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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

YE SHALL PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Join all ye chosen race,
To praise the God of grace!
With one accord;
In Him let us rejoice,
For making us his choice,
And sing with heart and voice
Praise ye the Lord!

We'll to his house repair,
And offer there our pray'r,
On Him we'll call,
Jesus our Lord arise,
Accept our sacrifice,
Scatter our enemies
And make them fall.

Be thou our help and guide
Near us O Lord abide
Grant us thy grace,
When we are call'd away
From this our house of clay,
Receive our souls we pray
To see thy face.

**C.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

ONWARD.

The development of the human mind is testified by its history in all ages, whatever its surroundings. Circumstances have only controlled the ratio, never destroyed its progress. The germ from which springs unceasingly the after growth, is coeval with its existence. Its growth is unlimited. The light in its casket, passes sooner or later its meridian, and settles away to its primitive material, dust, awaits the transformation from mortal to immortal. The mind is onward through endless ages, and upward in progress, eternal.

Nor is the ultimate destiny of man less progressive than the mind. It is never reached. The "rest that remains," remains forever, "the wrath to come" is forever the wrath to come. The good man's bliss is in perpetuity, the bad man's great woe, is, that it never ceases. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Much of the happiness of the believer depends on the progressiveness of his knowledge. If the ultimate could be reached the pleasure would cease. The finite can never comprehend the infinite. Infinite heights forever transcend the highest created intelligence. Who can measure even the stature of men in Christ?—of those holding "the truth as it is in Jesus" who "grow up into him in all things." Perfect manhood as manifested in Christ, what a development from the embryo the christian began, always perfect in Christ in kind, yet never in extent. The absolute is with God only.

God in Christ, and eternity alone meet the possibilities of the immortal soul. Aught else mock its necessities. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Progressiveness is not always upward, although always onward. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." There is no limit in the downward course. Sin is alienation from God. Sin perpetuated is perpetual alienation. "The wages of sin is death," always death. Sin is the pathway of misery. To live in the pathway, is to live in misery. The descent grows rapid, and the progress less and less impeded as God's forbearance and overtures of mercy are disregarded. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set to do evil."

To the finally impenitent there is no alternate, "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall destroy the adversary." READER, Seriously consider the question, In which of these courses am I progressing?

J. C.

THE STABILITY OF NATURAL LAW THE SYMBOL AND PLEDGE OF THE STABILITY OF MORAL LAW.

FROM A SERMON SUGGESTED BY THE LATE TRANSIT OF VENUS: BY THE REV. GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN, D. D., PHILADELPHIA.

The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying: Thus saith the Lord: If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.—JEREMIAH xxxiii. 19-21.

Last Tuesday occurred an event of profoundest interest to the astronomical world; it was the Transit of Venus.

The ability to predict the transit of Venus was based on the stability of natural law. The transit was not an accident. Science knows no accidents. It was a natural event, occurring in due order of nature. For nature has its order, and that order is inexorable. Completely learn that order, and you shall completely recite nature's past, and completely foretell nature's future. Hence the favorite saying of Comte: "Science whence pre-science," i. e. pre-science. So universal and inflexible is natural law felt to be, that many of the votaries of science actually worship it, knowing no God but nature.

They make the profound mistake of failing to distinguish between law and force. The laws of nature are but certain invariable rules which Deity has chosen to prescribe to himself, according to which he has determined, and still determines, that he will govern every atom in the universe. The laws of nature are but the rules which Almighty God, as King of his realm of nature, has devised and laid down for his own procedure.

Or, to put the matter in another way, and in accordance with the text, the laws of nature are God's covenant with man. "If you can break my covenant of day and night, then you can break my covenant of David." According to Holy Scripture, then, the ordinances of matter, the appointments and arrangements of the material universe, the laws of nature, are not only God's self-prescribed method of procedure; they are actually his covenant. What we call the law of day and night is really God's promise to give us in regular succession day and night—God's solemn engagement with man to alternate regularly light and darkness. This, in fact, as he had declared to Noah, was what the rainbow should signify: "My bow I set in the cloud; and it shall be for a covenant-sign between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living being of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will see it, to remember the perpetual covenant between God and every living being of all flesh that is upon the earth." Not that the rainbow was itself God's covenant that he would never again flood the earth; it was but his appointed sign of such covenant. "My bow set in the cloud, and it shall be for a covenant-sign between me and the earth." Accordingly, every time we see it arching the eastern horizon, the God of the rainbow bids us to accept it as his pledge that "while earth continues, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." The laws of nature, then, are God's covenant.

The laws of nature are stable, to be depended on absolutely. Hence the ability to predict, e. g., the astronomical future. Precisely because the laws of nature are stable the astronomer was able to predict that there would be a transit of Venus on Dec. 8th, 1874. Precisely because the laws of nature are stable the astronomer is able to predict that there will be another transit of Venus on Dec. 6th, 1882. Precisely because the laws of

nature are stable, the astronomer is able to predict that after the next transit of Venus, Dec. 6th, 1882, there will not be another transit till June 7th, 2004. Every one of these predictions is based on the absolute stability of natural law.

It is the supreme confidence of astronomers in the unchangeableness of the laws of nature, so absolute their conviction that Venus would begin to cross the sun's disc at twelve minutes past ten, Dec. 8th, 1874, that in order to witness the phenomenon they hesitated not to make large personal sacrifices, involving months of laborious and costly preparation, and long and perilous journeys to remote and savage spots of earth, and this too in entire ignorance of what the weather would be when the critical moment should arrive. So morally certain were they that the transit would take place at the moment predicted, that they hesitated not to risk the elaborate and costly preparations of years and of continents on the chance of a few minutes of fair weather on the morning of Dec. 8th, 1874. It was a sublime instance of men's faith in nature. And the issue justified the faith. The transit of Venus did take place precisely as it had been predicted; it would; and so another august witness took the stand to testify to the unchangeableness of nature's laws; that is to say, the veracity of God's covenant of nature.

And now to the text. Our prophet represents God as using the stability of his administration of nature as the pledge of the stability of his administration of grace. "Thus saith Jehovah: If ye can break my covenant of the day and night, my covenant of the light, so with a son in their season, then also may my covenant with David my servant be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne." The words were spoken in the darkest period of Jewish history. The disobedience and obduracy of generations was just issuing in the shame and despair of the Babylonian captivity. But amidst this terrible downfall, this apparently hopeless wreck of the Jewish nationality, one blessed memory survived; it was the remembrance of God's covenant with David. More than four centuries before Jeremiah, God, through the mouth of his prophet Nathan, had said to the man after his own heart: "When thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall proceed from thy loins, and I will establish as kingdom; and he will build a house for my name; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." And now, amidst the horrors and despair of the Babylonian siege, God would comfort his servant Jeremiah and the few who like Jeremiah had remained loyal, assuring them that his covenant with David was as inviolable as his laws of nature. "Thus saith Jehovah who appointeth the sun for light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for light by night, who calmeth the sea when its waves roar: Jehovah of his is his name: if there is not my covenant of day and night; if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; if these ordinances depart from before me; if ye can break my covenant of day and night, so that there shall be no more day nor night in their season, then also may my covenant with David be broken, so that noon of his shall reign on his throne. Thus God bids his servant Jeremiah accept the inviolable covenant of day and night—in other words, the stability of nature's laws—as the resist argument for, and unerring sign, I pledge of, the stability of his covenant with David. And the issue proved that the covenant of Messiah was as inviolable as the covenant of day and night. Jesus the Christ, born from the loins of David, as the transit of Venus, after many years of prediction, proves the inability of God's covenant of nature to the birth of Jesus Christ, of those and lineage of David, six hundred years after

Jeremiah's prophecy, and a thousand years after the original covenant with David, proves the inviolability of God's covenant of grace.

Having thus explained the prophet's words in their bearing on his own countrymen and generation, we are prepared for the general lesson which they teach all lands and all times; it is this: the stability of natural law an argument for and pledge of the stability of moral law.

No one doubts the stability of natural law. We talk indeed of breaking the laws of Nature, violating the laws of health, and the like. But the language is manifestly loose. By no manner of possibility can we break a single law of Nature. It is the laws of Nature which break us if we do not obey them. A man lives a life of sensuous excesses and dies. Why does he die? Because he has broken the laws of health? No! Because the laws of health would not be broken—they insisted on having their own way—they broke him. The laws of Nature are absolutely inviolable. Think you that the laws of Morals are any less so? Shall the God who rules the natural world with a sceptre so sovereign and changeless, rule the spiritual world with a feeble and vacillating wand? While the world of matter is under the reign of law and order, is the world of spirit under the reign of chance and caprice? No! When you can break God's covenant with matter, then, it may be, you can break God's covenant with spirit.

Think not then that sin will ever go unpunished. You can no more break God's law of righteousness than you can break God's law of gravitation. Hurl yourself against the law of gravitation—break the law of gravitation? No! the law of gravitation breaks you; for there you lie, a crushed, dead body. Hurl yourself against the law of righteousness by leaping from the height of sonship to the Eternal Father: do you break the law of righteousness? No! the law of righteousness breaks you; for there you lie a crushed, dead soul. Sin and punishment are as indissoluble as cause and effect. You may not see the punishment. For the consequences of sin, though always inevitable, are not always apparent. As force in nature, though indestructible, is capable of assuming different guises, so the consequences of sin may appear in various forms, either in this world or in the next, either in remorse or in penitence, either in your own person or in the person of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. But whatever the form of the consequence, the law of sin and punishment is as inexorable as the law of cause and effect.

And as it is with sin, so it is with righteousness. That every true service for God, the very tiniest as well as the grandest, shall sooner or later receive its full reward, is as absolutely certain as that God exists. And this for two reasons: First, it is of the very nature of righteousness that it should issue in reward, even as it is of the very nature of cause that it should issue in effect. And, secondly, in addition to the inherent, inviolable nature of righteousness, God has solemnly given his own personal promise, and this in many an explicit Scripture. Take, e. g., the promise of our text. While the covenant with David, in its literal, technical sense, was a personal, and, so to speak, physiological covenant, meaning the Davidic progenitorship of the promised Messiah, or Christ; yet the covenant, in its moral, essential sense, was a spiritual covenant, meaning the setting up, along the line of David's son and Lord, of a spiritual kingdom, which should be universal and lasting, and this because spiritual. Thus interpreted the covenant with David was a universal covenant, offered to you and me as well as to the son of Jesse, and involving all God's promises, even every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus; for it is in him who was of the house and lineage of David that God's promises are yea and amen. And as it was in

the days of Jeremiah, so it is in ours; God still points to his inflexible ordinances of heaven and earth, his unchangeable appointments of sun and moon, and stars, his irreversible covenant of day and night, as the pledges of the eternal inviolability of his promises in Jesus Christ. Yes, as certainly as there is a gravitating force which works according to an unchanging law, so certainly will Jesus Christ, and whoever is Jesus Christ's, yet win a limitless and irreversible triumph; for to this, Almighty God has solemnly pledged the very inexorableness of the laws of the nature he has made. Aye, God's covenant of grace is even more certain than God's covenant of nature. Heaven and earth shall yet pass away, but not God's word. The very elements themselves shall melt with fervent heat, but out of the ashes of the wrecked globe shall rise in immortal resurrection the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Less hopeless then is it to attempt to reverse the laws of nature than the laws of grace—less absurd to fight against gravitation than against Christianity—less idiotic to undertake to annihilate matter than to avert the coming coronation of the covenanted son of David.

This then is the lesson of the evening; the stability of natural law the symbol and pledge of the stability of moral.

Oh, brethren and friends, the argument, as I know you must feel, is absolutely overwhelming. If the transit of Venus on December 8th, 1874, in precise answer to the predictions of astronomers as based on the stable, inviolable laws of the universe, proves that God administers his material creation with an even, unwavering, inexorable hand; then the birth of Jesus Christ, in exact accordance with the predictions of the prophets—predictions hinged on the ever fluctuating volitions and sudden, uncalculable caprices of millions of men, and this during hundreds of years, proves that Almighty God has had an irreversible plan from the beginning; and that the prophets of the Old Testament, in predicting as they did, were moved by his inspiration. When, e. g., I read in the Old Testament that Immanuel was to be born of a virgin, and of the line of David, and in the town of Bethlehem; when I remember that these precise, minute predictions were hazarded on the capricious impulses and secret plans of millions of unborn men, scattered through Asia, Africa, and Europe, on the rise and fall of coming empires, the edicts of kings, the intrigues of statesmen, the schemes of merchants, the tears of widows, the prayers of the saintly, the curses of the reprobate, and all these for hundreds of years; when I remember that the resultant of these inconceivably numerous and complicated forces was at last made to converge into one person, out of unnumbered millions, and in one little, obscure spot of Palestine, out of the whole wide earth;—when I remember all this, I feel a resistless force laid on me, which compels me to confess that God is infinitely wise and strong, foreseeing from the beginning all things, and pre-determining all things, because he had foreseen them. Verily "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony to Jesus." And if the transit of Venus, in exact answer to the predictions of astronomy is true, and that you cannot resist the God of nature, does not the birth of Jesus Christ, in exact answer to the predictions of prophets, prove and for an unspeakably stronger reason, that Christianity is true, and that you cannot resist the God of Scripture?

Finally, the issue of all that has been said to-night is in a word of cheer; and the word of cheer is this: Trust God absolutely. All nature is pledged to the inviolability of God's promises; and therefore all nature is pledged to give you good cheer. You cannot