

The Church.

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER, I, 12.

COBOURG, U. C., SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1838.

[NO. LI.]

VOL. I.]

Poetry.

THE LATE MRS. LOCKHART.

The Clergyman who read the funeral service over her was her father's friend, and hers, and mine—the Rev. Henry Hart Milman, one of the prebendaries of Westminster; and a little incident which he happened to observe during the prayers suggested to him some verses, which he transmitted to me the morning after, and which the reader will not, I believe, consider altogether misplaced in the last page of these memoirs of her father:

STANZAS, MAY 22, 1837.

Over that solemn pageant mute and dark,
Where in the grave we laid to rest
Heaven's latest, not least welcome guest,
What didst thou on the wing, thou jocund lark!
Hovering in unrebuked glee,
And carolling above that mournful company.

O! thou light-loving and melodious bird,
At every sad and solemn fall
Of mine own voice, each interval
In the soul-elevating prayer, I heard
Thy quivering descent full and clear—
Discord not inharmonious to the ear!

We laid her there, the Minstrel's darling child.
Seem'd it then meet that, borne away
From the close city's dubious day,
Her dirge should be thy native woodnote wild?
Nursed upon nature's lap, her sleep
Should be where birds may sing, and dewy flowerets weep?

Ascendest thou, air-wandering messenger!
Above us slowly lingering yet,
To bear our deep, our mute regret;
To waft upon thy faithful wing to her
The husband's fondest last farewell—
Love's final parting pang, the unspeakable?

Or didst thou rather chide with thy blithe voice
Our selfish grief that would delay
Her passage to a brighter day;
Bidding us mourn no longer, but rejoice
That it hath heavenward flown like thee,
That spirit from this cold world of sin and sorrow free?

I watched thee, lessening, lessening to the sight,
Still faint and fainter winnowing
The sunshine with thy dwindling wing,
A speck, a movement in the ruffled light,
Till thou wert melted in the sky,
An undistinguished part of the bright infinity.

Meet emblem of that lightsome spirit thou!
That still, wherever it might come,
Shed sunshine o'er that happy home.
Her task of kindness and gladness now
Absolved, with the element above
Hath mingled, and become pure light, pure joy, pure love.
Lockhart's Life of Scott, vol. vii.

ON THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION UPON LITERATURE AND SCIENCE.

A PRIZE ESSAY.

(Concluded from our last.)

II. Proceeding to the second branch of the argument proposed,—that the whole history of the Christian Religion has abundantly confirmed this *native tendency* of its fundamental principles,—we have

1. To advance the positive argument, that it has in all ages, numbered in its ranks men of great learning and proficiency in every department of science.

Although, for wise reasons, the great Author of our holy religion chose his first ministers from amongst the poorest and most illiterate classes of mankind, yet, at a very early period, men of extensive literary attainments were included in its ranks. Nicodemus, during our Saviour's own sojourn upon earth, became a convert to his doctrines; and his situation as a member of the Jewish Council implied an elevation in society as well from his learning as from his rank. St. Paul, who was converted soon after Christ's ascension into heaven, was a man of acknowledged acquaintance with all the learning of the day;—so much so, that, in his memorable defence before Agrippa, it was remarked to him by Festus that "much learning had made him mad." But his own writings afford the best proof of his acquaintance with the ordinary studies of the day:—his general style, and the frequent allusions he makes to existing writers and customs, give him an indisputable claim to be classed among men of learning. Through the teaching of St. Paul, Dionysius the Areopagite, a member of the most learned tribunal in the world, embraced the Christian faith. And if to these we add the names of Cornelius the Roman centurion, and Sergius Paulus the proconsul, we shall admit that the early converts to Christianity were by no means confined to the humbler and illiterate classes of society.—Justin Martyr, an early convert to Christianity, was a philosopher, and a man of extensive learning; and he even employed his literary powers in writing an admirable defence of his adopted faith. In short, the Christian fathers of the second and third centuries were, as men of learning, generally equal to their pagan contemporaries. Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Cyprian, may safely be placed in competition with Ammianus Marcellinus, Symmachus, and other heathen writers of the same period: Lactantius, the Christian Cicero, will bear comparison with the best profane authors of his time; and Boethius, in the sixth century, may almost take his stand amongst the purest classic writers of any age.

In the times which followed, when a cloud of gloom overshadowed the literary world, and gave to several successive centuries the expressive appellation of the 'dark ages'; when, as an eminent writer has expressed it, "law was neglected, philosophy perverted till it became contemptible, history nearly silent, the Latin tongue growing rapidly barbarous, poetry rarely and feebly attempted, art more and more vitiated,"*—in those dreary days, the lamp of learning, feeble and glimmering as was its light, was preserved from total extinction by the Clergy alone. Classical literature, however imperfectly cultivated; History, Philosophy, and Poetry; Sculpture, Painting, and Music, were studies pursued only in the quiet seclusion of the monks. If a solitary ray of genius was exhibited to the world during those gloomy periods, it beamed almost exclusively from the same sequestered abodes. "If it be demanded," says the eloquent writer already quoted, "by what cause it happened that a few sparks of ancient learning survived through this long winter, we can only ascribe their preservation to the establishment of Christianity. Religion alone made a bridge, as it were, across the chaos, and has linked the two periods of ancient and modern civilization."

Bede, the 'venerable Bede,' the great luminary of England and of the Christian world in the eighth century, was brought up in a monastery. Alcuin, who received his knowledge from the same source, stood almost alone in the republic of letters in his day. The man of most splendid genius in the thirteenth century was Abelard, a monk. Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, the idol of religious students until a better philosophy was introduced by the Reformation, belonged to an order of friars;—and the fathers of modern poetry, Dante, Tasso, Chaucer, Spenser, and we may add Milton, besides being professors of the faith of the Gospel, were indebted to religion for the subjects of their most inspiring songs, and for the happiest displays of their peculiar genius.

In observing also the progress of the Arts during the same period of mental darkness, we shall find that mankind were chiefly indebted to the Clergy for their improvement and even for their maintenance. St. Dunstan, as well as being the most learned divine of his age, was esteemed the best and most ingenious worker in iron, brass, gold, and silver, of his time.† The advancement of ecclesiastical architecture above every branch of the art, evidenced in the superiority of religious structures to all other edifices in those days, proves the hand of the Clergy in those improvements; and we have it well assured to us that, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the clergy were almost the sole dispensers of the medical art.

Religion also led to the invention of *Printing*; for if this discovery be not directly ascribable, as has been contended, to a keeper of the cathedral at Haarlem, the circumstance of the Magazine Bible having been the first product of the printing press of Faust, would argue for her claims to that honour; and it is certain that the introduction of printing into England is to be ascribed to the public spirit of an English prelate, who was mainly instrumental in sending the well known Caxton to Haarlem for that purpose.‡ And if, as has been universally conceded, the horrors of war have been mitigated by the invention of *Gunpowder*, the world is indebted for that discovery to a monk.

If it be asserted that, during the middle ages, men of learning were to be found, and that many useful arts were successfully pursued amongst the anti-Christian Saracens,—we have to answer that whatever good is to be found in the Mahometan religion, to which the Saracens belonged, is, in a great measure, owing to Christianity. Mahometanism is a borrowed system, extracted chiefly from Judaism and Christianity;—so much so, that learned men have thought it might almost be accounted a Christian heresy. If, therefore, Christianity had never existed, there is the strongest reason to believe that Mahomet could never have established his religion; so that whatever light of literature may have illuminated the Saracens during the middle ages, may be said to have been reflected from Christianity.

In later days, when the rubbish has been cleared away from the temple of religion, and the holy fire upon its altars trimmed anew, the Christian faith has numbered amongst its disciples the most enlightened men in every country in Europe;—giving evidence of the fact, that when the veil of superstition was torn away from the fair face of Religion, Science also emerged from her cloistered gloom. History, Philosophy, Poetry, have found, in these more auspicious days, their most eloquent votaries in the ranks of Christianity; and there is not a branch of science that has not received benefit from the studious researches of men whose more particular calling it was to be the propagators of heavenly truth.

In Metaphysics, reformed Christianity boasts her Locke, and Berkeley, her Butler, her Saunderson, her Watts,—many of them foremost in the ranks of the defenders of the Christian faith, and adorning the cause which their writings strengthened, by the purity and piety of their lives.

Do modern times boast of extraordinary discoveries in natural science, and corresponding advances in genuine and sound philosophy? The immortal names of Bacon, Newton, Cudworth and Boyle are as dear to Christianity as they are honourable to literature.

Eminent Christian names are numbered amongst the historians of modern days: Poetry has claimed divines amongst her most gifted sons: Law has been dignified by advocates of conspicuous

Christian virtues: Oratory* numbers in its ranks many a name whose eloquence has been poured forth in behalf of the Gospel of salvation: Chronology can boast of Christian divines amongst its most eminent and useful students: the palm of Classical and Mathematical learning is claimed almost exclusively by ministers of Christianity. To sum up all in the language of a distinguished Christian scholar, "To whom are we indebted for the knowledge of antiquities, sacred and secular, for every thing that is called philology, or the *literæ humaniores*? To Christians. To whom for Grammars and Dictionaries of the learned languages? To Christians. To whom for Chronology and the continuation of history through many centuries? To Christians. To whom for rational systems of morality and of natural religion? To Christians. To whom for improvements in Natural Philosophy, and for the application of these discoveries to religious purposes? To Christians. To whom for metaphysical researches carried on as far as the subject will permit? To Christians. To whom for the moral rules to be observed by nations in war and peace? To Christians. To whom for jurisprudence and for political knowledge, and for settling the rights of subjects, both civil and religious, upon a proper foundation? To Christians. To whom for the great work of the Reformation? To Christians. Let me add; and very often to Christian divines.†

2. That no corresponding advancement in learning and science has, in modern times, been made by nations not Christian, is, *negatively*, a strong argument in favour of the beneficial influence of Christianity upon the cause of literature.

These countries which once enjoyed a proud eminence in moral and literary cultivation, have, since the extirpation of Christianity from amongst them, relapsed, in many instances, into positive barbarism. Since the "candlesticks" have been removed from the seven churches planted by the Apostles in Asia Minor, those countries have exhibited a striking scene of moral desolation; and Africa which once boasted a Cyprian, an Origen, and a host of other learned Christian writers, is now in the lowest state of social and spiritual degradation. Viewing these regions, since Christianity has ceased to shed its influence upon them, not merely as respects their religious faith and practice, but in reference to their moral culture, their social polity, and the customs and arts of ordinary civilization, we are struck with the appropriateness to their condition of the Scriptural expression,—"they lie in darkness and in the shadow of death."

And if we extend our observations to countries which have never yet, unless partially, been converted to Christianity;—if we view, for example, the condition of China, the Indies, and various portions of interior Asia and Africa, we must admit that their greatest advancement in the culture of the arts and sciences, contrasted with the progress of European civilization, evinces a melancholy tardiness.

In further support of our present proposition, we have the undeniable observation to advance,—that even in countries converted to Christianity, literature and science have made the most rapid advances where the influence of the REFORMATION has been experienced;—manifesting that the more purely and brightly the light of Christianity shines, there does the torch of science also burn with the clearer effulgence. In Greece, once the centre of civilization and of elegant literature; in Italy, so long in by-gone days the nurse of science; in Spain, in Portugal, in countries which have not yet shaken off the cramping fetters of superstition, nor allowed genuine Christianity to proceed in its unshackled strength;—in those yet clouded lands, what has been the march of science, and the progress of the useful arts, compared with their gigantic strides under the influence of the 'pure and reformed religion' of the British isles?

From all the arguments which have been advanced, the conclusion seems easy and irresistible,—that the spiritual light and knowledge imparted by Christianity has conveyed its influence, to the furtherance of human learning, and of scientific discovery,—that literature and science are, as it were, natural allies and handmaids of religion,—and that truth, in the natural world, is best discovered by those who give the most diligent attention, and yield the most careful study, to the recorded revelations of God.

And when the votaries of Science may cease to receive the genial sunshine of worldly approbation; when there may be no Mæcenas to foster the growth of national literature, or to call forth individual merit from its obscurity; we should still be able to place dependence, for unrestrained advancement in all the branches of useful learning, upon the native influence of the holy and elevating religion of the Saviour of the world. Its breathing, its principle is philanthropic; and from the impulse of this benevolent and stirring sentiment, its zealous adherents will pursue the onward path of literary inquiry and scientific investigation, though the honours and rewards of the world may be denied to them. It possesses, moreover, another high stimulant to this valuable and generous ambition:—it points to possessions unseen, as a better recompense than any gratification which worldly wealth or honours can bestow. And as the contrasted light of Christian knowledge establishes the more deeply the consciousness which every mortal must feel, that here we "see but through a glass darkly," the disciples of the Gospel are naturally incited to higher discoveries,—to reiterated trials for advancement in the knowledge of the ways of Him who promises, in a future world, a full development of every mystery which engages our wonder here.

* Here the remark of Cicero is very pertinent to our argument, "Omnia profecto, cum se à caelestibus referret ad humanas, excelsius, magnificentiusque et dicet et sentiet."
† Jortin, Works, vol. x. p. 374.

* Hallam, middle ages.
† See Henry's Great Britain, Book ii. c. 5.
‡ See note to Bp. Porteus's Sermon on the anniversary of the Feast of the Sons of the Clergy, vol. ii. p. 158.