

pungent satire, what bitter words were poured forth upon that sex which to the celibate and the ascetic represented "the world, the flesh, and the devil." And if the holy and sincerely pious men, of whom there were many in the early Church, could revile women as their stumbling block and chief temptation, still more would the hypocrite who wished to disguise his sensuality put on a double portion of outward contempt for females, and make his teaching lower them in the eyes of laymen. He would affectedly preach what Saint Chrysostom preached in earnest, that woman was 'a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, and a painted ill.' They raved and slandered and reviled in a manner laughable exceedingly were not the consequences so terribly cruel and degrading. A favourite theme for the modern orthodox to descant upon, is what the Church has done for the purity and elevation of women, as though there were no virtuous women in the older days. 'Were there no bards before the fall of Troy?' The elevation of mind which would allow mediæval women to look on at vile Biblical dramas (the Monkish Mystery, or Miracle plays) where Adam and Eve were brought on the stage in a state of innocence, &c., was not so greatly above that of their pure Saxon and Norse ancestresses, and there is no more comparison between them than between the chaste Lucretias and Virginias of Ancient Rome, and the profligate daughters of nobles who swam naked round Nero's barge in public procession. Countless centuries before, in the dim hazy days of the East, had grown up the worship of the female power in the Universe, that great sense of the infinite Motherhood of Nature which appeals to all generations of men. The subject of the Dual Deity in the Everlasting is too gigantic to be more than touched on here, and the temptation must be forborne which prompts us to glance toward Isis and Hera, Ceres and the Venus Genitrix, with the mystical allegories which sanctified them, and the mysteries which polluted their later worship. The worship of the Virgin, which was the form taken by the mediæval mind in its communion with the Great Mother, has had too much claimed for it when it is asserted that it helped vastly to improve the condition of women. The mind which had been resting in religious ecstasy upon the spiritual bosom of the Madonna, the eyes which had been raised in half-delirious adoration toward the "rosa mystica," felt little but contempt when lowered to the level of earthly women, who, not having been honored by supernatural visitors from Olympus or the New Jerusalem, could not enter the holy land of maternity through the gates of pain without leaving behind them the chaplet of virginity. The monk, too, in preaching the vanity of earthly happiness and the utter insignificance of the search for it, weakened the sanctity of the regard for home and home duties. His hatred of the body not only encouraged dirtiness, but ruined the love of physical beauty which had been almost a religion among the Greeks, and gave us ideals from which Art is still suffering; so in sanitary matters and a hundred others, the old foolish, prudish contempt of the body appears and fights against any rational reform.

But it was in its effect upon the belief in witchcraft that we see the cruellest result of monkish teaching. To consult authorities upon this subject makes the blood boil with indignation to find what fearful pain men inflicted, under supposed Biblical direction, upon members of their race, and nine-tenths of the victims were women. They were accused of having children by fiends (incubi), and women with beautiful hair were supposed to be peculiarly liable to attract demon lovers—this was supposed to be the meaning of St. Paul's command to women to keep their heads covered 'because of the angels.' They were accused of frequenting witches-sabbaths where all sorts of vile orgies went on; of eating dead bodies as were-wolves; and of every other idiotic trash which minds rotten with superstition could conceive. And the ascetic familiarity with bodily pain, nurtured by dwelling on horrible pictures and stories of the sufferings of the saints and martyrs, intensified by a gloomy faith lurid with the flames of purgatory and hell, made these judges and accusers use torture in the most heartless and unsparing manner. The poor

victim was often kept awake for days and nights by having a "witch's bridle" fastened on her mouth and secured by a padlock to the wall, so that the sufferer could neither sit nor lie down. Let us read: "These instruments were so constructed that by means of a hoop which passed over the head, a piece of iron having four points or prongs was forcibly thrust into the mouth, two of these being directed towards the tongue, the others pointing out towards each cheek." (Dalyell's 'Darker Superstitions of Scotland'.) In this position she was watched by men set to keep her awake for days and nights in order to make her confess her guilt, the torture of thirst being added. So thousands of the poor weak, worn-out creatures acknowledged anything they were required to confess, and were removed to the flaming faggots of deliverance. Llorente states that from his perusal of the documents of the Spanish Inquisition, he found that at least 31,000 persons were burnt by that institution alone. 50,000 perished in the Netherlands under Charles V. In Italy 1,000 persons were burnt in one year (Spina 'De Strigibus'). 7,000 persons were burnt at Trèves ('Thiers' 'Traité des Superstitions'). Sprenger, who had unusual opportunities of judging, states that he believes that from the introduction of Christianity to the present day, nine million persons have suffered violent deaths on this account. Nor did the result of monkish fear of demons and monkish hatred of women end with the suppression of the monasteries; a legacy of horror was left to the Reformers. The Puritans in England and America, the Presbyterians in Scotland murdered more women than even the Roman Catholics had done. Luther, the first Reformer, said, "I would have no compassion on these witches, I would burn them all"; and John Wesley, the last Reformer, said (Journal 1768), "the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." Let us turn away from this darkest record of human history, and glance at one more result of monkery. It was the degrading view taken of Love. It has been truly said that Love, as it is regarded to-day, is of modern growth; that the exquisite and refined sentiment, which is the ideal of the intellectual world in opposition to brutal passion or coarse sensual indulgence, is a new product of our later civilisation. The notion of an affection which can survive all loss, grow without possession, and exist without hope of fruition, that "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all," may be of modern date, but that it should be so is the result of the degradation of women by ascetic preaching from Eastern books. As the Church for ages persecuted intellect in men, and tortured thinkers as heretics, so they threw down the lofty womanly ideal of our Northern ancestors, and gave us centuries of grossness and sensuality. Every step towards freedom for women, every link of her chain which has dropt broken, has been the work of that liberalising, widening tendency of thought which has been fought for inch by inch, year after year, against the monk and the monk's successors. Let me quote the noble words of noble George Eliot: "What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the yea or the nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections."

EDW. TREGEAR.

New Plymouth, Jan. 3rd, 1884.

#### HOW SHOULD HE DIE?

Unto each his handiwork, unto each his crown,  
The just Fate gives;  
Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,  
He dying so, lives.  
Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wrong'd world's weight  
And puts it by,  
It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;  
How should he die?  
Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power  
Upon his head;  
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,  
And is not dead.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

Faithfulness and sincerity are the groundwork of all goodness.—CONFUCIUS.