

Recent Theological Literature.

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The Pilgrim's Progress.

BY THE REV. JOHN KELMAN, JUN., M.A., EDINBURGH.

Mr. Worldly Wiseman.

WE have already seen how impossible it is for anyone to take a serious step in life without the intrusion of others with their advice. Obstinate and Pliable began this interference, now Worldly Wiseman takes it up where they have left it. Christian, it seems, has yet to learn that some men are enemies of the soul. Like a child he takes it for granted that all are helpers or pilgrims. This seems a chance meeting; for while some enemies seek us out, most cross our path casually. Yet it is no chance meeting after all. The spirit of the world comes very often in hours of violent reaction after despondency. Compare in Goethe's *Faust* the fact that it is the *erdgeist* that comes to Faust first after the *weltschmerz*.

The type, and indeed the name, are familiar in English literature. (Cf. Kerr Bain, ii., note L.) He is perhaps usually associated with the commercial point of view. It is significant that it was commerce that first opposed Christianity as we read of it in the Acts (16¹⁹ 19²⁴). It has been stated that the first protest on record was made by sellers of hay at Ephesus, whose business depended upon the supply of beasts for heathen sacrifice. Every age has its own type of Worldly Wiseman. Perhaps the most conspicuous ex-

ample is that eighteenth-century exponent of the 'paying virtues,' the diligent apprentice who becomes the wealthy merchant—of whose gospel Dick Whittington is so popular an exponent. In the nineteenth century Stevenson borrows from Bunyan the idea and the name, and actually continues the conversation of Worldly Wiseman in *An Apology for Idlers*. One of the most pronounced types in modern writings is to be found in the *Biglow Papers*, and their frank confession, 'I don't believe in principle, but oh, I do in interest.'

Here again, as in the case of Pliable, we are in the company of an apparent gentleman. He is not vulgarly loud nor unduly confidential. He introduces himself patronizingly, and his friendliness is that of the superior person. There is no more trying patronage than that of the shrewd self-made man whose first conviction is that he has conquered the world and understands life. The reason for that conviction is that he has learned the art of falling on his feet—an art generally manageable with some attention. So his 'good fellow' is a dangerous beginning. Cowper has warned us of 'the man who hails you Tom or Jack, and proves by thumping on your back, how much he feels your merit,' and Polonius gave excellent advice to Laertes on this matter.