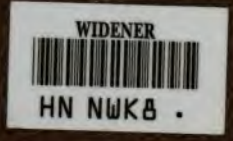
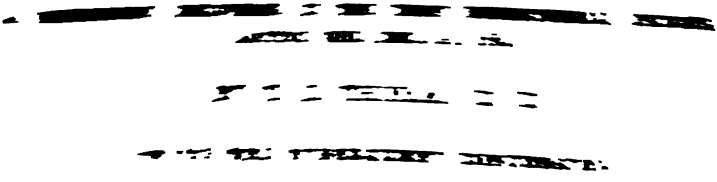
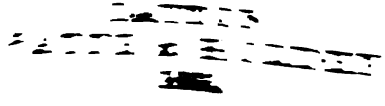


THEATRE.





Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1866, by
PAYNE & HOLDEN,
In the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of Ohio.

Printed at the
UNITED BRETHREN PUBLISHING HOUSE,
Dayton, Ohio.

THE THEATRE.

Eccl. VII. 4. The heart of fools is in the house of mirth.
Luke VIII. 7. 11. 14. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. . . The seed is the word of God, ... and that which fell among thorns, are they who, having heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.
2. *Tim.* III. 1–4. This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be . . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Theatrical amusements were invented at Athens, in Greece, twenty-fourhundred years ago. (B. C. 580-535.)* From a remote period, the rustic Greeks had celebrated the festival of the vintage with songs—mirthful, ludicrous, often indecent—in honor of Bacchus, the god of wine. Afterwards a choir of practiced singers was employed, who gradually adopted a disguise, or costume. Habited in goat-skins, to represent a satyr, or attendant of Bacchus, an actor recited the wild adventures of the drunken deity; music, dance, and song, all imitative, relieved the recitation; while dress and disguise tended to realize the subject, and heighten the illusion. Hence the term *Tragedy*, the *Goat-song;* while *Comedy* designated the *village song*, or ode of the revellers. Such was the foundation upon which Thespis reared the superstructure of The Drama. Improved and perfected, in place, play, and performance, by Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and others of less fame, the theatre passed from Athens to all the Grecian cities, thence to Rome, and throughout the Roman Empire.

The prevalence of Christianity, in the primitive and purer ages always hostile to such entertainments, al-

*B. C. 580–535. Clinton's Fasti Hellenici.

most wholly banished them from society. For ages the dramatic art was lost, or existed only among the lowest of the people, in almost its original form of plays improvised at such festivals as the carnival. Attacked, even by the degenerate clergy of the middle ages, as heathenish, immoral, and indecent exhibitions, these were replaced by the Mysteries, as they were called, or theatric representations of subjects from sacred history. The Mysteries were followed by the Moralities, or allegoric pictures of moral qualities; a form of play which continued in England to the reign of Henry VIIIth; and, under Queen Elizabeth, degenerated into Masks, the parent of modern masked balls. Both Mysteries and Moralities were enacted by priests, monks, and students; always as a mode of divine worship; in fact, they were the effort of a rude and ignorant age to render the theatre a means of moral improvement.

These popular extravagances encountered the condemnation of the Popes of Rome; yet, strange to say, we owe the modern revival of the drama to an Italian Cardinal, Bibbiena, who wrote the first genuine Italian comedy—the Calandria. It was performed for the amusement of the holy fathers of the Church, and the principal clergy, in the presence of the ladies of the Court. Comedy was subsequently cultivated by many Italians, including numerous ecclesiastics. Leo 10th, the reigning Pontiff in Luther's time, was a great patron of the theatre. Other European nations introduced the dramatic art at a much later period. In England, it dates from the reign of Elizabeth, three hundred years ago. From England it was imported into America.

I have sketched this rapid outline of the history of the stage,* first, to obviate an objection which meets us at the threshold of this discussion: —Of what use is it to oppose theatres? They have existed more than twenty centuries; have survived amazing revolutions of empires, of languages, of races, and of religions. The drama possesses an indestructible vitality. It was, is, and ever will be popular. Why attack that which it is impossible to destroy?

My answer is this. The vitality of the stage is but one form of the vitality of sin. The theatre is old, but human depravity is older. So long as the mass of mankind, under the leadership of the Prince of darkness, continues in rebellion against God, so long will the corrupt passions and vitiated tastes of the world find modes of expression. Theatrical amusements are but one manifestation of man's debasement in his apostacy from his Maker. But Jehovah, man's rightful and supreme Ruler, has purposed to subdue this impious rebellion of his creatures. He has established a base of operations in the setting up of his own kingdom on earth. In that holy warfare which Christians wage against sin, the enemy of God and man, there can be no truce, no compromise, no end but victory. "Impossible" is a word not found in the vocabulary of a Christian soldier. "With men," indeed, "this is impossible, but with God all things are possible:" and Christians "are laborers together with God." The Captain of our salvation has said,—"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

*Encyclopedia Americana, art. Drama. Shakespeare, Hudson's edit. vol. xi. Hist. of the Drama, ch. 1, 2. Hase Ch. Hist. § 266.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world—our faith." "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;"—and we do verily believe they shall be destroyed; that "the kingdoms of this world" shall "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* In this faith the Christian can not but make war upon every hydra-head of the old Serpent; upon false principles, wicked practices, and corrupt amusements, however powerful, popular, or profitable.

Another preliminary remark, suggested by the history of the theatre, is this, that it is no novelty, but an institution of centuries. From its birth it has possessed a well-defined character. Twenty-two hundred years ago, the great Athenian, Aristotle, observed that the dramatic poets of his city had improved upon each other, and had refined their own taste, and that of their audience, until tragedy had attained perfection. The modern drama has made no advancement. In the grandeur of its exhibitions it has vastly deteriorated. A Grecian Theatre held fifteen to twenty thousand spectators; a Roman, even eighty thousand. The Theatre of Scaurus, at Rome, cost five millions of dollars. What are our paltry Opera Houses in comparison?

The Theatre, then, has been tested by time. Its matured fruits are familiar to the world. It has been tried by the impartial judgment of the wise and good, for many ages. The judgment which they have pronounced upon it, will constitute my argument against

* Mat. xix. 26. 1 Cor. iii. 9. John xvi. 33. 1 John iii. 8. 1 John v. 4. Rev. xi. 15.

theatrical amusements, which may be stated thus: *The wisest and best men of every age; heathen and Christian; Legislators, Philosophers, Divines; the Christian Church, ancient and modern; have, with one voice, from the very birth of the drama, condemned, opposed, and denounced theatrical exhibitions, as essentially corrupt and demoralizing, both to individuals, and to society.*

Such is the proposition; I will now introduce the testimony:

1. *That of eminent and observing Pagans.*

Solon, the chief magistrate and law-giver of Athens, who witnessed the very dawn of the drama, remarked that, "If we applaud falsehood in our public exhibitions, we shall soon find it in our contracts and covenants."

Socrates never attended the theatre, in consequence of its immoral character, except when some play of his friend Euripides (the purest of ancient tragedians) was to be acted. Yet the glory of the stage in his day was never surpassed; perhaps never equalled.

Plato, the disciple of Socrates, whose genius is an honor to humanity, tells us that "plays raise the passions, and pervert the use of them; and, of consequence, are dangerous to morality." He therefore banished them from his imaginary commonwealth.

Aristotle, the world-renowned philosopher, the tutor of Alexander the Great, laid it down as a rule, that "the seeing of comedies ought to be forbidden to young people; such indulgences not being safe until age and discipline have confirmed them in sobriety, fortified their virtue, and made them proof against debauchery." At

what age, then, Aristotle, should a sensible adult expose himself to such contamination?

An Athenian spoke to a Spartan of the fine moral lessons found in their tragedies. "I think," said the Spartan, "I could learn much better from our own rules of truth and justice, than by hearing your lies."

The character of the Greek drama was exceedingly licentious. "We can form but one opinion," says a learned author, "of the auditory which could be pleased with such indecencies; or of the poet who could pander to an appetite so abominable." Plautus, who introduced comedy to Rome,* remarks that "Poets have composed few comedies by which good men are made better."† This he said, inviting the Romans to contrast the superior chastity of his own productions. Yet of his pieces a critic observes: "Much is vulgar, the jests often low and sometimes obscene. The subject of his play is frequently an obscene story humorously treated."

Ovid, the famous Roman poet, though neither a wise nor a good man, is a competent witness. In his celebrated poems, written expressly in the interest of lewdness, he recommends the theatre as favorable to dissoluteness of principles and manners. In his later days, in a graver work addressed to the Emperor Augustus, he advises the suppression of this amusement, as a chief cause of corruption.

Seneca, the renowned philosopher of Rome, a cotemporary of St. Paul, speaks thus of theatrical representations: "Nothing is so damaging to good morals as to be present at any of these spectacles. Vice easily finds

* ab., B. C. 200.
† "Paucas reperiunt poetae comedias, ubi boni meliores fiunt."

its way into the heart through the pleasurable emotions which they excite.*

TACITUS, the philosophic Roman historian, in his account of the ancient Germans, ascribes the singular purity of their women, in part to the absence of seductive theatrical spectacles.†

JULIAN, the apostate emperor of Rome, attempted in the middle of the fourth century, the utter subversion of Christianity, and the re-establishment of paganism. To this end he decreed "that none of his pagan priests, or those employed at the altar, should be allowed to attend theatres, or be seen in the company of a charioteer, a dancer, or an actor;" assigning this remarkable reason for his decree,—That the Galileans, as he sneeringly syled Christians, had gained their ascendency by their priests and people avoiding such causes of corruption, and the profligacy to which they lead. A striking testimony, from one of the most sagacious and malignant foes the gospel ever encountered,—at once to the purity of the primitive Christian life, and to the debasing influence of the stage! ‡

BRUMOY, a French critic of the Greek Theatre, and an admirer of plays, thus concludes his dissertation: "I have given an account of every thing as far as was consistent with moral decency. No pen, however cynical or heathenish, would venture to produce in open day the horrid passages which I have put out of sight; and in-

*Seneca: Of a Happy Life, chap. xvii. "Nihil est tam damnosum bonis moribus, quam in aliquo spectaculo desidere. Tunc enim per voluptatem facilius vitia surrepunt," &c. †C. C. Taciti. Germania, xix. "Ergo septae pudicitia agunt, nullis conviviorum irritationibus corruptae." And the Note in Williston's edition. ‡See Gibbon, chap. xxiii. "The priests of the gods should never be seen in theatres or taverns." "Licentious tales, or comedies, must be banished from his library."

stead of regretting any part that I have suppressed, the very suppression will easily show to what degree the Athenians were infected with licentiousness of imagination and corruption of principles. If the taste of antiquity allows us to preserve what time has spared, religion and virtue at least oblige us not to spread it before the eyes of mankind."*

In view of such facts, is it wonderful that the purest of the heathen, as we have seen, united in condemning the stage? We shall find, presently, that the modern drama is only less infamous than the ancient.

2. I will next produce the testimony of *Legislation* against the theatre, both ancient and modern; premising that no government has ever shown itself unduly forward in restraining popular vices, and that when such legislative restrictions have occurred, they were demanded by an audacity of vice absolutely intolerable.

Both in Athens and in Rome the stage was not unfrequently suppressed by positive statute. At Athens, the cradle of the drama, both comedy and tragedy were sometimes restricted, and sometimes prohibited, by authority. Among the Romans, in the purer ages of that thoughtful and sagacious people, although theatrical exhibitions were tolerated, they did not suffer a theatre, when built, to stand longer than a few days. Even the costly structure of Scaurus, before mentioned, was quickly taken down. Pompey the Great, who survived the liberties of his country, was the first Roman that had influence enough to secure a permanent theatre at Rome. And this was two hundred years after the introduction of the drama into that capital.

*Dissertation upon Greek comedy, translated from Brumoy by Dr. Sam'l Johnson, p. 62.

The profession of a player was esteemed infamous by the Romans. It was forbidden by law to any but freedmen and slaves; and as Augustine tells us, actors were excluded from honors, offices, and even from citizenship.* Cicero puts this expression into the mouth of Scipio--"That because the Romans regarded the whole theatric art as disgraceful, they not only refused to actors the usual honors of citizens, but required their ignominious expulsion from their tribe at the hands of the Censor."†

At a later period, a decree of the Senate was found necessary to prohibit its members from attending the entertainments of the theatre.‡ In a yet more degenerate day, the bloody and brutal emperor Nero was a passionate admirer of the stage, and prided himself on his public performances. The tribune Sobrius, one of his body guard, conspired against him. The bold answer he gave to Nero, when asked how he could join a conspiracy, finely illustrates the true Roman contempt of players—"I loved you as much as any man so long as you deserved love; but I began to hate you when, after the murder of your wife and mother, you became a circus-rider, a buffoon, a comedian."

Theatres were established in England, despite the opposition of the moral and religious public, through the patronage of Queen Elizabeth, King James, and a few of the nobility; who demanded amusements, how detrimental soever to society. The corporation of London

*"Actores poeticarum fabularum removent a societate civitatis—ab honoribus omnibus repellunt homines scenicos.—[De Civ. Dei, L. 2, cap. 14. †Cum artem ludicram scenamque totam probro ducerent, genus id hominum non modo honore civium reliquorum carere, sed etiam tribu moveri notatione censoria.—[Quoted by Aug. Civ. Dei, Lib. 2 c. 13. ‡Taciti Hist. L. 2, 62. Cautum severe, ne Equites Romani ludo et arena polluerentur.

were long hostile to the stage, and forbid play acting in the city, because of the abominable immoralities connected with it. For hundreds of years the common law of England classed actors with "rogues and vagabonds."* Even so late as the middle of the last century, the authorities of Scotland, in accordance with an act of Parliament, pronounced the stage contrary to Scottish law.†

Both in England and France frequent attempts have been made to reform theatres by law. Managers have been required to submit every play to the revision of persons legally appointed to correct what was evil before it was acted. But these efforts have availed nothing. Essential evils can not be reformed.

Let us come to our own country. The American Congress, during the war of independence, and in one of the darkest periods of that war, adopted the following resolutions, October 12th and 16th, 1778:

"WHEREAS, True religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness,

"*Resolved*, That it be, and it is hereby, earnestly recommended to the several States to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, *and for the suppressing theatrical entertainments*, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are *productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners*.

"WHEREAS, Frequenting play-houses and theatrical entertainments has a fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means necessary for the defense of the country and the preservation of their liberties,

"*Resolved*, That any person holding an office under the United States who shall act, promote, encourage or attend such plays, shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed."

Had this act been rigorously executed, America might have been spared the infamous treason of Benedict Arnold in the following year. And will not every patriot unite with me in the exclamation, Would to God

*Hudson's Shakespeare, vol. xi, ch. 3, pp. 232, 235, 237, 240, 241, 242.
†McKerrow's Hist. of the Secession Church, p. 525.

that our ever-lamented Lincoln had heeded this injunction of an American Congress!

3. *The precepts and practice of the Christian Church, ancient and modern, witness against the stage.*

The evidences of this fact would fill volumes. Primitive Christians, for three or four hundred years after Christ, were surrounded by a pressure of temptation to partake in games, spectacles, and stage entertainments wholly inconceivable by us. Colossal and magnificent theatres everywhere abounded. Vast crowds, comprising, in the declining age of the empire, all classes of citizens, constantly attended them. The mob at Ephesus, mentioned in Acts,* who, under a common impulse of passion, "rushed with one accord into the theatre," serves as an illustration of the times. To withstand such a torrent of public opinion required no ordinary measure of grace.

But could Christians countenance a system of iniquity of which even the purer sort of Pagans were ashamed? They had "not so learned Christ." They read in the divine word—

"The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot; speaking evil of you: who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the living and the dead."—1 *Pet. IV.*, 3, 5,

"But all uncleanness, . . . let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient."—*Eph. V.*, 3, 4.

Yet "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting," were, and are the very warp and woof of dramatic literature.

In obedience to such commands, Christians, as Julian has testified, not only abstained from participation,

* Chap. xix, 29.

but bore open and manly testimony against such amusements. Both players, and those who attended theatres, were debarred from the Christian sacraments. Actors were required, at whatever cost, to renounce their profession, before admission to baptism; and if they resumed it, were excommunicated.

It would be easy to multiply proofs on this point. The fathers of the church, with one voice, attest the facts. Many early synods, and councils, formally condemned the theatre. "All dissipating amusements," says Coleman, "were strictly prohibited. . . . . From most of the amusements of their heathen neighbors, Christians conscientiously abstained; and the weak and vain who suffered themselves to be betrayed into them, were promptly and severely rebuked." "The Christian lady," says Tertullian in the second century, "visits not the heathen plays, nor their noisy festivals."

Let the language of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in the same age, suffice us: "It is not lawful for us to be present at the prizes of your gladiators, lest we be accessory to murder. We dare not attend your other shows, lest our minds should be polluted and offended with indecency and profaneness. We dare not see any representations of lewdness. They are unwarrantable entertainments, and so much the worse, because the mercenary players set them off with all the charms and advantages of speaking. God forbid that Christians, who are characterized by modesty and reserve, who are bound to enforce self-discipline, and who are trained up in virtue—God forbid that we should dishonor our

* Coleman's Christ. Antiquities, chap. 18, § 7.

thoughts, much less our practice, with such wickedness as this."

Even in the ages of less pure Christianity which followed, the Church of Rome, by her councils, repeatedly raised her voice against the theatre. Indeed, as has been said already, the theatre gave way as Christianity prevailed, and for ages disappeared from Christendom.

Since its modern revival, almost all the reformed, or Protestant churches, have taken the same ground. Those of Holland, France, and Scotland, have declared it to be "unlawful to go to comedies, tragedies, interludes, farces, or other stage-plays, acted in public or private; because, in all ages, these have been forbidden among Christians, as bringing in a corruption of good manners."*

The standards of our own Church, in the enumeration of sins against the seventh commandment, include "lascivious dancings and stage-plays." Our General Assembly has often borne such testimony as the following: "The theatre we have always considered as a school of immorality. If any person wishes for honest conviction on this subject, let him attend to the character of that mass of matter which is generally exhibited on the stage. We believe all will agree that comedies, at least with a few exceptions, are of such a description that a virtuous or modest person cannot attend the representation of them without the most painful and embarrassing emotions. If indeed custom has familiarized the scene, and these painful emotions are no longer felt, it only proves that the person in question has lost some of the best sensibilities of our nature;

*Collier's View of the English Stage, chap. vi.

that the strongest safeguard of virtue has been taken down, and that the moral character has undergone a serious depreciation."

Such is the unanimous testimony of "THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD." It may be safely said that for eighteen hundred years no ecclesiastical body has ventured a contrary opinion. "And surely," as Dr. Miller has observed, "this concurrence of opinion, in different ages and countries, expressed not lightly or rashly, ought to command at least the respectful attention of all who remember the duty of Christians to follow the footsteps of the flock of Christ."

4. I shall adduce, in the next place, *the judgment of some eminent persons of widely different characters and stations in life, whose abilities, experience, and opportunities of observation, entitle them to express a conclusive opinion.* I shall not confine myself to religious authors, abundant as is their testimony; for, as Dr. Witherspoon has justly said, "few Christian writers of any eminence have failed to pronounce sentence against the stage."

The Frenchman, BRUMOY, already quoted as a critic of the drama, writes: "My purpose was only to say of comedy, considered as a work of genius, all that a man of letters can be supposed to deliver without departing from his character, and without palliating in any degree the corrupt use which has been almost always made of an exhibition, which in its nature might be innocent, but has been vicious from the time that it has been infected with the wickedness of man. The stage is too much frequented."*

* Diss. on Grk. Comedy, p. 60.

The eloquent Bishop TILLOTSON, after some pointed and forcible reasoning against it, pronounces the play-house "the devil's chapel; a nursery of licentiousness and vice; a recreation which ought not to be allowed among a civilized, much less a Christian people."

Bishop COLLIER, author of "A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage," though one of the most determined enemies of Puritan principles and practice in his day, solemnly declares, in the preface of his book, that he was "persuaded nothing had done more to debauch the age in which he lived, than the stage-poets and the play-house."

LORD KAIMES remarks, in his "Elements of Criticism," speaking of English comedy, "It is there an established rule to deck out the chief characters with every vice in fashion, however gross. But as such characters, viewed in a true light, would be disgustful, care is taken to disguise their deformity under the embellishments of wit, sprightliness, and good humor, which, in mixed company, make a capital figure. It requires not time, nor much thought, to discover the poisonous influence of such plays. A young man of figure, emancipated at last from the severity and restraint of a college education, repairs to the capital disposed to every sort of excess. The play-house becomes his favorite amusement, and he is enchanted with the gayety and splendor of the chief personages. The disgust which vice gives him at first, soon wears off, to make way for new notions, more liberal in his opinion, by which a sovereign contempt of religion, and a declared war upon the purity of the female sex, are con-

verted from being infamous vices to be fashionable virtues. The infection spreads gradually through all ranks, and becomes universal. How gladly would I listen to any one who would undertake to prove that what I have been describing is chimerical! But the dissoluteness of our young people of birth will not suffer me to doubt its reality."* Such was the deliberate judgment of a man of the world.

The late Dr. Channing, of Boston, assuredly no bigot, nor disposed to limit the range of polite amusements, thus expresses himself: "In its present state, the theatre deserves no encouragement. It is an accumulation of immoral influences. It has nourished intemperance and all vice. In saying this, I do not say that the amusement is radically, essentially evil. . . . But how little does the theatre accomplish its end? How often is it disgraced by monstrous distortions of human nature, and still more disgraced by profaneness, coarseness, indelicacy, and low wit, such as no woman worthy of the name can hear without a blush, and no man can take pleasure in without self-degradation. Is it possible that a Christian and a refined people can resort to theatres, where exhibitions of dancing are given fit only for brothels, and where the most licentious class of the community throng unconcealed to tempt and to destroy? That the theatre should be suffered to exist in its present degradation, is a reproach to the community."†

A sterner rebuke no Puritan has ever given of the theatre *as it is*, than this of the founder of American

*Elements of Crit. c. 2, sec. 2. †Channing's Works, vol. 2, p. 332, 333

Unitarianism. As to his intimation that the stage might possibly be purified, it is enough to say that the experiment has been tried a thousand times without success. Purge it of its nameless abominations, and it ceases to attract its chief frequenters. Give it moral elevation, and the play-house will show

"A beggarly account of empty boxes,"

As Shakspeare tells us that "many a robustious, periwig-pated fellow," on the stage, "will tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of groundlings; who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise;" so is it with the play itself: it must be adapted to the audience.

A few years ago, the manager of the Old Park Theatre, in New York, attempted to relieve his establishment of that especial curse referred to by Dr. Channing. He found it impossible to sustain himself, and, by a public card, announced the indiscriminate re-opening of his house.

The illustrious SAMUEL JOHNSON, the instructor and friend of Garrick, who was intimate with the theatre and its frequenters, speaks of the life of the player as "that condition which makes almost every man, for whatever reason, contemptuous, insolent, petulant, selfish and brutal." Can that be other than a school of vice, which produces such results?

Hear the immortal statesman and philanthropist, WILLIAM WILBERFORCE: "There has been much argument concerning the lawfulness of theatrical amusements.* . . . If there were any thing of

* He expressly includes the Opera in these remarks; and justly, for the Opera is a play in verse, set to music.

that sensibility for the honor of God, and of that zeal in his service, which we show in behalf of our earthly friends, or of our political connexions, should we seek our pleasure in that place which the debauchee, inflamed with wine, or bent on the gratification of other licentious appetites, finds most congenial to his taste and temper of mind? In that place, from the neighborhood of which decorum, modesty, and regularity retire, while riot and lewdness are invited to the spot, and invariably select it as their chosen residence? where the sacred name of God is often profaned! where sentiments are often heard with delight, and motions and gestures often applauded, which would not be tolerated in private company, but which may far exceed the utmost license allowed in the social circle, without at all transgressing the large bounds of theatrical decorum! where, when moral principles are inculcated, they are not such as a Christian ought to cherish in his bosom, but such as it must be his daily endeavor to extirpate; not those which Scripture warrants, but those which it condemns as false and spurious; being founded in pride, and ambition, and overvalnation of human favor!"

An infidel, "a well-instructed master in the science of human life," once openly "recommended theatrical amusements as the most efficacious expedient for relaxing among any people, that preciseness and austerity of morals, to use his own phrase, which, under the name of holiness, it is the business of Scripture to inculcate and enforce. Nor is this position merely theoretical. The experiment was tried, and tried success-

fully, in the city of Geneva, in which it was wished to corrupt the morality of purer times." *

The testimony of Sir Walter Scott, the author of the Waverly Novels, is not liable to the suspicion of proceeding from a too scrupulous refinement of religious principles. He wrote for the theatre, attended the theatre, and, in his essays on the drama, attempts to defend the theatre. Yet he admits that the most refined theatres in the world are "destined to company so scandalous, that persons not very nice in their taste of society, must yet exclaim against the abuse."

He acknowledges "the impossibility of excluding a certain description of females. The best part of the house is openly and avowedly set off for their reception, and no part is free from their intrusion, or at least from the disgusting improprieties to which their neighborhood gives rise. . . . No man of delicacy would wish the female part of his family to be exposed to such scenes; no man of sense would wish to put youth of the male sex in the way of such temptations." . . "Unless," he adds, "in the case of strong attraction upon the stage, prostitutes and their admirers usually form the principal part of the audience." Such is the testimony of one predisposed to favor theatres, as to their actual character in the capital city of one of the most enlightened Christian nations! His advocacy of their cause amounts simply to this: That some of the evils might be removed; though he does not pretend that they ever were, or indulge the hope that they ever will be removed.

* Pract. View, p. 226.

Hannah More, the most eminent lady, as a Christian writer and philanthropist, of the last generation, is a singularly competent witness on this subject.

In early life she was the friend and favorite of Dr. Johnson, the lexicographer, and of his pupil and protege, David Garrick, "the most distinguished actor ever produced by the English stage." She was herself the author of many tragedies, and had every opportunity of observing the effect of theatrical amusements conducted under the most favorable auspices. The stage, under Garrick's management, shone with unparalelled lustre; and he introduced a reform, both in the conduct and license of the drama, very honorable to his genius and character. Hannah More witnessed the experiment, and records its failure. The mature judgment of such a lady, formed under such circumstances, may be admitted as decisive. Hear it:

"From my youthful courses of reading, and early habits of society and conversation, . . . I had been led to entertain that common, but as I must now think, delusive and groundless hope, that the stage, under certain regulations, might be converted into a school of virtue. That it required nothing more than a correct judgment and a critical selection to transform a pernicious pleasure into a profitable entertainment. Unfortunately, this Utopian good cannot be produced, until not only the stage itself has undergone a complete purification, but until the audience shall be purified also. There must always be a congruity between the taste of the spectator and the nature of the spectacle, in order to effect that point of union which can produce

pleasure; for it must be remembered that people go to a play, not to be instructed, but to be pleased. If the sentiments and passions exhibited were no longer accommodated to the sentiments of the audience, corrupt nature would soon withdraw itself from the vapid amusement, and thin benches would too probably be the reward of the reformer."

"I have never perused any of these treatises, excellent as some of them are said to be, which pious divines have written against the pernicious tendency of theatrical entertainments. The convictions of my mind have arisen solely from experience and observation."

"The Christian's amusements must be blameless, as well as ingenious; safe, as well as rational; moral, as well as intellectual. They must have nothing in them which may be likely to excite any of the tempers which it is his daily task to subdue; any of the passions which it is his constant business to keep in order. His chosen amusements must not deliberately add to the 'weight' which he is commanded to lay aside; they, should not irritate the 'besetting sin' against which he is struggling; they should not obstruct the 'spiritual mindedness' which he is told is 'life and peace;' they should not inflame that 'lust of the flesh,' 'that lust of the eye,' and that 'pride of life,' which he is forbidden to gratify."

Speaking of the most unexceptionable plays, while affirming that "the English dramatic poets are, in general, more licentious than those of most other countries," she adds:

"What I insist on is that there almost inevitably

runs through the web of tragic drama, (comedy is still worse,) a prominent thread of false principle. It is generally the leading object of the poet to erect a standard of honor in direct opposition to the standard of Christianity; and this is not done subordinately, incidentally, occasionally, but worldly honor is the very soul, and spirit, and life-giving principle of the drama. Honor is the religion of tragedy. It is her moral and political law. Her dictates form its institutes. Fear and shame are the capital crimes in her code. Against these all the eloquence of her most powerful pleaders, against these her penal statutes, pistol, sword and poison, are in full force. Injured honor can only be vindicated at the point of the sword; the stains of injured reputation can be washed out only in blood. Love, jealousy, hatred, ambition, pride, revenge, are too often elevated into the rank of splendid virtues, and form a dazzling system of worldly morality, in direct contradiction to the spirit of that religion whose characteristics are 'charity, meekness, peaceableness, long-suffering, gentleness, forgiveness.' 'The fruits of the Spirit,' and the fruits of the stage, perhaps exhibit as pointed a contrast as the human imagination can conceive."

"How many young men pick up their habits of thinking and their notions of morality from the play-house! When Budgell, Addison's co-laborer in the Spectator, committed suicide, he vindicated his self murder by referring to Addison's tragedy of Cato; exclaiming, as he struck the fatal blow,

> "What Cato did, and Addison approved,
> Must sure be right!"

"If religion teaches, and experience proves, the immense importance to our tempers and morals of a regular attendance on public worship, which is only one day in a week, who that knows the human heart will deny how much more deep and lasting will be the impression likely to be made by a far more frequent attendance at those places where sentiments of a direct contrary tendency are exhibited; exhibited, too, with every addition which can charm the imagination and captivate the senses. Once in a week, it may be, the young minds are braced by the invigorating principles of a strict and self-denying religion: on the intermediate nights, these good resolutions (if such they have made) are melted down with all that can relax the soul, and dispose it to yield to the temptations against which it was the object of the Sunday's lecture to guard and fortify it."

"They are told—and from whose mouth do they hear it?—'Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, and the peace-makers.' Will not these and such like humbling propositions, delivered one day in seven only, . . . be more than counterbalanced by the speedy and much more frequent recurrence of the nightly exhibition, whose precise object is, too often, not only to preach, but to personify doctrines in diametrical and studied opposition to poverty of spirit, to purity, to meekness, forbearance and forgiveness? Doctrines not simply expressed, as those of Sunday are, in the naked form of axioms, principles and precepts, but realized, embodied, made alive, furnished with organs, clothed, decorated,

brought into lively discourse, into interesting action; enforced with all the energy of passion, adorned with all the graces of language, and exhibited with every aid of emphatical delivery, every attraction of appropriate gesture. To such a complicated temptation is it wise, voluntarily, studiously, unnecessarily, to expose frail and erring creatures? Is not the conflict too severe? Is not the competition too unequal?" *

Once more, I offer you testimony of like character, from a widely different quarter. JEAN JAQUES ROUSSEAU, by his own confession, was infamously unprincipled and immoral. He ranks with Voltaire as a Coryphæus of infidelity. In the ancient city of Geneva, the home of Calvin, and once the stronghold of reformed Christianity, the enemies of the gospel attempted to establish a theatre, for the avowed purpose, as has been said, of "relaxing the preciseness and austerity of Christian morals." With strange but characteristic inconsistency, Rousseau opposed its establishment.

"I observe," said he, "in general, that the situation of an actor is a state of licentiousness and bad morals; that the men are abandoned to disorder; that the women lead a scandalous life; that the one and the other, at once avaricious and profane, ever overwhelmed with debt, and ever prodigal, are as unrestrained in their disposition, as they are void of scruple in respect to the means of providing for it. In all countries their profession is dishonorable: those who exercise it are everywhere contemned. Even at Paris, where they are treated with more consideration, and where their con-

* H. MORE'S Works, Preface to Tragedies, vol. 1: 502–510.

duct is better, than in any other place, a sober citizen would fear to be upon terms of intimacy with the same actors who may be seen every day at the tables of the great. This contempt is strongest wherever the manners are most pure; and there are countries of innocence and simplicity where the trade of an actor is held almost in horror. These are incontestable facts. You will say, they result only from prejudice. I agree to it; but these prejudices being universal, we must seek for a universal cause; and I do not see where we can find it except in the profession itself. I might impute these prejudices to the declamation of priests, if I did not find them established among the Romans before the birth of Christianity; and not only vaguely scattered in the minds of the people, but authorized by express laws, which declared actors infamous, and took from them the title and the rights of Roman citizens."

Again, in terms how appropriate to our own situation, in which every appliance of wealth, of art, and of taste, has been lavished upon an Opera House, to render a pernicious, and hitherto unfashionable amusement, attractive, Rousseau exclaims—"It is impossible that an establishment so contrary to our ancient manners can be generally applauded. How many generous citizens will see with indignation this monument of luxury and effeminacy raise itself upon the ruins of our ancient simplicity. Do you think they will authorize this innovation by their presence? Be assured that many of them go without scruple to the theatres of Paris, who will never enter that of Geneva, because the good of their country is dearer to them than their amusement.

Where is the imprudent mother who would dare to carry her daughter to this dangerous school; and how many respectable women would think themselves dishonored in going there! If some persons in Paris abstain from the theatre, it is simply on a principle of religion; and surely this principle will not be less powerful among us, who shall have the additional motives of morals, of virtue, and of patriotism; motives which will restrain those whom religion would not restrain."

I will close this array of evidence with that of some famous actors, who may well be heard when they condemn their own profession. A celebrated English comedian once met a clergyman whom he had known intimately in early life. Both were absent from home in pursuit of health. "I have been acting Sir John Falstaff so often," said the player, "that I thought I should have died; and the physicians advised me to visit the country for the benefit of the air. Had you died, it would have been in serving the best of masters; but had I, it would have been in the service of the devil. As soon as I recover I shall be King Richard. This is what they call a good play. I acknowledge there are some striking and moral things in it; but after that, I shall come in with my farce of 'A Dish of all Sorts,' and knock all that in the head. Fine reformers, we!"

The newspapers, some fifteen years ago, published the following statement, which has never been contradicted:

"W. C. Macready is, we believe, considered at the head of the list of theatrical actors. He has, by his

long connection with the stage, obtained as much, and as varied, and correct information relative to its peculiar tendency as any man living. Nobody who knows any thing about the man will question this. In the bosom of a most interesting family he now resides at Sherbourne, England. Among other rules for the government of his family, there is one from which he, it is said, has never deviated. 'None of my children shall ever, with my consent, or on any pretence, enter a theatre, or have any visiting connection with actors or actresses.' This rule is from a man who has seen the height and depth of theatrical morality, who has witnessed the purity and pollution of its devotees. Yet there are thousands who are consenting to the destruction of their children, by allowing them to go where one who is best acquainted with the whole matter declares "there is nothing but mischief and ruin." If I am correctly informed, another, who ranks with the foremost of living American actors, adopts the same rule in respect to his daughters.

I have thus presented you, my friends, some evidence for the proposition I have undertaken to establish:—That the wise and good of every age since the birth of the drama, Pagans as well as Christians, sages, moralists, philosophers, legislators, divines, with the whole body of the Christian Church acting in ecclesiastical capacity, have unitedly and uniformly condemned and reprobated theatrical exhibitions, as dangerous to morals, debasing to actors and audience, demoralizing to society, essentially corrupt and corrupting.

Remember that the summary and specimen of testimony to which the time of this service restricts us, resembles a few blocks of stone picked up from an inexhaustible quarry. These few witnesses represent a vast multitude of the best part of human society; from Solon, who may have attended the first performance of comedy, to the leading living actors in England and America. To these I have added the deliberate judgment of such men as Ovid, Julian, and Rousseau; a kind of testimony which could easily be multiplied; that of eminently bad men, whose conscience and experience forced them to condemn what they loved and practiced.

It had been far easier to have expressed my own opinions in my own language; but would they, however enforced by argument and persuasion, have had equal influence upon your understanding? I bless God, that through the early instruction and pious example "of parents passed into the skies," I never saw a play, never even entered a theatre. You might have asked me, then,—what can you know of the stage? I might, indeed, have answered,—one need not eat a joint of tainted meat to ascertain its putridity. One need not have a loathsome disease to understand its character and consequences.

But I have chosen to adopt this method because the language of my witnesses does not simply pronounce their disapproval, or abhorence, of theatrical amusements: it assigns the ground of their conviction, the reasons which justify their conclusion. If you will weigh and analyze these utterances you will find here

the substance of the best arguments against the stage. You have the defective morals, anti-Christian principles, pernicious sentiments, polluting examples; the profanity, impiety, and licentiousness of *the plays* themselves; of the body of dramatic literature; from which description a few better pieces can not redeem the mass. You have the character of the theatrical operatives, *the players*, naturally no worse than others, but, with rare exceptions, depraved by the nature, habits, and associations of their unhappy profession. You have the character of *the audience* usually attracted by such entertainments;—here and there a stray sheep of Christ's flock, sadly out of place, with a herd of gay, fashionable, nominal Christians, just fitted to scandalize the cause they profess to love; a crowd of the young, flitting like moths around the brilliant flame that consumes them; while the mass, from Athens to New York, are the ignorant, the dissipated, the debauched, the scum and refuse of society. You have *the fruits of the stage*, in broken constitutions, polluted minds, infamous lives, blighted morals, and ruined hopes; in the wide-spread debasement of society. You have them, did I say? Nay, the pit holds them—the pit of God's eternal justice conceals them! From pit, box, and gallery of theatres innumerable here—they are congregated in countless throngs of lost souls, under an everlasting doom, as "lovers of pleasures more than of God?"

Christians! I will not dishonor you by asking whether you will patronize the theatre; by charging you to abstain from attendance. I adjure you, in the name of

the Divine Master whom we serve,—and I call upon all good citizens and true philanthropists—to oppose, to reprobate, the mighty effort now making to fasten upon us and upon our children this unmitigated curse!

(Communicated to the Dayton Empire, Jan. 2, 1866.)

A LAY SERMON ON THE DRAMA.

Eccl. iii. 1. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.

* * * * * *

4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

"The stage is a supplement to the Pulpit, where virtue, according to Plato's sublime idea, moves our love and affection when made visible to the eye." (D'Israeli.)

I have the temerity to undertake a brief reply to Dr. Thomas' sermon against Theatres, recently published in the Dayton *Journal*, and now issued in pamphlet form. The purpose to do so did not occur to me until Friday last, and I have prepared this answer amidst other occupations of an engrossing nature. I mention this fact not as an apology for my own shortcoming; but to let your readers know how much may be gathered up, in so short a time, in refutation of the reverend gentleman's plausible argument. Much more is ready at hand for use by the industrious searcher after truth.

This article is dictated by no disrespect for the person against whom it is directed; nor for the sacred calling which he has so long filled. It is prompted by a love of truth, of intelligence, refinement, and cultivated enjoyment; and by a dislike, hearty and innate, of eve-

rything like austerity, bigotry or narrow minded Christianity. Yet I must be allowed to say, in this connection, that the argument of Dr. THOMAS sounds more like the plea of an advocate than the impartial exposition of truth; and I cannot help expressing my surprise that one so learned as he is reputed to be, should have fallen into so many errors of logic, history and of fact. However, we are all human, and liable to errors; whether our early dramatic education has been neglected, or not.

Not having the honor of being a clergyman, I have thought it my privilege to take a secular as well as a religious text. I have adopted the text from ECCLESIASTES as a fair off-set to the one heading the sermon of the reverend gentleman. The extract from the elder D'ISRAELI expresses so nearly my own views of theatres, when properly conducted, that I have chosen it as what might be termed my *secular* text.

I shall not attempt a defense of the stage upon any plan of my own; but will follow the order and the argument which is under consideration.

The origin of theatrical amusements has but little bearing upon their present morality or immorality. The introductory part of the sermon may therefore be passed over in silence.

The Doctor's proposition, in his own language, is as follows:

"The wisest and best men of every age; Heathen and Christian Legislators, Philosophers, Divines; the Christian Church, ancient and modern; have, with one voice, from the very birth of the drama, condemned, opposed and denounced theatrical exhibitions as essentially corrupt and demoralizing both to individuals and society."

He then adduces the evidence. First, of eminent and deserving pagans; second, of legislation, ancient and modern, against the theatre; third, of the precepts and practice of the church, ancient and modern; and lastly of eminent persons of different characters and stations in life, whether religious or not. After producing his testimony, he winds up his discourse with a repetition of his proposition in still broader language:

"I have thus presented to you, my friends, some evidence of the proposition I have undertaken to establish; that the wise and good of every age since the birth of the drama, Pagans as well as Christians, Sages, Moralists, Philosophers, Legislators, Divines with the whole body of the church acting in its ecclesiastical capacity, have *unitedly and uniformly* condemned theatrical exhibitions, as dangerous to morals, debasing to actors and audience, demoralizing to society, essentially corrupt and corrupting."

Upon these propositions I take issue with him. Admitting that *some* of the wise and great, Heathen and Christian, have condemned the drama, I totally deny the statement that *all* have done so. On the contrary, disputing the facts of our preacher, I allege that in all ages and among all men, heathen or Christian, the drama has found illustrious advocates not only of its innocence, but of its honorable and useful tendencies; and that its most illustrious followers have been the companions and intimate friends of Kings, Statesmen, Philosophers and Poets. Let us examine the opinions and conduct of the ancients, or Pagans, first.

Solon was not an enemy to the drama. On the contrary Plutarch tells us: "Solon who was always willing to hear and to learn, and in his old age more inclined to any thing that might divert and entertain, particularly to music and good fellowship, went to see

THESPIS himself exhibit, as the custom of the ancient poets was." He did not like the play because of its "useless fabrications." Hence he made the remark attributed to him.

PHYRNICUS, of Athens, came next to THESPIS, being his disciple. He was the author of a tragedy which THEMISTOCLES caused to be exhibited with great magnificence; and the success of which was perpetuated by the following monumental inscription:

"Themistocles, the Phrearian, exhibited the tragedy; Phyrnicus composed it; Adimantus presided."

AESCHYLUS was the father of tragedy; a player himself, who invented even minute additions to the wardrobe; was held in high esteem and held a command at some of the battles in which he fought.

SOPHOCLES was also an actor and carried off prizes. When the illustrious CIMON returned from his warlike expedition, he presided with his Generals at the contest between SOPHOCLES and AESCHYLUS and awarded the prize. SOPHOCLES was rewarded for one of his successful tragedies with the rank of General, and accompanied PERICLES in that capacity in the Samian war.

EURIPIDES, player and writer, was held in the highest esteem in his day, and was a distinguished officer.

NEOPTOLEMUS was an actor as well as poet; yet was sent Ambassador on an important mission.

The same is true of ARISTODEMUS, who received from the public, at the solicitation of DEMOSTHENES, a golden crown for the faithful administration of public affairs.

SATYRUS, the player, was an acquaintance of the great DEMOSTHENES, and gave him valuable hints in his oratorical studies.

Roscius and Æsopus, Roman actors, were the co-temporaries of Cicero; his tutors, friends and constant associates.

Terence, the actor, numbered Lælius, the "wise," and Scipio Africanus among his warmest friends.

The illustrious Brutus journeyed from Rome to Naples to see an excellent company of comedians; and was so pleased that he gave them letters to Cicero, who received them with honor.

Let me add here, in conclusion, that in the construction of the Attic Theatre, seats were expressly reserved for the Priests, Generals, Archons, the whole Senate and the officers of the Government, which seats they regularly filled. So much for Paganism.

Dr. Thomas' next point is that legislation has been frequently directed against the stage. To some extent this is true, and of very little consequence as an argument for the Doctor's position. That abuses have grown up in the theatrical profession, which at times have needed legislative action, no one will pretend to deny. But this legislation—except in the glorious old days of New England blue laws—has generally been directed against the abuses, and not the drama itself. Indeed, at this present time, there is probably no law against theatrical representations, in any civilized country in the world, and none would be tolerated. Why then should the Church attempt to set up a law of its own?

There has been little legislation, comparatively, against the stage. It has received a high indorsement in the following extract from the preamble of the act of

Parliament establishing the present Theatre Royal in Dublin:

"Whereas, the establishing a well regulated theatre in the City of Dublin, being the residence of the chief governor or governors of Ireland, will be productive of advantage and tend *to improve the morals* of the people, &c."

And if legislation has been occasionally directed against it, it has also had violent measures adopted for its support. Who that has read HUME can forget the famous thousand paged quarto of a foolish lawyer named PRYNNE who wrote so violently against plays and interludes in the time of CHARLES the First. With his voluminous tirade Dr. THOMAS' sermon bears no more comparison than, according to his idea, our insignificant Opera House does to the magnificent edifice of Scaurus. But Mr. PRYNNE was fined £5,000, imprisoned for life, and was inhumanly deprived of his ears.

But legislation either way amounts to but little. Nor should we denounce the theatre because it has had its degenerate days or its unworthy members. All pursuits and professions have had their days of darkness and their black sheep. Should some industrious infidel gather together all the "sins of impurity" laid to the charge of the clerical profession, within the past four years, and unfortunately too truly, the record would *seem* as unanswerable as the Doctor's; and the argument against his divine calling almost as conclusive.

But let us proceed to a more important point—the third division of his evidence, "that the precepts and practice of the Christian Church, ancient and modern, witness against the stage."

To most of Dr. THOMAS' readers this is the strong point of his argument.

I have looked through his sermon, in vain, for a single quotation from the Gospels, the Acts, or the writings of the Apostles, even indirectly reflecting upon the stage. Yet when Christ was upon earth, there was a Theatre in JERUSALEM, and there were Theatres in Damascus, Ephesus, Antioch, Athens, Thessalonica, Phillippi, Alexandria and Rome, at all of which places some of his Apostles preached divine truth, and reproved the prevalent vices. Why is there such total silence upon this point? Why did Paul familiarly quote in his sacred writings, from Menander, and the tragic writers of antiquity—yet not denounce one of them.

It is no doubt true, that in the early struggles of Christianity, the fascinations of the Pagan Theatre occasioned much anxiety to the bishops and fathers, and that many petitions were sent to the Emperor to suppress dramatic exhibitions, at least upon the sacred days of the Church. But we should be careful to remember that in those days, Christianity and Paganism were in direct antagonism; that each was struggling for existence; that Pagan Theatres were based upon Pagan ideas and Mythology; but above all that the chief exhibitions in Theatres were gladiatorial combats, so repugnant to decency and humanity, as to deserve and receive the condemnation of the civilized world.

Yet the early fathers, desirous of making the drama useful, and not regarding it "essentially corrupt," wrote plays themselves for public representation.

GREGORY NANZEANZEN, who was a bishop of Constantinople in the latter part of the fourth century, wrote and introduced plays, one of which is still extant.

APPOLINARIS, bishop of Laodicea, wrote tragedies after the style of EURIPIDES and comedies in imitation of MENANDER.

And THEOPHYLACT, patriarch of Constantinople in the tenth century, introduced histrionic farces, with singing and dancing, into the churches and houses of religious worship.

In later days Mysteries and Moralities were enacted, and were a mode of divine worship.

But now let us come down to more modern days; confining ourselves to the practice and preaching of the Church or its ministers. I shall divide this portion into two parts—in the first, including the prominent divines who have *written* plays for the stage; and in the second, giving the opinions of eminent churchmen upon the morality of Theatres.

It is stated in Baker's Biographia Dramatica that over 200 English clergymen have been dramatic authors. Be this as it may, quite a number of distinguished clergymen and Christians have written for the stage.

Dr. YOUNG, author of Night Thoughts, wrote the tragedies of Revenge, Busiris and the Brothers: the last being acted for the express purpose of adding to the fund for the propagation of the gospel.

Rev. C. MATURIN is the author of Bertram, Manuel, Osmyn the Renegade, and Fredolfo.

Rev. Dr. CROLY wrote Catiline, and a comedy entitled Pride Shall Have a Fall.

Rev. Dr. MILMAN, author of the history of Christianity, wrote Fazio, The Fall of Jerusalem, The Martyr of Antioch, and Belshazzar's Feast.

Rev. Dr. HOME wrote the splendid tragedy of Douglas. And here let me add a piece of history in this connection. This magnificent performance threw Scotland into ecstacy. The Theatre was crowded to hear and see it. The author and many of the clergy were present at its first representation. The Presbyterians, taking fire, denounced the passion for the stage as "a delusion of Satan." The General Assembly meeting soon after, the matter was called up there. Several of the preachers made apologies, and were let off with a reprimand. Then came up the question as to the propriety of visiting the Theatre. An act was proposed subjecting to ecclesiastical censure all members of the Church, male or female, *lay* or *clerical*, who should be present at any theatrical exhibition. *This act was defeated*, and chiefly by the efforts of the famous Dr. ROBERTSON; and the extent of the action of the General Assembly was a recommendation to Presbyteries to take care that none of the *ministers* attend the Theatre.

I shall now proceed to give the opinions of distinguished divines and preachers.

CRABBE, poet and preacher, in his poem "the Library," says:

> "Yet *virtue owns the tragic muse a friend*
> Fable her means—morality her end.
> She makes the vile to virtue yield applause
> And own her sceptre, while they break her laws.
> For vice in others is abhorred of all,
> And villains triumph when the worthless fall."

Dr. ISAAC WATTS, the author of Divine Hymns, thus alludes to the fitness of scriptural subjects for dramatic exposition:

"If the trifling and incredible tales that furnish out a tragedy are

so armed by art and fancy as to become sovereign of the rational powers, to triumph over the affections, and manage our smiles and our tears at pleasure, how wondrous a conquest might be obtained over a wide world, and reduce it at least to sobriety, if the same happy talent were employed in dressing scenes of religion in their proper figures of majesty, sweetness, and tenor? The affairs of this life with reference to a life to come, would shine brightly in a dramatic description."

MARTIN LUTHER says:

"In ancient times the dramatic art has been honored by being made subservient to religion and morality; and in the most enlightened country of antiquity, in Greece, the theatre was supported by the State. The dramatic nature of the dialogues of Plato has always been justly celebrated: and from this we may conceive the great charm of dramatic poetry. Action is the true enjoyment of life; nay, life itself. The great truths of mankind are, either from their situation or incapacity for uncommon efforts, confined within a narrow circle of operations; *of all amusements, therefore, the theatre is the most profitable*, for there we see important actions when we can not act importantly ourselves. It affords us a renovated picture of life, a compendium of whatever is animated and interesting in human existence. The susceptible youth opens his heart to every elevated feeling—the philosopher finds a subject for the deepest reflections on the nature and constitution of man."

In another place he says:

"And indeed Christians ought not altogether to fly and abstain from comedies, because now and then gross tricks and dallying passages are acted therein; for then it will follow, that by reason thereof, we should also abstain from reading the Bible. Therefore it is of no value that some allege such and the like things, and for these causes would forbid Christians to read or act comedies."

Rev. Dr. KNOX, in his Essays, says:

"There seems to me to be no method more effectual of softening the ferocity and improving the minds of the lower classes of a great capital than the frequent exhibitions of tragical pieces in which the distress is carried to the highest extreme, and the moral is at once self-evident, affecting and instructive. The multitudes of those who can not read, or if they could, have neither time nor abilities for deriving much advantage from reading, are powerfully impressed, through the medium of the eyes and ears, with those important truths, which, while they illuminate the understanding, correct and mollify the heart. Benevolence, justice, heroism, and the wisdom of moderating the passions are plainly pointed out and forcibly recommended to those savage sons of uncultivated nature who have few opportunities, and would have no inclination for instruction, if it did not present itself in the form of a delightful instruction."

Dr. GREGORY, in his "Legacy to his Daughter," says:

"I know of no entertainment that gives such pleasure to any person of sentiment or humor as the theatre."

Dr. BLAIR, one of the most eminent of divines, says:

"Dramatic poetry has, among civilized nations, been always considered a rational and useful entertainment, and judged worthy of careful and serious discussion. As tragedy is a high and distinguishing species of composition, so also in its general strain and spirit, it is favorable to virtue; and therefore, though dramatic writers may, sometimes, like other writers, be guilty of improprieties, though they may fail in placing virtue forcibly in the due point of light, yet no reasonable man can deny tragedy to be a reasonable species of composition. Taking tragedies complexly, I am fully persuaded that the impressions left by them upon the mind, are, on the whole favorable to virtue and good dispositions. And therefore the zeal which some pious men have shown against the entertainment of the theatre must rest only on the abuse of comedy, which indeed has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it. I am happy, however, to have it in my power to observe that of late years a sensible reformation has begun to take place in English comedy."

PHILIP MELANCTHON says:

"On frequent reflection concerning the manners and discipline of mankind, I greatly admire the wisdom of the Greeks, who at the commencement exhibited tragedies to the people, by no means for the purpose of mere amusement, as is commonly thought, but much more on this account: that by the consideration of heinous examples and misfortunes they might turn their rude and fierce spirits to moderation and the bridling of undue desires. These things therefore were acted, beheld, read and listened to, both by the philosophers and the people, not as mere romances, but as instructions for the government of life. Men were thus warned of the causes of human calamities, which in those examples they saw brought on and increased by depraved desires."

Let me conclude this branch of the evidence by an extract from the history of Greece by the Right Rev. CONNOP THIRWALL, Lord Bishop of St. David's. Speaking of the poet and *comic actor* ARISTOPHANES, he says:

"But a still higher praise seems to belong to the poet ARISTOPHANES, and his genius, wonderful as it is, is less admirable *than the*

use he made of it. He whose works have furnished the most abundant materials for all the repulsive descriptions of his cotemporaries which have been given in modern times, never ceased to exert his matchless powers in endeavors to counteract, to remedy or to abate the evils which he observed. He seems to have neglected no opportunity of giving wholesome advice in that which he judged the most efficacious form; and only took advantage of his *theatrical privilege* to attack prevailing abuses, and to rouse contempt and indignation against the follies and vices which appeared to him most intimately connected with the worst calamities and dangers of the times.

The patriotism of ARISTOPHANES was honest, bold and generally wise."

It was of ARISTOPHANES that PLATO said "*his soul was the sanctuary of the Graces.*" PLATO studied his works, and honored him with a place in one of his own masterpieces.

The practice of such men as MATURIN, MILMAN, HOME, YOUNG, CROLY, ROBERTSON and others; and the *opinions* of such eminent divines as KNOX, LUTHER, MELANCTHON, BLAIR, CRABBE, GREGORY and THIRLWALL, are entitled to *some* consideration at the hands of even the most austere member of the most austere church.

I now proceed to the last branch of the testimony by which Dr. THOMAS thinks he supports his proposition; "the evidence of eminent persons of different characters and stations in life, whose abilities, experience and opportunities of observation entitle them to express a conclusive opinion." I may be permitted to say here that I do not place the same value upon the *opinions* of others in regard to the morality or immorality of the stage, as Dr. THOMAS seems to do. But in addressing myself to his proposition, it must be met in the way it is advanced.

The intelligent public was very much surprised upon

reading the reverend gentleman's sermon in print; and, I may say, somewhat amused at the sweeping assertions it contains as to the facts of history and the deductions therefrom. But nothing surprised it more than the argument attempted to be drawn from the few names presented under this last head.

We must remember, that the proposition is that "the wise and good of every age, since the birth of the drama, &c., have *unitedly and uniformly* condemned and reprobated theatrical exhibitions as dangerous to morals, &c."

The names of moderns by which this overwhelming proposition is supported are the following: WITHERSPOON, TILLOTSON, COLLIER, CHANNING, BRUMOY, KAIMES, JOHNSON, WILBERFORCE, SCOTT, HANNAH MORE, JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU and MACREADY! Taking Dr. THOMAS' proposition *literally* these names comprise *all* the sages, moralists, philosophers, legislators and divines of modern times. Of course he did not intend it so. But to unthinking or unlearned minds the argument may seem unanswerable! Let us see.

The Dr. JOHNSON, whose name he uses, was the intimate friend of GARRICK and was a composer of tragedy. Irene was the work of his hands.

WALTER SCOTT, whose name he also uses, was passionately devoted to the stage. Let me copy from his interesting life by his son-in-law LOCKART. Speaking of SCOTT he says:

"He had from his boyish days a great love for theatrical representation; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practice extended hospitality, the chief *actors* of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, *were among the most acceptable of his*

quests. Mr. CHARLES YOUNG was the first of them of whom he saw much; as early as 1803 I find him writing of that gentleman to the MARCHIONESS of Abercorn as a *valuable addition* to the society of Edinburgh.

"Another graceful and intelligent performer in whom he took a special interest, and of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle was Miss SMITH, afterwards Mrs. Bartley. But at the period of which I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE and his sister, Mrs. SIDDONS, both of whom he appears to have met often at Lord Abercorn's villa."

We find him in 1809 actually "purchasing a share in a Theatre, and becoming one of the trustees for the general body of proprietors," and from that time during a long series of years he took a lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh Company.

SCOTT was also the intimate friend of Miss JOANNA BAILLIE, the writer of tragedies; he took the greatest interest in her plays; was consulted about all the minutia of costume; attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue.

Such being his experience, what were his opinions. In the article "Drama," in the supplement to the Encyclopedia Brittanica, written by him, he uses the following language:

"The Supreme Being who claimed the seventh day as his own, allowed the other six days of the week for purposes merely human. When the necessity for daily labor is removed and the call of social duty fulfilled, that of moderate and timely amusement claims its place, as a want inherent in our nature. To relieve this want, and fill up the mental vacancy, games are devised, books are written, music is composed, spectacles and plays are invented and exhibited. And if these last have a moral and virtuous tendency; if the sentiments expressed tend to rouse our love of what is noble and our contempt of what is mean; if they unite hundreds in sympathetic admiration of virtue, abhorrence of vice, or derision of folly—it will remain to be shown how far the spectator is more criminally engaged than if he had passed the evening in the idle gossip of society, in the feverish pursuits of ambition; or in the unsated and insatiable struggle after gain—the grave employments of the present life but equally unconnected with our existence hereafter."

Four of the names used by Dr. THOMAS represent the pulpit; two of the others were critics.

Mrs. HANNAH MORE, one of his witnesses, and a pious old lady, was herself at one time a copious writer of dramas; and favored the Theatre extensively, until in her "maturer years," her plays not being properly appreciated, she came to the consoling conclusion that it was impossible to elevate and improve the drama!

Another name produced is that of the great actor MACREADY; upon the strength of a newspaper paragraph. I must be permitted to doubt the authority of any such testimony. A sermon upon morality must be hard pushed for facts when it falls back for illustration upon irresponsible floating statements in the daily press. But let me use the name of an actress who has shed luster upon America—a talented, beautiful and virtuous lady, still living—Mrs. ANNA CORA MOWATT (now Mrs. RITCHIE); and let me use her words in defense of a profession which she adorned for many years, but has long since abandoned. In her book, from which I have copied freely, will be found the following:

"I have been for eight years an actress. In the exercise of my vocation, I have visited many Theatres throughout this land and in Great Britain. This fact, perhaps, gives me some right to speak upon the stage as an institution; upon its uses and abuses; for I speak (in all humility be it said) from actual knowledge and personal experience. My testimony has, at least the value of being uninterested; for I was not bred to the stage; I entered upon it from the bosom of private life; none who are linked to me by affinity of blood ever belonged to my profession, I am about to leave it of my own choice, and I bid it farewell in the midst of a career which, if it has reached its meridian, has not as yet taken the first downward inclination. I can have no object in defending the drama, apart from the impulse to utter what I believe to be truth, and an innate love and reverence for dramatic art.'

She then devotes some pages to an elaborate defense of her art, when she asks this question:

"If then the stage be an institution acknowledged by the protection of governments as much as any which a passion for literature, or art, or science among men has established, is there not more wisdom in helping to elevate and guide its operations than in denouncing and traducing the institution itself?"

And she finally makes this pertinent remark:

"If the lingering abuses in our Theatres are to be reformed, it can only be done by the mediation of good men, "not so absolute in goodness as to forget what human frailty is," who discarding the illiberal spirit which denounces without investigating, will first examine the reasons of existing abuses, then help to remedy them by their own presence among the audience."

She writes and speaks as if she had the very sermon of Dr. THOMAS under her eyes at the time.

Having referred to the testimony produced by Dr. THOMAS in support of his argument, let us now present the names of great and good men, or wise men and philosophers, who do not concur with him in his illiberal views upon this subject.

MARCUS AURELIUS was a Roman Emperor, distinguished for his virtues and his eminent piety. He has left his opinion in the following words:

"Tragedies were first brought in and instituted to put men in mind of worldly chances and casualties. After the tragedy, ancient comedy was brought in, which had the liberty to inveigh against personal vices; being, therefore, through this, her freedom and liberty of speech, of very good use and effect to restrain men from pride and arrogance; to which end it was that Diogenes took also the same liberty."

Sir THOMAS MORE, the renowned statesman and upright man, both wrote and acted "interludes," as they were called.

ADDISON, who was regarded as an exemplary Christian, wrote the tragedy of Cato, the Opera of Rosamond, and the comedy of the Drummer—a triple sinner! Yet history records his death as a model for the most pious to emulate and envy.

COLERIDGE, THOMPSON, GOLDSMITH, JOANNA BAILLIE, and Miss MITFORD, were all composers for actual representation upon the stage.

Lord BACON tells us, in his works, that

"The drama is as history brought before the eyes. It presents the images of things, as if they were present, while history treats of them as past."

The great MILTON wrote the Masks of Arcadus and Comus, and the tragic poem of Samson Agonistes. In his preface to the last he says:

"Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath ever been held the greatest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems. Heretofore men in highest dignity have labored not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy."

D'ISRAELI, the elder, declares that

"The stage is a supplement to the pulpit, where virtue, according to PLATO'S sublime idea, moves our love and affection when made visible to the eye."

Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS says:

"Every establishment that tends to the cultivation of the pleasures of the mind as distinct from those of the sense, may be considered as an inferior school of morality, where the mind is polished and prepared for higher attainments."

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, in his defense of Poesy, says:

"Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which the poet represented in the most ludicrous sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. And little reason hath any man to say that men learn the evil by seeing it so set out; since there is no man living, but, by the force truth has in his nature, no sooner seeth these men play their parts but wisheth them in pistrinium; so that the right use of comedy will, I think, by nobody be blamed. And much less the high and excellent tragedy that openeth the greatest wound, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh Kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants to manifest their tyrannical humors; that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of the world, and upon how weak foundations gilded roofs are builded."

Much more could easily be gathered together upon this point, was there the time to prepare it. But more is unnecessary for my purpose. I do not claim that *all*

great and good men, &c., have in all times favored the drama, as my antagonist claims unanimity for his proposition; I am simply refuting his claim. In doing so, much is omitted that might be used. Every intelligent reader will perceive and wonder at omissions that may seem striking. In the hurry of preparation these omissions will naturally occur; and if all was said or quoted that could be said or quoted in favor of the drama, a volume would be requisite to contain it.

But I cannot close without adding the testimony of ALEXANDER WEDDERBURNE, a "ruling elder in the Kirk of Scotland," and afterwards Chancellor of England, under the title of Lord LOUGHBOUROUGH. He was the representative for the burgh of Dumfermline in the General Assembly of Scotland, when it met and took under consideration the question raised by the appearance of Dr. HOME'S tragedy, whether the Church should make a movement against the stage. He alludes to DR. HOME (who had resigned before that time) and his tragedy, and the character of Lady Randolph in it, in the following eloquent language:

"Be contented with the laws which your wise and pious ancestors have handed down to you for the conservation of discipline and morals. Already have you driven from your body its brightest ornament (Dr. HOME), who might have continued to inculcate the precepts of the Gospel from the pulpit, as well as embodying them in character and action. Is it, indeed, forbidden to show us the kingdom of heaven by a parable? In all the sermons produced by the united genius of the Church of Scotland, I challenge you to produce any thing more pure in morality, or more touching in eloquence, than the exclamation of Lady Randolph:

——Sincerity!
Thou first of virtues! let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, although the earth shall gape,
And from the gulf of hell destruction cry
To take dissimulations winding way.

My work is now almost done; and I think I may say that the proposition of Dr. THOMAS has been shown to be entirely untenable. But let the public judge.

It is too late at this period of our civilization to decry the drama. It has existed for thousands of years, and has a stronger hold upon the affections of the world now than ever. Great and good men in nearly every age have derived benefit and instruction from it. Its devotees have been the companions of poets, statesmen, orators, divines, councilors, princes, and kings. Who was more honored in his day than GARRICK, from whom England's most illustrious men derived their oratorical inspiration? Who had a more brilliant circle of friends than England's present boast, the great MACREADY? And our own manly, genial artist, FORREST, has he not numbered among his friends and admirers the great, the good, the wise, and even the austere of our day?

In the days of LOUIS XIVth of France, there were men of learning whose prejudices against MOLIERE's profession as a comedian, led them to exclude him from the Academy. A hundred years after his death, the same Academy undid the work of its predecessors, and duly installed the dead man, whose spirit still lived in France and though his body had disappeared in corruption, as a member of its illustrious body, with this single line:

"Nothing was wanting to *his* glory: he was wanting to ours."

In modern days CHARLES KEAN has been the constant visitor of her Majesty the Queen of England; and in France the whole body of the nation mourned, and

has the better of the question! The sacred interests of truth demand that even the unlearned should not be imposed upon by an array of names.

The term "lay," in the title of this article is clearly appropriate; but when "CADMUS" styles his production "a Sermon," he reminds one of Mrs. Partington's "church where the Gospel is dispensed with." He evidently aimed to be candid and courteous. Likely he thought he had succeeded. Yet a secret bias of mind, "hearty and innate," no doubt, as he admits, unhappily betrays itself when he insinuates a charge of "austerity, bigotry, and narrow-minded Christianity" against those who differ from him; in his graceless fling at the "impurities" of the clergy; when he patronizingly styles HANNAH MORE "a pious old lady;" speaks of "the glorious old days of New England blue-laws," of "one fell swoop of Puritanism," and of "the most austere member of the most austere church." Let him remember that scornful epithets are not argument; that a Christian Pastor who exhorts his flock to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," to "keep their garments unspotted from the world," to "avoid even the appearance of evil," "hating even the garments spotted by the flesh," is not necessarily a bigot, or narrow minded. Let him read Luke 19, 11-27, and consider who said, and to whom—"Lord thou art an austere man!"

My argument against the stage was substantially this: That the best and wisest men of every age, "the best part of human society," have pronounced against it. Care was taken, however, in selecting the testimonies both of good and bad men, to present "the substance

of the best arguments against the stage," based upon its intrinsic and historic character.* My witnesses not only gave their opinions, but the reasons for them. In vain, then, does the reviewer object to this method of handling the subject, as laying undue stress upon the mere "opinions of others." There is a divine warrant for an appeal to the voice of the Church, "the pillar and ground of the truth."† "Thus saith the the Lord God, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls."‡ Young America may say now, as Young Judea then said, "We will not walk therein;" but modesty, sound sense, and "the meekness of wisdom," will set no slight value, in deciding questions of practical morality, upon the concurrent testimony of the wise and good. An enlightened conscience, fixing for itself the metes and bounds of Christian duty, will ponder the precept, "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set."§

Admitting the line of argument adopted, CADMUS amuses himself with "the few names" offered in support of my proposition. The names of "moderns" are surprisingly scanty! "Taking his proposition literally,' one might infer that "these names comprise all the sages, moralists, divines," &c., "of modern times!" Are not the testimonies cited expressly called "specimen blocks out of an inexhaustible quarry?"‖ Would CADMUS have me put the Atlantic into a quart pot?—condensei nto an hour's discourse the judgments of all the wise and good in ten centuries? Is it not affirmed, in

* Serm. p. 30. † 1st Tim. iii, 15. ‡ Jer. vi. 16
§ Prov. xxii. 28. ‖ Serm. p. 29.

the language of Dr. WITHERSPOON, that "few Christian writers of any eminence have failed to pronounce sentence against the stage!" I would not boast in advance; but I trust that before I am through, CADMUS will wish that he had produced fewer witnesses.

"Of the twelve names of moderns," says the reviewer, "four represent the pulpit, two were critics," &c. I answer, these were purposely selected as those of representative men, in different classes of society. WITHERSPOON was a Presbyterian, a Scotchman, but one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; TILLOTSON and COLLIER were English Episcopalians; Dr. CHANNING, an American Unitarian; BRUMOY, a learned French Jesuit of the last century, author of the "Theatre des Grecs;" Lord KAIMES, not a mere "critic," as CADMUS thinks, but a lawyer of thirty years' practice, a Judge, for fifty years a writer on law, metaphysics, criticism, &c., and probably a skeptic in religion; Johnson was a scholar; Wilberforce, a statesman; Rousseau, an infidel; Macready, an actor; and Hannah More, despite the reviewer's sneer, the glory of her sex.

It is important to observe here, that, excepting a qualification as to Solon, a fling at Miss More, and a heedless query as to Macready, CADMUS does not impeach the testimony or competence of one of my authorities. He does not even propose to cross-question them.

So much for preliminaries: let us come now to the main question. I have affirmed that the body of the wise and good men in every age have condemned the stage as corrupt and corrupting. There is a serious dif-

ficulty in discussing a proposition of this nature with such a writer as CADMUS. The terms used are relative, and depend for their meaning upon the views of him who employs them. When CADMUS speaks of the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius, a pagan philosopher, who despised and persecuted the Christians,* as "distinguished for his eminent piety," it is evident that he and I can never agree on the previous question, Who are the wisest and best men of every age? He may endorse Pope, in calling him the "good Aurelius," but I shall pronounce him an enemy to true virtue, whose endorsement of the stage is its just condemnation. When Solon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca and Tacitus are quoted as the "best and wisest of Pagans," these terms are again used relatively to heathenism; not in their Christian sense, but, in the language of Cowper, as

"Names almost worthy of a Christian's praise."

Lord Kaimes, Sir Walter Scott, and Dr. Johnson are introduced, not as wise and good men in any high, much less any religious, import of the word; but on the same principle as Ovid, Julian and Rousseau are mentioned, as men whose known principles and position gave weight to their testimony against Theatres.

It would be easy for any one, with the aid of the New American Encyclopedia, to parade a long list of "illustrious" names in support of the stage; but if these witnesses are not illustrious as Christians,—or, if Pagans, distinguished as the moral lights of natural religion,—however famous as poets, orators, or men of genius, their opinions can have no influence in deter

* See Hase. Ch. Hist., 45; Eusebius' Eccl. Hist., 5, 1.

mining a question of moral duty. CADMUS overlooks the matter at issue when he introduces that Grecian and Roman phalanx which constitutes his advance guard, "Phyrnicus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Neoptolemus, Aristodemus, Satyrus, Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles, Demosthenes, Terence, Aesopus, Roscius, Cicero, Lælius, Brutus and Scipio Africanus." One insensibly pauses for breath after reading the list, and recalls Goldsmith's picture of the Village Schoolmaster at Sweet Auburn:

> "In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
> For even though vanquished he could argue still,
> While words of learned length and thundering sound
> Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around."

For what purpose are these gentlemen paraded? In the settlement of a moral question, according to the best lights of heathenism, Socrates, Plato, and Seneca outweigh ten thousand such. To prove that players were not infamous in Greece? Who ever said they were? Certainly not the author of the sermon reviewed. To show that actors, as a body, were reputable at Rome? Cicero himself makes this very Scipio testify the contrary.* And when Cicero contradicts CADMUS, as to Roman law and sentiment, the public will readily decide between them. "So much for Paganism."

I pass over what the reviewer says about legislation; only remarking that my copy of the "Blue Laws" of Connecticut contains not one word about Theatres; so that his side thrust at New England on that score is purely gratuitous.

* See Serm. p. 11.

Under the third, and "most important" head, of the precepts and practice of the Christian Church, CADMUS remarks, "I have looked through his sermon in vain for a single quotation from the Gospels, the Acts, or the writings of the Apostles, even indirectly reflecting upon the stage." Did he look at the texts?—"The heart of fools is in the house of mirth," &c. Did he read that from Luke's gospel,—The good seed is choked by the riches and pleasures of this life? Did he overlook p. 13, where both Peter and Paul are quoted as warning their followers against this very thing? The word *Komos*, used in Rom. XIII. 13., Gal. v. 21., and 1. Pet. IV. 3, and rendered "revelling," is the Greek original of our term *comedy*.*

But granting, for argument's sake, that the Scripture contains no express prohibition of the stage, what follows? It is a favorite argument with all bad men, that the Bible nowhere directly condemns their particular vice. These thirty years past slaveholders have called for the passage which forbid their patriarchal institution, or required masters to free their slaves. The blessed Book has received no additional text of late; but Americans are finding new light upon the old texts. What Scripture condemns masquerades, or gambling, or horse-racing, or a hundred other crimes? All such questions proceed from an ignorance of the nature of revelation. The Bible is not an *Index Rerum Prohibitarum*, a catalogue of things commanded or forbidden; but a communication of divine truths and principles, however taught, which lead to a new and holy life. A

* See Bretschneider's Lexicon.

quickened conscience, by the light of the indwelling Spirit, instructs the Christian how to apply these principles. Were the Scripture such a book as these cavillers require, a holy life would be as mechanical as the motion of a locomotive on the railway track.

"When Christ was upon the earth there was a Theatre in Jerusalem," says CADMUS. Yes, and who built it? That HEROD who "sought the young child's life to destroy him."* Do you ever read that the Master visited that Theatre? He went to the temple, and frequented the synagogues; but would any man learn from the Gospels that a Theatre existed in Jerusalem? Josephus tells us,† that the Gentiles were highly delighted with Herod's exhibitions, but the Jews "regarded them with the utmost horror and detestation." How then must our Lord have regarded them?

"Why did Paul," he asks, "familiarly quote in his sacred writings from Menander and the tragic writers of antiquity" if he did not approve Theatres? May not a Christian writer quote Shakespeare, "to point a moral, or adorn a tale," without countenancing the drama? In fact, Paul never quotes "tragic writers." In Ac. 17, 28, he cites the Phenomena, an astronomical poem of Aratus; in Tit. 1, 12, from Epimenides, a philosophic poet much older than the drama; and in 1 Cor. 15, 33, from a comedy of Menander, a passage very applicable to the stage,

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." ‡

Why did it not occur to Cadmus to cite Ac. 19, 29, 30, 31, "and when Paul would have adventured himself

*Jos. Ant. 15, 8, 1. † Bk. 15, 8, 1, 2.
‡ Eccl. Hist. of Socrates Scholast., Lib. 3, ch. 14.

into the Theatre, the disciples suffered him not?" It would have been equally pertinent with these allusions to classic poetry.

Passing on to the primitive Christians, CADMUS alleges that the Paganism and mythology imbedded in classic drama were the cause of their hostility to theatric representations. He ventures no proof of his assertion; and there is abundant evidence that long after idolatry was overthrown and abolished their hostility continued. But some of "the early fathers, desirous of making the drama useful, and not regarding it as 'essentially corrupt,' wrote plays themselves for public representation." Gregory Nazienzen, and Apollinaris, are given as examples. True, Gregory did write a tragedy, entitled "Christ Suffering;" and the two Apolinares, father and son, threw sacred truths into poetry, like that of Homer, the Greek tragedians, and Pindar. The latter reduced the Gospels and Paul's epistles into the form and style of Plato's dialogues.* But let Milton tell us why they did this. "When Julian the apostate, the subtlest enemy of our faith, made a decree forbidding Christians to study heathen learning," (all the existing school-books were of this kind,) "the Christians were so put to shifts by their crafty means, and so much in danger to decline into all ignorance, that the two Apollinarii were fain to coin all the seven liberal sciences out of the Bible, reducing it into divers forms of orations, poems, dialogues, even to the calculating of a new Christian grammar."†

* Coleman's Christ. Antiquities, 379.

†Lib. of Printing, Prose Works 182: and see the original in Socrates' Ecclesiastical History, Lib. 3, chap. 14.

We come now "to modern days," where CADMUS introduces "the prominent divines who have written plays for the stage," and "the opinions of eminent churchmen upon the morality of Theatres."

I propose to spend a little time upon this part of the subject, and will take the liberty of a few prefatory remarks. In the wide diversity of human opinions, in and out of the Church, eccentric individuals may be found who have differed on some important points from the body to which they properly belonged. A philosopher in search of truth would never single out these exceptions as giving character to a body, or as representing their views and opinions. If CADMUS would fairly overturn my position he must prove that the mass of the wise and good have ever approved the stage. If he would cavil at it, to lull the conscience of such as want an excuse for evil doing, he might show that a good many professed Christians and ministers, in all ages, have conformed to the world and shamed their profession. The former course he has wisely left unattempted. The latter I will not charge upon him. I understand him as assuming a middle ground, to-wit, that while the more rigid and puritanic, and "narrow-minded" Christians have always reprobated theatrical performances, a sufficiently large and respectable class of liberal Christians have entertained different views. Some such broad-minded believers and unbelievers (*broad road* Christians were the fitter term,) he supposes himself, "amidst other occupations of an engrossing character," to have discovered. I shall examine his authorities and if I show that he has wholly mis-

apprehended the position of the few good men whom he refers to; that, in his haste, he has overlooked important facts, and perpetrated a series of literary blunders; and that his most considerable advocates of the stage rather prejudice than benefit his cause; my task will be accomplished.

First, let us take the great reformer, Martin Luther. I have not command of the works of Luther, some twenty folio volumes in German and Latin, and therefore cannot verify the quotation of CADMUS, which, if read with its context, might materially modify its aspect. I freely admit the weight of his authority. Dr. Martin's record is on high, and his monument is the Protestant world. Yet Luther, like Peter, had his faults. "He was no systematic thinker and logical reasoner," says a biographer, "and his writings abound in paradoxes, inconsistencies, and contradictions. He always spoke out his first impressions and momentary convictions from the fullness of his mind and heart, regardless of consequences. * * Some of his private habits, his love for wine and beer, his jovialty and drollery, would have been regarded by the Genevan reformer as inconsistent with true Christian holiness." Luther denied the obligation of the Sabbath; held that the Epistle of James is no part of the inspired Word, but *epistola straminea*, an epistle of straw; and maintained to the last the grave error of Consubstantiation. Let it be remembered, too, that his "Table talk," so often quoted, presents his unpremeditated effusions upon a vast range of topics.

Michelet, in his Life of Luther,* gives us Luther's opinions of "theatrical representations." Three years before his death, he wrote the following letter:†

"Our dear Joachim has asked my judgment respecting *religious shows*, which several of your ministers object to. Briefly, my opinion is this: It has been commanded unto all men to spread and propagate the word of God by every possible means, not merely by speech, but by writings, paintings, sculptures, psalms, songs, and musical instruments. * * Moses desires that the word should move before the eyes; and how, I would ask, can this be more effectively and manifestly done than by representations of this kind, grave and decent, of course, and not mere coarse buffoonery, such as they used to be under popery. These spectacles, properly conducted, strike the imagination of people through their eyes, and move them often far more than public preaching. I know for certain that in lower Germany, where the public teaching of the gospel has been interdicted, *sacred dramas*, founded upon the law and the gospel, have converted great numbers."

If this is Luther's latest judgment on the subject, CADMUS is welcome to make the most of it. Truth requires me to add that "in 1545, Luther was so dissatisfied with the people of Wittenberg, on account of their luxury and vain amusements, that he left the town to spend the remainder of his days elsewhere," and that "the moral condition of the church at Wittenberg, when Luther left it in disgust, in 1545, bears no comparison whatever with that of Geneva in 1564, which

*Chap. 4. †April 5, 1543.

John Knox declared to be the most perfect school of Christ since the days of the Apostles, and which Valentine Andreae afterward held up to the Lutheran Churches of Germany as a model for imitation." Such is the record of history.

Speaking of Knox reminds me that CADMUS has quoted the Rev. Dr. Knox as saying, "There seems to me no more effectual method of softening the ferocity and improving the minds of the lower classes of a great capital than the frequent exhibition of tragical pieces, * * which, while they illuminate the understanding, correct and mollify the heart." And why did not CADMUS confirm this happy suggestion, historically, by showing what a refining effect the theatre has actually produced upon the Bowery boys of New York city! Seriously, who is not shocked at such teachings from the lips of a clergyman? "No more effectual method" indeed! Had he never read how Paul elevated "the barbarous people" of Melita?* Study "The Missing Link," and learn how the simple word of God in the hands of Bible-women in London, where Knox taught such preposterous stuff as this, is now elevating the masses whom he and his like neglected. I know not whom the reviewer supposed this Rev. Dr. Knox to be; some of his readers have mistaken him for the grand old Scotch reformer, John Knox. There have been many of the name, and CADMUS gives no clue but a reference to his essays. When I add that I take him to be Vicessimus Knox, an English school-master at Tunbridge for thirty-three years, and afterwards a London preacher,

* Ac. xxviii., 1-10.

it will be admitted that the statement knocks the wind out of that testimony.

No language can be too strong in reprobating the shameful perversion of Dr. Isaac Watts' opinions, given by Cadmus. If the reader will turn to Watts' "Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth," chap. 8, "A guard against evil influences from persons and things," he will find the subject treated at length. I quote a passage or two: "Among these dangerous and modish diversions, I cannot forbear to mention midnight assemblies, play houses, gaming tables, and masquerades. Let parents who would willingly see their children walking in the paths of piety and virtue, endeavor to guard their inclination from these enticing amusements. The religion and conscience of many a well-inclined youth have been exposed to great and imminent danger among those scenes of vanity and folly, to say no worse. * * * But the children of our age will pertly reply, 'What! must we live like nobody? Must we turn Puritans again? Must we look like fools in company, when there is scarce any discourse but of plays, operas, and masquerades, or cards, dice, and midnight assemblies? And pray what sin is there in any of them?' To this I answer that I am very sorry to find that the children of religious parents choose and delight in company where these things are the chief subject of conversation. I fear lest God, and virtue, and the important things of another world are utterly banished out of such a visiting room, where these discourses are the chief entertainment. * * Where any unhappy customs prevail in the world, that make an

inroad upon your piety, that endanger your virtue, that break the good order of religious families, and are usually or always attended with some mischievous consequences, surely, in these instances, it is better to look like a Puritan, and stand almost alone, than to follow the multitude in the road that leads to iniquity and mischief. A Puritan, or a Separatist from the vain or dangerous courses of a wicked world, is to this day a name of lasting glory. * * There are some things in which you must dare to be singular if you would be Christians, and especially in a corrupt and degenerate age. A sense of the love of God secured to your hearts, and an inward peace of conscience, will infinitely countervail the enmity of the world and overbalance the reproaches of an ungodly generation."

Watts admits, indeed, that a pure drama is conceivable, and suggests, as Luther, Melancthon, and others have done, the possibility of a sacred drama, and adds: "But it is too well known that the comedies which appear on our stage, and most of the tragedies, too, have no design to set religion or virtue in its true light, nor to render vice odious to the spectators. In many of them piety makes a ridiculous figure, and virtue is dressed in the habit of folly; the sacred name of God is frequently taken in vain, if not blasphemed; and the man of flagrant vice is the fine gentleman, the poet's favorite, who must be rewarded at the end of the play. Besides, there is nothing that will pass in our theatres that has not the mixture of some amorous intrigue; lewdness itself reigns and riots in some of their scenes. * * The youth that ventures sometimes into this

infected air, find his antidotes too weak to resist the contagion. The pleasures of the closet, and of devout retirement, are suspended first, and then utterly vanquished by the overpowering influence of the last comedy: the fancy is all over defiled, the vain images rise uppermost in the soul, and pollute the feeble attempts of devotion, till by degrees secret religion is lost and forgotten."

"A poet who made no great pretences to virtue, and who well knew the qualities of the theatre, and its mischievous influence, writes thus of it:

> 'It would be endless to trace all the vice
> That from the play-house takes immediate rise.
> It is the unexhausted magazine
> That stocks the land with vanity and sin.
> * * * By flourishing so long
> Numbers have been undone, both old and young;
> And many hundred souls are now unblest,
> Who else had died in peace, and found eternal rest.'"

Yet the author of this "Discourse" is paraded as a friend to theatres!

The Dr. Gregory referred to by CADMUS, among other "distinguished divines," author of "A Father's Legacy to his Daughters," was a physician, and medical professor in Edinburgh.

But, "over two hundred English clergymen have been dramatic authors." Now, with the highest reverence for the many thousand eminent and godly men who have adorned the established Church of England, I hesitate not to say, that few popular vices can be named which have not been patronized by English clergymen. Was not Swift, whose Tale of a Tub justly exposed him to the suspicion of an ill-concealed infidelity, one of them? Was not Sterne, the vile author of

Tristram Shandy, and of the licentious Sentimental Journey, another? Need I name Sidney Smith, the reviler of Christian missions; or the infidel Colenso, a living Bishop, the scandal of Christendom? What student of English Literature has not read Milton's and Cowper's pungent satires on the clergy, who,

> "For their beHies' sake
> Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?"
>
> "Oh laugh, or mourn with me, the rueful jest,
> A cassock'd huntsman, and a fiddling priest,
>
> Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,
> His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray?

A devout and able writer, himself a clergyman, speaking of the establishment at the beginning of this century, says "gravely and sincerely speaking, the number of clerical characters who will be received with approbation by the Shepherd and Bishop of souls in the great day of final retribution will be small, extremely small.* Whatever allowance we may make for such language, (and I thank God that the evangelical clergy have greatly multiplied in England since Simpson's time,) the mere fact that dramatic authors have been "English clergymen," is no proof that they are either wise or good men. If my Episcopal readers will bear with me for the present, I will do ample justice to graceless Presbyterian Ministers when I come to Home's Tragedy of Douglas.

To recur to the individuals mentioned by CADMUS: the Rev. C. Maturin is styled in the N. A. Cyclopedia, "a British novelist and dramatist." The only play of Dr. Milman ever produced upon the stage, so far as I

* Simpson's Plea for Religion, p. 90.

can find, was written and acted two years before he took orders. Dr. Young, the celebrated author of "Night Thoughts," a poem once so often quoted in the pulpit, is particularly honored.

"Mark how a few plain words shall put him down."

First, Dr. Young in the former half of his life, when he wrote his tragedies, "is said not to have been that ornament to virtue and religion which he afterwards became." Even at forty, "his theological system was not the most consistent and evangelical." He was a courtier, a flatterer, and his flattery was sometimes "inexcusably fulsome and profane." Secondly, his tragedy of Revenge, cited by CADMUS, is an immoral piece, and ends with suicide and an obscene jest. Thirdly, Young dedicated that tragedy to his friend, patron and admirer, the notoriously profligate Duke of Wharton, whose character Macaulay gives, and Pope describes in a single line:

"Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our age."

Fourthly, Young was not a clergyman at all, but a lawyer by profession, till "he was almost fifty, when he entered into orders." Fifthly, when he became a Christian and a clergyman, "thinking the occupation of a dramatic author unsuited to his new calling, he withdrew from rehearsal a new tragedy, The Brothers, which was on the eve of being produced on the stage."* Lastly, in 1758, "his tragedy of The Brothers, written thirty years before, first appeared upon the stage." Young "had devoted £1,000 to the society for the propagation of the gospel, and estimating the probable

* I copy throughout the words of his biographers.

produce of this play at such a sum, he perhaps thought the occasion might sanctify the means, and not thinking as unfavorably of the stage as other good men have done, he committed the monstrous absurdity of giving a play for the propagation of the gospel!" Little thought he that a hundred years after, CADMUS would hold up his example for the imitation of the good people of Dayton! After all, the play was a failure, and "the Doctor made up the deficiency out of his own pocket." Let us hope that he repented of the penuriousness, one of his foibles, and no uncommon one, which led him to commit such folly.

Another English clergyman cited by the reviewer, is "Crabbe, poet and preacher." "In his poem, The Library, he says," &c. Why did not CADMUS quote the whole stanza? It must have been before him. Hear it:

"Lo! where of late the Book of Martyrs stood,
Old pious tracts, and Bibles bound in wood,
There, *such the taste of this degenerate age,*
Stand the profane delusions of the stage.
Yet virtue own the Tragic Muse a friend,
Fable her means, mortality her end:
For this she rules all passion in their turns,
And now the bosom bleeds, and now it burns,
Pity with weeping eye surveys her bowl,
Her anger swells, her terror chills the soul;
She makes the vile to virtue yield applause
And own her sceptre, while they break her laws.
For vice in others is abhorred of all,
And villains triumph when the worthless fall."
Not thus her sister Comedy prevails,
Who shoots at folly, for her arrow fails;
Folly, by dullness armed, eludes the wound,
And harmless sees the feathered shafts rebound;
Unhurt she stands, applauds the archer's skill,
Laughs at her malice, and is folly still.

Does not CADMUS see that Crabbe is satirizing and not eulogizing the drama? And why did not the very

title of the poem—"The Library"—remind him that the author speaks of books, of tragedy and comedy read, not acted? Let him turn to "The Borough," Lett. 12, and he will find the stage thus described:

> "Come, Master Nottage, see us play to-night.
> At first 'twas folly, nonsense, idle stuff,
> But seen for nothing it grew well enough;
> And better now—now best, and every night.
> In this fool's paradise he drank delight!"

Or let him read Crabbe's own remarks, introductory to Letter 12th, in the Preface to the "Borough." He will find that the gentle poet pitied, but scarcely commended players and play-houses.

But enough.

"*Claudite jam rivos, pueri: sat prata biberunt.*"

Hereafter I will expose the strange blunder of CADMUS in his appeal to the Scotch Presbyterian apostates, "the Rev. Dr. Home," Dr. Blair, Dr. Robertson, the exemplary "ruling elder, Alexander Wedderbune," and the tragedy of Douglas, with the action of the General Assembly thereanent. A pretty piece of church history is connected with these names, affording a most appropriate and solemn lesson to Christians now-a-days; and, *Deo volente*, the public shall have it. For the present, I must be allowed to plead "other occupations of an engrossing nature."

T. E. THOMAS.

(Communicated to the Dayton Journal, Jan. 20, 1866.)

THE REVIEWER REVIEWED, NO. 2.

"'The brute goeth,' said De Bracy shrewdly to his companion in arms, the Templar, 'that the most holy order of the Temple of Zion nurseth not a few infidels within its bosom.' David Hume, intending on one occasion to be very complimentary, said nearly the same thing of the Church of Scotland. Was the compliment deserved, and if so, what peculiar aspect did the infidelity of our Scottish clergy assume? Was it gentlemanly and philosophic, like that of Hume himself? or highly seasoned with wit, like that of Voltaire? or dignified and pompous, like that of Gibbon? or romantic and chivalrous, like that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury? or steeped in ruffianism and vulgarity, like that of Paine? or redolent of nonsense, like that of Robert Owen? or was it not rather of mark enough to have a character of its own—an infidelity that purported to be Christian on Bible authority?—[Hugh Miller, Headship of Christ, p. 163.]

It is deeply to be regretted that most persons, however intelligent in other respects, are so little conversant with the history of the Church of Christ. It is singularly interesting and eventful in its records of individuals and of bodies of men; abounds in illustrious and heroic characters; develops in a striking degree the progress of truth and of humanity; is inseparably connected with all the great eras of social and political science; and is the only branch of human history that has been honored by the pen of inspiration.

If "history is philosphy teaching by example," surely Christians at least may draw many a lesson of danger to be shunned, and duty to be done, from these records of the Church.

A most remarkable example of the popular ignorance of ecclesiastical history is given in the appeal of CADMUS, on behalf of the drama, to the celebrated Scotch clergymen, "Rev. Dr. Home, author of the splendid tragedy of Douglas," "the famous Dr. Robertson" "Dr. Blair, one of the most eminent divines," and "Alexander Wedderburne, ruling elder in the Kirk of Scotland." He introduces his allusions to Home by saying, "And here let me add a piece of history in this connection;" and assures us that "the General Assembly," "chiefly by the efforts of the famous Dr. Robertson," "defeated an act," proposing to censure church members for attending theatres. I suppose many of his readers shared in the elation of spirit with which CADMUS produced this piece of testimony, so decisive in its bearing against the sentiments of the sermon he was reviewing. Who has not read Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland, his Charles V., and his India? And as for "the Rev. Dr. Blair,"—every student and schoolgirl has seen Blair's Rhetoric; and the opinion of so eminent a critic and divine as to the drama must be conclusive! The "Rev. Dr. Home,"—by the way he derives his doctorate from CADMUS—never had one before—is less known, to be sure, except as having written "the splendid tragedy of Douglas;" but if his cause was advocated by "a ruling elder," so able a man as to become "Chancellor of England under the

title of Lord Loughborough," the moral character of theatrical amusements seems really to be settled. "The Presbyterians" indeed, "taking fire, denounced the passion for the stage as a delusion of Satan.' The more shame on them for their bigotry and narrow-mindedness.

Now what will sensible people say when I assure them that if CADMUS had known the religious history of Scotland, he would no more have appealed to this incident, and to these names, in support of the stage, than he would have quoted Satan to prove the real character of Job?*—that a more damaging testimony to the character of theatrical supporters can not be found recorded? In proof of this, 'let me," too, "add a piece of history in this connection." I shall draw my facts from Hetherington's History of the Church of Scotland, McKerrow's History of the Secession Church, the Life of the Haldanes, Hugh Miller's Headship of Christ, Witherspoon's Characteristics, and other sources equally reliable.

First of all, CADMUS has done injustice, unwittingly I doubt not, to his own side of the argument. To the illustrious names cited he might have added that of the Rev. Dr. Carlyle, a veritable D. D., and the "Jupiter Tonans" of his day, among clerical play-goers; with seven others who shared his opinions, and condemnation. He might have shown that some of these liberal Presbyterian divines not only approved of Home's dramatic production, and attended its representation, but assisted in the rehearsal, took part as actors, met

* Job i. 9-11, ii. 45.

the actresses at taverns, and played police-man in the theatre.

He might have proved by their "eminent" example, not only that the good people of Dayton may attend the theatre with propriety, but that Doctor Marlay and myself might aid Edwin Forrest, Madame Ponisi, and Miss Lillie, in enacting Virginius! It is easy to see what his argument has lost by this oversight!

Let the world-renowned geologist, Hugh Miller, relate the facts in his own graphic and masterly style. "Dr. Carlyle was more than tolerant of play-acting parsons; he was a play-acting parson himself. On one occasion at least, when a select batch of moderate divines rehearsed the tragedy of Douglas in the house of an Edinburgh actress, the Doctor, a large, dignified looking man, well known among the wags of the bar as Jupiter Tonans, performed to admiration the part of old Norval. Dr. Hugh Blair personified the Lady Anna." (What, "the Rev. Dr. Blair, one of the most eminent of divines," dressed as a woman, and playing Miss Nancy? Exactly so, Cadmus, "his fault hath this extent.") "Carlyle, from being an actor himself, proceeded next to be an instructor of actors. The Edinburgh playhouse of those days was in the Canongate. The manager was a Mr. Diggs, and one of the prettiest of his staff was a Mrs. Ward, an actress of considerable ability, but, as was common at the time to the profession, of equivocal character; and poor Jupiter Tonans, in urging his instructions had made his light so shine that the tongue of scandal became busy."

"When the tragedy came at length to be acted, some

of the clerical friends of the author were led, by the the interest they felt in its success, to linger about the house, without actually appearing in the boxes. Hence the point of a stanza, the production of some Edinburgh wit of the period:

'Hid close in the green-room some clergymen lay,
Good actors themselves—*their whole lives a play.*'

Dr. Carlyle, however, with a few others, had more courage. He appeared openly among the audience, armed with a bludgeon. In the course of the evening, two wild young fellows, reckless with intoxication, forced themselves into his box. The Doctor, perfectly sober at the time, and of great muscular strength, succeeded, to the great delight of the lesser gods in the gallery, after a slight struggle, in ejecting both the intruders. Though a leading and influential man among his party,* most of them seem to have regarded his character as somewhat too extreme."

"Dr. Carlyle was, of all his party, the boldest and most uncompromising advocate of the theatre,—one of the truly liberal in the case of Home and his tragedy,—in short, a man enlightened enough in his views of dramatic representation to have almost wiped away the stain of bigotry and narrowness from an entire Church. But there is, alas! no perfection in whatever is human; and there were matters in which even he, with all his general liberality, could be narrow and bigoted. He exhausted the charities of his nature in tolerating balls and theatres; and for the Gospel of Christ he had no tolerance and no charity."†

* The Moderates. † Headship of Christ, p. 174–179.

Such were the scenes—how inadequately described by CADMUS I need not say—at which he represents "Presbyterians" as "taking fire," and "denouncing the passion for the stage as a delusion of Satan!" Such, in one aspect of their conduct, were "the eminent divines"—Dr. Blair among them—whose cause was defended by "the famous Dr. Robertson." and whose opinions of the stage are produced here to show that some of the best and wisest men in the Church have approved theatrical entertainments! Let CADMUS blush, and study before he preaches!

I say, in one aspect of their conduct; for this theatrical outbreak was but one illustration of a long course of iniquity practised by the ecclesiastical party of "wolves in sheep's clothing" led by the Robertsons, Logans, Blairs, Carlyles, and Homes, of the latter part of the eighteenth century, in the Church of Scotland. To the general character and history of that party, let us now turn for a moment, that we may ascertain what kind of religion it is which advocates the stage; and conversely, what influence upon religion we may expect the theatre to exercise.

On the accession of William and Mary to the English throne, after the revolution of 1688, the affairs of the Established Church of Scotland engaged his attention.

For twenty-eight years, under Charles II. and James II., genuine Presbyterianism in Scotland had been scattered to the winds by a bloody and relentless persecution. But there was a large body of men, ministers and laymen, who had escaped persecution by the sacri-

fice of principle—such characters as Sir Walter's Laurie Lapraik, in Red Gauntlet, "a sly tod, who could hunt with the hound and rin wi' the hare—be Whig or Tory, saint or sinner, as the wind stood." The compromising policy of William's Revolution Settlement, in 1680, introduced, both these classes into the national Church. The wheat and the tares were sowed by the same Erastian hand in the field of the Establishment. Referring to the time-servers, Hetherington says: "Their admission into the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was the most fatal event which ever occurred in the strange, eventful history of the Church. It infused a baneful poison into her very heart, whence, ere long, flowed forth a lethal stream, corrupting and paralyzing her whole frame. It sowed the noxious seed, which sprung up, and expanded into the deadly Upas-tree of Moderatism, shedding a moral blight over the whole of her once fair and fruitful vineyard, till it withered into a lifeless wilderness."*

It were long to narrate the details of that downward career, which lasted for a century. The settlement of 1690 thrust into the Scottish ministry a multitude of unprincipled and irreligious men. The Patronage act of 1712, secured their supremacy. "That secularizing, soul-destroying law," as Hugh Miller justly terms it, † was the work of Queen Anne's Prime Minister, the dissolute, infidel, Bolingbroke. The Reformation under Knox had restored to Presbyterians the primitive right of a congregation to choose its own Pastor. It was wisely regarded as the fundamental liberty of a free

*Hist. Church of Scotland, chap. 8, p. 306. †Headship, Page 64

Christian people. The Patronage act wrested this inestimable right from the congregation, and allowed noblemen, and other wealthy and lordly *patrons*, as they were called, to nominate the Pastors of their respective parishes. Even Sir Walter Scott, with all his anti-evangelic prejudices, tells us, that the restoration of the right of lay patrons in Queen Anne's time was probably designed to separate the Ministers of the Kirk from the people, who could not be supposed to be equally attached to, or influenced by, a minister who held his living by the gift of a great man, as by one who was chosen by their own free voice,—and to render them more dependent on the nobility and gentry. *

Such was the policy which the Moderates, as they are called in Church History, undertook to enforce. "It was not till Dr. William Robertson, the celebrated historian, succeeded to the chief management of church affairs, that it received the finishing touch."† "From the year 1763 till 1781, Dr. Robertson bore the chief sway in the General Assembly; and by his dextrous management, aided by the support which he received from successive (political) administrations, he had secured a complete triumph to the principles of the Moderate party. The golden age of Moderatism was now arrived. The law of patronage was carried into effect with inexorable rigor, and the rights of the people were laid completely prostrate."‡ How it was carried into effect, many a dark, and bloody page of Scottish Church History informs us. Dr. Chalmers has drawn a striking picture of the "coarse and contemptuous clergymen,

* Tales of a grandfather, Third series, chap. 5.
† McKerrow, chap. VII., p. 242. ‡ Do. c. 9, 317.

booted and spurred for riding commissions," who assisted in perpetrating the forced settlements of the last century,—names now gone down to dishonored graves, whose memories rot unburied in the recollections of the country." * The untaught, graceless and often immoral wretches, nominated to hundreds of pulpits by lay patrons, were rejected by a Christian people; and "the pike and musket came to be employed, as in the worst days of Charles II., to secure the settlement of ministers misnamed Presbyterian." † Under Dr. Robertson's administration, recusant churches and Presbyteries were reduced by force, and troops of dragoons and companies of infantry assisted at many an installation! ‡

The effect of this horrible policy, long continued, and at length triumphant, upon the religious character of the Establishment of Scotland, has been fully portrayed on the page of history, "The golden age of moderatism" was "the midnight of the church." § The law which re-established patronage in Scotland, by which Robertson ruled in the General Assembly, (says Hugh Miller,) "has rendered Christianity inefficient in well nigh half of her parishes." "It has done more to unchristianize the people of Scotland than all the learned and ingenious infidelity of the eighteenth century; it has inflicted a severer injury on the church than all the protracted and bloody persecutions of the seventeenth." ‖ Referring to the literary distinction of Robertson, Blair, &c., he adds: "The deep cloud of

* Hugh Miller's Headship of Christ, p. 292. † Headship, p. 63.
‡ McKerrow's Church History, chap. 5, pp. 317, 318, 319, 324, 325.
§ Haldane, p. 124. ‖ Headship, pp. 35, 60.

moral and spiritual death which has for a century brooded over our country, withering every blossom of hope and promise, had its upper sunlit folds of purple and of gold, to charm the eye of the distant spectators; but to know its true character, it was necessary to descend to where its lower volumes brooded over the blighted surface, and there acquaint one's self with its sulphurous stench, its mildew-dispensing damps, its chills and its darkness." "One of the great evils of moderatism was its tendency to extirpate religion altogether." *

"The most religious part of the community, says Hetherington, was driven out of the Church, and those that remained sunk into a state of carelessness till they ceased to feel and to regret their own calamitous condition. The rising generation grew up accustomed to such a state of matters, regardless, comparatively, of the sacredness of that day which God hallowed to himself, neglectful of public worship, and utterly destitute of personal religion, which too often the example and even the language of their half-infidel ministers taught them to despise and deride as hypocrisy and fanaticism. The church of Scotland, wherever thorough moderatism prevailed, seemed spiritually dead, and all living Christians withdrew from its polluting touch. Yet there were many truly pious ministers sprinkled over the land, shining in their own spheres apart, amid the prevailing moral darkness, like the few scattered stars that faintly break the gloom of a chill and misty night."†

"Many of the Pastors," says Dr. Hamilton, "were

*Headship, pp 190, 252. †Hist. of Church of Scotland, ch. 10, p. 377

ignorant of theology as a system, and utterly careless about the merits of any creed or confession. They seemed miserable in the discharge of every ministerial duty. They eagerly seized on the services of any stray preacher who came within their reach. When they preached, their sermons generally turned on honesty, good neighborhood, and kindness. To deliver a gospel sermon was as completely beyond their power as to speak in the language of angels. And while their discourses were destitute of every thing which a dying sinner needs, they were at the same time the most feeble, empty, and insipid things that ever disgraced the venerated name of sermons. The coldness and indifference of the minister, while they proclaimed his own aversion to his employment, were seldom lost on the people. The congregation rarely amounted to a tenth of the parishioners, and the one-half of this small number were generally, during the half hour's soporific harangue, fast asleep. They were free from hypocrisy. They had no more religion in private than in public. They were loud and obstreperous in declaiming against enthusiasm and fanaticism, faith and religious zeal.

. . But though frightfully impatient of every thing which bore the semblance of seriousness and sober reflection, the elevation of the brow, the expansion of feature, the glistening of the eye, the fluency and warmth of speech at convivial parties, shows that their heart and soul were there, and that the pleasures of the table and the hilarity of the light-hearted and the gay constituted their paradise, and furnished them with the perfection of their joy." *

* Life of the Haldanes, p. 125.

"Other less public proofs of the degraded state of the dominant party in the Church, (the Moderates) might be mentioned, particularly a Presbytery dinner to which Mr. Haldane was invited in Edinburgh, upon a special occasion, and to which he had gone, hoping for useful, perhaps spiritual, or at least rational conversation. Instead of this, the company were treated to Bacchanalian songs, the folly of which was aggravated into something approaching to wickedness, and an admixture of ridiculous, if not profane allusions to their own sacred calling and functions. The burden of one song was the prescription of a bumper of Nottingham ale, in the pulpit, at the different stages of a Presbyterian discourse!" *

If CADMUS will turn to Lockhart's Life of Burns, he may find the poet's excesses palliated by a reference to the habits of the times, when even a Presbytery, after transacting business, would meet for conviviality, the moderator singing one of Burns' songs, and the body uniting in the chorus,

"Wha last beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three!"

The second chapter of Dean Ramsay's Scottish life and character well illustrates the drunken habits of the times. Even Dr. Robertson could accept the advice of brother clergymen to "Bend weel to the Madeira!†"

The testimony of history is sadly conclusive as to the semi-infidel character of no small portion of the clergy at this period, and especially of their great leaders. "The infidelity of David Hume, Adam Smith, and their coadjutors, first infecting the universities and

* Life of the Haldanes, p. 128. † Chap. ii, p. 41.

seats of learning, had gradually insinuated its poison into the administrations of the Church. Some had altogether thrown off the mask, like the eminent and scientific Professor Playfair," (the editor of Euclid.) "Others, with more inconsistency, exhibited the same infidelity as the amiable Professor, whilst they still ate the bread of orthodoxy; and in practice trampled on the doctrine and precepts of the Church. Dr. Robertson, the friend of Hume and Adam Smith, was not without reason, more than half suspected; whilst Dr. Blair's moral sermons had shown how, in Scotland as well as in England, the professed ministers of Christ could become, in the words of Bishop Horsley, little better than the "apes of Epictetus." *

In the General Assembly of 1755, only two years before that clerico-theatrical exhibition to which Canmus has drawn our attention, "there arose a discussion respecting the infidel writings of David Hume. These the Assembly condemned, without naming the author, which would not have been convenient, as he was living in terms of friendly intimacy with several of the Moderate leaders. A short time after the rising of the Assembly, Hume was defended by Dr. Blair, in a pamphlet, published anonymously, to avoid the unseemliness of a teacher of religion being the avowed defender of one who made no secret of his infidelity."†

William Wilberforce uses strong language respecting Dr. Robertson in a passage which closes thus: "His letters to Gibbon, lately published, can not but excite emotions of regret and shame in every sincere Chris-

* Haldanes, page 124.
† Hetherington's Hist. Church of Scotland, ch. x, p. 364.

tian."* On this point, indeed, we have the testimony of David Hume himself; since he complimented the Church of Scotland as more favorable to the cause of deism than any other religous establishment.† In short the mass of the ministry and people of Scotland were sunk so deep in error, infidelity, immorality and open vice, that even ungodly men became alarmed for the consequences to the nation.‡

Let it not be supposed, however, that true evangelical piety, in principle and practice, was banished from Scotland. I have spoken only of the Establishment, and of the Establishment under the administration of the dominant Moderatism. Hugh Miller presents the truth in two sentences: "In the last century the antagonist parties of the Church were spread over her parishes like the wheat and the tares in one field. An inefficient and time-serving clergy were in many instances the near neighbors of ministers conscientiously faithful and eminently useful."§ And in his famous letter to Lord Brougham:—"We have but one Bible and one Confession of Faith in our Scottish Establishment, but we have two religions in it; and these, though they bear exactly the same name, and speak nearly the same language, are yet fundamentally and widely different."‖

It is with no pleasure that one drags to the light the forgotten corruptions of even nominal Christians; yet they should serve as a beacon-light to warn us from the "depths of Satan" into which they fell. A large portion of the Sacred Volume is occupied with a record of

* Pract. View, c. 9. † Headship, 162. ‡ Headship, 162-p. 170 *spec.*
§ Headship, 261. ‖ Headship, 29.

the back-slidings, and abominations of God's ancient people; and no part affords more solemn and instructive lessons. But when a writer like CADMUS, unwittingly indeed, recalls us to this very period of degeneracy and spiritual death,—to these very leaders and authors of that degeneracy,—apostates and semi-infidels,—as evidence that some of the wisest and best men in the Church have favored theatres, have written plays, and have attended their representation, it is indispensable to show the true character of such men. It is as if one should quote Ahab or Manasseh, to prove that a pious Jew might worship idols.

Yet CADMUS exults over their testimony for the stage as a child might gaze admiringly upon a brood of serpents, fascinated by the brilliant beauty of their burnished heads, and the graceful gyrations of their resplendent bodies.

The act which he commends to our imitation was a daring attempt to break down the barriers which law and public sentiment, even in those degenerate days, had erected against the immorality of theatrical amusements. An act of the legislature, passed twenty years before, had made stage entertainments penal. I do not endorse such legislation, but state the facts as I find them. Christians have learned, in the last hundred years, to prefer moral influences to legislative enactments. An attempt was soon after made to obtain a licensed theatre in Edinburgh; but was frustrated by a petition from the Professors of the University, and the magistrates, setting forth the dangerous tendency of the play-house. The players then endeavored to defy the

law, and failing in this, eluded it by calling their theatre a concert-hall; just as our theatre is styled an opera house.*

Such was the posture of affairs when the tragedy of Douglas was brought forward, Dec. 14, 1756. Its Author, John Home, had been licensed to preach at twenty-three years of age, but turned soldier, was captured and carried prisoner to France. Returning penniless, he resumed his trade of parson, and devoted his life to historic and dramatic studies. "His own favorite model of a character," says his biographer, "and that on which his own was formed, was"—not that of the Divine Master whom he professed to serve, but "the ideal being, Young Norval in his own play of Douglas." I need not repeat the circumstances which accompanied the rehearsal and representation, under the distinguished patronage of Dr. Carlyle, Dr. Blair and the other moderate worthies. Enough to say, that bad as Scotland was at the time, the infamous leaders went a little too far with their experiment. All Scotland broke out in condemnation of the outrage on public opinion. Most of the clergymen engaged submitted to the ecclesiastical censures inflicted, and poor Home dropped his ministerial cloak. The Assembly, to be sure, did not forbid theatrical amusements to the laity; only required ministers to abstain from attending! But remember, it was a Moderate Assembly, led by Dr. Robertson, which adopted that measure, under the pressure of public indignation. Yet why forbid ministers from attending? If the play-house be, as its friends pretend,

*McKerrow, chap. 15, pp. 525-527.

a necessary relaxation, the most intellectual and refined of amusements, a school of virtue, an aid to the pulpit in correcting public morals, a great teacher of human nature, why should ministers only be excluded from its advantages? Or is it conscience which tells the worldly professor of religion, and the advocate of the stage, that he allows himself conformities which he would be ashamed to see Christian pastors sharing.

I will only add to this already too protracted narrative, that the same ecclesiastical party which thus sanctioned the stage as far as a sense public decency would permit, forty years later in the General Assembly, after that "infidel debate" which Hugh Miller has so admirrably described,* substantially decided that the Church of Christ is under no obligation to send the Gospel to the heathen!†

Let me pay my respects, in parting, to "ruling elder Wedderburne, afterward Lord Chancellor under the title of Lord Loughborough."

"The Law Faculty of this period," says Hugh Miller, "though it seems to have had marvellously few Christians, had notwithstanding, its many elders; and, as might have been anticipated, we discover a fierce extreme of opinion on religious subjects in almost every instance in which they registered their views in our Church courts,—a bitterness of hostility to the Gospel truly wonderful.‡

"It would not have suited moderate policy," Hetherington tells us, "to have held the possession of personal religion as an indispensable qualification to an office.

* Headship, 144. † Hetherington c. 10. Life of Haldane 125.
‡ Headship, 336.

bearer in the Church. The only qualifications which they regarded as absolutely indispensable were,—for a minister, that he received a presentation from a patron, —and for an elder, that he possessed political influence, or was connected with those who did. And the practice was introduced about that time, which soon became the settled custom, of *ordaining young lawyers to the eldership*, that they might sit in Assemblies, exercise their oratorical powers, and swell moderate majorities. It was evident that they might discharge all those functions without any personal religion; and therefore the moderate party strenuously resisted the attempt to have an attestation of their possessing that qualification declared to be indispensable."*

Under such a policy Alexander Wedderburne, a rising member of the bar, obtained a seat in the General Assembly of 1757, which decided the theatre question. He made a speech in defense of Home, which CADMUS quotes. He may find in Burns' epistle to Dr. Blacklock, and Chambers' Life and Works of Burns, an account of Robert Heron, another elder who sometimes sat in the Assembly. As to Wedderburne himself, I have only to say that he was a member of Lord North's administration during our revolutionary struggle; that he sustained the royal Governors of Massachusetts; that he grossly insulted our representative, Benjamin Franklin; that he violently opposed the independence of the United States; that he was a friend to theatres; and that when he died, George III., who knew him well, remarked, "He has not left a

* Hist. Ch. Scot. chap. 10, 356.

greater knave behind him in my dominions!" Yes—Chancellor Wedderburne was "a ruling elder in the kirk of Scotland;"—and Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve apostles!

T. E. THOMAS.

(Communicated to the Dayton Journal, Jan. 17, 1866.)

Rejoinder to Dr. T. E. Thomas' "Reviewer Reviewed."

In all reprehensions, observe to express rather thy love than thy anger; and strive rather to convince than to exasperate; but if the matter do require any special indignation, let it appear to be the zeal of a displeased friend rather than the passion of a provoked enemy.—[FULLER.

Let history say what it will, they will not believe that SOCRATES ever danced.—[LA ROCHEFOUCALD.

I am sorry to be dragged farther into this discussion, but the state of the controversy seems to demand it. I avail myself, therefore, of the kind offer of the use of your columns for a rejoinder to Dr. THOMAS' "Reviewer Reviewed."

When I published my answer to his sermon, it was with no view to a protracted or an angry discussion; and I certainly had no idea of its being conducted under my name. These controversies are not entirely suited to my taste—especially if conducted in an improper spirit.

Had Dr. THOMAS made the propositions of his sermon less sweeping, or contented himself with its delivery to his congregation, instead of its publication to the whole

world as a sweeping condemnation of the patrons of the Drama, I should have been slow to open a controversy with him under any name, assumed or otherwise. But when it was printed in the daily papers and issued in pamphlet form for general circulation, I regarded the challenge complete; and I could not sit idly by and see so much false logic and bad history passing current under the authority of a *name* only—especially as the sermon was a direct impeachment of the morality of so large a proportion of our people. I could not endure to see a modern Procustean bed set before us to which we were all to be fitted, by Dr. THOMAS, by the stretching, or lopping off, of our lower limbs.

I am grieved that my review has been taken in such bad part, as it certainly seemed to me candid and respectful. Dr. THOMAS is right when he says that such was my aim, and that I thought I had succeeded. Even if I had failed *he* ought not to have imitated me, and sought to escape from the argument under insinuations against my candor or capacity, and especially against the honorable profession of which I am *proud* to be a member. If CADMUS is an attorney, does that fact disprove his argument? If he is an unworthy antagonist, will not the triumph be the easier? If he writes under an assumed name has he at any time abused the thin *incognito* by disregarding the courtesies of fair discussion? And if his argument is "shallow and superficial," and "full of literary blunders," I am satisfied that it shall be laid to his "unworthiness;" but it is surely all the more inexcusable in his reverend antagonist, having so easy a victory, to indulge in those sneers

which have marred the pleasure of a discussion which *should* be both interesting and instructive. Under no circumstances can I be induced to follow in his footsteps. Regard for his high character and sacred profession, but above all a sense of what is due to myself, forbids any attempt at retaliation. I shall, therefore, take no notice of the preliminary remarks upon myself, and answer nothing but the insinuation that I have copied extensively from the *New American Encyclopedia*. Allow me to state, as a fact, that I never opened the book until the appearance of "REVIEWER REVIEWED;" and found there (softly be it spoken) much of the DOCTOR'S history, but very little of CADMUS' argument! I invite the examination. Of course I borrowed somewhere. I am much indebted to Mrs. Mowatt's book—but the rest of my authorities are the following: Chambers' Encyclopedia of English Literature; Prescott's Miscellanies; Lockhart's Life of Scott; Smith's Greek and Roman Antiquities; Lord Campbell's Chancellors; Plutarch; Sir Philip Sidney's Works; Hume; Blair's Rhetoric; Graham's Colonial History; Bishop Thirlwall's History of Greece; and especially Eschenburg's Manual of Classical Literature—all of which, but one or two, happen to be in my otherwise poor library. I state these authorities because CADMUS, writing under an assumed name, has been unable to preserve his "nameless obscurity;" and making no pretence to great learning, desires no further credit than that to which he is fairly entitled.

Having disposed of these preliminaries let me address myself to the argument. The best compliment

the "LAY SERMON" has received from any one is the attempt of Dr. THOMAS to shift his position. In his review he now says:

I have affirmed that the *body* of wise and good men in every age have condemned the stage as corrupt and corrupting.

And again, in the third column of his argument, he says:

If Cadmus would fairly overturn my position *he* must prove that the mass of the wise and good have ever approved the stage.

I have before me the Doctor's sermon in pamphlet form; and if he designs to change his base let me suggest that he should call in the thousand copies now spread throughout the community, and issue a new revised and corrected edition. I find the following proposition on page seven of his sermon, as it has gone forth to the world, the italics being in the original:

The judgment which they have pronounced upon it, will constitute my argument against theatrical amusements, which may be stated thus: *The wisest and best men of every age—heathen and Christian—Legislators, Philosophers, Divines—the Christian Church, ancient and modern—have, with one voice, from the very birth of the drama, condemned, opposed, and denounced theatrical exhibitions as essentially corrupt and demoralizing, both to individuals and society.*

And again on page 29, near the close of the sermon, I find the following, the italics being my own:

I have presented you, my friends, some evidence for the proposition I have undertaken to establish—that the wise and good of every nation since the birth of the drama, Pagans as well as Christians, *sages, moralists, philosophers, legislators, divines*, with the whole body of the Christian Church acting in ecclesiastical capacity, have *unitedly* and *uniformly* condemned and reprobated theatrical exhibitions, as dangerous to morals, debasing to actors and audience, demoralizing to society, *essentially corrupt* and corrupting.

These were the propositions which the "LAY SERMON" was written to refute; and so far from its being CADMUS' place to prove that the mass of the good and wise have ever approved the stage, it is clearly Dr.

THOMAS' duty to establish that the wise and good of every age have unitedly and uniformly condemned it as essentially corrupt and corrupting. Neither has he the right to limit the character of the witnesses, as he attempts to do, by requiring them to be illustrious as Christians; or to object to the testimony of Marcus Aurelius, who, though a pagan, was a great and good pagan in the pagan sense.

With all due respect to Dr. THOMAS he must permit me to hold him to his original propositions. He must fight it out on this line. *A man of his learning and profession, and his reputation as a controversialist, cannot be allowed to shift a position which he has deliberately taken and published to the world.*

I thought the argument on Pagan testimony was so decidedly in my favor as to need no further illustration. But Dr. THOMAS still pleads that Solon, Socrates, Plato, Seneca and Tacitus are witnesses in his favor; and outweigh all the names I have produced.

As Solon's experience consisted in seeing Thespis perform in *a cart*, with a chorus of itinerant singers in the infancy of tragedy, (See Eschenburg, p. 169.) I think Dr. THOMAS lays undue stress upon the importance of his testimony. And he admits in his sermon (p. 7.) that Socrates, the great and good man of antiquity, went to the theatre when a play of Euripides was performed, it seems to me to have been more a matter of taste with him than of principle; and as Euripides wrote no less than seventy-five plays, the sage probably never lacked a reasonable amount of theatrical entertainment, when he was in the humor for it.

As he still insists upon holding Cicero responsible for everything that he has put into the mouths of any of his characters in dialogue, let us hear what Cicero says *in person* when speaking of his intimate friend Roscius, the actor. I quote from *Middleton's Life of Cicero*, p. 16:

One cannot but observe, from CICERO's pleading, the wonderful esteem and reputation in which ROSCIUS then flourished, of whom he draws a very amiable picture. 'Has Roscius, then,' says he, 'defrauded his partner? Can such a stain stick upon such a man, who, I speak it with confidence, has more integrity than skill, more veracity than experience; whom the people of Rome know to be a *better man* than he is an *actor;* and while he makes the *first figure on the stage for his art, is worthy of the Senate for his virtue.*'

As he still harps upon Tacitus' testimony that the purity of the German women was "in part owing to the absence of seductive *theatrical* spectacles,"(sermon p. 9,) allow me respectfully to suggest to Dr. THOMAS that he has misquoted that great historian, and has added the word "theatrical," which is neither in the Latin text, nor Murphy's translation. I give the Latin for the benefit of all who desire to examine for themselves: "*Nullis spectaculorum inlecibris*," which is translated by Murphy, "*No public spectacles to seduce her.*" (See Treatise on Manners, &c., of Germany, section XIX.)*

And more stress is laid upon the opinion of Seneca, (who wrote tragedies himself,) than is warranted either by his character or the words he used. It is charged upon him that he was a usurer and extortioner, who amassed great wealth and wrote splendid homilies about poverty and self-denial, &c., in the midst of untold wealth. See a very bad character given of him by a cotemporary, in Tacitus, page 238. But Dr. THOMAS

*Oxford Translation, v. 2, p. 309, "corrupted by no seductive spectacle."

has fallen into the same error here as in his translation of Tacitus. Seneca does not make his remarks upon dramatic representations as we understand them in this day. His language is, "*Nihil vero est tam damnosum bonis moribus, quam in aliquo spectaculo desidere*,"—literally translated: "nothing is so injurious to good morals as to loiter at any public spectacle." If that be an argument against the drama, Dr. THOMAS may make the most of it. If he had seen Edwin Forrest play the "Gladiator" during his recent engagement at our beautiful opera house, he would have seen pictured to life *one* of the "spectacles" that Rome afforded, quite different from the mere representation of it in Dr. Bird's splendid tragedy. He would have seen one of the "spectacles" referred to by Seneca, in his chapter on Cruelty. [Trans. p. 243.]

The Romans had their morning and their meridian *spectacles*. In the former they had their combats of men with wild beasts, and in the latter the men fought one with another.

And he would have been better prepared to understand the following from ESCHENBURG, page 284.

From the civil war, B. C. 88, to the death of Augustus, A. D. 14, regular tragedy was almost driven from the stage. The taste for *gladiatorial combats*, and the *shows* exhibited by the ediles had greatly increased; and a mere dramatic exhibition became rather an insipid thing, unless attended with a pageantry wholly inconsistent with its proper character.

* * * In the same period, from Augustus to the Antonines, A. D. 160, the same taste for *shows* and for mimes and pantomimes continued among the Romans. Those writers who composed tragedies, seem to have done it rather for the *sake of rhetorical exercise*, than with a design to furnish pieces for actual representation upon the theatre. The most distinguished name is that of SENECA.

As Seneca was put to death about the year 65, and Tacitus flourished a little later, I think it is quite clear what they meant by "public spectacles," and that mere dramatic entertainments were not even in their thoughts.

Let me pass on to the legislation that has been directed against the stage. In the "Lay Sermon" I used the following language:

> But this legislation—except in the glorious old days of New England blue laws—has generally been directed against the abuses, and not the drama itself.

Dr. THOMAS answers this as follows:

> I pass over what the reviewer says about legislation; only remarking that my copy of the 'Blue Laws' of Connecticut contain not one word about theatres, so that his side thrust at New England on that score is purely gratuitous.

The Doctor was superficial in his examination. I do not know what is in the copy of the "Blue laws" he has in his possession. The point I make is, that in the days of the Blue laws, theatrical representations were forbidden in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and probably the other New England States. *I appeal to history.* If Dr. THOMAS will turn to Graham's Colonial History, vol. 2, page 207, he will there find in the text and notes, the following facts: That in 1750 the first dramatic entertainment occurred in NEW ENGLAND, at BOSTON, at which a disturbance occurred; that a law was passed against theatrical entertainments, which remained in force from that time until 1793; that in 1794 a Theatre was established in Boston; and that in CONNECTICUT, theatrical performances continued to be prohibited even in the beginning of the present century. Dunlap's history of the American Theatre, which I have been unable to procure, will show the same facts. So will the life of Sullivan.

I may safely safely say, then, that my "fling" at New England was not gratuitous; nor was it intended as a mere fling. As a historical fact it is significant that the

Drama to-day flourishes in its purity and greatness in the city of Boston, where Theatres were a high crime a hundred years ago. As I have said before, as the world progresses in civilization and refinement it leaves puritan ideas and practices far behind; and Dr. THOMAS might as well undertake to reinstate the godly amusement of burning witches, Quakers and Anabaptists, as to overthrow, by any show of learning or dogmatism, the love of the people for the intelligent, refining and instructive pleasures of the tragic and the comic muse.

Passing now to the practice, precepts and teachings of the church from the beginning of Christianity down to the present time, I find some matters in Dr. THOMAS' article calling for a reply. I expressed my surprise that Dr. THOMAS produced no direct or indirect condemnation of Theatres from the Gospels, the Acts, or the writings of the Apostles. I am not satisfied with his answer; nor do I think he has convinced any one of its conclusiveness. Dr. THOMAS thinks that the BIBLE is not an index of things commanded or prohibited. Let us see. I have examined the things prohibited and denounced; and find the following vices condemned in the Holy writings: Drunkenness, gluttony, lying, lust, adultery, anger, hypocrisy, covenant breaking, sloth, pride, lasciviousness, fornication, extortion, idolatry, sodomy, murder, thieving, reviling, vanity, malice, perjury, treason, profanity, disobedience to parents, to husbands and masters, love of money, brawling, boasting, truce-breaking, false accusing, ingratitude, deception, uncharitableness and inhospitality.

And Paul goes so far even in his epistle to Titus as

to teach subjection to the powers that be, and the avoiding of foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, as vain and unprofitable. Possibly Dr. THOMAS "will insensibly pause for breath after reading *these* words of learned length and thundering sound." Now it seems to me that if Theatres were in active operation in JERUSALEM and the other cities which the DIVINE MASTER and his APOSTLES visited, and that if Theatres are "essentially corrupt and corrupting" and have been "uniformly denounced by the good and wise of all ages, pagan and christian," the fact is singular that the good and wise men whose chief business it was to preach CHRISTIANITY as the appointed agents of CHRIST, should be the *only* persons who failed to join in this denunciation, when they denounced all the other vices prevalent in their time. I am afraid the New American light that Dr. THOMAS speaks of with so much exultation, is strictly an American or borrowed light.

Dr. THOMAS makes the following inquiry of me:

Why did it not occur to Cadmus to cite Acts xix, 29, 30, "and when Paul would have *adventured* himself into the *theatre*, the disciples suffered him not!" It would have been equally pertinent with these allusions to classic poetry.

Dr. THOMAS must allow me to suggest again that he has misquoted the text I have examined the 30th verse in a number of English copies, and also the Greek text. It reads:

Verse 30.—And when Paul would have *entered* in unto the *people*, the disciples suffered him not.

But what earthly connection this text has to do with this controversy, or why it was referred to, I am entirely

unable to see. There was a mob that carried two of PAUL's companion into the Theatre, and when he would have "gone in unto the people" to save them, he was dissuaded by his disciples and Chiefs of ASIA, on account of the danger. I invite an examination of chapter 19.

I pass now to his dealings with my authorities. I confess to no small amazement at the unceremonious manner in which he disposes of nearly all of them. It is some consolation to me that they fare no better at his hands than I do. The ICONOCLASTS of old were not more vigorous in their demolition of images, than he, in his hurling down of the great men whose names I have used.

Dr. THOMAS thinks that the lines I have quoted from Crabbe were intended as a *satire* upon the drama. For the life of me, I cannot see it. Distrusting my own judgment, I have asked that of others more intelligent. Neither can *they* discover the satire. If this be one of my "literary blunders," I shall be happy never to commit any worse. The public must judge.

He next attacks me for having quoted Dr. Gregory as an eminent divine. *I confess to a mistake here.* In making the correction, however, Dr. THOMAS should have given the whole truth. Knowing Dr. Gregory to have been a Professor of Philosophy in King's College, Aberdeen, Scotland, I imagined him also a divine. But he was an eminent physician, who had studied at Leyden, Paris, and Edinburgh; who wrote several books upon medicine; was Professor of Physic in Aberdeen and in Edinburgh, Scotland, and whose "Legacy to his

Daughter" has been translated into several languages. Speaking of these letters, from which I quoted, the editor says:

These letters were written by a tender father, in a declining state of health, for the instruction of his daughters. They contain a rich treasure of admonition and advice.

If not an eminent divine, Dr. Gregory was at least a wise and good man; and his opinion is worthy of consideration; for I cannot agree with Dr. THOMAS that a man's opinion is worth nothing unless he has taken orders; and that even one who has taken orders is not "wise and good;" unless he is opposed to the Drama.

Dr. THOMAS must have a very low estimate of my capacity when he is not sure whom I meant in quoting *Rev. Dr. Knox*. If I had intended John Knox, the Reformer, I should have used neither Reverend nor Doctor in advance of his name. History knows him as John Knox. I meant Vicesimus Knox; and if Dr. THOMAS thinks that thereby the "wind is knocked out of his testimony" let us inquire who he was. I quote from the Encyclopedia Americana, (not the *new* American Encyclopedia, if you please.)

VICESIMUS KNOX, D. D.—An *eminent divine*, author of a variety of works, both in theology and polite literature, whose works have been translated into various European languages.

If Dr. THOMAS will inquire further he will learn that he was an elegant scholar, whose testimony is well worth having.

But let me pass on to a more important consideration.

When I barely suggested that "should some industrious infidel gather together all the sins of impurity laid to the charge of the clerical profession within the

past four years, and unfortunately too truly, the record would *seem* as unanswerable against it as the Doctor's argument," I am charged with a graceless fling at the clergy. But what shall be said of Dr. THOMAS' review? I have rarely read such a diatribe as he has given us in it. Not satisfied with quoting from Milton and Cowper in denunciation of men of his sacred profession, he perpetrates the following:

> But "over two hundred English clergymen have been dramatic authors." Now, with the highest reverence for the many thousand eminent and godly men who have adorned the established Church of England, I hesitate not to say that *few popular vices* can be named which have not been patronized by English clergymen.

And in a few lines lower down he quotes from Simpson, with a sort of qualification, as follows:

> A devout and able writer, himself a clergyman, speaking of the Establishment at the beginning of this century says "gravely and sincerely speaking, the number of clerical characters who will be received with approbation by the Shepherd and Bishop of souls in the great day of final retribution will be small, extremely small."

All that I can say in this connection is, that God help the sheep, if such be the fate of the shepherds.

But Dr. THOMAS is not satisfied with these sweeping denunciations of the eminent clergymen of the Church of England. He denounces Home, Blair, and Robertson as apostates; Sidney Smith as the reviler of Christian missions; Dr. Young as penurious; Swift as an infidel; Sterne as a vile and licentious author; Colenso, the scandal of Christendom; and Luther as no systematic thinker whose writings abound in paradoxes, inconsistencies and contradictions; a violator of the Sabbath; a denier of the sacred writings; fond of joviality and drollery, and a lover of wine and beer! And he promises at some future day to do ample "justice to graceless ministers" of the Presbyterian faith.

I stand aghast in the midst of all this ruin, accomplished and impending.

I cannot but wonder what the infidel feels in his heart as he reads these lines; and whether the Doctor thought of the delight with which his Catholic friends would receive his scoring of the great Reformer.

I began this controversy as the humble defender of the Drama. The contract is now swelling beyond my province, and is much too great for so unworthy a pen as my own. I must sublet it. I shall take the privilege of referring so much of Dr. THOMAS' assault as is made upon Luther to the reverend gentleman who officiates on Sundays in the handsome edifice on Main street below Fourth—barely suggesting to him that the illustrious Calvin was fond of his wine also, of which he had his annual allowance of two casks, and complained when the quantity or quality was not according to the contract. And he may fairly retort that if Luther was fond of wine and beer, it was a much more innocent diversion than the burning of Servitus at the stake for a difference of religious opinions.

The defense of the two hundred clergymen who wrote dramas, and of the Church of England in general, must be committed to the able hands of Mr. Jewett.

As Leo X. was a great patron of the Drama, and the present Pope has a box at the Apollo Theatre in Rome, which he and his cardinals attend when some fine opera is performed, I respectfully ask Father Kelly to manage his part of this controversy in defense of past and future blows aimed at the "Mother Church."

And as Dr. THOMAS threatens in future to pay considerable attention to the members of his own church, I must ask Mr. Kemper that he take care that Presbyterian ministers have fair play at his hands.

Seriously, if Dr. THOMAS is not careful, the Church, as he understands it, will soon be as friendless and desolate as he thought the drama was, when he began this controversy.

Having now disposed of so much of my work as properly belongs to others, let me address myself to so much as belongs to me. When I heard that Dr. THOMAS intended an answer to the "Lay Sermon," I expected a new list of authorities from his "inexhaustible quarry." He has not seen fit to add any further testimony, although his proposition is of a sweeping nature, demanding unlimited proof. The public begin to think that his "quarry" is composed of "specimen blocks" alone. But if he fails to produce anything further, I shall not follow his example.

The proposition we are discussing is whether the good and wise of every age, heathen and Christian, sages, moralists, philosophers, legislators, divines, and the whole church, ancient and modern, have unitedly and uniformly condemned theatrical exhibitions as essentially corrupt and corrupting.

My first additional witness is John Adams. In 1778 he was in Paris. The following is an extract from his diary (WORKS, vol. 3, page 118.)

We walked about the town, and to see the new *comedy*; after this we went to the *opera*, where the scenery, the dancing, and the music afforded me a very cheerful, sprightly amusement, having never seen anything of the kind before.

Theatres had been prohibited in Massachusetts in his day. By an examination of his diary we find that he went often, afterwards, and was both amused and instructed by the performance.

I think that Goethe and Schiller were great men—Goethe was certainly a great philosopher. From his biography by Lewes, I make the following quotation:

GOETHE and SCHILLER, profoundly in earnest and profoundly convinced of the great influences to be exercised by the stage, endeavored to create a German drama which should stand high above the miserable productions then vitiating public taste.

Accordingly we find Goethe in 1790, when the Weimar Theatre was rebuilt, taking the direction of it, as Walter Scott did of the Edinburgh stage.

Bishop Heber is good authority. His early childhood was distinguished by mildness of disposition, piety, purity of his ideas, and his trust in Providence. When a young man traveling upon the continent, he visited St. Petersburg. The following is an extract from a letter home:

There is no Italian opera here; the *French theatre we have attended pretty constantly:* there are also German and Russ theatres, but they are little frequented. The plays acted at the latter are for the most part, on the model of Blue Beard and Pizzaro, and attended for the sake of the scenery and dresses, which are at the expense of the government, and the best managed I ever saw. The Greek theatre is very magnificent, a little larger than Covent Garden.

I next quote the authority of Henry Kirke White with the greatest pleasure. Although he died at the early age of 21, his works indicate the maturity of his mind and the excellence of his piety. His biographer, Southey, says of him, there never existed a "devouter christian." I quote from his "Cursory Remarks on Tragedy":

I shall conclude these desultory remarks strung together at ran-

dom, without order or connection, by observing what little foundation there is for the general outcry in the literary world, against the prevalence of German dramas upon our stage. Did they not possess uncommon merit, they would not meet with such general approbation. Fashion has but a partial influence, but they have drawn tears from an audience in a barn as well as in a theatre royal; they have been welcomed with plaudits in every little market town in the three kingdoms, as well as in the metropolis. Nature speaks but one language; she is alike intelligible to the peasant and the man of letters, the tradesman and the man of fashion. While the muse of Germany shall continue to produce such plays as the Stranger and Lover's Vows, *who will not rejoice that translation* is able to naturalize her efforts in our language.

Upon morals, statesmanship or any other subject, I believe that Edmund Burke is good authority. Speaking of a sermon of one Dr. Price, who justified the atrocities of the French Revolution, he says:

With such a perverted mind, I could never venture to show my face at a tragedy. People would think the *tears* that GARRICK formerly, or that SIDDONS not long since, have extorted from me were the tears of hypocrisy. I should know them to be the tears of folly.

Indeed the *theatre is a better school of moral sentiments than churches where the feelings of humanity are thus outraged.* Poets who have to deal with an audience not yet graduated in the school of the rights of men, and who must apply themselves to the moral constitution of the heart, would not dare to produce such a triumph as a matter of exultation.

I next quote the authority of George Washington—and to prevent Dr. THOMAS from inquiring what Washington is meant, I will say that I mean the illustrious general, statesman and great man who achieved our independence. In Irving's life, it will be found that when a young man, he attended the theatre regularly at Williamsburg. But when he was President he was the patron of the drama. Let me quote first from his diary, Nov. 24, 1789:

A good deal of company at the levee to-day—*went to the play* in the evening—sent tickets to the following ladies and gentlemen, and invited them to take seats in my box, viz: Mrs. Adams, General

Schuyler and lady, Mr. King and lady, Major Butler and lady, Colonel Hamilton and lady, Mrs. Greene—all of whom came but Mrs. Butler, who was indisposed.

Let me quote more concerning him from "Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington," by G. W. Parke Custis, page 367:

The first President was partial to the amusements of the theatre, and attended some five or six times in a season, more especially when some public charity was to be benefitted by the performance. The habit was for the manager to wait on the President, requesting him to command a play; the pieces so commanded partook of but little variety, but must be admitted to have been in excellent taste —the 'School for Scandal,' and 'Every One has his Fault,' for the plays, and for the afterpiece there was almost a standing order for the 'Poor Soldier,' and 'Wignall's Darby.'

So that it seems comedy, and the afterpieces even, were the choice of that great and good man; and that he not only went to the theatre, but allowed his name to be used to induce others to go.

On page 368 of the same book I find:

In New York the play bill was headed '*By particular desire*' when it was announced that the President would attend. On those nights the house would be crowded from top to bottom, as many to see the hero as the play.

I would respectfully inquire of Dr. THOMAS how he will dispose of this testimony. *Lament* it, I suppose, as he does the fact that President Lincoln seems to have followed his example. The name and practice of Washington alone is a refutation of the Doctor's proposition.

I believe that Wm. H. Prescott, the author of the histories which have rendered him famous and our country glorious in literary annals, is first rate authority, as well upon morals as in history. I refer any one who doubts this to his life as developed to the world in the new book of George Ticknor. I shall not make

any quotation from Prescott's works, but refer the reader generally to the "Life of Moliere," as contained in his "Biographical and Literary Miscellanies." We can there see Prescott's opinion of the prejudices against the stage, as Moliere had much in that way to overcome in his day. I request an examination of that essay for his views.

I shall next introduce the testimony of Bishop Robert Lowth, a great and good man—though I express myself with much diffidence in the presence of my worthy antagonist, whose notions seem so radical upon this point. Before he was Bishop he wrote a great work entitled "Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews." I quote:

> But if we turn from the heroic to the Tragic muse, to which Aristotle indeed assigns the preference, because of the true and perfect imitation, we shall yet more clearly evince the 'superiority of poetry over philosophy,' on the principle of its being more agreeable. Tragedy is, in truth, *no other than philosophy introduced upon the stage*, retaining all its natural properties, remitting nothing of its native gravity, but assisted and embellished by other favoring circumstances. What point, for instance, of moral discipline have the tragic writers of Greece left untouched or unadorned? What duty of life, what principle of political economy, what motive or precept for the government of the passions, what commendation of virtue is there which they have not treated of with fullness, variety and learning? The moral of Eschylus (not only a poet, but a Pythagorean) will ever be admired. * * * *
>
> Now if *tragedy* be of so truly a philosophic nature, and if to all the force and quantity of wisdom, it add graces and allurements peculiarly its own, the harmony of verse, the contrivance of the fable, the excellence of imitation, truth of action, shall we not say that *philosophy must yield to poetry in point of utility.*

I hope my readers will turn back to Dr. THOMAS' proposition and compare it with what Dr. Lowth has said above of tragedy as *acted upon the stage*—that is theatrical exhibitions—and does he still think that the wise and good have unitedly denounced them as "essentially corrupt and corrupting?"

My next authority is Rev. A. H. Boyd, the delightful author of "Recreations of a Country Parson," and other books of a similar character. The quotation I shall make will give us his own and the authority of another author, the writer of "Friends in Council." I quote from "Leisure Hours in Town," from the criticism upon a tragedy written by the author of "Friends in Council," named "Oulita, the Serf."

He has resolved to give the English stage a really original work; and holding firmly, as we know from his former writings, that some *kind of amusement is a pure necessary of life, and that there is in human nature an instinctive leaning to the dramatic as a source of amusement*, he has sought to show, by example, that without becoming namby-pamby—without making the well-intentioned degenerate into the twaddling—and without making the great school-boys of mankind scent the birch rod and the imposition under the disguise of cricket bats and strawberry tarts—it is possible to make a play such as that in amusing it shall also instruct, refine and elevate. It is not by coarsely tacking on a moral to a tragedy that you will enforce any moral teaching. You must so wrap up the improving and instructive element in the interesting and attractive, that the mass of readers or listeners shall never know when they have overstepped the usually well marked limits that part work and play. And we think the author of Oulita has succeeded in this.

It does not seem to occur to Mr. Boyd, in all his criticism upon this play, that the theatre is "essentially corrupt and corrupting;" and should be frowned down by members of the Christian church. On the contrary, he seems to regard the stage as a place for rational amusement, instruction, and refinement, and the "enforcement of a moral teaching."

I shall add here the testimony of Rev. John Sylvester Gardiner, Rector of Trinity Church in Boston, author of numerous public discourses, and a man of great ability and eloquence. Living in Massachusetts in the intolerant days when theatrical representations were

forbidden, as we have heretofore seen, he and other intelligent gentlemen took the matter in hand to have the law repealed. He was assisted by Dr. Jarvis, known as the "towering Bald Eagle of the Boston seat," and by Thaddeus M. Harris. He was opposed, among others, by Benjamin Austin, who wrote a series of essays to prove that Shakspeare was no genius!

I quote from Volume 1st, page 534, of the Encyclopedia of American Literature, the following extract from Gardiner's speech, in 1792:

The illiberal, unmanly and despotic act which now prohibits theatrical exhibitions among us, to me, sir, appears to be the brutal, monstrous spawn of a sour, morose, malignant and truly benighted superstition, which, with her impenetrable fogs, hath but too long begloomed and disgraced this rising country—a country by nature intended for the production and cultivation of sound reason, and of an enlightened, manly freedom! From the same detestable, canting, hypocritic spirit was generated that abominable Hutchinsonian Warden Act, which hath twice, in my time, been reprobated by the House of Representatives, who passed two several bills for its repeal; although it seems it could not be given up by certain simon pures, the sanctified zealots of former Senates. It is to be lamented that this hypocritic, unconstitutional act is still permitted to disgrace our statute book; while every man who has duly investigated the sacred principles of civil liberty, contemns, and with the enlightened town of Boston abhors, and pays not the smallest attention to, this abominable, impotent act.

Constantine the Great lived in the fourth century, and was a convert to the Christian religion. We are all familiar with his history. He built the famous city of Constantinople. Gibbon gives the following account of what that great city contained within its limits:

A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a *circus*, *two theatres*, eight public and one hundred and fifty-three private baths, fifty-two porticos, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the Senate or Courts of Justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and four thousand three hundred and eighty-eight houses, which, for their size and beauty, deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebian inhabitants.

I shall finish the testimony to-day, by adding the name of the illustrious St. Thomas Aquinas—a celebrated scholastic divine of the thirteenth century, who was held in the highest esteem by princes and popes, and received prodigious honors after his death; being called the "angelic doctor," the "eagle of divines," &c. Possibly Dr. THOMAS may not consider him as good authority. But having quoted Brumoy, the French Jesuit, he cannot object to my citing the great and good St. Thomas Aquinas. I have not his works to quote from, but I find the following in a note to "Primitive Dramas," in D'Israeli, "Sketches of English Literature," vol. 1, page 374.

Tertullian, Chrysostom, Lactantius, Cyprian and others have vehemently declaimed against theatres. It is doubtless the invectives of the fathers which have been the true origin of the *puritanic* denouncement against stage plays and stage goers. The fathers furnished ample quotations for Prynne in his "Histriomastix." It is, however, curious to observe that at a later day, the great schoolman, THOMAS AQUINAS, greatly relaxed the prohibitions, *confessing that amusement is necessary to man, he allows the decent exercise of the histrionic art.*

My work is nearly done. I shall not undertake to compare the merits of our respective witnesses. The public is the proper judge.

If I had the time, or the necessary experience, I would be glad to refer, at some length, to the views and practice of nearly the whole religious population of Continental Europe, where men of eminent piety and learning, both Protestant and Catholic, frequent theatres and operas with a nonchalance that would stun the author of our sermon. But I must leave that to some other pen, with the single remark that, in discussing a question of morality upon the evidence and practice of

great and good men, we must lift our eyes from the ground and look beyond the narrow circle of puritan ideas and the teachings of a merely provincial theology. I should be glad also, if I had the materials, to show (as I could,) how many great and good men and eminent divines in ENGLAND and our own country, have patronized the drama as an innocent amusement; how many moralists and philosophers have entirely omitted to denounce it in their writings; and how many volumes of published sermons our libraries contain, put forth by the shining lights of the Christian churches of the world, in but few of which it has been denounced as "essentially corrupt and corrupting," or regarded as an "unmitigated curse." But I have neither the time, the space, nor the materials; nor does the nature of this controversy require it at my hands.

Let me conclude with the hope that my motives and objects are not misconstrued by the public. I have not intended nor desired to change the opinions of any truly conscientious person. Whoever feels that it is immoral to frequent the theatre should act upon the convictions of his own conscience. I entered the field as the defender of those, equally conscientious and possibly equally pious, whose views are in accordance with mine, and to repel the implied, if not the actual, assertion that we were all on the broad road to perdition. But at the same time we should all bear in mind that the OPERA HOUSE is an established fact; a durable, perpetual, enticing instrument for good or for evil. The immense pecuniary interests invested in it demand its use for the purposes for which it was constructed; and

the extraordinary success which greeted the opening engagement demonstrates that sermons can neither batter down its walls nor empty its seats. Under these circumstances it is for the respectable and virtuous citizens of Dayton to determine whether, by withdrawing their patronage, they will permit it to become an alluring and destructive seminary of vice; or whether, remembering the line,

"The drama's laws the drama's patrons make,"

they will take it in hand and make it permanently, what it was during Edwin Forrest's engagement, an elevating, pleasing and refining source of instruction and amusement both for themselves and their children.

I have now done. It is not likely that this discussion will receive any further attention at my hands. If the interests of others committed to my charge have not already suffered from the abstraction necessary to a controversy with so distinguished an antagonist, its further continuance would certainly bring about such a result. I must therefore say to the Public, farewell—and in saying the same to Dr. THOMAS, under my own name, allow me to hope that in quitting the field, we part as honorable antagonists, leaving no animosities behind.

JOHN A. McMAHON.

(Communicated to the Dayton Journal, Feb. 9, 1866.)

Reply to John A. McMahon, Esq.

"There is due to the public a civil reprehension of Advocates, where there appeareth * * * slight information, indiscreet pressing, or an over-bold defense." [Lord Bacon, Essay 64, on Judicature.]

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." [Acts xxvi., 25.]

CADMUS has laid aside the mask, and appears over his own name in a farewell rejoinder of six columns. Pressed, during the past few weeks, with duties of far higher importance, I have delayed an answer to his parting salutation, until the public have perhaps forgotten the controversy. Without entering into needless detail, I propose a simple resume of the discussion.

A herculean effort was made, last January, to establish among us a fashionable theatre. A quarter of a million had been expended upon "a Temple of the Muses." Bacchus had already appropriated its basement, and had dedicated it with befitting orgies. Venus, if mythology and all experience may be relied on, would not be far away. The first actor in America was invited to lend the lustre of his genius to the Dayton stage. If the

New York Observer can affirm that without Christian patronage no first-class theatre can be sustained in that metropolis, how much more dependent upon such support is the drama in Dayton! It was confidently expected that Christians here, like the Ephesians of old, would "rush with one accord into the theatre."*

In the simple discharge of their duty as men called of God to "watch for souls as they that must give account,"† the Pastors of our city raised a united voice against the treacherous arts of theatrical temptation. They knew that the Church of Christ has ever held the stage in abhorrence. They understood its insidious, seductive, soul-destroying influence. They felt that its allurements are in direct antagonism to that piety and spirituality which it is the very aim of the Gospel to inculcate. Could they, without shameless betrayal of that sacred trust committed to them, stand idly by, and witness the unspiritualizing of Christians, the demoralization of our youth, the deterioration of the community?

I know who will say that all this is a mere *petitio principii*, a begging of the whole question. But I tell him frankly that there is no question with us in this matter. Ours is a duty long since settled beyond the reach of question. And I thank God that ninety-five, if not ninety-nine, in every hundred of the professed Christians of Dayton have practically sustained the position of their Pastors. As one of them, I presented my views in a sermon, which was repeated and published by request. The argument of that discourse was

* Acts, xix., 29. † Hebrews, xiii., 17.

intended, (and so stands in the original manuscript,) as the *first head* of a discussion which should embrace the whole subject. (Permit the statement, for the benefit of those who think that my "quarry is composed of specimen blocks alone," and who insinuate that I value "opinions" more than principles.) Finding, however, that it swelled beyond the expected limits, it was adopted as the sole argument of the first sermon in a series yet unfinished.

In a Review of that discourse the drama found an Advocate, (to use Lord Bacon's term,)—and I use it with no reflection upon a profession, which, in its appropriate sphere, is an ornament and support of civil society. He volunteers, (I say it with no unkindness, but as the simple truth,) to expose the delusion of your pastors; to rebuke the austerity of the Church; to assure the good people of Dayton that the theatre is a very innocent, very commendable, very refined, very elevating institution, and has been so regarded by some of the best and wisest men,—in fact, perhaps, by all but a few bigots, who have never learned to "lift their eyes from the gronnd, and look beyond the narrow circle of puritan ideas, and the teachings of a mere provincial theology!" "Seriously," says our critic, "if Dr. THOMAS is not careful, the Church as he understands it, will soon be as friendless and desolate* as he thought the drama was when he began this controversy." Pardon me, sir, "this controversy" has brought to my acquaintance no new friend of the histrionic art but "CADMUS:" and as for the Church, he has yet to learn its

* Does he kno w that in using the word "desolate" he is actually ulfilling Isaiah LXII., 4?

true character and history who has not realized the weighty import of our Savior's words,—"How strait the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life! *and few there be that find it.*"*

The reviewer attempts to throw upon me the odium of an ill-tempered polemic. I can only assure him that though "I am not mad," and have no reason for anger, I am in earnest. The question at issue, is not one of taste, or art, or amusement; but one, the right or wrong settlement of which involves the interest of sound morals, the purity of religion, and the welfare of immortal souls. To treat such a question in the easy and careless spirit of philosophical indifference, were treachery to truth. "I believed, therefore have I spoken,"† is the Christian motto.

I asserted, and maintain, that the best part of human society, the wisest and best men of every age, have condemned theatrical exhibitions, as essentially corrupt and demoralizing. I produced in proof such evidence as the occasion permitted; the purest moral teachers of paganism; legislation, ancient and modern; the unanimous and unchallenged testimony of the Christian Church, as expressed by her ecclesiastical bodies; and that of distinguished persons, friends or foes of the drama, whose character or position, gives weight to their opinions. The reviewer denies the correctness of my position, affirming that an equal, or greater weight of authority can be found in favor of the play-house; and he especially insists that the chief authority, the Book of God, is silent upon this subject,

* Matthew VII. 14. † Psalm CXVI., 10, 2d. Cor. IV., 13.

Let us, for the sake of order, follow the original line of argument, and see with what success he has attempted to countervail the evidence presented.

1. *The testimony of eminent and observing Pagans.*

It is surprising, considering the low standard of heathen morality, that any should be found, in the classic lands of the drama, expressing their grave disapproval of its influence. The abuses of the stage, both in Greece and Italy, were obvious to all; and, as has been shown, often incurred, even among heathen lawgivers, the penalties of legislation. But that the scenic art itself should be reprobated as radically vicious, and inimical to good morals, and that upon sound principles drawn from a careful study of human nature, must exalt our esteem for the profound students of ethical philosophy who thus anticipated the verdict of Christianity against the stage. It avails nothing to tell us, as the reviewer does, that a crowd of poets, orators, warriors, and statesmen admired and attended the theatre. The question of its morality lay without the range of their studies and pursuits. Enough that it was a fascinating and popular relaxation. On a problem of that nature, he who can appreciate the great moral lights of pagan antiquity, will be not only satisfied, but delighted, with the testimony of Solon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca. The master-mind of Tacitus, the first of philosophic historians, maintaining its virtuous elevation amid the corruption of a degenerate age, surveyed the past to instruct the future, and portrayed the virtues of barbarians in contrast with the vices of his countrymen, that he might disclose the secret causes of declining liberty.

But the reviewer insists that I have misunderstood both Tacitus and Seneca; that the term *spectaculum* does not relate to theatrical exhibitions. Let us ask Ainsworth: "*Spectaculum*, A thing to be seen, and looked on, a spectacle; a public sight, show, pageant." And Leverett: "A seat, bench in the theatre; a theatre, or amphitheatre; a public sight, or show, a stage-play." And Andrews: "A show, sight spectacle; particularly, in the theatre, circus, &c., a public sight, or show, a stage-play, spectacle." Obviously, the historian uses a general term to cover exhibitions of all sorts. If the reviewer will examine Livy he may find *spectacula gladiatorum, circi, ludorum, athletarum*, &c. And Tacitus, Hist. B. 2, 62, will distinguish the *spectacula* as "*ludus et arena.*"

The reviewer quotes Seneca,* to show that "spectacles" at Rome were bloody combats; and Eschenberg, to prove that stage-plays were out of fashion, even almost unknown, in the time of Seneca and Tacitus. If he had extended his researches a little, Seneca would have taught him his error on both points.

"As an ill air may endanger a good constitution, so may a place of ill example endanger a good man. Nay, there are some places that have a kind of privilege to be licentious, and where luxury and dissoluteness of manners seem to be lawful; for great examples give authority and excuse to wickedness. . . . Especially let us have a care of public spectacles where wickedness insinuates itself with pleasure; and above all others, let us avoid spectacles of cruelty and blood."†

* Seneca, chap. 12, of Anger. † Seneca, of a Happy Life, c. 17.

"There was a fellow to be exposed on the theatre," &c.*

"There ought to be a difference betwixt the applauses of the schools, and of the theatre; the one being moved with every popular conceit, which does not at all consist with the dignity of the other."†

"This day I have had entire to myself, without any knocking at my door, . . . for all the impertinents were either at the theatre, or bowls, or at the horse-match. . . . My ears are struck with a shout of a thousand people together from some spectacle or other."‡

"There are a sort of people that are never well but at theatres, spectacles, and public places; men of business, but only in their faces; for they wander up and down without any design, like piamires, eager and empty; . . . a kind of restless laziness."§

"The baths and the theatres are crowded; when the temples and the schools are empty; for men mind their pleasures more than their manners."‖

"Nobody minds philosophy but for want of comedy, perhaps, or in bad weather, when there is nothing else to be done."¶

But enough; the reader will admit that Seneca understood theatres, their habitues, and their influences. As for the reviewer's insinuation that Seneca himself was no better than he should have been, he may find in the 15th chapter; "Of a Happy Life," the philosopher's own answer to the assailants of his character: "'Tis a common objection, I know, that these philosophers do not live at the rate they talk," &c.

* Seneca, of a Happy Life, c. 21. † Epist. 3. ‡ Epist. 5.
§ Epist. 7. ‖ Epist. 16. ¶ Epist. 28.

2. Let us come to the argument from *Legislation* against the stage. The reader may consult the Sermon for the facts. I need not repeat them. What reply does the reviewer make? Simply these two statements; that such legislation, (excepting the Blue Laws of New-England), "has generally been directed against the abuses, and not the drama itself;" and that there is no existing law of like character, and none would be tolerated. On the former point he wisely contents himself with bare assertion, without pretence of proof. But is the assertion true? Was such the character of the Roman laws declaring actors infamous? of the English legislation referred to? or that of the American Congress of 1778? Was this aimed at abuses merely? The English Parliamentary act of 1642, renewed in 1648, based upon the 39th. of Queen Elizabeth, and 7th. of King James, is explicit enough. All stage-players are declared to be rogues, etc., "all stage-galleries, seats, and boxes, are ordered to be pulled down by warrant of two justices;" the actors to be punished, and all spectators of plays fined.* The Scotch act of 1737 is equally intelligible.† The legislation of Massachusetts and Connecticut cited by the reviewer himself, is of similar character, not restrictive of abuses, but absolutely prohibitory. These are facts, not to be set aside by loose, unsupported assertion; and however we may deprecate such legislation, ancient or modern, it amply attests the sentiments of the law makers; which is the purpose for which it was quoted in the Sermon. That the particular acts of Massachusetts and Connecticut

* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. ii., pp. 155, 495.
† McKerrow's History of the Secession Church, chap. 15, p. 525.

should be stigmatized as "New England blue-laws," evinces a want of candor, and an anti-puritan prejudice, alike discreditable; since New England legislation on this subject was identical with that of Old England, Scotland, and other countries. As well might the colonial statutes making murder a capital offense, be held up to ridicule as "blue-laws." That term of obloquy, in any historic sense, belongs only to those exceptional measures of stringent legislation which were peculiar to one or two of the New England colonies. The absence of prohibitory or restrictive legislation against the stage in modern times, to which the reviewer adverts, is no proof that public opinion now favors the theatre as a school of virtue; but simply shows that in this, as in many kindred cases, society has learned to depend, for moral results, less upon legal restriction than on the intelligence and virtue of the people.

3. "*The unanimous testimony of the church of the living God*" was adduced against the stage; not the teaching of a few, or a few hundred, of her ministers and members; but her own deliberate judgment, authoritatively expressed by councils, synods, assemblies, conferences, and conventions,—her proper representatives;—and incorporated into her public standards. Prynne, in his Histriomastix, cites the acts of fifty-four ancient and modern, general, national, and provincial, councils and synods, both of the eastern and western churches. The protest of the early church against the stage has left its traces in the baptismal vow still repeated by multitudes. The phrase, "I renounce the vain pomp of the world,"* was, as its original phraseology shows,

* See the Episcopal Order for adult baptism and confirmation.

framed expressly to prohibit attendance upon theatrical exhibitions. * This testimony of the church, solemnly and judicially uttered, for many successive generations, surely deserves the most serious consideration.

How does the reviewer meet it? Does he disprove, or even deny, the facts? Does he produce a single counter-testimony in favor of the theatre from any respectable ecclesiastical body? Not at all. He contents himself with affirming that our Lord and his apostles preserved a "total silence upon this point," though he admits that many primitive "bishops and fathers" denounced the stage; and that Gregory Nazienzen, and Apollinaris, wrote tragedies and desired to utilize the drama. Such is his answer to the testimony of the church! His subsequent citation of individual opinion or practice, were it free from mistakes and misrepresentations, is wholly foreign to that testimony. What particular Christian divines, or authors, may say or do, is one thing; what the Church of Christ declares in her official acts is entirely another thing.

I have already given a sufficient answer to the allegation that the Bible is silent on this subject. "To ask," as Witherspoon justly remarks, "that there should be produced a prohibition of the stage, as a stage, universally, is to prescribe to the Holy Ghost, and to require that the Scripture should not only forbid sin, but every

*See the quotation from Salvian de Provident. Lib. 6. p 197—"For what is the first profession of a Christian in baptism? What, but that they profess to renounce the devil, his pomps, his shows, and his works. Therefore shows and pomps, by our own confession, are the works of the devil. How, O Christian, wilt thou follow the public shows after baptism." In Salvian's time, be it noted, idolatry was abolished, and the shows no longer honored idols. (Witherspoon, p. 63.)

form in which the restless and changeable dispositions of men shall think fit to be guilty of it, and every name by which they shall think proper to call it." * The reviewer finds certain vices expressly prohibited in Scripture, "drunkenness, gluttony," &c. But if "drunkenness," "lust," "hypocrisy," "sloth," "pride," "lasciviousness," "fornication," "idolatry," "vanity," "profanity," love of money," "brawling," "boasting," and "deception,"—I select from his own list,—were then inseparable from theatrical entertainments, did not Christ and his apostles forbid the attendance of Christians? If the whole black catalogue, excepting perhaps outward idolatry, (and when play-goers speak of this or that "divine," actress, or opera singer, there may be an idolatry they little think of,) be still fed, and fostered, and stimulated, in the heart of multitudes, by theatre-going and its inevitable accompaniments, do not the Scriptures explicitly condemn such exhibitions? And if those spiritual graces which the Christian must cultivate find no food, but rather poison there, can he that fears God, or values his soul, be at home in the theatre?

The reviewer admits that "in the early struggles of Christianity, the fascinations of the Pagan theatre occasioned much anxiety to the bishops and fathers;" but explains this as arising from the antagonism between the gospel and that idolatry which the stage then promoted. Does he not see the dilemma in which this admission places him? Was the theatre less idolatrous, less antagonistic, in the days of Christ and his apos-

* Serious Inquiry, &c., p. 38.

tles? Was "the struggle for existence" feebler? Did not Paul encounter at Antioch in the first century the very same "unwarrantable entertainments" that Theophilus, the bishop, denounced there in the second? Was Paul less solicitous than Theophilus to guard believers against temptation? How came "bishops and fathers" to be more sensitive on this subject than Christ and his apostles? Has the entire church of Christ, for eighteen hundred years, mistaken the teachings of her Founder; or is "CADMUS" mistaken in supposing that the Scriptures maintain a "total silence on this point?"

I have heretofore explained how Gregory Nazienzen and the Apolinarii came to write tragedies. "When Julian excluded all Christians from the schools of ancient literature," these eminent men, anxious to supply the deficiency, "hastened to resolve the contents of the Scriptures into a series of epics, tragedies, and Platonic dialogues." The whole story may be found in the ecclesiastical history of Socrates Scholast, 3: 15, and of Sozomen, 5: 17. Hence, probably, came the Christos Paschon of Gregory. *

4. And now for "*the judgment of some eminent persons* of widely different characters and stations in life, whose abilities, experience, and opportunities of observation, entitle them to express a conclusive opinion:"—my last appeal against the stage.

I am aware that this opens a wide field. The reviewer enters it with a relish, capering and flinging up his heels like a colt in a spring pasture. Here he finds scope for his peculiar genius. To change the figure, he

* Hase's Church History, §100, p. 116.

launches into the boundless sea of biography, and no fish comes amiss to his net. From the *disjecta membra* of floating opinions he catches up whatever fragment may serve his turn, of classic author, or Christian father, or modern divine,—of play writer and actor, ancient or recent,—of orator, warrior, statesman, poet, historian, philosopher, or novelist. From "the eminently pious" pagan persecutor, Marcus Aurelius, to that D'Israeli of whose son O'Connell said, he might, for all he knew, be the legitimate heir of the impenitent thief upon the cross; all rank with him in the category of authorities —provided they approved the theatre. If not, why are they introduced? True, I had summoned to the stand Ovid, and Julian, and Rousseau. But the worst men may be legitimate witnesses against a bad thing, when their approval of it would amount to nothing. Of the sixty-nine names produced by the reviewer in behalf of the stage, scarce a dozen, (excluding Pagans), are entitled by their Christian character to pronounce a valuable judgment on the subject, or to give the theatre an appreciable patronage by their example; and the true position of those few he has misunderstood, and therefore misrepresented.

The reviewer claims, indeed, that I shift my position. How shift it? I have presented the proof of my allegation. He replies that the wise and good are not unanimous in their opposition to the stage, and seeks to maintain his assertion by a collection of authorities. Do I shift my position by showing that he misstates the views of the truly great and good men whom he quotes; and rakes up a mass of evidence wholy inadmissible

from the character of the witnesses? Do I cease to defend Rome when I carry the war into Africa? But he insists that I have "no right to limit the character of the witnesses by requiring them to be illustrious as Christians." His friend Dr. Robertson took the same ground, and for the same reason, when he protested against the necessity of personal religion as a qualification for office-bearing in the Church; because such a requirement would eject the whole Moderate party. An appeal is made to the concurrent testimony of the wise and good; "the best part of human society." Does the reviewer forget that we argue a moral question? that the moot-point is the relation of the play-house to piety and morals? Obviously, the proper appeal in such a case is to those whose position qualifies them to pronounce judgment; especially to such as have carefully investigated the question in all its bearings.

What boots it, then, to show that such men as Home, Robertson, Miss Nancy Blair, (clerico-infidels,)—as Wedderburne, Goldsmith, Thompson, Coleridge, Goethe, Schiller, &c., advocated, attended, or even conducted theatres? The former four I have disposed of. What was Goldsmith? A fine poet, certainly; but "vain, sensual, profuse, a drunkard and a gambler." Read his song from the play, "She stoops to conquer;"

"When Methodist preachers come down,
A preaching that drinking is sinful,
I'll wager the rascals a crown,
They always preach best with a skinful.
But when you come down with your peace,
Per a slice of their scurvy religion,
I'll leave it to all men of sense,
But you, my good friend, are the pigeon."

Is the opinion of a profane babbler like him of any value in this controversy?

No one questions the reviewer's statement "that Goethe and Schiller were great men," men of splendid intellectual endowments; but what of their moral character? "Goethe," says Dr. Schaff, a competent judge, "undoubtedly the greatest poet since Shakspeare, and the most universal and the most cultivated of all poets, was a refined heathen, without even a desire after salvation which characterized the noblest minds of Greece and Rome, but perfectly contented with himself and the world of nature. His theoretical knowledge of Christianity, as displayed in the wonderful tragedy of Faust, and in the confessions of a beautiful soul, inserted in Wilhelm Meister, as well as his former intimacy with the pious Stilling and Lavater, make his case only the worse. He studiously avoided that indirect and suggestive teaching of virtue, which is the highest prerogative of art; and the religious tolerance in which he entrenched himself at last, was in fact nothing but cold indifference."

"His friend and rival, Schiller, was a pure minded and noble-hearted genius, abounding in elevated moral sentiment, and always longing after something higher and better than earth can give; but his religious views did not rise above the rationalism of Kant; and so great was his ignorance of the real nature and infinite value of Christianity, that he deplored, in a mistaken interest for poetry, the downfall of the gods of Greece, and entertained the absurd idea that the theatre might take the place of the Church."*

* Schaff's Germany, p. 148.

Goethe and Schiller were play-writers, and managers of the theatre at Weimar. It is not by such men that the character of the stage is to be sustained in a Christian community. They prove too much, and therefore nothing.

Why produce the schoolman, Thomas Aquinas, who died * before the dawn of the modern drama even in Italy †—or Sir Thomas More, who was put to death by Henry 8th; while the history of the English theatre dates from the subsequent reign of Queen Elizabeth? If the reviewer will consult Hudson's History of the drama,‡ he will find reason to believe that More's "interludes" were connected with Miracle-Plays, a species of entertainment "for a long time used only as a means of diffusing among the people a knowledge of the leading facts and doctrines of Christianity as then understood and received." Three years after More's death, Bishop Bale wrote Miracle-Plays in furtherance of the Reformation.§

Of what consequence is the fact that Constantine built theatres in Constantinople? He was an able general, and ruler; but so poor a Christian that he deferred baptism till he lay on his death-bed.‖ By his patronage of the Church, however well-intended, he did her a more serious injury than three hundred years of persecution had inflicted. And if the reader will trace the history of those theatres at Constantinople, in the luminous pages of Gibbon, he will learn they were among the worst plague-spots of the famous capital.

* A. D. 1272. † A. D. 1289. ‡ Shakspeare's works, vol. 11.
§ Do. page 181, 199. ‖ Socrat. Schol. Eccl. Hist., Lib. 1, c. 28.

The opinion of the Rev. John S. Gardiner, of Boston, in 1792, quoted by the reviewer, may go for what it is worth. When a clerical advocate of the stage denounces Christian opposition to it as "the brutal, monstrous spawn of a sour, morose, malignant, and truly benighted superstition," he effectually neutralizes his own testimony. That witness had better been left out of court.

The judgment of Sir Philip Sidney on poetry, or on military affairs; or of Sir Joshua Reynolds on painting, or the fine arts, would be indisputable: but with what pertinency can either be produced to determine the morality of the stage? A like remark is applicable to such statesmen as Addison, the elder Adams, Edmund Burke, and Washington; whose practice is referred to as justifying attendance on theatres. The first named, though a Christian, was a politician and a man of the world. His tragedy of Cato, though stained by a vindication of suicide, is perhaps one of the purest ever written. Yet Addison lived to lament that in his day, rant, curses, and imprecations would raise storms of applause; while sentiments of genuine beauty and virtue fell dead from the actor's lips. John Adams, a sincere patriot and able revolutionary leader, was far from a safe guide in moral or religious matters. The letters of his old age, in the fourth volume of Jefferson's Correspondence, leave the reader with a sad impression that he questioned the truth of Christianity. Wilberforce, who well knew Burke, said to Dr. Sprague, "though he had reason to fear that he was not a decidedly pious man, yet he was undoubtedly one of the

best of the class to which he belonged." * His habits of life, however, as shown in his association with Fox, Sheridan, and the Prince Regent, readily suggest that he could be no stranger to the theatre. † But what evidence have we that either he, or any of these great men, ever seriously considered the moral character of the stage? Engrossed in public pursuits, and moving in the highest circles of life, they found the stage a popular and entertaining amusement, and occasionally sanctioned it with their presence. I well understand that when such a man as Washington is named, a multitude are ready to exclaim, in the profane language of Burns over Gavin Hamilton,

"With such as he, where'er he be,
May I be saved or damn'd."

The reviewer supposes that I shall "lament" Washington's example. I tell him frankly, that, while yielding to no man in my admiration of Washington's true greatness, with every intelligent Christian lover of his fame I do lament, that in his patronage of the theatre, as well as in the whole tenor of his life, his professed, and I believe sincere piety, shone with so little lustre.

Another class of men, as I have shown in the case of Luther, and Dr. Watts, are sadly misrepresented by the reviewer. Young Heber attended the theatre in his continental travels. What evidence have we that Bishop Heber did? Young Saul persecuted Christ. Shall St. Paul be charged with the offence? Bishop Lowth, in his opening lecture on Hebrew Poetry, treats "of the uses and design of poetry." He discusses the

* European Celebrities, p. 49. † See Croly's Life of George 4th.

drama rather than the stage; and the ancient, rather than the modern drama. His aim is to exalt poetry above philosophy as a medium of imparting truth. The whole passage, as the American editor justly remarks, * "seems to attribute too much to his favorite occupation, and savors rather of rhetorical exaggerations than of sober truth." Indeed, if Lowth's statements be taken literally, the Greek tragedians equalled the sacred Scriptures themselves, as moral guides. Of course the writer meant nothing of the kind. Nor had he the remotest idea, as a perusal of the lecture will show, of recommending attendance on the theatre. The latter part † distinctly refers "to the reading of poetry," dramatic and other, as the "entertainment" and "relaxation" which he advises. Is it candid to call out a solitary expression of this kind as proof that its author countenanced and advocated the stage?

There is a wide distinction, often overlooked, between the drama and the theatre; between dramatic compositions in literature, and dramatic representations on the stage. Hannah More, in the admirable preface to her tragedies, forcibly argues the propriety of perusing, and even studying, some of the best dramatic authors, at least in expurgated editions; (for even Shakespeare cannot be read as he wrote without contamination); while she unanswerably demonstrates the immorality of playgoing. Some of the most excellent poets have composed dramas, sacred or other, with no thought of the stage, but as they wrote other poems. The reviewer has quoted "the great Milton," his books, and his enco-

* Note D. p. 16. † p. 20, 21, American Edition.

mium of tragedy. Whatever may have been the inclination of his youth—of which a solitary allusion affords very slight evidence,

> "Then to the well trod stage anon,
> If Jonson's learned sock be on;
> Or sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,
> Warble his native wood notes wild,—"
>
> [*L' Allegro.*

in his maturer years the stern old puritan was anything but a frequenter or supporter of theatres. The tragedy of Samson Agonistes was never intended as a stage-play, having no division into acts and scenes; but had a political aim, to represent the defeat of the English republicans, and their bondage under monarchy. In his "Ready and Easy Way to a Free Commonwealth," Milton alludes contemptuously to the royal Masks: "A king must be adored as a demi-god, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masks and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry, both male and female." So in his Paradise Lost, IV, 767.

> Nor in court amours,
> Mix'd dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball.

Speaking of the ancient dramatic writers, he calls that Aristophanes whom the reviewer makes Plato extol, "the loosest of them all;" styles his writings, and others, "books of grossest infamy," and adds that Dionysius, on Plato's recommendations, "had little need of such trash to spend his time on." * His remark on tragedy relates to the dramatic poem, not to the theatric exhibition, as the context sufficiently shows.

* Liberty of Printing, 158, 175.

And now I have done. If I have omitted a name or two presented by the reviewer, it is because they need no consideration. If I have succeeded in showing that he has offered no solid rebutting evidence, of which the public must judge, the argument of my sermon stands undisturbed.

T. E. THOMAS.

(From the Dayton Journal of Feb. 10.)

CONCLUSION.

As I have been recently informed that these fugitive communications are to be published in pamphlet form, the following additional references are given for the benefit of those who may desire to pursue an interminable controversy upon their own behalf:

Works of SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, Vol. IV, "The Drama generally and Public Taste," pages, 45, 46, &c.

The Life and Times of PIERRE CORNEILLE, by GUIZOT.

Dr. POTTER'S Essay on Greek Tragedy, prefixed to his translation of Eschylus.

The recent publication of COUNT JOANNES, in the New York Daily *News*, giving Chief Justice MARSHALL'S reasons for becoming a stockholder in the Richmond theatre.

Mr. MILMAN'S Bampton Lectures, Lecture VI, page 269, as throwing light upon the reason of the hostility of the early Christians to Pagan spectacles, shows, and theatres. (See Appendix to WHATELEY'S RHETORIC.) From the early fathers puritanism, in an altered condition of affairs, borrowed and intensified this hostility. (See PRYNNE.)

HALLAM'S History of Literature.

DUGALD STEWART'S Works, Vol. X, pages 111, 185, 187, 197, and 200, "Account of the Life and Writings of Dr. WM. ROBERTSON," containing a complete answer to Dr. THOMAS' strictures upon that great and good man.

SCHLEGEL'S Lectures upon Dramatic Literature.

The PENNY CYCLOPEDIA, articles "DRAMA" and "THEATRE" containing much valuable information upon these subjects; giving a history of legislation in England regulating theatres; ending in 1833, *with the advance of civilization*, in securing, by 3 and 4 WILLIAM 4TH, ch. 15, to authors the *exclusive* right for 28 years of *representing upon the stage* any opera, tragedy, comedy, farce, &c., which they may compose. I believe the same protection exists in our own country.

I have not the leisure for the further protraction of this discussion. I began it to refute the propositions of Dr. THOMAS; and the public is the umpire to whom I refer the issue, whether the witnesses presented are persons qualified to express an opinion upon a question, simply of *morals* and not of theology. I should regard it presumption to attempt to bolster them up by my feeble praise.

In conclusion, let me add that the summary manner in which my antagonist has dealt with them, reminds me of a remark attributed to the famous Bishop WARBURTON: "Orthodoxy, my Lord, is *my* doxy; heterodoxy is *another* man's doxy."

J. A. McMAHON.

NOTE.—In the publication of this volume an error occurred, for which the printer is not responsible, and which was discovered too late for correction. The articles are not published in the order in which they appeared. My "REJOINDER" was written in answer to "REVIEWER REVIEWED No. 1," and appeared in the Dayton *Journal* on the 17th day of January—three days *before* "REVIEWER REVIEWED No. 2;" which, though in this volume it precedes the "REJOINDER," was not given to the public until January 20th. Hence the "REJOINDER" contains, and could not contain, no allusion to Dr. THOMAS' elaborate onslaught upon ROBERTSON, BLAIR, CARLYLE, &c., and the "MODERATE PARTY" of the factions dividing the Scottish Church. I will not say that I would have have attempted any very lengthy answer, if it had then been in my power; but simply call attention to the fact, that the proper order may be understood. I certainly have not now either the time or the inclination to enter into so wide and boundless a field of controversy, so irrelevant to the question at issue, as the discussion of the bitter feuds existing for so many years in the church of Scotland; nor would the public be much enlightened or amused by a digression into the relative merits of the almost innumerable witnesses cited.—[McM.]