

or whether, after a few fitful blasts, the gloom will roll away from the heavens, leaving the sky more pure than ever, and the landscape beneath it bright and peaceful." For my own part, I believe that it is only the morning of the world's day. The sun of liberty and righteousness shall rise higher and higher, quickening the barrenness of earth into life and fruitfulness, before the harvest time comes, when the angel reapers shall garner the fruits of earth in the garner of heaven. Let us briefly glance at a few of the tendencies of the times in which we live.

THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL TENDENCIES OF THE TIMES.

First—The present day is distinguished by a general diffusion of intelligence, which has awakened a spirit of intense enquiry in every department of knowledge. The schoolmaster and the missionary are abroad. The Press is scattering the thick fogs of ignorance—reflecting the light of heaven upon the darkest spheres of human existence. With this diffusion of light has come a quickening and intensifying of intellectual life. The slumber of centuries is broken. Researches after truth are prosecuted with untiring zeal; and yet speculation far outstrips research. Not only does the world visibly move, but it moves with greater rapidity than ever before. Events which used to occupy a century are crowded into a year. "Revolutions and wars hardly cast their shadows before them, till they are upon us; reminding us of those sudden squalls at sea, which the mariner just discerns darkening in the distance, and then, before he can reef his sails, they are lashing into fury the waves on which his vessel is gliding." Though it may not be free from its attendant evils, I hail this diffusion of knowledge, and the spirit of enquiry which it evokes, as one of the mighty forces that are lifting the world up to a higher plane of existence. Far better the questionings of doubt, than the unthinking credulity of superstition. Enquiry and examination must always precede intelligent belief. The highest faith is born of doubt. The calmest rest succeeds the toilful struggle. Yet this condition of things has its shadows. It creates a tendency to superficiality. There is a wider diffusion of knowledge; but little thorough mastery of subjects. We dip into a great many subjects; but not very deeply into any. "These shallow draughts intoxicate the brain." Not that I would approve of the course of the professor, who spent his whole life studying Greek nouns, and said, when he was dying, "I meant well, but I undertook too much. I see now I should have confined myself to the dative case." As one of the shadows which bear witness to the existence of the light, we have a great deal of affectation of intelligence and independence. Few things are more contemptible than the shallow pretensions of concerted ignorance, treating opinions and arguments, which it never had the brains to comprehend, with scornful disdain as old foggy notions that it has examined and cast away as unworthy of their regard. You all remember the fable of the crow, that when it saw an eagle swooping down and carrying away a lamb, made a similar effort to carry off a large ram, and got entangled in the wool, and caught for his pains. Well, there is in our day a great deal of affectation of independence and intelligence, and contempt for old things because they are old. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Where the sum of our knowledge is small, the circle that bounds it and separates it from the unknown seems also small. But as the circle of our knowledge widens, the visible circle of the unknown and undiscovered that lies outside of what we know becomes proportionably enlarged, "Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise."

DEVOTION TO THE STUDY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

Second—This nineteenth century has been characterized by an intense devotion to the study of physical science, which has been crowned by results so brilliant that they stand out as waymarks in the history of human progress. This application to the study of the material world has been rewarded by many valuable discoveries that have lightened labour, and promoted the safety and happiness of life. Yet, it cannot be denied, that because many of the discoveries of physical science are capable of being applied to acquire wealth, and for other causes, in many instances the importance of this class of studies has been unduly magnified, and mental and moral science disparaged as misty speculations, from which no practical result can be expected. By many, the material is regarded as the real; the intellectual and spiritual as the unreal. Now, I would not in any degree depreciate the importance of the study of physical science. Every department of this vast universe of God is worthy of our profound and intelligent regard. In geology, we trace the record of past history, of vanished life. Chemistry takes us into the laboratory of the Creator, and reveals to us the workings of those mysterious forces that are the life of nature. Astronomy unveils the mystic influences that control the vast systems of worlds which people the immensity of space around us. They all enlist our profound interest, because they unveil the hidings of a power

and wisdom before which the most imperial human intellect is baffled and amazed. I agree with Dickens, that the discoveries of science and the inventions of mechanical genius have no necessary tendency to make us less spiritual and devout. Because we are swept along so rapidly by the power of steam, or because we can flash our thoughts to our distant friends by the electric telegraph, we need not have the less sympathy for human suffering, or less faith in the things that are unseen and eternal. I have no sympathy with those who look with distrust upon the revelations of science. But, just as vessels at sea run up colours which they have no right to unfurl, there is a great deal that sails under the banners of science, which cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. A brief allusion to some of these may not be useless. It is unwarrantable to adopt direct palpable utility as the standard by which to estimate the value of scientific enquiry. The adoption of such a standard degrades the grandest creations of poetry, and the rarest productions of art; and places Arkwright and Stephenson far above Bacon and Milton. There is a strong tendency in men who occupy all their time and thoughts with any one branch of knowledge, to become blind to the claims of other subjects of equal interest, and thus they destroy the harmony of truth. There are many illustrations of this among scientific men. Men of high scientific reputation, who have become so absorbed in physics that they cease to recognize the radical distinction between inert matter and intelligent, independent mind; and maintain that the same law of necessity by which matter obeys the forces that act upon it, equally controls the operations of the mind. It is neither philosophical nor right to speak of the discoveries of physical science as if in some way they had cast light upon the problems of the world of mind, and superseded the higher law of conscience and the testimony of consciousness. And it is a still greater confusion of thought and language to speak, as many scientific teachers do, of the uniformity with which the forces of physical nature operate, as "laws" which we can either obey or disobey, and possessing penalties and obligations for men. If a man climbing a ladder misses his foot and falls, and breaks his leg, they say he has broken a law of nature, and received the penalty. I say he has lost his balance, and obeyed the law of gravitation, and broken nothing but his leg. I object to all teaching, however pretentious, that assumes that the study of the world without is of greater value and interest than that of the world within us. That the material world alone is entitled to be called "nature;" and the knowledge of its properties alone to be called "science," as if mind was not the greatest province of nature, and as if the knowledge of its powers and modes of operation was not the most profound science. Is the testimony of the rocks, or the plants, or even the human body itself, more important than that of the regal mind, so richly endowed? Can the inferior things of creation contain richer truths than the very highest forms of created intelligence? We should never forget that it is because the material world reveals the thoughts of an intelligent mind, that its study demands such profound regard. If we reject the idea of a governing intelligence, creating, controlling and arranging the various forces of the material universe, they are bereft of their significance. If they exist for no purpose, if they are the visible expression of no thought, if they are directed by blind chance or necessity, the spell of their attraction is forever broken. It is an instructive fact that though many objects around us are far more enduring than human life, yet the grandest objects in the natural world are invested with an interest vastly greater than they would otherwise claim when they are associated with mental achievements, or facts in the history of human life. "Tourists cross the world to visit Sinai, because there Moses stood, and talked face to face with God. Carmel's flowery slope is sung, because it was trodden by the feet of Elijah. What were the Alps, with all their grandeur, but for the names of Hannibal and Napoleon? The lochs and friths of Scotland were immortalized by Scott, and therefore the world goes to gaze upon them. Melrose Abbey is seen by moonlight, in the glamour of his poetry; and the mist about Ben Lomond is the fairy-woven veil of Scott's coronet." Even the ocean appears invested with a loftier grandeur, when we think of it with Byron, "as a glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form glasses itself in the tempest." All proclaiming the same truth, that mind is grander than matter.

EXTENSION AND GROWTH OF POPULAR FREEDOM.

Third—One of the most remarkable and significant tendencies of the times, is the tendency of power toward the masses of the people. The political currents are unmistakably in the direction of democracy. Manhood is slowly but surely turning the scale against canonized prejudices and long enthroned oligarchies. Power is seeking its centre of gravity a great deal nearer the base of society than formerly. The late reform act of England only indicates the drift of the times. Whatever our politics—whether we think it good or evil—the fact cannot be questioned, that power is steadily descend-