

As long as there are persons in the world who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and other persons living close at hand who seek that kingdom in the second place, and in subordination to the claims of gain or fashion, there must necessarily be a strongly-marked opposition of sentiment between the two classes. They cannot both be right. Wherever convictions are keenly felt, and the consequent conduct is distinctly outlined, both parties will observe the difference, and each will frame his own judgement regarding it. Where the principles and conduct of two persons are opposite in regard to the chief aim of life, each must necessarily think his neighbour in the wrong. If two are sleeping in one bed, and if one arise at midnight and flee to the fields from a conviction that the house is tottering to its fall, while the other, though wide-awake, lies still in bed, the one who remains at ease within the house thinks his companion a fool for his pains. And he must think so. If he did not think so, he could not lie still another moment. For him only two alternatives are possible; either he must think that the man who fled is a fool, or he must arise and flee too with all his might. As long as he lies there he cannot afford to admit a belief of his neighbour's wisdom, for to admit that neighbour's wisdom is to convict himself of suicidal madness. Accordingly he holds fast by his creed that the other man is a fool; and, the moment that creed fails him, he arises and flees too for his life.

Poor Festus could not think,—could not speak other wise to Paul,—unless, like the jailor of Philippi, he had on the instant become a Christian, and made profession of his faith. The subject was obviously the greatest; the case had been clearly stated; this story of a Divine Saviour, the just giving Himself for the unjust, is either true or false. If it is true, Paul is right; but, if Paul is right, Festus is wrong. Not being prepared to confess this, and yield to its consequences, he took the only other alternative that remained. Festus, knowing well that on this point,—the turning-point of an immortal for all eternity,—where two hold opposite opinions, there must be madness somewhere, determined to throw the imputation from himself. Festus said, "Thou art mad, Paul." Paul replied, "I am not mad, Festus," and the two men parted, perhaps never to meet again on earth.

What then? Is it another case in which two men entertain different opinions, and in which each may safely hold his own? Alas! it cannot be. One of the two is mad, and in his madness throws himself away. Paul is sober; Festus is the fool.

To make perishing treasures the true centre to which the soul gravitates, and round which the life revolves, while the things that pertain to eternity are left to follow as they may in a secondary place, is abnormal and mischievous. The wrench is as fatal as would be the revolution in the material universe if the sun by external violence were compelled to move round the earth, or the earth to move round the moon. In the practical question which every one must once in his life decide for himself,—the question whether he shall be his

own master or accept with all his heart and soul the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ,—there are only two sides. One side is right and safe; the other side is wrong and ruinous. "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me."

THE UPPER CLASSES.

"Most noble Festus."—ACTS XXVI. 25.

Sixty years since a certain attached domestic, presuming on the privilege that was frequently in those days tacitly accorded to his class, roundly reproved his master, a great Scottish proprietor, for the sin of profane swearing. Although no record remains of the argument, it is evident that John had taken a leaf out of the great Apostle's book, and, besides speaking of righteousness and temperance, had given a broad hint about the "judgement to come;" for the laird, feeling that he had not a leg to stand on, cut the matter short by the remark, "It has pleased Providence to place our family in a superior position in this world, and I trust he will do the same in the next." This is a real case; but it is an extreme end, perhaps we may add, at least in our own day, a rare one. On the other side there are, not here and there one but everywhere many, who wear coronets and pray. In this respect the lines of our generation have fallen in a pleasant place. For present privilege we should "thank God," and for future prospects "take courage." But between the two extremes of evil and good, of gross stolid earthliness, and humble, intelligent, strong faith in the upper ten thousand of British society, how many diversities in constitutional character and external circumstances! How wide is the field, how difficult the culture, and how vast the product, if it were made fruitful over all its breadth!

It was an outstanding feature of Paul's character to appreciate correctly another man's difficulties, and to sympathize tenderly with those whose position magnified the offence of the cross. There is strength, no doubt, in this preacher, but there is sensibility too. He cannot be weak; but neither is it in him to be rude. "Most noble Festus," said he. Oh, I love the great missionary for that word. I think I hear his voice thrilling as he utters it. Right well he knew that, other things being equal, it was harder for the Roman governor than for a meaner man to obey the Gospel and cast in his lot with the Christians. He will not flatter the august stranger; he will not suggest that the elevated and refined may have a private door opened to admit them into Heaven, and so escape the humiliation of going in by the same gate with the vulgar throng. This missionary is faithful, but he is never harsh. He makes allowance for every one's temptations, and becomes all things to all men, that he may gain some. In the polite respectful address of the Christian apostle to the Roman magistrate lies a principle that is permanent, precious, practical. Let us endeavour to understand and apply it.

We speak of the aristocracy here in no narrow or technical sense. The subject concerns the whole human race, and bears directly on