

The Church.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1843.

[WHOLE NUMBER, CCCIV.]

VOLUME VI.—No. 44.]

EXTRAORDINARY CONVERSION OF MR. JOHN FRENCH, AN INFIDEL.

(From The Banner of the Cross.)
[The following narrative is extracted from "The Epistolary Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, and Dr. French Laurence." The editor of that publication has inserted it in a note, from an anxiety "that so valuable a document should not be lost to the public." It was written by Mr. Rogers, then vicar of Westminster, and addressed in a letter to the Bishop of Salisbury.]

Upon my first being placed in this large and populous parish, by Bishop Sherlock, it was not only my duty, but at the same time my pleasure, to get acquainted with, and be informed of, the characters, dispositions, and opinions of those whom I was sent to instruct. Among them I soon found a gentleman, much respected for his sense and understanding (Mr. John French), and looked upon as an oracle within the circle of his acquaintance. He was tolerably well skilled in the mathematics, and read the classics with ease. It was very rare, and somewhat extraordinary must have happened, if ever he neglected attending church on Sundays. He always brought with him his Greek Testament, in which he read with the minister, the several portions of Scripture, as they were appointed. But I soon learnt that all his friends held him to be a rank Deist; and quickly discovered, that at church the One Supreme God was the sole object of his faith and worship; for whenever the "Gloria Patri" was said or sung, I could not but observe his inattention, by wiping his spectacles, shutting his book, gazing about him, or the like. The same was observable at the repeating of either of the creeds. He was, however, always decent, and whatever were his particular notions, he never troubled the world with them. I lived with him in strict harmony and friendship many years, almost eighteen. He had many moral excellencies; and was, in particular, very charitable, and much beloved by the poor. He would never enter upon any religious points; and if at any time they happened to be started, was generally silent, or, at the most said but little. We styled him the "Philosopher;" a character he much affected both in his garb and carriage; being altogether careless in the one, and not a little unpolished in the other. About six months since, his health began to be impaired, and his decline seemed to be coming on apace. I watched every opportunity to get at his religious notions, and instil into him. Unhappily for him, he was too reserved, (as he afterwards confessed) nor could he venture to open his mind to me, when he could not but know that his end was drawing near. He died on Friday, the Monday previous I went to see him, purposely to lay hold on any favourable opportunity that might offer of my inculcating the necessity and importance of faith. But I left him as I found him, fully convinced in my own mind that he was resolved to leave the world in the faith of those principles he had embraced, whatever they were, without communicating them to me or any one else. I did not, however, think his time so very near as it afterwards proved, for he walked out and dined abroad the next day, and "better" was his reply to all who kindly asked how he was. On the Thursday following, in the afternoon, as I was visiting another sick person, three messengers came after me, on the heels of each other, to hasten me to him. They all urged he was impatient to see me immediately. I soon went, and found him sitting by his fire, in his chair, as usual. He thanked me for coming, hoped it was not inconvenient, and then calmly desired me to do my office by him. I asked him what part? His answer was, to administer to him the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This gave me the opportunity I had long wished for, I immediately put the following question to him, viz. Whether he renounced those principles he must know himself to be charged with; of which, too, he could not suppose himself ignorant; and whether he embraced the faith of a crucified Saviour, Jesus, through whom alone he could be saved? With a becoming warmth, he replied, "I do." And with indignation he added, that he renounced and abhorred those principles that had, all his days, misled him; withal reflecting on the folly and unhappy circumstances of those who build their hopes of security on the moral fitness of things. "In proof of my sincerity, sir," says he, pointing to the fire, "you see the ashes of two books, not quite consumed; they are the remains of two that have helped to mislead me. (Woolston against the Miracles, and a volume of Deistical Tracts.) I intended to have burnt them before you as a mark of my sincerity, but was impatient with resentment against their contents; and will, if it please God I ever get to my country again, where are more of the same stamp, burn the remainder." Thus, from the fall of Deism, an opening was given to me to implant the saving truths of the Gospel. To inculcate its truths, indeed, was needless; he had read, heard, and fully remembered them; and to enforce them in their spiritual sense, here the grace of God prevented me, for I had no sooner attempted it, than he freely acknowledged that he had found and felt the power of the Gospel of Christ upon salvation. He found, he said, all other schemes ineffectual, and the Gospel alone efficacious for his comfort and support. He then witnessed *as to place and posture*, wherein it pleased God to illuminate his understanding, to embrace those saving truths he had long rejected; and he rejoiced in the light thereof. Here, again, he repeated his desire of being made partaker of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament: joining issue with me in one great truth, which he remembered at times to have heard me inculcate from the pulpit,—that no true, sincere Christian, could ever abstain from that ordinance,—and which he promised never to neglect again, (as he hoped, in sincerity), if it were God's will to give him life; which he did not expect. More passed, much to the same purpose. In fine, my answer was, (not apprehending his end to be so very near), that the morning was the best time for such an act of faith; when, if he persevered in the same pious and devout frame of mind, I would attend him early. So I left him for that night, after having commended him in prayer to God. Friday morning, at nine o'clock, I accordingly attended him, not a little surprised to find him so weak, as to be unable to rise out of his bed. I found him, however, quite composed, much rejoiced to see me, and full of the same good thoughts I had left him in the night before, still earnestly desirous of receiving what he had all his days rejected. I then administered to him the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which he received with all the outward marks of faith and devotion, and, as he was pleased to tell me, with the highest satisfaction and comfort. Being engaged to visit, and to do the same office by another sick person, the same morning, I soon left him to God and his own thoughts, with a promise to call upon him morning and evening, as long as he lived. But I saw him no more; for about three o'clock in the afternoon, after having said to those about him, he thought he should not live to see me fulfil the kind promise I had made to him, he expired without a groan.

HOW TO READ CHURCH HISTORY.

(By the Rev. Hugh James Rose.)

In what spirit shall Church History be read?— Shall it be read in a thankless and careless spirit, which thinks little of what God has done for man, and cares little what He will do? Shall it be read in an infidel spirit, which, though like the devils it may believe, yet believes in vain, believes the outward facts, but doubts their inward influence? Shall it be read with a cavilling spirit, with the unchristian spirit which never believes good, where it can suspect evil, which attributes every act to the lowest motive by which it could be effected, and will not think that God himself ever has raised man, ever can raise him above the low, selfish, level on which it stands itself? Shall it be read with the wish to sneer at every thing that is noble, and generous, and lofty, to disbelieve in every thing like self-denial, self-forgetfulness, self-devotion, to brand it as enthusiasm, and folly?

SCHEMISM.

A DIALOGUE.

It was towards the close of one of those sultry days in August, when the mind not unfrequently partakes of the relaxation of the body, and is easily subdued, that I was returning from an evening walk through my parish in much depression of spirits. The visits which I had paid were not calculated to cheer my mind. I had witnessed jarring and contention where I had expected to find peace; and I was informed that a wealthy farmer, who had lately come to reside in the parish, was busily engaged in sowing the seeds of schism amongst my once happily united flock. No one but a minister of the Gospel can tell how deeply such circumstances affect him, and how completely he would be overwhelmed were he not invited to cast his care upon the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Yet, notwithstanding this privilege, his spirits will sometimes be peculiarly depressed by the feelings of ministerial disapproval which continually thwart his most sanguine hopes, and render useless his most zealous efforts, and that he must look continually to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. The stillness of the evening harmonised with my subdued feelings, leading me to raise my thoughts above this scene of care and sorrow, and to long for that happy period when all jarring and discord shall end, and there shall be peace, not only in families and parishes, but in the whole Church of Christ that is scattered abroad.

I had refreshed for my concluding visit that evening, as a refreshment after my day of toil, one of my most favoured families, and thither I now bent my steps. They were in the rank of farmers—the children, although some were now bordering upon man's estate, all regularly attended the Sunday school; and it was a cheering sight to see the parents with their happy family around them, seated in their pew every Sabbath day, joining with unaffected seriousness in the prayers and praises of the Church. They were the most united family that I had ever met, and enjoyed in all its fulness the blessing of those who dwell together in unity, the dew of divine grace having been apparently poured upon them in large abundance. I shall never forget, when once calling at the house just as they were about to meet together for their evening worship, the pleasure which I felt in kneeling down with them, and hearing the whole family, including a little girl, of about five years old, joining with me in the Lord's prayer. My way to the house lay across the fields; they were now ripe for harvest; not a breath disturbed the repose of the rich and peaceful scene. The cattle were all reclining, and it was scarcely possible to look at a flock of sheep through which I passed without raising the heart in prayer to God, to bring his wanderers home, to heal the unhappy divisions in his Church, that there might, indeed, be the one fold under the one Shepherd. I now entered a narrow lane that led to the house which was the object of my visit. The trees formed an arch across the way; the woodbine had twined itself to the very top of the hedge, and filled the air with almost overpowering fragrance. I had not proceeded far, when, at a sudden turn in the lane, I saw Mr. Smith coming towards me; but, instead of hastening his steps as usual, he stopped for a moment, as if considering whether he might not find some way by which he might escape; he soon, however, came forward, but with an evident unwillingness to meet me. I had missed him from his accustomed place on the preceding Sunday; and fearing that he must be unwell, I was now on my way to inquire for him. I at once perceived that I had been wrong in my conjecture, and the dialogue which ensued soon explained the cause of his absence, and also of his unwillingness to meet me.

Minister. I am glad, my friend, to see that you are well. I was just on my way to inquire for you; as, from my not seeing you yesterday, I feared that you were confined by illness.

Mr. Smith. I am much obliged to you, Sir; I was never better in my life, but I was not at Church on Sunday.

given; and may a like degree of light break in upon the hearts of all others, who are as yet in unbelief; that they may all be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus.

October, 1760.

Mr. S. I thank you, Sir, for your visits; you cannot come too often; you are always welcome.

Mr. I have always felt myself to be so, and a visit to your family has often refreshed me when wearied with fatigue and disappointment.

Mr. S. I am sure my wife and children are always talking of you, Sir. I wish all the ministers of the Church of England were like you.

Mr. I wish, my dear friend, that you would not compare me with others, or give yourself the habit, which I have been sorry to observe you have lately acquired, of speaking lightly of other ministers of Christ's Church. We all fall far short of that entire devotion to our Master's cause, which is not only our duty but our privilege; instead, then, of dwelling upon our infirmities, I wish you would pray more to the Giver of all good gifts, to pour out his Spirit upon us, and make us such as you would wish us to be. But you have not told me what kept you away from Church on Sunday.

Mr. S. Why, to tell you the truth, Sir, I walked to the town of Millbeck.

Mr. You were anxious, I suppose, to hear Mr. Gray preach for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Is he quite recovered from his late illness?

Mr. S. I did not hear him preach, Sir.

Mr. Has he had a return of his illness, or is it possible that you were not at Church?

Mr. S. I was not indeed at Church; but farmer Benwell, who has often come to see of us late, took me to the preaching house, to hear a great preacher who had come from abroad.

Mr. I now understand why you have been lately speaking to me so often about the faults of the ministers of the Church. Mr. Benwell has been putting that into your head.

Mr. S. Why, Sir, surely no one can deny their faults. Is there not the Rev. Mr. ————, a progress, such as to show the superintending power of a Divine Author, guarding and fostering his own work. We find awful judgments and warnings to nations, how they dare to trifle with the cause of God, or with the truth of God; warnings to individuals of the fearful consequences, to themselves and to others, of heresy and schism, of waywardness, and abandonment of the broad path of the Church for their own fond imaginations and evil tempers. But we find there too bright examples of saints and martyrs—of men of whom the world was not worthy—who have done all and suffered all that men could do and could suffer for that blessed cause, and in so doing and so suffering have found an elevation, a peace, and a joy, which nothing could give but the sense of God's presence, and the influence of God's blessing his own servants in doing his own work. So warned and so cheered by the voice of Scripture and the comment of history, we shall betake us each to our humble path of duty with a clearer conviction of duty, a stronger sense of the danger and the guilt of neglecting it, a firmer hope of a blessing, a more cheerful and animating view of the prospect before us.

SCHEMISM.

A DIALOGUE.

It was towards the close of one of those sultry days in August, when the mind not unfrequently partakes of the relaxation of the body, and is easily subdued, that I was returning from an evening walk through my parish in much depression of spirits. The visits which I had paid were not calculated to cheer my mind. I had witnessed jarring and contention where I had expected to find peace; and I was informed that a wealthy farmer, who had lately come to reside in the parish, was busily engaged in sowing the seeds of schism amongst my once happily united flock. No one but a minister of the Gospel can tell how deeply such circumstances affect him, and how completely he would be overwhelmed were he not invited to cast his care upon the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Yet, notwithstanding this privilege, his spirits will sometimes be peculiarly depressed by the feelings of ministerial disapproval which continually thwart his most sanguine hopes, and render useless his most zealous efforts, and that he must look continually to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. The stillness of the evening harmonised with my subdued feelings, leading me to raise my thoughts above this scene of care and sorrow, and to long for that happy period when all jarring and discord shall end, and there shall be peace, not only in families and parishes, but in the whole Church of Christ that is scattered abroad.

I had refreshed for my concluding visit that evening, as a refreshment after my day of toil, one of my most favoured families, and thither I now bent my steps. They were in the rank of farmers—the children, although some were now bordering upon man's estate, all regularly attended the Sunday school; and it was a cheering sight to see the parents with their happy family around them, seated in their pew every Sabbath day, joining with unaffected seriousness in the prayers and praises of the Church. They were the most united family that I had ever met, and enjoyed in all its fulness the blessing of those who dwell together in unity, the dew of divine grace having been apparently poured upon them in large abundance. I shall never forget, when once calling at the house just as they were about to meet together for their evening worship, the pleasure which I felt in kneeling down with them, and hearing the whole family, including a little girl, of about five years old, joining with me in the Lord's prayer. My way to the house lay across the fields; they were now ripe for harvest; not a breath disturbed the repose of the rich and peaceful scene. The cattle were all reclining, and it was scarcely possible to look at a flock of sheep through which I passed without raising the heart in prayer to God, to bring his wanderers home, to heal the unhappy divisions in his Church, that there might, indeed, be the one fold under the one Shepherd. I now entered a narrow lane that led to the house which was the object of my visit. The trees formed an arch across the way; the woodbine had twined itself to the very top of the hedge, and filled the air with almost overpowering fragrance. I had not proceeded far, when, at a sudden turn in the lane, I saw Mr. Smith coming towards me; but, instead of hastening his steps as usual, he stopped for a moment, as if considering whether he might not find some way by which he might escape; he soon, however, came forward, but with an evident unwillingness to meet me. I had missed him from his accustomed place on the preceding Sunday; and fearing that he must be unwell, I was now on my way to inquire for him. I at once perceived that I had been wrong in my conjecture, and the dialogue which ensued soon explained the cause of his absence, and also of his unwillingness to meet me.

Minister. I am glad, my friend, to see that you are well. I was just on my way to inquire for you; as, from my not seeing you yesterday, I feared that you were confined by illness.

Mr. Smith. I am much obliged to you, Sir; I was never better in my life, but I was not at Church on Sunday.

Mr. I know it, otherwise I should not have come to-day, as it is not many days since I was at your house.

Mr. S. I thank you, Sir, for your visits; you cannot come too often; you are always welcome.

Mr. I have always felt myself to be so, and a visit to your family has often refreshed me when wearied with fatigue and disappointment.

Mr. S. I am sure my wife and children are always talking of you, Sir. I wish all the ministers of the Church of England were like you.

Mr. I wish, my dear friend, that you would not compare me with others, or give yourself the habit, which I have been sorry to observe you have lately acquired, of speaking lightly of other ministers of Christ's Church. We all fall far short of that entire devotion to our Master's cause, which is not only our duty but our privilege; instead, then, of dwelling upon our infirmities, I wish you would pray more to the Giver of all good gifts, to pour out his Spirit upon us, and make us such as you would wish us to be. But you have not told me what kept you away from Church on Sunday.

Mr. S. Why, to tell you the truth, Sir, I walked to the town of Millbeck.

Mr. You were anxious, I suppose, to hear Mr. Gray preach for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Is he quite recovered from his late illness?

Mr. S. I did not hear him preach, Sir.

Mr. Has he had a return of his illness, or is it possible that you were not at Church?

Mr. S. I was not indeed at Church; but farmer Benwell, who has often come to see of us late, took me to the preaching house, to hear a great preacher who had come from abroad.

Mr. I now understand why you have been lately speaking to me so often about the faults of the ministers of the Church. Mr. Benwell has been putting that into your head.

Mr. S. Why, Sir, surely no one can deny their faults. Is there not the Rev. Mr. ————, a progress, such as to show the superintending power of a Divine Author, guarding and fostering his own work. We find awful judgments and warnings to nations, how they dare to trifle with the cause of God, or with the truth of God; warnings to individuals of the fearful consequences, to themselves and to others, of heresy and schism, of waywardness, and abandonment of the broad path of the Church for their own fond imaginations and evil tempers. But we find there too bright examples of saints and martyrs—of men of whom the world was not worthy—who have done all and suffered all that men could do and could suffer for that blessed cause, and in so doing and so suffering have found an elevation, a peace, and a joy, which nothing could give but the sense of God's presence, and the influence of God's blessing his own servants in doing his own work. So warned and so cheered by the voice of Scripture and the comment of history, we shall betake us each to our humble path of duty with a clearer conviction of duty, a stronger sense of the danger and the guilt of neglecting it, a firmer hope of a blessing, a more cheerful and animating view of the prospect before us.

SCHEMISM.

A DIALOGUE.

It was towards the close of one of those sultry days in August, when the mind not unfrequently partakes of the relaxation of the body, and is easily subdued, that I was returning from an evening walk through my parish in much depression of spirits. The visits which I had paid were not calculated to cheer my mind. I had witnessed jarring and contention where I had expected to find peace; and I was informed that a wealthy farmer, who had lately come to reside in the parish, was busily engaged in sowing the seeds of schism amongst my once happily united flock. No one but a minister of the Gospel can tell how deeply such circumstances affect him, and how completely he would be overwhelmed were he not invited to cast his care upon the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Yet, notwithstanding this privilege, his spirits will sometimes be peculiarly depressed by the feelings of ministerial disapproval which continually thwart his most sanguine hopes, and render useless his most zealous efforts, and that he must look continually to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. The stillness of the evening harmonised with my subdued feelings, leading me to raise my thoughts above this scene of care and sorrow, and to long for that happy period when all jarring and discord shall end, and there shall be peace, not only in families and parishes, but in the whole Church of Christ that is scattered abroad.

I had refreshed for my concluding visit that evening, as a refreshment after my day of toil, one of my most favoured families, and thither I now bent my steps. They were in the rank of farmers—the children, although some were now bordering upon man's estate, all regularly attended the Sunday school; and it was a cheering sight to see the parents with their happy family around them, seated in their pew every Sabbath day, joining with unaffected seriousness in the prayers and praises of the Church. They were the most united family that I had ever met, and enjoyed in all its fulness the blessing of those who dwell together in unity, the dew of divine grace having been apparently poured upon them in large abundance. I shall never forget, when once calling at the house just as they were about to meet together for their evening worship, the pleasure which I felt in kneeling down with them, and hearing the whole family, including a little girl, of about five years old, joining with me in the Lord's prayer. My way to the house lay across the fields; they were now ripe for harvest; not a breath disturbed the repose of the rich and peaceful scene. The cattle were all reclining, and it was scarcely possible to look at a flock of sheep through which I passed without raising the heart in prayer to God, to bring his wanderers home, to heal the unhappy divisions in his Church, that there might, indeed, be the one fold under the one Shepherd. I now entered a narrow lane that led to the house which was the object of my visit. The trees formed an arch across the way; the woodbine had twined itself to the very top of the hedge, and filled the air with almost overpowering fragrance. I had not proceeded far, when, at a sudden turn in the lane, I saw Mr. Smith coming towards me; but, instead of hastening his steps as usual, he stopped for a moment, as if considering whether he might not find some way by which he might escape; he soon, however, came forward, but with an evident unwillingness to meet me. I had missed him from his accustomed place on the preceding Sunday; and fearing that he must be unwell, I was now on my way to inquire for him. I at once perceived that I had been wrong in my conjecture, and the dialogue which ensued soon explained the cause of his absence, and also of his unwillingness to meet me.

Minister. I am glad, my friend, to see that you are well. I was just on my way to inquire for you; as, from my not seeing you yesterday, I feared that you were confined by illness.

Mr. Smith. I am much obliged to you, Sir; I was never better in my life, but I was not at Church on Sunday.

thence it is used to signify a tearing asunder or division in the Church of Christ, causing discord and disunion among its members, which, as it were, rend and tear his body, which is the Church, separating one member from another. Now let us turn again to the passage, and see what were the schisms in the Church of Corinth of which St. Paul speaks: he beseeches them, in the most solemn manner, by the name of Jesus Christ, "that there be no schisms among them, but that they all speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment," and then mentions the particular schism of which they were guilty, forming parties in the Church, and arraying themselves under separate teachers.

Mr. S. That is just what Mr. Benwell told me, that schism was a separation in a Church; but that if you separate altogether from a Church as the congregation in the town of Millbeck has done, you would not then be guilty of schism.

Mr. Mr. Benwell had a poorer opinion of your good sense than I have, when he could think to satisfy you by such reasoning.

Mr. S. He told me that he had a book, which proved that the persons who go to the preaching house, to which he brought me, could not be called schismatics in a scriptural sense, because they had not separated from the Church of England.

Mr. I have seen the book you speak of, and have never, I think, read such shallow reasoning. I suppose Mr. Benwell wished thus to prove to you, that there was no harm in your going to that meeting-house. Now, I would ask you, if some one tore your coat, would you consider that he had not torn it, because he separated the piece entirely? Was there no schism in the veil of the temple? did it remain uninjured because it was rent in twain from the top to the bottom? Suppose one of those parties to whom St. Paul wrote had answered, We are not schismatics; we are not guilty of schism, for we have separated entirely from the Church; we have our separate place of worship, our separate teachers; would St. Paul, do you think, have been satisfied with their answer? would he have admitted, that they were therefore blameless, that they were not carnal? Because the rent is made worse, is it therefore no rent at all?

Mr. S. I understand, Sir, what you say; separation is even worse than what Mr. Benwell allows to be schism.

Mr. Yes, and if St. Paul considered one as a proof of walking after the flesh, and not after the Spirit, he would still more strongly condemn the other; besides, in speaking of these very schisms in ch. iii. ver. 3, he calls them by a word, which implies separation, standing in separate places. Can you tell me, does Mr. Benwell allow the Church of England to be a part of the one holy Catholic Church, or, to make the question plainer to you, does he allow that there is salvation in the Church of England?

Mr. S. Indeed he does, Sir; he says that he has no objection to the doctrine, and that he sincerely wishes that all her ministers were that they ought to be, minded less the things of this world, and attended more closely to the spiritual welfare of their parishioners.

Mr. Most heartily do I join him in the wish, at least as regards myself. But then he must allow the Church of England to be a part of the Church of Christ. I suppose he considers the body to which he belongs to be also a part.

Mr. S. Of course he does, Sir.

Mr. How then can he avoid pleading guilty to the charge of schism? Surely separating from the Church of England he must admit, even according to his own view, would make a schism in the Church of Christ?

Mr. S. I think I see this clearly now, and wonder that I did not at once perceive it. But then, Sir, would not this place all dissenters from the Church of England in a very dangerous position? would it not exclude them from salvation?

Mr. They appear to me to be in a very dangerous position; but God forbid that I should exclude them from salvation. Some I honour, admire, and love in their works, and should be sorry to be compelled to think that they would not be found hereafter in the one fold, and under one Shepherd. I judge not those whom birth or education has brought up in schism. I know that the Judge of all the earth will do right. I judge not those who think that salvation cannot be found in the Church of England for separating from her. But as I have before showed you, it will be no excuse for them, that they have been misled by their own conscience, nor will it avail them in the day of judgment that they have been misled by others; for our Judge declares, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (Matt. xv. 14.)"

Mr. S. But still, Sir, you consider them as schismatics, although you will not judge them as to the degree of their guilt.

Mr. I cannot avoid it. Just consider the Church of England, as she stood after she had reformed herself, and cast off those impurities which she had contracted from her connexion with the Church of Rome. There was then no body of dissenters in England. Even the Romanists then attended the worship of the Church. She stood upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head corner-stone. Her ministers derived their commission in unbroken succession from the Apostles themselves. They did not, unauthorized, take upon themselves to minister in holy things, but were sent by those who had a divine commission to send them. Her rule of faith was the word of God, and she declared that she required nothing to be believed as an article of faith that was not read therein, or could be proved thereby. Her creeds, her articles, are a form of sound doctrine, which contains, even as those who separated from her will allow, the truth of God's word. The excellence of her liturgy is universally admitted, and it has been translated into foreign languages by even those who will not hold communion with her, as the best book next to the Bible, to put into the hands of Heathen converts. Her reformation, sealed (may we not say?) by the Spirit of God, was sealed by the blood of martyrs. Was she not then, I would ask, at the time of the Reformation, a part of Christ's Church; and was not separation from her schism? Is she not still the same, and is not separation from her still schism?

Mr. S. I cannot, indeed, Sir, deny it; and I trust that I may never separate from my mother Church.

Mr. Most sincerely, my dear friend, do I trust that you may not. Through her ministry you entered the Church of Christ; she received your earliest vows; she joined you to the partner of your joys and sorrows, and the solemn blessing she then pronounced upon you both has since rested upon your happy united family; through her you placed your infant children in the arms of her Saviour, and in his name I as his minister received and blessed them. In health her ordinances have proved to you the means of grace, and from her hands you have received the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of your Saviour Christ; and I trust that when sickness shall bow you down, you will then experience the soothing comfort which she brings to her children on the bed of languishing; and when your body shall be committed to the ground in her quiet church-yard, that she will soothe the anguish, and wipe away the tears from your mourning family, teaching them not to sorrow as those without hope.

Mr. S. Oh, Sir, I trust that her beautiful funeral service will indeed comfort those whom I may leave behind.

Mr. By stating that strange notion of Mr. Benwell, that an entire separation from the Church of England is not schism, you have led me away from the consideration of its real nature. Having, I trust, proved to you that such separation is schism, even of a worse nature than St. Paul speaks of, let us return to the consideration of the schism for which he reproves the Corinthians. From reading the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses of the 1st chapter, and the 3d and 4th verses of the 3d chapter of the 1st Corinthians, what would you think as to the nature of schism?

Mr. S. Why, Sir, it appears to me to have been the forming of parties in the Church under different teachers.

Mr. Exactly; thus introducing dissension, and breaking that perfect unity which ought to exist in the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, in which we profess our belief; as St. Paul so earnestly intreats the Corinthians: (1. Cor. i. 10.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;" and as he so touchingly beseeches the Philippians, (Phil. ii. 2.) "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill my joy; that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Whatever breaks this perfect union, whether it be banding together in distinct parties, following, as was the case of the Corinthians, different teachers so as to cause division in the Church, or separating altogether from any sound part of the Catholic Church, such as the Church of England, is schism.

Mr. S. But there are some, Sir, who although they do in some degree separate themselves, yet still say, that there is no essential difference between them and us, and that it is only for their greater edification and spiritual improvement that they have united as a distinct body.

Mr. Do they not make a separate party in the Church? If they do, they are schismatics, whatever may be the motive. We ought always to bear in mind, that the lighter the ground of schism, the greater is its sinfulness. Those who tell us that there is no essential difference between them and the Church of England are doubly guilty; they are by their own confession without sufficient reason introducing dissension where all ought to be love and peace; thus rending the Church, rending the body of Christ.

Mr. S. Oh, Sir, that sounds very shocking.

Mr. It is indeed a fearful thought, and if you will consider what St. Paul says of the sin of schism, you will find that he does not consider it light; even that schism, so little thought of in the present day, of which the Corinthians were guilty, professing to hold the unity of the Church, but arraying themselves under separate teachers, and being called by their names. "Are ye not," said he, "carnal, and walk as men (1. Cor. iii. 3.)?" Just as St. Jude declares of those who separate themselves, that they are "sensual, having not the Spirit. (Jude 19.)" How strongly are divisions condemned in Galatians ch. v. 20! The word "seditions" in this passage, is the very same as that translated "divisions" in 1. Cor. iii. 3, upon which I have already remarked. St. Paul here enumerates, as the fruits of the flesh in the same list, adultery, fornication, murder, and passes upon all the same awful sentence, ver. 21, that they "which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Mr. S. This is, indeed, an awful sentence. I had always thought that the word "sedition" related to political strife.

Mr. If the Apostle's declaration is true in respect to divisions in the kingdoms of this world, how much more true must it be of divisions in Christ's kingdom! but from the connection in which the word stands, it must relate to divisions in the Church, separating Christian from Christian; such as he mentions as having taken place in the Corinthian Church. Besides, schism not only interrupts the peace and unity of the Church, it also introduces offences. Do you know the meaning of the word?

Mr. S. I am not quite certain. Does it not mean whatever offends a person or makes him angry?

Mr. Not always; in the New Testament it generally means, what gives an occasion of stumbling, or what causes to stumble; thus, Christ was to be to those who believed not, a "stone of stumbling and rock of offence." Now, the sects which have divided the Church of England are an offence, an occasion of stumbling, to the Romanists amongst us; and their writers, confounding the Church of England with the several sects that have separated from it, under the common name of Protestants, use the divisions in that body as an argument against its being part of Christ's Church; and I am sure those divisions or schisms give offence, and are an occasion of stumbling to many of our weaker brethren.

Mr. S. I have often myself wondered at the number of parties into which Christians are divided, and it has sometimes caused unpleasant thoughts.

Mr. Turn now to Matt. xviii. 7, and what does our Lord there declare? that "offences," occasions of stumbling, "will come, but that man by whom the offence cometh." Schism is undoubtedly an occasion of stumbling; and does it not therefore come under this word?

Mr. S. Indeed, Sir, I should fear so; but I do not think that my going to a dissenting place of worship could prove a stumbling-block to any one. Mr. Benwell told me that the Rev. Mr. Perrot subscribed towards building the meeting-house to which he wished me to go, and that the Rev. Mr. Conder was present when it was opened. There could, therefore, he said, be no great harm in my going there, when the ministers of my own Church went.

Mr. You have given me another instance by which I can explain the word offence. Did what Mr. Benwell told you influence you as to your going to that meeting-house?

Mr. S. I surely did; I may say that it removed all the objections which I at first felt.

pray earnestly that this my sin may be forgiven, and that the good Lord may deliver us all from schism.

Mr. I shall not forget your request. I rejoice, that what I have said has in the least opened your eyes; and I think, that you will feel still more deeply upon the subject, when you consider how directly schism is opposed to the spirit of that most affecting prayer which our blessed Lord offered up, just before He entered upon his agony. It has always appeared to me, a powerful and most touching dissuasive from disunion amongst those who profess to be members of his Church. Look at the 17th chapter of St. John, verses 20, 21: "Neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me— Oh, if these words were engraven upon the hearts of all professing Christians, how careful would they be, lest any thing might tempt them to act contrary to the Spirit of this most impressive petition.

Mr. S. Indeed, I should think so; but Mr. Browne told us yesterday, that there is a real union between all Christians, although they may be of different denominations.

Mr. Can those persons be said to be united, to act according to the spirit of this prayer, who will not worship in the same house of prayer, who will not kneel down together, who in any way withdraw themselves from the members of Christ's Church? Are they united with those members, as the Father with the Son? are they not acting in direct opposition to this affecting petition of our blessed Saviour? Are the fruits of their separation the fruits of love? Is there no coldness and estrangement between persons of different sects? no bitterness of spirit produced by schism between those who ought to be drawn together in the bonds of the tenderest love?

