

for ever. And what was the issue? How did the world prosper without religion? What need to dwell on that age of "the trifling head and the corrupted heart?" When, in the chambers of St. Louis, a worse than Sardanapalus suffered adulteresses to toy with the crown of France; when a worse than Messalina befouled with lust and assassination the throne of Russia; when in Saxony an Augustus the Strong well-nigh equalled the infamies of a Commodus, and in Prussia a Frederick II. made his court the propaganda of anti-Christian thought, and in England—alas! even in England—an English archbishop complimented an English queen on her placid indifference to her husband's sins; in a word, when effeminacy and blasphemy were the all-but-universal concomitants of an all-but-universal disbelief; in that picture we see what the 18th century was, what the 15th had been, and—*quod Deus omen avertat*—what the 19th may become. If literature be a fair test of a nation's condition, is there any literature—not excepting a few vile and recent specimens in England, America, and France—much more revolting than the foul poetry of the cinquecentisti, or the corrupt and enervating fiction that dates from Diderot and Voltaire? The very wit and genius of these men is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, or a diamond on the mouldering forehead of a skull. To pass from them to those who held the faith which, forsooth, they affected to despise,—to pass from a Politian and an Aretino to a Fenelon or a Melancthon, from Voltaire to Bossuet, or from Tom Paine to Leighton—is like stepping from a dark charnel-house into a glorious cathedral, and from thence into the pure air of the sunny or starlit sky. And was the world better for thus throwing overboard its faith in Christ? Did the world succeed when it had tried to get rid of Christianity? Ay, my brethren, if it be success to boast of liberty and end in a reign of terror; of humanity, and end in Robespierre; of virtue, and to end in the worship of a har-

lot on the polluted altars of Notre Dame.*

VII. But when this plague of irreligion was foulest throughout society, once more God took pity on an apostate civilization, and purged the pestilence from the reeking atmosphere with fire and storm. He awoke, and His enemies were scattered. The great earthquake-shock of the French Revolution shook the minds of men from their frivolous and atheistic dreams. The finger of God wrote His Mene and Tekel in flame upon the guilty palace-walls, and, when His judgments were abroad in the world, the children of men learnt wisdom.

Let us then take warning, for indeed in what we have seen there is warning both for the world and for the Church. For the world, because it shows what diseases are virulent when men prefer the vapours of the death-vault to the incense of the cathedral; for the Church, because, even from this rough survey, it is abundantly clear what makes her unassailable and what makes her weak. Wealth, luxury, ambition, worldliness, vice; these have wounded her well-nigh to death, when she has been invincible against the scimitar of Mohammedan or the violence of Hun. So far back as the complaints of Clemens and the denunciations of Chrysostom against the gorgeous iniquities of Alexandria and Constantinople, we hear the warning note of peril, and learn that "golden priests who used wooden chalices are stronger than priests of wood with chalices of gold." "You see that the day is past when the Church could say, 'Silver and gold have I none,'" said Innocent IV. complacently to St. Thomas of Aquinum, as he pointed to the masses of treasure which were being carried into the Vatican. "Yes, holy father," was the saint's reply; "and the day is

* It may be interesting to some readers to know that the unfortunate "goddess of reason," who had been adored with bacchanalian dances, as she sat in white robes, blue mantle, and red cap, with a pike in her hand, on the altar of Notre Dame, died so late as Sept. 30, 1803, ninety years old, idiotic, blind, and a beggar in Alsace.—See Christlieb, *Moderne Zueifel am Christlichen Glauben*, s. 152.