

ASPECT OF THE TIMES.

The times in which we live are truly solemn. The mercantile interests of Britain, and of much of the world besides, are in a state of the greatest perplexity. The Swiss republics are mustering their armies, and are ready to fall upon one another in deadly combat. The presence of the Jesuits, and their influence in some of these republics, have occasioned the present quarrels. Famine is again hovering over some parts of Ireland, and is ready to settle down upon its miserable population; while the cholera has been pursuing its deadly track from Asia to Europe; and if once it reach the shores of Britain, we know, too well, that it will not be arrested in its westward march by the waves of the broad Atlantic. In these circumstances, how loud is the call on Christians to watch and pray, that they may be prepared for afflictions and temptations, and for meeting with their Master and giving an account of their stewardship. We are desirous of keeping our readers informed on the great events of the day; and as we find in the British correspondence of the *New York Evangelist* a striking description of some topics of commanding interest, we make ourselves debtors to that journal in transferring to our columns the letter of their English correspondent, bearing date London, November 2, 1847. We are sure that our readers will peruse it with interest:

"The British Parliament will meet on the 18th of November. The convening of our legislators at this unusual season is rendered necessary by the recent act of the Government in interfering with the principles of the Bank Charter. The money pressure which has recently crushed so many old and established houses, was spreading on every hand; and the nation would have sunk into 'confusion worse confounded,' had not Government interfered, and relaxed the laws which regulate the Bank issues. They calculate, and very justly, on the immediate passing of a bill of indemnity. The immediate result of this strong measure has been partial relief in the commercial world; but I am much mistaken if we see as yet only the beginning of the end. Our commercial affairs are not in a healthy condition. There is a want of confidence—a depression of spirit—a mutual distrust, which is singularly unfavourable to commercial success.

"There is one melancholy result of the late, or rather present, commercial crisis, on which the thoughtful mind must dwell with pain—I mean the large number of suicides which has recently taken place in this metropolis. Every day records some instance of this kind. It is a singular fact in the beginning of November in each year, the cases of suicide in London are unusually numerous; but at present the cases are not only more than ordinarily numerous, but the modes of self-destruction, and the standing of many of those who are committing the dreadful crime, are very striking; and ought to lead to some serious investigation of the causes. My belief is that the mode of living luxuriously in London, is the fruitful source of many immoralities.

"The Queen's government has other reasons for convening the Parliament this month earlier than the usual time. The state of Ireland is very alarming. The new poor law has imposed on the landlords a burden which neither they nor their fathers have been willing to bear. Famine, not from a failure in the potato crop, but from a miscalculation of the land, and the inability of the people to purchase food, stares us in the face in some populous districts of Ireland. Under these circumstances, government must interfere; and my belief is, that Ireland is now, as it has been for centuries, one of the main difficulties of the Queen, the Cabinet, and the Parliament. The state of the continent, too, engages the thoughtful attention of our executive. Switzerland is con-

vulsed, and we are pledged to prevent, if we can, foreign interference. Of Italy I need say nothing. Lord Minto, a member of our government, and father-in-law of Lord John Russell, has by this time arrived at Rome; and opened unofficial negotiations with the Vatican. The mission of this nobleman to the Court of Rome will be followed by some formal and official intercourse between the Courts of St. James and that of St. Peter.

"Rome is playing us some fantastic tricks just now. She is full of hope in reference to England's conversion. She knows her men; and I am convinced that many influential clergymen among the Puseyites are in communication with the Romish authorities, and remain in the English Established Church in accordance with their desire. They are working more energetically in the church than they could do out of it. They 'bide their time.' They will come out in large numbers at no distant day. Rome is making her arrangements. The recent death of the Bishop in this metropolis, furnished an opportunity of reviewing and revising the Romish Ecclesiastical arrangements of this land; and the changes already made and decided on are very ominous. You may be aware, that hitherto, since the Reformation, England has been regarded by the Church of Rome as a missionary field, and the priests have always spoken of themselves as engaged in a mission; hence the bishops were called vicars-apostolic, and had no dioceses, as such, though each had a missionary district. Now, however, the arrangements are changed. Dr. Wiseman has returned from Rome, and he has aided the sacred congregation in adopting regulations suited to their altered circumstances. England is to be divided into dioceses for Romish bishops, and already Dr. Walsh is announced as Archbishop of Westminster, and Dr. Wiseman as Bishop of Birmingham. Other appointments will speedily follow, and we shall have all the apparatus of Romish propaganda busily and systematically at work. The position and prospects of Romanism, and of its twin sister Puseyism, will form—as 'the present truth'—a prominent topic in my future communications. You will find that the *Universe* of last Friday, published here, has commenced a series of articles on the questions relative to Romanism. The writer, I have good reason to know, has deeply studied the entire controversy.

"The Sacred Congregation—and the Pope has concurred—has just pronounced against the new Irish colleges. These colleges are now in course of erection. They were founded by the government of Sir R. Peel. They are unsectarian. They will be open to all denominations. The Irish Roman bishops had nearly unanimously approved them. John of Tuam, indeed, had uttered his dissent, and John has triumphed. The colleges are condemned. The papal edict is a curious document. It is worthy of a darker age. It breathes the spirit of other times. It censures the bishops who approved the colleges, and mainly because they ventured to encourage the project before they had consulted the Papal Court. This edict will be very embarrassing to our ministers, as they had largely calculated on the influence of these colleges to heal divisions among the people of Ireland.

"The state of religion in our churches is very sad. This is universally felt. Indeed, none but the ignorant can doubt that in all denominations there is a loud call for special prayer and effort.—The dissenters of all denominations, are not, as communists, extending; and I know no denomination in this land displaying so many outward marks of life as the Established Church, and yet many of them are the mere trappings of a hearse—the garnishings of a sepulchre. May God, in mercy to Britain,—in mercy to the world—grant us a season of refreshing from his presence! I am inclined to think that the abuses which have crept into the working of many of our religious societies, have more connection than many of us suppose, with the low state of religion in our churches."

Some have met with Christ who neither knew the time nor the place.

Original Communications.

To the Editor of the Record.

LETTERS

FROM A PRESBYTERIAN CLERGYMAN TO A LADY UNDER SPIRITUAL CONCERN.

LETTER II.

DEAR MADAM,—I have now your letter before me, and have read it with much both of satisfaction and of anxiety. You remark that it is nearly a repetition of your former letter. This is not to be wondered at, since you describe the same situation of mind in both. Perhaps mine also may be a repetition of what I said before; but I shall not be solicitous whether it is or not. I shall state such things as your letter may suggest.

Certainly, whatever your difficulties are respecting your failures in exercise, you must be sensible that you have much reason of gratitude to God that you are not left to be altogether careless about the concerns of your soul. Thoughtfulness about salvation, jealousy over ourselves, are tendencies in us to Christ; and these are the gifts of God. I grant that some resemblance of these may obtain even in unregenerate persons. But where there is a deep seriousness respecting them, a habitual and supreme concern,—these are what I presume hypocrites never attain. And these characteristics of right exercise appear, I think, in your account of yourself.

It is well that you are much accustomed to commune with your own heart, and to search and try your ways. By this practice you are discharging an important duty; and you are recompensed by an increase of experience. Even the continuance of it is some evidence of the life of religion. Perhaps you think that all your knowledge and experience, resulting from your self-examination, is no more than a knowledge of your own weakness, of the deceitfulness of your heart, and of the perpetual fluctuation of your exercise. But this knowledge is highly valuable; and is it not the known accomplishment of the promise,—"They shall know every one the plagues of his own heart?" It is far from being a doubtful thing whether a christian may, in the space of a few days or years, feel great vicissitude in his exercise. Is not the christian life a constant and an arduous struggle, in which corruption often prevails? Was not Paul often led into captivity by sin within him? Neither the presence nor the power of corruption within you, if it is lamented and opposed, can be a sufficient reason to conclude against the reality of grace. And although your best attainments are very imperfect—your views of God, and of sin, and the degree of your repentance—yet the consciousness of this imperfection, and the desire of progress, must, I think, indicate the life of religion. If your views and convictions of sin have led you to the Saviour, as I think they have done, I cannot but suppose these views and convictions to be right in kind, how imperfect soever they may be in degree.

I do not see how it is possible for you ever to obtain comfort if you will reason yourself out of it by such arguments as you employ. You turn those imperfections which are inseparable from grace in the present world into arguments against the reality of it in yourself, and you will not give due weight to favourable evidences of the first importance,—such as delight in God's law and ordinances, waiting upon him in prayer, hatred of sin, and concern for salvation. Thus you say that you feel satisfaction in ordinances; but you add,—"may not this be from mere custom?" Surely you cannot say that a mere compliance with human fashion brings you to ordinances. That your pleasure in ordinances should be strengthened by custom, is surely nothing wrong. But have you no respect to the divine command in attending them, and no desire for the divine presence in them? Do you not wish in ordinances to behold the glory of the world, to pour out your heart before him, and to enjoy his salvation? Creating another difficulty of the same kind, you enquire whether your delight in the law