

MR. TILTON'S STATEMENT.

The long story now given to the public by Theodore Tilton is probably the most interesting chapter thus far contributed to the history of the Scandal. In clearness of statement and fullness of detail it leaves nothing to be desired. It is arranged with great skill, and expressed with a certain bitter moderation which cannot fail to produce an effect upon the average reader. It contains, we are happy to say, none of that gratuitous outside nastiness which imparted such a flavor to the recent production of Mr. Moulton. In the distribution of filth Mr. Tilton has confined his energies to his own household, and has forbore to bespatter any woman except his wife and his mother-in-law. Even towards his wife he preserves an affectation of kindness, for he expends the first few columns of his statement in an effort to prove that she never seduced Mr. Beecher. "Mrs. Tilton was always too much of a lady" to thrust her affection upon any man unsought, and her "indelicatecy of behavior" never proceeded from her own suggestion. We mention these mitigations of Mr. Tilton's disgusting narrative with the more pleasure because we have so seldom found anything to commend in the whole course of the discussion, and because there are so few points upon which ordinary men and women are in contact with the sphere of these advanced sentimental reformers. When a husband speaks of his wife's adultery as "indelicatecy of behavior;" holds her to be a reasonable being and yet pure in heart and mind while she is violating her marriage vows; offers to drop the pursuit of her seducer if a church committee will testify to the "moral integrity and elevation of character" of husband, wife, and interloper, all three; uses the guilty secret to force a pecuniary settlement in his favor by means of a threatening newspaper article, and sees in such thrifty employment of his shame no "indelicatecy of behavior;"—when he does all this, we confess that we are unable to put ourselves in his place so as to judge him with rigorous impartiality; perhaps we do not even understand his character.

The question to-day, however, is not whether Theodore Tilton presents himself in any better light than before, but whether he has succeeded in overwhelming Mr. Beecher. The serious parts of his statement are found in one or two of the extracts from letters of Mrs. Morse, and one long letter from Mrs. Tilton to her husband, written while he was at the West in November, 1870. At first sight these do seem to involve an acknowledgment of the worst that has been charged; and it will be hard to find any other explanation of them satisfactory to unprejudiced persons of plain common sense. With the marvelous achieve-

be hard to find any other explanation of them satisfactory to unprejudiced persons of plain common sense. With the marvelous achievements, however, in the way of explanation that have been accomplished on both sides fresh in mind, we should be rash to conclude that Mr. Beecher and his friends will not account for them at least as well as they did for the apology, and far better than Tilton accounts for the use he made of Mr. Bowen's Woodstock letter. They will tell us that in the mouths of wild sentimentalists like Mrs. Tilton words lose their natural meaning, and there is nothing in her painful and almost incoherent letter which cannot be reconciled with her own account of an innocent infatuation with the Plymouth preacher and the remorse which followed it. This we say is the possible answer of Mr. Beecher's friends; but that a cold and unsympathetic world will be content with it we certainly do not believe.

The second notable point in Mr. Tilton's statement is the reply he makes to the charge, upon which the Plymouth Committee laid so much stress, that his original accusation against Mr. Beecher was nothing more than improper solicitation. He shows from the records of Plymouth Church itself in the matter of the abortive West inquiry which was quenched last year, that he made the charge of "criminal intimacy" as early as August, 1870. Of course this proves nothing; but it leaves the Committee in a very unpleasant predicament and terribly impairs the value of their sweeping and emphatic verdict. Upon the subject of the alleged blackmailing, Mr. Tilton tells us little news. He repeats that he was not aware of Mr. Beecher's contributions to the support of *The Golden Age*,

and while he admits the payment of the previous \$2,000 through Moulton, he asserts that it was expended on Bessie Turner in his (Tilton's) name.

What, then, is the result of this latest, and let us hope last, of the statements? We can only repeat what we have said so many times before, that a strict legal investigation is imperatively necessary for the vindication of Mr. Beecher, if he is ever to be vindicated at all. Mr. Tilton has already begun a suit which ought to accomplish a final settlement of the case one way or the other, and Mr. Beecher must meet that suit with alacrity. Happily it is brought in a form which throws the main issue at once into court, and if it is pressed in good faith and fortified with the same line of proof which Tilton puts forward in his statement to-day, it will result in the utter ruin of one of the two parties. There is too much reason to fear that there has been not only a vast amount of lying and perjury in this case, but an infamous, a shocking conspiracy. The Church Committee certainly failed to get at the "bottom facts." Let us see if the courts will be allowed to do it.