

faith is departing, and the Christian cause is being weakened." There is a place upon the New England Shores which some of you perhaps have seen. It is known as Old Orchard Beach. The peculiarity of it is this that there is a large and wide expanse of level and smooth sand, and that the sea retires to an astonishing distance from the green fields that overlook it. I can fancy the child taken there for the first time on a summer's morning and seeing the water recede until out of sight, leaving the great expanse of smooth and dry sand, being tempted to believe for a moment that the sea was going away altogether. But it is not so; it is only the receding of the tide, and it will come back again at no distant time; and it is so that the things that sometimes strike the eye make an equally undue impression upon the mind. The truth of God is like the ocean, and as one has said of it—

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll,  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the world with his ruin, his control  
Stops with thy shores."

There was a time when the Christian people of New England used to begin their Sabbath at sunset on the Saturday evening. They do so no longer; but does any man suppose that there is less spiritual religion throughout New England than in the days when that was their usage and their custom? The very contrary can be proved. There was a time in the Province of Ireland where I passed my earliest years when the communion season came twice in the year, and was protracted not only through the services of week-days but on the Lord's day through four or five or six hours. Now it is within two hours; and I can understand how an aged Christian, not very conversant with the things of the world, might be ready to say:—"Oh, such a change as has taken place; it is not now as it used to be in the good old days." But I tell you, notwithstanding the change, there never was so much Godliness in that region as there is at this present moment.

What do all these things go to show us? Why, my brethren, that we must allow for circumstances, conditions, incidents and surroundings, and we must distinguish between these, and their superficial, partial influence, and the inner truth and reality of things with which we have to do. The vesture and some of the attitudes of the mystical body of Christ may undergo changes, but that body does not change; it is like Himself: "the same yesterday, to day, and forever." So I say to you, without hesitation, "Be ye steadfast" in your adherence to the truth; in your standing fast by these oracles that God has revealed. "Yes," but some may say, "there are men who speak to us and are recognised as liberals, and they do not think about this matter as we do, and yet that is a good name that they have succeeded in appropriating." I say that they have no right to appropriate it. We Christians are the truest liberals, in the best sense of the word. Nay, we are the liberals, if the matter came to be thoroughly investigated. It is true they may turn round and say to me, "but you are biassed, you are prejudiced by your training and your education and your early habits and even your professional feelings, you are biassed." I have just as much right to turn to them and say, "you are biassed by your pride, by your vanity, by your self love, by your lusts, by that carnal mind that is enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Well, but," they say, "there are persons now who call themselves and are called by others 'secularists,' and they do not look upon these things as you do." Now, it is sometimes very easy to be carried away by an impressive word—a showy word, and it is good to look into the meaning of the thing. "Secularist," that is one who is devoted to the age, bent upon lifting up the age, making the age better, and so on. I claim that we Christians are the true secularists, and the Bible is the best inspiration of the true secularism—the godliness that is profitable for all things, and has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come; and the difference between us and the so-called secularist is this, that he would lift up