

Yet think not that I wish to give an evil character to our Time. There are many agencies at work for good—many for evil. There is much that is ominous of danger—much that is full of hope. The Age is active—earnest—practical. There is no time for dreaming, for inaction, for triviality. All around may be heard the rush of onward progress or the sound of coming changes. They are heard in the Church and in the world. Mercantile operations are not now conducted as in former times, there is a pressure of competition, a hurry of occupation and an intense anxiety once unknown. Political parties are breaking up before the growth of new opinions, which are sweeping men onward they know not whither. Social relations are changing, education is spreading, and the ends of the earth brought into unwonted contact are exerting a fresh influence on each other. In the region of opinion things sacred and things profane are undergoing examination. I am not sorry for it. Men will not receive anything as true simply because formerly believed. Mind is restless in enquiry. And yet with all this activity and power, betokening hardihood of thought, there is a feature of the Age which presents a strange contrast to the foregoing. The general Literature most read is in character strikingly different from the general course of action. It is for the most part light, frivolous, relaxing in its nature,—nothing in it to brace up the mental strength and fit it for genuine toil. And on that symptom I look with alarm, for it betokens much of feverish, unhealthy excitement, in connection with the active, vigorous striving of our time. It tells of a dangerous undercurrent which, if not counteracted, will drift the social vessel among the breakers. There have been plain signs given of its existence and of its course in the alarming disclosures of reckless living and utter want of principle, combined with singular skill and daring in the pecuniary frauds of the old and new world,—frauds that have stained the shield of proud names in the aristocracy of Britain—that have shown bad faith in the circles of her merchant princes whose very word was once inviolable—that have eaten as a canker into classes of inferior name—that have spread as a festering sore over whole districts of a great neighbouring land.

Now is there not cause for alarm when these two facts are considered in their connection—that there there is abroad in active exercise a spirit of the most unsparing enquiry, at the very time when the great majority of youthful minds are rapidly disqualifying themselves, either for thoughtful examination or for intelligent reception of its results? I repeat that I rejoice in free unfettered thought as a glorious privilege in itself, that as a Minister of the Gospel I am glad to behold on the one side scientific research questioning the secret workings of the Creator, and on the other side critical investigation trying and testing each fact, each doctrine contained in the Word of the Redeemer. But I should wish also that the minds to whom these results are to be presented should at least be capable of manly thought. And it is not for readers of novels, or light skimmers of magazines, for those who have emaculated their mental power by frivolous engagements, whose knowledge of mankind is gained in the ball room or at the card table, who, by yielding to luxurious desires, have