

IMPROVEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

"The Bible is the *only* religion of Protestants." Such is the universal maxim of the churches, and yet it may be doubted whether one Christian out of a hundred who adopts this trite saying, is aware of its solemn import—of the exceeding length and breadth of its spirit and intention. To be consistent with the above motto a Christian should believe nothing in religion but what is taught in the Scriptures, and he should do nothing but what his Bible warrants. And if all books except this were lost from the earth, every church ought to be able to find its entire constitution sanctioned and supported by the facts and principles recorded there! To this effect are the following able remarks of Rev. Richard Burgess, which we copy from a Sermon delivered in Trinity Church, London, on November 4th, 1838.—"There is one way in which the profession of Christianity may be rendered more pure; and that is, by clearing away all those errors and traditions, which either the ignorance or malice of men has introduced:—to restore the Gospel to its original purity, and to reform all that is amiss in the doctrine and the practice of its professors. This is the only alteration, which we can admit in matters of religion. To add to or diminish aught from the word of God is presumption; to clear it from the glosses which an affected criticism or a false philosophy have put upon it, is necessary. "Let that abide in you," says John, "which ye have heard from the beginning." When we have cleared our way through the clouds and darkness, which men have attempted to throw around the pure light of the word; when we have listened rather to the voice of God than to that of men; when we have ceased to call any man master on earth, and so have arrived at the genuine light of truth as it stands in the revealed Word; then we have made all the progress, which is in our power—then we have done all that is permitted to man to do towards improving the profession of the Christian faith. To go further, and to refine on the word itself, would be like any one by the light of a candle attempting to improve the light of the Sun. When we have got to the source of all truth, we have got to the utmost limit of religious improvement. Let others, who dive into the secrets of science, advance our condition by discoveries and new inventions; but let all, who desire to advance true religion among men, "hold fast the form of sound words," which they have read in the Holy Scriptures. There are, my brethren, just two opposite ways towards improvement in worldly things, and progress in the knowledge of God's word. The one goes forward to grasp at something more, and to make daily additions to the stock already acquired; the other goes back, and throws off the dross with which succeeding generations have covered the Word. We speak not of practical holiness and Christian attainment—we are ever reaching forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: but we speak of the foundation of the truth, and declare that it is only to be discovered by going to the Fountain we have left, and when once discovered never more to be abandoned. Thus much we have thought it necessary to say on the *fixity* of Divine truth, compared with the ever-revolving speculations of men."

TRUTH.—Adhere rigidly and undeviatingly to truth: but while you express what is true, express it in a pleasing manner. Truth is the picture, the manner is the frame that displays it to advantage.

If a man blends his angry passions with his search after truth, become his superior by suppressing yours, and attend only to the justness and force of his reasoning.

Truth, conveyed in austere and acrimonious language, seldom has a salutary effect, since we reject the truth, because we are prejudiced against the mode of communication. The heart must be won before the intellect can be informed.

A man may betray the cause of truth by his unseasonable zeal, as he destroys its salutary effect by the acrimony of his manner. Whoever would be a successful instructor must first become a mild and affectionate friend.

He who gives way to an angry invective, furnishes a strong presumption that his cause is bad, since truth is best supported by dispassionate argument. The love of truth, refusing to associate itself with the selfish and dissocial passions, is gentle, dignified, and persuasive.

The understanding may not be long able to withstand demonstrative evidence, but the heart which is guarded by prejudice and passion, is generally proof against argumentative reasoning; for no person will perceive truth when he is unwilling to find it.

Many of our speculative opinions, even those which are the result of laborious research, and the least liable to disputation, resemble rarities in the cabinet of the curious, which may be interesting to the possessor, and to a few congenial minds, but which are of no use to the world.

Many of our speculative opinions cease to engage attention, not because we are agreed about their truth or fallacy, but because we are tired of the controversy. They sink into neglect, and in a future age their futility or absurdity is acknowledged, when they no longer retain a hold on the prejudices and passions of mankind. —Mackenzie's *Literary Varieties*.

ADVERSITY.—Adversity brings forth parity of character, as the purest water flows from the hardest rock.

CONTRASTED SONNETS.

Nature.

I strayed at evening to a sylvan scene
Dimpling with nature's smile the stern old mountain,
A shady dingle, quiet, cool, and green,
Where the moss'd rock poured forth its natural fountain,
And hazels clustered there, with fern between,
And feathery meadow—sweet shed perfume round,
And the pink crocus pierc'd the jewell'd ground;
Then was I calm and happy: for the voice
Of nightingales unseen in tremulous lays
Taught me with innocent gladness to rejoice,
And tuned my spirit to unformal praise:
So, among silvered moths, and closing flowers,
Gambolling hares, and rooks returning home,
And strong-wing'd chafers setting out to roam,
In careless peace I passed the soothing hours.

Art.

The massy fane of architecture olden,
Or fretted minarets of marble white,
Or Morish arabesque, begem'd and golden,
Or porcelain Pagoda, tipp'd with light,
Or high-spann'd arches,—were a noble sight:
Nor less you gallant ship, that trends the waves
In a triumphant silence of delight,
Like some huge swan, with its fair wings unfurl'd,
Whose curved sides the laughing water leaves,
Bearing it buoyant, o'er the liquid world:
Nor less you silken monster of the sky
Around whose wicker car the clouds are curl'd,
Helping undaunted men to scale on high
Nearer the sun than eagles dare to fly:—
Thy trophies these,—still but a modest part
Of thy grand conquests, wonder-working Art.

Country.

Most tranquil, innocent, and happy life,
Full of the holy joy chaste nature yields,
Redeem'd from care, and sin, and the hot strife
That rings around the smok'd unwholesome dome
Where mighty Mammon his black sceptre wields,—
Here let me rest in humble cottage home,
Here let me labour in the enamell'd fields;
How pleasant in these ancient woods to roam
With kind-eyed friend, or kindly-teaching book;
Or the fresh gallop on the dew-dropt heath,
Or at fair eventide with feathered hook
To strike the swift trout in the shallow brook,
Or in the bower to twine the jacinth wreath,
Or at the earliest blush of summer morn
To trim the bed, or turn the new-mown hay,
Or pick the perfum'd hop, or reap the golden corn!
So should my peaceful life all smoothly glide away.

Town.

Enough of lanes, and trees, and vallies green,
Enough of briary wood, and hot chalk-down,
I hate the startling quiet of the scene,
And long to hear the gay glad hum of town:
My garden be the garden of the Graces,
Flowers full of smiles, with fashion for their queen,
My pleasant fields be crowds of joyous faces,
The brilliant rout, the concert, and the ball,—
These be my joys in endless carnival!
For I do loathe that sickening solitude,
That childish hunting-up of flies and weeds,
Or worse, the company of rustics rude,
Whose only hopes are bound in cloths and seeds:
Out on it! let me live in town delight,
And for your tedious country-mornings bright
Give me gay London with its noon and night.

A CHAPTER ON LADIES' HAIR.—Expressive as the eyes and the mouth are, how much is the expression of each of them affected or altered by the manner in which the hair is dressed; so that, after all, every feature in the face is a subsidiary sovereign to the crinatory influence of the whole facial aspect. Now, as far as young ladies are concerned, (for there is a satire about discussing the question as how an old lady should dress her hair, which we are gallant enough not even to allude to,) we are bold enough to declare it to be our opinion that the mode of wearing hair most suited to by far the greater number of faces, is that which allows a profusion of long and ample ringlets to fall over the shoulders, and to attire them, as it were, entirely behind, with just a ringlet or two curving down in front of each shoulder, as Miss Fanny Wyndham, many of our readers will remember, dressed her hair in the part she so exquisitely played in Lord Burghersh's lately produced opera, *Il Torneo*. The fashion commonly denominated a *la Chinois* we hereby enter our especial protest against, firmly believing, as we do, that the face would look scarcely less pleasing, in every respect, were the head completely shaved. Those huge curls, only three or four in number, on each side of the head, and first worn by our French neighbours, we also object to, unless the face is a small one, giving it, as they do in the reverse case, a look not sufficiently gentle and self-possessed and feminine. Plaited hair we admire and regard as judicious when the wearer possesses altogether but a little, but this is an extremely inferior mode of dressing it to the one we first mentioned, and that one, therefore, we demand and command shall be the mode practised by all the beautiful beings in the human botany of England.—*Court Journal*.

GOD SEEN IN ALL THINGS.—It is a poor philosophy and a narrow religion, which does not recognise God as all in all. Every moment of our lives, we breathe, stand, or move in the temple of the Most High; for the whole universe is that temple. Wherever we go, the testimony of His power, the impress of His hand are there. Ask of the bright worlds around us, as they roll in the everlasting harmony of their circles; and they shall tell you of Him, whose power launched them on their courses. Ask of the mountains, that lift their heads among and above the clouds; and the bleak summit of one shall seem to call aloud to the snow-clad top of another, in proclaiming their testimony to the Agency, which has laid their deep foundations. Ask of ocean's waters; and the roar of their boundless waves shall chant from shore to shore a hymn of ascription to that Being, who hath said, "Hitherto shall ye come and no further." Ask of the rivers; and, as they roll onward to the sea, do they not bear along their ceaseless tribute to the ever-working Energy, which struck open their fountains and poured them down through the valleys? Ask of every region of the earth, from the burning equator to the icy pole, from the rock-bound coast to the plain covered with its luxuriant vegetation; and will you not find on them all the record of the Creator's presence? Ask of the countless tribes of plants and animals; and shall they not testify to the action of the great Source of life? Yes, from every portion, from every department of nature, comes the same voice: every where we hear thy name, O God; everywhere we see Thy love. Creation, in all its length and breadth, in all its depth and height, is the manifestation of thy Spirit, and without Thee the world were dark and dead. The universe is to us as the burning bush which the Hebrew leader saw: God is ever present in it, for it burns with His glory, and the ground on which we stand is always holy. How then can we speak of that Presence as peculiarly in the sanctuary, which is abroad through all space and time?—*Francis*.

There is something in beauty, whether it dwells in the human face, in the pencilled leaves of flowers, the sparkling surface of a fountain, or that aspect which genius breathes over its statue, that makes us mourn its ruin. I should not envy that man his feelings who could see a leaf wither or a flower fall, without some sentiment of regret. This tender interest in the beauty and frailty of things around us, is only a slight tribute of becoming grief and affection; for Nature in our adversities never deserts us. She even comes more nearly to us in our sorrows, and leading us away from the paths of disappointment and pain, into her soothing recesses, allays the anguish of our bleeding hearts, binds up the wounds that have been inflicted, whispers the meek pledges of a better hope, and in harmony with a spirit of still holier birth, points to that home where decay and death can never come.—*Constantinople*.

EFFECTS OF MUSIC.—The effect of music on the senses was oddly and wonderfully verified, during the mourning for the Duke of Cumberland, uncle of George III.: a tailor had a great number of black suits, which were to be finished in a very short space of time. Among his workmen there was a fellow who was always singing "Rule Britannia," and the rest of the journey-men joined in the chorus. The tailor made his observations, and found that the slow time of the tune retarded the work; in consequence, he engaged a blind fiddler, and, placing him near the workshop, made him play constantly the lively tune of "Nancy Dawson." The design had the desired effect; the tailors' elbows moved obedient to the melody, and the clothes were sent home within the prescribed period.—*Scrap-book*.

LIFE.—A man may change his life into a desert, wherein his eye will rest on nothing but the infinity of earthly littleness and of heavenly grandeur. But is not such an Arabian desert, which contains nothing but the transition from countless grains of sand by day, to countless stars by night, inferior in beauty and fruitfulness to a landscape, wherein are some shadows thrown by trees and clouds?

POETRY.—Tell us, thou bee, why makest thou thy wax, for masks or for candles—for concealment or enlightenment? The bee answered, "For neither; only for cells to hold my honey." Ask the poet. "Just like me," rejoined the poet; "I seek neither to deceive nor to undeceive; but to give sweetness."

THE VEIL OF THE FUTURE.—Thou standest before the mighty veil which shrouds eternity, and askest, Is it a veil of mourning or that of Isis? that of a murderer or a beauty? that of a radiant visage, like Moses's, or of a corpse? I answer, thou wilt one day lift it, and such as thy heart has deserved, such wilt thou lift.

GOD'S SLUMBER.—"The Almighty is resting, or asleep," says the heart of man, when his dim eye can no longer follow his footsteps. Thus did men once dream that the sun had sunk to sleep in the ocean, when he was waking and moving over a new world.