

gularly compact and skilful organisation of the Romish Church.

Still, the mighty fabric was destined to receive a shock which would for ever weaken its power and mar its compact symmetry. The voice of the Reformation sounded even to Scotland, and the nation obeyed its call, and rose in its might, and burst asunder its fetters, and asserted its liberty.

In the Reformation contest, there were many truths at issue between the Romish Hierarchy and the Reformers. They differed in many things,—the number of points of difference always increasing, as the minds of the latter threw aside their former prejudices and were enabled to understand the will of God more fully. Yet, undoubtedly, the principal object around which they fought, and for which they contended, was the Word of God. We are indebted, under God, to the Reformers, for proclaiming to the weary and heavy-laden spirit, the holy and consolatory doctrine of Justification by Faith. But we are doubly indebted to them for handing down to us an open Bible, where we can learn this, and every other doctrine necessary for salvation. That every man should have his Bible—that all Christians are priests to God—that the humble spirit of the believer, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, can understand that word for the edification of his soul—were truths for which they were ready to labor and die. But, was the Romish Church in no measure guided by this? or, did she, neither in lip nor in teaching, exemplify any of its spirit? We dare not say so—but we must say that, together with the word was mingled such an amount of superstitious observances and traditional doctrines and folly, that the pure word of life could scarcely be recognised in the distorted and polluted mass. The pure stream of the waters of life, flowing down through the channel of the Church for sixteen centuries, had contracted many impurities, and became utterly unwholesome for the thirsting soul. Originally, it gushed, bright and sparkling with life—cool, pure, and refreshing from the rock. Yet, as it flowed onwards, other streams, rising out of the impure soil of the human heart, had flowed into it, as it flowed downwards: the number of such streams increased, until, at length, its waters became pestilent. The aim of the Reformers was to lead mankind backwards to the stream of living waters, gushing freshly from the rock, or, in other words, to give them the unadulterated words of our Lord and His apostles. This, through the grace of God, they effected, and, no sooner did mankind drink of the fresh and cooling stream, than they experienced a new impulse and a new energy, which has since carried them mightily onwards in the march of progress. God grant that the stream may long retain its purity and its healthy vigor, for the well-being of Protestantism and the progress of the world!

It has, of late years, become somewhat fashionable for Protestants of a particular order, and of somewhat latitudinarian views, to speak kindly of the Romish Church; and it is well, provided the truth be not sacrificed at the shrine of what is supposed to be charity. Yet the tendency seems to be a reaction from a very different state of things,—from that rabid and intolerant spirit which can acknowledge no particle of virtue or goodness in an opponent. Still, as a reaction, it goes in a contrary direction, and to such an extent as Truth does not seem to warrant. Lord M'Aulay is certainly an instance of this kind. His sparkling periods and striking antitheses give us a rather favourable view of the Church of the "dark ages." Indeed, he would lead us to conclude that the phase of Christianity the Church then presented, and the special organization of that Church, was more suited than any other, for curbing and governing the fierce and rude spirits with which that Church came into contact. He points out how the lamp of learning kept burning in the monasteries, when the outer world was in darkness, and how the institutions of the Church formed an asylum for the weak and oppressed, when other refuge they had none. This, certainly, is one side of the picture. If we turn to the other, however, we will find it dark enough. For, was not the Church herself very far responsible for the existence of that fierceness of spirit and that rude ignorance, that characterised this gloomy portion of history? Is it high praise to say that the clergy were not wholly illiterate, when they ought to have laboured, not only to be men of learning themselves, but to disseminate that learning through the length and breadth of the land? Did the Church exert herself to fulfil the mission assigned to her by her Divine Master and Head? Is she not, in a great measure, responsible for that comparatively stagnant portion of History, which, notwithstanding all that can be said in its favor, was a period of gloom and great darkness! We believe she is, and that, by departing from the simple and earnest faith and the pure teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, she lost the secret of her strength and vitality, and became powerless in influencing the elements around her. As to the Church, with her acknowledged corruptions, being most suitable for that time, or for any time, we cannot, for a moment, tolerate the thought. The simple and pure word of God—the example of Christ and His Apostles—that form of Christianity appointed by our Lord, not for one age, but for all ages—must ever continue to be the most powerful engine for pulling down "the strongholds of Satan," and scattering light and blessedness broadcast, down the whole field of human history. On this subject, we have no right to philosophise. Supposing we know Heaven's plan, we dare not adopt a plan of our own invention. That must be "the best" plan, which the Master