

have the herd controlled by the herdsman directing, pricking its leaders with his goad.

"Which are given from one Shepherd." That is, the blows and threats are given by the one man—the herdsman in charge. He belabors and pricks the leader when stubborn or unruly, and forcing them in the right direction, he guides easily the entire drove of cattle, however large.

Such is an explanation of the text, by which we see at once the unity, the harmony, the simplicity, and the expressive meaning of its figurative language; its accordance with the design of the Book in which it is found; and its proper position at the close of that Book. As the goad in the hands of the herdsman is an instrument of power by which he leads a large herd as he likes, so "the preacher's words of truth and wisdom"—the words of the living God—are words of power, creators of moral force, by which the course of mankind, the events that befall them, and their destiny, are directed and shaped. As the herdsman by goading one or two animals in the herd, can control the action of the whole, so the counsels and dealings of the Most High, brought to bear on the understanding and conscience of gifted men—goading them at times to agony—compelling them against their predilections to a course they had not intended to pursue—will make great men of them, leaders in eventful crises, and bring about by them revolution and deliverance for the people of a whole country or age; as in the case of Moses, constrained reluctantly to undertake his mission on behalf of oppressed Israel.

All human history confirms and illustrates the truth of this doctrine. To all great events of the past we attach the names of leading actors, on whom we bestow the curse or the blessing, as the event in the solution of which they were active or principal agents is deemed disastrous or beneficial, and generally we give a kind of credit to these men as individuals to which they are not entitled. The great leaders of opinion and action have not been always the very best and greatest of their age. The best and greatest have never been wholly the authors, or even the mainspring of the illustrious transactions in which they bore the most conspicuous part. The circumstances and tendencies of an eventful epoch have more, far more to do in producing great leaders than the leaders have to do in forming the circumstances and guiding the tendencies of the age, so as to accomplish the memorable achievement. That is, transposed into the language of religion and reason,—God, the Ruler of men, so disposes and arranges all events that in the proper time the proper man is found, and assumes his place, sometimes goaded to it under the pressure of circumstances which neither he nor anybody else can control, and the issue of which he cannot foresee. Not the less on this account, rather all the more honour, so it be of the proper kind, is due unto the men who, like Abraham of old, listening to the voice of Heaven, have bravely, amid uncertainties and fears, cast their sword into the right scale, and hazarded all for God and truth and their country's weal. Not that God employs unreasoning, incapable men—mere hammer-heads of a resistless fate—in bringing about great and beneficial changes; rather, He takes the

men that think, that dare, that intrepidly look and venture when others shudder to approach; these He counsels, urges, constrains, does not permit to turn back, till their apointed work is done, and a whole nation, and generations succeeding, are impelled to praise the Lord for mercies and benefits He imparts through the instrumentality of the good and great men whom He called and qualified for the work.

Thus, in the Scottish Reformation, if the most noted actor in it, the man that might be called the father of it—if any man may be so called—if John Knox had resisted the leading of the Spirit of Truth, if he had remained what he was at first, a priest of Rome, and if he had bent the whole might of his strong will and dauntless heart to the strengthening of the crumbling structure of Popery—leaving his mark, for a mark he would leave, on his country for evil, and not for good—if the man called John Knox had never existed, God would have found a Knox—a man of might, or a dozen of them if necessary, to do His work there and then and in that way; and this man or dozen of men would just have arisen, as we say, seeing only the outward aspect and the easily-discovered surface causes of events, out of the condition of things in that age and land. We reach a deeper truth, and the originating cause, when we say God did it, by the men whom He quickened and led by His Word.

Take another illustration from the same field. It is susceptible of proof that the views generally entertained of the condition of Scotland at the period preceding the Reformation are not so truthful as they might be. Our popular religious historians have colored their picture of the age and its manners too darkly, and in this have made a great mistake, not to use a harsher word, The country was not hopelessly sunk in ignorance and superstition. This is the impression, however, we have received from them. So far as this impression is inaccurate, so far historic truth is disfigured, which will remain truth forever for all that. And more than that, by relying on such overcharged representations, we deprive the reformers of the praise that is their due, and we preclude ourselves from appreciating the reality and the might of the Divine impulse—the goad in the hand of God by which they were directed and constrained. For plain it is, if the religious and social condition of our forefathers was only rank, reeking rottenness, and nothing else, the abolition of that was no great achievement for anybody. The kick of an ass can shiver to atoms a mushroom on a muckheap. We fail to perceive, on this ground, the magnitude and importance of that work of God carried on, and over obstacles which sheer corruption could never present, to the glory of His name and to the welfare of mankind.

No; irreligious and barbarous as was the age; deformed by error and oppressed by hierarchical tyranny, and beclouded by vain tradition, as was the suffering church, still there was a remnant according to the election of grace, and still there were some elements of Christian life in the religion of our forefathers, and in the hearts of some who called upon the name of the Lord. Men knew that the mass of the ministers of religion were wicked, ungodly hirelings, rob-

bers and wolves, as they designated them; but they also knew that, here and there at any rate, was a friar or a priest that bewailed and denounced the evil, while he strove to lead the poor to patience, and trust in the Lord, and well-doing.

Nearly all the reformers were churchmen. There were some earnest and holy and true-hearted men among the clergy then. Like to those we have heard of, were others of whom no memorial remains, but who, like Luther's fellow-monks, were searching for God and truth, and helping distressed souls in the best manner they could. God had not forsaken His world; He was leaving the apostate church, but he stood yet upon its threshold, looking back on its altar, as Christ looked on Jerusalem and wept. This explains how a state of things so bad could be tolerated so long, and how great a struggle must at the same time have taken place in the minds of those who cut the ties that bound them to the past, and to all that they had cherished as sacred and holy.

Do not deride the religious beliefs and feelings, nor stand amazed at the credulity of the people of the olden time. They leaned upon that which had been taught them from their infancy. They had worshipped God in these old churches, with their fathers before them, whose dust lay mouldering in the consecrated ground around and beneath their pavements. When the doctrines of the reformation were preached for the first time to the men of that age, the preaching must have given a shock enough to shatter every conviction within them. It must have startled them, as Gospel truth did Paul while he yet lay in the fetters of cruel Judaism—as unblushing Atheism advanced with astounding show of reasoning would startle us now.

The early confessors of the disinterested Gospel had to pass "through fire and water" before they reached "a wealthy place"—a state of repose for the soul. But it was not the flames of persecution, trying though these be to flesh and blood; conscientious men could die, and did die, for the old error, as well as for the new truth; it was the putting off their old man and putting on the new in a sense we cannot know; it was the reversal of the current of every stream in their being that tried their souls; that needed the impulse given by God's Word, setting their conscience on fire, and goading them from stage to stage—leaving with them an awakened people, and giving us the heritage of the reformation.

Missionary Intelligence.

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND—While the number of missionaries is less than it might and should be, yet, too we believe, than before the mutiny, the real progress of religion appears to be encouraging. The missionaries in the field are diligently plying both agencies or modes, the educational, and the evangelistic, and as the result of both, they have the satisfaction from time to time of seeing hopeful additions made to the Christian church. Dr. Duff, lately mentions the baptism of a youth, in trying circumstances, the fruit of the teaching in one of the higher school classes at Calcutta. Dr. Murray Mitchell tells of the bap-