

GENERAL LITERATURE.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.]

ORIGINAL ESSAY,

BY A MEMBER OF THE MONTREAL CHRISTIAN
MUTUAL-IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY.

THE EARTH.

It is truly an important and interesting study for the Christian to investigate the globe, which has been fitted up for the temporary abode of mankind, and, by that means, be led to see the overflowing beneficence and goodness of the Creator, and to observe with wonder how admirably the means employed are adapted to the end designed to be accomplished, and how nicely the end is attained by the means employed. Such study is recommended by the Saviour, when he exclaims, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow;" and it is, besides, well calculated to humble our pride, to teach us our ignorance, and to display to us the boundless riches of the benevolence and power of the Almighty.

The Inspired Writings inform us that God is almighty, and perfectly wise and good; and the discovery of these divine attributes in the atmosphere which we breathe, in the ocean which encircles us, in the ground on which we tread, and in the formation and construction of the plants and animals which surround us,—must certainly tend to increase our confidence in the Creator, to afford us matter for contemplation, and to instil into our hearts a greater desire to praise Him, who has impressed his hand-writing in so many and so splendid characters on every side of us; and we thus find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

We are placed here on a sphere called the EARTH; but the telescope discovers to the astonished gaze other spheres, of different sizes, but similar to the earth in their general outlines. The earth revolves round the sun, and rotates on its axis at certain known periods; the planets do the same. The earth is furnished with an atmosphere adapted to support animal and vegetable life; and some of the planets possess the same appendage. To them belong the variations of day and night; they are at one time left dreary and waste by the blighting frosts of winter, and at another covered with verdant fields, and vegetation, by the refreshing and invigorating rays of the summer sun.

The poles of some are covered during winter with a fleecy mantle of snow, which is dissipated on the approach of summer; and others are attended by moons, to enlighten the darkness of their nights. Can, therefore, these bright orbs have been created to gratify the eyes of man? Is the earth the only spot in the Almighty's vast creation from which ascend prayer and praise? Are all yon shining orbs dreary solitudes? Do unmitigated silence and solitude reign there, or do songs of triumph and praise ascend from beings placed, like ourselves, as probationers, seeking for a higher scale of being; and may not their prayers mingle with ours before a throne of grace? There a moral pestilence may have existed—there the Son of God may have atoned for sin—there may be abodes and places of worship, from which adoring voices may offer up praise to Him who rules on high.

If we cross the Atlantic, and approach the shores of England, we at first only behold the dim outlines; we see none of the luxuriant fields of the large cities, or of the cottages, dotting its surface. So it is with regard to the planets and stars; their immense distance, and our imperfect instruments, prevent us

from getting more than their bare outlines; but, as these outlines exhibit the same appearances, and display the same phenomena as the small globe on which "we live and move and have our being," he who would confine the providential care of the Almighty solely to the government of the inhabitants of the earth alone, certainly exhibits the appearance of possessing a selfish and narrow-minded spirit. Holding that the earth is only one of many similar globes also peopled with inhabitants, the Christian is often led to exclaim, like the Psalmist of old, "What is man! that thou art mindful of him?"

Notwithstanding the boundless extent of the Creator's dominions, we have an outward conviction that, although He governs so many and so various mighty kingdoms, yet he condescends to watch over each of us. We feel that he can, at the same time, extend himself over, space and confine himself to each of us, and that we are under his immediate care, though we do not compose a fractional part of his family;—that the same Being, who has produced, and sustains, the revolutions of the stars, at the same time directs the trivial circumstances that affect the life of each of us—now bestrewn our path with the thorns of adversity for some benevolent end, and now lighting it up with the sunshine of prosperity; that he hears and listens to the innumerable offerings of prayer and thanksgiving which are being continually made at his throne by millions of his worshippers, and that he at the same time listens to the prayers and beholds the meditations of each individual now present, as if that individual were under the peculiar care, and occupied the sole and undivided attention, of the Creator.

In examining minutely our place of habitation, we discover that the gases contained within the earth may expand and shiver our abode to atoms; the fires raging within may burst out, and convert it into a liquid mass; noxious vapours may arise from the earth, and render the atmosphere incapable of supporting animal and vegetable life; or a comet, in its erratic excursions, may come in contact with the earth, which would send the sea with irresistible force over the dry land, and utterly destroy the human race. Now, since all these events may occur, and no human foresight or prudence can prevent their occurrence, do they not afford us as instructive a lesson of our dependence on God alone as that which the growth of the lily affords us, and from which He, who never "spake as man spake," instructs us to have confidence in God?

In pursuance of the plan which I intend to adopt, it is now my object to illustrate, by a few observations, the goodness, wisdom, and beneficence of God, displayed in such profusion on every side of us.

It is at first necessary to remark, that the laws which govern matter are few and simple. For example: the laws of propulsion and gravitation have produced and sustain the motions of the planets; but, if we examine the dispositions of matter, we discover more complexity in the arrangements, and that a greater number of independent circumstances must occur before the result intended can be produced; for instance, the heart would be useless without blood and muscles, unless it was placed in a proper position and endowed with sufficient power to circulate the blood to the extremities of the body. Here many causes unite to bring about one result, and consequently the probabilities are greater that chance has not produced that organ of our body;—just as, when we perceive the different parts of a watch so ingeniously put together that they produce the end intended, viz., the measurement of time, we find so many traces

of design, that we must conclude that some one has put together its several parts.

[To be continued.]

POVERTY.

LET none of those would-be moralists, who, seated in luxurious ease at their cheerful fireside, pretend to measure the temptations, and measure the resisting virtues of their brethren; let none such pretend that poverty is not an evil. Disguise it as we will, it is an evil shape, and whether it covers beside the dying embers on the pauper's hearth, or hides its gaunt limbs beneath the furrowed robe of the votary of fashion, still it is a fearful thing.—Talk not with stoical contempt of that which has power to break down the barriers of principle, and summon the demons of avarice and dishonesty to rule over the souls of men; which can chill the heart's best affections, and chase the sweet charities of life from the cold hearth-stone and the scanty board; which can bow down the lofty intellect, and put fetters of triple brass on the pinions of genius; which can bend the most untameable will, and crush the haughtiest spirit in the dust.—The power which can extinguish the taper whose feeble glare sheds its last earthly light on the features of the dying child, and robs the weeping mother of that last fond look which is turned upon her from the portals of the tomb: the power which can make the strong man lie down in child-like weakness to perish beside his little ones: the power which beyond all other evils of our fallen state, can torture the body and tempt the soul—is one which our hearts may contemplate with awe, but not with contempt. Yet is poverty but a ministrant of the designs of a wise and good Providence; and, as in olden times, men were hospitable to all comers, knowing that they sometimes entertained angels unawares, so may we welcome all the messengers of Heaven, whether of good or evil import, believing that in the end, they will leave on us a blessing. So long as poverty loosens not the tie of kindred love: so long as its shadow darkens not over the pure fountain of affection in our hearts: so long as the mildew is shed from its baneful influences upon the snowy whiteness of the soul, it may be endured patiently, nay even cheerfully; and as there are certain flowers which shun the sunshine, but thrive and blossom in the shade, so may we find virtue which prosperity called not forth, springing up in our hearts beneath the gloom of a sky of clouds.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

[From the Boston Young Ladies' Friend.]

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD."

BY MISS ELLEN S. SMITH.

Who has not been interested by reading the story of Mary's devotion to her Saviour, and his kind approval of her offering? When his followers censured and attributed to wrong motives the act which was prompted by her grateful heart, how cheering must have been the commendation of Jesus! And in the dark days which followed, when her crucified Lord had gone from her, when clouds seemed to envelope his cause, and his disciples were persecuted in every city, how must these words have dwelt in her memory, and inspired each day the desire to do what she could for the poor, whom her Master had said would be always with her. I have often thought this simple story of Mary's love was full of encouragement to the female disciples of our Saviour. What young lady, as she reads it, does not feel that, feeble as her powers may be, she can do something to benefit those about her; something to hasten on the day when all shall hail Jesus as their Saviour? God is often pleased to bless the most humble means, and thus has placed it in the power of all to labour for Him. I know of one such instance, of which I always think with pleasure.