

ed them, no one prayed with them, they were left to do as they listed. A careless priesthood soon made a careless flock.—The number of absentees increased, and it went on increasing and increasing till behold! it stands out before us at the present day, a separate and distinct class as “the masses.”

According to this theory, therefore the fault lies altogether at the door of the church; and that the lost ground may be recovered, the church must just retrace her steps, begin anew where she left off; and by doubled labours and re-doubled efforts regain her former position.

We believe that such things have had their influence in producing the present melancholy state of society; but we do not believe that these things were the only cause. The change of manners and customs; the great influx of wealth into the world; the keen pursuit of commerce; the establishment of large and crowded factories and other public works; the facility of locomotion and the consequent emigration and mingling of men of different nations and different creeds; the power of an infidel and semi-infidel press; and the wars engaged in, all around the world;—these and a thousand things of the same description, have all co-operated in raising some classes higher in society and sinking others lower. In the purest waters, there is some residuum and when let alone, particle after particle sinks to the bottom, and these gradually accumulating form something like a mass there. So is it with the societies of men. In all ages and in all countries, there has been less or more a sunken, degraded class. The tendency of human nature is downward.

But be this as it may, to whatever cause we trace the origin of these masses, there they are before us, and there they are in strong league with infidelity; and the important question with us now is.—“How are they to be dealt with? how are they to be reclaimed and evangelised? how are we to contend with them?” And here we repeat and repeat it emphatically, we believe the grand weapon to be “the word of God.” It is vain, perfectly vain, to assert that this word is inefficient. It would be contrary to the assurances of God himself to do so. “The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword;” “My word shall not return unto me void;” “The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.” It would be contrary to all past experience and all the records of history to say so. Looking at the past what marvellous achievements, what mighty triumphs glorify the progress of this word! Beholding these in all their length and breadth, we are compelled to exclaim:—“Verily, verily, it is ‘the sword

of the spirit.’ It is the sword that Paul wielded with so much power and energy, that he subdued and converted the licentious Corinthians. It is the sword which eradicated heathenism from imperial Rome, drove her priests from her altars, upset the altars themselves, and emptied her temples of worshippers. It is the sword which the reformers drew afresh, and with which they attacked ‘the man of sin’ in his own citadel, stormed his strongholds of ignorance and superstition, revolutionised more than one half of Europe, and sent light and liberty rejoicing throughout the earth. It is the sword with which Hervey and Whitfield and Wesley smote the hearts of the peasants and labourers and colliers and the lower classes of the last century, reviving evangelical religion, and once more making practical piety and experimental godliness smile over England’s lovely mountains and fertile plains. It is the sword with which our missionaries gird themselves when they go forth to the lands of heathenism, and with which they labour and toil and contend, till rebel souls become willing captives of Jesus—till nations are converted in a day—till the very forests clap their hands together, and the isles of the ocean lift up their voices and sing. And what is more to our purpose, it is the sword with which pious servants of God and devoted laymen have entered the dark territories of these very sunken masses, and in a few months have gathered around them multitudes of souls reclaimed, reformed and renewed in Christ Jesus; and have made the humble missionary church, and its companion, the attractive missionary school, rise up on the very spot where the den of infamy once stood, and the sons and daughters of vice congregated at midnight to hold their horrid revels.” If, then, all these things be so, let us only take a firm hold of this sword and wield it as the Lord tells us to wield it; let us only use it as Paul used it; let us only ply it, as Luther and Calvin and Knox plied it; and especially let us labour and toil and contend with it, as these missionaries have done; and who can doubt but we shall assuredly find it. “a weapon of our warfare, not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.”

2. We should earnestly contend for a Protestant faith in opposition to Popery. The errors of Popery are numerous. They have often been exposed and refuted. That the Scriptures are not a perfect rule of faith and practice; that the Pope and his counsels are infallible; that the mass is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; that the sacraments are of themselves sanctifying and saving; that salvation can be obtained in no church but the church of Rome;—these and a hundred other dog-