

almost realised, that which may be realised again. But what we see in history behind us and in the world about us is, it must be confessed, not like "a bride adorned for her husband." We see something that is admirable and much that is great and wonderful, but not this splendour of maiden purity. The bridal dress is worn out, and the orange-flower is faded. First the rottenness of dying superstitions, then barbaric manners, then intellectualism preferring system and debate to brotherhood, strangling Christianity with theories and framing out of it a charlatan's philosophy which madly strives to stop the progress of science—all these corruptions have in the successive ages of its long life infected the Church, and many new and monstrous perversions of individual character have disgraced it. The creed which makes human nature richer and larger, makes men at the same time capable of profounder sins; admitted into a holier sanctuary, they are exposed to the temptation of a greater sacrilege; awakened to the sense of new obligations, they sometimes lose their simple respect for the old ones; saints that have resisted the subtlest temptations sometimes begin again, as it were, by yielding without a struggle to the coarsest; hypocrisy has become tenfold more ingenious and better supplied with disguises; in short, human nature has inevitably developed downwards as well as upwards, and if the Christian ages be compared with those of heathenism they are found worse as well as better, and it is possible to make it a question whether mankind has gained on the whole.

To be sure, the question is a frivolous one. What good for the grown man to regret his childhood, and to think his intelligence and experience a poor compensation for the careless happiness that accompanied his childish ignorance? It was by Nature's law that he grew to manhood, and if infancy can be happy without wisdom, a foolish and superstitious man cannot hope for the same happiness. Those who saw "old Proteus rising from the sea" may or may not have been happier than we are; we, at any rate, should be none the happier for seeing him. But the triumph of the Christian Church is that it is *there*,—that