

the honor of woman were held sacred." To what general elevation of Puritan character do facts like these bear witness.

That in some directions the scruples of our forefathers were pressed too far, the profoundest reverence for their virtues does not require us to deny. I can hardly sympathize with them, to give a single example, in their dislike of that simple and beautiful token of plighted faith, the marriage ring. Yet we must bear in mind the age in which they lived, and the special reason they had for a godly jealousy as touching ill-meaning ceremonies. It was not the mere form that troubled them—so they often testify. It was the import of that form—its associations and suggestions—its conventional and symbolical power over men. Who does not know that little things may in this way become great? Who needs to be told that the rite or the usage which in some circumstances is perfectly harmless, may in others be properly discarded as of evil influence? Not he, surely, who has heard the noble Paul exclaim, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."

There is one point, at least, in which we think the descendants of the Pilgrims are in advance of their fathers;—in their estimate, we mean, of the esthetic element. That was a just analysis of the old philosopher, which resolved all excellence into the true, the beautiful, and the good. And quite as just was that judgment of his which gave to