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SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

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BROTHER going to law with brother is the most notable sign of the present times; the daily newspapers have been filled with theological controversy, and the Devil and a Ritualistic clergyman have divided public attention between them, such attention, at least, as remained possible while the all-important question of "Reverend or not Reverend" was agitating the hearts of men. What seems to some to be a terrible blow has been struck at the Established Church, in the persons of her ministers, for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council have reversed the findings of the inferior Courts, and have proclaimed that the "Rev. Henry Keet, Wesleyan minister, of Owston Ferry, in the county and diocese

of Lincoln and province of Canterbury," is rightfully and duly styled "Rev.," and may print that title on a tombstone, or elsewhere, none hindering him. Alas! a "reverend" seems no longer revered since a schismatic and heretical minister may hereafter claim the designation as his own, and thus desecrate it, even as the body of Guibord unhallowed the consecrated burial ground in Montreal. Dire are the lamentations that rend the air; clergymen striving for their title, and will not be comforted, because it is not exclusively their own. This new wickedness of the Privy Council is causing unwonted disturbance in the dignified seclusion of the *Guardian* publishing office, for clerical missives sternly bid the publishers of that church organ to omit, from henceforth, the once-honoured prefix, and to style them either "Rector" or "Vicar." But even here will arise a difficulty, for "Rector" is a title which is also borne by those on whose heads has never rested the consecrating touch of a Bishop's hand. The rector of a parish is he, whether cleric or layman, who receives the large tithes, and he may not only be a layman, but may be a Jew, a Roman Catholic, or an Atheist. May not this be a yet more desecrated title than the other? One especially injured clergyman advertises in a local paper that he will not open letters directed to him as the "Rev.," and warns all his would-be correspondents to address him only by name and surname. Such an outbreak of petty spite as this speaks eloquently of the spirit of some of those clergy of the Establishment who, scattered up and down throughout the country, serve in each parish as a centre of "sweetness and light." In perfect consistency with this spirit is the exaggerated importance attached to dress, gesture, and position, by the members of every section of the Church. Mr. Ridsdale, a Ritualistic clergyman at Folkestone, is tried for mixing water and wine, for standing with his back to the people, for wearing

certain garments, for lighting unnecessary candles, etc., etc., and the whole machinery of a court of law is set in motion to decide on these trumpery points. The position of the celebrant at the altar is, certainly, instructive to antiquarians, as a relic of the ancient sun-worship, of which so many traces appear in the Christian mythology; what more suggestive at Easter time than the eastward facing priest and the bowed congregation, as the celebrant chants:—"He is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world;" one can fancy oneself transported back to ancient days, hearing the Sun-priest welcome the glorious Sun as the very Lamb of God, who takes away the darkness of the weary winter, and shines out on the fresh spring world from the zodiacal station of Aries. As he pours the wine, we remember the libation to Bacchus, the god of the vine, "the true vine;" and in the mingling of water and wine, which gives life to the world, we catch a fanciful hint of that most ancient thought of every mythology, the union of the life-giving elements, which we meet in the cosmogony of Moses, when the spirit moves on the face of the waters. The antiquarian will regret to see all these traces of the elder faiths swept away, these ancient ceremonies in new dresses, which are performed so innocently by the simple Christian worshippers. How the church people, however, who do not see this antique charm, manage to get so excited over dresses and candles, is a mystery; for God, who is a spirit, and looketh at the heart and not at the outward appearance, must surely regard it as a matter of the most complete indifference whether a man "serve the altar" clad in a plain white surplice or in an alb and chasuble. Lord Penzance, as Dean of the Court of Arches, has now decided in this case against Mr. Ridsdale upon every point, and condemned him in the costs of the suit.

The Devil has been causing much stir in orthodox

circles ; once he disputed with Michael about the body of Moses ; now the dispute is as to the reception of the body of Christ. Mr. Jenkins, of Clifton, was refused the Sacrament because his faith did not include a belief in the prince of this world. We have before, in these papers, noted the earlier combats ; how the lay non-believer fought the clerical believer, and how both appealed to the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol ; how his lordship corresponded with both, equivocated lamentably in the witness-box, and generally discredited himself ; how the Sacrament was refused to Mr. Jenkins by the Rev. Flavel S. Cook, not because he could not " be a partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils," but because, while he believed in the Lord, he was sceptical as to the devil ; how Mr. Jenkins prosecuted Mr. Cook, and how Mr. Jenkins lost his suit. Sir Robert Phillimore, in the Court of Arches, declared " the avowed and persistent denial by Mr. Jenkins of the existence and personality of the devil did, according to the law of the Church, as expressed in her canons and rubrics, so constitute him an evil liver, and a 'depraver of the Book of Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments,' as to warrant Mr. Cook in refusing to administer the Holy Communion to him until he discovered or withdrew his statement of unbelief, and the same consideration applied to the denial of the eternity of punishment, and punishment for sin in a future state, by his deliberate exclusion of the passages of Scripture referring to such punishment." From this judgment the appeal was made. It appears, according to the statement of Dr. Deane, the appellant's counsel, that " it was not the existence of a spirit of evil that was denied by the appellant, but he contended that the commonly received sense of the words, 'personality of the devil' was inconsistent with what was decent and becoming, and was a low and humiliating view of the subject." An impersonal

spirit of evil seems rather a vague object of faith, but such is the "devil," in whom alone Mr. Jenkins thinks it "decent and becoming" to believe. As regards eternal punishment, Mr. Jenkins does not believe in "physical torments;" but—we may presume—in a spiritual fire and an incorporeal worm. The Archbishop of Canterbury suggested to the counsel that they might say "you call upon us not to condemn as penal the expression of a hope that even the ultimate pardon of the wicked, who are condemned in the day of judgment, will be consistent with the will of Almighty God." This is putting it softly and delicately, and seems to hint at the desire of the Court to avoid being driven into a corner, and being forced to declare positively either on the one side or on the other. The Church of England is in a very awkward position; if the decision goes against Mr. Jenkins, then the whole liberal section will be up in arms; there will be an outcry against the enforcement of obsolete superstitions, and the cultured thought outside the Establishment will turn from it with added disdain and increased contempt; if, on the other hand, Mr. Jenkins be re-instated in his position as Communicant, the High and Low Church parties will unite in a passionate protest on behalf of their cherished doctrines, and there will be talk of secession, of "a corrupted Church," and of a betrayed faith. Easy-going folk, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, must be aghast at the imprudence of zealous believers like Mr. Cook, who drag such delicate questions into the full glare of a public court of justice, instead of leaving them in the decent twilight of doubt and indecision.

The natural effect of all these law-suits is much restlessness and unquiet among the more earnest and orthodox of the clergy. A noteworthy symptom of this has lately occurred; the following announcement appeared in the *Morning Post*:—"We understand

that information has come to light which reveals, on the part of an extreme section of the English clergy, a direct intrigue with Rome, which only waits for completion to be publicly announced." It is supposed that the Ritualistic clergy, alarmed and horrified by the Public Worship Regulation Act, no longer feel justified in acknowledging allegiance to the Bishops who accept it, and therefore propose to secede, to form a separate Church, and to place this Church under the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff, owning him as primate. One of the main difficulties in the way of this hopeful scheme is the Wives of the seceding clerics, and the Ritualists therefore plead to be allowed to keep their wives, "celibacy being a matter of discipline, not of doctrine." They desire, also, for policy's sake, to retain the English Book of Common Prayer, at any rate for the present. All this being arranged, flocks and pastors are to secede and to form an Uniat Church, "acknowledging the Pope as their chief Bishop." It is said, in addition, that the recalcitrant clergy have met together, and have elected unto themselves Bishops, but it is not stated by whom the newly-chosen prelates are to be consecrated, and here some slight difficulty may presumably be experienced by those who must necessarily keep unbroken the Apostolical succession, and receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. The scheme scarcely appears to be a promising one, and at the most could only issue in a feeble movement, analogous to that of the Old Catholics in Germany, who have neither the strength of the great Roman organisation nor the vitality of independent and private judgment.

Meanwhile, Rome herself is busily engaged in spreading wide her nets, and her latest feat has been to open, with much ostentation, "the Manchester Academia of the Catholic Religion." The object of this institution is, according to its own rules, "to

promote the study of the Catholic religion, to oppose the errors of the day, to preserve the young from the influence of such errors, and to supply a want experienced among Catholics, viz., that of lectures upon literary, historical, and scientific subjects in connection with the Catholic religion. The special object of the lectures and dissertations is to lay down solid and true principles in connection with Catholic doctrine; to demonstrate the harmony between reason and faith; to cultivate higher intellectual tastes; and to provide, as widely as possible, literary and scientific instruction in harmony with the Catholic religion for those who desire to continue or perfect their education." The way in which reason and faith are to be harmonised is shown by Cardinal Manning, in his inaugural address; he takes the case of Galileo. "Galileo did not demonstrate. He enunciated his hypothesis, and that hypothesis was not demonstrated for a century afterwards. . . . When Newton demonstrated the truth, he demonstrated nothing to touch the faith, but as soon as he demonstrated it, the Church at once, which had carefully guarded the popular and visible interpretation of the historical words of scripture, lest, without cause, the mind of man should be perturbed and doubts should be insinuated without necessity and power of solution—as soon as that demonstration was made, the Church, in its wisdom, at once declared that the language of Holy Scripture in this matter of science was the language of man, as it was the language of sense which we used to this very day." That is about as neat a piece of audacious sophistry as could by any possibility be conceived. Galileo made a scientific hypothesis, which appeared to be contrary to faith. Galileo was therefore imprisoned, threatened, forced to recant; yet is the Church in nowise an enemy of science, since she accepted the same hypothesis when demonstrated by Newton. But how can any hypo-

thesis be demonstrated, if the thinker is to be thrust into prison the moment he formulates his thoughts? No chance will ever come of demonstrating the truth, for the thinker will have been forced into recantation of the hypothesis, and his search will be put an end to. Newton's demonstration only became possible when science had grown too strong to be strangled by the Church, and the thinker, freed from Church oppression and from fear of punishment, was able to study out the problem quietly, and put the hypothesis of Galileo for ever beyond the death-grip of the Church. Put into plain language, the words of the Cardinal mean, "The Church will always struggle against every new thought, against every fresh advance, and will only accept a discovery when the discovery is patent to all and can no longer be denied; then she will try and manipulate the Bible, so as to twist its words into some sort of resemblance to the reality." Such is the harmony between reason and faith taught at the new Roman Catholic Academy.

The Burials Bill is likely to be the most prominent ecclesiastical measure during the present session of Parliament, and social and theological feeling is running very high upon it; the Church party are as obstinate and as unfeeling as ever, carrying on the struggles of life beside the open grave, and mingling the sobs of the mourners with the fierce tones of partisan strife. The Archbishop of Canterbury has pointed out, that both in Roman Catholic and in Greek countries the Protestant may bury his dead in peace, using over the body the words that were dear in life to the lost one, and which sound homelike and consoling to those who gather round the tomb. Surely the grave, at least, might be kept free from miserable quarrels, and in death those might sleep side by side who in the battle of life were marshalled under opposing flags.