

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES. }
Vol. XII. No. 19.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 1867.

WHOLE SERIES. }
Vol. XXXI. No. 19.

Religious.

The Unveiling of Mysteries.

The following article "by Rev. Dr. Cramp of Acadia College, Nova Scotia," we copy from the April No. of the *London Baptist Magazine*:

We cannot travel far on the road to knowledge without finding ourselves enveloped in darkness which may be felt, where we cannot grope our way; and we must return and strike into some other path, observing and gathering facts as we go on, till we reach again the same region of mist, and have to turn back, to pursue the self-same course of procedure in some other department of inquiry, and to encounter the same result. Wherever we go we stumble against mysteries. Facts and laws are clearly ascertained, but modes of action are hidden from us, and the reasons of things in ten thousand instances, are altogether unknown. We understand the laws, and we know the facts. That is all. We cannot see the connecting links, nor presume to describe the method of operation.

We believe in Providence. We say, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." But who can fathom the depths? There is, first, the great problem, as yet unsolved, perhaps for ever insoluble—The existence of evil. And then, as we float down the stream of history, what do we behold and what do we hear? The devastations committed by the world's conquerors—the Alexanders—the Tamerlanes—the Bonapartes who by millions of murders have acquired the fame of heroes:—the shrieks of widows and the groans of miserable captives; wicked men "in great power, spreading themselves like a green bay tree":—the righteous pining in grief and desolation, or struggling in hopeless poverty:—God's own truth making snail-like progress, while delusion spreads like wildfire; Antichrist overshadowing all lands with his abominations, and substituting fable for truth and form for power; horrible persecutions mowing down the servants of the Lord by thousands, or premature death (so we term it) cutting them off in the midst of their usefulness;—despotism rampant on the earth, treading down and crushing the masses and meanwhile revelling in all luxuries, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. We see all this and we ask, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" "How long, O Lord, how long?"

So it is. We are surrounded by mysteries—in the works of God and in His ways.—This is a fact which cannot be denied. There they are. They meet us at every turn. They are interwoven with our daily experience.—They appear in every page of history, secular and sacred.

It is not to be doubted that these things serve good and wise purposes. They rebuke our pride,—they try our faith,—they exercise our patience.

But there is every now and then an unveiling. God leads the blind by a way that they know not, and makes darkness light before them. The suffering of one age, has led to the joy of the next. The patriot's groans and tears and blood have procured a nation's freedom. The martyr's agony has purchased the Church's enlargement. The ashes of Smithfield fertilized the soil, and a rich harvest of faith and holiness has since been gathered in. "Be of good comfort Master Ridley, and play the man," said Latimer to his fellow-sufferer, as they stood at the stake, waiting for the kindling of the fire—"we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out." No: the light of Protestantism cannot be put out; Popes and Jesuits have tried to extinguish it; Oxford essay men, Neologists, Infidels and Ritualists are seconding their efforts; but "by God's grace," as the good bishop said, it will continue to shine, and the whole world shall at length walk in its brightness.—Many a time, too, has piety wept over plants that have been nipped in the bud, or smitten down in the time of their first fruits,—like

Brainerd and Martyn, and Pollok and numbers more; but from the early grave of young genius and zeal have sprung forth hosts of ardent men, emulous of fame and fired with love to God and their fellow-creatures, who have accomplished the purposes which departed ones formed, and signalized themselves by achievements which they had not dared to dream of, much less to attempt.

Let us take a lesson from the discoveries of geology. We are told that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." It may be supposed that they expected to behold at once in this new world some new and more strikingly glorious manifestations of the power, wisdom and goodness of the great God than they had as yet seen. But they were disappointed. For a long time—how long no mortal can tell—the earth was "without form and void"—empty and desolate. Power was at work but its productions were, for ages, of a seemingly insignificant kind—the Zoophytic, the Molluscous, and the Crustacean. Angels gazed, and watched, and wondered. At one time the great deep bubbled like a caldron, and mountainous ridges shot up, their high peaks belching out fire, and molten rocks flowing down their sides. Then, all settled down in awful stillness; and as the heavenly spirits peered into the waters they saw strange uncouth creatures, swimming in them—the Pterichthys the Coccostrous, the Cephalaspis, the Holoptychius—and plant-like animals attached to ocean's floor. Thus, ages passed on. Then, slowly rising out of the deep vast ranges of dry land appeared, soon covered with rankest vegetation, luxuriantly growing in a steaming atmosphere, so charged with carbonic acid gas that beings now living on the earth could not have breathed in it. Those plains and valleys were seen alternately sinking during successive centuries beneath the waters, and rising up again, re-covered after each rising with forests of gigantic shrubs and trees, countless generations of them dying there, or uprooted by roaring floods and borne away in mighty masses to the ocean. Other changes followed. The "age of reptiles" came, when huge monsters of frightful mien disported in the shallow waters and on the banks of pre-Adamite streams—the Ichthyosaurus, the Plesiosaurus, and the Iguanodon—and birds of shapes long since unknown, careered in the air. Still there was no mind. If angels flew hither in search of kindred intellect, with which they might commune, or which they might teach to sing God's praises, they had to speed their flight back again, and tell their unprofitable journey. All shrouded in mystery. Still they could not but desire to look into these wonders. But hundreds upon hundreds, and thousands upon thousands of years, nay, of ages, rolled on, during which new races took possession of the land and waters,—and the land and the waters seemed often to change places, upheavals and depressions succeeding one another, and sometimes wild commotion showing itself, rocks shattered to atoms and ground to powder, plains bulging up into mountains, and mountains sinking into the abyss. Then came a season of quiet, and the Mastodon, the Megatherium, and other monstrous beasts and creatures, like Milton's "gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire," strode over the earth, while others, of vast bigness and strange form, played in the sea or swept the sky. At each change the proportion of land and water appeared to increase and the number of visible inhabitants on the earth to be multiplied. But they also died away and disappeared. Then the climate changed. The whole northern hemisphere was submerged, with the exception, it may be, of its loftiest crags and peaks, and a dreary ice-covered ocean spread all around. The icebergs floated in every direction, though generally with a southern course, and as they passed along they left their mark on the uppermost strata. Whole districts were denuded of the softest parts of their covering; and ere the land rose again out of the sea there had been vast scoopings here and heapings up of clay, and sand and boulders there, so that when it reappeared, as at length it did, it was like a new earth.

We will not pursue the narrative any farther. Let it suffice to say, that after a period of untold extent, angelic eyes were gladdened by the sight of man. Then they began to

understand the mystery. They learned that there had been a gradual preparation for this last and noblest inhabitant. The destruction so often repeated, of such glorious scenery, was to furnish him with fuel for his fires, and material for the reduction of the ores imbedded in the earth to the state of useful metals. The upliftings of the strata took place in order that he might more easily possess himself of the riches entombed there. All, all, dark and mysterious as it had seemed, had tended to one result; and the "sons of God" confessed, when man was placed upon the earth, that never, till then had the earth been in a fit state to receive him. The preparatory process was long but they could heartily exclaim, as in anticipation of the Psalmist, "O Lord, how marvellous are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all!"

Hence we may learn the necessity and duty of faith and patience. We require them of our children. They are not able to comprehend our plans, and therefore cannot appreciate them; but we expect them to believe that we are wiser than they, and to trust us implicitly. And we are children, with reverence to God's plans. It is reasonable to suppose that their development and working-out will require much time. And who are we, that we should refuse to wait? If we believe in God, we shall have no hesitation in concluding that whatever difficulties may encircle His administration, as we now view it, they will all be ultimately removed. But surely we ought to be content to leave it with Him to choose the time and manner. The Rev. H. Cecil observes:—"We are placed in a disposition and constitution of things, under a righteous governor. If we will not rest satisfied with this, something is wrong in our state of mind. It is a solid satisfaction to every man who has been seduced into foolish inquiries, that it is utterly impossible to advance one inch by them. He must come back to his patiently, meekly, and with docility at the feet of a teacher." One of the Lord's prophets said, and his words will apply to many a dark dispensation. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

What glorious accessions to our knowledge will be made in the world of light and purity! Then the blanks will be filled up—omitted chapters of the history placed in our hands—modes of operation understood—and reasons assigned for all the Divine dealings. How amazingly extensive the field that will be opened up to our view! How delightful will it be to discern the true grounds of God's laws, and to review the history of the world and the Church, divested of obscurity, tracing events to their actual causes, and admiring the manner in which seeming evil was overruled for good, "the crooked made straight, and the rough places made plain!" What blessed communings will there be with exalted spirits, commissioned to instruct the glorified, and gladly fulfilling the duties prescribed them! Then, the pains of perplexity and doubt will have ceased forever; we shall have done with speculations, and guesses, and probabilities; we shall have "put away childish things." Every subject will be seen in heaven's own light. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but shall I know even as also I am known."

Dancing.

Burke remarked that "the true defence of virtue is in her outposts." This makes it of great consequence that we should be fortified against whatever threatens either our personal character or our social life.

Even though the demoralizing influence of the dance should be questioned, it is still open to other objections quite too serious to be overlooked.

The great German scholar and divine Tholuck, in one of his papers says: "I was a spectator, a short time since, of a gay assembly at N———. I looked on the motley throng with a tear of thankfulness that I knew something better. At times I felt such compassion for the poor deluded beings, that I was ready to cry aloud among them, 'Seek what ye seek; but it is not where ye seek.' The dancing seemed to me a sad and

affecting emblem of human life. They approach, divide, pass and repass each other, and under the constant excitement of the music prolong the diversion, overwhelmed with heat and dust, till it ends in complete exhaustion. And when, after all this coming and going, joining in the dance, or resting, the day dawns, and the hall is gradually emptied of the jaded crowd, how forcibly are we reminded of the termination of a life squandered in vanity.

And the day following all such entertainments, how woe-begone appear the wearied participants! What lassitude of body, and what morbidness of spirit! Why is this? Simply because dancing is not a recreation, but a fascinating dissipation, and, therefore, positively injurious.—*Examiner*.

True Nobility.

The death of the wealthy Earl of Brownlow, at the age of only four-and-twenty years, seems a sudden call from the apparent enjoyment of all worldly advantages, but has been in reality a relief from an existence trying indeed to the resignation of the most exemplary Christian. Born to high rank and unbounded wealth, his life was one long struggle against the sufferings of an enfeebled constitution inherited with his birth. He never, we believe, knew a day's health, and what volumes does not that speak! But his own affliction only seemed to inspire him with the desire to confer acts of kindness and charity upon others. By the extensive circle of his family connections he was regarded with well-merited affection. To his numerous tenants and dependants he was the justest and most generous of landlords and masters, and to the outer world his charity was unbounded. One instance of the latter is so striking and so illustrative that we cannot refrain from mentioning it. So delicate was he that the winters of this climate would have been at once fatal to him, and for many years he passed them at Madeira. On these occasions he used to discover individuals afflicted with the same delicacy of constitution as himself, but who were totally unable to afford the solace which wealth procured for him. These, sometimes to the number of thirty or forty, he prevailed upon to accept his "invitation upon the voyage in search of health," as he delicately termed his noble act of thoughtful kindness. From England to Madeira during the winter, and thence back to England, he took upon himself every possible charge of these poor people, including not only every enjoyment of which they were capable, but also the advantage of the first-rate medical skill which was necessary for his own case. Every packet brought every luxury possible of transportation from his numerous estates, and all was as freely at the disposal of his proteges as his own. He had no greater gratification than to perceive that he had been the happy means of procuring for others that glow of health which, alas, was destined never to be seen on his own cheeks. He was once described by one who knew him most intimately as "the most amiable mortal breathing." He is succeeded in his title and estates—the latter estimated at £130,000 a year—by his only brother, the Hon. Adalbert Cust, a captain in the Grenadier Guards, and M. P. for North Shropshire.—*Court Journal*.

A RITUALIST'S WARDROBE.—A letter in one of our exchanges contains (says an American paper) an inventory of the garments needed by a Churchman to enable him to worship in simplicity and godly sincerity. The writer seems to have had a fervent ambition to reach the summit of Ritualistic perfection at a bound. He must have appeared well in his toggery. The following is the account of his wardrobe:—"I secured an alb, chasuble, amice, girdle, maniple, dalmatic, tunic, germinal, chirothecae, arpergillum, aspersorium, manica, particle, benatura, stock, sumbrey, pome, thurible, chalice, navicula, the *Directorium Anglicanum*, and the priest's prayer book, together with a multitude of utensils such as you Christians could not understand if I named them."

Many have been victorious in great temptations, and ruined by little ones.