

dence of the reality and earnestness of the invitation.

"Well, I've tried, and I can't change my heart. I know I have got to feel, and to do differently; but somehow I can't get hold of it."

"Do you remember the story of the man who had a withered hand? Christ said to him, 'Stretch forth thy hand.' Now, this man's arm, as I understand the narrative, was completely withered. He might I suppose, have said with entire truth, 'Lord, I cannot stretch forth my hand; it is an utter impossibility; I haven't the power to do it.' He had no power to do it; but one thing he could do; he could put forth the will to do it. He did that; that was obedience; and Christ gave the power; and he was healed. I know that the faith in Christ, which I wish you to exercise, and without which it is impossible to please God, is the *gift of God*; but he gives it to those who exercise the will to obey. The Lord invites you to prove him. Do it."

Confessing Christ.

"My friend do you love Christ?"

"Well, that is a pretty blunt question! Really, I hardly think you can consider that a proper question for me to answer. Did you ever happen to read what Keble has said of making sacred things common?"

"Even human love will shrink from sight,

Here in the coarse rude earth:

How then should rash intruding glance

Break in upon her sacred trance

Who boasts a heavenly birth?"

"Yes I have read these lines of Keble, and heard them quoted, too, more than once on both sides of the Atlantic, and by persons whose training had as little in common as could well be conceived; and yet they agreed in deprecating frank conversation about Christ, and his claims and his love, I wonder if they or you ever happened to turn back a single page in that same volume, and read the following avowal.

"There's not a strain to memory dear,
Nor flower in classic grove.

There's not a sweet note warbled here,
But minds us of thy love.

O Lord, our Lord and spoiler of our foes,
There is no light but thine; with Thee all
beauty glows."

Now, was Keble expressing a just and worthy sentiment when he penned this, and the real feeling of his heart? or was it a mere poetic rhapsody?

"Oh, certainly, it was the true feeling of his heart. Why should you doubt it?"

"Then you approve this utterance, and think it sometimes proper to avow the love that 'boasts a heavenly birth'?"

"Unquestionably I do; at proper times, and in proper ways."

"May I ask what times you consider to be proper?"

"Well I don't think such things should be thrust upon you suddenly and unexpectedly."

"Why not?"

"Why not! Why for decency's sake. I'm astonished that you ask."

"Ah, I begin to comprehend. You conceive that there is a proper formality, a becoming ceremony, to be prefixed, like a prelude to a poem, or to a piece of music; an artistic intimation to the hearer, that something religious is coming, to which it is proper to adjust one's air and manner."

"You have a very provoking way of putting it. I think you might know that that is not my meaning. I would like to ask, Do not you think that we ought to approach religious topics with a solemnity which common topics do not require?"

My dear friend, I object to *your* way of putting it. I had not thought of approaching religious topics; my thought was of *Christ*, and of loving him; and that our love ought to be so single-hearted, childlike, and ardent, that we should no more think of concealing it than of concealing our admiration of a landscape, because some turn in the road brought it suddenly to view. Did you ever meet with a person who thought it necessary to suppress his admiration of a beautiful landscape?"

"No, of course not; but, then that's different. There could be but one opinion on that."

"And can there be two opinions on the excellency of Christ?"

"Everybody knows that he is perfect; but all do not feel alike about speaking of him! and a great many think that religion is too serious to be talked of in public."

The love of Christ, like the love of an affectionate child, is sometimes grave and sometimes jubilant; it is always something too noble for the trifling and the frivolous to appreciate; and therefore we would guard both the one and the other from their touch. The profanation we dread is in the frivolous spirit, from which we shrink, not in any inherent impropriety in times and seasons. All times, all seasons, are proper to the love and service of Christ; and no loyal disciple of Christ will suffer any circumstances to attach to himself that are inconsistent with the avowal of his love or with the advocacy of his Master's claims. It is true that a feeling exists, so common as to be almost universal, against the expression of religious sentiment. The majority of men disown religious obligations; every recognition of those obligations reproves them. Timid Christians yield to the public sentiment thus created, and shrink from declaring themselves. Then there are many whose unrestrained avowals of love to Christ are neu-