

Another of these disguises, and in frequent use, is one which the Pharisee used to patronize; and within its folds, men, who scorn the sect that joined its seams, are committing the error that prevailed within it when new, by setting their good deeds over against their evil ones, as though the virtue was intended by a holy Ruler to neutralize the vice of life. Men in multitudes to-day are prating about their benevolence, as though it were nothing less than a fee for the admission of a sinful soul to a final reward. Like Westminster Abbey, beautiful without, but within the abode of bones, these thousands are depending upon the surface of the life to cancel the corruption within. A sacrifice like that of Cain is brought to hide a murderous intent, and the prayer has been lengthened to mislead in the analysis of the heart.

Another garment in constant requisition from this Satanic wardrobe is one labelled, *Procrastination*. A prospective obedience quiets the conscience that rebukes the life of to-day; and many there are who would not risk the soul a moment, but for this pledge that some day the prime duty of life will be observed. Tell such that death will be sudden, and assure them that your prophecy is true, and see how quickly the garment is removed. The man who has fixed the years of decrepitude as the period of consecration has but to obtain a pain of body which defies prompt removal, to induce him to suspect the wisdom of his tardiness. You need not read to him the story of the thief on the cross. That but vexes him, notwithstanding he has taken from it the notion that there is such a thing as "*dying grace*."

But what shall we say of the class whose sin is clad in the robe worn on St. Bartholomew's day, when men said they were doing God a pleasure by putting Christians to death? Are there none even in the Protestant faith who are excusing their sin under the false notion that sin is a plan of Providence to keep them humble? And if men can bribe their conscience to such an extent as to make sin easy, what reason is there for disturbing so false a security? Talk of undue zeal in the mission of undeceiving men who have thus made the petrified body sightable by the dress with which they have clad it! Why, no effort is an extravagance which can tear off these robes and leave them in shreds, if by such effort souls can be saved. Is there nothing good to say for sin that it must be disguised thus? Must the theft be made a sharp business-action,—Sabbath-breaking be made an example of worthy providence, and anger a mere defence of the right,—the libertine the mere victim of a necessarily uncontrollable nature? Such verdict is but the announcement of man's own detestation of guilt and the eulogy on the law that punishes it. And it were safe to say that no better example of the sinfulness of sin is found, than in the fact that men have conjured up methods for its excuse. Sinners forcing themselves to call evil good and good evil that they may "do evil with both hands earnestly," wrapping up their iniquity, are pronouncing the most distinct anathema upon the life they are leading.

It is the business of the Gospel to take off these disguises; and even to the suffering of the body that has swelled beneath them, turn up to the light the fatal wounds which may yet be accessible to the blood of atonement. The