

Poetry.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

(From the "Christian Year.")

"And suddenly there was with the Angel multitude of the heavenly host, praising God."—St. Luke, ii. 13.

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er the expanse of heav'n?
In waves of light it thrills along...

in their statements of the progress of the contagion; and even the philosophic radicalism of The Westminster Review has condescended to notice, with censure...

It is now somewhat more than ten years since four or five Clergymen of the University of Oxford met together—alarmed at the course of Parliamentary legislation with respect to the Church, at the very menacing and formidable attitude of dissent, in its alliance with political liberalism, and at the disposition manifested in the Establishment itself to tamper with the distinctive principles of its formularies—met together in private, and resolved to make an effort...

No secular power, no Episcopal sentence, no courtly, aristocratic, or popular influence added one tittle of impetus to the movement which was thus commenced. The Bishops had not recently been accustomed to instruct their Clergy, in their Charges, upon matters connected with the constitution and authority of the Church...

PRESENT ASPECT OF THE CHURCH.

[From The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review just published, we give the following truly excellent article, which is attributed to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade, but how truly so we know not.—Church Intelligence.]

below the proper level of their lofty calling, although they continued to be much above that of general society. The lives of the portion of our youth intended to recruit their ranks, were generally unrestrained; and they passed at the period of their Ordination, from indifference or dissoluteness to decency, rather as a matter of social arrangement, than as the fruit of any religious emotion, or effectual training for the most sacred and awful of all functions.

This, we say with pain and shame, was what the Church of England appeared to be about to become. It is true that amendment had commenced before the year 1833; but while this was the case in particular parishes, in other localities, the process of degeneracy and decay was still regularly advancing, as the nature of all corruptions is to go from bad to worse, until, by some vigorous check, and the infusion of a new principle, the course is reversed.

It may be said that this is theoretical reasoning; that it indicates what should or might have been, according to the arbitrary notion of an individual writer, and not what was. But let it be submitted to the test of common observation. We assert, without the fear of contradiction, that the progression of which we speak is, as a whole, the progression not of a party or section, but of the Church.

We do not mean that there were no moral affinities, no capacities of close alliance and amalgamation, between the teaching of those who are ever to be honoured for their witness to the doctrines of grace as opposed to those of a narrow, frigid and abstract morality, and that of the later school, who have brought into general prominence the doctrine of the Church as living and perpetual stewardship of the ordinances of grace.

We have been led by this contrast, almost unawares, to express the conclusion towards which we are naturally brought by the previous remarks: namely, that regarding the operation as a whole, that operation has been a development from within of the mind and sense of the Church herself; not proceeding from fortuitous causes, not coloured by individual caprice, nor by merely individual genius, piety, or learning...

not comprehend the elements necessary for its own permanent immunity from deteriorating influences. But strange, indeed, it would have been—at least in the view of those who regard the Church visible and Catholic as the everlasting Spouse of Christ, dowered with the gifts which He purchased with His blood and tears—most strange to them it would have been, if in a great religious revival that spouse had not found herself a voice for the assertion of her prerogatives; not, indeed, as if it were her to battle with her foes, like earthly potentates, for the sake of acquisition or possession, of admiration or renown, but because her prerogatives are also her duties, and by them alone she can discharge aright the high trusts committed to her by Lord.

The inhabitants of Lapland are nominally all Protestants, great pains having been taken for their religious improvement by Swedes and Danes; still superstition exists to a fearful extent among them, though there is good ground to hope that it is on the decline.

There are many relics of heathen idolatry in Lapland—the deities of which are represented as of such the same character as those of the northern nations in general—many of which they imagine to be extraordinary charms in many of the diseases; and they held in strange and fearful veneration the places where ancient sacrifices had been offered. These places are still marked by heaps of decayed rein-deer's horns; and still, when they pass that way, the natives shrink with horror.

It was once believed that there were necromancers in Lapland who had power to send fortunate winds; and, what was worse, to send adverse ones after those who gave them offence. So late as 1653, a French traveller in that country gives an account of going on shore with the captain of a Danish vessel to purchase a wind, in compliance with the wishes of his crew.

Even in the reign of Queen Elizabeth witches and wizards were accused of dominion not only over the destinies of men and cattle, but over the elements themselves. If the wind or a storm arose, the cry was "Bind the bells and burn the witches."

As a Lapland parish often extends some hundred miles, it may be imagined the clergyman's life is subject to much fatigue and hardship. In the depth of winter he is usually settled near his church; and here his parishioners assemble from their distant homes every Sunday, some arriving the day before if they have a very long way to travel, and taking up their quarters for the night in the church, or in one of the few log-houses close by.

Here, too, their marriages take place. On one occasion a son of one of the Nier's old friends took unto himself a wife, and Karin was delighted to see the grand presents that were bestowed as bridal offerings. There were rings and silver spoons, and a cup of silver; a silver kerchief for the lady's waist; one silk, and two cotton kerchiefs for her neck.

After the wedding-dinner a collection in money was made for the new-married pair from all the guests. The father bestowed on his son, to begin the world

with, some of his precious silver cups and dollars, and a fine herd of eighty rein-deer. The guests also, many of them, promised to contribute a few more to his stock, on condition that he would come to demand them, and bring with him a present of brandy in exchange.

Round the clergyman's hut there were several others of the same kind, inhabited by the merchants who came to deal with the Laplanders for the furs they got in hunting.

A Laplander's funeral is conducted somewhat in the following manner, and is on the authority of an eye-witness:—"Coming to the house of the deceased, we saw the corpse taken from the bear-skins on which it lay, and removed into a wooden coffin by six of his most intimate friends, after being first wrapped in linen, the face and hands alone being bare. In one hand they put a purse with some money to pay the fee of the porter at the gate of paradise; in the other a certificate, signed by the priest, directed for St. Peter, to witness that the defunct was a good Christian, and deserved admission into heaven.

Superstitious notions of a very similar character are not unknown in our own country, where certain supposed wizards or cunning men are consulted by the weak and credulous, under the silly notion that they can give information as to lost property, those who have been guilty of theft, &c.

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