

# THE SYNOD AND THE SNAKES,

WITH POINTED ALLUSION TO SPIRITUALISM AND MATERIALISM.

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By J. G. S. GRANT.

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See and confess one comfort still must rise;  
'Tis this, tho' Man's a fool, yet God is wise.

BYRON said, "the more I see of man the less I like him." The more we see of man in his clerical capacity the less we respect him. Our observation of the actions and expressions of clerical assemblies has been pretty extensive. We have attended in our day, the sessions of General Assemblies, Free, United Presbyterian, and established. We have watched the proceedings of the Presbyteries from Edinburgh to Inverness. When we came to Melbourne, there were only four congregations and one Presbytery, and now there are 114 congregations and 10 Presbyteries in Victoria. In 1857 we attended the Synod of New South Wales. Since that period we have taken stock of the various Synods, Presbyterian and Episcopalian, as well as of the Presbyteries of New Zealand. What then, you will ask? Well simply this. The Synod of Otago, during its last session, out-herods them all. It has filled our mind with disgust; and from conversation with some of the best members of the Synod, we gather that others cherish the same feeling towards it that we here record. One reverend father said that the reason why ministers' sons did not choose the profession of their fathers was that they saw too much of the internal difficulties of the manse.

Precisely so. Not a few of the honest spectators declare that

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the more they see of the conduct of the clergy behind the scenes in the church courts, the less hold the pastors have of their affections. Indeed, one godly man—whom we always regarded as an arrant church bigot—openly boasted that, for his part, he would have nothing more to do with church matters. He believed the aim of the great majority of the Court was to degrade the people, so that they might become the more pliant tools in their hands. “The church,” said an ex-elder and a man of social position, “is rotten from Waitaki to the Bluff.”

Manliness is not one of the characteristics of the Synod. One clergyman prevailed upon one of his elders to travel all the way south to Dunedin in order to support him in his threatened onslaught on Spiritualism and Materialism. The elder came, saw, and left disgusted at “the want of straightforwardness of his minister.” The obnoxious heresies were not even mooted publicly. The indignant pastor graced the ranks of the party that he had determined to libel before the court. One of the accredited stipendiaries of the church got an increase of £20 voted to his salary, in place of being censured for his materialistic tendencies. It is true, indeed, that a southern pastor rose to put some questions about this matter to the Synod, but one of the ruling dons of the court promptly sealed his mouth. Whatever may have been done in private, the public ventilation of such questions was considered inexpedient. And yet these men denounce the Press as being guided solely by expediency. “It is irreligious and scurrilous in its tone, and will not speak out on abuses.” Whatever fault may be attributed to the Press of Otago, it cannot be said to be “an infidel Press.” The public and respectable journals are singularly free from blame in this matter. But why is the Synod so timid and reticent on questions that affect the very existence of religion and morality? When the questions of indiscriminate baptisms and reckless administration of the Lord’s Supper came on for discussion, where was the zeal of members who professed to be scandalised at the way in which certain of their brethren “pandered to the depraved tastes of their hearers,” in the celebration of such holy ordinances? One pastor made an effort to relieve his burdened soul, but very soon swallowed his words most ignominiously. Talk of consistency, and manliness, and religion, why there are no traces of such qualities pervading the deliberations of the Synod. The real enemies of Christianity are within, and not without, the camp. Continual complaints are being made of “the horrible shabbiness of congregations” in the support of schemes of the church.

“Men of the world,” as if ministers were not, as a rule, the veriest muck-worms, estimate a tree by the nature of its fruit. The dreary night devoted to missionary revelations showed that the church, last year, “had baptized one Chinaman” out of a

nominal congregation of between 15 and 20 persons. It appears there are 4000 Chinese in Otago, while only 15 or 20 can be gathered together to hear the Gospel. What about the 3,000 Celts, all of whom would gladly come and hear the Gospel had they the opportunity afforded them? In the Northern parts one is glad to hear of the wonderful success of the Maori mission, for one clergyman, assisted by a neighbouring pastor, managed to "baptise a Maori child."—another illustration of the mountain in the fable. In the southern districts, certain evil-disposed persons of the race of the Christadelphians "taught the Maories the annihilation of the soul." The brethren wished to invoke the aid of the civil magistrate to put down such a heresy. And yet, they themselves were afraid to discuss openly the obnoxious doctrines of materialism and spiritualism, lest it might give offence in certain quarters. The leaven may work underground, but it must not be noticed in public. Expediency, not principle, rules the world.

Certain men, the proverb says, should have good memories. About five months ago, on a public occasion, it was openly and applaudingly asserted, that our churches supported religion more liberally than at home. In the Synod congregations contributed, it appeared from the same authorities "horribly shabby" to the sustentation and church extension funds, &c. The deputies from other churches told the Synod that their ministers were better paid than in Otago. This, we know, to be a fact; for except one minister, no member of Synod receives a stipend of £400 per annum. The highest gets £350. Three receive £300 each and one £290. The rest get the equal dividend, about £190 annually per man. The best scholar in the church, now a convert to Spiritualism does indeed get a supplement of £15 from his appreciative congregation. Who will now deny that "every man of worth is well supported in Otago."

As for the miserable contributions to the church extension fund, I am inclined to think that the reason of this "horrible shabbiness" is not difficult to find out. Indeed, it was told, perhaps more plainly than courteously, in the "scurrilous letter" that appeared in the columns of the *Daily Times*. We could see very little scurrility about it.

One of the leading members of Synod openly taxed a member of the Court with having written that letter, but he had to withdraw with a bad grace his assertion. There are some prominent elements of the Synod that profess to know the paternity of any letters that appear in the correspondence columns of newspapers. For ourselves, we plead profound ignorance of such matters; and yet we claim to be as lynx-eyed as any man in Otago. A word on the Lang scholarship, because of the collateral points raised in its discussion, may not be out of place here. It appears that the gainer of that prize was ~~not~~ allowed to hold it



during the first year, because he was three months short of 16 years of age. Next year he got it. It was proposed that, as the scholarship is available for three years, the recipient by attending another session might enjoy it for three instead of two years. He would thus have an opportunity of a longer curriculum, even a four years course of study.

Now, the course at home extends over a period of four years in the gown classes, and four years at Divinity Hall. In all eight years. Why is it three years in the Otago University? And is Divinity to be taught efficiently in three years in the proposed theological class? Are our institutions superior to the Scottish Academies? Why shorten the very inferior and imperfect course of study here? As there is a sad deficit in the teaching power ought not the curriculum to be lengthened in place of being shortened? Can one divinity professor do the work of half a dozen in a shorter time? Can four professors do the work of a fully equipped University of some 20 or 30 chairs. Perhaps, however, we are a smarter and faster people here than at home. Certainly, every tyro attempts to solve very flippantly problems that task the combined wisdom of the Home Republic of Letters. Men on the strength of having attended a night class for a few months pretend to know more than the *Senatus Academicus* of Edinburgh or Cambridge, Oxford or Aberdeen, Glasgow or London University.

The discussion respecting the First Church engrossed much time. The Synod went twice into private conference on the subject. It had been well not to have brought it at all before the public. Such a course would have saved the reputation of several members of the Court. "This dreary First Church business," according to one minister, has been the bane of the Court since 1861!! Indeed! The point may be condensed in a nut-shell. The First Church resolved that, after defraying the necessary expenses towards the erection of a memorial church and suitable manse, out of the revenue accruing from the Manse Reserve Fund, the property thereafter should be made an endowment for general church purposes. All members of the church considered that action on the part of the First Church congregation, to be very generous and even munificent. Two of the most bitter enemies of the First Church openly expressed their admiration of that self-sacrifice. They told all and sundry that the First Church might have kept the property in her own hands, and that none could have blamed her on that account. Indeed, the First Church has been a nursing mother to Otago from the outset. To many districts she has generously granted sums of £200 in each case for the erection of manses. The second charge sanctioned in Dunedin got £1,100 towards the erection of the church, and its minister, after his arrival, got a present of £50 from the First Church. And now, the Synod refuses the

paltry sum of £1,700 out of the congregation's own fund, to finish the New First Church. This is paltry and ungrateful. To Dr Burns the church is under a load of obligations. He made liberal arrangements for the Otago Zion. The New Church should be called Burn's Church, and finished in a creditable way; so as to reflect credit on the city, and to perpetuate the memory of the venerable ecclesiastical founder of Otago. The Synod is ruled and led by the nose after this fashion. There are three members who individually have always "extraordinary pleasure" in supporting each other. Two sit below the Moderator, and face the court. The other, with his shepherd's plaid and pastoral crook moves from point to point, and sometimes sits in the centre of the members. These three prominent elements are slavishly backed up by other three subsidiary elements, and thus all things on which they set their hearts are carried *volens volens*. The rest of the Court, despite private remonstrances and expressions of disgust and discontent to the contrary, remain passive or silent or indifferent, or, at best, refuse to vote. This was abundantly illustrated in the discussion on hymns and funeral services. Despite the private conference of the Clutha Presbytery in respect to heresies and innovations, and the refusal of the Oamaru Presbytery to sanction the introduction of hymns, and the promised appearance of "a strong phalanx of elders at the Synod," the ruling party carried everything before it and the Synod was "led as a lamb to the slaughter, or as a sheep before its shearers was dumb, opening not its mouth." But this feature is apparent to all men of observation.

If there be any ground for the complaint of "horrible shabbiness of congregations" towards the support of the Church Extension Fund, *the fact* that no less than seven ministers who came to Otago had to leave, and now occupy important posts elsewhere, may be a sufficient apology for the laity.

By the way, a respected elder some time ago told us that this session there would be a formidable body of the laity sent to the Synod to resist innovations. We are sorry to say that his hopes were not realised. One of the dominant party of the Court gave unmistakeable warning of his intention to follow up the Episcopalian habit of members of Synod opening their business by partaking of the Lord's Supper! The custom of taking the communion in this private or semi-private way is abhorrent from the genius of Presbyterianism. A venerable elder of three years' standing in the old land, and one who figured as one of the Disruption Assembly members, expressed to us his intense sorrow at witnessing some of the escapades of the majority of our Synod.

We attended this session, from first to last. We have studiously refused to name any person. We have abstained from anything bearing the semblance of personality. We are no party men. We have no personal desires to gratify in ~~thus~~ re-



ording our impressions of the Synod. We are aware, indeed, that it has been industriously reported that the reason of our apparent hostility to the Synod is to be laid to the score of disappointment. Disappointment at what? Not having got license—echoes a scurrilous libeller. Well, we are not concerned to rush into print to refute anonymous libellers. But here, it is due to ourselves to state, once for all, that we refused license in Scotland, were requested to take license in Melbourne, and in Dunedin shortly after our arrival, and that in all cases, we obstinately, but conscientiously refused. Such stories, together with others equally infamous, are clearly beneath contempt. Before next Synod meets, we may be out of Otago; but whether in or out of the colony, it is the last Synod we shall ever attend. One may experience grief, and indignation, but no edification within the walls of such Courts.

In the *Times* of Saturday, 15th February, there appeared a small letter headed "Passing Queries"—some thirty-seven in number—by Zeugma. The anonymous writer is full of scorn at the bare thought of the anonymous criticisms of "Sigma." And yet himself has not the manliness to write *in propria persona*. Anonymous writers who impugn the actions, lives, and motives of other men *unjustly*, we hold to be despicable moral assassins. But this charge cannot, in any sense, be laid on the shoulders of the author of "Passing Notes." His remarks—while as impersonal as those of the editorial column—are characterised with urbanity, candour, generosity, and even magnanimity. Some of his remarks might have found a place in the papers of the *Spectator* in its palmyest days: especially his kindly "Notes" on the Synod. He has been fortunate enough to have heard one sermon at least in Otago that would not have disgraced a Presbyterian parish pulpit in Scotland. That is more than we can say, since the lamented retirement and final removal of the Rev. Dr. Burns. And yet we have heard repeatedly "the thirty-six Presbyterian clergymen" of Otago. As to Zeugma's boast of the liberal provision made for them in this province, we have only to reiterate that only one minister receives a salary above £400 a-year. Another gets £350; while about three pastors get about £300 each. The others get only the equal dividend, something below £200! Verily there is room left for the laity "to make better provision for them than formerly." But, will they do it? Why, we have conversed, and do frequently converse, with laymen from all these thirty-six parishes, and they uniformly say that their ministers "get as much as they deserve, perhaps more than they would get elsewhere." To retort the words of our correspondent,—“Is not one plain solid fact worth more than a ton of reckless assertion or ribald declamation?”

We grieve to say that, next year, they will get less, owing to

their abominable neglect—amounting to insult—of the Celtic population of Otago.

The writer of "Passing Notes" did not malign the Synod: on the contrary, his words have been re-echoed from Waitaki to Riverton.

*Hinc hae lachrymae.* Is "Zeugma" a knave or a fool, or a strange mixture of both? Is he ignorant of the fact that Presbyteries and the Synod also "met in private recently" to deliberate upon the *Spiritualistic proclivities* of one of their order, as well as upon the *Materialistic tendencies* of one of their stipendiaries? Why, as to such matters—the more they are concealed, the more they will be revealed. "Sigma" might have gone much further than he did, had he felt so inclined, without having had any recourse to "eavesdropping." Hence the utter irrelevancy of the following inelegant and ungrammatical query: "Did some one give him a hair, and he MADE a halter of it to hang up the Synod to public scorn?"

The Presbyterians of Otago do not want an apologist of the type of a "Zeugma." They know too well the reckless character of the spiritual milk-and-water food served up to them here, and deplore the want of the strong meat so freely enjoyed by the most isolated village of their native land. They glory in Presbyterianism, but they are heartily ashamed of its mongrel representatives in Otago. They are not likely to forget the disgraceful insults heaped upon the memory of its Great Founder, through the eccentric innovations and deviations which have already been sanctioned, and of which more are in contemplation. "Zeugma" must have fearfully degenerated, else he never could have written such an absurd string of pedantic categories; or perhaps he is not a Scot after all. We are aware, however, that some Scotchmen are quite as superstitious as Irishmen, with this important reservation:—While Pat will give his last sixpence to his priest, and deem it a great privilege so to act, Sandy will carefully keep any bad penny he may get during the week and drop it religiously on Sunday in the "Lord's plate." "Zeugma" is not, we fear, a true blue Presbyterian, jealous of the honour of Scotland and her church. Caledonians love and court manly criticism of their pastors. They have too much of the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* to put up with mediocrity in church, or state, or school. Such a spirit is sadly wanting in Otago. All honour to "Sigma" for trying to stir up Scotchmen to a sense of duty and honour in such momentous matters. There is nothing offensive in the tone, style, or sentiments of his invaluable "Notes." "Let him," as royal poet David said

"That righteous is, me smite,  
It shall a kindness be."



Our churches require such a judicious castigation. What do we find at present? Good men leaving and finding excellent positions elsewhere, while drones leave Australia and America, &c., go home for a season, and are sent out to "canny Otago" to keep them from beggary and starvation. If Zeugma will have the manliness to give us his name, throw off his mask, and fling his "nom de plume" to the limbo of oblivion, we shall endeavour to remove the scales of ignorance from his leaden, jaundiced, prejudiced and hypocritical eyes.

Why are all the ministers brought to the First Church temporarily from Victoria so immensely superior to our pastors? Because the people of Victoria offer splendid attractions for home ministers. The Rev. Mr Campbell of Geelong, in the course of his address to the Dunedin Presbytery, told our ministers that if they wanted good men they must pay for them. The very fact of Dr Cairns, of Chalmers Church, Melbourne, having been allowed an annual stipend of £1,000 from the outset operated very beneficially in the direction of drawing men of talent to Victoria. But the truth of the matter must be plainly spoken. So long as the Otago clerical Merry-Andrew, who is supremely "an empty-headed fool," is allowed to send home for men of a certain sycophantic type, to suit his own mean purposes, so long will the church languish in Otago. We would advise the First Church to offer a £1,000 a-year for a man of talent, and men of standing at home will be attracted to our shores. There is, indeed, great need for them, for the people are fearfully ignorant of Scripture when they can swallow such a wretched parody of Christianity as was doled out recently Sabbath after Sabbath in the Queen's Theatre under the auspices of Christian communicants and office-bearers. Bradlaugh, the atheist, would have been heartily ashamed of parading such a silly caricature of Christianity in his London rat-hole. Nowhere but in Dunedin, could a Christian minister be seen in a Hall of Infidelity, heartily applauding a Yankee clown while busy ridiculing the personal appearance of a brother minister, and worse than all, caricaturing Christ on the cross, and scoffing at his miracles as the clever tricks of a conjuror. These things have not been done in a corner.

Froude, in his second volume, entitled "Short studies on great subjects," asserts that "the phenomena of spirit-rapping show us that the half-educated multitudes are ready for any superstition." But it remains for Dunedin to show to the world that its ministers and office-bearers are capable of supporting and even hospitably entertaining at their manses, the deadliest enemies of the Christian Faith. They laugh at the Royal Psalmist for having written thus: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the



way of sinners nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." David was a fool when he said—

"With persons vain I have not sat,  
Nor with dissemblers gone;  
The assembly of ill men I hate,  
To sit with them I shun."

Again, what a fanatic, according to the notions of Presbyterian doctors, was Israel's King, when he averred,

"Do not I hate, O Lord, all those  
That hatred bear to Thee;  
With those that up against thee rise,  
Can I but grieved be?  
With perfect hatred, them I hate,  
My foes I them do hold."

So degenerate are the Presbyterians of Otago, that they will allow, day after day, the memory of John Knox to be insulted, and parodied, in the person of a public charlatan, whose whole life proves that God is not in all his thoughts. On the 25th November last, the people of Dunedin went out "to see a reed shaken by the wind" of a rotten public opinion. They laid a stone upon the head of John Knox, and left it in a dirty hole, and never after looked near the spot. In the evening they assembled to drink tea and hear the plagiaristic verbiage of the materialistic Professor of the Otago night-school. That animal clod, however, unconsciously gave utterance to one original prophecy—to wit, that "he was the forerunner of a monkey-show." It was, indeed, a "monkey-show" got up to *caricature* the character of the man "who never feared the face of man." We could wish that the spirit of Knox did really actuate the minds of Scotchmen in Otago. Then they would arise and would spue out of their mouths the sneaking, political and professional charlatans of Otago. Knox was an embodiment of conscience. He did not stand up in a pulpit, like a devirilised coward, bent on pleasing everybody and offending none. "I am," said the brave reformer, "in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and, therefore, the truth I speak, impugn it whoso list." This was the eternal aspect of his moral character. And it is the characteristic of every great and good man. But we forbear; for the congregation that desecrates his name is at sixes and sevens, despite pretences to the contrary; and, in due time, the wheat will be separated from the chaff, the tares from the pure grain, the gold from the dross and the scoundrels and hypocrites who labour to

burlesque their country and their creed will be cast out upon the dung-hill of public opinion and consumed with the fire of our execration. As the proverb says, "It is a long lane without a turning." Their damnation slumbereth not. They are, very surely, reserved for public infamy. The sand-glass of their worthless lives is almost run out.

The worthy pastor of Knox Church seemed to enjoy himself intensely at Dr Dunn's entertainment. Evidently he saw there a genuine reflection of his own character. Like draws to like. We suppose the session of Knox church will not trouble itself with the escapades of one of its own deacons. Either the session must be silent or it will have to libel the pastor: for the deacon conducted himself with decorum, at least, while the pastor seemed to be quite frantic over the buffooneries of the healing medium and clairvoyant who had done "a good many cures in Dunedin by spirit power." Dr Dunn's reply to Dr Copland's lecture "would be a disgrace to a public bar-room," to borrow the very words of the spirit doctor himself. We pretend not to be able to judge of the qualities of spirit-poetry, but when a Spiritualist condescends to quote some six lines from the celebrated *Essay on Man*, we are able to say whether the quotation is genuine or spurious.

*Go gather earth, weigh air and test the tides ;  
Go teach you rolling planet where to run,  
Go change the Orient and bind the Sun.*

The words italicised by us are not in the original. The poetry is caricatured. Even the ear of a Dr Dunn might have saved him from perpetrating such egregious blunders.

The philosophical and satirical lines run as follows :—

*Go, wondrous creature ! mount where science guides,  
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides,  
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,  
Correct old Time, and regulate the sun ;  
Go teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—  
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool !*

Mr Peebles also misquoted a noted couplet of the *Essay on Man*,

*For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.*

The "Seer of the Age" ignorantly read the last line thus :—

*He can't be wrong, &c.*



Is there a new edition of the "Essay on Man" published in America under the auspices of the spiritual college that conferred the degree of M.D. on Mr. Dunn? Americans claim the unenviable prerogative of improving upon the orthography, grammar, logic, rhetoric, text, and pronunciation of English authors. Besides the whole structure of the letters, lectures, and sermons of Mr Peebles and of Drs. Dunn and Stuart, completely sets the rules of composition, as well as the principles of Christianity at open defiance.

On May the 18th, 1872, there appeared an elaborate leader, headed "Alphabetical Dignities," in the *Scotsman* newspaper. The "real moral nuisance" complained of in that article, reflects disgrace upon Germany, America, Aberdeen, and St Andrew's. There is no occasion for resorting to the silly expedient of tracing Dunn's diploma to the spiritual spheres; for a degree of any sort can be easily secured in any of those mundane universities. The ancient Academy of St Andrews has covered herself with shame perpetual in having allowed herself to be seduced to betray her sacred trust, as she did recently in the matter of throwing away her honors in Divinity upon the most ignorant charlatan that ever crossed earth's central line. When a vacancy occurred in the professorial ranks of the Melbourne University, it was stipulated, much to the annoyance of Scotsmen, that none but a graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, or Dublin could be eligible for election. The abominable conduct of the Senatus Academicus of St Andrew's University, in the matter of the Otago D.D., is a severe blow and a sore discouragement to any man who would manfully stand up to resent similar insults gratuitously heaped upon our Scottish Universities by any of the Peddlington Universities of Polynesia. Should this come under the eyes of the Fife-shire Professoriate, we hope they will heartily repent of their blinded action, and be more careful for the future. The evil is so glaring, and the imposition so bare-faced, that real scholars henceforth will refuse, like Carlyle, to accept such alphabetical appendages to their names, as *e.g.*, M.A., M.D., Ph. D., and D.D., &c. "Letters"—says the *Scotsman*—"are often used as a synonym for learning, but we suspect that in the case of a very large number of the individuals we refer to they are lettered only in the literal sense. Nor can it well be otherwise, considering, on the one hand, the reasons for which the supposed literary honors are often bestowed, and, on the other hand, *the queer fountains* from which they are frequently found to flow. The United States can grow degrees as plentifully as they grow corn, and with as little trouble. All that is needed to constitute a University out in Kentucky or Wisconsin is a few cart-loads of *logs* and *two old schoolmasters*. If two schoolmasters can't be got, one (with spectacles) will do. The *logs* go to form the outward body of the

Academy, the dominies constitute themselves into the various faculties, taking power as they go along to grant degrees. If a charter is required, the local legislature, always anxious to encourage American enterprise, will grant it readily."

For American, read Australasian, and we have a life-like picture here of the rise and progress and present position of the Universities of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and notably of Dunedin.

As for the New Zealand University, it has not yet provided itself with the necessary outward or inward logs to constitute "the body of the Academy." The title of Doctor, at least in Otago, is "fruitful of jokes." We agree with the Scotsman, "that the man who is so mean as to purchase the honours of a pseudo-university, or of any university, the authorities of which can know nothing whatever about him, and who has the impudence to append them to his name, and flout them in the face of his fellow-men, is only a degree below the house-burglar in the moral scale. He is a contemptible pilferer, who has stolen a miserable rag of reputation which, if he had common sense, he would see could do him no real good. But his successful theft does not the less detract from that common store of honour which is the rightful property of learning and ability. It is surely high time such academical jackdaws were effectually dealt with."

Collections are being raised in the Presbyterian churches to defray the expenses incurred in connection with the bringing out from Great Britain an additional supply of labourers for the vineyard. The people seem not to be very hearty in this matter. Let, however, a general collection be levied for the special purpose of covering the expenses arising from the transportation of our present clerical incumbents to the old land, and we predict the Laity will liberally respond to such a praiseworthy appeal. Presbyterianism played a great part in the seventeenth century in England. Prelacy was ostracised by the British Parliament, and the parochial pulpits of England rung with the stentorian voices of the true-blue Presbyterian ministers of Geneva. But, in Otago, Calvinism is languishing, withering, and fast dying out. Nothing will save it, but the forcible removal of almost all our ministers, beginning at Knox Church and emptying the East and West Taieri pulpits, together with their satellites. While the Synod closed its annual labours, the spiritualistic vagrants began their pernicious ministrations in Dunedin. They burlesqued not the Bible only, but all standard authors. The clergy were cowardly silent, and we had to drive the wolves from their folds. How large audiences could have listened with patience to Peebles and Dunn's incoherent effusions, we pretend not to divine. Nor yet are we able to understand how one clerical augur could have



enjoyed the spectacle of seeing a Yankee clown offensively ridiculing a brother augur both in his person and common creed. But this buffoonery is now at an end; but its evil results will spring up, like the fabled teeth of the dragons, in the shape of an army of juvenile infidels, whose flippancy will be equal to their impudence, vulgarity, and ignorance. Like their masters, their "language will be a disgrace to a public-bar-room."

There is a vast difference between personal satire and low ribaldry. Dr Copland's lectures were said to be full of personal epithets. And so they were: but there was nothing low about them. Oh! but say the parasites of Knox Church, "how unchristian the language!" Well, it was not of the milk and water type to which they are accustomed. A spade was called a spade and a rogue a rogue. Men are woefully mistaken about the spirit of Christianity. Christ was a very severe and merciless censor. He excelled a Cleon or a Clodius in personal invective. Do you doubt it? Read, for example Matthew xxiii. There you will find a black catalogue of maledictions against hypocrites, rogues, and sycophants. We award considerable praise to Dr. Copland for his plucky utterances, even at the eleventh hour. We hope he will turn over a new leaf, and, in company with such an estimable man as the grave and honest minister of St. Andrew's, that he will form in the church courts a "true-blue" party that will rescue Presbyterianism from the unholy gripe of a parcel of "scribes, pharisees, and hypocrites," who would really ruin any cause which they even so much as touched with their slimy fingers. "The time is short." Be up and bravely "cast aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light," and put to the rout the low-born jugglers, whose self-elected mission seems to be to drag down to the very dust of public humiliation all manly, righteous and holy institutions that exist only for the moral and religious elevation of degraded humanity. Every good man and true will join such an earnest fraternity.

The Rev. Mr Johnstone of Port Chalmers is an honest man, but weak as clay in the hands of the potter. Yet he may be redeemed. Rev. Messrs Greig, M'Naughton, Blake, and Davidson might be reasoned with and brought over to the new party. By and by, we hope the First Church will have a man of weight to join the party. As for the elders, they may be relied upon. Then will shame and confusion overwhelm the cursed trio of mongrels who have made Scotland and her Zion to "stink in the nostrils" of all high-minded and honourable and God-fearing men.

We believe in Divine Providence, and feel convinced that the end of that trio shall not be peace. When things come to the

worst, they will mend. Impostures and shams cannot stand long under God's most earnest sky. Wait a little. "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall *not be*." The place that knows them now shall soon know them no more. Their remembrance shall die out of the land, which they had desecrated with their odious presence. Religion with such sycophants is only a cloak for covert immoralities. The young will rise up and curse the memories of the men who nursed Spiritualism, and endowed Materialism, and thereby poisoned their young minds in the opening buds. They will curse their parents who were so infatuated in mind, and so spiritually darkened in soul, as to countenance and reward open ribaldry that early polluted the pure springs of life of their children. It is very dangerous to tamper long with conscience, which eventually becomes hardened and darkened, and will not be roused from its lethargy, till the simultaneous flash of a past resuscitated life of infamy and wickedness shall pass over the darkened chambers of imagery at the perilous hour of dissolution. Memory is the Book of Life. Spiritualism is undermining the faith of the young, and Materialism is sapping the springs of immortality. Impostors who make money, honestly or dishonestly, by hook or by crook, are openly applauded and held up as the true models of moral beauty; and thus conscience, that ought to be "tender as the spirit-touch of man or maiden's eye," is lulled into a Lethean torpor and humanity sinks beneath the condition of the brute creation. Principle is a fool's word, and is openly laughed at in Dunedin. "Make money, and never mind your conscience," is eternally rung in our ears. Sycophants and rogues carry away the palm and wreath of victory, and honesty is ruled out of the market as a worthless old commodity that no man regardeth. The political barometer has fallen so low that there is no sense of religion or morality left beating in the public pulse. Show us men's political idols, and we will show you the characteristics of their moral and spiritual character. The Ideal is the metre of the real. When the good are exalted, the people rejoice; but when villains and knaves and sycophants ride on the high places of the earth, then society becomes morally rotten and demoralised. Religion pines and dies for want of sustenance.

Family worship is the very core of public devotion. Where the sacred vestal flame of domestic piety is not daily fed with the pure oil of heart-felt worship, there religion becomes outwardly eclipsed, and will become finally extinguished. He who cannot govern his own house is not fit to take charge of the duties appertaining to the House of God. Dancing, like a butterfly, in the sunshine of village popularity, is bad preparation for the services of the sanctuary. And, in very deed, the blood of those whom he mechanically baptized, married and buried, will be finally laid upon his devoted head in the day when "the



secrets of men's hearts shall be revealed." We are, in the words of the brave Knox, "in the place where we are demanded of Conscience to speak the truth, and therefore, the truth we speak, impugn it whoso list."

It is not palatable or gainful, but we have long ago counted the cost, and have never yet shrunk back from the faithful discharge of our sacred duty. Let us acquit ourselves as faithful stewards, and God will own our labours in due time, if we faint not.

Trimmers, time-servers, and hypocrites, are our especial aversion. Let a clerical buffoon attend a public pic-nic, and go through certain gymnastic exercises at shinty, and bow and scrape and fawn for popularity, verily we say he has his reward in the feigned approbation of fools and the contempt of the wise.

Let the stout champions of spiritualism, under the mask of religion, Saturday and Sunday, disport in "Logan's bonnie woods and braes," and concert plans and schemes to sap the very foundations of Christianity. Verily, they, too, shall have their well-merited meed. But we mistake greatly the temper of the people of Otago, if they will not soon turn round and transfix with the spears of public opprobrium such spiritualistic snakes as would inject their lethal poison into the very core of humanity. These stout spiritualists indulge in blasphemy and ribaldry of the coarsest and most offensive character. But their ignorance of theology is only equalled by their impudence when they would parade their vain and inane jargon of "angel communion" with a view to slander Christians and caricature the leading doctrines of Christianity, of which they are as profoundly ignorant as they are concerning the mythology of ancient Greece or Rome. It is vain to address the words of Joshua to such silly creatures, for they can neither grasp nor digest a subject; nor have they that invaluable quality of rational humanity, to wit, decision of character. At the eleventh hour we would say to them this, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," Make up your mind for Christ, or the spirits. Be one thing or the other; or forsake both, and hold your peace, and then there will be some small hope of directing your leaden eyes towards the pure worship of the holy God and Creator and Preserver of this truly beautiful world whose fair face your foul footsteps desecrate, and whose pure atmosphere your organs of respiration impregnate with deadly poison. These men hate the *English* Bible, and no marvel; for, as Dr Davidson writes, "There are, indeed, terrible things written in the Book of God against the workers of iniquity; things so terrible, that when they are brought home to the conscience by the Spirit, they make the stoutest-hearted man to tremble." Such

men want a free and easy religion ; but, as the same learned and eloquent divine says—"the holy man is one who loathes all impurity in thought, or speech or conduct. There is a sensitiveness about the holy man that makes him turn away from every thing that can pollute, in the heart as well as in the life." He would not sit in the seat of the scorner, on a public platform of open ribaldry, and countenance the insane and immoral ravings of such as lead the silly astray, and efface the Divine image from the souls of both themselves and their infatuated dupes. God is, indeed, Love, but against the wicked His resentment knows no restraining bounds. As the stoic philosopher of Tarsus says, "Our God is a consuming fire." We talk much of beauty, natural and moral ; but, in the words of the Rev. Dr Davidson, who lectured for forty years on the Bible, and pondered over its contents night and day—but "holiness alone is real and proper beauty."

Could a philosopher enjoy the society of an ignorant and flip-pant clown ? Could he keep company with the low herd of crazy spirit-rappers or applaud the conduct of such as trample morality, religion, and virtue beneath their impious feet ? How then expect that the Holy God will permit the wicked to stand before His Divine presence.

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