

examination is required to test whether a man is a Mason or not.

The tendency, then, of this system, is to produce a habit of mind which may be expressed as a preference for the show and traditions of a religion, rather than a regard for its intrinsic ethical value as an agent for the regeneration of humanity or its truthful presentation of what is revealed in Scripture. Very naturally, religious discussion in England has developed in all classes a more earnest religious spirit; more this than earnest enquiry as to the truth. For Earl Ripon to pass from the atmosphere of Masonry to that of Romanism would be a mild change. He would have no convictions to be uprooted, no living principles to be destroyed. Indifferentism is so near a neighbor to superstition that the passage across could be made with very slight baggage of brains, or stored thought, or moral experiences. There are singular points of contrast and parallel between the Catholic Church ritual and Masonic; the Catholic ritual has this advantage over the Masonic, that it is open to women and children. It has, therefore, more general appreciation from spectators and auditors. The Earl of Ripon may have the sympathy of many in thinking that it is better to confine such solemn fooling as he has shared in as Grand Master to occasions when it may impress the young and ignorant, rather than associate it with the pretended pursuit of science and art, and the cultivation of the social virtues, all which are rendered objects of ridicule by the incongruous mixture of such themes with singular ceremonies, terrific oaths, and elaborate questionings and answers.

One of the most interesting and most gratifying incidents we have for some time read of, occurred recently at Sheffield, England, a town famous for its cutlery and cutlers, the former for their quality of steel in temper and sharpness, the latter for the same qualities in human guise, strength of will and quickness of perception. A more independent class of men does not exist than the artisans of Sheffield. This spirit of self-assertion and reliance develops splendid citizens, but under some circumstances very dangerous ones. The manufacturers who employ the largest number of hands there, are ex-workmen. It is the city of the self-made, and also that of the self-ruined, to a fearful extent. Two men are grinding in one mill. One, by-

and-by, is taken to the highest seat of citizenship by skill, saving habits, probity, and tact; the other is left to degradation and early death, by drink. It has for a century past been notoriously democratic, boastfully ahead of other towns in political life, and the pioneer in more than one movement towards freedom in civil and religious life. A place so honorable in repute, so full of men in whom the fire of the better life of England burns with clearest flame, has saved itself from a terrible reverse and reproach by an act of civic enthusiasm on behalf of education which does it infinite honor. The town was growing enormously, and it was discovered, on official enquiry, that school accommodation existed for only half the population. The spirit of the town rose to the emergency. The School Board organization was established, and, at once, sixteen new schools were decided to be built. The force spent elsewhere in bickering over the religious difficulty was here directed to the rapid completion of these structures and their equipment, in all of which the Bible is to be read. More than twenty years ago it was contended in debate on education that compulsion was necessary, and some who took part in such discussions have wielded their official influence to secure that compulsion in dealing with the children of the ignorant. We, however, refer to this crucial test of the possible benefit of the Education Act in England to ask whether in Canada we are being educated as a people in proportion to the opportunities afforded by and costs incurred by our school system? We have an uncomfortable suspicion that some schools here are like a wide meshed sieve. There is a very large dropping through of little ones who have gone in and out at much too early an age to have received any instruction, for "education" is an absurd word to use in such connection. A girl attending a separate school in Ontario, fairly intelligent in appearance, and tidily dressed, was recently asked, "What do you learn at school?" Now we do not unduly strain this incident, but tell it as it occurred for others to follow up who have time for such very important enquiry. The girl looked puzzled at the question. Its form was changed into "What books do you read at school?" She answered, "We don't read no books."