

THE HOME AND FOREIGN RECORD.

MARCH, 1861.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

WHO that is human has not watched with eager eye the cloud that closes down between us and the Future? It is one of the strongest instincts of our nature to look anxiously forward and to long for the unveiling of the secrets of the world to come. God has graciously adapted His revealed Word to our mental constitution in this respect. The events which concern us most intimately are made to loom up largely out of shoreless sea of the unknown, above the waves of time, through the thick, dark cloud that bounds our vision. The day of resurrection and of final judgment flashes its awful light, sunlike, through all the centuries. As the traveller journeying towards a high mountain sees its peaks bathed in light, while many intervening leagues of hill and valley are shrouded in impenetrable mists, so we, marching through the dreary wastes of time, our eyes dimmed and our hearts fretted by the cares and sorrows of life, are invited, yea urged to fix our gaze on the last great day and the events which shall signalize it,—the coming of the Son of Man, the summoning of all to judgment, the public justification of the righteous, the utter condemnation of the wicked, the renovation of the universe.

We are assured also of a happy Millennial Age to be enjoyed by the Church on earth, when the name of Jesus shall be universally known and his power acknowledged,—an age happier and more glorious by contrast with the turmoil and the storm which must usher it in. While the man who studies Scripture with the modesty of true learning or of common sense will shrink from the fruitless and foolish, if not profane attempt to fix the day or the year of the coming of the Son of Man,—it is still our privilege and duty to watch the “signs of the times” and mark the finger of God making all things work together towards that grand consummation.

The triumphs and the disasters of God’s ancient church were heralded by many signs and wonders. When Christ was born at Bethlehem his star was seen in the east, and angelic hosts descended to sing “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.” When Jesus was crucified, there were signs on the earth and in the sky: the veil of the temple was rent, the earth shook, the sun put on sackcloth. Christians were forewarned of the doom of the apostate city of Jerusalem by terrible portents. Each great revolution in the world’s history has its appropriate signs, which the wise read while the ignorant and foolish gaze in idle curiosity.

What are the signs of *our* times? We can trace the connexion between the sign and the thing signified, the prophecy and its fulfilment, in regard to the great events of the past; can we not calmly feel the pulse of our own age and study the aspects of the moral atmosphere that surrounds us?