

to make railway travelling as safe as it is expeditious. The more severely the necessity for increased security is felt, the more likely are those inventions which will produce it to be forthcoming.

Of many a political injustice and abuse, we may say, "the worse the better." Things must, generally, become very bad indeed before anything is likely to be done to cure them. It was the Old Sarums that stirred us up to Reform; and it is, to a great extent, the fact that there are no Old Sarums now, that renders it impossible, at all events difficult, to get up a Reform agitation at the present time. Small grievances people will endure, without much impatience, from one generation to another; but get a grievance that is a grievance indeed, and then see how things will go! Had the Stuarts been a little more moderate than they were, they might have retained the throne, and prolonged, for some time at least, much of their despotic power. Happily they had not good sense enough to temper their administration with mildness; happily James II. was a thorough-going tyrant, and to that prince's bad qualities, as much perhaps as to the virtues of the Prince of Orange, we owe the Revolution of 1688. Indeed, as confirmatory of the paradox which I am endeavoring to illustrate, history reveals cases of which it *must* be said—"the better the worse." "Evil for evil," says John Stuart Mill, in his *Considerations on Representative Government*,—"a good despotism in a country at all advanced in civilisation is more noxious than a bad one; for it is far more relaxing and enervating to the thoughts, feelings, and energies of the people. The despotism of Augustus prepared the Romans for the despotism of Tiberius. If the whole tone of their character had not been prostrated by nearly two generations of that mild slavery, they would probably have had spirit enough left to rebel against the more odious one."

Our paradox is illustrated by the Protestant Reformation. It seems far from improbable that if the Church of Rome had manifested common prudence, if it had checked the multiplication of superstitious rites, if it had not been quite so barefaced in the sale of Indulgences, if its priests and monks had, as a rule, led chaste and sober lives, and if it had dealt mildly and reasonably with heretics, it might have retained its authority and influence longer than it did. Not for a small matter would whole nations have left its communion; not under a light and easy yoke would they have proved restive and unmanageable. But the Papacy was infatuated; it scouted the idea of moderation it set at defiance common sense by its superstitions, common decency by its licentiousness, common humanity by cruelties; and so the Reformers found a sympathizing audience, and the Reformation was achieved. Sometimes the last feather breaks the camel's back; but some-

times it causes the top-heavy load to tumble over, and so the camel is relieved.

I think that our motto is also applicable to infidelity. If we are to have infidelity at all, I give my vote for a thorough-going, out-and-out infidel, that halts not in its march until it reaches absolute scepticism; until it doubts everything, denies everything, and can go no further. As long as infidelity pays a dubious respect to Scripture, expresses its admiration of the character of Christ, exhorts men to follow his example, argues for the immortality of the soul, and maintains a theistic belief, so long it is a rather formidable foe to vital Christianity. Happily, however, it cannot, with any show of consistency, act in this moderate manner. The Scriptures demand that they be received as the Word of God, or repudiated as the fabrication of wilful impostors; the character of Christ can be respected only as long as he is recognised as the Son of God and the Saviour of men; his death cannot be resolved into a mere martyrdom, nor his life into a mere example; he is what he professes himself to be,—a Divine Redeemer of men, or he is a person convicted of dishonesty and most shameful untruthfulness. Infidelity, if true to itself, must give up every great principle of religion; it must lead us down from one depth of darkness to another, until it leaves us nothing to believe in. "The worse the better;" for from such a state of dark, cold, absolute negation, the human soul instinctively recoils with horror. Therefore, it seems to me that in what is called Secularism there is not much that should give uneasiness to the friends of Christian truth. Its bold avowal that we know nothing, and can know nothing, and need to know nothing of a future state, is very startling; but by all means let it make this avowal; let it tell men that death is the final extinction of conscious being, that there is nothing to fear, nothing to hope, that there is no God, no heaven, no hell; let the avowal be made—"the worse the better." Give this system rope enough, and it will hang itself; let no man stay it, let no man seek to moderate its tone; let it go on, denying every principle that we hold dear, denouncing every character that we admire, blaspheming every name that we consider sacred; be it so; so much the worse for itself, so much the better for us. The best, the most encouraging fact about Scepticism is this—that its logical terminus is Atheism.

Many persons will find, on reflection, that this paradox has been verified in their own experience. For example, if some one has unjustly assailed your character, and slandered you very shamefully, then "the worse the better." If, while you and your friends know that you are an upright, sober, generous man, your detractor has spoken of you as a rogue, a drunkard, or a miser, you need not be in the least annoyed. Had your enemy been moderate, had he censured you mildly, then you might find it necessary to adopt active