

THE

# SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

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This must be a Soldier's Battle.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ONE who is very valiant for the truth said to us, "*This must be a soldiers' battle.*" In that utterance we heartily concur. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is now assailed all along the line. Scarcely a denomination is free from the enemies of the truth: they are within our ranks. In the Church of England the superstitious errorists are more to the front than the sceptical; and it is not an easy warfare which falls to the lot of Evangelicals within the Establishment. How is it they are there? Those who are seeking a decision upon the matters raised by the action of the Bishop of Lincoln, are going straight to the point, and raising the question of Mass or no Mass in the most plain and practical manner. But if the result of the episcopal trial should be unfavourable, every Protestant man and woman should look upon the case as one for the personal conscience, and should, by individual action, drive the Evangelicals to a plain and unmistakable course of action.

Among Baptists, the great need is the personal investigation of the matters in debate by the members of our churches. It is clear that the members of the Council have nothing to say except by way of rebuke of any who protest against the growing error. The ministers also cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." If sturdy individuality took up the matter, and godly men were determined not to remain in league with those who depart from the truth, the issues would be speedy.

A Congregational minister asks for an opportunity for the rank and file of the ministry to speak; and his impression is, that ninety-five per cent. would be found to be on the old lines. We sincerely wish that we could believe it; but we think he puts his percentage far too high. Still, if in our free churches there were fair opportunities for utterance, either by the voice or through the press, we feel confident that the Broad School gentlemen would find themselves very much in the minority. But the hour of free speech will not come till the old Nonconforming-spirit asserts itself in the pastors, deacons, and church-members, and the gag is taken off from the religious press. We are glad to hope

that by other organs the truth will yet gain liberty to speak through the press. It is possible that a clique is now predominant, and that the mass of the people are misrepresented by them: if it be so, let them declare themselves.

The Free Church of Scotland must, unhappily, be for the moment regarded as rushing to the front with its new theology, which is no theology, but an opposition to the Word of the Lord. That church in which we all gloried, as sound in the faith, and full of the martyrs' spirit, has entrusted the training of its future ministers to two professors who hold other doctrines than those of its Confession. This is the most suicidal act that a church can commit. It is strange that two gentlemen, who are seeking for something newer and better than the old faith, should condescend to accept a position which implies their agreement with the ancient doctrines of the church; but delicacy of feeling is not a common article nowadays, and the action of creeds is not automatic, as it would be if consciences were tender. In the Free Church there is a Confession, and there are means for carrying out discipline; but these will be worth nothing without the personal action of all the faithful in that community. Every man who keeps aloof from the struggle for the sake of peace, will have the blood of souls upon his head. The question in debate at the Disruption was secondary compared with that which is now at issue. It is *Bible or no Bible, Atonement or no Atonement*, which we have now to settle. Stripped of beclouding terms and phrases, this lies at the bottom of the discussion; and every lover of the Lord Jesus should feel himself called upon to take his part in an earnest contention for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. From the exceeding boldness of Messrs. Bruce and Dods, we gather that they feel perfectly safe in ventilating their opinions. They evidently reckon upon a majority which will secure them immunity; and our fear is that they will actually gain that which they expect. We are not sanguine enough to believe that they are mistaken. Unless the whole church shall awake to its duty, the Evangelicals in the Free Church are doomed to see another reign of Moderatism. Have they suffered so many things in vain? Will they not now make a stand?

Finding ourselves in a community which had no articles of faith, and seeing deadly error rising up, we had no course but to withdraw. Whether others think fit to do so or not is no part of our responsibility; but nothing can free any true believer from the duty of maintaining pure and undefiled religion in its doctrine, as well as in its practice, by every means in his power. The most quiet country minister, the most retiring deacon or elder, the most obscure Christian man or woman—each one must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The crisis becomes every day more acute: delays are dangerous; hesitation is ruinous. Whosoever is on the Lord's side must show it at once, and without fail. Let those who so sadly pine for "another reformation," and a remodelled creed, stand out and say so, and no longer conceal their sentiments, or eat the bread of men at

whose most cherished convictions they are stabbing with might and main. Let these be honest, and let the Evangelicals be true. The church expects every man to do his duty.