

ven to worship other gods beside the Lord, we should conclude that the human heart could pay no honor to departed heroes and statesmen, to poets and philosophers, even viewed as mere men, without trenching upon the worship of the Almighty, and become neither more or less than Polytheists.—

We should wander through the dull, cold aisles of St. Paul's Cathedral, as through the Protestant Pantheon, in amazement at the singular religion of the Londoners of the 19th century, and think what an astonishing want of taste and sentiment (to say the least) they displayed in worshipping Dr. Johnson and Lord Howe, and a whole host of soldiers and sailors in marble cocked-hats and breeches, in preference to the classical gods of Greece and Rome. That these stone images were John Bull's divinities, we should not doubt for a moment, if we were to take him at his own word, and believe that when a man venerates, or to use the plain, old English word, *worships* a relic or a figure, he is necessarily making it into a god, and falling into idolatry.

Yet what are the facts of the case, both as to the real conduct of mankind and the tendencies of the human heart? Is it not so plain a fact that it were absurd to attempt to prove it, that none but the most hardened souls are insensible to the influence of the remains of the departed great and good, and that the habitations and possessions of those whom we have loved when living, become tenfold dearer when they are taken away from us by the hand of death? Is it not true that the tendency to relic-worship is so intensely powerful in human nature that men who have no legitimate, innocent object on which to fix these peculiar feelings, will attach themselves to things most loathsome and abhorrent to every person of pure and refined mind? And is all this idolatry? Is there any difference between the Catholic's regard for the threshold of the Apostles, for the house of Loreto, for the wood of the true Cross, and all those remains of saints which a canting philosophy designates as "trumpery;"—is there any difference between these feelings and that which sober, calm, and business-like and sceptical people are perpetually displaying for the relics of those whom the world has delighted to honor? Is there any difference except this, that in the one case the devout soul venerates all that has been connected with those who have been high in the favour of God, while in the other the mind worships the remains of those who stood high in the favour of man?

Such, indeed, are the facts and the philosophy of the case, when viewed by an eye not distorted by the most blinding prejudice. From the entire French nation, which a short time ago went almost frantic with delight at possessing a few bones because they had once been animated by the soul of Napoleon; to the low, base-minded being who gives his two and three guineas for an inch of the rope

on which a Thurtell or a Burke had been hung; from the gallant sailor, who wipes the tear from his eye as he stands in the hall of Greenwich Hospital and looks upon the coat in which Nelson died, to the lover of literary curiosities who bids his score or half-hundred of pounds for the inkstand or chair of a renowned poet or philosopher, all mankind are relic-worshippers, all have their consecrated remains, their hallowed remnants of departed eminence.

We have been led to put these thoughts upon paper by observing the sudden and general excitement aroused in the literary, if not the universal world by the announcement of the sale of Shakspeare's house at Stratford-upon-Avon. The great poet's habitation having come into the market, men of all ranks and professions have taken the alarm lest the time-honoured walls and beams should be consigned to the mercies of a surveyor bent upon improving his town, or to be transported across the Atlantic to furnish a theme of exultation over English folly in the mouths of vaunting Americans. Societies of all kinds have taken up the matter; archaeologists and actors, poets and peers, lawyers and historians, the prince and the churchwarden have met together in various ways, making speeches, moving resolutions, appointing committees, raising subscriptions, and estimating expenses, and all with a view of securing the poet's home as a national monument to be preserved and honoured as one of the proudest of the nation's possessions. Henceforth it is proposed that it shall be the private property of no man, but be consecrated as a shrine, towards which the pilgrim's foot shall never cease to move, and guarded by a "custos reliquiarum" for the benefit of an affectionate posterity.

Do we then find fault with all this zeal and devotion for that which was once the dwelling-place of one of the most wonderful men whom the world has ever seen? Do we count it all mere excitement, or hypocrisy, or humbug, or jobbing? Far from it. We rejoice to see any symptoms of a hearty, loving, unselfish reverence that is not connected with rank and riches. Such a movement is a token of a more healthy state of mind than has been the lot of this country for many an age. Hitherto, we have only worshipped coronets, and titles, and well filled purses; or if we have found a soul to honor any beside the high-born and the wealthy, we have showered our rewards upon conquerors in war, or successful leaders of mere political parties. Here and there a solitary monument has been raised to the man of intellectual greatness, or eminent benevolence, or a poor pittance has been allotted to a few who have toiled for the enlightenment of myriads. But there is probably no previous example of the spirit now shown to secure from destruction the house of him who is without an equal in the annals of poetry.