

**THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
CHARLES KINGSLEY, IN NINETEEN
VOLUMES, VOL. IX; HYPATIA OR,
NEW FOES WITH AN OLD FACE, IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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The Life and Works of Charles Kingsley, in Nineteen Volumes, Vol. IX; Hypatia or, New Foes with an Old Face, in Two Volumes, Vol. I by Charles Kingsley

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CHARLES KINGSLEY

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P. M.
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Dedication

TO MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER

MY DEAR PARENTS,

WHEN you shall have read this book, and considered the view of human relationships which is set forth in it, you will be at no loss to discover why I have dedicated it to you, as one paltry witness of an union and of a debt which, though they may seem to have begun with birth, and to have grown with your most loving education, yet cannot die with death: but are spiritual, indefeasible, eternal in the heavens with that God from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.

C. K.

1931

PREFACE

A PICTURE of life in the fifth century must needs contain much which will be painful to any reader, and which the young and innocent will do well to leave altogether unread. It has to represent a very hideous, though a very great, age ; one of those critical and cardinal eras in the history of the human race, in which virtues and vices manifest themselves side by side—even, at times, in the same person—with the most startling openness and power. One who writes of such an era labours under a troublesome disadvantage. He dare not tell how evil people were ; he will not be believed if he tells how good they were. In the present case that disadvantage is doubled ; for while the sins of the Church, however heinous, were still such as admit of being expressed in words, the sins of the heathen world, against which she fought, were utterly indescribable ; and the Christian apologist is thus compelled, for the sake of decency, to state the Church's case far more weakly than the facts deserve.

Not, be it ever remembered, that the slightest suspicion of immorality attaches either to the heroine of this book, or to the leading philosophers of her school, for several centuries. Howsoever base and profligate their disciples, or the Manichees, may have been, the great Neo-Platonists were, as Manes himself was, persons of the most rigid and ascetic virtue.

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For a time had arrived, in which no teacher who did not put forth the most lofty pretensions to righteousness could expect a hearing. That Divine Word, who is 'The Light who lighteth every man which cometh into the world,' had awakened in the heart of mankind a moral craving never before felt in any strength, except by a few isolated philosophers or prophets. The Spirit had been poured out on all flesh; and from one end of the Empire to the other, from the slave in the mill to the emperor on his throne, all hearts were either hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or learning to do homage to those who did so. And He who excited the craving, was also furnishing that which would satisfy it; and was teaching mankind, by a long and painful education, to distinguish the truth from its innumerable counterfeits, and to find, for the first time in the world's life, a good news not merely for the select few, but for all mankind without respect of rank or race.

For somewhat more than four hundred years, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, born into the world almost at the same moment, had been developing themselves side by side as two great rival powers, in deadly struggle for the possession of the human race. The weapons of the Empire had been not merely an overwhelming physical force, and a ruthless lust of aggressive conquest: but, even more powerful still, an unequalled genius for organisation, and an uniform system of external law and order. This was generally a real boon to conquered nations, because it substituted a fixed and regular spoliation for the fortuitous and arbitrary miseries of savage warfare: but it arrayed, meanwhile, on the side of the Empire the wealthier citizens of every province, by allowing them their share in the plunder of the labouring masses below them. These, in the country districts, were utterly enslaved; while in the cities, nominal freedom

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was of little use to masses kept from starvation by the alms of the government, and drugged into brutish good-humour by a vast system of public spectacles, in which the realms of nature and of art were ransacked to glut the wonder, lust, and ferocity of a degraded populace.

Against this vast organisation the Church had been fighting for now four hundred years, armed only with its own mighty and all-embracing message, and with the manifestation of a spirit of purity and virtue, of love and self-sacrifice, which had proved itself mightier to melt and weld together the hearts of men, than all the force and terror, all the mechanical organisation, all the sensual baits with which the Empire had been contending against that Gospel in which it had recognised instinctively and at first sight, its internecine foe.

And now the Church had conquered. The weak things of this world had confounded the strong. In spite of the devilish cruelties of persecutors; in spite of the contaminating atmosphere of sin which surrounded her; in spite of having to form herself, not out of a race or pure and separate creatures, but by a most literal 'new birth' out of those very fallen masses who insulted and persecuted her; in spite of having to endure within herself continual outbursts of the evil passions in which her members had once indulged without check; in spite of a thousand counterfeits which sprang up around her and within her, claiming to be parts of her, and alluring men to themselves by that very exclusiveness and party arrogance which disproved their claim; in spite of all, she had conquered. The very emperors had arrayed themselves on her side. Julian's last attempt to restore paganism by imperial influence had only proved that the old faith had lost all hold upon the hearts of the masses; at his death the great tide-wave of new opinion rolled on unchecked, and the rulers of earth were fain to swim

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with the stream ; to accept, in words at least, the Church's laws as theirs ; to acknowledge a King of kings to whom even they owed homage and obedience ; and to call their own slaves their 'poorer brethren,' and often, too, their 'spiritual superiors.'

But if the emperors had become Christian, the Empire had not. Here and there an abuse was lopped off ; or an edict was passed for the visitation of prisons and for the welfare of prisoners ; or a Theodosius was recalled to justice and humanity for a while by the stern rebukes of an Ambrose. But the Empire was still the same : still a great tyranny, enslaving the masses, crushing national life, fattening itself and its officials on a system of world-wide robbery ; and while it was paramount, there could be no hope for the human race. Nay, there were even those among the Christians who saw, like Dante afterwards, in the 'fatal gift of Constantine,' and the truce between the Church and the Empire, fresh and more deadly danger. Was not the Empire trying to extend over the Church itself that upas shadow with which it had withered up every other form of human existence ; to make her, too, its stipendiary slave-official, to be pampered when obedient, and scourged whenever she dare assert a free will of her own, a law beyond that of her tyrants ; to throw on her, by a refined hypocrisy, the care and support of the masses on whose lifeblood it was feeding ? So thought many then, and, as I believe, not unwisely.

But if the social condition of the civilised world was anomalous at the beginning of the fifth century, its spiritual state was still more so. The universal fusion of races, languages, and customs, which had gone on for four centuries under the Roman rule, had produced a corresponding fusion of creeds, an universal fermentation of human thought and faith. All honest belief in the old local superstitions of paganism had been long dying out

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before the more palpable and material idolatry of Emperor-worship ; and the gods of the nations, unable to deliver those who had trusted in them, became one by one the vassals of the ' Divus Cæsar,' neglected by the philosophic rich, and only worshipped by the lower classes, where the old rites still pandered to their grosser appetites, or subserved the wealth and importance of some particular locality.

In the meanwhile, the minds of men, cut adrift from their ancient moorings, wandered wildly over pathless seas of speculative doubt, and especially in the more metaphysical and contemplative East, attempted to solve for themselves the questions of man's relation to the unseen by those thousand schisms, heresies, and theosophies (it is a disgrace to the word philosophy to call them by it), on the records of which the student now gazes bewildered, unable alike to count or to explain their fantasies.

Yet even these, like every outburst of free human thought, had their use and their fruit. They brought before the minds of churchmen a thousand new questions which must be solved, unless the Church was to relinquish for ever her claims as the great teacher and satisfier of the human soul. To study these bubbles, as they formed and burst on every wave of human life ; to feel, too often by sad experience, as Augustine felt, the charm of their allurements ; to divide the truths at which they aimed from the falsehood which they offered as its substitute ; to exhibit the Catholic Church as possessing, in the great facts which she proclaimed, full satisfaction, even for the most subtle metaphysical cravings of a diseased age ;—that was the work of the time ; and men were sent to do it, and aided in their labour by the very causes which had produced the intellectual revolution. The general intermixture of ideas, creeds, and races, even the mere physical facilities for intercourse between different parts of the