

THE MONTHLY RECORD



OF THE

Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and the adjoining Provinces.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—PSALM 137, 16.

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THE CHURCH AT HOME.

Extracts from the Report of the Endowment Committee to the General Assembly—May 1854.

Every year, as it passes, impresses your Committee with a deeper conviction of the vital importance of the great cause in which they are engaged. By men of all creeds and professions society is felt to be in an unsatisfactory state. Every man capable of reflection, indeed, is becoming more and more alive to the fact, that a vast amount of power is lost to the best interests of the country, and that these interests are subjected to very serious and positive evils, through the ignorance and degradation of large masses of the community; particularly in our principal towns and populous mining and manufacturing districts. The nation, as a whole, is giving it to be understood, by unequivocal proofs, that it has come at length to regard the continuance of this state of things with impatience, and even with indignation. A voice has gone forth which proclaims, in terms of no uncertain import, that the country will no longer endure that multitudes of its citizens should be left to wallow in ignorance and dissipation, a burden on its resources, and a foul reproach to its boasted civilization. In the determination which it has evinced to wipe away this reproach, and to relieve itself of so intolerable a burden, the country is unquestionably right. Would that it were equally right and equally united in respect of the remedy to be applied! But this, alas! is far from being the case. The hope is entertained by many, that the regeneration of society may be effected by means of themselves altogether inadequate to the accomplishment of such an object. Education is the panacea of one party; improved wellings, of another; rational and manly amusements, of a third; and the catalogue may easily be extended. Your Committee are by no means disposed to deny that a certain amount of value may belong to one and of the proposed remedies. If collected

into a proper whole, and pervaded by a proper spirit, there is none of them, indeed, but might tend more or less to the healthful development of the human being. But rightly to integrate and animate them, is just the great problem which we are called upon to solve; and in vain shall we seek for any principle capable of effecting its solution, save in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The man must be reformed from within; a new life must be communicated to him; and the life must alike pervade all his powers, and regulate all his acquirements, before he can adequately fill his place in society. Regard only in the letter, even the Gospel itself is insufficient to effect the necessary change. To make the dead live, we must ever keep in mind, not the work of man, but of God. With Him, and with Him exclusively, is the residence of the quickening spirit, which no external means, how soever adjusted, or how earnestly soever applied, can of themselves command. Still, if God himself has furnished us with means, to which He has given His own eternal sanction, we have surely abundant reason to hope, that from the diligent use of them, the blessing of His increase will not be withheld.

Where, we may well ask, has He disappointed the expectations with which He has inspired His human offspring? If the husbandman daily cultivate his field, and commit to it, at the proper season, the precious seed, do not the dews and rains that distil from heaven, and the rays of light and heat that stream forth from the sun, as he travels from day to day with unwearied strength, fulfil the just expectations of human toil, and bring about, at the appointed time, the months of harvest? If, moreover, a more enlightened husbandry be applied, does not the law hold good, universally, which gives, proportionally, an enlarged return? The like rule obtains in every department of human industry. In no case has earnest and well-directed application come short of its just recompense. Witness the almost innumerable discoveries and successful applications of science in our

own times—discoveries and applications of which our fathers did not so much as even dream. What improved facilities of intercourse, to give but a single instance, are now enjoyed by us, in consequence, both by sea and land; and how marvellous the additional resources which such facilities are obviously destined to furnish! And is the supposition, then, to be reconciled either to the primary intuitions of reason, or to the explicit declarations of His own Word, that God should have more pleasure in lighting up anew the midnight lamp of science, or successively rewarding the persevering toil of the man of art, than in blessing the labours of those who serve Him with their whole hearts, and make it their first and highest care to seek the coming of His kingdom, and the universal rule of His everlasting righteousness? No. If the labours of His own people have not been abundantly blessed for the building up of Jerusalem, it is not because the Saviour does not long to see of the travail of his soul;—it is not because His bowels of compassion do not yearn for the conversion of sinners;—it is not because His grace is withheld, where it is made the object of fervent and unceasing prayer;—it is only because those labours have not been adequately rendered. Alas! it is still true, that the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, and apply a zeal and diligence for the acquisition of things which are to perish in the using, that may well put to shame the lethargy and slowness of hand of those who yet profess to labour for an eternal crown. So far, indeed, is the Most High from taking more pleasure in efforts not directed to the advancement of His own kingdom, than in the humble services of those who keep this object continually in view, that, if He have respect at all for the former, it is only that there may be made sure to the latter their just recompense of reward. Yes; how mean soever may be the object that stimulates the immediate agent, there is no discovery of human science, there is no application of human art, that shall