

history, another interesting department of science, though still in its infancy.

He would now say a few words on historical literature. Here also a wide and spacious field opens up to the diligent student. Without some degree of knowledge of the history of the past, it is evident that a man can have little idea of the movements or changes in society going on around him at the present day. The pleasures arising from the study of the past history of the world are such as to invite all, who enjoy the least leisure, to so agreeable a recreation. The history of his own country no intelligent man would like to be ignorant of. But general history also—not the dry annals of empires—but the great turning points of history, ancient and modern, might become a very interesting subject of study to one who has a taste for this kind of reading. Perhaps after all the most comprehensive and philosophical manner in which history could be written or studied, would be with reference to the five great varieties into which mankind have been divided, and of which the Caucasian to which we belong, is the leading Division. If we want to study history thoroughly we must begin with the Bible, which is here invaluable. Its narrative extends over a period of nearly three thousand six hundred years from first to last, and ends just about the time when the epoch of ancient authentic history begins to dawn. It is for the most part taken up with the affairs of the Jewish nation, which occupies a most peculiar position in all history, mixing itself up, either directly or indirectly, with all the important transactions which have taken place on the great theatre of the world. Thoroughly to know the Jewish race, therefore, in all their vicissitudes of fortune, is to know a great deal. History could not do without the Jews, who are the principal characters in the drama. Some infidels, with greater boldness than judgment, have attempted to undermine the whole Christian Scheme, and to prove it to be founded on nothing but old Jewish legends which have been gathering force as the ages rolled on; but whoever attentively considers the history of the past, and with an unprejudiced mind, cannot fail to see the hollowness of this sort of reasoning, and to be convinced that this most wonderful people must have had some great mission to perform in the world. To overlook them as an historical phenomenon, would be pretty much the same, as to disregard the principal character in a play, and to fix the attention upon the subordinate ones. But to come to modern history,—how many things are there, in the events of the last half century, even, to awaken the deepest interest and attention! Besides the value of the discoveries which have been made during that period, how great has been the progress of most of the nations of Europe, in freedom and enlightenment? and if we look at the fearful contest going on in our own day, with our minds enriched

by a study of the past history and character of the nations involved in it, how much more likely shall we be to derive solid satisfaction from the contemplation, and while we deeply deplore the immediate consequences, to entertain a well grounded hope as to the final result on the interests of religion and civilization, than if we were totally ignorant of them.

The Lecturer then drew his remarks to a conclusion by pointing out briefly the importance of habits of reading—the superiority of solid mental enjoyment, to the low and debasing habits of indulgence in social drunkenness. At home, he said, much good had of late years been done by means of Mechanics' Institutes, reading rooms, book clubs &c. Man's nature craves for enjoyment of some kind—and if you take away his Bottle you must give him a book instead, which is just substituting a higher for a lower—a rational and profitable for an irrational and destructive means of gratification. In this country book clubs ought by every means to be encouraged, as well as mutual improvement societies, both of which might be the instruments of much good to the community, by banishing sensual enjoyments, and creating a desire for the calm and enduring pleasures of literature.

### The Best Missionary.

THAT there are various degrees of missionary talent and missionary zeal among the labourers in the vineyard of our Lord, is a truth too apparent to require any illustration or proof. Such devoted men as Elliott, Martyn and Williams are not often vouchsafed to the Church of Christ; but it does not hence follow that humbler instruments, less known to the world, may not, each in his own order, be useful in advancing the cause of the Redeemer's kingdom. The title of this brief sketch is "the best missionary." Our readers are not, however, to infer from this that we want to come nearer home, and to institute a comparison between the labours of our own missionaries, and those of any other church. This is very far from our purpose or intention. We wish well to the efforts of Christian ministers of every denomination, though in all minor points we may not be able to agree. Nor is it our wish now to canvass the respective merits of our own staff, in order to arrive at something like a satisfactory conclusion as to which of them is the most zealous and devoted to the service of His Divine Master. That we should of course never think of; although, at the same time, we believe that the friends of the Church of Scotland, in this and the neighbouring colonies, have every reason to be thankful for having such men sent among them, as for several years past the Colonial Committee have selected

for occupying this department of the mission field, where so much still remains to be done. But neither is this our theme on the present occasion; and yet is our title an appropriate one, for we allude to the word of God itself—the word of God alone—which is pre-eminently the best of all Missionaries, where its voice is listened to with reverence and attention, and its pages perused with diligence and prayer. In listening to the living voice of the most gifted preacher, we are to remember that it is but the voice of a man and not of God. Men, however learned or talented, may mislead us, but the Bible never. It is the fountain of truth and wisdom, and whoever draws from its pure waters will ever find true refreshment to his soul, such as he would in vain seek for from the lips or pens of the greatest of uninspired men. The Bible therefore is the "best Missionary," and one easily accessible to the most humble, and speaking truths level to the meanest capacity. In its sacred pages, we are introduced as worshippers into the grandest of all churches, where we hear proclaimed to us tidings the most glorious by many different tongues—Job, with his lofty conceptions—David the sweet singer of Israel; Isaiah, in his peerless majesty of song—Jeremiah with his bright eyes bedimmed with holy tears—Ezekiel—Daniel, and the rest of God's chosen messengers under the old Testament dispensation, who, like those under the new, were to all intents and purposes missionaries in their respective ages, teaching and preaching in the ears of a sinful world, and are now, though dead, yet speaking from the quiet pages of Holy Writ with a power greater than ten thousand voices. But above and beyond all, do we not hear issuing from the sacred oracles, an utterance sweeter and yet more authoritative than they all—the voice of one greater than Solomon and wiser than the prophets—even of Him who "spoke as never man spake."

God hath spoken—the heavens have indeed been rent—and he has descended to commune with men as a man with his fellows. But alas! how are his heavenly lessons neglected and his counsels spurned! Other books are eagerly run after, how trifling soever they may be—and perused with avidity, while the book of books—God's own word—the very Prince and Chief of Books is left in its dusty corner unopened, or only now and then taken down for a brief period, to be hastily returned to its shelf; or sought after in seasons of sickness and feeble-mindedness, but altogether forgotten while we are in health. Hear what a late eminent clergyman belonging to our church says, on the subject of neglecting the study of the scriptures. We hope his words will not be altogether lost upon those who may peruse them in our columns. Speaking of the Bible, he exclaims:—

"Oh! if books had but tongues to speak their wrongs, then might this book well exclaim—Hear O heavens! and give ear O earth! I came from the love and embrace