

tent power over them, and which prevents their independent actions. Not that we would in any way intimate that a grand and noble ideal does not tend to elevate the mind which contemplates it, not that having some worthy end in view, and being guided in its accomplishment by a high example, does not render the victory more probable, but that too often does this degenerate into a false subservency, detrimental to the accomplishment of the very end sought.

How to educate the people to fearless independence in all things, to spur them on to grand and noble deeds, to high and true living, is the problem to be solved.

M. B. F.

DEFENCE OF THE TIMES.

I hear the statements so often made, that the present generation is so much more corrupt than the former; that dishonesty is so much more prevalent; that young men and women lack so much more in reverence and respect for their elders; that pride and vanity have so much greater hold upon the people; that society in general is such a mere sham; I say, I hear such statements so often, and from so many quarters, that sometimes I am almost led to believe them. But when I look back and see that each generation has made the same lamentations over the decay of virtue, has equally mourned the loss of honor and probity, and has praised the good old times with the same zeal, I am led to ask myself, is this cry of increasing evil true? May it not be distance that lends enchantment? Like some painting that charms the soul and thrills with pleasure every fibre of our being, when seen at a distance; but which becomes a mere mass of paints, rough and unseemly when closely examined; so it may be with the past, charming when looked back to, but, when minutely scanned, harsh and unrefined.

And, again, if we are to accept the views of the satirists and the croakers of each

generation, and admit that their age and time has fallen from the nobility of their ancestors, must we not necessarily conclude that each period in the world's history is a little more corrupt than the preceding? and that we, instead of living in the noble nineteenth century, are grouping our way through the darkest time in the world's history?

Then must we admit that man has already passed the zenith of his glory, and that his end will be shrouded in darkness more terrible, and more gloomy than any that has passed.

But no, it is impossible. The age of the rack and the thumbscrew, the stake and the fagot, can not be better than the present with its free speech and free press. The time when thousands and tens of thousands gathered in the arena to see the contests between wild beasts, or, what is worse, to see the gladiatorial combats, can not be compared to the nineteenth century with its refinement and tenderness of feeling. But, as the writings of any age determine to a great extent the character of its people, I will notice the difference between the writings of a few authors of former times and some of the present age.

First, take some of the old dramatists, as Beaumont and Fletcher; and, while we find in them much that is grand and elevating, I think we find much more that had better be left unread.

For while they by the greatness of their imagination, and their skill in weaving the plot, and by the sudden and unexpected turns in the fortune of their characters, keep the mind of the reader interested; still there is a coarseness, a lack of refinement in much of it that can not possibly have any other tendency than the blunting of that delicacy of feeling and thought that should exist in every man's mind. Of all their many plays I have not found one, as far as I have read, that I should call refined. And what is true of them is true of nearly all the great dramatists of their day. In the age that immediately followed, or the period of