

[Here Mr. McSparrow resumed his pipe.]

Robert. You told us, grandfather, about the Christmas-feasts. Were they also of great antiquity?

Cottle. They were, my boy. The Peers dined on Yule with the King—and the Barons kept open house for all their neighbours and dependents. On such occasions the utmost profusion prevailed, and no one was sent empty away. The vassal, the tenant, and the serf, all sat down at one table, and the weary way-worn beggar was made welcome as the richest mendicant, or the best born gentleman.

Erastus. In my humble opinion, the great folks in these days, might have spent Christmas in a more profitable manner, than feasting at such a rate.

C. Mr. McSparrow, they had Scriptural warrant for so doing. Does not the Apostle say that a Bishop should be given to hospitality?—and what is right for a Bishop cannot be wrong for a layman, I should humbly imagine.

E. But Christmas is a holy day—and as Mr. Drumlog told me not long ago, such days should be kept with prayer and fasting.

C. That is one of the errors of the followers of Calvin, who love to behold religion ever in sackcloth and ashes. I fully grant that the sincere Christian will be much given to prayer on the anniversary of his dear Redeemer's birth, but I have yet to learn that well regulated festivity is incompatible with a spirit of devotion.

E. There, I differ from you!

C. Then you differ from the Lord Christ himself!

E. How so, neighbour?

C. Did not our Saviour come into the world to set us an example, as well as to die for our sins?

E. Of course he did?

C. And did not the blessed Jesus often grace the hospitable board with his presence, accepting invitations from the great and rich men among the Jews? He then who sneers at the Yule feasts of Old England, and brands them as sinful, censures by inference, the great Head of the Church.

E. I cannot understand, for all that, how

feasting and religion can be combined. I have not learning enough to dispute with you, but I am sure that Mr. Drumlog could show that you are wrong!

C. If Mr. Drumlog were here at this moment I would answer his cavils by quoting a portion of one of the beautiful phrases attached to the Presbyterian version of the Psalms.

E. I should like to hear it.

C. The verses thus run:—

“Do I delight in sorrow's dress,
Saith he who reigns above?
The hanging head and rueful look,
Will they attract my love?”

“Go, bid the hungry orphan be
With thy abundance blest:
Invite the wand'rer to thy gate,
And spread the couch of rest.

“Let him who pines with piercing cold,
By thee be warm'd and clad;
Be thine the blissful task to make
The downcast mourner glad.

“Then bright as morning shall come forth,
In peace and joy thy days:
And glory from the Lord above,
Shall shine on all thy ways.”

Now, McSparrow, if it be a *religious* duty to feed the widow, the orphan, the wayfaring man, how can the birth-day of our Lord be profaned by such observances? If God hates the “hanging head,” and the “rueful look,” is it possible that he can be offended with the sober mirth of Christmas?

E. But the Christian religion is altogether spiritual, as Mr. Drumlog said in Magusmuir Meeting-house, last Sunday.

C. Then Mr. Drumlog said what was incorrect. Christ was not altogether spiritual—He was *man* as well as *God*, and therefore his service must be a compound of the material and spiritual. We are to worship him with our bodies as well as our souls.

E. That is true enough.

C. One leading beauty of the Incarnation is, that it unites heaven and earth. It connects unseen things with carnal things.—Hence praise and well regulated hospitality are not incongruous, but quite the reverse, on an anniversary which we have good reason to believe is celebrated in heaven as well as on earth!

E. Well, well! One thing at least is cer-