

her destiny was to reign, and inspired by conscious might, she behaved herself bravely at the stake and before the lions, and treading upon the thrones and altars of paganism, she mounted to dominion. Is there no augury here that Christianity will one day govern the world?

The second great intellectual era of the modern world was the Reformation.—Christianity was now subjected to a severer ordeal than before, but it came triumphantly out of it, and in doing so gave to the world renewed assurance of its intrinsic power and its ultimate destiny.—The human intellect, as if refreshed by its long slumber, awoke in the sixteenth century with a vigour and comprehensiveness surpassing even that of the Greek and Roman times. That was not the age when a weak system, or a false system, could live and prevail; and had christianity been either weak or false, it would then have disappeared, and never more been heard of. But very different was the result: as the intellect expanded, christianity received an enhanced homage, and began to exercise a wider dominion. This is the more to the honour of christianity, that there never was a more glorious outburst of the human mind than at that period. The literature of Greece and Rome arose from its tomb. The inductive philosophy which taught men to examine nature, and admit only what was true, had then its rise. Old arts revived, and new ones were invented. The rays of a higher civilisation broke over the nations. But all this array of intellectual force—this literature, and philosophy, and art, and civilisation, arose not to displace christianity, not to explode her as an imposture, not even to assign her a second place as a mental power; but, after a careful examination into her claims, to endorse her title to supremacy, and to place themselves at her service as humble but zealous handmaids.

The Reformation was followed by reaction. The old superstitions began to recover from the shock of the Reformation; a lethargy crept over the minds of men, art and science were stationary, and christianity positively retrograded, or, perhaps we should say, its adherents began to decline in zeal, intelligence, and courage, when the political and social convulsions of half a century ago anew broke the stagnancy, and restored the impulse which the Reformation had communicated to the human mind. Christianity has since been exposed to fresh or-

deals, which have resulted, as all former ordeals have done, in giving increased confidence in her inherent powers. First and sorest, she had to stand the brunt of modern atheism, which at one time threatened to become the creed of the whole western world. The supporters of that system formed a band of the most acute, learned, zealous, and clever writers which ever lent their genius in support of any cause. They ransacked past history for proofs to overthrow christianity, they exhausted in the assault all the resources of wit and sarcasm, light railery, and grave argument. And with what result? They found it impossible either to reason down christianity, or to laugh her out of the world; and now that their jokes are stale, and their arguments have long since been shewn to be fallacious, and that their doctrines have polluted so large a portion of Europe with crime, and deluged it with blood, christianity is neither stale nor held to be fallacious, but, on the contrary, rests on a considerably firmer basis, so far as public opinion is concerned, than it did before. There is nothing here to make the friends of the gospel dread the application of any future test to christianity, but much to inspire them with the opposite feeling.

When the storm of French atheism had blown by, the materials of a fresh inquisition began to accumulate around Christianity. The progress of discovery now brought to light a variety of records and annals contemporary with the earliest histories of revelation, of the existence of which no one had dreamed. The sculptured monuments of Egypt began to be read, and the buried palaces and cities of Assyria to be exhumed, and strange documents respecting the events and persons named in Scripture were brought up from the grave in which they had lain for three thousand years. At the very time that Moses and the other penmen of the Old Testament were committing to writing on the sacred page the public events of their times, other writers, of whom they knew nothing, were occupied in the same way. While the Bible was travelling through the earth, and telling its story to the nations, Nineveh, with its records of early wars and customs sculptured in stone or graven in hieroglyphic characters on tablets, was sleeping in the dust. In due time she arose, and presented her long-hidden records to the world. If there be a false line in Old Testament history, or if a wrong fact has been