

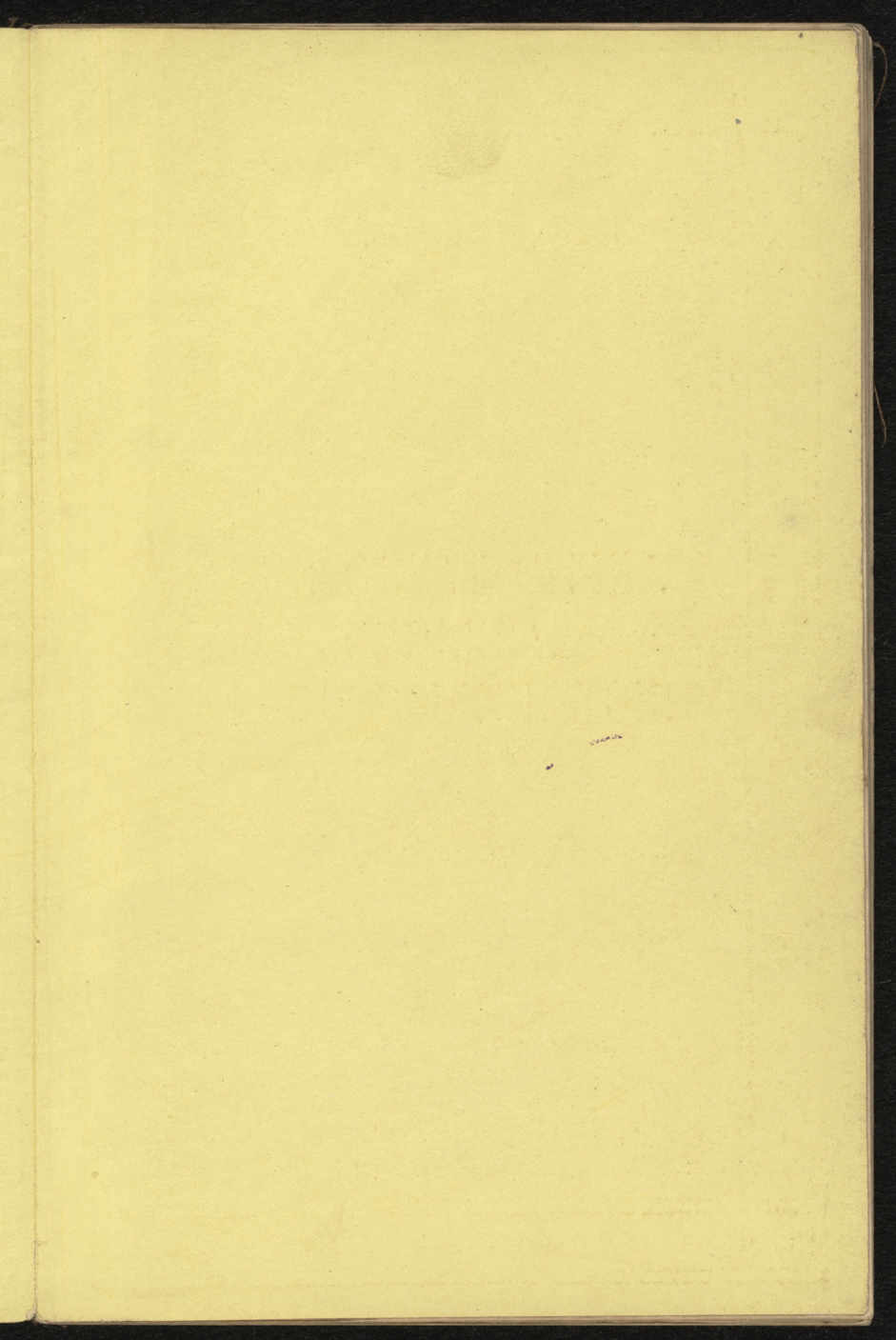
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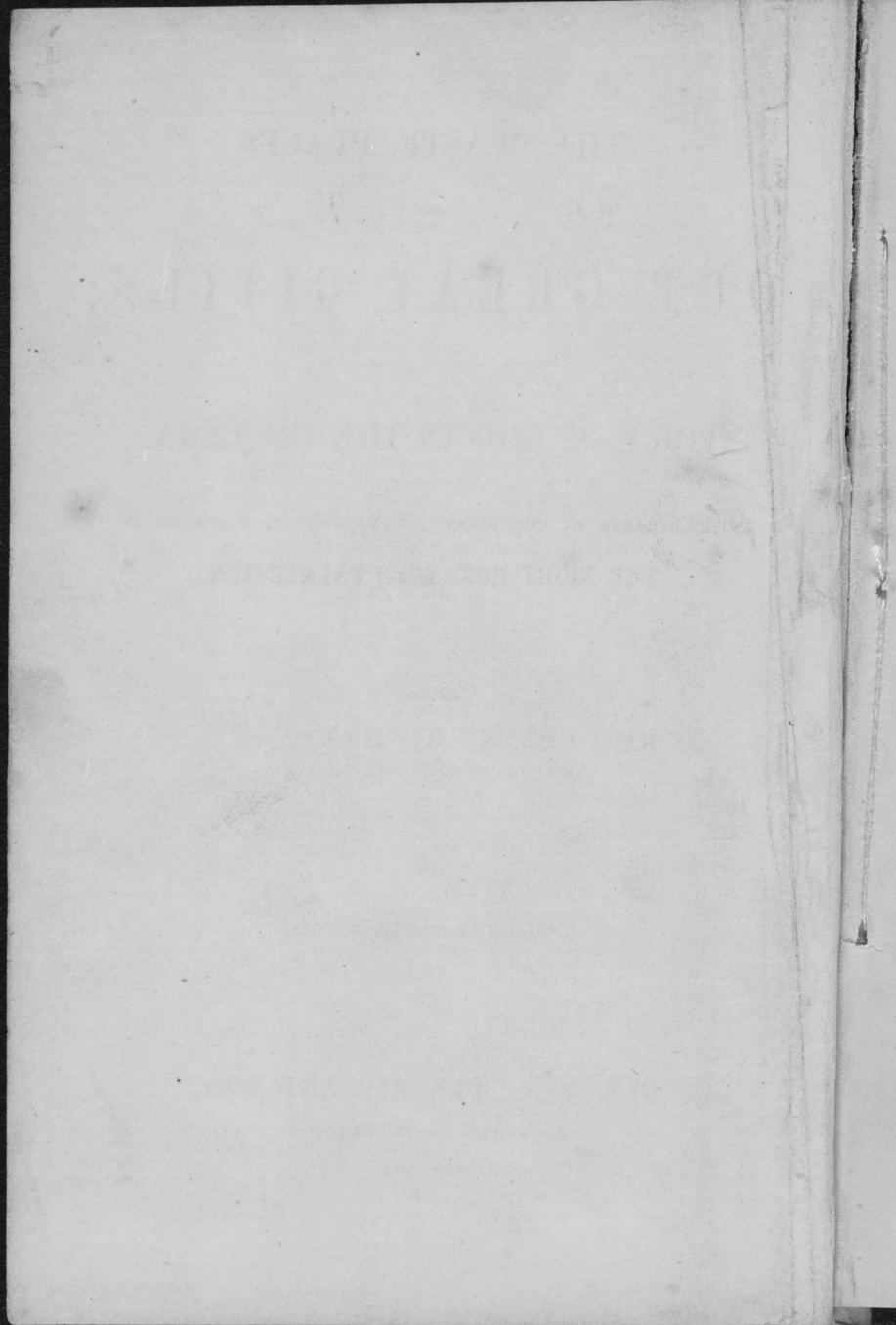
The waste places of our
great cities x x x

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OUR GREAT CITIES.
CHOLERA.
LORD PALMERSTON.

OUR GREAT OFFICE
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LORD PALMERSTON



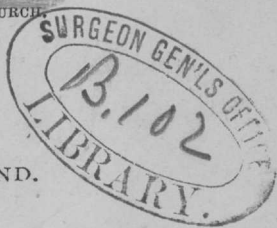


THE WASTE PLACES
OF
OUR GREAT CITIES;
OR, THE
VOICE OF GOD IN THE CHOLERA.

WITH REMARKS ON THE RECENT LETTER UPON THAT SUBJECT OF
THE RIGHT HON. LORD PALMERSTON.

BY THE
REV. ROBERT BUCHANAN, D.D., ✓
MINISTER OF FREE TRON CHURCH.

FOURTH THOUSAND.



GLASGOW: BLACKIE AND SON;
AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

MDCCLIII.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

THE following Lecture was delivered in the City Hall, on the 30th ult., at a public meeting of the citizens of Glasgow, attended by upwards of 2500 persons, and presided over by JAMES HANNAN, Esq., Lord Dean of Guild. It is now published through the press, at the request of the meeting. Prefixed to the Lecture is the Correspondence, to which it so largely refers, between the Edinburgh Presbytery of the Established Church and the Right Hon. Lord Palmerston.

GLASGOW, *Dec. 9, 1853.*

THE LETTER OF THE EDINBURGH PRESBYTERY TO
LORD PALMERSTON,
AND HIS LORDSHIP'S REPLY.

“Edinburgh, October 15, 1853.

“MY LORD,—At a meeting of the rev. the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the 13th current, there was some discussion as to the propriety of appointing, on ecclesiastical authority, a day for prayer and humiliation within the bounds of the Presbytery, under the visitation of Asiatic cholera, which has again appeared in this country.

“The members were of opinion that it was likely, in the circumstances, that a national fast would be appointed on royal authority. For this reason they delayed making an appointment for this locality, and directed me, in the meantime, respectfully to request that you would be pleased to say—if you feel yourself at liberty to do so—whether the appointment of a national fast by the Queen is in contemplation.

“The Presbytery hoped to be excused for the liberty they use in preferring this request.

“I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's humble servant,

“W. H. GRAY,

“Moderator of Presbytery.

“To the Right Hon. Viscount Palmerston, M.P., &c.”

“Whitehall, October 19, 1853.

“SIR,—I am directed by Viscount Palmerston to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th instant, requesting, on behalf of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, to be informed whether it is proposed to appoint a day of national fast on account of the visitation of the cholera, and to state that there can be no doubt that manifestations of humble resignation to the Divine will, and sincere acknowledgments of human unworthiness, are never more appropriate than when it has pleased Providence to afflict mankind with some severe visitation; but it does not appear to Lord Palmerston that a national fast would be suitable to the circumstances of the present moment.

"The Maker of the universe has established certain laws of nature for the planet in which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or the neglect of those laws. One of those laws connects health with the absence of those gaseous exhalations which proceed from overcrowded human habitations, or from decomposing substances, whether animal or vegetable; and those same laws render sickness the almost inevitable consequence of exposure to those noxious influences. But it has, at the same time, pleased Providence to place it within the power of man to make such arrangements as will prevent or disperse such exhalations, so as to render them harmless; and it is the duty of man to attend to those laws of nature, and to exert the faculties which Providence has thus given to man for his own welfare.

"The recent visitation of cholera, which has for the moment been mercifully checked, is an awful warning given to the people of this realm that they have too much neglected their duty in this respect, and that those persons with whom it rested to purify towns and cities, and to prevent or to remove the causes of disease, have not been sufficiently active in regard to such matters. Lord Palmerston would therefore suggest that the best course which the people of this country can pursue to deserve that the further progress of the cholera should be stayed, will be to employ the interval that will elapse between the present time and the beginning of next spring in planning and executing measures by which those portions of their towns and cities which are inhabited by the poorest classes, and which, from the nature of things, must need purification and improvement, may be freed from those causes and sources of contagion which, if allowed to remain, will infallibly breed pestilence, and be fruitful in death, in spite of all the prayers and fastings of an united but inactive nation. When man has done his utmost for his own safety then is the time to invoke the blessing of Heaven to give effect to his exertions.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"HENRY FITZROY.

"To the Rev. W. H. GRAY, Moderator
of the Edinburgh Presbytery."

OUR GREAT CITIES, &c.

THE subject into which the title of this lecture leads us is both deep and large. In studying the providence of God we find ourselves, at every step, in contact with mysteries. Events rise up oftentimes before us like the detached eminences in a mountainous country, while the dense mists of the morning are still burying out of sight everything that lies between. There they are, like islands floating in a sea whose depths we cannot penetrate. From the landscape of nature the cloudy covering soon passes away, and its broken fragments are seen gradually piecing themselves together into one harmonious and perfect whole, as the sun climbs up into the firmament of heaven. The landscape of Providence is never thus unveiled in our present state of being. Clouds and darkness continue to rest upon it after the lapse of six thousand years. Even in that higher state of existence which the Christian anticipates, and after which he aspires, doubtless, in surveying so complicated and so vast a field, there will still be ample

room for the exclamation of the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out?"

But though such considerations may well rebuke the dogmatism, upon such a theme, of presumption and ignorance, there is nothing in them to debar the approaches of the humble and reverential inquirer. Providence is indeed "a mighty maze," but "not without a plan." The ways of God are as beautifully and as systematically ordered as are his works. If, however, we would make any progress in searching out these ways, we must not only proceed in a right spirit, but we must take certain great guiding principles along with us. If, in setting out on this voyage, there be such a thing as a mariner's compass that will indicate the great cardinal points between or among which our true course lies, we must not only be careful to provide ourselves with it, but we must keep it constantly before us. If, in addition to the compass, a chart can also be obtained of the sea we are to navigate—a chart upon which, here and there at least, the shore-line and the soundings are given—he must be a reckless voyager who will go without it. Such a chart and such a compass we have in the Word of God. In that Word there are great principles laid down, by the help of which we can steer fearlessly on, even when there is nothing but darkness and tempest upon the face of the deep. In that Word, moreover, examples of the application of these principles are supplied, so numerous and so

clear, as to afford invaluable aid in studying those cases with which we ourselves have actually to do.

The Scripture principles to be thus taken along with us in interpreting the phenomena of Providence, are those which stand connected with the being and perfections of God on the one hand, and with the nature, and condition, and destiny of man on the other. We assume what the Bible states on these fundamental points to be infallible truth. The infidel will of course reject this assumption; but it is not with the infidel our present argument is held. A previous question would have to be settled with him before we could enter on the subject of a Divine Providence at all. That previous question would obviously relate to the inspiration and authority of Scripture as a revelation from God; a question that falls to be decided upon its own peculiar grounds. It is a question, however, that does not lie in our way here, simply because we are addressing ourselves in this lecture to those by whom the Bible is professedly regarded as the Word of God. All that we are assuming, therefore, in the outset of our argument is, that those who make this admission are bound, in interpreting the dispensations of Divine Providence, and their own duty in connection therewith, to take the principles of the Bible along with them. To refuse to do so would be even more absurd than it would have been for Young and Champollion to refuse the aid of the Greek inscription upon the Rosetta stone in interpreting the hieroglyphics of Egypt; or for Rawlinson and his coadjutors to set

at nought the Persian texts of the trilingual writings engraven on the rocks of Hamadan, or sculptured on the ancient palaces of Persepolis, in deciphering the long-buried monuments of Nineveh and Babylon. The Bible is the only key that can unlock the mysteries of the Divine government. Even with all the assistance it affords we find ourselves, ever and anon, bewildered by some strange and terrible handwriting on the wall, which baffles all our efforts to read it. Some fond hope is suddenly blasted; some cherished object is taken away with a stroke; some well-planned scheme, or important enterprise, on which had been lavished the toil and anxiety of years, is all at once dashed to the ground; and we are compelled to feel and to acknowledge that there is a Power at work, around us and above us, whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known. Even in such dark and perplexing cases as these, the Bible comes in to reconcile and to reassure us, by the great truth which it teaches, that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground "without our Father." But not unfrequently it does much more than this. By the principles which it enunciates, and by the numerous and varied examples of their application which it presents, it makes the events of Providence as intelligible, oftentimes, as the statements of Scripture themselves. And what we complain of is, that men, who would at least have it believed that they accept that Scripture as a Divine revelation, do nevertheless practically disown its authority as an interpreter of those

events that are falling out in this world under the government of Him from whom that revelation proceeds. They approach the consideration of these events just as if no such help to understand them had been given to mankind. To the torch of Scripture they prefer the taper of science; of science falsely so-called; the science not of true philosophy, but of a shallow empiricism which, like the vain janglers spoken of by St. Paul, knows not what it says nor whereof it affirms.

Of this method of proceeding we have had recently a very striking and painful example, in connection with that formidable pestilence, which now for the third time within the last twenty years, has visited this country, and which may be said to be at this very moment impending over our city. Pestilence is not a new thing under the sun. Often before has it stalked across the earth, and cast its deadly shadow upon the cities and nations of this fallen world. Following in the line of Scripture precedents upon the subject, it had been usual in this Christian country to make a public acknowledgment of the hand of God in these appalling visitations, and to seek by humble confessions of sin, and earnest supplications for mercy, to obtain deliverance from them. There was nothing, therefore, that could reasonably be regarded as unusual or out of place, when a religious body belonging to a church in immediate alliance with the civil power, took means to ascertain whether the advisers of the Crown intended, on the present occasion, to adopt the course observed in

like circumstances before. It is well known that, in answer to that inquiry, a somewhat remarkable document came forth. We have not forgotten the high authority which says, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people." Nor did it need that solemn admonition to prevent us from using any language unsuited to the exalted position of the eminent person under whose auspices the document in question was issued. With us, respect for the constituted authorities of the kingdom is a matter of religious principle; and as regards the distinguished individual now specially referred to, we will yield to *no* one, either in admiration of his talents, or in gratitude for the important services he has in many ways, and on many occasions, rendered to his country. During a ministry of twenty years in this city, the only meeting having even the semblance of a political object or character which we have ever attended, was the one that recently assembled in this hall to do him honour. It is, therefore, with no other feelings than those of the profoundest sorrow, that we have come forward to offer this public protest against the sentiments to which, on a great religious question, he has lent the high sanction of his office and his name. A thoughtful mind like his might well be startled on finding from what suspicious quarters the heartiest echo to those sentiments has proceeded. If there be any portion of the public press notoriously hostile to the spirit and principles of an earnest and evangelical piety, it is there the letter from the Home Office has met with the most

vehement applause. It is a fact still more instructive and ominous, that it has called forth a shout of exultation from the organs of infidelity. In proof of this painful statement the following passages from the *Reasoner*, a paper edited by the well-known infidel lecturer Holyoake, may suffice. They occur in an article to which the name of that individual is attached, and which is entitled, "Secularism in the Cabinet."* "We this week," says Mr. Holyoake, "reprint this magnificent secular letter, that it may be always accessible to our readers. The late deputation of the London Secular Society to Scotland, addressed the same arguments, and allowing for the greater skill of his lordship in the matter of diction, nearly the same words."—"This great secular state document, which has no parallel in any Christian country, may well disturb the divine peace of the Presbytery. The dogma of a special Providence is rejected by British statesmen. The state proves itself wiser than the church. Here is a philosophical separation of church and state. Instead of appointing 'fasts,' which augment the danger, and calling 'solemn assemblies,' which make matters worse, the cabinet says, look first to sanitary and material conditions of health. Lord Palmerston's secular epistle to the spiritual doctors may well disturb their complacency, for it denies their prayer-making functions. If St. James is to be believed, the

* "Secularism" is the title which its disciples employ to designate that school of infidelity to which Mr. Holyoake belongs.

General Assembly can heal the sick faster than any sanitary board. But the age no longer has confidence in St. James ; it no longer trusts its physical welfare to the prayers of any assembly of any church," &c. But perhaps, what is worse than all, Lord Palmerston's letter has given, there is cause to fear, a formidable impulse in many of the young and thoughtless to that evil heart of unbelief that is ever departing from the living God. The object most distasteful to the natural mind is a personal God, a God with whom men have immediately and individually to deal, and who takes directly to do not only with all their actions and affairs, but with the very thoughts and intents of their hearts. From the presence of such a God they would fain hide themselves among the trees of the garden. A God, on the other hand, who takes to do with men only through the medium of certain laws and properties of the material universe, they have no objection to recognize. In an age especially like this—an age prone to physical rather than to metaphysical science—an age essentially materialistic in its spirit and pursuits—there is something altogether to its taste in a theory of the Divine government, that would reduce all the powers and agencies at work in this world of ours to something that we can see, and taste, and handle ; something that arithmetic can sum up, and geometry can measure, and chemistry can analyze. To all wise and good men it must be matter of equal sorrow and surprise, that sentiments so much in accordance with this base, earth-born,

epicurean philosophy, should have proceeded, in this Christian country, from one of the chief ministers of the Crown.

“The Maker of the universe,” says the letter to which reference is made, “has established certain laws of nature for the planet on which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or neglect of these laws. One of these laws connects health with the absence of those gaseous exhalations which proceed from overcrowded human habitations, or from decomposing substances, whether animal or vegetable; and these same laws render sickness the almost inevitable consequence of exposure to their noxious influences. But it has at the same time pleased Providence to place it within the power of man to make such arrangements as will prevent or disperse such exhalations, so as to render them harmless; and it is the duty of man to attend to those laws of nature, and to exert the faculties which Providence has thus given to man for his own welfare.”

Here the whole problem of such a visitation as the cholera is solved without respect to any moral cause or object whatsoever—whether in the character and conduct of men, or in the purposes of God. Mere material agencies and influences explain it all. In so far as this theory is concerned, the system of things to which we belong would seem to be little more than a machine which its author, if it had one, had long since wound up, and left to go on of itself in blind obedience to its own internal forces, without

any further interference or control. If men have sense to find out and follow the rules according to which it works, so much the better for them; but if otherwise, they must take the consequences. The laws of "this planet on which they live" will punish their ignorance or their errors just as unconsciously and impassively as a locomotive engine would punish the man who lay down upon the rails by cutting him in two. To render it still more manifest that moral considerations have no place in that economy which this extraordinary letter describes, it goes on to say: "The recent visitation of cholera, which has for the moment been mercifully checked, is an awful warning given to the people of this realm that they"—have done what? that they have been transgressing the moral law? that they have been doing those works of the flesh, for which things' sake an apostle testifies that the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience? No; but that they "have too much neglected their duty in this respect,"—that is, the duty of preventing or dispersing the foresaid "gaseous exhalations," and "that those persons with whom it rested to purify towns and cities, and to prevent or remove the causes of disease, have not been sufficiently active in regard to such matters. Lord Palmerston would therefore suggest that the best course which the people of this country can pursue to *deserve* that the further progress of the cholera should be staid, will be to employ the interval that will elapse between the present time and the beginning of next spring in planning and exe-

cuting measures by which those portions of their towns and cities which are inhabited by the poorest classes, and which from the nature of things must need purification and improvement, may be freed from those causes and sources of contagion, which if allowed to remain will infallibly breed pestilence, and be fruitful in death in spite of all the prayers and fastings of an united but inactive nation."

Here we have the same gross materialism reigning throughout. Material pollutions are held forth as the sole provocatives of the cholera, and material cleansings as the sole means necessary to secure and to deserve protection against it. It can need little argument to show that this is a representation of the case as shallow as it is pernicious. Let it not be said or supposed that we dispute the existence or the agency of secondary causes. We do not doubt that it is through the medium of such secondary causes that cholera is propagated and comes into contact with the human frame. Even, however, as regards those natural agencies by which it is transmitted from place to place, or in which its *virus* resides, it seems to be a very hasty and unwarranted conclusion that would sum them all up in certain "gaseous exhalations." Nothing seems more certain than this, that science as yet has utterly failed to detect the true secret of the cholera considered simply as a bodily disease. It cannot tell at this hour, with the smallest approach to certainty, of what the subtle poison of this mysterious malady consists, through what

channels it is propagated, or in what precise way it makes its onset upon the human frame. It is true that the causes specified in the letter of the Home Secretary appear to have something to do with it. It has an evident affinity for filthy and overcrowded habitations; but to talk, as the letter does, with an easy and almost flippant confidence, of the exhalations generated by such localities as explaining the whole case, is to present a theory as inadequate and unsatisfactory, in a medical point of view, as it is unsound in relation to religion and theology.

If any reliance is to be placed either on medical opinions, or on the actual statistics of the disease itself, intemperance, weak health, excessive fatigue, the low-feeding necessarily associated with poverty even when these are totally unconnected with filth or fetid exhalations, must be regarded as powerful predisposing causes of cholera. It is abundantly notorious, moreover, that this fatal pestilence has often found numerous victims where no known predisposing cause could be traced. We advert to these things, let it be again repeated, not as questioning the existence and the operation of natural causes in connection with this mysterious disease. But though natural causes were enough to explain it all, we should still dissent from the theory of Lord Palmerston as equally inaccurate and incomplete. Considering, indeed, its crudeness and insufficiency, even when judged by its own principles, the complacency with which it is given forth, is all but ludicrous. Our objections to

the theory, however, go far deeper than this. Our grand complaint against it is, that it puts both the *fact* and the *principles* of God's moral government altogether aside. If there be any truth more clearly revealed in Scripture than another, it is this, that the material is subordinate to the moral world—that the one was created and is upheld for the sake of the other. From this fundamental truth it obviously follows that the laws of external nature must needs be administered in subserviency to those higher ends which the great Author of all is following out in relation to the human race. Man is a fallen creature, and the laws of external nature are accommodated to his fallen condition; in other words, they are so ordered as to fall in with the purposes of the Divine government towards him. They come to his aid when he is pursuing the paths of piety and virtue, and they cross and correct him when he deviates into the crooked ways of sin.

If, therefore, we would take a right and intelligent view of those phenomena to which the laws of material nature may at any time be giving birth, we must never lose sight of the fact that, in so far as they have to do with man, they stand in close and constant connection with that moral government under which he lives, and moves, and has his being, and that to the great designs of that moral government they are all subservient. These ends, it is true, as has been already hinted, we cannot always discover. But our ignorance of these ends in any given case, or our inability fully to trace them,

does not alter the fact that they exist, nor does it exempt us from the duty and the responsibility of endeavouring to find them out. In the case, for example, of the cholera, it may not be given to us, in the use even of all the light which Scripture, and history, and right reason supply, to unlock the whole mystery of its coming, and to tell with absolute certainty wherefore it is sent. But of this, at least, we may be sure that its secret lies a great deal deeper than Lord Palmerston opines. When God said to the Israelites of old, by the mouth of the prophet Amos,—“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt,”—no doubt then, as now, there were laws of nature brought into play—material agencies which gave effect to the Divine will. It was, however, not in a material, but in a moral cause, the true origin of that pestilence was found. The pestilence came, not because the rulers and people of Israel had neglected to purify their streets, and to ventilate their dwellings,—but, as the prophet testifies, because the poor were oppressed, because the needy were crushed, and because the land was full of luxury, and selfishness, and forgetfulness of God. The inspired herdsman of Tekoa, we apprehend, will prove a better guide in seeking out the real cause of the cholera, and the right way of averting it, than the wise men of this world. But let us take, for the moment, Lord Palmerston’s way of it, that physical filth and the gaseous exhalations which it generates explain the whole thing,—and let us see what the theory is worth. Assuming that

he has found in these causes the root and source of the visitation, his grand and only remedies are ventilation and cleanliness. That these sanitary improvements are urgently needed in all the poorer and more densely peopled districts of our great towns, is unquestionable. They cannot be made too soon, and no one can be more anxious than we are to see them executed. But, after all, the question comes,—how is this thing to be most effectually done? Send your scavengers into these filthy lanes and alleys, and sweep them clear of their accumulated abominations—says the Home Secretary. Turn the hose of your main water-pipe into the drains and sewers, and scour them out. Eject the pigs from their domiciles up three or four pair of stairs. Fine smartly those who overcrowd their wretched lodging-houses,—and dispense white-wash and chloride of lime *ad libitum*. Very good—let this be done, by all means. Indeed, if any reliance can be placed on police reports, this wholesome process was going on weeks before the recent manifesto was issued.*

* Through the kindness of our esteemed friend, Dr. Davie, Town Clerk, we have ascertained that within the last three months there have been no fewer than 593 cases of persons summoned before the police courts of Glasgow for having unlicensed, or overcrowded lodging-houses. We have inspected the police schedules respecting a large number of these cases, and the state of things they disclose is of the most painful and disgusting kind.

It is to be feared, however, that in curing one evil by thinning the lodging-houses, another evil is produced by driving many wretched creatures into the streets. The fol-

But will this suffice? Under such merely external and mechanical appliances, will these fetid localities be anything better than "whited sepulchres," made

lowing communication, which we received this very day from an intelligent missionary who labours under our oversight, is painfully suggestive on this point:—

"WEDNESDAY, 9½ A.M.—On the stairs of the house, No. 19, Princes Street, there were seventeen girls, aged from fifteen upwards; most of them youngish; all of them complain they have no place to go to. The people that live in the land, as it is called, or tenement of houses, tell me—those of them that go out to work at six o'clock—that it is scarcely possible to get down the stairs, they are so crowded; and numbers of them lie there all the day, particularly if the day is wet. Yesterday, at three o'clock, I saw seven or eight of them. And in this tenement there are a number of young females, belonging to the families that live there, and who were mingling and conversing with these poor wretches, and, of course, being polluted by such company. In No. 27, King Street, I saw the same yesterday; and this morning, at a quarter to ten o'clock, there were thirteen that had lain on the stair all night, some that had been there were gone. The reason why they go to these houses in preference to the others, is, they have wooden stairs, wide and roomy; but there is hardly a *land* about the district, on the stairs of which some of these poor creatures do not quarter every night: I could not say how many altogether might be found; but even in this district, in the different *lands* and closes, I think it would be rather under than over, if I say, that from eighty to one hundred are to be found every night of females alone; there are also boys, but not so numerous. The sight is the most disgusting I have ever witnessed, and the smell, such as must breed disease, indeed, almost all of them are already diseased, and in an awful state of filth. Were it the case that as many cattle, cows, sheep, or even swine, were found wandering about, a shed would be erected for them, and surely something should be done for these."

to appear, so long at least as the fear of cholera continues, somewhat fairer without, but left all the while within as full as ever of "rotteness and dead men's bones." Let Lord Palmerston be assured that it is not in the power of such superficial remedies to gain even *his* end. They will but

"Skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen."

If our sanitary reformers, instead of confining their attention to the outside of things—to sewers, and drains, and dungsteeds—would go a little deeper, and investigate the moral, and social, and spiritual state of the inhabitants of those filthy outfields of our great cities, they would come far nearer to the seat of the disease, and be in a far likelier way of effecting its cure. Let any man take his place for a forenoon beside our police magistrates, while the offenders against those regulations which, since cholera began to threaten us, the police have been instructed rigidly to enforce, are brought before them—let him look at those sordid and sottish men, at those fierce and foul-mouthed women, insensible to every consideration but their own selfish gain, lying, and swearing, and clenching their fists at the officers who have dragged them from their loathsome dens into the light of day; or let him follow those wretched beings home to their own haunts, and let him descend into their dismal cellars, or climb up their dark, and dirty, and foot-worn stairs; and when his eyes have become so far accustomed to the

murky atmosphere that he can look round on their dingy and dilapidated dwellings—when he has found himself, perchance, as we did the other day, in a wretched apartment, six or seven feet by nine, and has almost stumbled, before he is aware, over the head of the family, drunk, and fast asleep, and bent double upon the floor, and has descried, with some difficulty, a daughter grown to womanhood crouching on one side of the fire, and a son approaching to manhood squatted upon the other; when he has discovered that there is not an article of furniture within the four walls of the miserable room, no bed, no table, no chair, not even a stool to sit upon; when he has ascertained, as we did, from the daughter's own acknowledgment, that the father and the son have each of them, as regular wages, 13s. a-week, and that she and her mother between them earn about 12s. more—in other words, that this family, living in rags and filth, have among them an income of about 36s. a-week; and finally, when he has witnessed the callous indifference with which the son and daughter contemplate their drunken parent on the one hand, and their desolate dwelling on the other, let him then ask himself the question, what Lord Palmerston's remedy will do for people like these? Filth and physical degradation are their congenial element. If you were to cleanse them from it to-day, they would be surrounded with it to-morrow. Like the sow that had been washed, they would return, as by the force of an instinct, to wallow in the mire. It is to mistake the effect for the cause to ascribe their

sunken state, morally and socially considered, to their external circumstances. True, indeed, the effect becomes, in its turn, a cause—the external reacts upon the internal, and the outward filth soils with a still deeper stain the polluted mind within. But the main and primary source of the dirt and desolation which surround them is within their own hearts. It is their want of self-respect, and their sordid sensuality, that has plunged them in the mire. It is the moral that rules the economic condition of human society ; and if, therefore, we would have a thorough sanitary, we must have a thorough moral, and intellectual, and spiritual reform ; and therefore we repeat the assertion, that even for Lord Palmerston's own purpose, the means he would employ falls miserably short of the end. If cholera could be averted by mere sanitary regulations, it is a perfectly hopeless thing to get them, in his way, efficiently and permanently enforced. In other words, we must purify the hearts of the people if we would purify their homes. If we would elevate the external condition of the people, we must, by God's help and blessing, elevate, educationally and religiously, the people themselves.

But if, on the grounds thus stated, we object to Lord Palmerston's theory of such a visitation as the cholera, and of the way to deserve and to secure its removal,—what, it may be asked, are the views upon that subject which we ourselves entertain ? It is to this question we now proceed, and, with the utmost deference, to give our reply. We

begin, then, by saying that both the principles and the precedents of Scripture teach us to connect the coming again and again of this fearful and fatal pestilence with a moral cause. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." The material and mundane philosophy of secularism may think that it does,—but, in reality, it springs from a deeper source. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Physical evil is the result of moral evil; the one is the bitter fruit of the other. Suffering is the scourge with which the moral Governor of the universe chastises sin. "Shall there be evil in the city"—physical evil—"and the Lord hath not done it?" The cholera, we may rest assured, is a voice from Heaven, and carries in it a message from God. It comes because we have been provoking Him to anger with us: because we are indulging in some wickedness which needs to be beaten out of us with this heavy rod. In that wickedness, whatever it be, is the true secret of such a visitation as the cholera; and, in seeking it out, it is important to carry along with us that well-known principle of God's moral government, according to which, men are usually made to suffer in that same kind in which they have sinned. The suffering becomes often in this way a clue to the sin. When we apply this principle to the case before us, it leads us so far to agree with Lord Palmerston, that there is a connection between the cholera and those physical impurities, in the filth and mire of which masses of our

population lie. But if we stop, as his famous letter does, in the inquiry here, we are casting away the clue while we are still in the very heart of the labyrinth. It is not mere physical impurities that provoke the moral Governor of the world. These physical impurities must be the index of some moral disorder in the midst of us,—and in that moral disorder will be found to lie the sin for which the cholera finds us out, the iniquity for which it so terribly corrects us. The cholera, by fastening first and chiefly on the places where filth and physical wretchedness abound, is virtually pointing at these waste places of our neglected villages and overcrowded cities as with the finger of God, and saying to us—“Look here!”

Yes—but we shall miserably misinterpret this startling summons, if we understand it as meaning no more than this—“Look at these dung-heaps, at these festering accumulations of animal and vegetable matter; at these sewers choked with filth, and sending up a miasma which is creeping, by every door and window, into these overcrowded habitations!” True, indeed, the noxious air thus generated may prove, when the cholera comes, the very breath of the destroying angel, beneath which his victims blacken and die, as if struck by the lightnings of heaven. But the finger and the voice of God in this fearful pestilence bid us look deeper still; they bid us follow up those outward impurities to that miserably low state, partly of intelligence, and still more of morals and religion, to which these physical abomi-

nations must be ultimately ascribed. When, like the vulture guided by an unerring instinct to its prey, the cholera alights among the undrained marshes and moral cesspools of such a city as this, and spreads sudden terror, and mourning, and death among the most sunken and degraded classes of the people—and when this mysterious visitant, issuing forth from these dark and foul recesses where his victims abound, soars up to a higher level, and flaps his deadly wing over our most princely terraces and squares, and fills ever and anon some abode of wealth and splendour with lamentation and woe—what does all this mean? Does it not imply that there is a voice in the cholera both to the rich and to the poor—both to the enlightened and to the ignorant—both to the pious and the profligate—both to them that fear God and to them that fear Him not?

It is true that the filth, and feeble health, and poverty upon which cholera feeds, among the more sunken and degraded classes, are chiefly due to their own improvidence and intemperance, and to the low tastes and grovelling habits in which they indulge. But it is also true that for permitting them to fall into that deplorable condition, and still more, for permitting them to continue in it, a heavy responsibility lies at the door of that wealthier and more cultivated portion of society whom Providence has so largely blessed. It is a fact as undeniable as it is discreditable, that the one-half of mankind, even in a professing Christian community, can hardly be said either to know or to care

how the other half lives. We are well aware indeed that there are numerous and noble exceptions to this rule; and we venture, without fear of contradiction, to affirm that it is among the men of piety that these exceptions are chiefly found. If the outcasts among the people—those who are huddled together in the obscure corners of the city—have any friends, they are indebted for them not to the philanthropy of the world, but to the philanthropy of the church of Christ. What in fact does the world know at this hour of the actual state of these ground-floors of the social edifice, but what missionaries and men of God have told it? It is not our Humes and Bolingbokes, but our Chalmerses and our Shaftesburys, who have descended into these depths, and who alone have made vigorous and self-denying efforts to let in upon them the light and air of heaven. In a word, though Lord Palmerston would seem to have forgotten it, those who begin with prayer to God, are the very men who have been most strenuous in the use of human means; and if at this moment there be any links of sympathy still binding the opposite extremes of society together, they have been forged and flung across the yawning chasm that divides so ominously the one from the other, by the hand of religion.

But still, after all these exceptions, be they more or fewer, are adduced and allowed, the great and humbling fact remains, that in all the great towns, the mining and manufacturing districts, and overgrown cities of the kingdom, there are countless multitudes whose moral and social degradation is the disgrace of the

age and country in which we live—at once the problem and the peril of modern times. If, therefore, we dissent from the views of Lord Palmerston, it is not because he calls for the use of means, but it is because he sets aside, if he does not also despise, the best and highest of all means; and because he puts, in altogether a wrong place, even that inferior means which alone he recommends. In other words, we dissent from his Lordship's views, first because they appear to make light of prayer, and next because they appear to imply that mere material appliances will suffice to remedy an evil, which, having its main root and source in a moral cause, can be effectually cured only by moral means. In a brief statement on these two points, we shall endeavour, still further and more fully, to set forth the views we hold regarding the threatened visitation of cholera, and the duties in which it calls and commands us to engage.

Firmly believing, as we do, on the grounds already stated, that under the moral government of God the cholera has been sent to chasten us for our sins, we are not ashamed to proclaim it as our deliberate judgment, that not the *last* but the *first* duty to which it summons us is prayer. We have said that the letter of the Home Secretary *appears* to make light of this duty; he looks at it simply as a specific for averting or removing the pestilence, and pronounces it to be "not suitable to the circumstances of the present moment." It is altogether a mistake, however, so to limit the object and the use of prayer. Whether it may seem good to the great Disposer of events to

remove any given temporal affliction that may have come upon us or no, it is equally our duty to humble ourselves under His mighty hand. There may be ends to be served by it, for which its continuance is necessary, ends connected with our own moral and spiritual well-being; ends, towards the right and full accomplishment of which, prayer may be indispensable even when it is altogether unavailing as regards the removal of the affliction itself. There is therefore a fundamental error in the assumption upon which the letter in question proceeds, that the services of devotion, engaged in under the existing or impending visitation of cholera, would be unsuitable, unless it could be shown that they were to deliver us from it. Apart altogether from that result, we humbly judge, upon the authority both of Scripture and of all Christian experience, that it is most "suitable" to the circumstances of the present moment to make a public confession of our sins, and to seek, along with the forgiveness of them, for that wisdom and self-denial which might dispose and enable us to find out and follow the path of personal and practical duty.

But leaving this preliminary and most important consideration, we go on to protest against the idea that prayer can have no direct efficacy in the way of arresting or removing the cholera. Lord Palmerston does not indeed assert in so many words that it can have none; but in declaring it to be unsuitable to the circumstances of the present moment, in postponing it till every thing else has been tried, and in propounding a theory both of the cause and

the cure of the cholera, which leaves no available room for it, he shuts us up to the painful conclusion that at least for the end now under consideration, prayer, in his judgment, can be of no use. It is not our intention, for the purpose of rebutting this opinion, to enter into a formal disquisition upon the profound subject of the philosophy of prayer. Among the writings of Dr. Chalmers, there is a treatise on the "necessity of uniting prayer with performance," in which that subject is handled with his wonted eloquence and power. We refer to it not so much for the purpose of noticing the theory which he propounds, as rather for the purpose of quoting his very striking remarks on that sort of philosophical scepticism which thinks itself at liberty to set prayer at nought. After pointing out how thoroughly the investigation of the laws of nature had in our day unpeopled the earth of those demigods, those imaginary beings, whom in less enlightened ages it had been the part of superstition to implore as often as any calamity arrived; how this higher intelligence had swept away the spectres of a fabled imagery, and how nature, instead of a haunted fairy-land, was now regarded as the stable and everlasting repository of innumerable sequences, in whose rigid uniformity we see nothing of the caprice of will, but all the certainty of mechanism, he goes on to say, "You may now perhaps see by how likely and continuous a transition it is that men may pass from the extreme of superstition to the extreme of philosophical impiety. After that nature has been rescued by philosophy

from the dominion of separate and subordinate deities, it may be placed by the same philosophy under the absolute and irreversible dominion of secondary causes. To guard this new dominion, and make it inflexible, a supreme and eternal Spirit may even be disowned; and at all events it might be reckoned indispensable that He should never put forth His hand on the regularities of that universe which He himself has established. It might be difficult to assign the place or the pre-eminence of such a God over His own workmanship, or to understand how He is admitted to a share in the government of His own world. But it is at least the imagination of many a philosopher that all must give way to the omnipotence and certainty of nature's laws. The interposition of the Divine will with these is utterly excluded from his creed, and the efficacy of prayer would be deemed by him a monstrous inroad on that constancy which he holds to be unalterable. It is thus that, along with the mythology of paganism, the theism of Christianity is apt to be swept away, and the system of nature is reduced to an economy of blind and unconscious fatalism." We say it with profound regret, but we fear it is to just such an economy that nature would be reduced upon the principles of Lord Palmerston's letter,—fully and logically followed out.

It is not needful to state that such an economy—the economy of a "blind and unconscious fatalism," is utterly rejected and emphatically condemned by the Word of God. His will is there uniformly represented as the ultimate and operative cause,

alike of the falling of an empire and of the falling of a leaf. But it does not follow from this, though a shallow and sceptical philosophy may think otherwise, that the Bible view of prayer involves either the dispensing with secondary causes, or the disturbing of the established sequences of the physical world. It involves only this, that the laws of material nature must be in harmony with the laws, and subservient to the designs of God's moral government; and that, among the laws of that higher government, prayer has an appointed and potential place. If, therefore, we humbly believe and confidently affirm, that in the mighty and mysterious chain of causation which reaches from heaven to earth, and connects the will of the Omnipotent with the arrow that flieth by night, and the pestilence that wasteth at noon-day, prayer may be that very link, with the presence or absence of which is inseparably conjoined the coming or the not coming, the continuing or the removing of that tremendous visitation,—if we humbly believe and confidently affirm this to be so, what has philosophy to say against it? Philosophy cannot disprove it. A really profound philosophy, a philosophy that takes in the whole sum of things, will find it rather to be in keeping with all its own highest conclusions. And this we know on the other side, that unless the Bible be an imposture and a delusion, the view of prayer now exhibited is as true as that there is a God in heaven.

But while, in opposition to the views we are now combating, we thus rely on the efficacy of prayer as a direct means of obtaining deliverance from the

visitation of cholera, we utterly repudiate the notion that there is any incompatibility between prayer and the most assiduous use of ordinary human means. We are ignorant of any ground that could possibly warrant Lord Palmerston in assuming as he does, that prayers and personal inactivity must needs go together. Such, assuredly, is not the doctrine of Scripture; and we have yet to learn that it is either the doctrine or the practice of any section, in this country, of the Christian church. Already, in an earlier part of this lecture, we have made reference to the notorious fact, that as regards even sanitary and social reforms, the men of prayer have been hitherto in the front rank of almost every movement in that direction which has been made. And in now looking forward to the future, and to the very case in hand, we greatly deceive ourselves if experience will not prove that only those whom piety inspires, and whom its exercises have braced up to sustained and self-sacrificing efforts, will be found to grapple in right earnest with either the enormous physical, or the enormous spiritual destitution which disgraces and endangers such cities as ours. What Carlyle calls the "condition-of-England question," is one which few men have the courage even to look in the face. We speak with profound reverence when we venture to express our belief that God has been taking many ways of urging, and all but compelling us to look at it,—and when we give utterance to the conviction, that he is now using the cholera for the same end. Men have been appealed to upon this subject through the medium of their pockets.

Poors-rates, and police-taxes, and the whole vast expenditure of our institutions for the punishment of crime, have been long and loudly proclaiming how costly a thing it is to neglect the social, and material, and religious necessities of the people. In a former lecture we took occasion to show that in this single city these objects were then absorbing an annual outlay of £180,000.* But keenly alive as men usually are to the money-form of an argument, we go on as before: stinting all intellectual and spiritual appliances; and for every single pound sterling we devote to these, having at least five taken from us by the tax-gatherer to be laid out in the support of pauperism, and in the punishment of crime. Nor is the fiscal burden, oppressive as it is, the only means Providence has been employing to arouse us to a more adequate sense of the guilt and folly of neglecting the masses of the people. Our statesmen and civil governors are almost at their wits' end to know what to do with that refuse and scum of society which is continually boiling up from the depths in which it is gendered, and running over upon the rest of the community. Our colonies will no longer submit to have this foul residuum drained off from Great Britain, and poured out upon them. Deprived of this outlet, our bursting prisons and penitentiaries are now, it seems, to be periodically opened, and ticket-of-leave convicts, men neither bond nor free, are to be let loose among their fellows, to experiment upon a system which, to the uninitiated at least,

* *The Schoolmaster in the Wynds; or, How to Educate the Masses.* Glasgow, 1850.

looks as desperate as it is likely to be dangerous. Nor are these the only resources that Providence has tried by way of opening our eyes to the consequences of our own weak-sighted and selfish indifference to the spiritual and social wants of the people. Revolution and insurrectionary violence, shaking and convulsing continental Europe from one extremity to the other, have within the last few years addressed us in a voice of thunder, and bidden us beware. But still we refuse to bestir ourselves. A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep—has been, for the most part, hitherto the nation's drowsy reply. It is in these circumstances that, for the third time, the gaunt form of pestilence is knocking at our doors. It will be well if this dreadful scourge, like the last in the long catalogue of Egypt's plagues, shall at length arouse us to our duty. If even this blow should be struck in vain, and our hearts, after, perhaps, some apparent relenting, should become hardened once more, it may be that in some terrible overthrow, in the outbreak of some tremendous social convulsion, our prosperity as a nation may be engulfed in a Red Sea of ruin; and amid the destruction of our noblest privileges and institutions, perishing amid the tumults of a lawless and godless, because neglected populace, we may learn too late what an evil and a bitter thing it is to have been deaf to the voice of nature and to the voice of God.

But here we come to the question,—what should be done? You question the sufficiency of Lord Palmerston's remedy,—what is yours? In replying

to that question, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we by no means undervalue sanitary reforms. We have already expressed our conviction that in such a city as ours they are urgently needed, and that they ought to be prosecuted with promptitude and vigour, and on a large and comprehensive scale. There cannot be a doubt that physical filth and wretchedness interpose most formidable obstacles to intellectual and spiritual improvement. Outward cleanliness and comfort are unquestionably helpful to good morals.

From the body's purity the mind
Receives a secret sympathetic aid.

With purely sanitary measures, however, it is not our province to deal; and it has probably occurred to many as somewhat singular, that the letter so urgently recommending the adoption of measures of that kind should have been addressed, not to the secular authorities, but to an ecclesiastical body that could not be presumed to have, in that department, very much in its power. The weight of their judgment and influence the ministers of religion are indeed bound to give in the way of recommending sanitary reforms, and we venture to say, in their name,—in the name of all denominations of them in this community, at least,—that they will neglect no fitting opportunity of doing so. For ourselves, so highly do we estimate the value and necessity of a thorough-going system of sanitary reform, that there is hardly any pains we would grudge to assist in promoting it. At the same time, it is a work which private parties, however zealous, cannot accomplish.

If it is to be done at all, to any good purpose, it must be done by the municipal authorities of the city, backed,—nay, if need be,—compelled by the authority of Parliament. It is a reproach to the legislation of this country, that stringent regulations have not long ago been laid down as to the breadth of streets, and as to the proportion that should be maintained between the number of human dwellings, and the extent of the area on which they are erected. Not only has that proportion been totally disregarded in former times when the older parts of this city were built,—but it is shamefully and outrageously disregarded at the present hour. When men go down into our Wynds and Vennels, they stand aghast at the narrow lanes, overhung by lofty tenements towering up to the height of five or six storeys, and shutting out the very light and air of heaven. But the fact seems to be altogether overlooked, that in almost all parts of the city the same abomination is in the course of being repeated and multiplied without end.

So long as this shameful state of things is permitted to go on, sanitary reform is an impossibility. Filth and foul air are inseparable from such a crowding together of the habitations of the people. Nor can the evil be arrested by anything short of legal compulsion. The efforts and appeals of mere philanthropy are impotent in the face of that remorseless cupidity which thinks of nothing but the tempting price that may be extracted from so many square yards of ground by packing and piling up upon it the greatest possible number of human beings. An

emigrant ship has the fresh breezes of the ocean playing continually around her from one end of her voyage to the other, and yet the law will not allow her to take more than a certain number of passengers on board. If the law is so careful of the people's health and comfort upon the sea, why should it leave these great social interests so utterly unprotected upon the land. So long as the tenements above spoken of are still comparatively new, and are tenanted in consequence by a better class of occupants, there may seem, to the casual observer, to be nothing about them very deserving of remark. They look tolerably well outside, and their want of sufficient light and air is felt only by those whose lot it is to live within. To this cause, no doubt, it is chiefly due that in its earlier stages this evil attracts so little notice. In point of fact, by the great majority of the wealthier classes of the community, the very existence of these back lanes is totally unknown. They see a respectable range of buildings fronting the street, and have no idea of the base material which this *veneer* covers and conceals. Twenty or thirty years hence, however, these obscure lanes will force themselves into just such a notoriety as our wynds and vennels at this moment enjoy. Become, by that time, dingy and dilapidated, and inhabited by an inferior class—a class whom such dwellings will have helped to degrade—as the receptacles of all sorts of impurity, moral and physical, and as the hotbeds of disease, and vice, and crime, their fame will be of a kind of which the deafest will be compelled to hear.

Legislation, in our humble judgment, would not go a hair's-breadth beyond what the most imperious necessity demands, if, in addition to fixing such a proportion between the breadth of streets and the height of the houses which line them, as would secure a sufficiency of light and air, it should also insist on various other things: such as, that to every tenement designed to accommodate a certain number of families, a washing-house should be attached, and a certain space for drying clothes. In the case of the working-classes, both the washing and drying of clothes have, in almost all cases, to be carried on in their own dwellings, thereby aggravating the discomfort and confusion of the small apartments in which they live, and tempting, perhaps, husbands and fathers to prefer the fatal attractions of the tavern to their own fireside. Legislation ought further to provide, by stringent and peremptory rules, for the frequent periodical removal of all those impurities which, as things now stand, it seems to be no one's business in particular to take away. Instead of leaving the obligation to see this done to be bandied from one to another, as it is at this moment, so that the police know not whom to charge with it, the owner of every tenement to which receptacles for such impurities are attached, should be made responsible for his tenants, and recognized as the only party with whom the law has in this matter to deal. As we have already said, however, this is not our peculiar province. We gladly indeed, nay, eagerly, avail ourselves of the opportunity of bearing our testimony upon the subject, and of doing

what in us lies to arrest upon it a greater measure of attention than it has hitherto received. Though the chiefest concern of a Christian minister must always be with the people's moral and spiritual interests, we will yield to none in our anxiety to promote their outward comfort and material prosperity; our motto is, "*Nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*" We think nothing foreign to us that belongs to humanity.

But leaving this whole subject of sanitary reform to those whose practical knowledge and official authority best qualify them to deal with it, we go on to say that, valuable as it is in its own place, it will be in great measure useless unless it be accompanied by a contemporaneous reform of altogether another kind. The master evil with which we have to contend is to be found in the ignorance, irreligion, and immorality in which large masses of the people are sunk. This is the real disease, of which the filth and physical impurities assailed by the sanitary reformer are only the external symptoms. To this undeniable truth we have already pointed, and to the more deliberate consideration of it we now return. The fact stares us in the face, that by our own criminal sloth and self-indulgence we have suffered to accumulate, in all our great cities, a mass of human beings who are living without God in the world. They are never seen within the walls of any place of Christian worship. Many of them, lost to all feelings of self-respect, live in the habitual indulgence of the grossest vices. Both sexes and all ages being huddled oftentimes together in the same wretched apartment, not only

is everything like delicacy and propriety habitually violated, but even common decency is defied.

“It needs not,” says the Hon. and Rev. Sydney Osborne,*—describing a visit which, along with a friend, he paid a short while ago, at the dead of night, under the protection and guidance of a police detective, to one of the plague-spots of our city,—“that I make the attempt to describe each separate room into which we penetrated,—their common features were all of one cast, and that the blackest. Small, square, or oblong places, they were crammed with human life; and the insect life which finds a living on and about our kind when cleanliness and decency are absent. There were dogs and a few cats,—these were to all appearance the cleanliest creatures we saw. On the ground as the rule, on rotten bedsteads as the exception, lay human beings of all ages and sexes,—some of the children perfectly naked, many, even of the women, nearly so. The bedding black rags, undiluviated relics of blankets and old clothes. There was aged vice, with crimes life-written in the lineaments of countenances which had known little of rest, except that gained in the insensibility of the last stage of intoxication. There were many young, almost infant girls,—not brazened in their course, for they had never known shame,—but wearing the appearance of their childish debauchery as the clothing of their very nature. Virtue would indeed have appeared as an exotic on such a soil as that we then walked. There was the

* *Meliora*, second series. London, 1853.

returned convict, but little clothed on a filthy bed, a prisoner again to the women who had enticed him there, robbed him of the rest of his clothes, and kept him captive to his nakedness. There were young girls who had followed sin from their birth; they had returned from their nightly pursuance of it, and wore yet the tawdry finery above their rags and dirt, with which they endeavoured to hide the fact that they were of the very dregs of the base."

"The impression,"—continues Mr. Osborne, in his singularly forcible and pictorial style, after describing a succession of such scenes,—“the impression before my mind was that this was one of the deep dirt-pools of social life, in which the accumulated filth lay, for its season, quiet and inoffensive: stir it, and I have no doubt it would have been most offensive, as doubtless it was in its every day current of existence, as it flowed in detail amongst other living less-polluted matter. I do not assume that these lodging-places breed their contents, though of course now and then fresh life will break out upon their floors from some of the wretched beings forced to find a shelter there. No—the supply is drained from other quarters: this is its ultimate destination—its almost natural terminus. It is now a material of such a nature that it cannot be considered out of place where and as we found it.” Think of this, citizens of Glasgow, as a picture drawn from the life of what exists at your own doors! We have tried, on a former occasion, and in another place, to portray substantially the same state of things, such as

we had witnessed it ourselves;* but we have thought it preferable, at present, to let the hand of a stranger "hold the mirror up," to let us see what nature,—human nature,—a nature spiritual and immortal,—a nature made originally in the image of God,—has become in the very city where we dwell. What, we ask, can mere sanitary reform do for the cleansing of such cesspools of humanity as these? Just as much as they could have done for the maniac whom our Saviour found crying and cutting himself among the tombs, and fouling himself in the dust. The unclean spirit that possesses these degraded beings,—the spirit of deep depravity,—must be cast out, if they are ever to be seen clothed and in their right mind. And "this kind," let would-be philosophers scoff at it as they may, "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,"—by the devout, and diligent, and self-sacrificing use of those moral and spiritual appliances which the gospel dictates, and whose efficacy is from above.

It is true that when we come to realize something of the actual nature of this tremendous social malady, the hearts of most men are apt to fail; many are ready indeed to give up altogether the attempt to cure it as a hopeless enterprize. They are disposed to listen, if not with absolute acquiescence, at least with a certain vague sort of sympathy, to the sentiments of the celebrated author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* when he talks of making what he calls,

* Speech on the Spiritual Destitution of Glasgow, delivered in the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Glasgow, 1851.

“rather brief work” with the more profligate portion of society; proposing “to apply the besom, to sweep them with some rapidity into the dust-bin, and well out of one’s road.” “Away, you,” he exclaims in his pungent but eccentric and exaggerated style; “begone swiftly, ye devil’s regiments of the line! In the name of God and of his poor struggling servants, sore put to it to live in these bad days, I mean to rid myself of you with some brevity. To feed you in palaces; to hire captains and schoolmasters, and the choicest spiritual and material artificers to expend their industry upon you! I have quite other work for that class of artists. Seven-and-twenty millions of neglected mortals, who have not yet quite declared for the devil!” And so Mr. Carlyle would, without more ado, dismiss what he terms “the one extremely contemptible interest of scoundrels, sweeping *that* into the cess-pool, tumbling *that* over London Bridge, in a very brief manner if needful.” This, of course, is sheer extravagance, and means nothing but that the case, in regard to a certain class of the population, is all but desperate. We agree, indeed, with Mr. Carlyle, that the class in question furnish the least hopeful material to go to work upon. There is a great deal of truth, and of truth not undeserving of notice by those who are prosecuting schemes of moral and social reform, in a remark he makes, when, pointing to what he accounts a more encouraging field for philanthropic and Christian effort, he says, by way of contrast, in his own peculiar way, “Yonder, in those dingy habitations, and shops of red-herring and tobacco-pipes, where

men have not yet quite declared for the devil; there I say, is *land*; here is more *sea-beach*. Thither go with your benevolence, thither to those dingy caverns of the poor; and there instruct, and drill, and manage—there, where some fruit may come from it.” Even, however, as regards the mere “sea-beach” of society, impracticable as the cultivation of it may appear, we dare not abandon it. It is as unsafe, as it would be cruel and sinful, to do so. We are not yet come to the wretched condition of Paris, where, five years ago, when revolution had sent forth from the depths of its infidel and godless population those ragged *gamins* who were the terror of the city, its rulers had no better resource than to form them into regiments of the *garde mobile*, and send them up to the barricades to shoot or be shot, perhaps by their own fathers or brothers, in that murderous contest which for days together deluged the streets of the French capital with blood. Thanks be to God, we are not yet reduced to any such terrible extremity. There is still enough among us of the spirit of Him who came, not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them—not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,—who died to save sinners, even the chief—still enough of this spirit to try other and better methods than mere brute force. If only the Christianity of the city could be thoroughly aroused and set in motion, and brought to bear upon this great work, in assiduous, and systematic, and prayerful efforts, we would not despair even of the most sunken and degraded class which the city contains. The difficulty does not lie in knowing what to do, but in get-

ting people to do it—to do it, that is, with anything approaching to an adequate expenditure of the right means. “We both,” observes the Rev. Mr. Osborne, after describing the horrible scenes in this city, which he and his friend had been taking a look of,—“we both had heard enough of great sanitary commissions, the evils of bad drainage, the necessity for improvement, nay, that it would pay. Had either of us ever read or heard of one bold determined *national* attempt to deal with such matters as that before us? Have we seen or heard of Church or State, Dissent, any one class of any shade of believers, determined to set aside all grounds of particular difference, and unite to cleanse this animated substratum of human beings, who were, at their birth, before God as the best of us; who are now, what? more brutes than men; creatures of vitiated instinct, of none but the most debased intellect. I shall be told;” he continues, “of ragged schools, reformatories, penitentiaries. Far be it from me to take from the credit due to these institutions, but they, after all, only touch a very small portion of the evil; and though they have done much, each in their own way, all they have done is as a mere drop to the ocean of sin which yet ebbs and flows unassailed. I look at the above institutions as so many schools of experimental philosophy, in which certain portions of specifically depraved material are taken in to be specifically treated. I want to see the class from which these subjects for experiment are taken dealt with, so as to make it less a common source for this kind of matter.” This is what we also want to see;

and till this is done, little or nothing, to any good purpose, is done at all. We must first make the tree good, if we would have it to cease from bearing evil fruit. We must purify the fountain, if we wish to get rid of the bitter waters it is now incessantly sending forth. Is there anything that will do this but God's own specific, the gospel of his blessed Son! All history answers, No! Let it not, however, be alleged or supposed that in saying this we mean to undervalue or neglect any of those other appliances which are calculated to promote the material comfort and social well-being of the people. Schools, libraries, reading-rooms, savings'-banks, popular lectures, public baths, better houses for the working-classes, everything which can be effected in the way of social improvement and sanitary reform,—we are for them all. But what we maintain is this, that even if we had no other end in view but to get these subsidiary agencies and ameliorations introduced among the outcast population, the Christian missionary is by far the most effective pioneer we could employ. For elevating sunken humanity, there is no lever-power to compare with the gospel of Christ; there is nothing else that ever did, or ever will, awaken man to a just and realizing sense of the dignity of his own nature, and of the responsibilities under which he lives. To assure him, as the gospel comes on very purpose to do, that poor and miserable though he be, the occupant, perchance, of some wretched hovel hardly fit to be the shelter of a beast—a being no more accounted of by his fellows than the mire they tread beneath their feet—to assure such a man that the Son of God came

down from heaven to seek after him, and deemed the saving of his soul a sufficient reason for shedding His own infinitely precious blood—to assure him of this, and to get him to believe it, is to make him another man. It is to establish between him and that which is best and highest in the universe a link of lasting sympathy. The man begins to feel that he may venture to stand erect, and to look his fellows in the face, when he comes to know that he is an object of interest to the God of heaven. It is a new view of things that has broken in upon his mind. As his eye now lights on the filth and squalor that surround him, the thought arises in his breast, why am I here? there is surely something better for me than this? the rags he wears, and the swinish husks he has been wont to eat, content him no longer. He will arise and go to his Father!

Eighteen months ago ——— was living in the interior of a *close* in ——— Street. He was a shoemaker, and a good workman, and had some lads who wrought with him at his trade. He frequented no church, and was often drunk. His house was filthy in the extreme, and all but utterly destitute of furniture; the lads slept on the floor. His wife was ragged and miserable; his children ill fed and worse clothed; three of them died in swift succession! The missionary's first visit to the family was on the occasion when one of them was to be buried. The father, when he came to ask his attendance, was so drunk that he could hardly deliver his own message. The missionary's visits were repeated while the other two children were dying; and the father

all the while was seldom sober enough to be spoken to. The scene was one of unmingled wretchedness and misery—sickening to look upon. But the missionary persevered, and the Son of Peace came to that house; and now what a change! Everything that Lord Palmerston's heart seems to be so set upon has been long ago secured, and a great deal more besides. The filth is gone; the lads no longer sleep on the floor; the house is decently furnished, clean and comfortable; the family prosperous; the father and mother are members of a mission church, and the drunken shoemaker is now one of the most zealous sanitary reformers in the district where he lives, giving his neighbours no rest till the nuisances of the place are removed.

Such cases are not singular. If the noble Home Secretary would honour us with his company, we could take him to a large school-room, not many hundred yards from this hall, where, had he been with us last Lord's-day, he would have seen more than a hundred persons sitting around the table of the Lord, and receiving the holy sacrament of the Supper, while at least a hundred more were looking on, and joining reverently in the devotions with which the service was accompanied, and the whole number so decent in their attire, and so orderly in their aspect and demeanour, that the beholder could in no way have distinguished them from any of our ordinary Christian congregations. And when his Lordship had seen this surely gratifying sight, we could have told him with strict and literal truth, that the individuals who composed that well-clad and decorous

assembly, for whom a regular church is now in course of being built, were only two years ago, with few exceptions, living without God and without hope in the world; sunk, many of them, in the lowest depths of moral and physical degradation. Nay more, we could exhibit to his Lordship so many other examples of the same thing as at least to prove this,—that our plan of social reform, now in such hopeful progress among several denominations of Christians, is not a mere baseless theory, but a proved and practicable scheme, which needs only to be carried out, and followed up on a sufficiently comprehensive scale, in order, by God's blessing, to effect such a change in the character and condition of the neglected masses in our great cities as would gladden every patriot's and every Christian's heart.

The grand peculiarity of this scheme of which we speak is, that it aims, in every case, to gather, and organize, and build up, in each of the destitute localities on which it is brought to bear, a Christian congregation. Experience has shown that there is no external bond so enduring in its nature, or so beneficent in its influence, as the bond of membership in the same Christian church. It interests the people in each other's welfare,—it increases their self-respect—it comes to the aid of their own steadfastness in the hour of temptation—it keeps them in contact with all that is best in the district to which they belong; while the congregation itself which they combine to form, becomes, through its minister, its elders, and more enlightened and active members, a permanent source of good to the whole neighbour-

hood around. It is a well-known fact that there is hardly an instance in which the same agencies that planted and formed the mission-church have not been instrumental in introducing numberless other important institutions along with it. Week-day and Sabbath-schools have been found almost invariably to spring up around it, and many other contrivances for promoting intellectual and social improvement besides; thereby beautifully illustrating and confirming the inspired sayings of Scripture—that the fear of God is the *beginning of wisdom*; and that godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of *the life that now is*, as well as of that which is to come.

We repeat, therefore, that, for the elevation of the neglected masses in our great cities, the difficulty does not lie in knowing what to do, but in getting people to do it, on a scale of means and effort at all commensurate with the extent of the field. Mr. Osborne, to whom we have more than once referred, cries out for a *national* movement,—national not only in the sense of enlisting in it all denominations of Christians, but in the sense of being supported out of the public funds. Without saying more of this proposal for direct state-interference, it seems enough to say this—that we believe it to be utterly impracticable; and that to agitate it would only be to land us in an angry and interminable controversy, and to adjourn the practical settlement of the question to a hopeless and perilous futurity. As regards education, indeed, the resources of the nation ought to be dealt out in promoting it with a liberal hand. It is nothing short of infatuation to be stinting the

public money, as has been the custom hitherto, when the education of the people,—and especially of the poorest of the people,—is concerned. When benevolent individuals have been doing their utmost to provide a school for some neglected portion of the city, they have found it the hardest thing possible to induce the Government to come to their aid. In most cases it has been only as the result of a half-year's correspondence,—of an amount of trouble and toil enough to wear out the temper and patience of the most zealous educationists in the city,—that at last a *fourth* or *fifth*, or perhaps only a *sixth* or *seventh* part of the expense to be laid out in providing the school, has been obtained! We must have a system that will work easier and faster, and that will deal with us on far more liberal terms, if education is ever to be carried down to the basis of society in such a community as this. In the establishing of district libraries, reading-rooms, penny savings'-banks, and various other appliances for the improvement of the people, public funds ought also to be liberally supplied. But it must never be forgotten that the greatest difficulty of all with which we have to contend in this great enterprise, is to be found in the ignorance and indifference of the people themselves. Schools and teachers may be planted in every street and lane of the city,—but there are families in thousands who will not be at the pains to avail themselves of the benefit thus placed within their reach. There is no appetite for such food,—no market for such wares among multitudes of our people. Not only schools but libraries, reading-rooms,

savings'-banks, and every other device that Christian benevolence or public philanthropy can supply, will be to a great extent thrown away, unless there be an active agency at work, plying the people with their Christian assiduities, getting at their hearts, and stirring them up to do their duty to their children and to themselves. Hence the fundamental importance,—nay, the absolute necessity,—of this work being taken up by the Christian church. Let each of the existing congregations charge itself with some specific portion of the city in which social and spiritual destitution prevail, and address itself earnestly and systematically to the noble task of forming in it a Christian flock, and of seeing that they do not leave in it one uneducated child.

In making this appeal, we do so in no narrow and sectarian spirit. We have of course our own peculiar church preferences, and, time and place fitting, would be neither ashamed nor afraid to render a reason for them. But when we look abroad on the thousands around us, wandering like sheep that have no shepherd, living and dying ignorant of God and of his Christ, we are free to say, and to say it with our whole heart,—“God speed” to any body of evangelical Christians that will go forth and attach to their communion these perishing souls. We believe there is not a minister of the gospel in this city who will not say the same thing, and if there be, we have no sympathy with him. We pity such bigotry as much as we despise it. It is matter, indeed, of unspeakable comfort to know that in this attack upon the ignorance, immorality, and irreligion of the

waste places of our city, several of the leading denominations have already made at least a most hopeful beginning, and in substantial accordance with the views which have now been explained. Still it is but the day of small things, as regards this movement, with us all. If ever we have longed for "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," it has been when pleading this cause. We believe it can be conclusively proved that far more than one hundred thousand of the inhabitants of this city are living in habitual estrangement from all the ordinances and influences of the Gospel; countless multitudes of whom have in consequence already sunk, while multitudes more are fast sinking after them, into the lowest depths of moral and social debasement. Shall it be that we are to go on as we have been doing, trifling with evils so enormous, with dangers to society so incalculably great? It is time that we were done with merely talking and writing on the subject. The public ear is becoming palled with the statistics of ignorance, and vice, and crime; and even the most graphic and harrowing pictures of sunken and depraved humanity are losing their power to stir the public mind. Men's moral sensibilities are getting hardened, and growing callous by the very familiarity they are acquiring with a state of things which they are all the while doing nothing to remedy. If we continue much longer folding our hands, and indolently and selfishly looking on, the risk is imminent that we shall lose at length all consciousness both of our guilt and of our peril. It concerns us, therefore, as

much as it concerns the neglected masses themselves, that we should be up and doing. But if we are to bestir ourselves to any purpose, we must look the question fully and deliberately in the face. It is no holiday task that is before us. If we engage in it at all, we must make up our minds to systematic, and strenuous, and sustained exertions; we must lay our account with devoting both time and money to the work. There must be no raising of the cry—a cry which the least laborious and liberal are always the first to utter,—We have many claims upon us already, and we can do nothing more! The cry is untrue; there is not one of us who could not both give far more, and labour far more, if only first there were a willing mind. If we had before us here the countless merchants of this great city, so many of whom are living, not in comfort merely, but in affluence and splendour, we would appeal to them with confidence. It is by this city they have their wealth; with the industry, the good order, the social well-being of its working-classes their own interests are bound up. Is it unreasonable to ask them to lay out some portion of their capital in strengthening the foundations of their own fortune. By helping to diffuse intelligence, morality, religion among the masses of the people, they are taking the surest means to increase and perpetuate the sources of their own prosperity. We well know indeed, and rejoice to know, that motives and aims of a far higher and nobler kind have already enlisted many of them in this cause. But this we say, that our cause is of a kind that has arguments for all sorts of men. Its grand arguments,

it is true, are those which address themselves to the Christian heart; for it is Christian sympathy alone that will fully appreciate them, and Christian faith alone that will have courage, and constancy, and self-denial to follow fully out the course which they recommend, and which the nature and necessities of the case require.

We have but one other thing to add in conclusion, and it is this,—the work can be accomplished only by a thorough and well-arranged division of labour. It is the old story of the bundle of rods. Impracticable when taken in the gross, even this huge mass of social and spiritual destitution may be dealt with most hopefully in detail. Let the city, in so far as its waste places are concerned, be mapped out into manageable districts. The process, indeed, is already begun, and needs only to be carried out over the whole length and breadth of the destitution, and in the same spirit of mutual deference between different denominations which they have hitherto exhibited. A little friendly communication between their superintending committees would be quite sufficient in the future, as it has been in the past, to guard against all risk of misunderstanding or collision. When the moral and social desert is thus broken up into conterminous fields, and each has been taken possession of by the congregation that has resolved, in dependence on the Divine blessing, to bring it under the gospel plough—then there need be nothing but the honourable and wholesome rivalry of trying who shall be the best cultivators of the soil; who shall soonest extirpate its noxious weeds and drain its

stagnant pools; who, in other words, shall do most within the territory assigned them, for the great interests of humanity and religion. Apart altogether from the blessed fruits of such a combined movement, what a glorious spectacle would the movement itself present to the world! It would do more to confound the pretensions of Romanism, and to silence the taunts of infidelity, than the weightiest arguments which either logic or learning can supply. How powerfully and how beneficently would it react upon the churches themselves! It would be truly "twice blessed," blessing not less him that gives than him that takes. How much misery, under its benignant operation, might be alleviated; how much happiness bestowed!

Let none say that the case of our great cities is hopeless, till this grand experiment has been fully and fairly tried. Till then, at least, let none be driven to the shallow, and sceptical, and withal selfish conclusion, that the social evils over which we mourn are inevitable; that they are the necessary accompaniments and conditions of a high civilization. It may have been so of old, in Egypt and Assyria, in Greece and Rome—empires whose internal corruption has long since involved them in ruin.

Where is Rome?

She lives but in the tale of other times;
 Her proud pavilions are the hermit's home,
 And her long colonnades, her public walks,
 Now faintly echo to the pilgrim's feet,
 Who comes to muse in solitude, and trace,
 Thro' the rank moss revealed, her honour'd dust.

But not to Rome alone has fate confined
The doom of ruin: cities numberless,
Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Babylon, and Troy,
And rich Phenicia,—they are blotted out,
Half-razed from memory, and their name
And being in dispute.

And why? Because in these ancient and magnificent empires the social edifice, splendid and shining above, and in its outward show, rested upon a base, broad and deep, of foulest corruption, of darkest ignorance, and extremest wretchedness; resembling not a little one of their own ruined temples, where the traveller now beholds the beautiful tracery of the lofty frieze and the sculptured foliage that crowns the tall Corinthian column, overhanging a rank and unsightly undergrowth of weeds and thorns—because, in a word, their civilization was destitute of the purifying and conservative element of that heaven-descended Christianity which is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Let that Divine element pervade the whole framework of society, and there is no reason why the very highest civilization should not be coincident with order and comfort, intelligence and virtue, contentment and peace, among the masses of the people—no reason why our national prosperity should not be indefinitely prolonged—no reason why the time should ever come, when any future Gibbon should have to write the history of our great and glorious country's *Decline and Fall*.

