

interest in the Common School, I think it has an interest not less vital in the Sunday School. Every visitor to Europe must be struck, I think, with the connection between the decay of religious belief and the decline of public spirit. The decay of religious belief cannot be questioned. Scepticism pervades every manifestation of human thought and feeling, from philosophy and science to poetry and art; it shows itself without disguise in the works of the most Conservative writers. Not only does it preside in the lecture room, but it frequently mounts the pulpit. Among the wealthier classes it is fast becoming dominant, though it often cloaks itself in public at least under the disguise of a political religion, assumed because it is thought that a clergy in state pay is a good supplement to the police, that belief in a God is a safeguard to property, and that a doctrine of a future life puts off inconvenient social claims to the next world. The decay of public spirit seems to me equally manifest. What is taken for Conservative reaction is, in many cases, not so much a change of principle as the cynical indifference of sybaritism, convinced that this life is all, and wishing only to be let alone to enjoy it, and not to be troubled with great questions, or with the future of humanity. The political energy of the fathers of British freedom appears to me to have found a last asylum in the same hearts with their religion. The framers of the great Charter, Stephen Langton, and William, found a last refuge among the stoics, a part of whose creed bore a marked resemblance to a part of Christianity.

"It is in the midst of a world to a large extent positively materialist, that we are met here this evening to devise measures for strengthening and extending institutions, the object of which is to train up children in the service of God. And if not in the service of

God, in what service are children to be trained up, unless it be that of their own interests and appetites. In the service of Humanity? So Materialism of the most generous kind, and that which has least severed itself from the previous state of thought and feeling declares. But what is Humanity Christianity can tell. Christianity believes that all men are made of one blood, and that all are made in the image of their Creator. Christianity believes that all men are brethren and members one of another. Christianity in short teaches the unity of Mankind in God? But to Materialism surely Humanity is a word without meaning; at least without any meaning that can command our reverence or kindle our self-devotion. In the philosophy of Materialism, man is no essential respect distinguished from the brutes. Morality, public or private, is mere gregariousness; it is nothing but the individual instinct of self-preservation extended to the herd. Tribal feeling subtilized into a sort of etiquette may be said to be Darwin's account of morals. Is there anything in such a humanity which can command reasonable self-devotion, reasonable self-sacrifice, or keep individual appetites and passions in subjection to the common good? Even the unity of the human race is denied; and it is difficult to see what sacred bond of duty or affection can be said to exist between the offspring of an African and the offspring of an Asiatic ape. In what does the tie of fraternity between me and any other human animal in whom I do not happen to have a personal interest consist? What binds me to be just or kind to him, or to put myself to trouble, and forego the enjoyment of my short span of life for the sake of improving his condition? Nay, if he comes in my way, what forbids me to get rid of him? I would get rid of any other noxious animal? The Materialists will say