

GENERAL LITERATURE.

TIME.

THE following thoughts on time are translated from the "Pensees" of Masillon:—

The principal source of those evils of which men complain, is the improper use they make of time. Some spend the whole of their life in obscurity and idleness, useless to their country, their fellow-citizens, and themselves; whilst others zealously engage in the occupation and tumult of human affairs. The former might have been born only to indulge in selfish repose, and expose themselves, by the diversity of their pleasures, to that listlessness which, though they ever attempt to avoid it, constantly pursues them: the latter, on the contrary, seem to live that they may seek, incessantly, in the cares of this world, those agitations which expose them to a state of perpetual disquietude, and which the whole of their life is but a miserable attempt to shun. The most happy among men are those who feel least the weight of time; and those engagements are the most agreeable, whether they arise from the innocent pleasures of life, or from its more serious occupations, which appear to shorten its days and moments, and leave us scarcely aware that they are gone. Where are our earliest years? What realities have they left in our remembrance? They are little more than a dream in the night. We dream that we have lived. This is nearly all that now remains. The whole of the interval between our birth and the present moment is but a rapid stream, which we have scarcely seen pass. When we enter on public life, the past will not then appear to us, either long in its duration, or more real in its nature. All past ages seem to us as fugitive moments; and all the people who have appeared and disappeared in the world,—all the revolutions of empires and kingdoms,—all the grand events which embellish history, all these appear to us as the different scenes of a play, the beginning and end of which we might have witnessed in one day. Let us only call to mind the victories, the taking of places, the glorious treaties, and all the pompous events of the last reign,* the whole of which we well remember, for most of us witnessed them, and they will be recorded in the annals of our country, and descend to our latest posterity; and the whole will appear to us as a dream, or as a flash of lightning which dazzles us and then dies away; and which every day effaces more and more from our recollection.

Time, that precious deposit which is confided to our care, often becomes a burden which oppresses and fatigues. To be deprived of it, we fear as the greatest of evils; and yet we fear almost as much the thought of bearing its *ennui*, and its duration! It is a treasure that we wish always to retain, and yet can hardly suffer it to remain in our hands! The whole of our life is an art, continually employed in losing it; and notwithstanding our endeavours to kill time, there always remains more of it than we know what to do with.

Years appear long when at a distance; but they no sooner arrive than they are gone; and before we can look about us, we find ourselves overtaken by some fatal period which we thought to be far off, and fondly hoped might never arrive. Let us look at the world as we saw it in our youth, and as we see it now. A new Court has succeeded that which we first beheld; new personages have entered on the stage, and new actors are performing their parts. We see new events, new intrigues, new passions, new heroes in

virtue as well as vice, who are all in their turn the subjects of applause, derision, and censure of the public. A new world has insensibly appeared; and, without our perceiving it, is built upon the ruins of that which is just gone.

Time is that blessing which, of all others, we value the least. We reserve our places for our friends; our gifts for our creatures; our property for our children; our credit for ourselves; our praise for those we think worthy; but our time we give to all the world: we expose it as prey; and, it should seem, they do us a favor who take it off our hands. It is a burden which we carry among mankind, seeking continually some one to release us from it.

Everything passes away with us. A rapidity which nothing can arrest bears all away into the abyss of eternity. Yesterday our ancestor prepared the way before us.—To-day we are preparing the way for those who are to succeed us. Age follows age. The dead and the living replace each other continually. Nothing remains stationary.—Everything wears out. Everything becomes extinct. We are always ready to profit by the ruin of others. We resemble those infuriated soldiers who, in the confusion of battle, and while their companions are falling at their feet under the sword of the enemy, eagerly pick up the garments of the dead; and no sooner have they put them on than a mortal blow strips them also of life and of their ornaments. And, so far from profiting by the example of our predecessors, there seem to arise, as it were, from their ashes some fatal sparks which rekindle in us the same desires, and lead to the same results.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.*

THE TRAVELLER.

(From the Toronto Banner.)

REMINISCENCES OF A MISSIONARY TOUR IN SHETLAND.

(Continued.)

Nature, however, purified by the truths of the Gospel, is a glorious teacher—even in the matter of good breeding or politeness, which the wealthier classes claim as their own peculiar province, she is rarely, perhaps never, known to err. It is to be observed, however, that steamboats, and the crowds of travellers and tourists which they bring with them, are making sad havoc upon the unsophisticated manners of the inhabitants in the provinces, and, in a few years, or it may be even now, the amiable trait of character, to which I have alluded, may be talked of as things that have been, but are no longer. So much for the transitory nature of the fairest flowers of the world! As it chanced that I resided at the same house which Dr. Clarke had been in, during his sojourn in these parts, the good woman who had kept it seemed proud in shewing me a copy of his Commentary, in six splendid volumes, which she had received from him after his departure. It was enhanced still farther by a testimony in the handwriting of the author of his sense of the virtues and Christian excellency of his quondam hostess. Moderatism had been in the ascendancy in these islands for a long time. The consequence of which was that the people felt little interest in their ministers. Religion was a mere thing of usage. There was a decency in being christened and married by the functionary of the parish. It was also customary to attend the ministrations at the Church on Sunday, but beyond these externals, the spirit of religion was greatly wanting.

This was the general state of the parishes of Shetland, though it must be admitted, that, even in the dearest of them, there was still some evangelical religion to be found; and its existence was preserved seemingly by some of those old volumes, that you might see on the shelf of the lonely cottage—there they lie, giving, by their blackened appearance, evidence of having been well read. You open these volumes successively, lying, as they are well entitled to do, alongside of the Bible, and you find "Guthrie's Trial of a saving

interest in Christ?" "Boston's Four Fold State," or the "Life of Halyburton." Dr. Clarke, therefore, when he visited Shetland full of zeal for the interests of religion, was received with open arms by all classes. His Arminian doctrines, however, were steadfastly resisted by several of the established ministers, and as the people were led to take an interest in the controversy, they soon became great proficient in the literature of the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy, and the progress of English Methodism in Shetland was stayed. At the time of my visit, it seemed to have reached its height—indeed I was told, in many places, that it was on the decline. Their congregations, as I was informed, amounted to ten; and I doubt not they were the means of doing much good among the people, as I may have occasion to notice in the sequel of my narrative, for I had frequent occasion of meeting both with them and with their preachers. As an illustration of the excellent understanding existing between the venerable missionary of the English Conference (I mean Dr. Clarke) and the people, I shall copy some verses, addressed by a Shetland poetess to him on his arrival. I had not the happiness of seeing the ingenious writer, as she had gone to the south, but some of her friends shewed me a small volume, containing some devotional and descriptive pieces, highly creditable to her feelings and literary taste. But some may be ready to exclaim, "A Shetland poet, and who cares for such a personage?" But why not a poet in the isles of Shetland, as well as in Erin, Iona or Greece? Poetry is the language of passion, the mirror of feeling, the image of external nature in all her varied aspects of mountains and valleys, of streams and seas, of flowers and leafy forests, of balmy gales and headlong storms, of sunshine and shade,—in short, of universal nature, whether as perceived by the *sensorium*, or grasped by the imagination, and therefore belongs to humanity; the tuneful race, accordingly, are found in every country and clime, and bear with them the credentials of their mission, in the beauty and freshness of their song. But let the Shetland poetess speak for herself. I wish I could have presented my reader with some of her descriptive pieces. The following is a mere complimentary effusion, but most worthily bestowed, on the distinguished stranger who had visited her native islands:—

And hast thou, generous stranger, come
From blooming scenes where nature smiles,
And left thine own delightful home,
To visit Thule's barren isles?

What tempted thee to come so far,
A wanderer from the land of bliss,
To brave the elemental war
Of such a stormy shore as this?

'Twas not th' insatiate thirst of gold,
Nor proud ambition's loftier aim,
Nor brighter regions to behold,
Nor undiscovered lands to claim.

No! it was still a loftier aim,
'Twas Christian zeal and Christian love,
A bright and never-dying flame—
Pure, holy, harmless from above.

Bless'd is the man whose holy breast
Enshrines this spark of life divine;
Bless'd is his home, his family bless'd—
Such bliss belongs to thee and thine.

Such bliss on earth thy portion be,
And everlasting bliss above,
When death shall set thy spirit free,
To live with God in realms above.

I resume my narrative. In preaching among these islands, there is this peculiarity, that you may have a congregation every day, and at all times of the day. There is what I might call a thirst for the word of truth. It is very true, you cannot, on week days, get the male part of the inhabitants, and, for the best of all reasons, that they are all off at sea, plying their avocation as fishermen; but you are certain, at a few hours notice, of getting a goodly number of women and young persons to attend your discourses. They will come from great distances, across heathy deserts and marshes, to hear a sermon, and with such sprightly and satisfied looks, that they would really put to shame the sour countenance and unwilling aspect of many a Sunday hearer among

See Clarke's Life, p. 617.

* That of Louis XIV.