

EARNEST CHRISTIANITY.



LIKE the ring of these little words. They strike some chord in our inner nature and thrill us, so that we wish the kingdoms were all ablaze with earnest Christianity. Although the wise man has written, "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" there is a temptation, nevertheless, to ask this very question. It is easy to see that man has laid his hand upon nature, and has made its powers, more than in any former days, subserve his interests. Christianity, to say the least, has kept abreast with the mechanical, intellectual, and political advances of the race. She is still marching onward in her glorious mission, and God's great army is planting standards of the Cross amongst the nations. And looking only on the bright side of the picture, we sing of the "Old, old story":—

"More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail;
Sin's strong-holds it now o'erthrows,
Shakes the trembling gates of hell."

We are almost ready to take up the language of the "great voices in heaven," which John heard, and say, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

But along with these bright prospects there are dark shadings. All that take shelter under the great covenant of grace do not stand forth as moral lights to scatter the darkness of sin that surrounds them. And the enemies of Christianity are, in great force, still upon the field. Sin abounds still; and if *earnest Christianity*, in the days of the Apostles, of Luther, or of Wesley, was necessary, it is so still. Our work may differ somewhat from that in former days; but the foe is the same, and, like our noble fathers, we are not only to defend the truth, but to conquer as we go.

The success of the churches, if I have not misunderstood a common sentiment, does not equal the agencies. In point of numbers, sanctuaries, and other handmaids, we never before stood on such vantage-ground. But, somehow, our reasonable expectations are not realized. *Why is this?* Has God changed? Is Christ unequal to what the times demand? Is the Holy Spirit less willing, than long ago, to fire our hearts and fill us with the old-time power? To all these questions relating to the persons of the "Ever-blessed Trinity" there is only one answer, and that is, without any qualification, in the negative. The reasons of this want of great success must, therefore, lie at our own doors. I cannot pretend to know all these evil causes, but I may perhaps indicate the direction in which they lie. We are told that Dr. Carey's great sermon, on Isaiah liv. 2-3, had two divisions,—“Expect great things from God,” and “Attempt great things for God.” I don't think we do too much of the latter, and I fear we are verily guilty with reference to the