

his eminent predecessors were exposed, an acquaintance with his personal history shews the value of a calm spirit of research, diligent application, and patient courage when sorely tried by unjust aspersions and untoward circumstances. Great as was his genius, without the exercise of these virtuous qualities we are well assured that this "prince of philosophers" could never have given to the world the various excellent treatises which resulted from his assiduous and unwearied prosecution of his scientific enquiries.

Let me only call attention to one more example,—to a philosopher who not only earned for himself the highest reputation, but who indeed defined the sphere of the sciences, and who marked out the true method of traversing that sphere. I refer to Lord Bacon, who may be styled the father of modern philosophy. Did he escape the encounter of severe trials and distressing obstacles? Or did their visitation damp his ardour or relax his diligence in studiously and laboriously seeking to advance the interests of science? Quite the contrary. It was after he had been accused of corruption in his office of Lord Chancellor, dismissed, and heavily fined, that he betook himself to retirement and those successful efforts, the fruits of which demand our admiration. Thus did the excluded statesman profit both himself and others by his disgrace. How much more commendable was his conduct than pusillanimously, indolently, or like a misanthropist, to have neglected the cultivation of those brilliant talents with which he was endued. Speaking generally of his works, they are pronounced invaluable, "but if," as has been observed, "none of these existed but his 'Novum Organum Scientiarum,' he would have earned himself a deathless name."

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

## THE GUARDIAN.

HALIFAX, N. S. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1841.

### ON THE LIMITS AND PROGRESS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

"Tell, for you can, what is it to be wise?" was the interrogatory of the Poet to his friend Lord Bolingbroke, one of the most celebrated wise men, after the flesh, of his day; and, as if aware of the answer which must be given to his question, he immediately adds,

"'Tis but to know how little can be known."

If such is the case, it is certainly pre-eminently calculated "to stain the pride of all" human "glory," and to admonish the wise man not to "glory in his wisdom."

But can it be, we may be asked, that the accumulated wisdom of ages and generations, amounts but to this? Can this be, with truth and justice, predicated of that knowledge which has subjected even the elements to the service of man? which has computed the dimensions and measured the distances of the sun and of the luminaries which revolve around him; which has calculated the periods of their revolution and the velocity of their flight; has ascertained the principles by which, under the divine guidance, their motions are regulated and controlled; has brought to light so many of the hidden mysteries of nature, and is still daily adding to the triumphs of science new and more important discoveries. Are not these things rather an argument, a proof, that the progress and the capabilities of the human mind are limitless, or can only be arrested by the want of further subjects to contemplate and investigate?

It cannot be denied—it is readily conceded that, independent of the important revelations which have been vouchsafed to us, in the inspired volume, of the mysteries of creation and providence, the discoveries which have been made by those of our race whom "He in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" has endowed with superior powers of intellect and penetration, are extensive and astonishing. Yet how many things are there

which mock, how many which must ever defy the most assiduous and most persevering researches of the most pre-eminently gifted and most highly cultivated human understanding! How can finite comprehend that which is infinite—the existence, the nature and the perfections of the Deity? What do we know of the extent of the universe? What of the constitution and the inhabitants of those very planets which, with our own, revolve around the solar orb, and whose magnitudes, distances and revolutions we pride ourselves on having ascertained? How many of the ordinary and every day operations of Providence, mis-named Nature, are beyond our comprehension? Can we even tell how a single blade of grass grows, or how the power of germination is imparted to the seed "that it may bring forth food out of the earth?"

Are we then to suppose that our faculties receive their full development in the present state? or that those mighty minds, those master spirits who have astonished the world with the sublimity of their conceptions, the depth of their researches, and the extent of their discoveries, shall have their career of investigation and improvement terminated by the dissolution of their bodies? Were this the case we might be tempted to take up the desponding complaint of the Psalmist, "Remember, O Lord, how short our time is! Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"

But there are, we apprehend, no grounds for such a supposition. On the contrary, even in that higher and more blissful state, where "the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father," we have every reason to conclude that much of their felicity shall consist in the progressive development of their faculties, in the ever accumulating increase of their knowledge, and their unceasing discovery of new sources of wonder, and delight, and adoration. These subjects of holy and delightful contemplation eternity itself cannot exhaust, for the field is infinite, embracing, doubtless, many which are unknown to us, and of which we can form no conception; but we may be permitted to mention those mysteries of creation and providence which we know not now, but shall know hereafter; those wonders of redemption, "into which the angels desire to look," and for which "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, shall be ascribed unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;" and the nature, the number, the uses, and the inhabitants of "all yon orbs and all their sons" revolving throughout illimitable space, with the endlessly varied exhibitions which they must present of the almighty power, the infinite wisdom, and the boundless beneficence and love of their divine Creator.

How cogent an argument does this consideration furnish for giving a proper direction to our studies, and for pushing them to the utmost possible point, ever looking through nature, as well as revelation, up to nature's God, that we may not only thus begin on earth the employments of heaven; but, even in time, make the greatest possible progress in that path which it shall be our felicity to pursue throughout that endless duration when there shall be time no longer.

But shall it be only in the regions of perennial and ever growing felicity that the human soul shall be continually developing new powers, and for ever acquiring additional sources of information and fresh stores of knowledge? Were this the case the pains of the place of torment would, we are of opinion, be divested of half their poignancy. How dreadfully, on the contrary, must these be aggravated if, throughout eternity, those who in this life would not know God nor obey the gospel of his Son, shall be for ever making new discoveries of the felicity they have forfeited, as well as of the misery they are doomed to endure.

Surely such considerations are not only calculated to impress deeply upon our minds the

divine admonition, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding," but to teach us also upon what foundation that knowledge should be based—upon that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom;" and to what purpose that knowledge, when acquired, should be consecrated—to the glory of that gracious God whose gift it is, to the welfare of our fellow mortals, and the growth in grace of our own souls. The wisdom which has not this tendency is characterised by an apostle as "earthly, sensual, devilish;" while "the wisdom which is from above," which recognises the Divine Being as at once its author and its object, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and of good fruits."

#### REPORT OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The time has now arrived when the Committee of *St. Andrew's Church Female Benevolent Society*, consider themselves bound to give some account of their labours, and of the appropriation of the funds, placed at their disposal during the past year. As the objects of the association are now well known, and as the Committee in relieving the destitute, have pursued the very same course which had been previously recommended and adopted by preceding Committees, a lengthened and elaborate detail of their operations, appears to be altogether unnecessary. To supply the wants and to alleviate the misfortunes of the humble and friendless Poor, were the leading objects which the Society had in view at its formation, these are its leading objects still. And altho' from the diffusion of useful knowledge, the decrease of intemperance, and the present prosperous condition of Halifax, pauperism has been greatly diminished, there are still a number of aged and infirm persons requiring occasional assistance, as well as destitute widows and orphans, who stand in need of your friendly attention. These persons appear to have a claim upon the liberality of their more fortunate and more wealthy brethren in Society, although your Committee have never felt themselves warranted to extend relief to any except those who had been previously visited, and whose case had been specially recommended to their notice.

During the past year your Committee have afforded relief in fuel, in clothing, and in some instances, in money, to above 70 poor families. They have made up and distributed, chiefly among poor children, 169 garments; and have expended, in the purchase of different articles for the poor, the sum of £56 3s 7d.

Such is a very brief statement of the labours of your Committee during the year that has now closed, extracted from the Books of the Society, and from the records of the Secretary, drawn up at the monthly meetings. A regular balance sheet, and a list of subscriptions and donations accompany this Report, which the Committee have endeavoured to arrange and to prepare with the greatest accuracy.

Fully convinced of the urgency and importance of the cause which they have espoused, and firmly believing that the Society, though small in its numbers and limited in its resources, has already done, and if properly supported and encouraged, will yet do much good among the poor of Halifax, your Committee now beg leave to commend it to the care and guidance of an all-wise and gracious God, and to the continued liberality and support of an enlightened and generous public.

HALIFAX, 4th January, 1841.

COMMITTEE.—*Mrs. MITCHELL, President; Mrs. Barron, Mrs. Hutchinson, Mrs. Troup, Mrs. Keith, Mrs. Wallace, Miss Burkitt, Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Flood, Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. Malcom, Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Fraser, Mrs. Clarke, Miss Shannon; Mrs. Forsyth, Treasurer; Mrs. T. FORRESTER, Secretary.*

DIOCESAN CHURCH SOCIETY.—The Large room in the new Hotel was crowded, on Wednesday evening to overflowing. The Lord Bishop was called to the chair, and the business of the meeting was opened with prayer. His Lordship then addressed the audience, on the history of the society, its objects and prospects. He stated some interesting facts respecting the parent societies at home, and remarked upon the gratifying increase in the funds, from £10,000 in 1837, to £41,000 in 1840. Several gentlemen addressed the meeting with appropriate speeches; and, at the close of the meeting, a subscription was taken, amounting, it was supposed, to about £35.—*Post.*

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, held on Wednesday the 24th instant, a Committee was appointed to consider the case of the Rev. Wil-