

dove with a vulture's beak, a rose with leaves of nettles." How incongruous, how unlovely! What strange results might be expected from a Church composed to some extent of such anomalies!

A people should be noted as *progressive*. Progress is the order of God's universe. The powers of man, both physical and mental, have a gradual development. This principle holds in the Kingdom of grace, in individuals and in Churches. To advance in religion is the duty of every professing Christian, and of every constituted Church. On the individual obligation, Mr. James, in his Church Member's Guide, has the following important remarks: "As the usual mode of admission to our Churches subjects their members to a scrutiny of their conduct, it is considered by many as a kind of ordeal, which being passed with success, remits them from any solicitude about further improvement. A kind of indelible character is then impressed upon them which is susceptible of neither increase nor improvement. I do not mean to say that they come deliberately to such a conclusion, or that they are aware of any such opinion being in their minds, but having passed their trials with honour, they insensibly acquire the idea, that now they are professed and acknowledged Christians, that their religion is admitted to be genuine, that they are put amongst the disciples, and therefore the same anxiety is no longer necessary. Often and often have we seen, especially in the case of young persons, that the act of joining the Church has in some measure diminished the earnestness with which their minds were formerly directed to the subject of religion. They were growing rapidly as babes in Christ, till the consciousness of being a Church member and acknowledged Christian, either by generating pride or relaxing diligence, has paralyzed their piety, arrested their growth, and left them dwarfs in grace forever after. We should consider that religion is not an abstract thing of times, places and ceremonies; nor is the religious character formed by any single compliance, however public or however solemn. If it were admitted that regeneration is an instantaneous change, in which the whole character of a child of God is formed at once, this will not apply to membership. Instead of considering our union with the Church as the goal of our religious career, where improvement may cease, and progress be stopped, we should view it as but the very starting point from whence we are to forget the things that are behind, and press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling. From that moment we are under more solemn obligations than ever to grow in grace, inasmuch as the means of growth are increased. Till then we have been trees growing in obscurity, without the aid of human culture; but when we associate with a church we are transplanted into a garden, and have the advantage of the gardener's care, and should therefore abound more than ever in all "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God." This warning may well be pondered, and produce that vigilance in the several members of a church which shall issue in growth. Growth is beautiful. Standing still cannot be satisfactory. Plans that have been tried and found wanting must be set aside, instruments blunted and unfit for use should be sharpened and made available, eyes opened to improvement in every department of usefulness, hands ready to carry out every good work, and hearts delighting in works of faith and labours of love; thus shall churches grow, and walking in the fear of the Lord, be multiplied.