

under severe restraint, while not a few have virtually abolished the monastic orders altogether. Instead of ministering to the higher unselfish life of sacrifice, they had become the refuge of the idle and vicious, in which they might indulge their indolence and practise their vices with the greater freedom.

So has it proved with the wholesome discipline of the Church for the maintenance of its purity. Instead of guaranteeing that purity, and stimulating conscience to its highest vigor, the confessional has become a narcotic to the soul and often an instrument of the greatest tyranny. Many of those in a good position to know aver that even more serious crimes must be laid at its door. Tennyson, in a well-known passage, hints at the possibility of one good custom corrupting the world. It is at least true that movements initiated with the best intention may easily be so perverted as to do vastly more harm than good. The pitfalls for human progress are many. There are no institutions which can be pronounced the best for all times, for all circumstances, and for all conditions of society.

And yet in spite both of the dangers which beset all upward movements and the tardiness with which all true development proceeds, we are bound to believe that real progress has been made. The purer forms of Christianity have rejected some of the worst institutions of the mediæval church in the effort to rescue their original spirit, and have cleared the way for further progress by throwing off the claim to infallibility, which, whether expressed or implied, forms the most serious bar to real advance.

When the way has thus been cleared, and assuming always that goodwill which is the essence of all moral life, even when it is most mistaken in its ideas, there are three directions in which ethical development is possible.

First of all, as in the past, we may look to experience to correct the errors with which men, nations, and even churches have fallen as to the detailed application of acknowledged moral principles. This is practically an endless process; for society is continually growing more complex, new relations