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SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

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VERY little has been stirring in ecclesiastical circles during the past month, except in the way of preparation for the battles to come. The din of arms is heard, but the blows are not struck against the foe, but only on the anvil, to mould the blade for future use. Hot indignant words are heard from the Ritualist camp, whispers of a Uniate Church, of secession, of rebellion, but the angry tones are hushed down by the wiser leaders, and the speakers are bidden to possess their souls—and their benefices—in patience until brighter days. Menaces answer from the Low Church battalions, who, flushed by recent victory, dream of a resurrection of the palmy

Simeonitish days. The Broad Church stand carelessly as ever, indifferent to attack, knowing that the spirit of the age is flowing against their enemies, and conscious that they are more in harmony with it than either High or Low. Outside the Church progress is visible on every hand. As science spreads scepticism increases; as eastern researches are more eagerly prosecuted the true foundations of popular Christianity are being laid bare, and their real nature is seen; as criticism lays down its canons with more certainty the Bible becomes more and more discredited as Divine, more and more proved to be human both in its beauties and in its faults; every advance, in every direction, is leading men further and further away from their ancestral faith, and is building up brains too large and too strong to be moulded by priestly touch or to be bound in ecclesiastical bands. Cheering is the prospect to the lovers of humanity, and ever fuller and fuller swells the hope which animates them; the hope of that glorious day when man shall no more be the slave of superstition, and woman no longer the tool of the priest.

A curious point of contact between the ecclesiastical and civil laws is now before Parliament, and the *Rock* is loud in its denunciations of the proposed legislation. Many of the colonies have passed a law legalizing a marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister. This law has, in due course, been sanctioned by the Home Government, and a Bill is now introduced to make such colonial marriages legal in England, should the parties come into this country, and to protect their offspring from all disadvantages they might otherwise suffer from here, owing to the difference of the colonial and home marriage laws. Upon this Bill the *Rock* writes a very bitter article, speaking of such marriages as "a form of incest," and saying that "the present law of Great Britain is avowedly founded on the law of God," and that

“Christian men in Parliament” ought to be very careful not to “legalise what God condemned in the case of the old Canaanites.” It seems a pity to raise angry feelings by dealing with an important social question in this style; the *Rock* ought to confine itself to Church garments and the personality of Satan, and not venture into the delicate domain of social legislation; in that sphere the bitter tone of theological controversy is out of place, and is even dangerous.

Another strange interposition of the *Rock* in political matters is found in an article upon the proposed new title of the Queen: if the mischief of the name Empress be averted, then may “England, as specially favoured by the Most High, continue to hold the highest place among the kingdoms of the earth, instead of—in an access of pride—provoking Him to leave us to ourselves, and so perhaps add another chapter to Volney’s famous book, ‘The Ruins of Empires.’” So not only is this magic title to scare away the Emperor of Russia from our Indian frontiers, but it will also frighten “the Most High” away from our borders. What a curious juxtaposition!

The Rev. Flavel Cook is prospering; can he—according to mediæval stories—have entered into some compact with the Evil One, for whom he is now suffering? A church, seated to hold 1,000 persons, is to be erected for him near Clifton; the testimonial fund has already reached the sum of 1,000*l.*, the Exeter branch of the English Church Union contributing 100*l.* as “a public and tangible mark of sympathy” with his treatment of Mr. Jenkins. The costs of the trial are a warning to ecclesiastical litigants; those of Mr. Cook amount to between 1,200*l.* and 1,400*l.*, and those of Mr. Jenkins to between 800*l.* and 900*l.* The Wesleyan body have spent some 3,000*l.* in vindicating their right to the title of Reverend, so that, on the whole, suitors and

defendants in these courts must often exclaim : "How dear are thy counsels unto me, O Lord ! How great is the sum of them."

The *Church Herald* has found a successor ; this valuable paper is called *The Pilot*, and is "A Journal of Religion, Politics, Literature, and Art." It is neatly printed on good paper, price threepence. To what party it belongs it is hard to say, but it appears to be of very extreme High Church views, and yet not Ritualistic, while it evidently is issued to promote union with Rome. It advocates the Roman primacy, in preference to the present Parliament primacy, and is the sworn foe of Erastianism. It speaks with high approval of a pamphlet entitled "The Discipline of Christ, or the Discipline of Devils;" and the discipline of devils is, according to the publication in question, that of Lord Penzance : the Royal Supremacy is "a huge Tudor imposture," and the following passage is endorsed : "Forced to choose between the Crown, as advised by the Senate, and the Pope, as advised by his theologians, or to sink into a sect ἀκέφαλος and ἄνομος, increasing numbers of us are learning to prefer the Bishop to the Crown, the rules of the Congregation of Rites to the *dicta* of the Privy Council. The rule of a Catholic Metropolitan, with right of appeal to Rome, is at least preferable to the rule of 'Archbishop' Penzance, with the sorry right of appeal to my Lords of the Judicial Committee, a body which is, now and henceforth, the 'Holy Governing Synod' of the Anglican Church." On this subject of Lord Penzance and his Court, much wrath is poured forth : the *Pilot* maintains that Courts which judge Church matters, ought to be "Courts Christian," *i.e.*, ought to "depend upon the Synods of the Church : " "the law which 'Courts Christian' ought to administer is the Divine Law ;" "but nothing of this kind obtains in the case of Lord Penzance and his Court. He can only be likened to a comet which belongs to

no recognised system whatever." "Suppose some 'question of the law Divine' to arise; it may be a question of ritual, as in Mr. Ridsdale's case; or it may be question of doctrine, as in Mr. Bennett's case; or a question of the exercise of the power of the keys, as Mr. Cook's." This question, when raised, may seriously affect the welfare of the whole Anglican Church; it may touch in their tenderest point the consciences of the most devout Churchmen and Churchwomen of the day; the very character of the Anglican Communion for orthodoxy, or the validity of the Sacraments, may be involved in it; and by whom is it to be decided? By Lord Penzance in the first place; and by Lords Cairns, Selborne, Hatherley, and a few other lay judges in the last resort." Horror of horrors! a layman, with unconsecrated hands, is touching the ark of the Lord. "They may condemn what the Church approves; deprive a Priest whom the Church would gladly retain and support in the exercise of his ministry; admit to Communion a layman whom the Church would certainly repel; and all the while Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and faithful laity, must sit still and see the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church dislocated and mutilated, and say nothing." And what does the *Pilot* advise among so many rocks, and stress of weather so terrible? "Uncompromising resistance." Such is the *mot d'ordre* of the new paper, and when the strength of the "Catholic party" within the Church is remembered, the appearance of this paper at the present critical juncture is a "Sign of the Times" not lightly to be ignored. If this party, as a whole, resolve on a policy of resistance to the Secular Courts now ruling the Church, and decide for union with Rome rather than submission, the days of the Establishment are numbered. We have always hoped much from the attempt to "stamp out the Ritualists," and our hopes seem likely to be realised. The attitude of the *Pilot* to-

wards the Rationalists also deserves a word of notice; if its policy towards Lord Penzance is one of uncompromising resistance, its policy towards the Free Thinkers is one of uncompromising hostility. Mr. Gould speaks of God's Truth before "the bar of Reason." "Before the bar of Reason!" We thank him for the admission. It is Reason, then, that is to decide matters of Faith! The very Truth itself was once arraigned at the bar of a ruler who, sitting as the Representative of the World, asked, with unconscious irony, the scoffing question, 'What is Truth?' And Pontius Pilate remains, for all time, the typical representative of all Rationalism. 'Before the bar of Reason!' Yet the author of this book professes to hold the Catholic Faith, provided always that its 'imperfections' be supplemented by the gospel of science." The Belfast address of Professor Tyndall is "a display of second-hand erudition," than which "nothing could be more pitiable." Mr. Mill is "an over-rated writer of so-called philosophy, who has been dead for some time, and is now almost forgotten." This is quite up to the *Church Herald* standard. As to education, the "Act of 1870 is efficiently doing the Devil's work," by teaching children without dwarfing them with dogmas. It attacks the late Lady Augusta Stanley for her sympathy with Père Hyacinthe in his marriage, and says: "We are glad that the Father—now a father in quite another sense—did not adopt her Ladyship's loose views as to vows, and apply them to what Dean Liddell terms the 'yet dearer confidence of wedded life.' Yet if one kind of religious vow may be broken with impunity and commendation, why not another? Philanthropy, of whatever kind, and rotten sentiments, are very poor substitutes for Christian principle." What Christian principle it shows to write thus coarsely over the scarce-closed grave of a good and noble-natured woman, respected by all for her gene-

rous work among the poor, and her wide-hearted charity! Our new paper gives an interesting account of "Religion in Germany," where "Strauss—who was personally honoured by some of our English Royal Family—and other odious infidels of the same kind, have done their dark and deplorable work. Except amongst Roman Catholics, Christianity is practically banished and inoperative." "The decline of what is called 'Evangelical Lutheranism' has been at once rapid and sure. Reason has triumphed over Revelation. For example, in the year 1831 eight Prussian Universities could boast 2,203 theological students; in 1873 no more than 740. . . . The supreme governing body has had to proclaim to the world that in a year or so one-sixth of the vacant benefices will have none to fill them. Pastors cannot be obtained for the churches, which are being closed for lack of them." Truly, the labours of German rationalists have not been without results, and we, in England, who follow in their steps, may well rejoice in the success which has crowned their labours.

Our old friend, the *Church Times*, seems quite moderate and charitable after this terrible *Pilot*. Far from urging uncompromising resistance, it counsels sage policy. In writing on "the Persecution," while it proposes that a Sustentation Fund should be formed for the support of clergymen dispossessed of their benefices under the new Act, it at the same time counsels the clergy not to unwisely precipitate matters, but to distinguish between the essentials and the accessories of divine worship. A "cute" suggestion is also made—that when a priest is dispossessed for "Catholic practices," and a successor is placed at his post by the bishop of the diocese, the congregation should withhold all their customary offerings, whether through the offertory or otherwise. "There is not the least reason why any question of charity, or rather of want of charity, should come in.

The whole thing should be regarded simply as a pure matter of business, and be conducted in a business-like way. The absolute stoppage in all such cases of all voluntary offerings whatsoever would, we shrewdly suspect, soon very palpably change the general aspect of affairs." This is really very sensible advice from the Catholic stand-point, and shows that the children of light are endeavouring to use somewhat of the wisdom of the children of this world in dealing with the foe. But a sharp battle is imminent when combatants begin girding up their loins in this fashion, and since brother is going to war with brother, and that before the unbeliever, we may look forward to the downfall of the Establishment, as of a house divided against itself. There is a rather clever skit on "The Law," published in the *Church Times*, contrasting the legal Church decisions given from time to time since Henry VIII.

" 'The Law' made it penal to read in the Prayer Book,
And waited until it became quite a rare book,
Then made an engine of greater enormity,
And cut off our toes with the Act Uniformity.

* * * * *

'The Law' gave its blessing to Essays, Reviews,
And settled the clergy may write as they choose ;
But Voysey and Heath, who believed what 'Law' said,
Were seized by its minions and thrown out of bed."

And so on, for half a column. How bitterly the Church party feel regarding the Law may be judged from the following extract from a leading article in this same number. The *Record*, "it seems, is very solicitous about the majesty of the Law—the Law, namely, by which it was declared that a churchman may hold the New Testament to be a pack of lies, and our Saviour's own words to be 'quite incompatible with decency and religion.'" One cannot but wonder how long it will be before the State sees the unwisdom of meddling in these Church squabbles, and recognises the real danger implied in the growing

contempt for law; wherever the law comes into conflict with the rights of conscience, the law will assuredly go to the wall, and wise statesmen will make such conflict as rare as possible by carefully avoiding all State interference in matters of religion.

Some terrible things have happened lately. Dr. Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury, has actually given the benediction in an Ulster coat. Once before he has been known to deliver it in evening dress. Truly shocking! "Yet this is the prelate who wishes to prohibit the true devout Catholics of the Church of England from worshipping their Lord in the 'beauty of holiness.'" What can be hoped for a Church whose chief minister worships the Lord in an Ulster?

Another burial scandal has been added to the many which, week after week, make the Burial Bill more necessary. At Dore, near Sheffield, a young child died, and, when all arrangements for the funeral were completed, the Vicar of Dore, the Rev. J. T. F. Aldred, said "that he could not inter the boy, inasmuch as he had not baptised him." The child had been baptised, it seems, by the sacrilegious hands of a Primitive Methodist minister, instead of by the divinely appointed Vicar of Dore. The Vicar, however, gave permission to bury the corpse in the churchyard, and the friends decided to hold a service in their own chapel, and that Primitive Methodist Mr. Whitby should complete the service in the road, the body being placed in the ground meanwhile. The programme was duly commenced, but when the funeral procession arrived at the graveyard, behold the Rev. E. B. Chalmer, of the Church of England, advancing to meet the body, reading the sentences from the Burial Service. The rival clerics glared at each other, and the following conversation took place:—

Rev. W. WHITBY.—"Stop, sir, if you please. We do not want any service read. We have had a ser-

vice in our chapel, and we do not wish any service of your Church."

Rev. E. B. CHALMER.—"You cannot bury here, then."

Rev. W. WHITBY.—"I say yes. It has been done."

Rev. E. B. CHALMER.—"But you cannot have the body interred here unless the service is read."

Rev. W. WHITBY.—"It shall be buried like a dog, then, without your service."

Such was the conduct of these two Christian gentlemen over the body of a dead infant, while the mourners stood around sobbing. The mother was almost fainting, naturally suffering intensely at this quarrel desecrating her baby's funeral; at last she prayed that the child might be interred in peace, with any service, and Mr. Chalmer victoriously carried off the corpse, and read his service over it without further interruption. In this fashion are Dissenters taught to reverence the Establishment, and thus it is sought to convince them that the Church is the Church of the nation. The Dore case seems likely to create some interest, as the Bishop of Lichfield has been appealed to, and questions have been asked about it in Parliament. It appears, nevertheless, that the clergyman must have acted in accordance with the law, for there is manifestly no right on the part of a Dissenting minister to read any service at the actual burial, although he may hold a service in the road, provided he create no obstruction; and the clergyman has surely a right to use the Burial Service over any corpse buried within his freehold, unless it comes within the excluded classes mentioned in the rubric.

The unjust state of the law as regards Free Thinkers is painfully exemplified in the case of the children of the late Lord Amberley. These children were committed, by their father, to the care of Mr. Spalding, a tutor chosen by himself, whom he could trust, and who understood his wishes with regard to their reli-

gious, or rather non-religious education. The grandfather, Earl Russell, claimed the children, pleading that children could not legally be committed to the care of one who would educate them in no form of religious belief. A case was submitted to counsel, and was decided in Earl Russell's favour, and the children of the heretic were handed over to the Christian, to be brought up in a creed detested by both their parents; these children, if they grow up Christians, must believe that both their father and their mother have perished everlastingly. People talk of religious equality in England: how much equality does the law allow to the Free Thinker? If this case had happened in Spain, and the parents, being rigid Protestants, had confided their children to the care of a Protestant, and the law had stepped in and handed them over to a bigoted Roman Catholic grandfather, to be brought up in the Roman Catholic creed, we should have heard enough cry of "injustice," and "intolerance," from those very people who approve of such treatment when it is only against the hated Free Thinker. Earl Russell has also seized his dead son's manuscripts, and stopped the publication of a book on religions, to which Lord Amberley had been devoting his time and strength. Not content with all this, a final outrage was perpetrated on the helpless dead: the bodies of Lord and Lady Amberley, buried at the dying wish of each in unconsecrated ground, have been exhumed and reburied in the Russell consecrated vault, so that those who, in life, could not be forced within the Church, may be handed over to her when they can no longer defend themselves. Thus bitterly intolerant does the so-called Liberal Earl Russell show himself; protesting against persecution of his fellow-Christians abroad, he persecutes those who disagree with himself at home, and pours the cruelest insults possible on the head of his own dead children; for he destroys the one immortality for which Lord Amber-

ley hoped and laboured, the immortality of his thought, enshrined in the suppressed book; he takes his children to bring them up in a superstition hated by both their parents; and he takes the most cowardly of all revenges on the dead bodies reverently committed to the bosom of the mighty mother, by insultingly tearing them from their resting-place, thus desecrating even the last home of the dead. Will the day ever dawn when honest heresy shall be as respected as honest orthodoxy, and men and women shall reverence in others the freedom they desire for themselves? Sometimes orthodox Christians complain that the tongue of the Free Thinker speaks bitterly, and that sharp taunt is used where gentle persuasion would be more attractive: but can they wonder that sometimes our words are bitter: can they wonder that our arrows are sometimes keenly barbed, when they know that no thought is taken how our tenderest feelings may be trampled on, and our hopes crushed; that no voice will be raised in defence of the sacredness of the tie between parents and children of our brotherhood, no word of rebuke spoken to those who desecrate our graves, and who crush out the one hope of immortality to which we cling, the hope that our thought shall live, and may serve the world of men when we are gone to our rest.

