

spiration and power, to go on, from human presence and from cheerful looks. The workman works with added energy from having others by." No man can be at his best who wholly secludes himself from his fellow-men. Mental occupations require more or less seclusion, but a man cannot mould society by his thoughts, unless he mingles with it, learns its spirit, and draws his material from it. The hermit and recluse have never been the best types of manhood. He only can have a symmetrical, full-orbed, strong character, who has a hearty sympathy for his kind, and appreciates their sympathy for himself.

But what a man can do in conjunction with others, when buoyed up by a full tide of friendly sympathy, does not test the man. We must know what he can do alone. The strength that is in him can only be learned when he is thrown upon his own resources, and left alone to achieve worldly success amidst adverse circumstances, or to face oppositor, reproach and calumny for the sake of his convictions and principles. This is the school of self-reliance and the test of character. It is not very difficult when the world opposes you, refuses you its smiles and sympathy, to withdraw from it and "live upon your convictions;" it is less difficult to mix with men and follow their maxims; but to enter the world and then live out, firmly and fearlessly, what you believe to be the truth, in spite of its frowns and oppositions, that is Christian greatness. Nothing on earth surpasses the moral grandeur of those scenes in which one man alone, for the sake of truth, stands opposed to many, and yet will not swerve from his convictions of duty. Such a character was Milton's hero:

"The seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless; faithful only he,
Among the innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth or change his constant mind,
Though he stood single and alone."

But no man is alone in the battle of life who is on the Lord's side. He may be separated from his fellow-men and excluded from their sympathy by his adherence to his convictions; and yet he is not alone, because the Father is with him. His communion with God fills his solitude with thoughts and inspirations and consolations which more than compensate for his lack of earthly companionship. And, after all, are we not made to find the perfection of our being and our chief joy in God? It is not a misfortune that withdraws a man from the noisy babble and applause of human society, and shuts him up to fellowship with God. He is rather to be pitied, who looks to men for his best inspirations, when he may have access to God; who has not learned the blessedness of retiring for a season from the noise and bustle of the world to be alone with God; he, more, who, when sickness or old age or other circumstances shut him out of society, is left to the unutterable loneliness of spiritual emptiness and isolation from God; and most of all, he who has to meet death alone. But blessed are they who, in the solitude of life, can say with the Saviour, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me;" and in the hour of death, with the Psalmist, "I fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." It is good to be alone with the Father.—*N. Y. Methodist.*

THE LESSON OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

The Book of Nehemiah is invaluable for the lesson it teaches, that when the Church of God is at the lowest, it will still be protected by His almighty hand, will be enabled to triumph over the malice of its external enemies, and will be purged and purified from the internal corruptions which endanger it far more than any hostility *ab extra*. It must have greatly helped to encourage and sustain the nation during the terrible times of the Ptolemaic and Syrian persecutions; and it may with advantage be read and pondered on by Christians, at all periods when the power of the world is put forth to crush or overlay the faith. That Judaism rallied from the weak and seemingly moribund condition described by Nehemiah, became

once more a power in the world, strong enough to confront heathen Rome, and wage a desperate struggle with the entire force of the Empire, is one of the most remarkable of the facts of history, and should never be forgotten by the Christian community in times of depression and danger.

A minor point which lends a peculiar interest to Nehemiah is its fulness of topographical detail. In inquiries concerning the ancient city, its site, walls, towers, gates, and principal buildings, the third and twelfth chapters are simply invaluable. For copiousness, for exactness, for authority, these chapters transcend all the other notices that have come down to us with respect to ancient Jerusalem; and the possibility of recovering the general plan of the place rests almost entirely upon Nehemiah's descriptions. It seems to the present writer that scarcely sufficient use of them has been made by modern topographers, who, while verbally allowing their importance, suffer their representations of the original town to be unduly affected by the accounts which were given of a very different city, five centuries later, by the Jewish historian Josephus.—*Canon Rawlinson, in the Bible Educator.*

DARWINISM.

Twenty years ago Mr. Darwin published his book entitled the "Origin of the Species," in which he attempted to prove that all the lower animals sprang from one or a few primitive forms by development. In that work he did not apply his theory to the origin of man, but in his "Descent of Man," published some years after, he endeavoured to show that the human race was not specially created, but began its existence in the same way that all other species originated. This theory, of course, must stand or fall by the test of the facts.

It should be remembered that Darwin does not claim that this theory is proved, and shows a candour that many of his way of thinking, not knowing near so much, manifest a great lack of. He thinks his facts point in one direction, but waits for further light before arriving at a positive conclusion.

But what is the general drift of his facts? It is that species are susceptible of numerous variations. Many who read his books are deeply impressed with his array of interesting facts, and think the theory must be true, taking them as so many proofs. Did they properly discriminate they would see that his facts are no proofs at all, for varieties are not species, and not a single fact does he present showing the origin of a new species from another. All the different varieties of pigeons he speaks of, which he traces back to the wild rock-pigeon, are pigeons and nothing else. It should be remembered that nearly all his varieties have been developed through human intervention or domestication; and naturalists tell us that such, when left to themselves, gradually revert to what they were before. How can this be reconciled with Darwinism?

Mr. Darwin is sometimes severely denounced in the pulpit and elsewhere, and represented as an atheist and actuated by a motive hostile to Christianity. But, while having no faith in his theory, we do not feel at liberty to style him an atheist. He recognizes the agency of a Creator at the start, in the special production of the first form or forms. That his teachings tend to atheism we do not deny, as he does not recognize any intelligent agency in the creations that have been taking place during vast ages, including man, the last creation. He is unduly absorbed in one department of science, being of "one idea," which colours more or less all others, and we recognize in him a different spirit and attitude toward religion, from those of prominent names often associated with his. It is important to discriminate between him and the advocates of an atheistic and materialistic form of evolution. Darwin is an able scientific investigator, but a poor philosopher.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

SPIRITUAL GROWTH—FROM THE INWARD TO THE OUTWARD.

"Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."

In the request itself there was nothing sinful, yet

still the Lord absolutely refused to accede to it; He declined here, as in every other case, to interfere in the affairs of civil life.

It was indeed most true, that His word and doctrine received into the hearts of men, would modify and change the whole frame-work of civil society; that His word and His life was the seed out of which a Christendom would evolve itself, but it was from the inward to the outward that He would work. His adversaries more than once sought to thrust upon Him the exercise of a jurisdiction which He so carefully avoided, as in John viii. 3-11—and as in that of the Roman tribute. But each time He avoided the snare which was laid for Him, keeping Himself within the limits of the moral and spiritual world, as that from which alone effectual improvements in the outer life of man could proceed.

A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES.

Within the present year, at least, we have not met with any new book so readable, and at the same time so practically useful, as "A History of Our Own Times," by Justin McCarthy. The work will establish the author's name and fame as a writer possessed of taste and power; and it furnishes abundant evidence of his being peculiarly gifted with that mental perspective which is so necessary in order to give to the events of recent history their proper relative prominence. The first volume opens with the death of William IV.; the second volume brings the history down to the close of the Crimean War, and ends with an admirable chapter on "The Literature of the Reign;" and the fourth, and last, volume will close with an account of the Berlin Congress; so that the complete work may be regarded as a history of the reign of Queen Victoria, brought down as near as possible to the present time. A person cannot live his life over again; but the next best thing that one can do, who has watched the course of events during the last thirty or forty years, is to read Mr. McCarthy's book. At every page, the terse, pithy and withal truthful, description of some event, or the passing allusion to some of the conditions or circumstances under which it occurred, awakens the slumbering memory of the reader; brings early impressions to the surface, despite the accumulated rubbish of busy years; and makes him think again the long-forgotten thoughts, and feel afresh the buried griefs and joys of other days. No history could produce such an effect as this but a history of our own times. On that account, as well as on account of the author's ability, this book will be found not quite such dry reading as history generally is. But as we have already hinted, it will be found not only an interesting book to read straight through, but also a practically useful work of reference, to be consulted as occasion requires. Here also it occupies the ground alone. Of earlier periods we have many histories; of our own times we had no history till this one appeared. If a person wished to verify names and dates connected with some of the less important events, or to ascertain the full particulars of any event, even the most important, that occurred in the present reign, he could scarcely expect that the brief summary to be found in the concluding chapter of an ordinary history would serve his purpose; and he was under the necessity of ransacking back numbers of periodicals or old files of newspapers for the needed information—a sort of work that involves considerable loss of time. The purchaser of this book, then, will very speedily find its cost returned to him in the shape of a saving of time—and "time is money." The more we know of the history of all times, the better; but an intimate acquaintance with the history of our own times is indispensable to the proper understanding of the present. The present condition of affairs—political, social, and ecclesiastical, throughout the British Empire—is to a great extent the immediate result of the events recorded and described in the book now before us; and on that account an acquaintance with its contents will be found of great value, in giving correct views of things as they are, even to those who are so young that the book is to them a good deal more than its title indicates.