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"HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

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POETRY.

ON A SPLENDID METEOR,
WITNESSED ON THE NIGHT OF THE 23D OF JULY.

The skies were curtained o'er with clouds, and not a star appeared,
That piercing through the sable veil the mournful darkness
cheered;

I felt the influence of the scene descend upon my breast,
The gloom that hung on all around, seemed on my soul to rest.

My eyes were turned to heaven, and sad and pensive was my
heart,

When forth amid the sky I saw a sudden glory start;
And on, and on, beyond the clouds, it winged its mystic flight,
The veil that hid the heavenly host could scarce obstruct its light.

Strange feelings through my spirit thrilled of wonder and of fear,
I felt as if an angel sent from realms of light were near;
And bursting forth amid the gloom that brooded all around,
Methought in wrath 'twas surely sent when heaven so darkly
frowned!

Even thus, perhaps, on that dread night, when God's avenging
hand

Sent down the last and direst plague on Egypt's guilty land,
Commissioned from His awful throne, the messenger of wrath,
With radiant wings and robes of light illumed his earthward path.

But sweeter thoughts came o'er my soul to chase the shades of
fear,

And sacred recollections rose that faith holds ever dear;
I thought of that benignant star by whose celestial ray
The sages from the Eastern clime conducted on their way,
Their pious offerings brought to where the infant Saviour lay!

LITERATURE.

PRESBYTERIANISM DEFENDED, and the Arguments of Modern Advocates of Prelacy Examined and Refuted, in Four Discourses. By MINISTERS OF THE SYNOD OF ULSTER. Glasgow: W. Collins.

Amid the general shaking both of Churches and of nations which is now taking place, it has become highly necessary for the adherents of Presbytery, and in particular for the members of the Church of Scotland, to be well acquainted with the grounds on which they maintain their separate position from Episcopacy on the one hand, as well as from Independency on the other. The ecclesiastical polity of the Church of Scotland was constructed by men, remarkable at once for their profound and varied learning, their enlightened zeal and practical wisdom, their thorough acquaintance with the Word of God, and uncompromising determination to act by the light unfolded there; so that it is a polity which will stand the closest examination, and the more it is scrutinised and compared with that of other Churches, the more, we are confident, will it be admired for its own inherent excellencies, and for its striking conformity to the standard of Scripture. The most learned and intelligent foreigners have been known to express their admiration of it as exceeding any thing with which they were acquainted; and even one of the most distinguished for candour and learning of the English bishops once complimented the late Dr. Inglis on his belonging to a Church, which had the most perfect model of church government of any Church of Christendom.

We need not tell our readers, however, that the ecclesiastical polity of the Church of Scotland is not always held in such esteem, and that the press has even been teeming with publications which deny to it the very name and essential elements of a Church of Christ. The grand charge urged against it is, that it does not recognise three distinct orders of clergy—bishop, presbyter, and deacon—but maintains the essential parity of all ordained ministers, and their power as presbyters to ordain to the sacred office of the ministry. For this more especially the church of Scotland, in common with all Churches non-Episcopal, have been unceremoniously declared to be rotten in the foundation, and her people abandoned to the uncovenanted mercies of God. When such sentiments are openly expressed, and with untiring zeal repeated, in almost every part of the country, it is surely time for the conscientious supporters and adherents of Presbytery to bestir themselves; and if any unpleasant feelings are kindled by the warfare, or consequences are produced which good men would deprecate, the blame manifestly lies at the door of

those who, by their semi-Popish bigotry and intolerance, have provoked the contest. We, therefore, record our gratitude to the ministers of the Synod of Ulster, for the defence of the Presbyterian model which they have here produced, and welcome it as a well-timed, as it unquestionably is an able, a well-reasoned, and learned treatise on the important subject which it handles. In a literary point of view it reflects great credit upon their scholarship and theological attainments; and while it comprises everything of essential moment belonging to the controversy, either in the discourses themselves, or in the valuable notes appended to them, it is written throughout in a style perfectly intelligible, and we should also think, interesting, to the general reader. We hope it may receive a wide circulation, and that the principles which it so well advocates and expounds, may become more extensively known and zealously embraced. We may just add, that it is not merely the soundness and Scriptural authority of the Presbyterian form of church government, as opposed to Episcopacy, which this volume discusses, but the entire character of this form, and its peculiar fitness for serving the ends for which the Church of Christ was instituted.

CHINA; its State and Prospects, with especial reference to the spread of the Gospel: containing allusions to the antiquity, extent, population, civilization, literature, and religion of the Chinese. By W. H. MEDHURST, of the London Missionary Society. 8vo, pp. 592. London: John Snow. Glasgow: J. Maclehoze and R. Nelson. 1838.

This interesting and important contribution to our religious and historical literature, forms an appropriate companion volume to William's on the South Seas, brought out by the same publisher, and formerly noticed in our columns. Both authors are men of kindred spirit, and distinguished agents of the same Missionary Society, although labouring in far distant and dissimilar sections of the great missionary field of the world; and both have done much to extend and stimulate the interest of the Christian public in the cause of missions; and, what is worth remarking as indicative of the improving character of missionary agents generally in regard to literary and philosophical acquirements and habits of observation, both have added largely to our knowledge of the past history and present condition of the respective countries of their adoption. We can imagine nothing more attractive than the garb in which these excellent and accomplished men have presented the claims of missions to the public attention; and great good may be expected to result to the ultimate object from the universal perusal of works which hold out so many inducements to all classes of readers.

The aspect of China, as regards the extent of its territory, the amount of its population, the exclusiveness and peculiarity of its institutions, and the social condition of its people presents some of the most puzzling, anomalous, and extraordinary features that are to be found in the history of the globe. China is a world *sui generis*, and as essentially distinct in many of its characteristics from the other nations of the earth, and possessing as little in common with them as if it formed part of some other planet. The territory of China Proper consists of eighteen provinces each of them equalling in extent and population some European kingdoms, and covering an area of 1,298,000 square miles; and the annexation of Chinese Tartary, besides the dominion claimed by the emperor over Thibet, Corea, Loo Choo, Cochin China, Camboja, Curbah, and Siam, form a territory extending over 85 degrees of latitude and 70 of longitude, and cover an area of 3,000,000 square miles. The population of China Proper, according to the statistics given by the author of this volume, is rated at 371,221,900—about one-third of the whole human race! This enormous population exists under one despotic rule, possesses one universal language and literature, and no small degree of civilisation, and the whole is harmonised by one uniform, unvarying national mind; so that, as our author observes, when a man has studied the great outlines of the Chinese character in one individual, he has studied them in all. This uniformity of national sentiment is a characteristic highly favourable to the missionary cause; for hence, observes our author, "the missionary finds the Chinese always using the same arguments and starting the same objections;—in this view of the matter, the multiplicity of their population dwindle

into insignificance, and affords an advantage to the missionary not to be met with elsewhere." The difficulties, however, arising to the introduction of Christianity into the empire, from the extremely stringent nature of the laws prohibiting the ingress of foreigners, are very formidable; and in present circumstances, instead of resting contented with the random efforts of a strictly-guarded residence at Canton or Macao, the missionary must look, under the Divine blessing, for his chief success, among the Chinese emigrants whom poverty and starvation are driving in myriads into the islands of the Maylayan Archipelago and the surrounding countries. It is a striking fact, illustrative of the economical condition of the empire, and showing how wide a field is opening up for missionary exertion among this people, that notwithstanding the laws against emigration are professedly as severe against the natives, as those against intercourse with or the ingress of foreigners, such have been the rapidity and extent of the increase in the population, that all the waste lands within the empire have been reclaimed and occupied; and the surplus population, unable to gain a subsistence at home, are compelled to emigrate by thousands annually to neighbouring countries—while the Government is every year feeling itself less and less competent to prevent it. Many of the emigrants return to their native land when their circumstances improve, and may thus be the means of conveying the knowledge of the religion of Jesus into a country abandoned to the fantastic notions of Confucius and Buddha, when all direct attempts at invading the heathenism of the empire from the outposts of Canton and Macao may prove comparatively abortive. It was with this view that the London Missionary Society founded the Ultra-Gangetic Mission, which divides its attention among the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Malays, and the Malabars. It is the opinion of Mr. Medhurst, however, that the two outposts we have mentioned are too much undervalued by the Churches at home; and his own experience and success certainly add great weight to the remark.

We are unable, in our brief limits, to refer, however shortly, to the varied details of our author respecting the history, statistics, government, laws, literature, and religion of China. These, and numerous other topics, pregnant with interest to a European reader, are treated in a pleasing and instructive style, although subordinated to the great and important object of the author and his work. We conclude by recommending the volume, which is well printed and beautifully illustrated, to the attention of our readers, assuring them that it will abundantly recompense them for both the money and the time they may expend upon it.

PRINTING THE BIBLE IN SCOTLAND.

We are enabled to present our readers to-day with the official documents which are to regulate, for the next twenty-one years, the printing of the Bible in Scotland. The Royal Warrant, appointing the new master printers for the Queen, and the Instructions under which they are to act, will be found in another column. With the composition of the Board we have no fault to find. It consists of seven individuals, three of whom hold their places at the Board *ex officio*; the other four by special appointment. The three former are the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor-General, the chief law officers of the Crown, and the Moderator of the General Assembly. The remaining four are the Rev. Dr. Gordon of the High Church, Edinburgh; the Rev. Dr. Dewar, Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen; Graham Speirs, Esq. Advocate; and George Ross, Esq. Advocate. Of the two lay members of the Church thus placed by special appointment upon the Board, the one is a Whig, the other a Conservative, and both of them men of high personal character. So far, therefore, as the mere composition of the Board can give a security for the safe keeping of the great interests committed to them the Christian public have no cause to fear. The important question remains however, Are the powers and instructions given to the Board of an equally satisfactory kind? We have no delight in being fault-finders, but we regret to be obliged to say, after a deliberate consideration of the question now proposed, that we have very serious doubts upon the subject. There are two things in particular in the instructions which appear to us to be decidedly objectionable.—The first is, that the power of licensing private parties to print the Scriptures is vested, not in the Board but in a single member of it, the Lord Advocate.—This is one means of impairing the security which