

Poetry.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

(From the "Christian Year.")

"And suddenly there was with the Angel multitude of the heavenly host, praising God."—St. Luke, ii. 13.

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er the expanse of heav'n?
In waves of light it thrills along,
Th' angelic signal given—
"Glory to God!" from yonder central fire
Flows out the shining light beyond the starry quire;

PRESENT ASPECT OF THE CHURCH.

[From The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review just published, we give the following truly excellent article, which is attributed to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade, but how truly so we know not.—Church Intelligence.]

The actual state and probable development of religious tendencies existing in the Church of England supply a subject of consideration, profound in its depth, inexhaustible in the interest which attaches to it. We can only hope to touch it here and there upon the surface. We approach it with the deepest impression, that in the present condition of the Church, charity, founded upon a sense of our Christian brotherhood, forbearance, and considerate forethought, are the very first requisites of useful discussion of her concerns; and if we positively offend against this rule, we have thus supplied in the outset the means of judging us out of our own mouths. As to the rest, if we require apology for venturing upon ground so sacred, we plead the rapid growth of the question in its importance and pressure upon the minds of men; the immense moment of its issues, and the aspect of universality which it has assumed.

in their statements of the progress of the contagion; and even the philosophic radicalism of The Westminster Review has condescended to notice, with censure full of apprehension and alarm, the signs, of which we conceive it must now be admitted, from the convergence of such various and unsuspected testimony, that they force themselves upon the view of all, either for good or for evil, for reprobation or for encouragement, and consequently that no work which seeks in any degree either to inform or to represent the mind of the country, can wholly exclude the consideration of them, and of what they indicate, from its pages.

It is now somewhat more than ten years since four or five Clergymen of the University of Oxford met together—alarmed at the course of Parliamentary legislation with respect to the Church, at the very menacing and formidable attitude of dissent, in its alliance with political liberalism, and at the disposition manifested in the Establishment itself to tamper with the distinctive principles of its formularies—met together in private, and resolved to make an effort, through the public press, to revive, not the doctrines, but the lively reception and impression of doctrines, which relate to the visibility, perpetuity, and authority of the Church of Christ, and to the spiritual essence of her ministry and ordinances. The series of publications called The Tracts for the Times, were the first fruits of that meeting.

No secular power, no Episcopal sentence, no courtly, aristocratic, or popular influences added one tittle of impetus to the movement which was thus commenced. The Bishops had not recently been accustomed to instruct their Clergy, in their Charges, upon matters connected with the constitution and authority of the Church, but rather upon such as had relation either to its circumstances as an establishment, or else to their pastoral duties in their parishes, and to the mode of preparation for them; and we indeed believe, that no single Prelate took public notice of what is now known as the "Oxford movement," until it had reached its later stages; and its chequer-like characteristics, some four or five years ago, appeared to the Bishops of Oxford and Exeter, in particular, to require the administration of praise mixed with warning and even with censure. As to the Court and the House of Lords, no person, by word or act, has ever intimated to either, we believe, that they had part either in the merit or the blame attaching to the efforts for the restoration of Catholic principle and feeling. The House of Commons, again, is only known to the public in connection with those efforts, from the circumstance that it has several times been the scene of vigorous and indeed violent attacks upon them, contrasted with defences in a much more subdued and apologetic tone. The leaders of all the political parties in the State are popularly imagined to regard with the most decided aversion that which is called Puseyism or Tractarianism. The patrons of livings are generally men who were educated at a time when all such questions slumbered in unbroken repose. Persons thus trained, it is well known, do not in mature or advanced life readily allow new elements of religious conviction to obtrude themselves among those which they have already received, and which, having settled down into quiet equilibrium might be materially incommoded by the vivacity of the newcomers. We do not mean that, as a class, and as compared with other classes, they are otherwise than conscientious, but that, according to the constitution of the human mind, everything tends towards fixity as life proceeds, and that, upon the whole, each generation of our gentry carry with them to the grave that set of doctrinal and Ecclesiastical impressions, which they received at the University, without material enlargement or modification.

Upon the whole, then, looking to our Ecclesiastical and political governors, and to those who, though neither strictly speaking the one nor the other, yet exercise so powerful an influence upon the Church, namely, the proprietors of the soil in the character of patrons, we seem to find, that every secular and human influence from above has been against, and not in favour of, the Oxford writers. Nor is it less material to remark, that the general tendency of the times, and of other Protestant bodies, is in a direction wholly opposite to theirs. In the Church establishment of Scotland, for example, during the very same decade which is the subject of our present review, a movement of proportional magnitude has been in progress, and has in the spring of the present year found a consummation in the secession of nearly two-fifths of its ministers. This secession, involving the sacrifice of station and independent emolument for conscience sake, has been founded upon a reaction from the tame domesticated Presbyterianism of the eighteenth century, towards the extreme developments of the Scottish Reformation: and in Scotland, as we believe, the charge of Puseyism has been ridiculously enough advanced against those who have remained in the Presbyterian Establishment; thus openly and deliberately, and we doubt not conscientiously, continuing to separate themselves from the communion of the Bishops of that country. And the movement in Scotland towards a more extreme Protestantism received its main impulsion from the same social and political convulsions of the years 1831-3, which in England produced a precisely contrary result. Thus it is that in periods of pressure, men, and the institutions to which they belong, are driven back upon their first principles. The English Church, put upon her mettle, has shaken off the conventional and secular influences which clothed her in an Erastian disguise, and has lighted up, with the rapidity of wildfire, the blazing title of Catholicity upon her brow: the Scottish, ridding herself of the very same accidental integuments, has displayed to the world the bony configuration of her Geneva skeleton. We say the Scottish Church,—for although it is true that the popular party in that body has now retired from its precincts, we apprehend there is no reasonable doubt that that party is the genuine modern representative of those who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, effected the separation of the Scottish nation from the Episcopal line.

We have been led by this contrast, almost unawares, to express the conclusion towards which we are naturally brought by the previous remarks: namely, that regarding the operation as a whole, that operation has been a development from within of the mind and sense of the Church herself; not proceeding from fortuitous causes, not coloured by individual caprice, nor by merely individual genius, piety, or learning, but a tribute providentially supplied to the imperious necessities of the time, whose emphatic language sounded in the ears of the English Church, bidding her either to descend from her eminence, or else to assert its prerogatives and discharge its duties. It was impossible for her any longer to stand in the public opinion upon the grounds of political utility, of the national tradition, of an accommodating tone of doctrine, too long and too widely prevalent, which, instead of rousing dead consciences like a trumpet, had lulled them into deeper slumbers. Administrative abuses, such as non-residence, pluralities, and the progressive reduction of sacraments and other services, had reached a most frightful height; and the progress of reforms late begun for some time appeared to be so slow, that it was to be feared the scythe of the destroyer might overtake them, and remove the abuse and the thing abused together. The Clergy were, as a body, secular in their habits; and unless, in individual instances, had fallen altogether

below the proper level of their lofty calling, although they continued to be much above that of general society. The lives of the portion of our youth intended to recruit their ranks, were generally unrestrained; and they passed at the period of their Ordination, from indifference or dissoluteness to decency, rather as a matter of social arrangement, than as the fruit of any religious emotion, or effectual training for the most sacred and awful of all functions. Those who were pious and earnest, had for the most part to pious standards of character, of discipline, and of operation, for themselves; so that the Priestly type, in its sanctity and elevation, was almost obliterated. A faithful few, indeed, ever continued to exhibit it, in their teaching as well as in their life, embodying the true spirit of the Church: but they were lights rather cast to his own sphere, than to the country as a whole. In fact, the Church of England at large had seemed at one time to be rapidly approximating, in practice, to the character of what a powerful writer denominates, in homely phrase, "a sham;" an organization of vast dimension and detail, professing to convey to the door of every native of the country, Divine grace and knowledge, but really being and meaning to be little more than a provision for supplying younger sons, tutors, and incapable persons in general, with an independent livelihood and a position in society; and for the perfunctory discharge of a minimum of religious offices in public places but just kept weather-tight for the purpose, without the establishment of anything like a personal and spiritual relation between the pastor and his people, and without the smallest appreciation of the high and holy aims embraced in the adjustment by our forefathers of her services and her discipline.

Thus, we say with pain and shame, was what the Church of England appeared to be about to become. It is true that amendment had commenced before the year 1833; but while this was the case in particular parishes, in other localities, the process of degeneracy and decay was still regularly advancing, as the nature of all corruptions is to go from bad to worse, unless and until, by some vigorous check, and the infusion of a new principle, the course is reversed. Many excellent Bishops were striving to stem the tide; and in particular, we apprehend that the present Bishop of London will be honourably remembered by posterity, as one of our earliest and most efficient reformers of practical abuse. But the efforts of individuals, and even of individual governors, were feeble against general deterioration: the more so, since the reaction in favour of personal piety was connected with a school of doctrine wholly destitute of the spirit which pervades the sacramental and ritual system of the Church; and since, accordingly, it assumed a form distinct and even alien in the public view from hers, and appeared less bent upon the revival of her institutions, than upon devising new modes of development for the religious life of the country, to be substituted for the ancient channels seemingly well-nigh blocked up. Personal zeal, faith, and love increased; new forms of association were invented; new services were devised, based not upon liturgical models, but upon the practices of the puritans, or approximating to them as nearly as the state of discipline and of public opinion, still respectful of what was established, would allow in each particular locality. A sort of school of popular Divinity arose, common to which was included to Churchmen and dissenters, and therefore necessarily excluding the great principles, which have since so much more powerfully asserted their position.

In this detail we do not wish to undervalue the importance of the amendments actually made, nor the honour due to those concerned in promoting them; nor, let us add, the shame attaching to many who persecuted, to the utmost of the small power allowed them, the Evangelical teachers; but we seek to point out this momentous fact, that they were amendments of certain persons in the Church, and not of the Church herself. On the contrary, they were connected with elements actually tending to disorganize her distinctive constitution, and to assimilate her in everything, but a set of external forms, scarcely worth contending for when divested of their sacred companionship with the deepest principles, to the societies which profess an anti-Catholic Protestantism. Had the divinity of Mr. Scott, for instance, given the tone to the whole body of our Clergy, and to our laity in the mass, it is clear that whatever good effects might have been produced by it in some, and those too most important particulars, it would have engendered a spirit that most absolutely have required our formularies to be remodelled in the Genevan sense. In the Evangelical movement, as such, there was no promise for the institutions of the Church, but rather a prospect that they would be more and more dissociated from all true spiritual meaning; that they would then be relaxed and dispensed with as superfluous in themselves, and as causing unnecessary divisions in the Christian world; and this in an order commencing with such services and parts of services, as most prominently declare the doctrines of what we may call the Catholic or Sacramental system.

We do not mean that there were no moral affinities, no capacities of close alliance and amalgamation, between the teaching of those who are ever to be honoured for their witness to the doctrines of grace as opposed to those of a narrow, rigid and abstract morality, and that of the later school, who have brought into general prominence the doctrine of the Church as living and perpetual stewardship of the ordinances of grace. Who that remembers the writings of Nicole and Pascal—who that cherishes the memory of the yet more venerable and mighty name of Saint Augustine—can fall into the vulgar error of supposing that the champions of the doctrines of grace, and those of the high spiritual theory of the Church, must necessarily be found in opposite ranks? On the contrary, the sum and substance of our charge against the evangelical system, such as it was thirty years ago, is, that it was a partial and defective system, and required the admission of new and potent elements. But, as a matter of fact, this unnatural and false opposition between ordinances and grace did exist to a certain extent in this country. The secret so to speak, of the close relationship between what is Catholic, and what is, in the best popular sense, evangelical, had not been discovered. It was assumed on the one hand, that those who taught the grace of baptism must be Arminians at least, with a Pelagian leaning; and on the other, that it was impossible to set forth freely and warmly the truths of original sin, of the atonement, and of the influences of the Spirit, as the root and first spring of holiness, without reducing the sacraments to naked signs, void of all proper spiritual efficacy.

We do not say that the elements of which the best theological teaching ought to be composed, have as yet, in any school, or in any large proportion of writers or teachers among us, adjusted themselves, by their reciprocal action, in a perfect equilibrium; but the fundamental proposition which we seek to establish and illustrate is this—that the popular divinity of thirty years ago, although it had indeed many recommendations in comparison with that which it resisted and displaced, and although it sprung from the vivid re-awakening of religious instincts and desires, yet did not spring out of, nor stand in harmonious relation with, those principles which belong to the constitution of the Church, and did not avail to secure for those principles and that constitution their proper place in the Christian system. And thus the restorative process, which we rejoice to honour even in its crude commencement, was both narrow in its extent, and what was worse, faulty in its quality, because it did

not comprehend the elements necessary for its own permanent immunity from deteriorating influences. But strange, indeed, it would have been—at least in the view of those who regard the Church visible and Catholic as the everlasting Spouse of Christ, dowered with the gifts which He purchased with His blood and tears—most strange to them it would have been, if in a great religious revival that spouse had not found herself a voice for the assertion of her prerogatives; not, indeed, as if it were for her to battle with her foes, like earthly potentates, for the sake of acquisition or possession, of admiration or renown, but because her prerogatives are also her duties, and by them alone can she discharge aright the high trusts committed to her by Lord. And so, in an order which seems to us to bear every mark of the hand of Almighty wisdom, after that the embers of faith and love had been extensively rekindled in thousands upon thousands of individual breasts throughout the land, there came next a powerful, a resistless impulse, to combine and harmonize the elements thus called into activity, to shelter them beneath a mother's wings, that they might grow into the maturity of their strength, and issue forth prepared for the work which might be ordained for them to perform. This was to be done by making men sensible that God's dispensation of love was not a dispensation to communicate His gifts by ten thousand separate channels, nor to establish with ten thousand elected souls as many distinct, independent relations; nor again was it to leave them unaided, to devise and set in motion for themselves a machinery for making sympathy available and co-operation practicable among the children of a common Father: but it was to call them all into one spacious fold, under one tender Shepherd; to place them all upon one level, to feed them all with one food, to surround them all with one defence; to impart to them all the deepest, the most inward and vital sentiment of community, and brotherhood, and identity, as in their fall so in their recovery, as in their peals so in their hopes, as in their sins so in their graces, akin the means and channels for receiving them.

That, therefore, which we are now discussing, was not the origin and casual thought of three or four or more individuals; it was a link in the great chain of causes and effects, by which the mind of this country has, for half a century and more, been made the subject of so remarkable and of so general a religious progression and development. To have had the smallest share in impelling the movement of which we speak, was indeed an honour; to have had a greater share in directing it, a surpassing crown; to have dared it by temerity or excess, among the heaviest of sins; but do not let us suppose that in contemplating it, we are contemplating an affair of mere individual volition; it is, as a whole, the divinely prompted anster of our Christian humanity to its own cry for its proper meat and drink; it is as much the offspring of providential necessity as any great historical event of any age; let us add, it was the inflexible sequel and complement of the work of religious renovation, which began apart from, and almost in antagonism to, Ecclesiastical rule, but which never could be complete, or full; worthy of its author, until it ceased to deal with men as isolated individuals, and steadily and uniformly regarded them as members of that Divine society, within which they are appointed "to grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 15, 16.)

It may be said that this is theoretical reasoning; that it indicates what should or might have been, according to the arbitrary notion of an individual writer, and not what was. But let it be submitted to the test of common observation. We assert, without the fear of contradiction, that the progression of which we speak is, as a whole, the progression not of a party or section, but of the Church. Some few individuals there may be, who may have been seared through their own sensitive timidity, some few who may have been scandalized by particular excesses or defects of act or language, into a mood of more decided aversion or suspicion towards Catholic principles and practices, than any of which they were formerly conscious; but even here, as we believe, the process has rather been to evoke what was latent, than to infuse what was new. But, when we speak of the country and of the Church at large, it is evident that the body, as a body, moves forward, from year to year, we might say from day to day, in the line of Catholicism: of Catholicism we admit, regulated and tempered by the Anglican mould in which it has been cast, but involving all its essential principles, and more and more predisposed to their development. Shall we call evidence in proof of this position? Listen to the allegations of dissenters; remember that in the efforts which they made, and we doubt not, made according to their own consciences, during the present year, for the defeat of the Educational Clause of the Factory Bill, proposed by the Ministers of the Crown; one of the leading allegations from all quarters was, that the plan proposed to entrust a paramount influence in the training of the young, to a Clergy infected as a body with what they term the most essential and worst peculiarities of popery—a Clergy containing, they admit, a number of members not thus defiled, yet a decreasing number, and in its corporate character justifying the charge which they have made." The Wesleyans, indeed, contrasted the disposition of the Clergy to put prominently and generally forward the distinctive doctrines of the Church, has, during that interval, assumed a form altogether new. But some will say they are enemies—they are prejudiced. Shall we then turn to a very different class of witnesses—the Episcopal Charges of the last few years? Certainly in this resort we are not doing injustice to the opponent, because there is scarcely one of those Charges that does not convey some degree of animadversion upon particular writings, or tenets, or practices, of the Oxford Divines, or some of their adherents. We have seen those of the Bishops of London, Durham, Winchester, Salisbury, Exeter, Chester, Llandaff, St. David's, Ripon, Lincoln, Gloucester, and Bristol, Oxford, and Worcester—the only ones, as we believe, which have been generally circulated, and almost the only ones which have been delivered. Let any person examine them as a whole; and we do not fear his verdict. He will find that there is indeed not one of those Charges that tends (to employ language which has attracted much notice) to "unprotestantize" the Church of England, or to make it retire further and further "from the principles, if such there be, of the English Reformation." But on the other hand, it will also appear, that there are very few of those Charges which do not tend to Catholicise the Church, not by imparting what it has not, but by exhibiting and enforcing what it has; very few of them which do not tend to check the action of those destructive elements, which gave even to the English Reformation a portion of its impetus; and to assert and vindicate the legitimacy of those great tenets relating to the Church and to the Sacraments, which are after all the matters really and fundamentally at issue in the present conflict of minds and sentiments. Of the thirteen charges we have named, we conceive that this description applies without doubt to nine; of the remaining four, there is but one which seems

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your own indifference? Who will quench for you the consuming fire of Divine vengeance, kindled against your sins, and prepared for your destruction? Is a tragedy death a thing never heard of? What yearning for which is not marked by this melancholy distinction? What campaign is closed without hurrying thousands to an untimely grave!

Let us suppose, however, that your days will end naturally and without sudden violence. Have you never stood by the bed of death? Think you that the dying man is in a meet state for meditation and reflection, when he is already in the grasp of death's messengers, who herald his approach? When he is wrenched from those piercing and intolerable pains which drive the soul from her natural functions: to that drowsy listlessness which paralyzes the most vigorous mind and the keenest intellect: to that deep lethargy which withstands the strongest motives, and defeats the most touching exhortations: to those offering wanderings which conjure up phantoms and chimeras, and fill the soul with a thousand quaking terrors? Brethren! shall we always take pleasure in deceiving ourselves? Mark, deluded Christian! mark, I implore thee, this pale extended frame; gaze on this shattered structure, a corpse indeed, though still heaving with the pulses of life; and tell me,—Where is the mind so commanding as to collect itself in these mournful circumstances, and to accomplish its wild projects of conversion!

Again, let us imagine—and God grant the supposition may be realized—that by a peculiar favour of Heaven, you are visited with one of those sicknesses which conduct to the grave by unperceived decay, divested of the horrors which accompany rapid dissolution: will you be more disposed by it to conversion? Are we not ourselves, day by day, the sorrowing witnesses of what transpires on these occasions? Friends, family, self-love, all conspire to give us a favourable opinion of the disease, so long as it is not the subject of despair. Whilst we do not believe that the term of our existence has yet arrived, we continue to defer the convenient season for conversion. After having denied to God the four days of health, we will also grudge him each soothing intermission of our malady: we will prescribe to him a fixed time for the surrender of the breath of life, when it is even now trembling on the verge of our lips. We hope for life, and this hope kindles desire; and desire of days settles deeper and deeper our love of the world, and this is enmity against God. Disease meanwhile steals on apace; wasting sickness pursues its sure career; the body loses its strength, the spirit its fortitude; and death overtakes us ere we are fully satisfied that we are mortal.

Lastly, place yourselves in the happiest circumstances; on a bed of death, tranquil and peaceful; without confusion, without delirium, without stupefaction: suppose, too, that you have abandoned every fallacious hope of returning to the world; that you are conscious your departure is at hand. I ask you,—Is not the mere thought of death, the conviction that in a few brief hours you will lie beneath the folds of the valley,—is not this alone sufficient to perplex your reason, and deprive you of that freedom which is indispensable to the prosecution of the great work of salvation? He who has lived absorbed in the pleasures of time, engrossed by his cares, and the slave of his customs; can he behold without convulsion and agitation his designs rendered abortive, his hopes dissipated, his projects discontinued, the fashion of this world passing away, the judgment set, the books opened, and his soul summoned before the tribunal of the Judge of all the earth?

We have often had occasion to observe, when solacing the last hours of the dying, that those who are afflicted with the greatest bodily pain, are not always the most distressed in mind: however agonizing may be their pangs, this anguish engages the entire faculties of the soul, and on this very account the sufferers are precluded from fixing their attention on the object which is to them the most appalling,—the shadows of approaching dissolution. "But he who feels himself sinking beneath the stroke; who eyes his conqueror face to face; without being distracted by any physical convulsion; he who in this situation beholds death unveiled in all its terrors, not seldom endures torture more exquisite and penetrating than any external throes.

Need I recount the number of occupations which this fatal hour brings in its train! Medical skill must be obtained; consultations must be held, all human ingenuity must be exerted to sustain the tottering fabric of mortality. The claims of posterity demand attention; the last will and testament must be drawn up; the world will extort its tribute of regretful sighs; we must bid farewell to our family; take an affectionate leave of friends; *escape from ourselves*. Is it a time then, amid so many affecting scenes, and tumultuous emotions, to examine religion, to review the actions of a life which is hastening to its close, to restore property dishonestly acquired, to repair the dishonour calumniously attached to a neighbour's reputation, to perform the offices of repentance, to search the heart, and to estimate duly the motives which incline us to righteousness. Brethren! when we devote our energies unimpaird to this momentous work; when we surrender to it all our inclinations, and all the strength of an intellect in its vigor, unaffected by the incursion of disease; when we yield up our whole life: it is all too little. How, then, I enquire, can this great labour be achieved by a spirit absorbed, distracted, and confused?

THE CHURCH.

COBourg, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1843.

CONTENTS OF THE OUTSIDE.

Table with 2 columns: First Page, Fourth Page. Topics include Christmas Day, Conveyance of Land of Real Religion in England, A Death-bed Repentance.

The Church, with maternal affection and care, provides for her children seasons of rejoicing as well as days of mourning. At particular times, she calls upon them, with tender but authoritative voice, to view with more than wonted seriousness, the dark picture of their sins, and the sufferings of an incarnate Deity of which they were the cause; and such a contemplation we are called upon to pursue with livelier acts of penitence, with deeper expressions of contrition and sorrow.

And it is well thus to break down the carnal temper, and subdue the waywardness and worldliness of the natural heart,—to check the high aspirations of earthly promise and hope,—and bend the spirit to a more befitting tone of humble and fervent piety. But the Church, too, in the desire and effort to retain the followers of their Divine Master in humble and trustful subjection to his laws and will, seeks not to crush, but to give a right direction to the natural affections of the human heart; not to choke up the fountain of feeling, but to purify and give healthfulness to its streams. And so we have our joys, as well as sorrows, in our spiritual warfare: we have, at peculiar seasons, the love of God presented to us in more than wonted terms of encouragement and hope. We are taught, as on the day of Christ's Nativity, to behold in more resplendent light the promises of God; and to draw peculiar comfort from the contemplation of the privileges and rewards he is pleased to annex to faith in the Saviour's name.

CHRISTMAS, then, may well be a season of rejoicing to the militant pilgrim,—as presenting the first indication of the realities of truth which, after a long season of shadowy figurings, it was the will and purpose of God to reveal to the world. This by St. Chrysostom was justly termed the most venerable, and the mother of all Festivals; and he bid responded the voice of the whole Church of God, from the beginning, in hailing it with peculiar joy and welcome.

We are assured, by the most credible and satisfactory evidence, that the "mystery of godliness," which the Apostle applies to the Incarnation of the Son of God, was celebrated by the primitive Christians at a very early period, and that a certain season was appointed for the solemnity. The commemoration of this holy season can be traced, with historical accuracy, to a very ancient date,—ancient enough to warrant the conclusion, that it was contemporaneous with the first preaching of Christianity itself. There is a beauty and propriety in the act of gratefully solemnizing an event so calculated to awaken our deepest love and veneration as the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh, which would engage the attention of the Christian Church probably long before other observances of comparatively inferior interest would be established. We may claim for it, indeed, the authority of some Apostolic ordinance,—included, it is to be believed, in those institutions so frequently alluded to by St. Paul, without being formally or directly explained, as being familiar to those to whom the allusions were made,—one of the many things to be done "decently and in order," which the Apostle was continually inculcating, without feeling it necessary particularly to detail.

St. Chrysostom records the practice of his own day, and what is more important, the custom of previous ages,—when he states, that the day which we call Christmas was of great antiquity, and had been for a long time celebrated in the Christian Church; that it was famous and renowned from the beginning, from Thrace to Gades in Spain. And this testimony, it must be recollected, was borne about the beginning of the fifth century. Gregory Nazianzen and Basil,—both of whom flourished in the fourth century,—supply the same evidence, not the less valuable for being indirect; namely, the fact of their composing sermons for the occasion. This circumstance proves not only the prevalence of the custom, but the religious object to which the festival was devoted. This was, the furtherance of holy meditation upon the great work of human redemption; to which end it was very desirable that discourses, like those we have mentioned, should be delivered, embodying a practical application of the sacred theme, and imparting aids and stimulants to suitable reflections.

It appears from the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus, a pagan historian, compared with the statements of Zonaras upon the same subject, that the emperor Julian, to conceal his apostasy from the Christian faith, when he did not as yet deem it expedient to divulge the heathen predilections upon which, at a later period, he openly acted, took part, on one occasion, in the celebration of our Lord's Nativity. This incident occurred in the fourth century; and we find, moreover, that Diocletian, the great persecutor of the Christians, who abdicated the imperial purple in the year 304, is stated to have caused the doors of a church in Nicomedia to be closed, where some Christians had come together for the purpose of commemorating, in the usual manner, the Nativity of Christ, and the whole edifice along with the assembled worshippers was reduced to ashes. The record of this barbarous transaction has been quoted by Nicephorus and Baronius from the ancient Martyrologies; and while it illustrates the character of the persecutions to which the Christians were at that time exposed, it incidentally but satisfactorily establishes the great antiquity of the festival of Christmas.

These are considerations which deepen and sanctify the celebration of this great festival of the Church; but the most powerful incitement to its devout observance must ever be, the work of redemption which, after the long age of types and figures, was then in reality begun. We shall welcome "merry Christmas" then, not for its worldly associations,—not for the terrestrial joys which ancient custom has made it to yield,—but more for its spiritual refreshments, its likeable comforts to the weary soul. While, like the multitude who spread branches in the Saviour's way, when weak and lowly he entered into Jerusalem, we adorn our sanctuaries and crown our altars with festive boughs, the heart will participate in the welcome which we tender, and the soul will respond to the invocation which the lips pronounce,—"Hosannah to the Son of David"—blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!—While winter's chillness withers not their greenness, but their verdure remains, contrasting cheerfully with surrounding desolation, may our affections to the Lord who bought us never wither nor decay; but while the storms of the world howl on and its frosts nip the tender buds and wither up the plants of earthly promise, may love to the Saviour,—an abiding and imperishable feeling in the heart,—fresh and vigorous even when the sullen decay of death comes on, surviving the corruption of the cold and lonely grave, and carried on and continued through the ages of eternity.

On our first page will be found the commencement of an article on the "Present Aspect of the Church," which, not less from the force of its reasoning and the elegance of its style, than from the great importance of the subject which it discusses, has created much sensation in the Mother Country. The interest it has excited is not a little enhanced, too, by the celebrity of its reputed author,—a gentleman well qualified, from the great extent of his acquirements as a scholar and a statesman, to treat upon any subject, but peculiarly well fitted to do justice to the difficult and delicate points which are embraced in his able Review.

If all our readers shall not be found to coincide in the correctness of every position which this excellent writer assumes or defends, and if some may fancy that his bias in favour of particular views in theology detracts, in some degree, from the fairness and efficacy of his strictures and statements, it will be conceded, we feel assured, by all, that in kindness of temper and gentleness of spirit, the present work of Mr. Gladstone is not to be surpassed. We hope indeed, that from the power of reasoning and the sweetness of Christian feeling that it evinces, it will disarm many prejudices against the views, we cannot say of doctrine, but of ecclesiastical polity, which are entertained by those who are striving for the better and wider resuscitation of Church principles, and at the same time prove an effectual caution to the few who, probably with the purest intentions, are too rashly outstripping popular opinion, or rather popular prejudices, upon these great points. We shall continue the publication of this Review next week, and we solicit for it a careful perusal.

It was not necessary that our respected contemporary of the Niagara Chronicle should call our attention to the letter of the Rev. C. B. Gribble, recently published in his journal, as a copy of it was transmitted to ourselves. With every disposition to exercise towards Mr. Gribble and his friends the utmost courtesy, and, if in our power, the utmost kindness, we beg very respectfully to say that we must adhere to our intention, already expressed, of not interfering in a matter with which, as public journalists, we have nothing to do. A satisfactory result, which it must be the desire of all should be brought about, would be marred rather than advanced by our interposition as the conductors of a public paper; an interposition, we may beg to add, which would savour of obtrusiveness and presumption, when the question, as Mr. Gribble himself intimates, is in the hands of the proper ecclesiastical authorities.

We request attention to the documents on our last page, which we publish at the suggestion of the Committee of the Diocesan "Church Society." The information which these documents contain is what, we are aware, has been anxiously inquired for in many cases; and we understand several copies in pamphlet form will shortly be ready for sale at the Depository of the Church Society at Toronto. We have no doubt that the wider diffusion of this information, will materially advance the beneficial services ren-

dered by the "Lay Committee" of that valuable Society, as well as further its general interests.

The Report of the Society for 1842-3, is now in the course of distribution.

The Stockholders of the Diocesan Press will perceive that another instalment of Five per cent. is called in,—payable on the 10th of January next.

We beg to inform our Subscribers in the Prince Edward District, that an Agent from this office will, in the course of next week, call upon them for the amount of their respective dues,—which we should feel greatly obliged if they would be prepared to pay into his hands.

OBSERVATIONS.

ON THE POLICY OF A GENERAL UNION OF ALL THE BRITISH PROVINCES OF NORTH AMERICA. (Originally published in the Cobourg Star, A.D. 1839.)

LETTER VIII. FORMER UNIONS.

An attempt to form an union of the British North American Colonies, is by no means new: on the contrary, it was familiar to those who now form the United States, not as matter of speculation but of actual practice. The first project of this kind was made among the New England Colonies in 1643, to protect themselves against a formidable combination of the neighboring Indian nations, assisted as they were by the Dutch, who were their avowed enemies. A sense of impending danger suggested the policy of this consideration, and articles of union were adopted in May 1643, by the Colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New-Haven. These provinces entered into a perpetual league of offense and defence, and agreed to be bound by all just obligations, both for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the Gospel, and for their mutual safety. Each Colony retained its full sovereignty in all matters except those which were common to the whole, and managed by two Commissioners, annually chosen by each State. The number of Commissioners was eight; and three-fourths, or six, possessed the power of binding the whole. Such measures were approved of by a smaller majority, were referred to the Legislature, and were adopted by the Colonies. If on any extraordinary meeting the whole number of Commissioners could not assemble, four were empowered to determine on war and call for the respective quotas of the several Colonies, but fewer than six could not determine the justice of the charge of war to be borne by the Colonies respectively in proportion to the male inhabitants of each between 16 and 60 years of age. Each Colony raising their quota as they pleased. This union was the greatest benefit which ever befell the Colonies, and it preserved the entire independence of the Colonies, and preserved the general peace. The league was continued upwards of thirty years, when a dissolution of their charter and a new arrangement of their boundaries took place.

Nearly a century elapsed before any other project for a union was suggested; but at the commencement of the troubles previous to the French War of 1755, the Earl of Holderness, then Secretary of State, wrote a circular to the Governors of the respective Colonies, ordering them to assemble in the month of August, at New York, and recommending a union among themselves for their mutual protection and defence. The plan was to form a grand Council to be chosen by the Provincial Assemblies, which Council, together with a President General to be appointed by the King, was to be authorized to raise money, and also to raise money from all the Colonies for the common defence. Obstacles were thrown in the way of this plan, both in the Colonies and in England, and after much discussion it was finally abandoned. A scheme was soon after proposed, viz. that the Governors of all the Colonies should be invited to meet at New York, and to discuss the plan of a union, and to recommend a union among themselves for their mutual protection and defence. The plan was to form a grand Council to be chosen by the Provincial Assemblies, which Council, together with a President General to be appointed by the King, was to be authorized to raise money, and also to raise money from all the Colonies for the common defence. Obstacles were thrown in the way of this plan, both in the Colonies and in England, and after much discussion it was finally abandoned.

There were no further attempts at a union of the Colonies till after the conquest of Canada, when, relieved from a formidable enemy, they were almost surprised, and held in check, they began to unite in conspiracies against the mother country. This result had been already foreseen by men of penetration, who stated long before the peace of 1763, that the true policy of Great Britain was, not to expel the French from North America, but to establish a clear and distinct boundary between the Colonies and the thirteen Colonies. It has indeed been long fashionable to praise the American Revolution, and the blood shed with which it was attended. But believe that ample proofs are still to be seen, that the momentary success of the Colonies in their revolt, the conduct of the French and the war, is deemed worthy of approbation. It is doubtless in many respects blameable and shortsighted; but it presented no sufficient cause for insurrection; and was far more conspicuous for its weakness and want of vigor, than for its strength and success.

In 1765 some steps were taken towards an Union on account of the passage of the Stamp Act, and Commissioners were appointed from nine States who met in October of that year, and adopted a declaration of rights and grievances of the colonists and a petition to the King and each House of Parliament. It was likewise ordered that the several Colonies should appoint special agents who should unite for a redress of grievances. All this being done, they adjourned. On the passage of the Boston Port Bill in 1774, delegates from all the Colonies met in Philadelphia, and entered into a declaration of rights and grievances, and a petition to the King and each House of Parliament. It was likewise ordered that the several Colonies should appoint special agents who should unite for a redress of grievances. All this being done, they adjourned. On the passage of the Boston Port Bill in 1774, delegates from all the Colonies met in Philadelphia, and entered into a declaration of rights and grievances, and a petition to the King and each House of Parliament. It was likewise ordered that the several Colonies should appoint special agents who should unite for a redress of grievances. All this being done, they adjourned.

The differences between any of these Unions and the one here proposed are many and important. Among others, it may be mentioned, that in the former Unions, the Colonies were not united in a single body, but were represented in the House of Commons, as it is now ready and correct information respecting every one of the Colonies; and it is from the want of this knowledge that most of the errors committed by the British Government in regard to their Colonies, and in the execution of the late Act of a Colonial Board were added, composed principally of persons who had resided in the different Colonies, with freedom for all their Representatives to sit and vote at this Board, and that all measures respecting the Colonies should be first discussed and prepared at this Board, and at all events reported upon, before they were introduced into the House of Commons, a system which would gradually rise up and become consolidated of a steady and permanent nature, which could not fail of producing general satisfaction and tranquility, and the utmost protection to persons and property. Such a Board would not be marred from its fixed and established principles of proceeding by the Secretary of State, whose business it would be to preside at its deliberations: for as that officer would be frequently changed, he would in general be liable to shelter himself under the wing of such a Board; and in such a case, the Board would be liable to be influenced by the Secretary of State, whose business it would be to preside at its deliberations: for as that officer would be frequently changed, he would in general be liable to shelter himself under the wing of such a Board; and in such a case, the Board would be liable to be influenced by the Secretary of State, whose business it would be to preside at its deliberations: for as that officer would be frequently changed, he would in general be liable to shelter himself under the wing of such a Board; and in such a case, the Board would be liable to be influenced by the Secretary of State, whose business it would be to preside at its deliberations: for as that officer would be frequently changed, he would in general be liable to shelter himself under the wing of such a Board; 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