

# CHRISTIAN



# VISITOR.

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[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

## EVENING THOUGHTS.

How swiftly passes time away!  
Another short and anxious day  
Is numbered with the past:  
Like shooting stars the minutes fly,  
They just appear and quickly die,  
The weaver's shuttle cannot fly as fast.

The sable curtain of the night,  
That intercepts day's cheering light,  
Again is spread around;  
Darkness throughout her wide domain,  
Resumes her delegated reign,  
And o'er the nations spreads a gloom profound.

Since from the night's serene repose  
Of dreamy slumbers I arose,  
How short the time appears!  
Yet since that time an earthly day  
Has dawned, declined, and passed away,  
Shortening the measure of my future years.

How rapid is the flight of time!  
The thought how solemn and sublime,  
That soon its course will end!  
Its anxious cares, delusive joys,  
Deceitful prospects, gaudy toys,  
And faithless hopes but to the grave extend.

Life's changing scenes will soon be o'er,  
Time shall depart, and be no more,  
And then eternity,  
With all its vast realities,  
Its inexpressive mysteries,  
Shall fill the embraces of infinity.

Eternity! O, awful word!  
Who but the universal Lord,  
Its meaning fully knows?  
F frail mortals cannot comprehend  
Duration that shall never end,  
Fraught with eternal joys or endless woes.

Yet this must be the lot of all  
Who dwell on this terrestrial ball,  
An everlasting home,—  
A mansion of unsullied light,  
With inexpressive glory bright,—  
Or an abode where peace can never come.

Saviour of sinners, God of love,  
Who reignest in the heavens above,  
O let me share Thy grace;  
That I may be prepared to stand  
Acceptably at Thy right hand,  
When heaven and earth shall flee before Thy  
face.  
G. McC.

## WESTERN AFRICA.

The *Westminster Review* contains an article of great interest, and, considering the subject, of great importance, having reference to the Western or slave coast of Africa. It affords the clearest and fullest insight into the interior life and habits of this great nursery of slavery, in which Christian civilization remorselessly trafficked for so many successive ages, that has yet met the public gaze. An intimate and accurate knowledge of the subject treated of is as legible and as intelligible on these pages as the nervous and racy language in which it is developed. The writer wins your admiration until it becomes a belief, and you feel not alone that he speaks of things within his knowledge, and that his delineation is but the expression of his convictions.

The existing condition of things; the state of the people mental and social, their actual being as a people, are the first inquiries which naturally suggest themselves when we get a glimpse at the original sources of this enslaved race with whom we are so fatally associated.

And in this instance we see what we were not prepared for by any previous account. Settled habitations, ownership and cultivation of the soil, manufacture of iron, gold, and cotton goods, fortified towns, grades in society, responsible government, and even the institution of domestic slavery, that truest type of an advanced state of civilization, present themselves to our astonished view. The fortifications are rude; mud walls and stockades, and the huts nearly as bad as some of those of the poorer Irish, but more cleanly. Of the fortifications it may be observed, that they are adapted to their use, and perhaps more tenable, considering the means of attack, than the fortifications of Paris when assailed by all the modern appliances of civilized warfare; and as to the huts, their superiority over the Irish depends in a great measure, we opine, on the fact that the climate is intolerable, and has saved them from English dominion. A more intimate connection with that Government would adjust the equation of the social destiny of Irishman and African.

This description applies to the African nations or tribes along the coast, some of which are far in advance of others, and all of which are in advance of the tribes in the interior, who are inaccessible in general to Europeans. The former are divided into several distinct nations. Most of them are Mohammedans, forbidden by their religion from holding or selling Mohammedan slaves, and therefore, as a general rule, the powerful tribes of that religion, and even the weak ones, cannot be enslaved. The principal tribes at the Gambia are the Joliffes, the Mandingoes, the Foolaahs or Felatahs. The Mandingoes are the landed class—the proprietary, as they would be called in England. They rent out their lands to the Foolaahs to feed their flocks, and to other neighboring tribes for agricultural purposes. For themselves, they are addicted to aristocratic pursuits—war, excess and idleness.—The Joliffes, the remaining tribe, are said to be intelligent and well looking, and are generally mechanics.

The Foolaahs are not all engaged in herding; one section of them are given to war, and perhaps a little plunder. But the greater agricultural section forms a very interesting nation. Their traditional habits, sports, festivals, &c., are no doubt national and characteristic, but approach European nations so closely in refinement, and a view to taste in dress, as to become interesting to the traveler.

In their religious opinion, the whole of the Mohammedan population is divided into two great sects—the Marabouts, who adhere strictly to the laws of the Prophet, and the Sonnachees who eat swine's flesh and get as drunk as Christians. We are not told whether they have any martyrs, or, in fact, whether a Sonnachee is proscribed. The intelligent reviewer does not enlighten us on this branch of African politics.

The responsibility and constitutionality of Government as exemplified is an account of an interesting discussion which took place in reference to an innovation proposed by the English surgeon, namely, vaccinating children for the purpose of averting the fatality of the small-pox, whose ravages had been very general. More than one king called together his council to submit the proposal to the concrete wise one. They usually assembled under a green tree, perhaps of a thousand years' growth. The chiefs and sages here debated the question, and, singular to say, in every instance the popular opposition to the innovation was based on the privilege of the council to controul the regal power. The argument somewhat resembled the capital opposition reasoning. They were partially indifferent to

the issue—whether vaccination was good or bad, safe or dangerous—but whether it did not infringe on the constitutional right of the council. We find, however, that the logic did not prevail; nor are we informed whether the Sonnachees—the patriotic rum-drinkers—resigned in a dudgeon or not. In one instance this extreme sacrifice was rendered unnecessary; for as soon as the council and king, after grave deliberation, decided in favor of the sanatory reform, the lady mammas scampered off to the woods with their sable angels to save them from the profanation.—Perhaps, indeed, the opposition was pursued to extremes with the view of showing the English, who did everything, and said everything, concluding their prayers in the name of her gracious Majesty, how much more circumscribed were their rulers and how much more securely their liberties were guarded.—However that may be, the reform is progressing, and by degrees the mammas and the patriots are yielding to its salutary influence.

The laws of the Africans in respect to debtors are stringent and severe, and here is the fountain and spring of the domestic institution of slavery. If the debtor fail to satisfy his obligation he becomes the chattel of his creditor, and once a slave, he and his offspring are slaves for ever. Not alone this, but in many instances, if the debtor himself escape, any of his family or relations, or even tribe, can be "held to service" with his progeny for ever. These are cruel laws, but they are scarcely more cruel than hanging a man or woman for petty larceny, stealing 2s. 6d. worth, and such was the law in England within our memory. Further, the African law has had a far more salutary effect, for there prevails among the mercantile community at the Gambia the most perfect sense of security, and no where in the world is property more secure than among the African population.

We have mentioned one source of slavery. Another and a more fruitful one is war.—Every captive taken in war becomes thereby a slave forever. The victor can hold him or sell him at his pleasure. And in general the plea that he is a Mahommedan will not avail him. In the din and tumult of war, there as elsewhere, the voice of justice, mercy and truth is unheard.

The commerce of these settlements is rapidly increasing, and promises a rich return to those who engage in it. The demand of the natives for various articles of wear, with their articles of *virtu*, is scarcely to be satisfied, and there is no doubt but the productions of the country, which are absolutely without limit, can be had in exchange on terms most profitable. On this head we let the article before us speak for itself.

"The palm oil alone imported into England is now of the value of more than \$800,000. In 1835, forty-seven bushels of groundnuts were exported from the Gambia; at present between 8,000,000 and 9,000,000 bushels are annually exported. The palm ceases to flourish two miles from the sea, but the Chea Butter tree is abundant throughout the whole of the interior. The Chea Oil is worth from £3 to £4 a tun more than the Palm Oil.

The produce of Indigo and Cotton can be increased *ad libitum*, and, by proper attention and enterprise, the facilities of transit can be so arranged and provided as to make the cost price less than one-half. A great and rich field is there, and needs only care and cultivation. That it will receive them, the enterprise of Englishmen is a sufficient guarantee. We agree, however, with the writer, that if trade and Christianity were made a little more independent of one another, both would prosper better. They do not seem to travel *pari*

*passu*, for while the former is flourishing the latter seems sadly unprosperous, and the native strikes a balance between the sailor and the missionary, somewhat neutralizing in its effects. The association is, he thinks, a bad one, and while he wishes ardently for cheap cotton, beads and trinkets, they would be acceptable to him on their own merits, while no doubt, when he comes to appreciate the Word of God, he will find it sufficiently convincing and consoling without the other adjuncts.

The reviewer furnishes a sublime picture of brute nature in all the untamed majesty of the clime, softened by a back-ground of verdure and forest grandeur. But we have considered the paper in a different point of view, and shall not follow the writer into this agreeable field of inquiry.—*New York Tribune.*

## Curious Customs of the Japanese.

The Japanese shine like the Chinese, in monstrosities. They can dwarf trees so well, that in a little box four inches square, President Neylan saw growing a fir, a bamboo and a palm tree in full blossom. Or they hypertrophy plants if they please, until a radish is produced as large as a boy six years old.—Their gardens, however small, are always laid out in handsome style, and each is adorned with a temple, not a mere ornamental summer house, but the real shrine of a household god. Into this garden walks the lady, and returns with a few flowers. She takes these to an elegant shelf fixed in a recess of the apartment, boquet-stands, and is engaged upon her nosegay. An act of taste? Oh, dear, no; every drawing room in Japan has such a shelf with flowers upon it; every lady entering who found her husband there, and meant to take a walk with him, would in the first place, make the nosegay talk, and say, "The wife and husband are alone together." If company arrive, the flowers must be otherwise adjusted; the position of every flower, and even of green leaves in that boquet, is fixed by custom, which is law, to vary with the use to which the room is put.

One of the most difficult and necessary parts of female education in Japan, is to acquire a perfect knowledge of the rules laid down in a large book on the arrangement of the drawing room nosegay, in a manner suitable in every case. It is in the Japanese "use of globes" to ladies' schools. The boys and girls, after reading and writing; which are taught (bear, England!) to the meaneast Japanese, the most necessary part of education is an elaborate training in the ceremonial rules of life. Bows proper for every occasion, elegant kotoos, the whole science and practice of good breeding, have to be learned through many tedious years. To boys there is given special training in the *harakiri*, or the art of ripping one's self up. Many occasions present themselves on which it as much concerns the honor of a Japanese to cut himself open, as it concerned an Englishman some years ago to fire a pistol at his friend. The occasions are so frequent, that a Japanese boy's school would be incomplete in which instruction was not given in this art of suicide.

Boys practice all the details in dramatic fashion, and in after life, if a day come when disgrace caused often by the deeds of other men, appears inevitable, he appoints a day, and according to the exigencies of the case, before his family or his immediate connections, ceremoniously cuts open his own belly at solemn dinner. Dying in this way, he is said to have died in the course of nature; dying before shame come to him, he is said to have died undisgraced, and so has saved his family from participation in his fall which otherwise was imminent.—*Household Words.*