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AN ADDRESS

TO ALL

EARNEST CHRISTIANS.

BY

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EARNEST CHRISTIANS.

THE Christian Evidence Society maintain their position, such as it is, in seeming composure. They have a world of their own, and abstract themselves from what is outside their circle. They are at sea, aware of the storm blowing around them, but prefer the shelter of their cabins to facing the troublesome elements. They have nailed their colours to the masthead ; the old vessel tumbles about sadly, and creaks in all its timbers ; but it still floats, and they trust will continue to do so. They wish not to alarm the crew with the revelation of what is assailing them. They keep them, therefore, battened down under the hatches. Mr Scott and his writers habitually knock at their doors, but they are not to be disturbed. His personal appeal to them, made two years ago, has met with no attention. Mine, of April last, remains similarly unnoticed. We appear to have been addressing "watchmen," such as those of old, who are "all dumb dogs," and "cannot bark ;" and are allowed to roam about, unscathed, like the relentless Philistines, when the chosen people, in the time of their first king, hid themselves in holes, conscious

that they had not a weapon among them wherewith to face the enemy.

The Christian Evidence Society are not the only persons guilty of evading their opponents. There are multitudes bound up in the same cause, provided also with a host of professional standard bearers. Many of these are continually appealed to, and in vain. It is sad, but true, that those professing to have divine truth on their side hesitate to have it examined by the light of the present day. With indifference we cannot charge them. Many of them abound in zeal, doubtless; but it is a zeal so tempered with caution, as to be practically, on such occasions as I speak of, inoperative. We doubt not that they would match themselves with us were they reasonably confident of the results. It is just, we must conclude, the apprehension that the issue might be otherwise than favourable that deters them from incurring the venture. This is neither manly nor honest. Nor can it avert the threatening danger. In the confidence of the power of insubvertible truth, we advance openly and boldly, fearing no adversaries. The day is our own, but as yet only in the distance. We earnestly desire to hasten the march of that enlightenment which has visited ourselves. We have a duty to perform towards those still shrouded in darkness. We should be untrue to them, as well as to ourselves, were we to be guilty of retaining in silence the sense we have of the prevailing error. We know its potency, and how it enslaves the understanding and debases the thoughts and sentiments. We know of the miserable dominion of fear it establishes, and of the forbidding nature of the representation it makes to mankind at large of the author of their beings. To be silent would be to leave the error to free currency.

We should be maintaining a forced indifference to its prevalence such as we do not feel. We therefore speak out with what power of expression we can command. We are called destructors, and should be so had we no better thing to offer than the scheme we denounce.

I have personally had considerable experience of both elements. I lived for years upon the food presented by the religious system I have turned from. I thought its records came from the source of all truth, had been uttered by instruments divinely inspired, and contained all that was to govern me in this life, and fit me for the life that has to come. I fervently and undoubtingly believed, and strove to conform myself in all respects to what was thus put before me. And when facts and considerations, too plain to be misunderstood, presented themselves to disturb my faith in the sources of my dependence, I struggled for years before the strands were severed which bound me to my past convictions. Now I am willing to be tested in every way by those remaining in the position I have left, and for whom I have in truth the deepest sympathies. If any one of them will open a correspondence with me, he has my permission to probe my present faith to the utmost. I should be glad, at the same time, if not too painful to his feelings, to be allowed to make some searching inquiries connected with the foundations of his faith. Either side should be at liberty at the close of the correspondence to publish the results.

T. L. STRANGE.

. GREAT MALVERN,
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