

attention of God to man, but the attention of man to God; not to call upon Him to punish the wrong-doer, but on the witness to remember that He will assuredly do so. The ceremony of the oath is not intended primarily for persons who have an active conscience, a high regard for truth and an abiding sense of the presence of God everywhere in this world. In the words of Hudibras—

“Oaths were not purpos'd more than law
To keep the Good and Just in awe.”

The oath was not intended on the other hand for very bad men who would violate it at all times. For very good men, it is unnecessary; for very bad men it is useless. The judicial oath, however, is expected to serve a useful purpose in dealing with a stratum lower in morality than the best citizens and higher than the worst. The utility of oaths has been justified in the following words by Archbishop Secker, as quoted in *Ram on Facts*, p. 222.

“It must be owned great numbers will certainly speak truth without an oath, and too many will not speak it with one. But the generality of mankind are of a middle sort, neither so virtuous as to be safely trusted, in cases of importance, on their bare word; nor yet so abandoned as to violate a more solemn engagement. Accordingly we find by experience that many will verbally say what they will by no means venture to swear; and the difference which they make between these two things is often indeed much greater than they should; but still it shews the need of insisting on the strongest security.”

The oath is calculated to influence witnesses possessing a dull conscience. While the oath will not generate a conscience it will quicken a dull one. Some witnesses, indeed, never consider themselves bound to tell the truth on the witness stand unless they actually kiss the book, or unless their bare hand touches the book, which presumably is the reason why the ungloved hand must be used. They often try to kiss their thumbs instead of the book, thereby hoping to avoid eternal punishment for perjury by omitting what they