

RELIGIOUS DISGUISES.



IN the struggle between Truth and Error, there is a feature in the policy of either combatant, which reasonably vexes the soul that hungers for the fulfilment of prophecy; robbing as it does the Truth of its force, and proportionately fortifying the cause of Error. I refer to the mischievous disguises in which these two antagonistic forces often appear in the strife between them. Were they never contending but in native costume, and in the use of weapons that agreed with the professed policy of each, Truth, with lad-like pretensions, would not be long grasping the head of its more formidable foe. But because both the one and the other, through manipulations they have undergone, must be studied to be known, the struggle is prolonged, if indeed the cause of Truth does not meet a signal defeat.

The duel arranged for on parchment has a degree of honesty that never can belong to the homicide that is committed under the cover of a salutation. And it is thus with controversy generally. Its aims will be questioned, if not defeated, proportionately to the masking of the debaters, or the efforts to compromise for the purpose of advantage.

David, going out simply as David the shepherd-boy, and not as a warrior cut short,—casting away the bad-fitting uniform,—did in his day what Truth should do in ours. In his act he said as much as this, "*If the right should prevail, it may be risked on its own merits;*" and the weapons of his choice were wisely selected, as in keeping with the stripling that bore them. Nor would Truth come out of the field with less lustre did she enter the lists with Error, satisfied to fight with her own weapons.

No one conversant with the inherent power of Truth, would fear to risk her against the foe, however formidable, if she but contents herself to stand or fall by the power she possesses. I am not nervous for the safety of Truth in a square fight, labelled truthfully, and depending more upon her might than her size; but there is some reason to doubt her success, if she goes to battle with the smile of friendship, and as free to kiss as to smite, clad in a toggery that belies her real intention.

Consider what confidence the voice of inspiration expresses in the power of naked truth, when she writes the safety of cities and peoples nearly wasted by iniquity, on the ground that some samples of truth yet remain. Sodom is promised another lease of life, if ten good men are there. Why? For the safety of ten? Nay! they could be rescued as well as Lot. But because there was the possibility of the piety of ten righteous men check-mating the idolatrous purposes of the mass, if not regenerating the heart of the populace. Had Elijah a companion or two, or the Psalmist, or the prophet Isaiah, the conviction that there remained even a remnant of true godly patriotism, Elijah would not have sought an early death, or the psalmist