

THE FUTURE.

THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN.

Has the Christian really no advantage over the unbeliever in respect to the knowledge of the future? It is alleged that he has not—but let us see.

Now it is right that we should acknowledge the disruption which has taken place between this world and all other worlds. Although we have no definite information on the point, we cannot help feeling that we have been parted from the great continent and community of being, and that we are lying, like a detached and isolated rock, among the breakers of an angry sea.

By the incarnation and work of Christ the broken communication with the great father-land have been resumed, and preparations are making for a final return of this earth into the light, and its re-establishment among the righteous worlds. Indeed, it seems that though it is small among the thousand worlds that fill the sky, it is yet destined to become the greatest of them, and to be the favourite dwelling-place of Emmanuel (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14).

In the meantime, however, we are passing through shaded skies, and we are often plunged into utter darkness, which we neither wonder at nor deplore. We do not wonder at it, for we know the derangement that has happened to us. We know that here, upon this earth, the great battle of the universe—who shall rule,—the creature or the Creator—is being fought, not by God and the Devil only, but by every soul of man taking the one side or the other. And we do not wonder that in such a universal strife the earth should be covered with dust, and that the air should be filled with darkness, and that we should not be able to see things clearly, or at all. Ask the soldier what he saw in the battle-field. Ask him if he understood the evolutions of the fight. He will tell you frankly that he saw nothing but smoke, and understood nothing but the word of command.

My position as a Christian, then, is simply this—I do not know what is to happen to me here, but I know what is to happen to me hereafter. My earthly path

lies through that valley which is covered with mist, but beyond it I see myself emerging on the hill of heaven, and all the rest is clear and bright.

Then, first, as to that unknown part there are many considerations which prevent me from deploring my ignorance of it:—1. It is really a very little portion of my existence that is thus under the shadow—it is but a handbreadth. 2. Although I do not know the particular elements that are to make it up, I know that the whole result is to be good. 3. And although I cannot trace the windings of the stream in that hidden part, I see it issuing from the darkness, and rolling far away, and for ever, in the sunshine of heaven. 4. Every one who is in the habit of vexing himself with possible disappointments must feel that the vexation would become intolerable if they were announced as certain and unavoidable. How could I listen to my child's merry laugh if I knew that six months hence it would be in the grave? 5. And how many sweet surprises of love and mercy we would lose, and the swelling tide of gratitude, if every good thing we were to see was proclaimed beforehand? And finally, How difficult it would be for us to walk with an acquiescent spirit in the path which was announced to us as our future path? If the future were to be announced to, it could not be the possible nor the alterable future, but the absolute future;—the things that we would infallibly do, and the things that would infallibly happen to us. Now, I do not know how others feel, but I own that I would not like to have been put to a test like that—to be told not only what I ought to do, but what I would do. For I would have been ever tempted to try what strength there was in these declarations of the future. I say, my proud self-will would have been tempted to try whether it could not defeat God's counsel, and, when He said that tomorrow I would do so and so, whether I could not do something else.

But thank God, I am to be guided by my DUTY, not by my DESTINY.

I have said that there is an impenetrable mist upon this valley, which hides all objects or misshapes them. To the Christian, however, that darkness is interpenetrated by the True Light that shines. There is