

It—let us cry for His grace to whom a thousand years are as a day.

6. Discerning the time is to notice the changes that have occurred during its progress, and to be rightly affected by the thoughts which these changes suggest.

Just try to think of what must have been witnessed and felt, of joy and sorrow, of glittering hope and moody despair, by all the men of all generations, from the beginning to the last. "They all died. But before death, what varieties—what vicissitudes!

Think of the mighty empires which have been—their growth, extent, strength decline, and fall, one after another. All bearing at one period, the marks of stability. All passed away!

If one had looked upon Imperial Rome, the day that Christ was born, surveying its vast dominion, estimating its strength riches, civilization, and other elements of power, could he have thought it possible, that in the course of 400 or 500 years, the proud mistress of the world, with all her pomp, would be lying a bleeding, spoliated suppliant at the feet of then unknown savages? and that darkness and barbarism would cover her most enlightened provinces, and even sacred Italy? Or could that man have believed that, in the course of another 500 years, there would arise a new power in that old Rome, with spiritual pretensions greater than any authority ever exercised by the *Cæsars*; with spiritual fulminations as its weapons; with armies of cowed monks and shaven priests and mitred bishops, to carry its aggressions into every land; with lying promises decoying, with lying threatenings terrifying, with lying superstition imposing on the religious sentiment of man;—and, having bound all in spiritual fetters, receiving a homage and a tribute which stern old pagan Rome never extorted, and would have rejected with scorn?

Or, worse still, could that man have anticipated the spectacle presented in the 'eternal city' now? Could he have believed that, after men awoke from the sleep of the dark ages, and found that their life-action, and aim, and thought, had been but dreams,—distressing, terrible, degrading, leaden, cursed unrealities,—a phantom would be found in old Rome—a ghastly rather than a ghostly successor and caricature of the *Dream King*? Like a bird of night and evil omen, winking its eyes unused to light, and trying to bear itself defiantly amid the glare of the noon-day sun of knowledge which scorches it, like grinning death's head, lifeless, soulless, trying to chatter and mutter, and peep. Like maniac raving, endeavouring to persuade itself, that again it will enslave the world!—the world! that pities it, that helps it for its own bad ends—that props it up with bayonets in Italy, and elsewhere with legislative provision, and laughs in scorn at the miserable imbecility!

Who, that may have walked through the streets of London, or Paris, or who has heard of the extent, power, and influence of the great empires, of which they form the centres, could easily think of utter desolation brooding o'er the site of these cities; utter prostration as the doom of these empires?—It may not be for long, long ages; but the destruction cometh, and no man knows how soon. The end of all things is at hand, however lengthened that indefinite period may appear to the perceptions of men. And Time is what it has been. It passed, and all things withered, grew old, and died. It passes and all things wither and shall die.

Concluded on page 669.

HUMILITY.—The Christian graces grow only under the shade of the Cross, and the root of them all is humility.