

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. VIII. No. 23.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 1863.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXVII. No. 23.

Poetry.

Love and the Cross.

Love and a cross together blest
Bring to the Christian peace and rest:
Too sweet were love, if felt alone;
Too sad the cross, with love unknown.

And so the two together come,
Sent by our God to lead us home,
And guide within the narrow way
Our footsteps, ever prone to stray.

For love when it is sent alone,
And pain and sorrow all unknown,
With soft enchantments fills the heart,
And steals from heaven its rightful part.

Without a cross love is but blind,
And fond illusions cloud the mind,
Until by sorrow's light we view
Realities of false and true.

But when a cross is felt alone,
And all the joys of love unknown,
The heart oppressed, without relief,
May sink beneath its load of grief.

For cares and burdens doubly press;
Sorrow has added bitterness;
All hope and courage seem to fly;
While dark despair is drawing nigh.

But love, with gentle smile, comes near:
Despair and darkness disappear;
While strength and energy she brings
To do or suffer wondrous things.

Then give me, Lord—I ask no more—
These blessings from thy wondrous store,
Love and the cross: of these possessed,
I am and shall be ever blessed.

From "Hymns from the Land of Luther."

Scientific.

(From the Baptist Magazine, May, 1863.)

The antiquity of Man.*

Is times gone by, it may be hoped for ever, the discoveries of science have had to force their way to general acceptance against objections drawn not so much from the records of the Bible, as from interpretations that have in the end been abandoned as erroneous. When astronomy deposed the earth from its dignity as the physical centre of the universe, and proved that it was but one of several bodies that revolved round the sun, it was not from the word of God itself that any concession was required, but only from the opinions which men had ignorantly deduced from the mere letter of Scripture. When, more recently, geology established the antiquity of our globe, which was previously supposed to be only about six or eight thousand years old, it was then discovered that the Bible really said nothing to prevent the geologist from making his own time to produce all the phenomena. Still, however, it was thought, that long as it may have taken to prepare this planet for the abode of man (hitherto God's masterpiece), yet that his occupancy of it is comparatively recent, and that the Mosaic chronology must remain undisturbed. Many considerations favoured this conclusion. Man, as he exists at present, has a distinct origin and history; and so far as that history can be traced, no reason exists for assigning to him a higher antiquity than that which he already enjoys in the popular belief. Of course the higher we ascend the more dim and confused is our information. We pass from history into tradition, and then we find tradition largely blended with fable. But still all research in this direction has hitherto tended to prove a common origin for mankind, notwithstanding diversities of race; somewhere in the centre of Asia, and at about the period which the sacred records determine.

This fact is of so much force, that it at once raises a strong objection to the tendency of Sir Charles Lyell's book, which geologists will find it necessary in some way to remove. For it seems utterly incredible that man

should have existed so long upon the earth, and yet nothing in the shape of tradition (leaving history out of the question) should have drifted down to us calculated to awaken the least suspicion of such a truth. Surely it might have been expected that geology would not be the only witness. Tradition, or fable—which is only tradition disguised—language, progress, ought to be as rich a field of investigation, and yield as much of the same tenor as the deposits and stratifications of the earth. That these are all adverse to the antiquity of at least the present race of men, throws considerable discredit upon the geological discoveries so long as geology is the only witness.

But whatever discoveries science may make upon this subject, there is not the slightest occasion for jealousy or fear on the part of any believer in the sacred volume. Our faith in the word of God, and in the religion which it embodies, must rest upon a very feeble foundation if it dreads the progress of knowledge, and deprecates any lawful investigations, conducted in a proper spirit and with an honest view to ascertain the truth. Now the volume which gives occasion for this paper is distinguished for its candour and moderation. There is no attempt to press the argument to a hasty conclusion. Sir Charles Lyell, for the most part, leaves his facts to infer their own consequences, and is by no means anxious to influence the judgment of his readers. We are not aware that any geologist who has taken part in these explorations has manifested a spirit hostile to revelation. The successful cultivators of a science which has from time to time been suspected and feared by religious persons, when they adopt this tone of true philosophy go far to secure for themselves that calm and unprejudiced hearing which they ought to desire. When science proclaims a new-found truth in the language of vaunting defiance, it is not in human nature to refuse the insulting challenge; more especially as it has hitherto turned out that the discovery which has to confute the Bible has been after all found in perfect harmony with it; which is sure to be the case to the world's end. If philosophers will say more than the truth, in order to make it offensive, it is no wonder that divines challenge the truth itself because of its false applications. The result is that both parties have been in fault; the one in making the Bible obstructive to science, the other in making science antagonistic to revelation; whereas, if both be true, they must at last be found in agreement.

And so we are persuaded it will be with regard to the subject before us; namely, the antiquity of man. We may rest assured that if man did not exist fifty or a hundred thousand years ago, geology will never be able to prove such to have been the fact. Why, then, should the investigation of remains, that are at least curious and interesting, awaken any anxiety? But if beings like man in bodily structure, and gifted with some degree of intelligence, can really be shown to have existed before Adam, the proof will not be weakened by denouncing science, nor will it be possible to stay the progress of inquiry and examination. The Bible is rather injured than vindicated when its authority is employed in this direction.

Who knows how many species of bipeds resembling ourselves may have vegetated upon the earth in the innumerable ages of the past? and how is it possible for the discovery of their remains to affect our religious faith? Bones like those of men, and skulls that may have belonged to a better class of apes or gorillas, with whom the mammoth and the cave-bear lived, as it would seem, in the same dens, and in the utmost cordiality, are no sure proofs of the antiquity of man. Hitherto the so-called human remains that have been found indicate a lower type than the lowest of all known specimens of humanity. The forehead is "villainously low," and the cerebral development exceedingly small, while other parts betray an extraordinary amount of physical strength. This may account, perhaps, for the cordial familiarity between the owners of these remains and the formidable animals with which they are found in intimate association. Unlike our degenerate race, they had no cause to be afraid of lions, and tigers, and bears; and therefore the evidence of their existence comes down to us in company with theirs.

An equality of power is the best foundation for mutual amity. Perhaps the error of Sir Charles Lyell and his worthy fellow-labourers lies in this, that knowing the anatomical distinctions between a man and a chimpanzee, they do not allow for the possible existence, at some time or other, of a middle link between the two which is neither an ape nor a man; and yet all the remains point to such a conclusion.

If, therefore, the resemblance to man in bodily structure were even closer than it is, there would really be nothing to disturb or embarrass any believer in the old chronology. A biped is not a man, without a reasonable soul. Consequently, if we find, together with the remains of the creature, some of his works clearly exhibiting design, it will be admitted that in the case before us the evidence is complete. Here, then, lies the gist of the whole question. It is alleged that certain implements and weapons have been found, in considerable numbers, which however rude, are yet as evidently the work of man as if they were of the finest and most elaborate construction. It is true that none but practised eyes can see that these knives and arrow-heads are anything more than common pieces of stone, done into their shape by the numerous forces to which they have been subjected in the course of many ages; and, for the present, the uninitiated must be content with the testimony of those high-priests of science, who are alone acquainted with the mysteries of science. It would be dangerous to our reputation for knowledge and sagacity to call in question evidences of design which are so palpable that hardly one man in a million can discern them. But still, if it were not rebellion against authority and experience, we should venture to suggest that the proofs, in such a case, ought to be plain enough to be appreciated by all intelligent persons when once attention is called to them. What we should not have discerned for ourselves, scientific men ought at any rate to make visible to us, and not require us to believe on their word in marks of design, when the only agency employed was breakage, and the result a pointed or sharp-edged piece of stone which a few imaginative cultivators of science assume to have been arrow-heads and knives.

Such, however, are the remains which have already created a period of indefinite length in the early history of mankind, called the age of stone, which reaches back to a date far beyond the oldest that can be assigned, or any computation, to the beginning of the Mosaic chronology. Not that we pretend to deny that these lumps of stone may have been broken by men, and for a definite purpose. Indeed, it would be rash to do so in the present state of the investigation. Facts may be expected to accumulate rapidly if there be any truth in the theory. Without, therefore, presuming to prove or even affirm a negative, we only remark that these remains constitute at present a very insufficient ground for a positive conclusion. Even if we allow them to be tools of human design and fabrication, we call in question their claims to extreme antiquity.

The Danish peat-bogs play a very conspicuous and important part in this argument. It seems to be quietly taken for granted that the origin of this "peaty record" is of immense antiquity, that it has increased with amazing slowness, and never at any greater rate than it does at present. And yet Sir Charles Lyell himself, in his "Principles of Geology," declares that a considerable portion of the peat in the peat-bogs of Europe is evidently not more ancient than the age of Julius Cæsar. He also says that Hatfield Moss appears clearly to have been a forest eighteen hundred years ago. We quote another fact, Mr. Pattison's excellent tract upon the present subject, which we cordially commend to our readers. "In the 'Philosophical Transactions,' No. 330, the Earl of Cromartie records, that in the west of Ross-shire a considerable extent of land was, between the years 1651 and 1699, changed from a forest into a peat-moss, from which turf was cut." On what ground, then, can the Danish peat lay claim to so high an antiquity as this argument assumes? Solely because it contains three stages of vegetation. Lowest is found the Scotch fir, which has not, we are told, grown in Denmark within historic times; next come two varieties of the oak, which

also have disappeared from the country; while uppermost are the trees which still flourish. Three ages are thus constructed, to correspond with the three ages of stone, of bronze, and of iron; and because an implement of stone (we will admit the implement) has been found lying embedded under a Scotch fir, it is concluded that the men of stone were contemporaneous with the fir. No we will not stop to question the truth of the statement the Scotch fir has not grown in Denmark within historic times; but is there not space enough beyond historic times for all these changes which have unquestionably taken place? And is not the fact that four successive growths of forest-trees have fallen in and been absorbed, a proof that there have been at least four periods when the peat has augmented with more than usual rapidity?

Sir Charles Lyell has quite taken from us all hope of ever answering that obscure and oft-repeated question, Who was the first man that ate an oyster? But he has clearly proved that the delicate edible, together with others less delicate, was consumed in enormous quantities by the men of stone. The fact is sufficiently attested by the vast mounds of shells that are found on the island coasts of Denmark, called kitchen refuse-heaps. Such heaps are also found in North America, no doubt thrown up by the same sort of people. The kitchen-middens are brought in to prove that these voracious devourers of oysters must have lived at a time when the waters of the sea had freer access to the Baltic than at present, because the oyster will not flourish now in places where it was then so abundant. We believe, however, that no one can tell us how long ago it may be when some of the lowlands of Denmark were still submerged, and consequently afforded other channels through which the salt of the Northern Ocean might flow in and season the Baltic to the taste of the fish in question. But Sir Charles Lyell tells us that Jutland was at no remote period an archipelago; and "even in the course of the present century the salt waters have made one irruption into the Baltic by the Lym Fiord, although they have been now again excluded. It is also affirmed that other channels were open in historical times which are now silted up." The physical changes here indicated are quite sufficient to bring the oyster-beds of the Baltic, if not their lapidary consumers, within a period of very reasonable dimensions.

On the whole, we think that the Danish antiquaries have made sadly too little of their "kitchen-middens." We are inclined to fancy that if a modern dust-heap, just as it is now deposited, should be brought to light 10,000 years hence, by men who will probably by that date have attained at length to the age of gold, they will gather more from it respecting ourselves, even in the single article of oyster-shells, than we have yet learned from the same objects about the men of stone. Our men of gold will probably discover in what manner we open our oysters and make them ready for consumption; a point on which the Danish explorers have neglected to enlighten us as to their consumers. With all possible respect for the stone-knives, we yet do not see how, with an oyster in one hand and one of these implements in the other, a man had any reasonable prospect of satisfying a good appetite. Our oyster-shells will, in all likelihood, show that they have been opened by a sharp instrument, a specimen of which may, though rarely, be found, destitute of its handle. Our mussels and cockles will, perhaps, bear traces of having felt the fire, or some few of our oysters of having been between the bars. These little particulars, though we may now smile at the mention of them, will no doubt become respectable in the lapse of time, and will be discussed with all due gravity by the men of gold.

The dwellers upon the Swiss lakes undoubtedly constitute a very curious and interesting subject. They erected their habitations a little from the shore, upon a platform supported by piles, and connected with the land by a causeway, that could be readily destroyed in case of hostile attack. It is needless to say that the position was chosen with a view to security. The remains of charred wood and burnt piles attest that their dwellings were sometimes destroyed by fire, whether from accidental causes or the projectiles of an enemy. Mention is made by Herodotus of a

*The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man, by Sir Charles Lyell.
The Antiquity of Man: an Examination of Sir Charles Lyell's Recent Work, by S. R. Pattison, F.G.S.
The British Quarterly Review, April, 1863, A.T.