

must receive, without doubt, a much larger measure than it now has of the Spirit of Christ.

### ON EDUCATING MEN'S CONSCIENCES.

At a gathering of Christians held lately, where the aspects of the times were under discussion, one of the brethren, an eccentric man of genius and piety, startled the company by giving emphatic utterance to this statement: "Christendom wants a new creed, the very first article of which must be—*There is a hell.*" The harshness of this assertion is considerably modified when one considers that in our day there is abroad a dangerous tendency to make light of sin and crime, and to extol mercy at the expense of truth and justice. Every week brings to light social, commercial and political crimes that should consign the criminals to infamy. But lawyers, and jurymen and judges combine to shield them from justice, and writers are not wanting to excuse this, and readers are not wanting to justify the writers. This tendency to make light of sin we can easily understand when found in one who is guilty. We see it in Cain, who thought his punishment (which was really very light) altogether too heavy and out of proportion to his crime. But the loss of that sentiment of justice which was characteristic of Rome and Greece in their best days, and which we find in the best period of English history—the Puritan period—is spreading in our community beyond the lawless classes, and meeting us in men who hold municipal offices and sit in our legislative halls.

This lawless spirit is fostered by the modern sensational novel, which has rightly earned in our day the title *vinum dæmonum* (the wine of devils) given by one of the fathers to profane poetry. It fills the imagination with its fumes to such a degree that men drunk with it can hardly distinguish truth from lies, an honest man from a rogue. "It is

not, however, the lie that passeth through the mind," as one remarks, "but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it that doth hurt." And worse, therefore, than the sensational novel is that materialism that teaches that every phenomenon of mind is the result of some change in the nervous elements of the brain, and is no more to be blamed in the thief, adulterer, and murderer, than small pox, the itch or fever is to be blamed in them that are sick by them. Working strongly also in the direction of extenuating and excusing crime, is the mawkish sentimentalism, more common in America than Europe, that coddles the criminal as more sinned against than sinning, and berates society for being so cruel as to hang murderers.

In the desire, laudable enough, to educate the intellect in literature and the sciences, we have, save where the Sabbath-school, the pulpit, and the religious press speak out, almost overlooked the education of the conscience. In our desire to speak pleasant things and to prophecy smooth things, we have a tendency threatening even our pulpits, to pass over in silence as too stern for modern sensibilities, that attribute in God that hates sin and which pursues the unrepentant sinner,

"Down to that world where joy is never known."

We are all familiar with the reply of Demosthenes to the man that asked which was the first essential of oratory? Action: the second? Action: and the third, Action. We know also Augustine's paraphrase of that famous saying in his reply to the question, "Which is the first of the Christian graces? Humility: the second? Humility: and the third? Humility." The modern paraphrase, Educate, Educate, Educate, suggests, however, the question, What is to be so persistently educated? Conscience. What next? Conscience. And what next? Conscience. This was clearly Solomon's idea of a good education. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." According to the He-