

school of Hobbes and Priestley, Gibbon and Hume and Bolingbroke, and the readers of their treatises must be apprised of the fact. In modern England and America, such authors as Clifford and Ingersoll are the true successors of these earlier men. Perchance the wild extremes to which these errorists resort are the best antidote of the errors themselves, and serve, under Providence, to contribute to the cause of truth. A greater danger to the reader lies in the line of books which are the product of authors whom we must regard as sincere, and yet who tend to uproot or weaken those generic convictions by which we live, and which, in the main, have been endorsed by the common conscience and reason. Not only are those verities that we call intuitional to be thus strongly held, but also all those cardinal and governing beliefs which have been reached by long experience and safe induction, and which in their authority, universality and utility lie right next to the self-evident convictions of men. They are neither distinctively Protestant nor Romish, Augustinian nor Anglican, American nor European, modern nor ancient, but are simply Christian as distinct from unchristian, religious as distinct from non-religious, biblical as distinct from non-biblical. We are not to be accused of narrow-mindedness or a bigoted opposition to the "progressive orthodoxy" of the day when we warn readers against all such books and bid them betake themselves to the Christian literature of the world. In the face of the natural irreligious tendencies of our own minds at their best, and the disturbing influences necessarily attending the stir of thought within us and about us, it is all important that men hold to what is essential and aim in their consultation of authors to confirm it. Religious beliefs, most especially, must be religiously guarded. No man has any moral right to play fast and loose with well-established truth, to be so inquisitive as to pry into all error, and so desirous of holding "advanced views" as always to keep a little ahead of Scripture and common sense.

We speak of settled convictions. Such convictions were never more needed than now, and never more endangered, and among other methods for ensuring their permanence is the negative one of abjuring all books that aim at their overthrow.

We note, as we close, the responsibility of readers. As authors are to take heed what they write, readers are to take heed what they read—placing a sentinel, as Addison suggests, at the door of their libraries to demand that every book applying for admission be morally wholesome, mentally substantial, and confirmatory of valid views of truth.

"It is to be desired," writes Mr. Howells, "that the tests of literature should not only be more and more practical, but more and more ethical." Readers should hold themselves amenable to such tests, and insist on applying them. The Christian ministry, the Christian college, the Christian press, and the Christian public have a duty in this