

# Christian Mirror,

AND GENERAL MISSIONARY REGISTER.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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## GENERAL LITERATURE.

From the N. Y. Observer.

### AFFLICTIONS WORKING OUT GLORY.

IN my little parish under the Highlands of the Hudson, I was walking out one afternoon to make a pastoral visit at a house of mourning. For several hours in the earlier part of the day, a summer's rain had been drenching the fields, but the clouds had broken away, the sun was shining in his strength, and the face of nature smiled in his genial beams. The flowers that had been beaten down by the descending torrents, now raised their heads again, and opening their bosoms to the warm sunshine, looked purer and lovelier than before the storm swept over them. Had I feared a few hours ago that their tender leaves would be torn rudely, and their freshness and beauty marred by the tempest, I saw now that He who "clothes the flowers of the field" with colors which no art can rival, understands that rain is as needful to the perfection of their beauty, as the sunbeams that gild them with lustre more radiant than Solomon in his glory.—Large drops of rain stood on the leaves, and sparkling in the sunshine like diamonds, reminded me of tears of grief lit up with smiles of joy.

With these thoughts suggested by the objects around me, I entered the house where death had been before me. A young mother had lately buried her first born and only child, and the bitterness of bereavement had not yet passed away. The gentleness of her spirit, sweetened by divine grace, winning the love of Christian friends when as yet she had not been called to drink the waters of affliction, gave such delicacy to her piety, that it was natural to fear the effect of a blow that had fallen suddenly and so severely on her frail heart. Surely, thought we, the flower must be smitten to the earth under the fury of such a storm.

In the hour of her first anguish she had yielded to the strong impulses of natural sorrow, and had found that relief which floods of grief will open when the heart is crushed. And when we had met to take the child to its silent home, and hide its form from her sight, the stream of grief still flowed freely, and we would not interpose restraint. The consolations of the gospel were offered to the mourners, and the truth illustrated and enforced, that afflictions sanctified are the richest blessings which a Father's love bestows. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," said I, in the words of the pious Psalmist, and they who like him have tasted, and seen that the Lord is gracious, are assured that those whom the Lord loveth he chastens, not in anger, but in infinite tenderness and mercy. In all ages his own people have passed through the furnace, and have come out tried witnesses of the truth of his word, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Believing this declaration, I assured the stricken mourner that though clouds and darkness hung over the present scene, the sun of righteousness would yet dispel them, and she

would feel that even this sore bereavement was designed to secure her highest happiness, as well as the glory of Him who had taken her jewel to set in his own crown.

A few days had elapsed since the funeral, and I had now called to mingle a pastor's sympathies with an afflicted friend. She met me with a smile, and the tearful eye was lighted with brightness that the rain-drops glistening in the sun had not reflected. The sun of righteousness was shedding rays of comfort and peace on the heart that but yesterday was overcast with clouds, and beaten with the storm; and as we spoke of the sweetness of a Saviour's love in the time of trial, she said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." The words from which I had spoken on the day of the funeral, she was now able to adopt and to repeat with an expression of countenance which testified the peace that reigned in her heart. Never had she found such strong consolation in Jesus; never had she so richly feasted on the joys that flow from communion with the Father of spirits; never had she made such high and swift attainments in holiness as in the hours of her late bereavement. A clog had been broken from her soul. An earthly tie that drew her downward had been severed, and her freed spirit rose toward heaven.

An idol had been slain, and now she worshipped the only living and true God. A new attraction drew her upward, and now her heart was with her treasure and her Saviour.

Often have I seen, not seldom have I felt the power of this Christian paradox, "It is good to be afflicted," and of that other, "Blessed are they that mourn." In the midst of health, and immersed in the cares of life, we sometimes forget our dependence on God, grow careless and proud and worldly minded, and soon lose those spiritual joys which once flowed constantly into our souls. God lays his hand suddenly upon us, stretches us on a bed of languishing and pain, shuts the world out of the chamber, and compels us to nauseate and think of Him, of our soul's estate, of heaven, of the judgment to which we are going, near to which perhaps we have come. And when he has restored us to health, we are able to see and to feel that it was a blessing thus to be arrested in our career of worldliness, and led to renewed self-consecration to the Lord.

Or, such a chastisement may not be stern enough to bring us to repentance, and God sends death and takes away a beloved member of our families, and leaves our hearth desolate. We mourn and weep, but into our hearts thus broken and softened he pours the rain of grace divine, and the fruits of the Spirit, which are love and joy and peace, start up and grow to the praise of Him who is mysterious in his dealings, but wise and kind even when he smites and slays.

Even now while I am writing, a sinking sun breaks out in the midst of a harvest shower, and the great bow of the Almighty spans the eastern sky. It is gorgeous to behold. It is "glory built on tears." Reflecting every color with which infinite skill has garnished the

universe, there it stands to adorn the earth, lustrous as that other rainbow about the throne. But what makes that bow on the clouds? Nothing but sunshine in showers—smiles in tears—joy in grief. The heavens must weep, or man may never see that brightest revelation of beauty, faithfulness and strength.

So have I seen the tears of the sorrowing, lit up by the rays of divine grace, and on the clouds of their grief a bow of promise resting, bright and beautiful as that which is now reposing in majesty before me. So have I seen afflictions working out exceeding and eternal glory; the chamber of death enlivened with unearthly joy, the dying bed transformed into a conqueror's car, the groans of expiring nature bursting into celestial melody, the darkness of the tomb illumined with the effulgence of heaven, as faith exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory."

This is glory born of grief; this is joy that flows from broken hearts; this is the gladness known only by those who mourn.

### ARCHITECTURE OF THE HEAVENS.

Who has not gazed with admiration upon the starry firmament? And whose heart does not respond to the sentiment of the devout Psalmist, that "the heavens declare the glory of God." Verily, there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. The voice is heard by all men. Yet all do not equally understand its import. To the rudest intelligence it probably is not without some meaning. It intimates with more or less distinctness the existence of a Divine Being, and fills the imagination with dim and shadowy conceptions of his power, while, to the cultivated mind, it not only proclaims the existence of God, but in the ascertained order, and harmony, and extent of the universe, unfolds the most impressible manifestations of his attributes. Let us collect together under one view, the conclusions of astronomers upon the distances of fixed stars,—their arrangement, and the consequent vastness of the stellar firmament. It is absolutely certain that the diameter of the earth's orbit, equal to about 190,000,000 miles, would dwindle to a mere point, if seen from the nearest of the fixed stars. Of this fact, there is not, in the judgment of astronomers, the shadow of a doubt. And though we cannot here spread before our readers all the evidence upon which this conclusion rests, nothing short of a mathematical demonstration can be stronger. We are sure that every one, who examines the subject, must admit its validity. But the distance at which the diameter of the earth's orbit would become a mere point, that is to say, less than one second of angular space, (which is about the least quantity directly and certainly measurable by the best instruments,) cannot be less than 19,200,000,000 miles, or such that light moving at the rate of 192,000 miles in a second, must be, at least, three and a half years in coming to us. From these undoubted facts, the necessary inference is, that the stars are so many suns, and many of them far