

source—suffering as pathetic and as maddening to witness as the anguish of dumb animals.

"The time has come," writes one of our Doctors, "when the ecclesiastic must learn to keep himself within the domain he has chosen"; and the hour has struck when "religious slavery" should be dethroned for ever. Talk of martyrdom! martyrdom is nothing compared to this life-long tyranny. On this point I am inflexible, disposed to neither give nor take quarter, to pander to no man's mania, no, not even if he had all the "officialism" and "red-tapeism" in the world girt about his loins; because "fine feathers" have no charms in my case whatsoever. None of your toadyism; let us have "Hanwell" rather. Hanwell, what of Hanwell?

Again, in my opinion, "intellectual progress and a purer social life have been obtained through the mind of mankind rising superior to the narrow confined views of things alike of Nature and man in all theological systems; and the progress of the laity has compelled the clergy to passively go with it, and rendered their attempts to restrain progress futile. Freedom of thought, once obtained, has enabled men to take broader views of things in general, and rise superior to the intolerance incidental to sectarianism; so that the more correct knowledge of Nature and the higher moral tone have compelled the Church to reluctantly follow; therefore, it is incorrect, as many do, to ascribe to religion the greater desire for truth, &c., of our times."

And, moreover, "I utterly repudiate and disown the doctrine so long preached by the Christian clergy, 'that men should be content to remain in that state God has placed them'; and in reply to Lord Selborne as to the efforts of Christianity in abolishing slavery, I assert that this abject, servile, degrading view of humanity preached by Christianity has brought more *real slavery*, by lowering and degrading man in his own sight, than all the slave-dealers that ever existed."

But to return to our District Nurses.

After visiting almost every county in England, and conversing with thousands of the working men of this generation, we have no hesitation in saying that it is a well-known fact to the majority of these men that many parsons who have suddenly become popular, so popular indeed as to consider everything outside their own self-interest unworthy their notice, have repeatedly said to our District Nurses something like this: "I care not one bit whether you are a good or a bad *professional* Nurse so long as you use plenty of soap and water, open the windows, and bring the people to church." And what a strangely odd medley of work is this to be sure! To a philosophical eye, how grotesque and revolting! Why not ask the parsons to turn tails and nurse? Then will such a programme help the Nurse to become the Doctor's right hand? Hitherto it has not; hence the jargon between the Doctor and the Nurse goes on, because the "parson" is *infallible*, you see.

Further, it might perhaps be well to analyse this matter a little more closely ere we proceed—we must not be content to saddle the wrong horses for ever, for there are "soul saving" sisterhoods and Church Army Nurses in plenty, they say. And it is idle to imagine that any *loyal* professional District Nurse, if she does her work honestly, has any margin for this sort of thing. It is, or should be, we take it, her special duty to impart sanitary knowledge, as time permits; and to do this *efficiently* and *acceptably* will require all the humanity, tact and practical common-sense at her command, *leaving no margin*. Her mission, be it remembered, is to care for the bodies of men while they need it, and terminates with the returning health or decease of the patients; beyond the "portals" she cannot go, neither does any intelligent and thoroughly conscientious District Nurse wish to do so.

Here is an extract from a contemporary, entitled, "Our Duties to the Dying," and to these sentiments, which we would unhesitatingly transcribe as with a pen of iron upon

the rock for ever, we would ejaculate ten thousand times, "Amen."

"A discussion has been raised in 'America as to how far a Nurse may go in administering spiritual comfort to the dying patient under her charge. It is always a sore subject, this; whether it is wise or no to 'prepare' the patient to die. Oliver Wendell Holmes says: 'Nothing is clearer than that the merciful Creator intends to blind most people as they pass down the dark valley. Without very good reasons, temporal or spiritual, we should not interfere with His kind arrangements. It is the height of cruelty and the extreme of impertinence to tell your patient he must die, except you are quite sure that he wishes to know it, or that there is some particular cause for his knowing it.' But then there are some people who believe in death-bed repentance, and think no Nurse or Doctor ought to let the last unconsciousness fall on a patient without warning. The case of the thief on the cross is generally given as proof of the power of a late repentance. But the prayer of the thief was spontaneous; it was no preaching, no warning, which wrung that cry from him. Was it not rather the sight of suffering borne in silence? It is not by exhortation or rebuke so much as by example that you can speak to the soul which is already withdrawing from the earth. The Nurse's duty is not to preach, it is to minister. She has responsibility enough on her shoulders without being troubled with the argument that it is her duty to warn the dying."

The truth to tell, Sir, we might venture to lay particular emphasis on this point, for it is to be feared that far too many Nurses have been, under these and similar circumstances, just so far carried away during those ecstatic moments as to forget they were the "Servants of the People," to become quite beside themselves concerning *their own* duties, until the patients had entered the great Unknowable for ever. Is this wise? Is it a womanly, a queenly attitude? Surely not! Then why not take "sides" forthwith; and let others—the Doctor, the clergyman, or the family—settle that question?

At this point we can most gladly and cordially support John William Draper, M.D., LL.D. And we are prepared to follow the lead of that body of indefatigable, persevering, and self-denying men and women, the Doctors, so long as they keep within the precincts of reason, and prove themselves worthy our united confidence, loyalty and devotion. Indeed, we are considerably indebted to Dr. Draper for the ray of light he has been enabled to shed upon the darksome way; and we may thank him heartily for it. Listen!

"Then has it in truth come to this, that Roman Christianity and Science are recognised by their respective adherents as being absolutely incompatible; they cannot exist together; one must yield to the other; mankind must make its choice—it cannot have both.

"While such is, perhaps, the issue as regards Catholicism, a reconciliation of the Reformation with Science is not only possible, but would easily take place if the Protestant Churches would only live up to the maxim taught by Luther, and established by so many years of war. That maxim is the right of private interpretation of the Scriptures. It was the foundation of intellectual liberty. But, if a personal interpretation of the book of Revelation is permissible, how can it be denied in the case of the book of Nature? In the misunderstandings that have taken place, we must ever bear in mind the infirmities of men. The generations that immediately followed the Reformation may perhaps be excused for not comprehending the full significance of their cardinal principle, and for not on all occasions carrying it into effect. When Calvin caused Servetus to be burnt, he was animated, not by the principles of the Reformation, but by those of Catholicism, from which he had not been able to emancipate himself completely. And when the clergy of influential Protestant confessions have stigmatised the investigators of Nature as infidels and atheists, the same may be said. For Catholicism to reconcile itself to Science, there are formidable-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)