

verted ingenuity, we wring from them meanings which their words do not convey. We will not take the simple explanation of God's anger which lies on the surface of the pestilence, we must fain detect a deeper meaning. Perhaps we are angry ourselves at some recent national act, some policy which we, perchance, opposed unsuccessfully, and at once with unparalleled boldness and hypocrisy we seize on the famine or the plague, the inundation or the conflagration, and try to degrade these weapons of God's wrath into our service and to make the Almighty himself a partisan in our petty and ignoble strifes. How often this has been done all readers of history know well. It is to my mind no slight recommendation of the theory under consideration that when it is more widely received such degrading views of God's Providence will gradually die out.

If I were asked what was Buckle's most conspicuous fault as a historian, I should unhesitatingly say, his absence of a complete sympathy with bygone ages, and his being unable to see any good in old forms of thought, which are clearly unfitted to assist the progress of enlightenment. Now this defective sympathy is very destructive to good historical writing. I do not allude merely to the external beauties of narrative, though even there sympathy comes largely into play and (truthfulness being supposed on both sides) everyone would prefer a history of Ireland written by one of Irish race and feelings to a similar history by one of the dominant faction, or a Protestant life of Latimer and Ridley to a Roman Catholic one. But I refer more especially to that insight into the springs and germs of policies, into the aims and real objects of institutions, which is seldom given but to the eye of a loving as well as an intelligent criticism. It is true that Buckle allows to the Church in the

Middle Ages a considerable share of praise for its work in keeping alive some spark of learning, and for preserving some bond of common fellowship between wrangling kings and half barbarous tribes. But when he comes to speak of the literature of that period his condemnation of it is most sweeping. Indeed, to judge from the samples he gives of it, it was beneath contempt and could only serve to harass and clog the human mind in its slow struggle to the light. But had Buckle possessed that gift of sympathy which I have spoken of, he would have recognized the fact that, at one period, at least, those innumerable legends of Saint and Bishop *did* convey a lesson, *did* subserve a moral purpose. I will give a few examples.

When slavery was universal throughout Christendom, how touching to all true hearts must have sounded the tale of the self-inflicted penance of St. Bavon of Ghent, who, having sold a man in chains, sought him out and prayed with bitter tears to be allowed to take his place in prison, there to expiate beneath the lash of the taskmaster the act which he so bitterly regretted.

Or again, there was the true life of St. Germain by Paris, the forerunner of our own Wilberforce, who spent rent and revenue in redeeming fellow-believers from slavery, and who sat at last, mournful and dejected, when he had spent his all, not, mind you, grieving that he himself was left penniless, but because the cries of bondsmen must rise to heaven unanswered.

When coarse and obscene language was on every man's lips, what a true reprimand was contained in an incident in the life of St. Valery, who, travelling on foot in the winter time, stopped to rest, half-frozen, in a priest's house. He tried in vain to check by gentle reproof the idle words of the company, the, turning away