churches the blessed ones see!

Nay, if England alone, this little island in the Northern Sea, can shew to-day Three Hundred distinct denominations, how vast, how awe-inspiring will be the Infinite Divisions of Eternity!

IV

What is true Patriotism?—Our Corrupt Stage —Superstition in the Newspaper.

Have you ever noticed the strange persistence with which a calumny, oft-times refuted, is again and again repeated? How often, to take a modern political instance, has it been boldly, nay, shamelessly asserted that the advanced wing of the great Liberal Party (to which I have the honour to belong) is indifferent, or indeed, hostile to the British Empire, its fame and its prosperity. We have seen this slander refuted each time it has been advanced, for from the dark days of the Boer War, to the recent troubles in South Africa and Egypt, who but the Advanced Liberals have come forward on every occasion to denounce the Mother Country, to heap well-deserved shame on the British Empire, to prove their countrymen invariably in the wrong, greedy, cruel, rapacious, murderous? And in what better way than this can we prove our intense pride and joy in England? Was Cæsar an enemy to his wife when he declared that she must be above suspicion? Am I the foe of my little ones when I lovingly correct them for their childish faults? What

do we call the parent who suffers his infants to have their own way in all things; to torment animals, to annoy the neighbours, to swear, to drink, to steal? Surely such parents are not friends to their children, but rather their deadliest foes; and surely we do well not to keep silence over the misdeeds of our wandering sons. Which is the worse, think you; to pull the kitten's tail or to cut off the heads of the hapless Mahdi, of the deeply-wronged Bambaata, victims both of English lust for gold? Which is the blacker crime, for my little boy to annoy the bald old gentleman in the next garden by his sportive exercises with the pea shooter, or for the English jingoes and maffickers to annoy our good friends at Berlin by the persistent building of vast ships armed with guns of great power? The other day I was walking down a neighbouring street when my attention was arrested by shrill screams from over the way. I crossed over, and was shocked to find that my little Helen, aged seven, had succeeded in evading domestic supervision, and was endeavouring to wrest a small doll from a child of much tenderer years. I administered suitable castigation to my erring child there and then, and on her return to our roof she received a chapter from the Book of Kings to learn by heart. This course of action I considered, and consider still, to have been dictated by true regard for the welfare of my offspring; and yet—

look at the map of the British Empire, like a great stain of blood upon the fair face of the world! I corrected my child for the attempted theft of a paltry doll; shall we not also correct our vagrant children who have stolen, not a child's toy, but whole continents? From the Maori and the Blackfellow, from the African Negro and the myriad tribes of India, from tne Red-skinned native of Canada and the poor down-trodden Egyptian, there goes up an exceeding bitter cry that pierces our hearts as the wail of the infant in the street pierced mine; and are we to remain silent? I say no; punish we must, though we punish with love; and for this are we to be branded as enemies of our country? And yet the vile slander is repeated at each instance of our tender love of these our erring children; and one of us who was not afraid to lift his voice in horror and reprobation of the vile massacre that followed the death by sunstroke of an English officer is held up to execration, forsooth, as a traitor to his country!

Yes; calumny seems a monster which revives from the ashes of its funeral pyre, like the fabled Phœnix of Arabia; and I know of no more abominable calumny than that which ascribes to the Puritan an ignorance of the arts, and indeed a detestation of them.

In answer to this, let me point out once and for all that it is we and we alone who make any artistic success possible in the England of

to-day. Of course, there are more or less unclean cults and cliques which lurk in certain byeways and back-alleys of English life, hidden away, happily, from the most of us, and nauseating all right-thinking people by their rare appearances in the public streets. But I must say that on the whole the Press of England understands its duty where such persons are considered. A little sharp ridicule will often affect wonders where more serious rebuke would be inefficient, and I have not yet forgotten my delight when our great comic journal greeted the work of a certain notorious imitator of the old Popish painters with just this comment:—"Burne Jones? Burn Jones!" Then there was a person called Rossetti (a very un-English name it seems to me), and a man named Whistler, and I believe I have heard of an unhappy lad named Beardsley, who was cut off in the midst of his sins. But I am not speaking of these "æsthetes"; I do not wish to discuss a subject which is, to say the least of it, an unsavoury one. What I say is that the artist who wishes to succeed in England must win the affections of the English People, and the English People are, as has been often observed, Puritan to the backbone. Consider the popularity of such pictures as the "Railway Station," the "Derby Day," and that eloquent series called, I think, "The Road to Ruin." Note the humanity, the appeal to our best in-

stincts in all of them, the gratification of that eminently worthy instinct that demands that every picture should tell a story. Note, too, the moral appeal; who, however thoughtless, or, it may be, criminal, would wish to go to the great gambling carnival after gazing at Mr. Frith's vivid picture? Take a more modern example, the wonderful "Doctor"; how it tends to raise our opinion of the whole medical profession, to excite our sympathies for the anxious parents! Take that class of pictures which are often so admirably reproduced in the Christmas numbers of the illustrated journals. The pictures in question may not be, perhaps, pretentious, though some of them seem to me to shew very high power; but how delicate is the chord struck. A litle girl with golden hair holds up a piece of meat, at which a fox-terrier is jumping; meanwhile pussy, who is perched on the child's shoulder, slyly extends a paw in the direction of the dainty morsel. One wonders what will be the end of the story: will the fox-terrier secure the meat by some extraordinary exertion, or will the artful cat succeed in her design, and devour the toothsome prize before Jack's very eyes? Again, there is the humorous catastrophe which befalls the fishmonger's lad, too intent on the (certainly very fascinating), pages of *Tit-Bits*, so that this time pussy, who has had her eye on his tray, succeeds in carrying out her felonious schemes.

Nay, the catalogue of such excellent works is practically endless, and the fame and fortune which the admirable artists have achieved is due, let me remind you again, to the appeal which their works make to the great mass of the British Nation, which is, as I have said, in profound sympathy with the aims and ideals of the Free Churches.

Again; consider the Drama. Who, if it was not the great Puritan middle class, made the fortune of such a masterpiece as "The Sign of the Cross?" I remember watching the immense crowds that waited patiently outside the Lyric Theatre, and thinking that the tide had at last turned, that it was no longer necessary for the sincere Christian to leave the playhouse severely alone. I seemed to foresee a time when at every theatre in London plays of like nature should be produced, and as the mass of thoughtless pleasure seekers became gradually leavened, it might, perhaps, be possible to strike out more boldly still, and practically to transform the whole character of the stage. It has been said, perhaps with no very complimentary intention, that some of our Sacred Songs are not far removed from the region of Negro Minstrelsy; why, I thought, should not we bridge over our differences and cause Negro Minstrelsy to speak, as it were, the tongue of Zion? Then it seemed to me that I saw in a Pisgah Vision the Opera itself transformed; no longer the resort of

a thoughtless aristocracy, assembled to listen to the vocal gymnastics of foreigners and Romanists, but a rallying point for all lovers of homely and innocent English Music. Why, I remembered, the oratorio itself developed from services held in an oratory or chapel in Rome; why should not the Service of Song, which has long been such an attraction in our churches, develop in its turn and become the great musical form of the English People; so that instead of the over-dressed and under-dressed (alas! that I must say it), who throng the opera-house to listen to exotic, un-English, and, I am afraid, unwholesome music, we might have great gatherings of sober, decent, earnest people, clad in their "go-to-meeting" clothes (to use a good old phrase), and rapt to tears and laughter by such masterpieces of the true musician's art as "Little Abe" and "The Oiled Feather."

And I went farther. At present, I said to myself, there is every reason to fear that the ordinary English play is a thoughtless and frivolous production at best, while many are known to be much worse than thoughtless. The scene is laid in gilded halls, in the drawing-rooms of a brainless and effete aristocracy, the dialogue is compounded of idle and pointless jest and repartee; even when the title—such as "The Importance of being Earnest"—promises better things it is to be feared that no real good is

intended, that the serious name serves but as a mask to cover the writer's thoughtless gaiety. Why, I thought, should not all this be changed? As one who has seen the lights and shadows of Sunday School life under very favourable conditions, I have often wondered that such a field of intense dramatic interest should be neglected and passed over. Take the career—it is no exceptional one—of a young man who has been long known to me. I remember him as a tiny boy repeating his texts in that shrill clear voice which touches every father's heart; I remember his voice rising shriller yet in the hymn:—

> Oh tell me about the Sheep,
> Oh tell me about the Fold;
> I want to hear 'bout the Ninety-and-nine,
> And the One that was lost in the cold.

Still I remember the pathos on that little face, when the child's teacher, whose suspicions had been aroused by a strong odour, found half-a-score of tiny packets of peppermint lozenges, which the lad had brought to school, in the hope of disposing of them at a penny a packet. Many such incidents as these come to my memory, and in the last scene there are wedding bells and an extremely prosperous business in Wandsworth, and I am amazed, as I say, that such a story as this has not appealed to any of our rising dramatists. From such sources as these, I thought, will the play of the future be constructed; playwrights will have realised that

there is no need for them to pry into the dark corners and unsavoury recesses of the human mind, since there are innocent and engrossing subjects all around them. What should we say of a man who, not content with plucking fruit and flowers from the orchard and the garden, should reject the wholesome and delicious pear, the dewy roses exhaling their odours under the bright sun, and explore the evil-smelling depths of the dustbin and the rubbish-heap?

Well; I often wonder when I shall see my vision realised, when the theatre will be as innocent and as helpful as the Revival Meeting, and the actors will rank with Church Workers in the public estimation. The time is not yet; but after what I have said I do not think you will require any further proof of my intense interest in the English Drama. True, I, and those who think with me, would see the Stage reformed, we would banish from the boards themes which suggest the Penitentiary or the Lunatic Asylum. Nothing would give me greater pain than to witness the murder or madness of my best friends, and I fail to see that such subjects make profitable and pleasing spectacles, even though the *dramatis personæ* are kings and queens whose very existence is doubtful. But I do not think that an attitude such as this can be described as one of hostility to the drama. If you, in a sudden fit of frenzy, were to take off your clothes and propose to

walk to Westminster in a state of complete nudity, I do not believe that on coming to your right senses you would characterise my firm but kindly restraint as "hostility"; and, following the analogy, it seems a little hard that Free Churchmen should be held up to public contempt and execration because they object to plays which contain scenes in a duchess's bedroom after midnight, scenes in which champagne is produced, scenes of which the dialogue is far from edifying. Many of us are the fathers of families, of boys and girls whom we are training up with anxious care, whose young lives are precious in our sight. There is nothing more sacred than that ingenuous shame which the growth of civilisation has fostered as a guarding instinct against the violation of the mind. I make no fight for prudery, but I stand for cleanliness and decency, and there are certain dark places into which I would never have my children introduced. And yet, let us consider one of the so-called "classics" of the English Stage, a piece which, I am sorry to say, seems to enjoy an infamous immortality. Its plot (I do not care to name it), turns on the unsavoury topic of an old man married to a young wife—a theme which, as I daresay you are aware, has always been a favourite with the purveyors of indecency and moral garbage. About these two unhappy persons revolves a crowd of dissolute, idle, and luxurious people

of fashion, whose only employment seems to be the circulation of ill-natured and preposterous rumours about each other. The dialogue, I may add, is written in a style which is evidently intended to be brilliant, but which strikes me personally as most unnatural. I may say that my social opportunities have been rather larger than is general; I have known almost intimately two of the most respected Liberal Peers, I have visited the palatial residence of Sir Josiah Smeech, who has raised himself from poverty and obscurity to his present great position, I am naturally, welcome at the tables and in the drawing-rooms of the principal members of my congregation, some of them extremely wealthy men, and I have long been acquainted with the leaders of the Free Church Party in the House of Commons. I think you will admit, then, that I am not without experience in the conversation of men of light and leading; but I can earnestly and truthfully assure you that on no occasion have I heard anything remotely resembling the dialogue in the play I am discussing. Scene after scene proceeds with this stream of empty, irreligious chatter—in another play by the same author there is a character who swears "by the mass"—and we gather by degrees that there are two brothers, one of whom is held up to our admiration, but who seems to me the worse character of the two—if there be degrees of turpitude where all is of the vilest of the vile.

The favourite brother, I must tell you, is portrayed as a spendthrift, a drunkard, a gamester, and a libertine, and he is surrounded by a gang of dissolute and insolent servants and of noisy, ill-bred boon companions who are as bad as himself. Honesty, I need scarcely say, forms no part of this person's composition; he is represented as deliberately refusing to pay his tailor's bill, preferring to spend the money in a deed of so-called charity, which happened to appeal to the false sentiment which ran riot in his maudlin, ill-regulated brain. Now we come to the climax of the piece. The brother of the young spendthrift forms a plot against the honour of the woman who is, I suppose, the "heroine" of the story, and entices her to visit his rooms on an errand of no doubtful purport. And then, in full view of the audience, we have represented the attempted seduction of this foolish and thoughtless wife, whose levity of character brings her to the very brink of destruction. On the one side are all the arguments that a specious and abandoned hypocrite can muster, on the other retorts which we are supposed to accept as wit, and so the scene proceeds to its most unpleasant termination. The worst, it is true, does not happen; but all but the worst happens; and this is the "classic" English Drama, this deliberate and elaborate representation of lust, debauchery, and the lowest and most degraded passions in poor human nature.

You will scarcely believe me when I tell you the defence that has been made for this most disgusting piece of prurience and indecency. It is simply this: we are told, forsooth, that there is no harm in it because it is a "Comedy of Manners," because the whole thing is an elaborate jest! It is a comedy of very bad manners assuredly, and I suppose that you or I would not have much difficulty in stringing together disgusting phrases collected from the drunken revellers of the pot-house and the gutter. As for the theory that the actor is at liberty to depict the vicious and abandoned lives of wicked people, to utter before an audience which may, and probably does, contain a considerable proportion of young people sentiments of the most horrible and disgusting nature, to portray at other times vice in its most alluring character; to do all this without reproach because his dress is of the eighteenth century fashion and not of the twentieth: I say that such a theory is monstrous. Sin is sin, and vice is vice in bloom-coloured satin as in black broadcloth, and a lustful heart is no less odious under lace ruffles than under plain linen. So much for the theory of "the Comedy of Manners."

As for the other defence that has been proposed it is even more monstrous and offensive to the common sense of humanity. I cannot conceive how anybody in his sober senses can defend plays such as this because they are sup-

posed to be quite unserious, to treat human nature, both good and evil, as a vast jest. My dear sir, this defence is itself an accusation and a heavy one. Are we sent into this vale of tears to laugh and make merry over ourselves and our destiny? Is the Life of Man, that great Drama which is being performed before the dread audience of High Heaven matter for quip and retort, for senseless and thoughtless merriment? We know that the architects of the Dark Ages thought so; bewildered with superstition, they defiled even their own idolatrous holy places, and sculptured grotesque infamies by the very horns of the altar; while the wretched monks mingled obscene jokes with the would-be sacred mummeries that they called Mystery Plays. All this need not surprise us, for the world was then drunk with the wine of the fornications of Rome; but that so-called men-of-letters, men of education and presumably sharers in the enlightenment which since those dark old days has blessed the earth should deliberately put forward such a theory in modern times is more than surprising; it would be unthinkable if it were not, unhappily, true. Life is real, life is earnest, said the poet; life is a futile but amusing jest say the apologists for these dreadful plays. Adultery is an amusing situation, theft is the odd humour of a comic servant, the debauchery of young men is the theme of endless merriment, drunkenness will set the whole

house in a roar, the dishonest debtor is a charming and entertaining hero, slander and lies and calumny make a capital scene, and finally, the only person in the play in question whose sentiments approach the verge of decency and good behaviour is held up to execration as the villain of the piece.

Is it any wonder that amongst earnest Christians such terms as "art" and "classic" are at least terms of suspicion? Is it any wonder that when we hear people singing the praises of the "exquisite art" of this or that volume, when play or poem or picture is awarded the palm of "classic merit," is it wonderful, I say, that we simple Puritans are apt to take alarm, to imagine, and not, as you will confess, without reason, that "classics" are mostly museums of indecency, and that "art" means either Popery or immorality, or both?

I am told, and I am afraid it is true, that at the present time in London there are places of public entertainment where young women counterfeit at all events, the action of taking off their clothes, of undressing, in fact, upon the stage; while in one case a woman has been found who is indecent enough to exhibit herself before thousands in what is, practically, a state of nature. You may note, by the way, that in the latter case the exhibition is supposed to be sanctioned by the name of "art," to be "classic" in so much as the unhappy female in

question assumes, I believe, the appearance of some of the statues which have survived to us from heathen times. Now, as you may imagine, no voice will be raised higher than mine against these and all similar exhibitions. The prurient hypocrisy of shewing an audience a naked woman and of pretending at the same time that the sight is "classic" needs no comment from me. But bad as this is, I am quite sure that it is not so bad as the terrible scene from the "classic" comedy which I outlined for you. For, after all, clothes are a convention; a convention of decency and seemliness it is true, but still a convention and not an eternal law. An African woman, clad in a bead girdle, may be, and very likely is, as modest, or much more modest, than an Englishwoman dressed for a great dinner according to the latest dictates of the prevailing fashion. Clothes, I say, are a convention and a convention that affects the body only; how much more important is the clothing of the mind? Conceive the effect on the average young man and woman, while this heroine of the play is being tempted and approached before them; are not the priceless veils of maiden modesty torn, not from the body of the person on the stage, but from the souls of those who gaze at this awful spectacle?

I suppose you will ask me if I expect the writers of such things to address themselves exclusively to the Young Person—if I intend to

tie their soaring genius to the pinafores of my children. I say in answer to that query, that it is not I who chose the medium through which these persons have chosen to reveal their genius to the world, I say that having chosen that medium for themselves, they cannot rightly ignore certain responsibilities which the choice imposes on them. The field of art is a very spacious pleasure-ground indeed, and you may legitimately lay out in it almost any sort of garden plot or plantation, and may erect in it almost any sort of palace or cottage or mansion. As in Battersea Park, there are wide spaces in this field of art, and within the limits of reason and decency you may play whatever games you choose. But it is an open space, and it is dedicated to the delectation of the public. The operating theatre, the dissecting room, and the precincts of the divorce court are out of place there, and most out of place of all possible exhibitions is the exhibition of man's lust and women's temptation. We referred a little while ago to the mediæval carvers of grotesque obscenities; and I would say here once for all that I do not recognise the right of any maker of such things first to carve revolting shapes, and then to plump them down in the public pleasure-ground for any unsuspecting wayfarer to sicken at!

So far I have been thinking chiefly of the theatre, and I hope I have convinced you that

if Free Churchmen distrust the theatre as it is they have reason for their distrust. At the same time I hope you see that it is as irrational to accuse us of a hatred of the Drama, as it would be to accuse the physician who should prescribe plentiful doses of quinine to some poor victim of malaria of hating his unfortunate patient. It is not hatred which causes the surgeon to cut off the gangrened limb, it is not hatred which makes me caution my little ones to shun the fever-stricken slum, and it is not hatred which impels us to denounce the horrors and the indecency of the so-called "classic" drama, and to take care that those we love shall not enter the halls of so deadly a contagion.

But before I pass from my consideration of the Drama to that of other forms of art, I should like to say a word on the outrageous licence which some persons who write for the public press seem to allow themselves. A friend of mine, a man of rather lax views, is in the habit, I am sorry to say, of taking in regularly, week by week, a well-known Sunday paper, which is partly concerned with the subject which we have been discussing—the Drama—and partly with the degrading and destructive topic of horse-races. I have noticed also some columns which appear to be of a jocular nature, but as the jests they contain are couched in a language which to me is quite unintelligible, and as these jests appear in some way or another to have become

mingled with advertising matter, I shall say no more about the columns in question. I have often reproached my friend for taking in this paper; I have pointed out that the Fourth Commandment is not only binding in its strictest, most literal sense on all Christian people, but also prohibits every kind of relaxation or amusement, and it is relaxation and amusement, as I have urged on him, that the Sunday Paper is intended to supply. Again, I spoke briefly but firmly on the dreadful evils of betting; I reminded him of cases, known to both of us, in which whole households had been involved in awful, irretrievable ruin through the mania for gambling on race-horses: of the young fellow with good prospects and talents, with an excellent situation in a business house, tempted by these lists of odds to ruin, disgrace and imprisonment; of the sober middle-aged man, prosperous and beloved by his wife and family, yielding to a form of excitement that is worse than dram-drinking, losing and betting to retrieve his losses, losing again till, his wife dead, his children in misery, he himself at last found rest in a pauper's grave. I could mention scores of such cases, they are known to everyone who cares to interest himself in the subject, and I asked my friend if he thought it right to encourage a journal, published on the Sabbath, which made a special feature of this horrible pest of all classes in England, from the duke to

the errand boy. His answer surprised me: he said he never read a line of the sporting intelligence, not knowing, as he remarked, one race from another; he was solely interested, he observed, in the front page, which, according to him, was filled by a writer of singular ability, who discoursed on the most important and weighty subjects. Indeed, my friend had such an opinion of this author that he had pasted a number of his articles into a large scrapbook, and he insisted on my accepting the loan of the volume. I took it home with me, expecting moderate entertainment, and perhaps instruction; but what was my surprise and disgust to find the greater number of these essays devoted to a credulous consideration of the darkest superstitions. I could scarcely believe my own eyes; I found a difficulty in imagining that the pages before me had been written by an apparently educated man in the twentieth century, in Protestant England. I asked myself whether my senses were not playing me false, whether these lucubrations were not in fact the gibberings of some old woman in the Dark Ages, of some pretended seeress who had collected together the myriad delusions of her equally foolish and benighted predecessors. There were tales of Ghosts and Apparitions, of Dreams and Omens and Visions, of mysterious rappings, of "clairvoyance" and "clairaudience," of Divination and Astrology; in a

word, I had before me the great rubbish heap of human fatuity, a museum, as it were, of all the miserable debasing superstitions that have haunted man for centuries and have ministered to the artful devices of charlatans and priests. I assure you that I was thunderstruck, and as I looked through this encyclopædia of imposture, imbecility and hallucination, I could scarce persuade myself that the whole series was not a translation from some journal published in the interior of Africa for the benefit of the local fetich-worshippers and medicine-men. But no; I was reading extracts from an English Newspaper; and, indeed, before long I perceived that wherever possible the Bogies and Turnip-Spectres of the writer were dressed up as far as might be in imposing scientific, or rather, pseudo-scientific terms, with the object, no doubt, of still further bewildering and bemusing the unfortunate reader; and this depth of absurdity was, as I knew, beneath even the intelligence of the superstitious negro.

There was a dear old minister whom I knew years ago, during my pastorate in the hills of Wales. We were discussing the credulity and self-delusion of mankind in these matters one night, and with a shake of his wise old head, he said: "Superstition is a wild beast, look you, that lives in each one of us, and a wild beast that grows very quick indeed, to be sure." No doubt, he was quite right; the wild beast Super-

stition, bred in the dark caves and dens of the earth when man was in his childhood, still dwells in our hearts, and exercises, it may be, more influence over our actions than we would care to admit. I myself, I am ashamed to say, have been perturbed to find myself sitting down with twelve fellow-guests, I have shuddered inwardly at the sight of spilled salt, and I always avoid going under a ladder. But I do not blazon these infirmities in the open day; I do not, perhaps, starve my "wild beast" as thoroughly as I could wish, but I try to keep him unseen and lonely in his den. I will not take money to make a show of him; I decline to put him on exhibition either for praise or pudding. Each of us must confess that within our souls these obscene terrors exist, and that if we cared we might publish the ghastly and horrible visions that at times come to all of us. I dare say we all know that we could, if we liked, make a very decent (and most indecent) living out of the monster that dwells within us; but for my part I decline to set the Beast on view for the gratification of a prurient vanity.

But what are we to say of a man who seems to have deliberately set himself to make a living by the ostentatious reproduction and exhibition of all that sane and decent people are willing and desirous to forget, who, week by week, is willing to pocket his wages, knowing that they have

been earned by this needless and offensive resurrection of the buried plagues of heathendom and Popery? I cannot, of course, admit for a moment that these articles are written because the writer takes an especial interest in this particular subject (though I hardly see that his case would be much the better if I made such an admission); I am forced to conclude that he works, as I say, for the gratification of a prurient vanity, and for the pence of the purchaser. Does he reflect, I wonder, on what he is doing? A cheap newspaper is not in the same class as a book. About the purchase of the latter, some care is usually exercised; the subject-matter at least is more or less ascertained, criticisms in all probability have been read before the volume is placed on our tables. Even then, should the work prove to be undesirable in its tendency, the parent or master may lock up the offending pages, so that our boys and girls may not be injured by their perusal. But a newspaper is in a different category; there is a convention that it will contain nothing that is beyond all question corrupting to young people, and so it is bought carelessly and suffered to lie about our rooms within reach of all, both young and old. I wonder whether the author of these articles ever meditates upon the number of young lives he must have ruined, whether he gloats over the thought of the seeds of madness and delusion that he has planted in the hearts of the

little ones. Has he ever thought, as he counts his gold, of the little children who cower with horror in the dark, as they recall his tales of hauntings; of the young lives which are growing up hopelessly astray, their attention and their energies misdirected, and misdirected by him, from the safe and sunny highway into the dark and pestilent dungeons beneath the house of man; of the young men and women, starting on life's journey, who have been lured by him into the obscene thickets of madness and delusion and terror, into those unsavoury caves where half-forgotten superstitions still lurk, ready to claim their victims? A child, it may be said, would not understand such things. Possibly not, but the germ has been implanted, and in due course, the half-remembered, half-understood words will have their effect, and will stimulate into rampant growth a whole host of morbid and deleterious fancies that otherwise might have died of inanition.

I had thought that the final blow had been given to this most deplorable side of our human nature, that mysteries and masses, ghosts and goblins, crystal gazings and astrologies had been definitely relegated to the museum of the follies and horrors of the past. It seems that I was wrong; that the quack and the charlatan are still amongst us, anxious and willing to corrupt and deceive both youth and old age;

and that an English journalist is not ashamed to make his living by pandering to some of the most noxious delusions that have haunted and enslaved the race of man.

V

Immoral Sculptures—The Domesticated Critic —The Right Place for Shakespeare.

Our last conversation was, I think, in the main, devoted to the Drama; and I believe I succeeded in showing you that while we Free Churchmen object to the stage as it is at present conducted, we are so far from being hostile to the theatre, that one of our dearest wishes is to see it reformed, re-edified, and made an instrument of innocent and wholesome delight. In touching on the question of the drama, I could scarcely avoid dealing to some extent with literature, but before I go more fully into that great subject, I should like to say a word about an art which is not so generally in the public view; I mean sculpture.

Now I will say in the first place that there are certain aspects of this art which seem to me wholly laudable. When I pass through the public spaces and squares of our great metropolis and see the splendid statues of deceased statesmen—mostly, I am glad to say, of the Liberal persuasion—my heart thrills, and I feel that I am indeed a citizen of no mean country.

Those stately figures, proud and erect, clad in no unmeaning or obsolete finery, but in the homely trousers and tight-fitting frock-coat of the modern Englishman, go far to justify the sculptor's art, and we feel that the side-whiskers and nose of such a man as Cobden deserved to be commemorated in the enduring marble. Here, too, on that shelf, you will have noticed the bust of a distinguished fellow-minister: how the brow glows with thought, how well the artist has rendered the fine flowing locks, swept back, it seems, from the forehead in some sudden access of inspiration. Nay, there are humbler walks of the art which are at least innocent; the monkey in terra-cotta swinging on his rope will certainly afford harmless amusement, and perhaps may inculcate kindness to animals; while the head of the grinning negro boy may stimulate an interest in missionary enterprise.

But here, I think, we must draw the line. We may be held up to derision as prudes and fanatics, the oft-quoted motto, *honi soit qui mal y pense*, may be hurled at our heads, we may be styled prurient, unclean, and I know not what else; but in spite of all clamour and all abuse we must say once for all that we cannot tolerate the making and the display of likenesses, in marble or bronze, in ivory or terra-cotta of the naked human form. There is a point at which all modern peoples divide the endurably coarse from the intolerably indecent

and abominable. Every civilised man has a limit beyond which he will not permit himself to be carried; and, what is of at least equal importance, he has a limit beyond which he will not knowingly allow those innocences, ignorances and inexperiences which are under his guardianship or control to travel. I say that this limit is overstepped when in defiance of every principle of modesty and decency our eyes are confronted with this spectacle of nudity. A nude picture is, indeed, bad and vicious in the extreme, but what is it to the sculptured form of a large, well-shaped woman, offending our eyes with the blatant realism of bronze or marble?

I was once being entertained by one of my deacons, a comparatively wealthy tradesman. He had moved into a larger house, and was kind enough to invite me to be present at the consequent festivity. Much of the furniture, ornaments, pictures, etc., was new, and to most of it no exception could be taken. But, on looking round the drawing-room I was horrified to perceive a group of statuettes in white marble; the statuettes in question being nothing more or less than the representations of three young women, not one of whom had on a stitch of clothing. Now, as it happened, my host had three daughters, all of them modest and Christian girls, aged from sixteen to twenty-two. I had watched their progress in our Sunday

School, and knew them well. So after supper I took Mr. Laskin aside, and said:

"I have a suggestion to make, which I think you will find calculated to add to the pleasure of the delightful evening we have all spent."

"What is it, doctor?" he said. "Let's hear about it, by all means."

"Well," I said, "I daresay you have heard of tableaux vivants, as they are called; the idea is that people should group themselves in such a way and in such costume as to suggest some well-known picture or event. Now, I propose that your three daughters, Minnie, Lizzie and Muriel should take off all their clothes and see how well they can remind us of that pretty group I notice on the side-table."

You may imagine my host's consternation at this proposal, and it was some time before he was convinced that I had not fallen a victim to a sudden attack of mania. At last, however, my real meaning dawned upon him, and I could see that he was a good deal ashamed. The statuettes were no longer in the drawing-room on my next visit.

Would that I could persuade the world to act as promptly and as sensibly as good Mr. Laskin Yet our Art Galleries and Museums, when they are not filled with the representations of Popish Virgins and Martyrs, teem with so-called works of art such as I have just described. I sometimes see ministers of religion, schoolmasters

and schoolmistresses, even mothers and aunts, conducting bands of children round the establishments which the nation is wasteful and wicked enough to support; and I confess that I view such a sight with very great misgiving, or rather, with horror. How can that be right in art which is admittedly wrong and monstrous in life? If I am not to gaze at the nude and exposed forms of the lady Sunday School teachers, why in heaven's name should this great Protestant and Christian nation subsidise exhibitions which contain dozens of such forms, forms, moreover, which in many cases add to the offence of their nakedness by the representation of lascivious and alluring attitudes and gestures? I do not see that the antiquity of many of these objects is in any way in their favour, or excuses in the slightest degree their exhibition to the public. Indeed, I should have thought that in a professedly Christian country the pagan origin of these statues would be an additional argument in the contrary direction. But if we are to be told that we are to look with respect and admiration on every relic of antiquity, as such; then of course the path is clear, and we shall revive in our midst all the unspeakable abominations that in remote times defiled the earth. We shall see re-enacted the horrid orgies of Nero, Tiberius, and Heliogabalus; shameless processions will promenade our streets, and the last shreds of decency will

depart from our nation. But on the other hand, if we do not wish to see such a state of things, we shall turn a deaf ear to those who prate to us of antiquity, we shall decline to offer up the modesty of our young men and maidens at the shrine of heathen gods and goddesses. Shew me a man who puts forward the plea of "art" in this connection; I will ask him in return how he would like to see the image of his mother in a state of nudity exposed to the gaze of grinning multitudes.

And now we must enter on the consideration of a question which is more complicated and perhaps of more importance; I mean the question of literature. Here I hardly think I need defend myself or my friends from the charge of detesting or despising an art which is and has been cultivated with such success by so many members of the Free Churches. The names of Milton and Emma Jane Worboise, of Bunyan and Hocking, of Baxter and the Rev. E. P. Roe are, I think, sufficient testimony to the contrary. In poetry and fiction, in allegory and exposition we have taught the world the way of excellence, and we might be content with the testimony that such names as these afford. But we have done much more than this. Who can read such works as *John Halifax Gentleman*, *Adam Bede*, and *Robert Elsmere*—to name the masterpieces of the last century—and not acknowledge that these great books are Puritan to the back-

bone? I can never look into certain of these pages without my mind being carried back to the days of my youth, when I worshipped in an old-fashioned church situated in a great manufacturing town in the north. It was not a beautiful and ornate building such as that to which my ministry is now given; for it bore on its grey stone front the inscription—Ebenezer, 1809—and in those days the sturdy Independents of the north were not much given to architectural adornment or æsthetic superfluity. No, it was a stern and rugged building, with plain windows and square doorway; but the memory of it is still sweet to me, and I shall never forget a series of sermons preached there, sermons about "Men who got on." The preacher took such examples as Jacob, David and Jehu; and he told the old-world stories with such simple directness in his plain Yorkshire speech that to me at all events they became no mere chronicles of dead and buried kings and patriarchs, but the living histories of living men, whose careers offered as important lessons as the careers of the good citizens of Leeds itself. One was taken from the semi-mythical, wholly oriental atmosphere of the old records right into the life and bustle of modern streets; one heard the busy hum of machinery, the rattle of the loom, the tread of hurrying and eager feet. The preacher shewed us that these old heroes of the Jewish nation were in fact very near to us, that then,

as now, strict attention to business, to the business in hand, was bound to ensure success, in Leeds as in Jerusalem, in Yorkshire as in Syria. Even now I can remember the glow of satisfaction that seemed to radiate from the congregation when the good minister told us that Jacob "was a good Yorkshire lad at heart. He knew well enough if you want to get on you must start well, whether it's in God's service or in man's service. Jacob was not a man for compliments and soft sawder—he had no time for that any more than we have at Leeds—he had the Pottage and the Skins ready when they were wanted, and so he became the father of a great people. He stuck to his business, and so his business stuck to him." It was to such heart-lifting discourses as this that I listened in the old grey chapel thirty years ago, and still the preacher's tones, the faint aroma of hair-oil and peppermint, the listening faces of the sturdy, well-to-do congregation, and the sweet notes of the hymn return to me when I open the leaves of *John Halifax*.

So it is in a greater or less degree with the works of the other writers I have mentioned. I should like to see on the title-pages of George Eliot's wonderful books three well-known words —*Beth-el I'll raise*. In formal theological belief, perhaps, she was severed from us; none the less does one gather from her pages the aroma of the good, old-fashioned "meeting-

houses" of the Midlands, of placid, gentle, undulating scenery, of plain red-brick country-towns, and above all of the Free Churchmen of the time and place, typical Englishmen and Englishwomen. It has been said that in all those books there is not a single idea; but I do not think that idealism offers many attractions to plain, Protestant England. When an Englishman wants to go from London to Manchester he does not take a balloon, he takes a ticket at Euston, content with his comfortable corner of the railway carriage, and not envying the adventurous aeronaut. True; the balloon is nearer to the stars; but our traveller wishes to get to Manchester!

And so the tale goes on. English fiction of the worthier, greater kind owes a debt that can never be repaid to the influence of the Puritans and their descendants; even when its authors are not mechanically of us, spiritually they are very near to us indeed. Indeed, I know of books whose authors would have disclaimed, perhaps with indignation, both Puritan sources and Puritan influence, and yet these books are among the best representatives of our moral atmosphere. Miss Yonge, for example, was technically, I believe, a member of the Establishment, and her pages are here and there tainted with Anglican doctrine. And yet I know of no work which is more distinctly representative of our principles than hers. Those

doctors and ministers in the country or in country towns, always with enormous families, the daily round of life under such conditions so faithfully and patiently described, without haste, without rest, are as good in their way as anything that George Eliot accomplished, and as remote from the fever-heated and unwholesome atmosphere of Romanism and Ritualism and "art" as can be well imagined. We smell no fumes of incense here, our eyes are not dazzled with the sheen of strange vestments, with the complexities of antique architecture—for I have always felt quite sure that the church built by Ethel at Cocksmoor would have been one in which, with few alterations, I could have gladly ministered. Even when the peculiarities of the Establishment are mentioned, we suffer no shock, no repulsion. Richard, it is true, takes "Orders," but he enters the church with the quiet piety and sense with which a good Free Churchman would open a shop; whatever Miss Yonge's personal opinions may have been we do not gather from her page that she conceived of this character as called "to the awful and tremendous hierurgy of the Unbloody Sacrifice"—to use the phrase of a dreadful book which I once opened. Again, it is true that there is a "Bishop" who "consecrates" the church at Cocksmoor; but I do not think the most bigoted anti-Episcopalian need be alarmed by his

appearance. Here is no mitred, mystic figure, armed with powers from worlds beyond our ken, no claimant to an imaginary apostolic succession, no maker of "sacrificing priests"; but a quiet, kindly old gentleman, who says a few pleasant words to the children; as simple and as Christian a soul as any Sunday School Superintendent. Thank heaven for it, there is no sense of mystery in Miss Yonge's work, no dark oppression of the sacramental system in the air, nothing that might serve to cherish in the young mind the workings of a vague and fantastic imagination.

Without haste, without rest, must, as I said, have been the motto of this admirable writer. She has that sense of the importance of the infinitely little which is so characteristic of the highest genius; mark how patiently she traces the daily life of each of her child characters step by step, almost hour by hour, till we rise from the book with the delightful impression of having been inhabitants of Dr. May's nursery for many years. Not a detail is withheld; a childish complaint is an episode, and the escapade of a boy at school has in it all the matter of a great tragedy, while a small practical joke comes near to wrecking one of the young lives in which we grow so absorbed, till, as I say, we seem to hear the energetic screaming of the younger children, the pleasing bellow of the sailor-lad, the incessant (and most

edifying) oratory of Ethel, and the grave voice of the good Richard. If I may parody a passage from a very different writer, Miss Yonge has painted for us an eternal tea-table, and the hissing urn seems to whisper that the tea is not too strong. And then note the landscape which serves as a background to these deeply interesting events. There are no bottomless vales and boundless floods, no shoreless seas or sacred rivers, no cedarn caves or Titan woods—none of the distorted and unhealthy landscapes that presented themselves to the opium-drugged minds of the unhappy Edgar Poe and the ill-fated Coleridge. Just as I am sure that there were no magic casements in Dr. May's most comfortable residence, so I feel convinced that one might seek in vain within a large radius from the agreeable country town in which he practised for anything remotely resembling fairy lands forlorn. No, we seem to look from solid red-brick houses over placid meadows, watered by gentle and sluggish streams, bordered by well-trimmed hedges with all the gates and stiles in excellent repair. The wildest place mentioned in the book is Cocksmoor; and one understands the exquisite symbolism by which this ragged and unkempt heath stands for the wild, strange impulses and dreams which sometimes haunt and disturb the best of us, which we are to trim and tame at any cost, at any sacrifice.

I have dwelt perhaps too long on a work which has always fascinated me by its truth and its simplicity, but I have demonstrated, at all events, my admiration for really fine literature, and I think I have shewn you that a Free Church minister is by no means the tasteless boor that his enemies have pictured. Now, I am sorry to say that my task will be a less pleasant one; for it is my duty to declare that much which passes under the name of literature should, in my opinion, be ruthlessly suppressed. I will *not* allow that perfection in the presentation makes the nature of the thing presented of little consequence; I will *not* allow that the deadliest poisons may be vended openly so long as the phials containing them are curiously and "artistically" shaped; I will *not* allow that venomous serpents should be encouraged in our back gardens for the sake of the iridescent colours which their scales display. There are those who would suffer putrid and stagnant water to collect in our highways for the pleasure of observing the green scum which gathers over such places; but against such madness as this I, at least, will never cease to raise my voice in horror and detestation.

And I must say that on the whole modern criticism has taken this view, which I maintain to be the only possible one. After all, even the most enraged mediævalists, the most atrabilious opponents of every kind of progress are obliged

to confess that the present age is an ethical one. It is by the standard of ethics that we form our judgment of most things. Dogma may be on the wane, for as the worthy ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference so truly affirmed, dogma is not practical, and the twentieth century is nothing if not practical. As Dr. Forrest, a notable example of the fine scholarship and literary culture of Presbyterianism, has observed in a recent and stimulating work:

"It is preposterous to call a state religious according as it does or does not make a formal profession of religion; for example, to call Spain Christian and America godless, as if, so long as the dogmatic of Christianity is preserved, it does not much matter about the ethic."

Considering what we know of the ethical code of America in social, commercial, and political affairs, considering the severity with which any infringement of this high moral standard is punished, especially in the Southern States; it seems to me that the illustration is almost too extravagant for Dr. Forrest's purpose, but it serves my turn, inasmuch as it insists on the supreme importance of ethics. Ethics, of course, are the natural development of a free commercial state; we are not surprised therefore to note that in the Dark Ages, when the Feudal System and the Church of Rome held down the world under a terrorism of blood and fire, there were, in our sense, no morals

at all. But in commerce morals are essential, trade could not exist for a day without them, and the great commercial systems which have transformed the world from an armed camp into a peaceful factory would perish, unless sustained by a lofty ethical basis.

The world of to-day, then, is peculiarly and essentially a moral world; there is no doubt that if a Syrian Christian of the first century could revisit this earth, and compare the London and Chicago of to-day with Jerusalem of old he would be astonished at the contrast. And the moral code which governs us is itself peculiar to our age. No doubt it represents through a process of growth and development the ethics of the New Testament, but this identity is not to be discovered on the surface. Nor need this surprise us: the gigantic oak tree bears no resemblance to the acorn, and the splendid blooms in our gardens are very dissimilar from the tiny grains which we entrusted to the soil. Who, without minute and delicate observation, could identify the splendid butterfly, clad in all the colours of the rainbow, with a loathsome caterpillar crawling on the ground? So, it must not surprise us if we find in the Inspired Volume that deliberately to hurt another man's feelings is denounced to be a most capital and deadly sin, that poverty is held up to our admiration as a highly-privileged state, that the possessor of a flourishing business

and an immense fortune is considered as occupying much the same position as that of a man on the brink of a frightful precipice, that the saving of money and a careful consideration of future contingencies are regarded as both imbecile and wicked. We must not be surprised again when we find the Master studiously shunning the company of what we should call the respectable classes, and associating with persons, male and female, whom we should describe as drunkards, tavern-haunters, wastrels, and "Bohemians." At the same time, I need not point out to you that this is not precisely the code of to-day. We pride ourselves on our commercial prosperity, we do not wish to imitate the Popish "saints" in their superstitious views of poverty, we regard a successful and wealthy business man as a highly enviable and laudable individual, we applaud economy and prudent foresight in business matters, and, speaking for the Free Churches, I need scarcely say that we are devoted adherents of the great cause of Temperance. With the utmost stretch of my imagination, I cannot conceive of a minister of any respectable denomination drinking in a common public-house, with actors, painters, authors, or musicians, who, I am afraid, are rarely men of very sober habits; nor can I for a moment admit that it would be possible for myself, or for any of my brethren, to cultivate the society of the

unhappy women who have been branded with the shameful stigma of the Divorce Court.

But ours, as I have observed, is an ethical age, and I cannot sufficiently praise the manner in which the chief literary critics of the time have absorbed the great moral principles which are, as I have said, the backbone of the modern commercial state. I do not know any of these gentlemen personally, I am sorry to say, but if we may judge from their writings, it must be, indeed, a blessed privilege to have their acquaintance, to imbibe, as from the fountain head, those precious streams of high ethical instruction which must well out alway from their lips. And they are by no means the mere pedants of the dull old days, the dry scholars with their quaint interest in purely literary theories, with their puzzle-headed and minute knowledge of antique and dusty tomes such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, learned in occult and useless lore of poesy, gravely discoursing of sonnets and epics, of rhymes and alliterations, acquainted, very likely, with the languages of ancient Greece and Rome. No; the modern critic is far from being of this grim old fellowship; as witness Mr. Arnold Bennett, who says in the columns of a great Liberal newspaper:—

"Money talks. A litterateur who, having made a profound study of fiction, can tell you the colour of the dress in which Charlotte Brontë was married, will command a higher

remuneration (because he interests more people) than the critic who can but chatter amiably of the differences between the philosophy of Browning and the philosophy of Algernon Charles Swinburne."

This is sound sense, not literary pedantry; and it is a combination of sound commercial sense with a high moral standard that has made our English criticism what it is: the resolute guardian of our homes, determined at all hazards to ward off the prowling bands of so-called "stylists," "artists," "mystics," and all other dabblers in the dark caverns of impurity and disease. I am a father myself, and it has always pleased me to think of our English critics as fathers also, as writing their profound and yet attractive essays in the midst of a laughing throng of merry, happy children; pausing now and then, perhaps, and gaining inspiration and (who knows?) ideas from the cheerful prattle of the little ones. I love to think of these men who guide the great destinies of English Literature as interested in all the details of innocent child-life, as more learned, perhaps, in the shape and uses of the tiny garments of extreme infancy than in the arid history of the masterpieces, as taking a greater interest in Nelly's doll than in the author of *Don Quixote*, as giving greater thought to the quarrel between Phillis and Jacky (who is always naughty), than to the debates of the

Tassoists and Ariostoists. Indeed, I feel sure than this fancy of mine must correspond to the truth, for in no other way can I explain the enthusiasm for the cause of youth which has so often edified me in the writings of these excellent gentlemen. Only fathers could identify themselves so absolutely with the childish mind, only fathers would perceive with such sure instinct the weak places, as it were, in the nursery wall and appreciate the need of guarding against the latent taste for decadent literature, so prevalent in infantine minds. This principle —that no book should be written or published which may, conceivably, do some harm to some young person or other—is a great one; it has been the salvation of our simple English shelves, and I hope that our criticism will always and without flinching maintain this splendid canon—that the book which is not fit to enter the nursery and the schoolroom is not fit to exist at all. The field of the novelist and the poet, like that of the playwright, is an open space, a Board School playground, if you please, and I contend that the man who would defile and degrade such a paradise with his grinning deathsheads, his grotesque and frightful gurgoyles, is a villain indeed.

Yes, the Principle of the Nursery, as I think I may call it, is a principle of such vital and tremendous importance, that, for my part, I

often wonder why it is not extended beyond the region of literature, in which its application has been found to have such beneficent results. Why do we not regulate our whole lives by regard to the little ones, for whose physical and spiritual welfare we are directly responsible?

For example: Why should we have any newspapers? I have said something already on this topic, when I was pointing out to you the terrible harm that must be caused to the young by a person whom I will not name, writing in a journal the title of which I do not care to give. But supposing this person saw the error of his ways, and desisted from appealing to the most morbid and dangerous sides of our nature, supposing his newspaper with its contaminating betting news and reports of stage-plays ceased to exist; how should we be the better off? Take the average daily paper; what is it in the main but a catalogue of horrors, a compendium of all the degrading and abominable vices and crimes to which man is subject? If you had children, would you wish them to be posted in the last divorce case, in the unspeakable details of the unsavoury scandal of the day? Would you wish your boys and girls at the most impressionable period of their lives to be familiar with all the degrading vice of the West End, with the aspect of Piccadilly Circus at midnight, with the proceedings of so-called "clubs," which in reality deserve a much harsher

appellation? Would you have these young minds interested in the careers of murderers and assassins, in the story of their crimes, forming pictures (no doubt, of ghastly realism) of murdered women concealed in cement, of a libertine's mistress buried in a back garden, of some hapless wretch hacked to pieces by her butcher, of the dying agonies of the poisoned? The paper can be kept out of the way? Yes, but that is the excuse and the defence of the provider of moral garbage in literature, and we are agreed that such a proposition is both monstrous and futile. I leave it to your conscience as to how far you are justified in purchasing a copy of the *Times* to-morrow morning; for myself I have no doubt at all that the scandal of the daily paper should not be suffered to exist another day. I withdraw what I said as to the press on a former occasion; led by an irresistible argument I have been forced to see that the newspaper horror cannot, must not, be allowed to continue.

And again; why do we have fires, why do we boil water? It may be speciously urged that the little ones should be kept away from both; but I have already demonstrated the shallow folly of such a pretence as this; and as a matter of fact, it is only too common for young children to perish in terrible agony, burned or boiled alive, offered up in sacrifice to the Moloch of our selfish and abominable

craving for strange luxuries, such as tea and chops. Think over this, and decide once for all whether you are prepared to insist on your roast beef at the cost of roast baby; taste, if you can, your cup of tea without detecting in it the flavour of boiled infant.

Of course, we shall be told that such things are necessaries. This I emphatically deny; this, I say, is demonstrably false, a lie that must be nailed to the counter once and for all. Many millions of human beings have lived and died without having heard of these so-called necessaries; and some of the best and most enlightened Englishmen of to-day would shrink in horror from the thought of touching such abominations. The fruits of the earth are not wanting; figs, dates, tomatoes, nuts, and cereals of all kinds are plentiful and cheap, and Mr. Eustace Miles is a standing, living, triumphant example of the superiority of a vegetarian, fruitarian, nutarian, and cereal man over the devourer of roast beef and boiled chicken. The championship of the Tennis Court was won upon cutlets that were made of nuts. Once more, I say, put out your fires, throw your kettles and saucepans into the dustbin. Else you shall have upon your soul the guilt of infanticide, and the cries of boiled and roasted babies shall disturb your midnight pillow. And moreover, if you abstain from the decadent and disgusting in literature, you will doubtless find

that the savours of the orgie called dinner no longer allure you; you will put away "strong" meat and return to your innocent, happy childhood over a diet of "Riscuit" and Grape Guts.

Have not the poets always sung of a fabled Age of Gold, when iron was suffered to remain in the earth, when, in the happy childhood of the world, man found shelter beneath the oaks and ate their simple produce, washed down with water from the sparkling brook? What if this vision should again be realised, if the world, weary of its follies and its crimes, should put them off and gain a second childhood?

Let us all work prayerfully, earnestly, persistently to this glorious end; but before it can be consummated much remains to be done. I have said that so far as modern literature goes, the gates are on the whole well kept, for modern criticism does its duty with respect to the current productions of the press. But what am I to say of the general attitude towards the fiction, the poetry and the drama of the past? I am afraid my verdict cannot be a very favourable one. It fills me with amazement and horror when I read in the writings of authors (who are safe enough where modern work is concerned) a kind of glib, matter of fact acceptance of some of the most monstrous productions of past ages—on the ground that these abominations are "works of genius," "works of art," and I know not what else. What a

monstrous inconsistency lies in the practice of forcing growing lads to acquire a knowledge of the obscenities of Aristophanes; a writer who would most deservedly be sent to gaol if he lived in our days, whom to read would spell the severest punishment, if he had written not in Greek but in plain English. Is this the way to breed English gentlemen, I ask; are we teaching our boys to become earnest and profitable Christians by forcing down their throats this filth of heathendom, this Athenian sewage? No one, surely, can sincerely think that vile and corrupting garbage is any the better because it was written more than two thousand years ago. Again, I say, it is not to be wondered at, if to the Free Churchman the word "classic" implies foul and deliberate nastiness. And yet, the very men who are most prompt in correcting any tendency of this kind in the work of to-day, are with the next breath ready to applaud the filth of some scoundrelly heathen, to smack their lips over some new edition of his plays or poems and to congratulate the editor on his notes—notes elucidating matter of which a Hottentot would be ashamed.

The case is much the same with writers who were at all events professing Christians. Take the case of Chaucer. Here is a man much of whose poetry is deliberately and brutally obscene; and not merely obscene in thought,

idea, conception, but obscene in words. Not only are the images he presents to us of a profoundly disgusting and immoral character, but the words which he employs are such that if I uttered them in the public street I should with no long interval make my appearance in the nearest police station on the charge of using filthy and obscene language. And yet, mark you, the works of this writer are not merely on sale, but they are on sale in cheap editions, and for two shillings and eightpence or some such sum you can buy more disgusting language than a magistrate in a low neighbourhood has to listen to in a month. And not merely is this book on sale at a cheap rate; it is actually made a text-book, it is propounded for the study of young men and girls, who are presently examined on their knowledge of one of the grossest and the vilest writers that our country ever produced. Again, I suppose the plea is that perfection in the presentation makes the nature of the thing presented of little consequence; Chaucer, I suppose, was a "stylist" and an "artist," and all the rest of it; and again I must express my wonder that critics who would indignantly reject this plea in the case of a modern writer are ready to welcome it with applause in the case of a ruffian who has been dead for five hundred years.

I could mention many other instances of this extraordinary indulgence extended to men whose

only merit lies in the fact that they wore clothes of a different fashion from those in use to-day. There is the elegant and alluring lustfulness of Boccaccio, the gross vulgarity of Cervantes, the mad obscenity of Rabelais, whose every page is strewn with abominations of thought and expression which are quite unspeakable, which belong rather to a prostitute in Bedlam than to a rational human being. But I pass these over and come to the most notorious instance of all, the universally read, the almost idolised Shakespeare. Nay; I am quite aware of the obloquy I shall encounter, I know that a kind of fetish worship has gathered round the name of this dramatist, that it is accounted a heresy to mention his works save in terms of the most extravagant praise. And I must allow that Shakespeare has written many great and admirable lines; there are whole pages, indeed, in his plays which may be read both with pleasure and profit, for the beauty of expression, the moral lesson, and the fidelity to life. Such for example are the famous soliloquy beginning "To be, or not to be," and the hardly less famous moralisings of the Melancholy Jacques. But we purchase such gems as these too dearly when we consider what Shakespeare is as a whole, that throughout his works are scattered many passages of an extremely indecent nature, that his language is by no means such as we should tolerate in our drawing-rooms, and that

again and again he appeals to some of the worst passions of Englishmen.

How vain is it for us to preach the wickedness of war from every pulpit, if with our next breath we bid our children study such a play as *Henry V*. We proclaim aloud at every opportunity the blessings of peace, we denounce militarism in high places and in low, we clamour for the reduction of the bloated armaments which suck the life-blood from the English People, and keep the rest of the world in a continual state of irritation and alarm. We resent such festivals as Empire Day, we banish the Union Jack from our schools, we hate and dread the very mention of conscription, and by our ridicule of the "Rifle Club" and similar schemes we do our very best to render our country defenceless in the event of invasion. Military habits—the smartness, the rigid carriage of the body, the prompt obedience to a superior—all these we consistently look down upon and deride, for they are at once provocative and contrary to the principles of democracy. Nay, as I have said, we have found it our duty in almost every case in which a dispute has arisen between Englishmen and those of another nation to declare our own people absolutely in the wrong, to paint them as a race of savage, sordid, and barbarian robbers. When Englishmen have won victories we allude to them as "brutal massacres of unarmed men," when

Englishmen have been defeated we point out that our own race is effete, rotten, cowardly, and contemptible in every respect, and that the leaders of our armies are too imbecile to fight successfully against men, whatever their prowess may be against women and children. We have done all this, I say, and we crown our work by putting into our children's hands a book that reeks of Jingoism, Imperialism, and Patriotism; that "mafficks" on every other page, that sings the glories of all the ruffianly kings who bore rule in the Dark Ages, and never fails to applaud their most disreputable military adventures! And when to vices such as these we join the immeasurable contempt that the flunkey-soul of Shakespeare felt for the People, when we remember the outrageous and insulting manner in which the Democracy is treated in *Coriolanus* and *Julius Cæsar;* above all, when we read that most injurious and shameful attack on the great Cade in *Henry VI.* Part II., the measure of our just indignation brims over, and we Free Churchmen reluctantly but decisively announce to the world that Shakespeare must go. A few copies of the Works may possibly be allowed to be kept in the strong rooms of the County Council, and may be shewn to such scholars as can satisfy the official custodians that their curiosity is harmless; but the man who by a kind of malignant prophecy at once defiled the memory

of the martyr in the people's cause, and contrived in doing so shamelessly to caricature and degrade the policy of the great Liberal Party of to-day, shall be no guide for our children, for those Liberal citizens of to-morrow, whom we have rescued from parson and from priest.

VI

The Free Churches the heirs of Evolution, and the only Catholic Church of to-day.

I am almost afraid that in spite of the long talks we have had together I have somewhat neglected what, after all, was to have been the main object of these pleasant afternoons. When you so kindly consented to assist me in giving to the world the views of Free Churchmen, I think there was a distinct understanding that our chief consideration was to be the Free Churches themselves, looked upon as a great body of closely allied Christians who are prepared to offer their system to the world as an alternative to the ecclesiasticism which has in the past usurped the name of Christianity. For many ages, as you must know, the ears of men have been deafened by the clamorous debates of contending sects, who built upon the simple foundations of the Gospel their fantastic and complicated edifices, each widely differing from its neighbour, and each, if but poorly provided with the sanitary arrangements of real Christian piety, amply furnished, at all events, with a bristling armoury of controversial weapons, and with the boiling lead of

theological acerbity. Arians and Catholics, Manicheans and Copts, Orthodox Greeks and Basilidians, Armenians and Anglicans raised their voices so loudly against one another that the thoughtful, as I say, were puzzled, and were content to stay without these contending folds (or rather camps), satisfying their religious instincts with the simple charities of the Gospel. And for some time after the Reformation, I am afraid, the Evangelical bodies perpetuated to a certain extent the evil leaven which had been handed down to them, and strove together about questions which seemed to them of vast importance but which we perceive to have been misunderstandings about trifles. Thus Calvin burned Servetus, thus Presbyterian contended with Independent, thus the Baptists were forced to leave Boston, and thus the Orthodox Church of Massachusetts was tempted into courses of some severity against the Quakers. And even in our own time I remember that excellent, though old-fashioned minister Mr. Spurgeon speaking with some severity of what he called the "Down grade" tendency in the Free Church ministry.

Thank Heaven! all that is over; we have perceived, I repeat, that the disputes which agitated the old Catholic and Arian sects and all the other bodies of puzzle-headed and cantankerous metaphysicians, which troubled to a less degree the peace of our Puritan forefathers,

we have perceived that these disputes were mere quarrels over a diphthong, mere logomachies over trifles which neither party understood, which it is not important that anyone should understand. The angry battle clouds have been dispersed by the Liberal breezes that have blown from heaven, and in their places we see the great Free Church Denominations, divided, perhaps, mechanically, but really, and spiritually, and vitally united; forming the true Catholic Church of to-day.

It was of this great Body, its aims and its principles that I chiefly desired to discourse to you; but I am afraid that we have delayed so long amongst rather secondary considerations, in the outworks and exterior walls of the Edifice as it were, that I shall be obliged to be somewhat brief in discussing our vital principles—the keep on which our flag floats boldly in the breeze. However, while we talked about the public press, the superiority of America, the study of history, literature, art, the drama, the future life, and other cognate topics, you must have gathered a good deal by the way, and perhaps the omission I have mentioned has been more formal than real.

But, briefly to return to first principles; you will, of course, understand that the Free Churches have but one foundation—the Bible. There is no other foundation on which man can build than on the dear Old Book which for

more than three hundred years has been the Englishman's greatest treasure, which to us seems, almost exclusively, an English book. We do not care to discuss with prying ecclesiastical antiquarians the question of the original formation of the New Testament; we just accept the dear old story as the Reformers gave it to us, and by us it shall be defended to the last against the Popish priest and the Ritualist parson. Yes; the Bible is our dearest and best possession, and we would gladly die for it.

But what do we mean by the Bible? Not the dead letter, which, as Paul observes, killeth; not the mere mechanical text? No; we value the book, not the binding; the precious liquor, not the vessel that contains it, the spirit, not the letter; the spirit as interpreted by ourselves, on whom through the liberal and scientific progress of the last century the ends of the world are come. It is an instance of the essential and vital union that exists in the Free Churches, in spite of apparent divisions, that Dr. Forrest, the Presbyterian minister, and Mr. Kelly, the ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, agree on this great principle—dogma (which is of the letter) is of no consequence. The ethic of a nation is its life, says Dr. Forrest, contrasting America with Spain, the rich and prosperous country with the poor; and Mr. Kelly says the same thing in other words when he told the young ministers that dogma to be tolerated

must be *practical.* The age in which men squabbled about the *Homoousion* and the *Filioque* clause is gone for ever; and we should receive the Pelagians and the Albigenses to-day with the open arms of Christian fellowship. No, it is not the letter of the Old Book which we revere with such intensity; it is the exquisite spirit which exhales from those wondrous leaves, the spirit which has banished all ugly words and ugly things such as heresy and schism from our hearts and our lives, which makes us One in a sense which the world cannot understand.

And I would have you note that even in the early days of Puritanism this great truth was not without its witnesses. Martin Luther himself, the chief of all Protestants, when he denounced the Epistle of James as an "epistle of straw" because he did not agree with its doctrine, spoke in the spirit of a Free Churchman of to-day, though we may not imitate the hearty bluntness of the great Reformer. Milton, too, understood how to transcend the letter when he published his famous manifesto on Divorce, anticipating by more than two centuries the grand liberty of the United States; and even the Anglican reformers saw something of the truth when they quietly dismiss Unction as a "corrupt following of the Apostles." But while the Anglican seems to be endeavouring to bind the chains of the letter more tightly than

ever about him, we have become still more free, released at last from that cramping dungeon cell of literal dogma, the spiritual type, and no doubt the efficient cause of the dungeons and racks of the Inquisition.

I have already told you that the Free Church outlook is in the first place ethical, and, in my first conversation, I shewed you that it is in America that our ethic is most fully and completely realised. I have explained that while our moral code is built upon the foundation of the New Testament, it is rather a healthy and consistent development than a mechanical replica of the gospel system of morals. For example, we do *not* keep the best seats in our churches for beggars, persons in ragged or shabby clothing, or costermongers in their working dress. Our ministry, we conceive, is to the comparatively well-to-do sheep of the house of England, and my little boy in his touching picture of the future life imaged forth, accurately enough, the kind of congregation that we like to see about us. I daresay you will have observed that Christian Churches are not very plentiful in the really poor neighbourhoods, whose degraded inhabitants we leave to the more degraded—because superstitious—ministrations of parson and priest. Take again the question of celibacy. I daresay several texts will occur to you: there is the "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's

sake," there is Paul's distinct recommendation of celibacy as the higher and better state, there is the weird procession of the Virgins in the Revelation of John. For a man of leisure with an interest in such questions I can conceive of no more agreeable occupation than that of tracing the evolution of the modern Protestant view of the subject from these crude beginnings. You are of course aware that we have always denounced in the strongest terms the celibate vows of priests and monks and nuns, both as highly displeasing to the Almighty, and as leading in practice to the grossest and most abominable vice. We have contrasted the high ideals of the marriage state held in Protestant countries such as America with the notorious and blatant immorality of all Romanist nations; we have not spared the world our views as to priests' "nieces" or as to the internal economy of convents. Truly the ways of Evolution are mysterious; and it should be, as I say, an interesting task to trace the steps by which the bud, as it were, of the Old Gospel has unfolded into the perfect blossom of our faith to-day.

I could give you many other instances of the same kind. Usury, for example, was, I believe, unknown in the early Christian communities, and was forbidden by the grotesque Scholastic Philosophy. I need not argue this point, for since the whole of our great Commercial System hangs on the giving of interest, it would be

otiose to point out that any texts which seem to forbid this practice cannot be taken in their literal sense. But there is another point which I cannot pass by, since it is concerned with the very foundation and bed-rock of all that is best and holiest and most secure in the modern Christian State. You will remember such texts as "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," "honour the King," and "be subject into the higher powers, the powers that be are ordained of God"; you will remember, too, David's horror at the thought of laying hands upon the "Lord's Anointed." Leaving for the moment the superstitious fears of the young guerilla chief; I presume you know something of the character and origin of the Roman Emperors in the days we are speaking of. In the first place, supposing that there could be a legitimate title to such a thing as kingship (which I do not admit for a moment), the title of these men was as bad as bad can be, since it was simply founded on carnage and prescription, and on the shameless violation of the Roman Republican Constitution. The first Emperors sailed to power on a sea of blood and terror, and compared with them Napoleon III. appears a harmless constitutional sovereign. Passing from their public to their private characters we find them stained with every cruel and abominable vice, crime, and wickedness of which humanity at its very worst is capable;

their lives are, as it were, the epitome of all the evil of the world; and the horrible barbarities which they used to the Christians seem almost a trifle when compared with the unspeakable, almost incredible catalogue of their other vices. Let us remember, then, that these were the "powers that be," of which the apostle speaks, such were the kings that were to be honoured, these the Cæsars to whom tribute was to be given; and let me ask you whether you can imagine a more violent contrast than that which exists between such teaching, and the great vital truths of Democracy in which we live and move and have our being to-day. Frankly, we should be false to all our best and most dearly bought principles if, for example, we rendered to Cæsar the things supposed to be Cæsar's, without first enquiring whether the rule of Cæsar was "broad based upon the people's will," whether the tribute proposed had been ratified by the chosen representatives of the people, elected on a liberal franchise, and finally whether the money when collected would be put to uses which we could thoroughly approve. These, or so I have always understood, are the first principles and rudiments of free popular government, "by the people, for the people, and through the people"; and it will be seen that there are no "powers that be" in existence; though there may be delegates chosen for convenience by the sovereign populace. As for

government which is *not* popular, which exists, not by the will of the majority, but in virtue of such a principle as heredity, appealing, perhaps, to imaginary celestial sanctions, and fortified by fetish-ceremonies such as "coronation" and "unction" bestowed by medicine-men, alias bishops: it is the duty of every free man and every Free Churchman not merely *not* to be "subject" to such powers, not merely *not* to honour such kings, but rather to strain every nerve, to use every means (including armed revolution and assassination) to destroy so infamous a tyranny. Unless this be our doctrine nowadays, I am at a loss to understand our attitude towards the Cæsar of Russia and his oppressed and downtrodden people, I am at a loss to understand our sympathy with Garibaldi and Mazzini, with the heroes of the French Revolution, with the Fathers of the great Republic of the United States, and finally with our ancestors, the men who judged and put to death Charles Stuart.

No: "the letter killeth," and it is the spirit and not the letter of the Grand Old Book that we follow in these and in all other instances. We are the heirs of the ages, the products of the grand process of Evolution, and it is thus that we may claim to be the true and earnest disciples of the Inspired Volume. Should we welcome the claim of a Primitive Man, if such a being existed now, to be the only True Man,

to be our superior in manhood? Surely not; we should drive the hairy and apelike creature from us with contempt and disgust; and with the same feelings we repel the claims of Tories and Sacerdotalists to be the true interpreters of the Sacred Text.

By analogy, then, you will easily conjecture that as our ethic is evolutionary so also are our dogmatic and our liturgic. Our great dogma, if I may say so, is that dogmas do not greatly matter, or in the words of Pope:

> For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Hence the profound gulf which separates us from the Romanists and Ritualists who, it is well known, believe that morals are not of the slightest consequence, that all the commandments may be broken with impunity, so long as certain doctrines are held and certain superstitious ceremonies performed. Needless to say, we do not go to the other extreme; we are free to hold what dogmas we will, so long as they are not displeasing to our friends in other denominations, since we are not at liberty to profess doctrine which practically "unchurches" whole bodies of earnest and devoted Christians. We are free, I should rather say, to hold whatever dogmas we please so long as we do not hold them with that "passionate certainty" which has been rebuked by an earnest minister of the Establishment,

with that acerbity which is sure to follow such certainty, which brings us sooner or later to the painful and uncharitable pass of denouncing the many good men who are unable to accept the literal doctrine of the Divinity of Christ as not Christians.

For, rightly or wrongly, many of us have long felt that the time is past for fervid discussion, for earnest and vehement affirmation on this and on similar topics. The age is a practical age, an ethical age, as Mr. Kelly and Dr. Forrest have affirmed, and I think we are all inclined to echo the amusing outburst of the minister of the Establishment, to say: "Hang Theology!—and let us tax ground values." The age is a hurrying and strenuous age, with real work in the world to be accomplished; we cannot afford to discuss the niceties of expression of early Christian metaphysicians while valuable building land is left undeveloped owing to the injustice of the laws.

Besides, are not the times "out of joint" for such questions as these? Do we not all feel in our hearts, if we are honest men, that in the whole atmosphere of the Gospel Story, literally understood, there is something strange, unreal, thaumaturgic? We must remember that the East never changes, that the dreamy, mystical Oriental was much the same in Palestine in the first century as he is in India to-day. And such a man as this was of a very different character

from the bustling, energetic citizen of London and Chicago. He was not whirled to and fro morning and evening by train or tram, his mind active and busy with schemes in progress or in contemplation; nor was he compelled to strain every nerve, every capacity of his body through a long day of business; every brain cell alert lest money should not be made, or lest money should be lost. The Syrian peasant, we may almost say, had no healthy interests in life; not only was he totally devoid of business instincts and of all opportunities for using such faculties had he possessed them; but he lacked all the other interests which nowadays go to the making of a good citizen and an earnest Christian. Consider, for example, how much of the time of the energetic man of this age is taken up by politics, both local and general. In America, indeed, so engrossing and so important has this function of life become that it has been found necessary to make it a regular and recognised profession, a profession which has to be learned like any other, for which there are special aptitudes needed, in which hard, intelligent, and patient work is executed, which, like other professions, gives to the successful a great reward. In England we are still hampered by the decaying relics of the Feudal System; yet, in our rather casual, amateurish way the work is done, and many worthy and public-spirited men are found ready to serve the people even on the

comparatively humble Board of Guardians without any official fee. How different was it in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem, in Nazareth of old! The politics of a Syrian peasant consisted chiefly in doing what he was told, and in bearing with what patience he could command the exactions of his superiors. He was told no doubt in words more or less anticipatory of the Anglican Catechism to honour and obey Cæsar and all that were put in authority under him, to submit himself to all his governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters, and to do his duty in that state of life in which it had pleased* God to call him.

From such a man as this it would, of course, be as absurd to expect our modern mental and moral activities as it would be to search for such qualities in the mind of a recluse or monk of the Dark Ages; and can we not understand how to these simple peasants, whose days were spent perhaps in a round of dreamy and mystic meditation, the world must have put on the appearance of a weird phantasmagoria? To these men, watching their sheep on the solitude of the Syrian hills, a very ordinary phenomenon might appear to be the opening of the heavens, and the excited imagination of the visionary would readily fill in all appropriate details. We

* There is a slight mistake here, but I give the phrase in the words of Dr. Stiggins.—A.M.

may not dogmatise, we may not positively assert that here lies the explanation of an astounding history; but at all events do not let us be too ready to condemn the earnest and devoted Christians whom such an explanation satisfies. And, if we take this as our keynote, much that has perplexed and grieved devout minds will become clear. We must not, of course, too rigidly prescribe the bounds of nature, for this is not the method of true science, and doubtless the mysterious phenomena of the hypnotic, telepathic and cataleptic conditions will explain many things that have seemed puzzling; but speaking generally, there are very few of the so-called miraculous occurrences in the Gospels that cannot be accounted for by the fact that the Oriental peasant was, and always has been, of a credulous and dreamy nature, prone to view the world as a vision, and to express his experiences in terms of the marvellous. Let us remember, then, that it was by and for such men that the Great Story was written; and while we may heartily acquit the writers of any attempt to deceive, we must not be too harsh towards those who are unable to accept the Gospel narrative with the same profound and literal belief that they accord to the items in their morning paper. After all, we may still show goodwill to men, even if the angels who sang the words only existed in the heated brains of the Shepherds; and if it should be proved

that Lazarus was a cataleptic, the lesson would remain, and we would still, I hope, support the work of the great London Hospitals.

In all sincerity and humility I must say that it seems to me that this is the safer way of regarding these wondrous old records; if we are to be, as Mr. Kelly advises us, *practical*, if we are to utter the message that has been entrusted to us, so that it may be understood by the people; for otherwise we become but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Science, of course, has not uttered her last word; it is possible that that which now seems incredible may be demonstrated in a thousand laboratories; but in the meanwhile let us beware how we estrange the least of these little ones, of these timid and doubting, but earnest and devoted spirits who merely ask us not to confound supernaturalism with religion. Let us remember that, so far, no man of science has pronounced in favour of the resurrection of the dead; let us not, then, turn anxious and enquiring souls away by passionately insisting on belief in such a dogma.

And when we have set aside the strange, the thaumaturgic elements in the story, how immensely valuable is the remanet! The Herald Angels, as I have remarked, will still press on us the duty of goodwill to men, still the Sacred Page will warn us to be as meek and lowly as our social positions permit, still we

shall give alms to the poor, not, it is true, after the demoralising and degrading fashion of the East, but in such taxation as a progressive government may think best. And, after all, perhaps, the old ideal of the union of Church and State may receive a new meaning in our day; little by little, it may be, technical, mechanical religion may tend to disappear, and the religion of the future may turn out to be simply a name for enlightened, altruistic, and progressive political energies. It is a strange, a solemn thought that in a hundred years' time man may find expression for all his feelings of awe and adoration by attending Liberal meetings, and the proceedings of the House of Commons may become the supreme worship of the nation. Then, perhaps, for the first time men will understand the vision of John, who saw the Heavenly City, like a Bride, descending upon earth. We cannot realise it yet; but what if "Order, order, order" were the *Sanctus* of the future?

But, at all events, after what I have told you of our Ethic and Dogmatic, I need scarcely say that our Liturgic does not profess to be a literal following of any Apostolic system. I know that many of my brethren think otherwise; they assert that a Free Church service is a reproduction of Christian Worship as it was in the earliest ages. But, as I have pointed out, this is *a priori* unlikely; for if our theory of doctrine

and morals differs, as it assuredly does, from the theory of the Syrian Christians; is it not probable that our ideals of public worship will be very different from theirs? Let us remember, if you please, that the first Christians were Orientals, and therefore addicted to an elaborate system of outward forms and ceremonies. Moreover, they were Jews, to whom Ritual was the very life of religion, whose every hour and action were regulated by ceremonial observances, who were accustomed to regard all the pomp and show of the Temple Services as the appointed and quickening images and patterns of eternal and heavenly realities. We are not surprised, then, to learn that both the Master and His disciples were devout and fervent attendants at these services, that all through the Gospels the Jewish ritual and ceremonial law is treated with reverence and respect. I need not dwell on the sacramental nature of Christianity as it is presented to us in these early documents —on such symbolisms as oil, water, bread, wine, the imposition of hands, the ceremony of breathing, the ceremonial washing ordered in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the elaborate ritual of John's heaven—for it seems to me that from the nature of the case early Christianity could not fail to be a ceremonial and ritual religion; and such, accordingly, we find that it had become when it emerged from the darkness and the dangers of the catacombs. How should it

not be so? If we find a censer in the hands of an angel in the Revelation, why should we be astonished to find a censer in the hands of the Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century?

And for the life of me I cannot understand why this truth should perplex and distress earnest and devout Christians. Our morals are a development; are we to expect then that our worship should be an exception and refuse to follow the great law of evolution? Of course John and his fellow disciples were Ritualists, but I have given excellent reasons why we should not follow their example. John no doubt believed that the earth was immovable, that the sun rose and set, and that the Psalms were written by King David—we know that he believed in the existence of "sorcerers"—are we, therefore, to share his belief on these points? And if not, are we to be tied down to his theory and practice of Divine Worship? The question answers itself; and till the Great Consummation that I have hinted at arrives, we shall do well to follow in the steps of Calvin and stout John Knox, and to conduct our services in a manner as remote from the practice and ideals of the Early Christians as are the meetings of a Public Company.

For let it not be forgotten that ritual is the expression of belief. Those old Syrians, with all their piety, were Sacramentalists to the backbone; to them the visible and tangible

world was but the symbol of the heavenly realities, and they undoubtedly believed that by a consecrating word, by the touch of blessing the veil might be removed, the dead matter might become quick, and earthly things become the vehicle of celestial virtues. A few years ago, before I received a call to my present ministry, I was induced by an Anglican friend to attend a service in a church of the Establishment. He hoped, I think, that I should be favourably impressed by the "performance" for which the church in question is famous; but I need scarcely tell you that my feelings were those of disgust and horror. The moment I entered the doors of the edifice my nostrils were saluted with the sickening fumes of incense, and unless I am much mistaken there was a vessel containing "Holy Water" inside the church, into which some members of the congregation dipped their hands, making the superstitious sign of the cross upon their breasts with the "consecrated" fluid. The roof was richly and strangely painted; there were carved and gilded images in a side chapel, and across the church ran a screen, surmounted by a Crucifix, beside which there were two more images. The "altar," of course, was decorated with a cross or crucifix, and I was horrified to see four great candles burning in full daylight. All around me people were kneeling down, and, I have no doubt, worshipping the crucifixes and other

images. The service began; a strange droning music of a wild and barbarous nature, more like an incantation of savages than the vocal praise of Christians, filled the building and produced in me a feeling of horror and repulsion that I am at a loss to express. I cannot describe these terrible proceedings at length; the strange gestures of the ministers in their Popish vestments, the thick smoke of the incense, the burning lights, and above all the weird rise and fall of that dreadful music made me feel as if I were under the influence of some horrible drug, and I wondered whether if I made an effort I could shake off the oppression of the awful sights and sounds and odours about me, and wake up in my peaceful home in Cricklewood. At last, to my unutterable relief, an old minister (the Dean of Westminster, as I was afterwards informed), began to preach. I shall never forget my sense of escape when I heard this excellent man characterise the conduct of the woman who touched the Master's garment as "superstitious," and I was able to witness the rest of the impious and idolatrous ceremony with something approaching indifference.

But of course the good dean was perfectly right; and not only this poor foolish woman but the whole population of the country was no doubt sunken in the grossest sacramentalism—which is but another name for superstition. These deluded people believed, as we know,

that dreams warned them of future events, that lunatics were persons possessed of devils, that the sick could be cured by bathing in holy wells, that the Spirit of God could be given by the imposition of human hands, that the diseased were made well, and the evil spirits expelled by "handkerchiefs and aprons" which had been touched by Paul, who himself credited such superstitions as witchcraft and the Evil Eye.

I need not tell you that such conceptions as these are utterly and completely foreign to all Protestant teaching with which I am acquainted; we no longer believe that the sick in body or mind can be made whole with ceremonies and oils, we no longer believe that we become inheritors of heaven at the touch of a drop of water, and as we have ceased to wash ceremonially before the Ordinance, so we have reduced it from a great, mystic Sacrifice and Sacrament to a touching pledge of Christian goodwill and fraternity. Evolution is justified of her children; we have submitted ourselves gladly and joyfully to her benign sway, while the Ritualist still believes that his child receives divine grace from the pat of an old gentleman called a bishop. He has stopped at the stage which was occupied by those simple and devout but ignorant and superstitious peasants of Syria, nineteen hundred years ago.

But superstitions that may have been edifying or at least harmless, "on account of their

ignorance," in the mental backwoods of ancient Palestine are to-day in free, Protestant, commercial England a danger and a disgrace; and those who teach such deadly figments must be opposed relentlessly, incessantly, in season and out of season. It may be that, in the scheme of Evolution, a religion of human sacrifice was the only possible one for our far-off British ancestors; but should we tolerate such cruel and devilish rites now in this happy Protestant country? No: and already I see the lines formed, the men at arms arrayed, the glitter of the weapons and the waving of the banners; I hear the pealing of the trumpets and the heavy roll of drums, as legion after legion closes its ranks; already is begun the great battle between two great hosts—between the armies of Sacramentalism and Anti-Sacramentalism. There are defections, on one side and on the other, as the true issue is apprehended, and now you understand why we Free Churchmen are able to range ourselves with the so-called Atheists of France, with Gambetta and Combes, why we rejoice at the ending in that country of all dogmatic teaching, at the expulsion of monks and nuns and all the brood of darkness from their dens, at the driving forth of the Sisters from the hospitals; why we shall rejoice when the idol temples are closed, the fetish images and monstrances and all the paraphernalia of Sacramentalism are confiscated, and the mouths of

priests and bishops effectually gagged. Our war cry is not wanting; Lloyd George proclaimed it to the House of Commons and to the listening world when he uttered the great words: "Clericalism is the Enemy!"

Let every man choose, once and for all, on which side he will fight; and let him remember that unless he fight on our side, he will have pronounced that the system called Protestantism is the deadliest and most abominable delusion that has ever fallen, for its sins, upon the world.

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