

Christian Mirror,

AND GENERAL MISSIONARY REGISTER.

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

VOL. II.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 1842.

No. 2.

GENERAL LITERATURE.

"YOUTH IS A SLIPPERY PATH."

THE following valuable remarks we have extracted from an admirable lecture lately delivered to the "Young Men's Presbyterian Association," in Halifax, N.S., by the Rev. Wm. Duff.

Here is a young man leaving the paternal roof to lay hold on the first link of social being. It is an event of no ordinary interest in the little household—an hour of many sympathies and feelings. The buoyant spirits and the visions of youth yield, for a time, to the depth and tenderness of filial love, as he listens with emotion to a father's counsels and receives a mother's blessing. He is destined. It may be, for the legal profession, and he enters the writing chambers to occupy the vacant seat at the table. Modest, diffident, ignorant of his work, yet forward to oblige and to be of what service he can. A few brief interrogatories discover him to his new companions to be what is termed, in the phraseology of the profligate, "green" in the ways of life. He has soon to listen to frequent inuendos against the truths of religion and the claims of virtue. He ventures perhaps to remonstrate, and his simplicity, as it is termed, calls forth only the laugh or the sneer. One, more thorough-paced in the ways of vice than the rest, undertakes to initiate him, and forthwith his principles are assailed, for there is no going on without these bulwarks of innocence being first demolished. Does he reverence the Bible? He is plied with arguments and insinuations against its authority, which as he has never before heard or thought of, he is unable to answer. Does he desire to remember the Sabbath day? its claims and sanctity are spurned and the too general practice, even of professing Christians, appealed to, and urged against the notion of its being intended for anything else than a day of amusement, idleness, or pleasure. Nay, the very feelings of nature are attempted to be poisoned. Should a father's or a mother's warning interpose to arrest him before he takes the fatal step—why should he continue for ever in leading strings now that he is old enough to be his own master? He may struggle for a time to resist this pernicious influence. The principles and lessons imbibed may not all at once be discarded and forgotten. But is it to be conceived, humanly speaking, that breathing daily in this polluted region, he should avoid inhaling the poison? No.—He yields at length, almost for peace sake he yields, and to escape being any longer the butt of ridicule. He makes one of a Sunday pleasure party, he joins the evening club, and mixes in the midnight revel, and the work of the destroyer is accomplished. He has at times his forenoon of reflection and bitter remorse, but every such thought and impression is speedily effaced by the return of riot and excess.

Who is yonder pale and emaciated wretch, whom we see prowling on the streets, like a wolf at evening for his prey?—a female form without one feature of a female soul—an out-

cast "whom neither the world nor its law befriends." And what has effected a transformation so revolting on one in whom a mother's hopes were centered, and whose cheek, now, alas! unconscious of shame, the blush of modesty once instinctively mantled?

She has been the victim of that bloated sensualist, who himself, but a few years ago, entered upon life uncorrupted, high in hope, with the path of usefulness, respectability, and honour, all before him, and with qualifications fitted to secure success; but he fell the victim to a vicious companionship, and now, cut off from the intercourse even of his early seducers, he walks a living pestilence, breathing around him the atmosphere of death, hated of himself, despised and shunned by all, a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction."

The case we have supposed is by no means ideal or unique. You have seen it realised, bad as it is, in the history of some of your acquaintances.

You have seen the young man of promise, of high intellectual endowments, and amiable disposition, fitted both to adorn and improve society, and who might have left a name behind him to be uttered with a tear, sink into the very slave of passion, the victim of crime, disowned by those who once most tenderly loved him, forgotten while yet alive, consigned to oblivion ere yet the grave has hid his shame.

But, that the influence of wicked companionship may be fatal to his immortal interests, it is not necessary that it impel him to drain to the very dregs, the cup of sensuality and crime. He may not have descended to the point at which the world disapproves, and yet he may lie under the strong and emphatic condemnation of Heaven.—Various circumstances may combine to keep him short of this fearful consummation, and to prevent him from sinking into the lowest gulph of sinful indulgence. The consideration of the mere temporal consequences of such excess, a desire to keep on some terms with society, or a mere regard to economy, may be the highest motives from which this constraint arises, while the evil communication to which he has been exposed may have fully done its work, in the perverting of every principle, and in the poisoning of every feeling of his heart.

Does not the well being of society then, and, above all, do not the interests of beings destined for immortality, demand an effort in behalf of those whose inexperience exposes them to be practised upon by remorseless and designing villainy, and whose inherent corruption, and natural aptitude for receiving a wrong impression, render a world lying in wickedness so peculiarly dangerous and so frequently fatal?

But, to conclude, the class to which we refer are in that season of life when efforts in their behalf are most likely to prove successful.

They are sinners, as well as others, it is true, and prone to evil, but their minds are more open to conviction—their hearts are more tender and susceptible of salutary impressions.

They have not been "accustomed to do evil;" their consciences are not yet "seared as with a hot iron;" the delegate of heaven is not wholly disowned; the still small voice within is heard, of which advantage may be taken, and to which appeal may be made.

Ought this season to be neglected? Shall the lively period of youth, that soft and impressible season, when lasting habits are formed, when the seal cuts deep into the yielding wax, and the impression is more likely to be clear and lasting and strong—shall this warm and favourable season be suffered to slide by without being turned to the great purposes for which not only youth, but life, and breath, and being were bestowed? Shall our young men, our country's hope, be launched into the open sea of life, without either chart or compass to steer by amid its hidden rocks and yawning waves? Shall they be left, in this most critical period of life, when a right direction may most easily be given to their habits and pursuits—shall they be left to the chance impressions which they may receive from a world whose influence and intercourse are so emphatically pernicious?

It may be so, and in general it is so. You may leave them to their fate, but a race will arise around you, from whose very aspect your souls will shrink. Do you love your country? Know then by your neglect you have ministered to its ruin. Do you love your race? You will learn the extent of evil you have inflicted upon them, when you stand together before the great white throne, in the audit of an assembled universe, and hear the sentence go forth, bidding them for ever away into those realms of woe, where no voice is heard but the wailings of despair, "where hope never comes, that comes to all." You will then, it may be, reflect that there was a time when you could have been instrumental in averting this; when you might have told them of a God above, a judgment before, and a Saviour "near even at the door;"—a time when the Spirit of God seemed even to be striving with them, and beginning a good work; and you, alas, by cold neglect, quenched the smoking flax! But then it is too late,—you cannot give them a cup of cold water to cool their burning tongues. Let us feel and act upon this responsibility. It is in dealing, and in dealing vigorously with the youth of a country, that any great moral renovation is to be expected.—We can hope for little success when attacking the wickedness which hath "grown with the growth and strengthened with the strength" of our adult population. Nothing is indeed "so hard for the Lord," and we would therefore ply the manhood and the old age of crime with the lessons of the Bible; but the alone hopeful attempt, is that of applying Christianity as a preventive, and turning away the young from the steps of their fathers.

I might recommend the necessity of such efforts by referring to the actual state of religion among the young of this city. I might ask you to enter any of our churches during divine service on the Lord's day, and reckon up the regular attendants upon divine ordinances, and