

Christian Miscellany.

CAUGHT IN THE QUICKSAND.



ICTOR HUGO gives the following impressive description of a death in the quicksand of certain coasts of Brittany or Scotland. He says:

"It sometimes happens that a man, traveller or fisherman, walking on the beach at low tide, far from the bank, suddenly notices that for several minutes he has been walking with difficulty. The strand beneath his feet is like pitch; his soles stick in it; it is sand no longer; it is glue.

"The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step he takes, as soon as he lifts his foot, the print which it leaves fills with water. The eye, however, has noticed no change; the immense strand is smooth and tranquil; all the sand has the same appearance; nothing distinguishes the surface which is solid from that which is no longer so; the joyous little crowd of sand-flies continue to leap tumultuously over the wayfarer's feet. The man pursues his way, goes forward, inclines to the land, endeavours to get nearer the upland. He is not anxious. Anxious about what? Only he feels, somehow, as if the weight of his feet increases with every step he takes. Suddenly he sinks in.

"He sinks in two or three inches. Decidedly he is not on the right road, he stops to take his bearings. All at once he looks at his feet. They have disappeared. The sand covers them. He draws them out of the sand; he will retrace his steps; he turns back, he sinks in deeper. The sand comes up to his ankles; he pulls himself out and throws himself to the left; the sand half leg deep. He throws himself to the right; the sand comes up to his shins. Then he recognizes with unspeakable terror that he is caught in the quicksand, and that he has beneath him the terrible medium in which man can no more walk than the fish can swim, he throws off his load if he has one, lightens himself as a ship in distress; it is already too late; the sand is above his knees. He calls, he waves his hat or his handkerchief; the sand gains on him more and more. If the beach is deserted, if the land is too far off, if there is no help in sight, it is all over.

"He is condemned to that appalling burial, long, infallible, implac-