

have been a deluge without an ark. To prevent so great a calamity overtaking the world, it was partitioned off, so to speak, into continents and islands, into nations and tongues, and these served the same purpose to the world which the water-tight compartments serve to the ship in cases of accident. They were a wise provision taken in prospect of the world, which it was foreseen were to be its worst days.

The division of tongues at Babel, and the dispersion of the human family, we are thus disposed to look upon as a signal blessing to the world—indeed, as the means in the hand of God of saving it from ruin. These obstacles, it is true, presented formidable impediments to the spread of truth, and imposed herculean labours of various kinds upon its friends; but this evil was more than counterbalanced, by the check which these same obstacles offered to the propagation of those idolatrous and demoralizing systems which existed in the early ages, and which otherwise might have become universal. The dangerous period of the world was thus got over.

But let us mark the wisdom of Divine Providence. Those barriers which, in pursuance of a wise design, the Creator set up at the beginning of history, are now in course of being taken down.—They have served their end, and are no longer needed. The earth is rapidly becoming an extended plain, and mankind one family and nation. Of course, we do not mean that it is literally so. Its mountain chains are as lofty, and its oceans as wide as ever. Its races are as numerous, and its tongues as diversified as before. But while these physical and ethical barriers remain, they no longer present insuperable obstacles to the intercourse of mankind. Art has gained a complete triumph over them. It has levelled the mountain: it has dried up the ocean. It has brought nigh the most distant continents and islands, and it is knitting together into one family remote nations and races, by the ties of intelligence and sympathy. The process which is going on in our day is the very antipodes of that which took place at the building of Babel. In truth, we are now witnessing a restoration of the disaster which then befel the world, and which was not so much a disaster as a blessing, seeing it circumscribed error in those days when error was far stronger than truth. It is

the reunion of the human race which we behold, after a dispersion of four thousand years. Thought begins freely to circulate throughout the earth. Many run to and fro. And under the printing press, and the numerous translations it is daily casting abroad among mankind, the world is rapidly becoming "of one language and of one speech." In these events we hear the first echoes of the predicted voice, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

CHAPTER II.—MORAL OBSTACLES.

Let us mark, too, the profound wisdom now so apparent, in delaying till our day the full advent of the arts. Had they earlier reached perfection—had the first ages possessed the facilities for social intercourse and the communication of ideas which we enjoy, to what use would these facilities have been put? Undoubtedly, idolatry would have seized upon them, and wielded them for its own extension: and by their help it might have so riveted its chains upon the neck of mankind, that no after-effort could have sufficed to break them. The tools which are helpful and beneficial in the hands of a man, may nevertheless be dangerous and hurtful in those of a child. On a like principle, those all but omnipotent agencies which have sprung into being in this latter age, were kept out of the way of society, during the period of its infancy and inexperience. But now we think the world may be safely entrusted with these powers. Nay, we believe it will be much the better of them, and that the time is come when they will subserve the very highest interests of mankind, and prove as signal blessings as, at an earlier stage, they would have been curses to the world. We see the idolatries, once so flourishing, now stricken with age, and ready to pass away. We behold truth, which is of slow growth, because destined to an immortal existence, with its period of full development: and mature vigour yet to come. Now it is at this juncture, when error is growing weak, and truth is only coming into possession of its powers, that these new and marvellous