

BOTH SIDES.

A CLERGYMAN in Cheshire had a large parish, with many idle people. Every now and then, some of them became so full of righteous grief at what seemed the glaring wrong-doing of their neighbours, that they had to go about seeking sympathy. The vicar was commonly one of the first to whom they went. They would not have thought of telling him of their own faults, or asking his help to overcome them. Had he told them that possibly it might be well to do so, they would have been hurt and angry. But they cared, as it seemed, far more for their neighbours' souls than for their own. They thought it their duty to bring every evil tale and suspicion to their clergyman, that he might know what very bad people lived in his parish, and that he might be sure of their grief about it. In most cases the stories they brought were of wrongs done to themselves, or disputes in which they claimed to have shewn great gentleness and Christian patience under very hard trial from the coarseness or selfishness of others.

The old vicar had a short way with them. He received them kindly and courteously: he told them how sorry he was that they were troubled. But, before he let them begin their complaints, he said, "Of course I will be glad to hear you, and give you what help I can, but it is right for me to say that if I listen to your story, I shall be bound to go to the person accused and ask for his story, so that I may know both sides. Of course if anyone came and laid a charge against you, you would think me very wrong to take its truth for granted, without giving you an opportunity of clearing it up. I must deal out the same justice to those against whom you bring a charge. Now, take time to think

about it; and make up your mind whether to say nothing, and to try to forget all this, or else to tell me all you want to say, and let me then go to the other and find out what his view of the case is." It need hardly be said that in nine cases out of ten, the vicar was told nothing; the person who came full of grievances which he longed to pour out, shrank from the prospect of having his story set side by side with another story. He was often led, also, to try to put himself in the place of his neighbour, and so take a fairer, calmer view of things. Often he came to the conclusion that, whether his neighbour had indeed been wrong or not, one thing was quite plain, that he had himself been very foolish.

The old vicar's plan worked well. He was told very few unpleasant tales. And his example came to be followed in the parish, to the great help of the cause of peace.

THE Bible is not an apothecary's shop into which one can heedlessly go and take whatever comes first and call it medicine. In it God speaks and the devil speaks, and angels and demons, and good men and bad. Sometimes the message is for a particular time or people, or man or group of men. God holds us responsible for using common sense in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. It is our duty to find His message to us.

So speaks a denominational paper, and so far as it goes, it is right. But it stops short of the whole truth. Add to the last sentence, "and it is the office-work of the Church, as the authoritative expounder of Holy Scripture, to help us find that message in its truth and fullness. In her teaching, we get the only application of the largest common sense—a Catholic common sense—to things scriptural and spiritual." This completes the other.—[Living Church.