

purest of all, only dreamed of virtue—and with a high ideal before him was practically a cypher !

Now go back eighteen hundred years and start with Christ's gospel, as it enters on its historical path. It enthrones and enshrines itself in a few humble, unlearned men, and their lives burn with its beauty and end with voluntary martyrdom. Follow the gospel of Christ as it marches down the centuries, and what do you see ? Hard hearts, cruel with crime, that no human love could soften, no human power impress, are broken into contrition and love. Weak women, timid and trembling, are fortified by it to dare the scourge, the rack, the stake, the cross, or face without fear the fierce Numidian lion in the arena. Millions of martyrs under no compulsion but the sweet constraint of love, welcome the agonies of torture—and from all the grades of society come up to the coliseum and soak its sands with their blood, rather than utter one word to disown or dishonor Him, whom not having seen they love.

The world can furnish no parallel to this ! Men have died for a principle, and that principle an error ; for a religious faith, and that faith a falsehood ; but self-sacrifice so perfect, so pure, and so repeated, is peculiar to the followers of Christ, and it has challenged the wonder and applause even of the enemies of Christ.

The teaching of Christ has been for eighteen centuries the leaven and the lever of society—the leaven to pervade—the lever to uplift. At first a handful of disciples in the humble homes of Palestine, then that handful flung by persecution broadcast over the surrounding countries, till from Jerusalem the gospel spread to Antioch and Rome and Alexandria and Constantinople. The cross of a crucified criminal at Calvary is the nucleus of a world's illumination and reformation ! The fame of gospel triumphs spread beyond the fields of conflict and as the lines of influence lengthened and their circles reached round new centres of power and wickedness, in fear men cried out—it is turning the world upside down !

The little army of Jesus with no badges or banners, no weapon but truth, and no force but persuasion, in the face of fearful persecutions grew mightier and mightier year by year. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of new churches, it fell like a fertilizing dew on a barren soil. Met with violence, the followers of Christ used no violence, though they kept silence with respect to social sins and vices which had taken the form of institutions, yet they did not tolerate evils with which they forbore. The gospel overcame evil