

From the Christian Treasury.

"HIS VOICE AS THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS."—(REV. i. 15.)

BY W. D. KILLEN, D. D., BELFAST.

MANY have supposed that there is here an allusion to the sound of a cataract. And, doubtless, we can scarcely fail to be impressed with feelings of the awful and sublime, as we listen to some mighty river, tumbling over the brow of some frightful precipice, and descending, with the noise of thunder, into some deep and rocky gulf below. The same form of expression is, however, to be found in the 93d Psalm at the 4th verse, and it is probable that the allusion in this place is the same as that which is there more distinctly recognised. The Psalmist says: 'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.' The reference, then, appears to be, not to the roar of a waterfall, but to the motion of the tides. And we can easily conceive why, under existing circumstances, such a comparison was suggested by the Spirit to the mind of the apostle. He was now an exile in the little isle of Patmos; and possibly, the dashing of the waves against the shores of his lonely residence supplied him with many a theme of holy meditation; and when the Glorious Being who walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks condescended to address him, it may have been that emotions akin to what he had often experienced as he passed along the beach, were, awakened in his mind, so that he was led to say: 'His voice is as the sound of many waters.'

By the voice of Christ we are to understand the word of his testimony. We read, accordingly: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Rev. iii. 20. The voice of the son of God speaking in the Gospel may, for various reasons, be compared to the sound of many waters.

I. It is never altogether silent. How many are employed, in almost every quarter of the globe, in proclaiming the message of mercy! As the noise of the seas is created by a multitude of separate waves, so the glad tidings of great joy are announced by a multitude of individual heralds. And as wave follows wave in endless succession, so that, as we approach the shore, we always hear the sound of many waters, thus, too, the voice of Christ speaking in his Gospel is sustained from generation to generation. Ministers are but the trumpets of the Lord; and when one passes away, another begins to sound; and in this way, from age to age, the message of grace is preserved and promulgated.

II. The voice of Christ is addressed to all the ends of the earth. As we stand upon the beach, we may have something like a community of feeling with the inhabitants of the most distant climes; for the waters of the same great deep wash the shores of all the continents of the globe, and speak in the same tones of mystery and magnificence to all the sons and daughters of Adam. It may be said of the ebbing and flowing tides, as of the other works of creation and of providence: 'There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.'—Ps. xix. 3, 4. And the love of Christ is expansive as the broad ocean; for he sends forth his invitations of mercy to every kindred, and people, and nation. The inhabitants of the various countries of the globe cannot understand each others speech, as every province has its own tongue or dialect; but the noise of the seas is a universal language, proclaiming to all the power and majesty of the ever-living Jehovah. And how delightful to anticipate the period when the harmony of the heralds of salvation will be as the sound of many waters, when the same truths will be echoed from shore to shore, and when the uniform reverberation of the tide will be emblematic of the one Gospel preached among all nations! Through the visions of prophecy we can look forward to this era; for it is written: 'The watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.'—Isa. lii. 8.

III. The voice of Christ is filled to inspire us with awe and reverence. There is something in the very aspect of the ocean which expands and elevates the mind. Almost every one is constrained to be serious as he stands solitary on the strand, and looks abroad upon the world of waters before him, and listens to the ceaseless agitation of the far-rousounding surge. The shoreless sea is the mirror of infinite duration; and as the floods lift up their voice, we feel as if they were repeating their commission from the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.'—Ps. xxix. 3, 4. It is thus, too, with the Gospel. David could say: 'My heart standeth in awe of the word.'—Ps. cxix. 161. The truth as it is in Jesus has a self-evidencing power—it commends itself to the conscience—it carries with it a conviction that it is a communication from heaven. The infidel may meet it with a host of plausible sophistries, and may attempt to laugh away its evidences; but when it is pressed home upon him closely and earnestly, it compels him to be serious, and to quail before its revelations. The Word of God is every way worthy of its Author—its doctrines are distinguished alike by their sublimity and excellence, and the simple majesty of its style bespeaks the greatness of the Mes-

ter of the universe. There is something very grand and imposing in the noise of the sea, when the Lord 'commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves thereof; but the still small voice of the Word, when accompanied by the Spirit, produces a far deeper and more permanent impression. 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,' says the Psalmist, 'and I am afraid of thy judgments.'—Ps. cxix. 120. Even the most abandoned wretch can scarcely divest himself of the conviction, that there is something in Christianity which is entitled to his respect. He feels that the Author of the Bible is a God of holiness, that his Word is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that his testimonies are true and righteous altogether.

What sound in nature conveys a more vivid idea of the omnipotence of God than that of the sea, when the waters thereof roar and are troubled? And even when its surface is comparatively calm, there is an interest attached to the murmur of the gentlest wave; for it may be regarded as the utterance of a great monarch who cannot be controlled. In the days of Noah, when the deep burst forth from its ocean bed, and, sweeping over hill and plain buried all in one dreary deluge, the sound of the approaching waters must have filled an unbelieving generation with terror. They had despised the 'preacher of righteousness'—they could now retire to no ark of safety; and as they heard the rushing of the flood, must have sunk under a sense of their utter helplessness. But there is a day coming when the voice of Jesus will be far more appalling even than that sound of many waters; for when Christ shall come in the glory of his father, and all his holy angels with him, how dire shall be the confusion of the children of disobedience! How shall they be consumed with terrors as they hear the great King saying to them: Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! In the symbolical language of prophecy, waters denote the masses of society, and thus the sound of many waters betokens the noise of many people. Hence, in the 10th chapter of Daniel, at the 6th verse, where we have an account of manifestation of Christ somewhat similar to that given in the 1st chapter of the Apocalypse, we are told that 'the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude.' The voice of the people is an element of tremendous power. The stoutest heart will quake before the shout of an adverse multitude, and the veriest tyrant that sits upon a throne cannot venture to trifle with the expressed will of all his subjects. But what is the voice of the united myriads of the human family to the voice of the Eternal? 'He saith, and it is done; he commandeth, and it standeth fast.' His word is the law of the universe. All the promises he has revealed shall be fulfilled, and all the threatenings he has denounced shall be executed. 'The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand. The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it! and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?'—Isa. xiv. 24, 27.

IV. The voice of Christ is by many disregarded. How few, as they pass along the beach ever think of listening to the dashing of the waves! Some may mark their various murmurs, and their magnificent echoes, and, ascending in thought to Him who formed the seas, and who sendeth the wind out of his treasures, may contemplate with adoring wonder the glory of Jehovah; but upon the mass of individuals the noise of the many waters makes no impression. And it is thus, too, with the Gospel. Of how many of its ministers may it be said as of Ezekiel: 'Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.'—Ezek. xxxiii. 32. How many make light of the great salvation! How many listen to the joyful sound as to a matter in which they have no interest—even as to the noise of many waters! Many preachers appear to be intrusted with the commission of Isaiah: 'Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.'—Isa. vi. 9, 10.

From the New York Sun.

FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

The Rev. Dr Mason delivered, on Sabbath evening, a very able discourse, on the influences of fictitious reading in the formation of character. Since time began, he said, young men had been the actors on this world's theatre. Almost without exception, those who had distinguished themselves, had risen to eminence before they reached middle life: in an intellectual, moral, religious, and social point of view, the man was what he made himself in youth. Every day's observation, as well as history, furnished abundant proofs of this sentiment, and yet it was most lamentably overlooked. David, Josiah, Daniel and Nehemiah, names of such thrilling interest in scripture history, rose to eminence in early life. Our Saviour selected young men as his apostles, the messengers of his salvation, the efficient agents for establishing his kingdom. Luther and Calvin, in modern times made their influence felt throughout Europe, and secured imperishable fame before they had seen thirty years.

In other departments might be mentioned Alexander, a Caesar who in youth conquered

the world, a Bonaparte, before whose prowess, at the age of thirty, the thrones of Europe trembled; and a Pitt, who, in early life, rose to the highest honor and influence in the British Cabinet.

Young men are doing something every day to determine their station in society; the character of their associations, with books or men, tell to the world, not merely what they are, but what they will be. Each youth is moulding himself for strength and greatness, or incurable imbecility, by such associations. He need not mingle with the trifling and licentious to degrade his character; he may, in retirement be unconsciously casting his mind into the mould of the author who fascinates him; he may become, in heart if not in talent, a Bulwer, while poring over his pages.

Every youth, he said, owes it to himself, as an intellectual being, to form such associations, and pursue such reading, as will develop his mental powers, and render them available to society.

The devotee of light reading is cultivating only the passions and the imagination; and is thus gradually becoming one of those distorted beings, from whom we turn away with disgust, and whose companionship no one, who has self-respect, would seek. This kind of reading adds nothing to his materials of thought, or his power to use those already acquired. Such writings add nothing to his store of facts; they are mere creations of the brain, and if one should become familiar with the whole of them, the circle of his information would not be widened. Or if fictitious tales claim to be founded on fact, a distorted view of facts leaves impressions even worse than ignorance. Neither do they, as is sometimes asserted, lead to an investigation of, or relish for useful reading. Who was ever led by the perusal of the Waverley novels to study history?

If a youth, perchance, suffer no material injury from poring over the pages of fiction, he gains no good, and is throwing away his opportunities for rising to respectability. Sir Walter Scott, himself, says, "Novels are a mere luxury, and are read much more for amusement, than with the least hope of deriving instruction from them."

Education of the heart and a proper direction of all the energies of the soul, Dr M. said, were essential elements in the formation of character. But the teaching of the novelist robs the heart of all its finer and nobler social feelings. He who yields to them, moves in a world of which self is the centre, and he is in imminent danger of becoming a cold, confirmed misanthrope. Home, the best school for the education of the heart—where a mother's tenderness and a sister's love smooth even the asperities of our nature, has little influence over him, and he hurries away to seek society more congenial to his vitiated taste. How often have withered hopes, blighted affections, and bleeding hearts, told their melancholy tale of the novelist's power over the youthful mind. Scenes which occur in the homes of some of the most popular novel-writers, and their own domestic associations, show, but too plainly, what must probably be the character of those imbibing their spirit.

No being was stimulated by their influence to do any great or good action, or even to desire it.

I look, said the speaker, upon the influence of this fictitious literature, which is rolling in upon us in a fearful tide, as a master-stroke in the policy of the prince of darkness; and as it is aimed especially at youth, I would say to them, God made you for nobler purposes: he did not give you that power of thought, those strong impressive desires,—he did not make you subjects of those mighty mysterious impulses,—for nothing. You cannot be neutral in the universe; you cannot even stand where you now do; you must rise or sink, just in proportion as your powers are employed for noble purposes, or perverted and degraded.

While giving yourself up to the influence of light reading, and becoming familiar with portraits of vice, you have no security that the heart, from the mere representation of which you now shrink with indignation, and the guilt, at which you now shudder, will not ere long be yours, and you, with those by whose perverted talent or love of gain you have been ruined, may, in unavailing regret, endure the shame together.

THE SOLDIER'S WIFE.

A THRILLING SKETCH.

One of the most striking cases of presence of mind and self-possession of which I have any recollection, came to light in a trial which took place some years since in Ireland. The story looks like a fiction; but I have reasons to believe it quite true.—A woman travelling along a road to join her husband, who was a soldier, and quartered at Athlone, was joined by a pedlar, who was going the same way. They entered into conversation during a walk of some hours; but as the day began to wane they agreed that they would stop for the night at a house of entertainment and pursue their pedestrian journey the next day. They reached an humble inn, situated in a lonely spot by the road side, and fatigued after a long day's walk they were glad to find themselves under the shelter of a roof. Having refreshed themselves with the substantial supper set before them, they expressed a wish to retire. They were shown into the traveller's room, and went to rest in their respective beds. The pedlar, before retiring, had called the landlord aside, and gave into his keeping the pack, which he had untrapped from his back, till the morning, telling him that it contained a considerable sum of money and much valuable property. They were not long

in bed when the pedlar fell into a sound sleep; but the poor woman perhaps from over-fatigue, or from the thoughts of meeting her husband next day, lay awake. A couple of hours might have passed away, when she saw the door slowly opened, and a person entered holding a light which he screened with his hand. She instantly recognized in him one of the young men she had seen below—son to the landlord. He advanced with stealthy step to the bedside of the pedlar, and watched him a few seconds. He then went out, and entered again with his brother and father, who held in his hand a large pewter basin. They went on tiptoe to the bed side, where the pedlar lay in a deep sleep. One of the young men drew out a knife, and while the father held the basin so as to receive the blood, he cut the poor victim's throat from ear to ear. A slight, half inaudible groan, and all was still, save the cautious movements of the party engaged in the fatal deed. They had brought in with them a large sack, into which they quickly thrust the unresisting body. The poor woman lay silently in her bed, fearing that her turn would come next. She heard low mutterings among the men from which she gathered that they were debating whether they should murder her too, as they feared whether she might have it in her power to betray them. One of them said he was sure that she was fast asleep, and that there was no occasion to trouble themselves more; but to make sure of this being the case, one came to her bed side with the candle in his hand, and the other with a knife. She kept her eyes closed as if in sleep, and had such a complete command over herself as not to betray in her countenance any sign that she was conscious of what was going on. The candle was passed close to her eyes; the knife was drawn across close to her throat; she never winked; or showed by a movement of feature or of limb that she apprehended danger. So the men whispered that she was so soundly asleep that nothing was feared from her, and went out of the room removing the sack which contained the body of the murdered man.

How long must that night of horror have seemed to the poor woman—how frightful was its stillness and darkness. The presence of mind which had so astonishingly enabled her to act a part to which she owed her life, sustained her through the trying scenes which she had yet to pass. She did not hurry from her room at an unseasonably early hour, but waited till she had heard all the family stir for some time; she then went down, and said she believed she had overslept herself in consequence of her being tired.

She asked where the pedlar was, and was told that he was in too great a hurry to wait for her, but that he had left six-pence to pay for her breakfast. She sat down composedly to that meal, and forced herself to partake with an apparent appetite, of the food set before her. She appeared unconscious of the eyes with deep security were set before her.

When the meal was over, she took leave of the family, and went on her way without the least appearance of discomposure or mistrust. She had proceeded but a short distance when she was joined by two strapping looking women; one look was sufficient to convince her that they were young men, and one thought assured her that she was yet in their power, and on the very verge of destruction. They walked by her side, entered into conversation, asked her how far she was going, and told her their road lay the same way; they questioned her as to where she lodged the night before, made minute enquiries about the family inhabiting the house of entertainment. Her answers were quite unembarrassed, she said the people of the house appeared decent and civil, and treated her very well.—For two hours the young men continued by her side, conversing with her and watching with the most scrutinizing glances any change in her countenance, and asked questions, which had she not been fully self possessed, might have put her off her guard. It was not long till her dreaded companions had left her, and till she saw her husband coming along the road to meet her, that she had lost her self command which she had so successfully exercised, and throwing herself into his arms, fainted away.

WORLDLY MINDEDNESS.

DIogenes walked on a day with his friend to see a country fair, where he saw ribands, and looking glasses, and nut-crackers and hobby horses and many other gimeracks; and having observed them, and all the other finnumbrums that make a country fair, he said to his friend: 'How many things there are in this world of which Diogenes has no need!' And truly it is so, or might be so, with very many who vex and toil themselves to get what they have no need of. I have heard of a man that was angry with himself because he was no taller, and of a woman that broke her looking glass because it would not show her face to be as young and handsome as next neighbours was. And I knew another to whom God had given health and plenty, but a wife that nature had made peevish, and her husband's riches had made purse-proud, and must, because she was rich and for no other virtue, sit in the highest pew in the church; which being denied her, she engaged her husband into a contention for it; and at last into a law-suit with a dogged neighbour, who was as rich as he, and had a wife as peevish and purse-proud as the other; and this lawsuit begot higher oppositions, and actionable words, and more vexations and law-suits; for you must remember that both were rich, and must therefore have their wills. Well, this wilful, purse-proud law-suit lasted during the life of the first husband; after which