

DISCOURSES AND ESSAYS

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Discourses and essays by John Ayscough

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JOHN AYSCOUGH

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AND ESSAYS**

Discourses and Essays

BY

JOHN AYSCOUGH

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This little book is dedicated
to
THE VERY REV. JOHN CAVANAUGH, D.D.,
of the
Society of the Holy Cross

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THE CHURCH AND VANITY FAIR

ELSEWHERE we have spoken of the charge brought against the Church, not by her more reputable opponents, of her inferior morality. We venture to believe that no single human being who ever considered her claims, with the faintest genuine intention of submitting to her, should he find those claims to rest on justice and right reason, has ever been decided against submission by a frank conviction that in becoming a Catholic he would be accepting a lower rule of ethics.

No student of her history and of that of the world, we are firmly convinced, has ever failed to arrive at the conclusion that her stand has consistently been on the side of good. Her vicissitudes have been great, her trials very many; and they would have been much less had she held the easy principles, the convenient laxity, the accommodating readiness to sacrifice justice for temporal, or selfish, advantage with which the ignorant and the vulgar-witted have credited her.

In history she is seen, time and again, at variance with the mighty. She might have lived more pleasantly at ease had she been willing to snatch at suggested compromises, to barter unchanging rules of right for comfortable expedients; to condone

robberies and take a present for herself; to wink at evil in high places and abstain from visiting upon the powerful the same censures into which the meanest of her children would have fallen who had attempted similar infractions of the law of God. It is not because she has been lax that she has stirred up against herself potent adversaries, at one period or another, in every country of Christendom, but precisely because she would hold no treaty with laxity though the favour of emperors or kings might have been the reward of her compliance.

Of all this the candid and not lazy student becomes fully aware. The libellers of the Church's moral rectitude are not the learned, and the sincere, nor the clearminded, but the shallow and ignorant, the malignant, and they who invert the quality of charity that thinketh no evil and rejoiceth not in iniquity. There is no more practical proof of fondness for anything than being willing to pay for it, and it is to hear of iniquity that they pay who go rejoicingly to the regale on the "experiences" of escaped monks and escaped nuns.

But that word of charity reminds inevitably of a special difference between the Church's attitude towards evil and that of the un-Catholic world. Towards unrepentant sin the Church holds herself rigidly: till the evil thing be put away she shuts up her treasures, and lifts an ever-threatening hand of warning. No sacrament of hers can avail the impenitent; no reconciliation can be held with him. No lapse of time can purge his fault while to that