

age and boldness that it is now, and that by Christian scholars themselves. The most fearless investigation, as rigorous and searching as that of any naturalist, is applied to the text of every part of the Bible by the scholars, whether of Germany, of England, or of America. What does Mr. Le Sueur know of the results of such research but what Christian divines have told him? Simply nothing. Did not the late Dean Alford—to name only one man—spend years over the text of the New Testament? Did he shirk his work or shrink from the frankest statement of what he found? It was my honour and privilege to know his rare transparency of character, and his fearless devotion to truth, and I am only one of scores to whom such an idea is only not outrageously offensive because it is so infinitely ludicrous.

Again, are we to forget that a number of men, chosen for their competent knowledge, are at this moment at work upon the English Bible for the purpose of bringing it into accord with our most exact knowledge of the originals? It is so far from being 'dangerous' to do this, that I have it on the personal authority of two of these revisers, one working on the Old Testament, the other on the New, that their agreement as to the desirable changes is wonderfully easy and perfect. The fact is that a true scientific method is just as desirable and just as fruitful in biblical criticism as elsewhere. We—and I speak now of biblical students—have never been so near together and never so sure of our ground.

Take another of Mr. Le Sueur's tests—'When augurs try not to laugh in each other's faces.' Now this either means nothing, or it means that clergymen are insincere in their profession of belief in the Gospel, and that on a large scale. That such a statement is rudely offensive goes

without saying. But it is much more—it is entirely untrue. I know many of these men, some of them humble and imperfectly educated; some of them of moderate knowledge and ability; some illustrious for learning and genius. I say fearlessly that there is no profession in the world which contains so few members untrue to their convictions or unworthy in their lives. If a clergyman is a secret unbeliever, the last face he will dare to 'laugh' his falsehood into is that of another clergyman. I am anxious to write with courtesy, because I have a real regard for Mr. Le Sueur. But I must use plain language. His allegation is false, utterly and preposterously false. Either he knew it to be so, or he did not. If he did know, I prefer not to use the appropriate adjectives; if he did not, he has slandered a class of men of whom he knows nothing, or so little that it amounts to nothing.

It would be easy to show that the remaining tests of Mr. Le Sueur are either irrelevant or not founded in fact. It is not 'the best mind of the age' that is deserting Christianity, but only the mind that is most plastic to the philosophical fashion of the hour. Even that will not be so for long. Truth will prevail, criticism will do its work, and what 'cannot be shaken' will remain. It is not very reasonable for any man to ask us to tell him beforehand exactly what that will be. But many of us believe, with a 'full assurance of faith' that it will include all that we most value in our present convictions, that the process will issue in the firm establishment of the Gospel of our Great Master, purged of its foreign accretions, and brought so into relation with the ripest knowledge of the race that it will sway the reason and conscience of humanity with redoubled self-evidence and with all comprehensive power.