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Poetry.

TOO LATE.

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'Twill be too late

To seek forgiveness at death's gate,—
When all the work of life is done—
And mercy's hour of pardon gone;
Too late! when gospel sounds have ceas'd,
That whispered oft the voice of peace,
And pointed, through the Saviour's love,
The way to blessedness above,
Too late to think of joy or rest,
When man departs from earth unblest;
The guilty spirit wanders then,
And finds no resting place again.

'Twill be too late!

When all the dead,—the small, the great,
The rich, the poor,—together meet
In silence round the judgment seat!
Too late to turn the wildered eye,
When neither rock nor hill is nigh,
In that decisive, dreadful day,
When earth and sky have fled away;
Too late the voice of God to hear,
Or bow the soul in awful fear,—
When sounds the dreadful word, Depart,
And anguish strikes it to the heart.

Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER]

SALVATION EFFECTED BY DESTRUCTION.

THE FLOOD—BAPTISM—THE END OF ALL THINGS.

The world's cry of "a good time coming," in which a secularized church is so ready to join, grows out of views of man's state and prospects which directly conflict with the word of God. It supposes the individual to enter upon existence an innocent, but a helpless and an ignorant creature, who may be educated to a perfect man. And it supposes the race to be now in a course of improvement from just such a rude, but innocent, origin to just such a perfection of humanity, when the ills that flesh is now heir to shall have been abolished by sanctified science; and peace, liberty, plenty, contentment

and benevolence shall cover the earth. Any evil which is acknowledged in man is the mere absence of light or virtue; a deficiency to be supplied; a power to be developed. Any evil in his circumstances is consequent upon a trespass of some natural law, which has merely to be put a stop to and the evil must cease. With a numerous class of professing Christians the Gospel is nothing more than an efficient means of promoting this development, and Jesus Christ is the great Apostle of progress, the teacher and the example of the perfection to which the world is hastening. We are not, on this occasion, to undertake any formal exposure of the world's delusion or the professing church's heresy, but shall simply set in contrast with them the Scriptural view of salvation man needs, and which God offers.

The Scriptures every where represent man's moral character as evincing not a mere absence of virtue, but a positive prevalence of sin and the evil of our fallen condition as being the curse of a holy God. The salvation needed, therefore implies a destruction of evil, as well as a bestowment of good, and that both in our characters and our condition; and this is the invariable characteristic of God's works of grace in the world in all its aspects and applications, life is brought out of death, glory out of suffering, salvation out of destruction. It is not necessary that we should at present pause to illustrate this principle in the great act of deliverance in which safety is brought to man, by the bruising of the serpent's head. The destruction of the work of the devil, for Christ also hath once suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. Hence eminently and illustriously, life is brought of death. But we would rather come down to the carrying out of the purpose of grace amongst and upon men, and shew that suffering and destruction, in order to deliverance and safety, has been, is, and ever must be, the characteristic of God's gracious procedure with His people in this world.

And first, this is displayed in all God's providential interferences in behalf of His people, in the history of the past. Take as an example the destruction of the old world by the flood. This awful catastrophe, in common with the other more signal interpositions of Divine power in the affairs of

this world, is commonly most grievously misunderstood: It is for the most part represented as nothing else than a terrible judgment on iniquity; sometimes it is spoken of as a mere ebullition of wrath. While the truth is, that the day of retribution and righteous indignation is not yet come upon the ungodly. This and all similar events in our present state, whether in the history of nations, or in the lives of individuals, are to be understood rather as instances of mercy accomplishing salvation by the destruction of evil. The wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and it seemed as if truth would be obliterated, and the righteous remnant swallowed up. It was then that God announced His intention to sweep away the corruption with a flood. That this is the correct view of the aim and purpose of God in the deluge is evident from the reference to the event in 1 Peter iii. 19, and 20. That mercy, and not wrath, was presiding over that disaster is there shewn—

First, by the forbearance and compassion with which God continued to warn the world by the mouth of Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Christ, it is stated by the Spirit, went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing. This statement sufficiently explicit in itself, has been made a mystery by the attempts of the corrupters of God's word to pervert it to sustain their doctrine of purgatory. "Spirits in prison," say they "are Spirits in some place where they are not finally reserved for judgment, since the Lord went and preached to them," that is, as they allege, during the period between his crucifixion and resurrection. It will relieve the passage of all obscurity, if we inquire how did he go, where did he go, and when did he go? How did he go? not personally; but by the Spirit "by which also he went and preached." In the same way, as Pauls says to the Ephesians—"Christ came and preached peace to you who were afar off." The two remaining questions, where, and when did he go? we shall join together in our reply,—"*he went and preached to the spirits in prison,*"—the time of his preaching is past, but the time of their being in prison is present. It is not spirits who were in prison at the time he went and preached, but spirits now in prison,