

THE
LIBERAL CHRISTIAN;

A MONTHLY MISCELLANY,

DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE

THE SPIRIT OF LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY, AND TO PROMOTE

THE PRACTICAL RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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**VOLUME II.**  
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THE
LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

Vol. II.

JANUARY, 1855.

No. 1.

THE VISION OF YOUTH.

BY REV. T. T. STONE.

YOUTH is often, I fear oftenest, the period of most fervid enthusiasms. It shrinks instinctively from baseness, from servility, from injustice. Let the tale be told of cruelty and oppression; the young spirit burns with generous indignation and spontaneous sympathy. Let the prophecy be announced of a brighter epoch, of freedom and of peace descending in a new baptism on the crushed heart of humanity; the spirit, if unperverted by falsehoods of education and society, leaps forth with jubilant echo to greet the glad future. Selfish pursuits have not yet clouded its vision. Cold words and colder deeds, the bitter sneer and the boast of pride, and the hatred or neglect of the world, have not yet frozen into the flowing life. Noble attempts have not yet been baffled by the oppositions of men, associates it may be, nay, bosom friends. These come later; and too often the fervent youth passes into the icy man; the flowering enthusiasm

withers and becomes sere, lifeless, a forgotten thing among the rank weeds which ignorance and selfishness cherish in the faded and fruitless Eden. Happy the young man who escapes the doom ; whose youth flows unchecked, with full stream, into the pure and serene currents of a wise and humane manhood ; whose enthusiasm is only gentler, not less earnest, — only deeper, not less strong, — only wiser, not less fervid, through the influences of advancing years, and even through the disappointments and contradictions which assail it, as well as the successes and the sympathies which sometimes greet it. Soul rejoicing now in the youth of thy hopes, on ! Be undismayed. This mountain of the Lord is not thy place ; thou must down into the cloudy and rough ways of men. But the vision thou hast seen in this divine solitude, carry that in thy soul for ever. The spirit that hath breathed and brooded over thy soul, let it quicken and shape thee as it will. The idea which has shined into thee of a redeemed and glorified humanity, let it grow in thee to manly freedom and celestial glory. Temple of God thou art ; let him fill thee with his own holiness.

I know well that the life spent in the lowliness of our common business and relations seems a little thing, and that common, every-day duties look mean. Especially, one would say, this is a great degradation, from the mountain to the valley ; from the splendors of the Lord to the obscurities of man ; from the vision of celestial ideas to the doing of petty deeds ; from worship before the mysterious pattern sanctuary to the raising up, piece by piece, of the small tent-work set for the daily task. A day of this lifetime of ours ! How poor ! To awake with the morning sun, to clothe and feed one's self, to go out and

work, or buy and sell, through the many hours, to return at evening, and soon sleep again till morning, this the history of a day, the history of life. Resemblance slight enough to the building and consecration of a temple to the Infinite Father! Such the first view. But it is all superficial and scanty. A day is larger and deeper than this. And the life, made up of watchful days and nights of rest, reaches out into higher relations, and its least of things do really become infinite through the spirit in which they are wrought. There is the wonderful analogy before us always. The day with God, — how passes that? He is for ever doing things, how minute to the sense, how small and insignificant. He does not sit enthroned in some magnificent palace, rolling out vast systems of suns and their earths, all complete and infinite. Suns and worlds flow from him indeed, but not the less does he spend himself on the minutest thing upon their surface; the particle of air, the ray of light, the petal and scent and hue of the flower, the atom which floats in the air or lies on the cold earth. He does not decline to open the snow-drop, because he has worlds waiting on his word; he lets not the mist-wreath pass untinted, because he has suns to lead on their bright tracks, nor stays he the soft evening breeze, because he has planets to send out on their everlasting circuits. Nay, there is to him no great, no small; no high, no low; rather, all is great through the grandeur of his presence, all is high through the attraction which draws the whole within the circle of his love. The leaf is as an earth; the flower, as a solar system; the cloud, as a globe; the ray, as a sun. Just so does our life, seeming little, become really great by being godlike, and its least and lowliest deeds cease to be small

ENTER THY CLOSET.

and low through the inspirations which fill and ennoble them. A gentle word, a kind deed, a truthful thought, a loving affection, are no longer mere word, deed, thought, affection, but are expanded and elevated into gentleness, kindness, truth, love, the very soul and unconfined essence of goodness. The tabernacle we rear may be made up of earthly materials, but not only is its pattern celestial, even its structure and form are product and image of the One Spirit which fills both heaven and earth. Perfection of character is thus wrought of the spirit of love coming down from the heavens, resting on the earth, blessing even the smallest action, that, however it may seem to the eye, it is great in the divine holiness, and reproduces in us and in every deed the Life once revealed from heaven, which, in solitude, in the family, in society, in temptation or victory, in joy or sorrow, in action or in rest, in birth, in growth, in death and ascension, has become the consecrated archetype, the prophetic symbol, of our regeneration and our perfection.

ENTER THY CLOSET.

BY REV. C. ROBBINS.

“ENTER into thy closet, shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.” Why? With what motives, with what wishes, and for what results? With the feelings of the mystic? For the airy purposes of the visionary? With no eye to practice, no thought of the sphere of man’s relative and social duties? For our private spiritual excitement, — for high devotional enjoyment, —

for abstraction from actual life, and absorption into Deity, the perfection of Oriental dreamers? Read on: — “And thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” And now, what is this reward, — this open reward of secret prayer, this open result of secret devotion, this return outward, consequent upon the retreat inward? Who can question the meaning of Jesus? The reward is in the *fruits* of prayer; in righteous character; in worthy action; in efforts blessed for good; in greater power and greater success of usefulness; in increased desire and augmented energy to do the will of God and finish his work. For, surely, it is not outward prosperity, an increase of earthly goods, a larger share of temporal comforts, or any such outward things as the selfish and the sensual mind covets, to which Jesus alluded, or which that soul would think of craving which would leave the world and shut itself up in the closet for spiritual communion with God. Nay, Jesus manifestly designed, not to lead us away from outward action, from social duties, from thoughts and works of benevolence, by leading us to the closet; but in very deed to qualify us more fully, and prepare us more thoroughly, and quicken us more powerfully, for these very results.

He leads us directly and simply to the very fount of religious life, — the source of all spiritual wisdom and holy influence, — the spring of all useful and happy action, all successful work. If, then, we were consulting only for outward results, — if we were surveying the field of our associated enterprise with the single object of its more extensive culture and more successful husbandry, — if the only question with us were how to enlarge our churches, augment our associated influence, and extend

our benevolent operations,—all discussion and all discourse would obviously leave out of view the one thing needful, that should not begin and end with the recognition of the power that dwelleth and worketh in secret with the Father, and manifest itself openly through the good and holy lives of those who in secret draw nigh to him.

The power of religious influence and the essential value of religious activity are in proportion to the quality and the amount of secret religious life. The nearer the spirit dwells to the Father, the more bright and clear its light, the more spiritual wisdom and power in its operation, the more elevating and deep its influence. And our Father is *in secret*; dwelleth in secret, and in secret is to be sought and found. In *secret*, — in spirit, in silence, in thought, in meditation, in prayer, in feeling. Through the door of the heart that opens inwards and upwards his communications of grace come in, his spirit enters to visit the soul, the Divine life flows down. And through this door he is to be approached, and the heart's incense of love and adoration is to go up to heaven. Through this door leads the path to highest truth. It opens out upon the infinite and the eternal. Through this door the soul correspondeth with the Deity, and in proportion to this correspondence is faith and love, is wisdom and might, is true life, — life for all holy sentiments, life for all duties, life flowing out toward man, and life returning again toward God. The great question is, How much have we of this life? How much is within, how much behind? What is the spiritual depth and purity of the heart? Many are active in religious works, speaking much, journeying far, exercising laboriously; but how few in a whole

lifetime so much as give one quickening touch to a human heart, communicate from a glowing flame one living spark of heavenly fire, or thrill the soul with one burning word of holy love! But some there are who do this, and do it without effort, even without consciousness. It is part of the Father's reward for the sincerity of their secret devotion.

There is one little sentence in the private papers of Channing, — so brief, so covered, so shut in, in the connection in which it stands, that it almost escapes notice, and looks as if the humility that wrote it was so profound and so modest, that it instinctively hid this perfect and priceless miniature of itself, — there is one little sentence that tells the whole history of his surpassing influence, — a history that all men can now clearly understand, since the rich secrets of his closet have been spread out to the light of day. “*Let no man know.*” That is every word. “*Let no man know.*” And all men *do* know; for the Father who seeth in secret has rewarded his servant openly. They know and they *did* know. The voice told the rich secret, the eye gave knowledge of it, the whole countenance disclosed it; and more impressively, the lofty character, the high discourse, the sentences which sounded like oracles, the instructions which seemed like fresh messages of God through his preacher's lips.

All religious fruitfulness, all outward religious life, all lovely manifestations of a lovely spirit, flow from the secrecy of God, through the privacy of the closet, — are the open reward of secret prayer. There may be, it is true, all the *appearances* of religious vitality in a Christian body, — the reward of diligence and skill directed to ap-

parent and superficial results. There may be a well-filled church; all the obvious means and instruments of numerical growth and of formal beauty may be in earnest and orderly action; much work may be done, for which there may be much to show; and all that is accomplished in such a body will be set down, every charitable visit be noted, every dollar of contribution be registered, and the annual account of the state and doings of the society, carefully made out, will show an enviable prosperity. But all these signs may be deceptive. There may be with all but a show of life. Such a church may but have a *name* to live, and live and strive but for a name. All may be kept in beautiful order, like patent machinery, for inspection. All labor may be for show, for effect, to have a parish as good or better than a neighbor's, and a church-list whose only value is its length, — for professional reputation, or sectarian capital. The outward temple may be all goodly to behold, and the church order beautiful, and the parish movements fine; but these may have been the ends. These may have been substituted in the place of spiritual results. These may be all. Inferior motives are powerful, and insidious, too, as they are strong. And of all others the most powerful and the most insidious is that which prompts us to the substitution of immediate, conspicuous results, — results subject to the gaze and admiration of men, — results too, in themselves, to a certain extent, desirable and good, — for those higher results, which man cannot immediately see, and which human praise is most tardy in applauding. The secret motive, the hidden purpose, the real intent of the laborers, — that is the true test of the value of their work. How much unfeigned piety, how much faith, how much love, how much

humility, inspired and influenced their actions and were wrought in with their doings? How far was God with them, and were they with God, in what they did?

O, how much in this age do we need to have our thoughts carried down to the profounder depths of Christian doctrine and Christian experience, — to have our attention turned from the outward of religion and life to the inward, the substantial, the spiritual, the eternal! How much do we need to have impressed upon us the truth, that Christianity can advance no farther or faster than its spirit rises, enlarges, becomes pure and intense in the very hearts of God's individual children, — in yours and mine, in his and hers! That temples and ceremonies cannot make religion, except in so far as religion makes and uses them! That wealth and learning and numbers and influence and art cannot spread Christianity, till they have first bowed down and been consecrated by its holy spirit! That the root of true Christian usefulness and power lies and grows in the silent depths of the spirit, — in the closet secrecy of prayer and self-devotion to God! That Christ must come into the world in the person of every true disciple, through the lifting up of the secret gates and the everlasting doors of the heart!

Again, there is ever a tendency to complicate religion, to confuse the heart by intricacy of doctrines, precepts, and forms, to vex the sentiment of worship with rituals, to puzzle the soul with catechisms, and to delay its child-like advance to God by forcing it to keep pace and company with some one or another band of pilgrims going heavenward by some gloomy theologian's lamp, through the aisles of their own church.

This tendency can be resisted, and the heart kept fresh

and simple, only through the influence of the closet; by remembering and feeling the secrecy of the Father; by reassuring ourselves that there is for each soul but one and its own path to God, and that a private way,—a secret way,—a near and simple way,—leading inwards and not outwards,—back into the heart and through the heart. There is no conviction that clears to us the whole sky of religion so quickly, that so harmonizes and simplifies the life of godliness, and that infuses withal into the soul such hope and joy and peace, such freshness and fervor of devotional feeling, as this of the *secrecy of the Father*. That he is not to be sought afar off,—that we need not wait, since Jesus has manifested him, till some competent human guide or guides may conduct us to him,—but that he is already nigh; so nigh, that if, with a feeling of simple trust, we will but enter into our closet, and shut the door, and look into the heart, we also may find him, and find that we ourselves are his children. So nigh, that there need not be any reaching or straining in our prayer, as if effort were needed to get at him, and our own striving could bring him down to us. So nigh that any *effort* of our own would only carry us away from him, and the very idea of his remoteness would give the feeling of his remoteness. So nigh, that we have only to hush and quiet the heart to feel the influence of his presence. So nigh as that saint found him, who said that he went to his closet to *listen* rather than to speak to God; or, as we might say, diluting that sentence for general practical use, so nigh that we might the better find and the more confidently speak to him, if we would listen before our prayer, and would let the heart realize his presence before attempting to call upon him.

If we would love God, we must find him in our own hearts. And found in our own hearts, we shall love him, we cannot help loving him. All talk about the love of God, without secret communion with him, closet hours with him, sweet feeling of his presence in solitude, confiding emotions, lowly, childlike prayers, is but cold and empty words, — borrowed language to express a counterfeit emotion. We must *feel* his love before we can speak of it; and when we feel it, and *as* we feel it, then and so our speech will reveal and commend and kindle it, — nay, like the child's deep love for an earthly parent, ours to our heavenly will not need to be told.

A DISCOURSE RETROSPECTIVE,

PREACHED IN THE UNITARIAN CHURCH, MONTREAL, ON THE
LAST DAY OF THE YEAR 1854.*

BY REV. JOHN CORDNER.

"For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a Watchman, let him declare what he seeth."—Is. xxi. 6.‡

To say that we dwell in a scene which is constantly changing, is only to repeat what we have all heard a thousand times. In fact, we exist only through a process of change, and every hour of our lives as it comes, carries with it a fresh phase of experience. If we travel across the field of a landscape, every step we take places us in a new position, and gives a point of observation differing from that which we had before. The change may be so gradual, that we do not appreciate it as we proceed, and it

* The portion here printed was preached at the morning service. The discourse was concluded at the evening service.

is only when we reach some more conspicuous point, where we can pause and make comparison, that we can properly understand what our progress has accomplished for us. Some persons can travel across the surface of a broad continent without pausing to make any such comparison, and all that they know or seem to care for, is, that they have completed their journey. Others, again, take eager and intelligent note of the ground over which they pass, and by their habits of observation, help themselves, and become helpful to others. In the one class, the faculty of observation is dormant; in the other class, it is awake and active.

The journey of life may be made blindly or intelligently — with care or without care. We may go on with eye, mind, and heart closed — stolid, or indifferent to its highest meaning, and to the striking lessons which it presents, or we may have all open, marking events as they pass, finding material for reflection, and food for the inner life. In the one case, we pass purblind through the world, or at best, find ourselves shut up within a narrow circle of interests of which self is the centre. In the other case, we look out upon men and things. We see a wider world than that which gravitates immediately round our personality. We recognise a providential order in the passing events. We mark the forging of the links which are to bind the future with the past in the grand chain of history. In the one case we cut ourselves off — so far as our selfishness and indolence can do so — from the prevailing life of humanity, and narrow the sphere of our human sympathy. In the other case we extend this sphere, and by opening our eyes and minds to the larger life of the world, we enlarge our own nature, and aug-

ment its capacity, both for giving and receiving. We make the days speak, and the multitude of years teach us wisdom.

God is in the days as they come, and in the years as they roll ; and all wisdom which does not see him there is but folly. Passing events are but historical chaos unless we can give them a place in the vast realm of order through heartfelt faith in a Divine Providence. This conviction of the soul binds them in the universal plan, and bids the understanding be patient for the explanation and issue. Passing events are the fragments of history. Sometimes they explain themselves, or stand explained in the light of others with which they are connected. Sometimes, again, they are to human eyes dark and doubtful, and if regarded without reference to a supreme Ruling Power, their darkness becomes impenetrable, and their doubtfulness brings despair. A universe without a God, — no thought can be more mournful than this. A world without a guiding mind, — even the supposition thereof is sufficient to unsettle and distract us. Thanks be to God, he has written himself within us and without us, and given an assurance to the believing soul which no darkness can darken, nor doubt disturb. We see him in the changing days and the rolling years, and in the burden of events which they bring.

This is the last day of the year. Commencing on Sunday and closing on Sunday, this departing year is a marked one in the Calendar. But the added Sabbath which has thus been given to us has not been the token of a year of rest. It has been a notable year, standing out from other years in more ways than one. If the Watchman had taken his place in the watchtower fifty-two

weeks since, when this now dying year first rose new and fresh upon the world in the light of the resurrection morning; and if, as the days and weeks and months and seasons swept past, he had been called upon to declare what he saw; how varied, and in very many cases how startling would have been his report! Surrounded by the marvellous appliances of our modern civilization, every one may now be his own Watchman. The daily newspaper spreads the world before him, and he may mark what comes to pass from the equator to the poles, and throughout every longitude.

And what has the year shown us? War — fierce, grim-visaged war — bloody, barbarous war. After forty years of peace, Europe has been most seriously disturbed, and three of its first rate Christian powers involved in war. Greek Christian, Protestant Christian, and Roman Christian, have mustered their hosts to the battle, and their ensigns have mingled, some in deadly strife, and some in friendly alliance with the banners of the Moslem. The immediate moving cause of this terrible calamity of nations has been made plain to every one who took any proper notice of passing events. The cloud at first appeared no bigger than a man's hand, yet so obviously threatening, that quick-sighted men had no difficulty in predicting the consequences. When the paltry dispute about the "holy places" commenced in Constantinople last year, the British minister there saw that it was going to lead to grave results. He looked upon it in connection with past events, and interpreted it by the light which they imparted. Russia in many respects is one of the most remarkable countries in the world. But lately born into the grand community of acknowledged empires, its

growth has been that of a giant. Starting into barbarous existence in the cold and barren regions of the north, it has lengthened its cords and strengthened its stakes through its rude and unscrupulous native vigor — trampling down ancient kingdoms in its way, and subduing the tribes and peoples around it, — until it has become a just object of suspicion and cause of alarm, both to the European and Asiatic powers. Take down the map of Europe, and there you see more than a third, almost one half, of its territorial surface taken up by Russia. You see Russia [stretching west to east, from the shores of the Baltic to the borders of Asia, and north and south, from the Arctic to the Euxine. Take down the map of Asia, and there you see how this vast empire covers the whole northern portion of the chart — crossing the Don and the Volga, and laying claim to the shores of the Caspian — passing over the Ural Mountains, and sweeping clear away to the North Pacific Ocean. Take down the map of America, and you will see that Behring's Strait has not arrested this formidable march. Russia is continued still, until stopped by a British frontier, where the long wall of the Rocky Mountains strikes the shore of the Arctic Ocean. Measured from west to east, then, on the map of the globe, this colossal empire extends from the Baltic waters in Europe, almost to the Rocky Mountains in America, while from north to south it reaches from the Arctic to the waters of the Black Sea and the Caspian, and to the mountains of the Chinese empire.

Here is a compact extent of territory, under the absolute control of one governing head, which is without any parallel in the world. Of course a large proportion of it is mere barren waste, but still the empire contains an im-

mense population* Prior to the last century Russia exercised but little influence on European affairs. But the genius and the wonderful energy of Peter the Great, who flourished in his strength about 150 years since, evolved a signal change in the condition of his realm, and with his reign came a new era. Every school-boy is familiar with his going over to England, and working as a ship carpenter, in one of the dockyards there, with the view of commencing a fleet, and thus open and prepare the way for his country to take its place as one of the commanding nations. His genius saw what was required to make Russia a first-rate power — yes, more in Europe than any of the present first-rate powers. His territory was then hemmed in on the south by Poland and Turkey. He felt the disadvantage of his northern position, and he saw that contact with the waters of the Euxine and the Mediterranean was requisite to the consummation of his desire. He died, but his ideas of Russian greatness lived. Visions of ambition have always occupied his successors in the empire. And in these visions Constantinople was still prominent — Constantinople, key of Europe and Asia, the depot of the commercial treasures of the east, the seat of ancient empire. It was seen as the future capital of a great and over-shadowing Russia. These ideas of aggrandisement have been the animating life of every succeeding emperor.

These are the ideas which have brought the calami-

* Intellectual life [in Russia] — even physical life — can be allowed to exist only so far as they assimilate themselves to support the control exercised by Czarism. * * * Every class feels the debasement — feels that by Nicholas all vitality, all individuality, except his own, are absorbed or annihilated. Nearly seventy millions of human beings are, after all, mere chattels, living only for him and through his imperial concession. — *Gurovski: Russia as it is*, p. 66.

ties of war upon Europe during the year now closing — the end whereof is not yet. The dispute of last year concerning the “holy places” was but a pretext — the proper origin lay far behind that. It is a maxim that the constitutional monarch of England never dies; but it may be regarded as no less a maxim that the aggrandising Czar of Russia never dies. His policy and ideas live on from age to age, and operate in every succeeding generation with accumulating force toward their ultimate object. Poland had been trampled on; the Crimea had been secured; and now the Ottoman empire is as a “sick and dying man.” In the distribution of the estate, behold, Constantinople is ours. So thought the Czar Nicholas of our day. Not so, said the Sultan. Not so, said Britain and France. Hence the dispute. Hence the horrors of Sinope. Hence the clash of arms and the flowing blood on the Danube and the Alma. Hence the carnage at Balaklava and Inkerman, and the cannonading at Sebastopol.

See then, my hearers, see what an unholy ambition does. I know that this is an old story, and a trite moral, to those who have studied human history. The lawless ambition of the untamed and unsanctified human heart has wrought desolation in all ages, and left its tracks in human blood and human woe.

Although we dwell on this side of the Atlantic, we see this war, and feel it too. Three thousand miles of intervening ocean do not cut us off from it. Our intercourse with Europe is so direct and constant, that in a matter of this sort we are as one community with the old world. It touches us physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. It affects the trade and commerce, the literature and the conversation of the civilized world. Many

merchant ships are prevented from freely traversing the great highways of the sea. The publication of books of a higher order is curtailed by reason of the prevailing excitement of the public mind, while the press is prolific of hurried works more or less related to the great topic which now monopolises attention. Our passions are agitated by what we read in the newspapers, and what we hear in the streets. Through some such means do the influences coming from this war press upon us all, for better or for worse.

Restraint is demanded — self-restraint. Our feelings have been outraged by the unscrupulous ambition of the great disturber of Europe, by his profane use of the name of the Christian religion in his designs, and by repeated accounts of terrible destruction of human life in battle. Our hopes have been clouded, so far as they have been accustomed to look for a permanent pacific civilization, by his late provocation to war. With feelings thus outraged, and hopes thus disappointed, we are prone to go beyond the limits of a just indignation, in the desire for revenge, though that revenge should involve still more barbarity, and still more blood. I think I am not wrong in saying that such a desire springs up very readily and very naturally in many of us. But it must be remembered that its tendency is, so far as it has hold on us, to bring us down to that very barbarian level from which we made our first recoil. Here let us take care. Here let us look to the peaceful and benignant Christ. Here let us yield ourselves to his guidance, and submit our souls to the just and gracious restraints which his law imposes.

This war is a dark blot on the civilization of the nineteenth century. But we must not close our eyes to some

of the brighter and more hopeful points connected with it. Hitherto it has been the custom for rulers to involve their nations in war to gratify personal animosities, or serve some other personal ends. But the tardiness and the evident reluctance of British statesmen to engage in this war, exhausting the patience of the people by continued negotiations for peace, shows that it was undertaken only as a terrible necessity. Moreover, in aiding Turkey against her gigantic and grasping foe, Britain and France strive on the side of humanity. They have distinctly pledged themselves by treaty not to augment their own territories thereby. That vast empire of Russia is the colossal type of absolutism, and the implacable enemy of free ideas. These great nations throw their forces in the way of its southward march, as protectors of European freedom and civilization. A conflict of ideas is involved in this bloody war. In the triumph of Russia, absolutism is triumphant, and liberty depressed. In the defeat of Russia, human freedom gains a victory, for despotism is shorn of so much prestige and power. I know not how victory may go at this present juncture. But for the ultimate triumph of freedom, justice and humanity, I have no fear. I have no fear, for I have faith in God.

When we look from Europe to this side of the Atlantic, we see the cause of liberty and humanity temporarily depressed in a land called free. While in Europe imperial ambition has been mustering its forces to push one form of despotism southward, we have seen in America republican cupidity mustering its forces to push another form of despotism northward. The struggle was violent and protracted on the Congress floor at Washington, but the legions of slavery at last carried the posts of freedom. The

bulwark of the Missouri Compromise was broken down; and the Slave Power, stimulated and sustained by cotton and cupidity, became open masters of the nation and the nation's councils. Territory before made sacred to liberty by solemn law of the United States, was then laid open for the pollution of slavery. It was an audacious conquest, barbarous in its prominent purpose, and, in its operation, enlarging the domain of barbarism. But that great and outwardly prosperous nation will find out sometime, mayhap ere long, that there is a higher power in the universe than cotton; higher interests than commercial interests; and a law, a "higher law," which politicians may not defy with impunity. Multitudes of noble minds and generous hearts, in the United States, know and feel all this already. And now that this last blow has been successfully struck against justice and an advancing civilization, they think that the stroke has aroused the conscience of the nation, and that the cause of freedom will be a speedy gainer by the reaction. Already have peaceful hosts emigrated from the north, resolved to reconquer a portion of the fair soil to the exclusive domain of liberty. Already has the ballot-box been made to speak more significantly on the side of humanity. Already has a current set in to renew and strengthen the nation's faith that "a man is of more value than the golden wedge of Ophir,"* or the cotton crop of Carolina. O, that that youthful giant nation were true to the grand ideas which gave it birth!

In the tumult of war and the movement of slavery which we have noticed we have seen man as a prime agent and immediate moving power. His hands deliberately raised the warlike weapons in Europe. His

voice voluntarily stormed the defences of freedom in America. The part he played in these was obvious and palpable. But in looking to the past of this closing year other events rise up before the eye of the observer, in which man had either no part as a moving power, or was involved so remotely with the origin, as to conceal from us the precise limits of his responsibility. The lengthened and parching drought of the summer, when the clouds refused rain, though field and garden yawned for it, and the woods blazed with fire, putting goodly villages in peril, was beyond human control. The pestilence which stalked in our own and other cities, carrying away neighbors and friends, sparing neither age, nor sex, nor class, was certainly not within the immediate control of man, and whether he was remotely responsible for it, or to what extent, none of us can positively affirm. The dread disease came, accomplished its fatal and desolating work, and departed — a mystery in its coming, a mystery in its working, a mystery in its going — defying the scrutiny of science, and baffling the skill of man. These were visitations in the natural order of providence, the causes of which lie too remote for our ken. They brought anxiety, suffering, and sorrow, and called for the exercise of patience and faith. In a method of moral and spiritual discipline some such times and trials seem to be required to moderate the confidence of man in himself, and dispose him to humility and devout dependence on God. The gross and undiscerning mind may recoil from the lesson, but the more appreciating spirit will gratefully accept it, and follow its leadings to the realization of a closer communion with heaven.

Look from the land to the sea; and behold what has

taken place there. That vast field of waters covering two-thirds the surface of our planet has been a wonder and a mystery to man, from the beginning. Its depths who can reach? Its hidden places who can explore? Its huge form, instinct with motion, who can measure? Its heaving and boisterous waves who can tame? It rolls freely round the earth washing the borders of every continent, everywhere approaching human abodes, and tempting the genius of man to adventure upon its yielding form, and to make its trackless path a highway of intercourse. From the early days when the men of Tyre put out with their tardy oars to steal cautiously along the Mediterranean coast, until our own times when stately palaces float from east to west, and from west to east, ploughing the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific from shore to shore, the skill and enterprise of man have found scope and enjoyment upon the great uncertain deep. Alone with sea and sky, what a feeling that is, when abroad upon the ocean! Riding the waves, so terrible in their rising and their falling, how the heart of a man exults, and how the blood courses through his frame as he does it! The distant shore, how welcome its sight when he sees it, how joyful its touch when he safely reaches it! That wide sea, how it helps men to know their brothers, and bears upon its broad and flowing surface the products of every clime! That wide, deep, heaving sea, how it serves man! It brought Tyre to Carthage and opened the way for commerce and civilization. It floated the navies of Solomon which carried the gold of Ophir to Jerusalem. It lifted the modest ships of Columbus and halted them by the shores of the new western world. And fleets to day, more than I can name or number, are borne upon its

surface, binding man to man, and nation to nation, by ever enlarging ties of interest and affection. "O Lord how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These all wait upon thee, that thou mayst give them their meat in due season."*

That wide, deep, heaving sea, how it serves man, I say, but O, how it masters him likewise! He rides the wave which swallows him up. His ships are ground to powder by its frozen masses, and he is driven to the most barren of lands, to die the most awful of deaths. The fate of Sir John Franklin came to light during the year now closing, and it was a sad and touching story. Hardy martyr to science, peace be to thy dust in thy Arctic resting place! This dying year came into life with a wail of "sorrow on the sea." The troop steamship "San Francisco" was a helpless wreck upon the raging waters, with a living and dying freight of hundreds of men, when this year opened upon the world. That wail of "sorrow on the sea" has hardly ceased since. This year, 1854, will be memorable as a year of disasters by sea. During its first month, Lloyd's List reported 300 ships and 720 lives lost; this being the largest known amount of casualties during the last 16 years, within the same period. I make this statement on the authority of a newspaper paragraph. I sought for Lloyd's List to verify it, and also to calculate, if possible, the entire losses of the year, for my own information, but I could not obtain a copy in Montreal. It

* Pa. civ. 24.

was stated by the Rev. H. W. Beecher, in his sermon on the loss of the Arctic, as reported in the *New York Tribune*, in October last, that "the full extent of losses on vessels which have met with disasters, reported in American papers, in some way connected with American trade, embracing inland trade, exceeds 4,000 within the last twelve months. The whole reported from every part of the world is over 10,000." I give you the figures as many of us have seen them published, but they are so enormous that I think we can hardly accept them until we know on what principle the computation has been made.

We do not, however, require precision in figures to inform us of the unusual calamities by sea during the year now closing. It has been the daily report of the newspapers. Noble ships have left their ports, and their departure is all that is known of their fate. This has been the case with the "City of Glasgow" and many others. Ships have been consumed by fire while afloat upon the water, which only quenched the flame when it swallowed them up. They have been dashed to pieces on treacherous coasts, or, like the magnificent "Arctic," they have "sunk like lead in the mighty waters." Verily the sea, though our servant, is yet our master. If we ride it too recklessly, it will startle us with proofs of its awful power. Man boasteth that he can rule nature, but if he mindeth not God, nature will rule him. In these particular disasters by sea I presume not to define the limits of man's responsibility. But that we wield our powers subject to imperative conditions, is evident. The merciful Being who rules supreme over land and sea alike, calls on us to observe them. Courage must be mixed with caution, boldness with humility, and the love of God must be

lodged deeper in the soul than the love of gain. The loss of property by these disasters has been enormous, and the loss of life immense and appalling. The "wail of sorrow on the sea" has called a long echo of sorrow from the land. The sad experiences of this year forcibly appeal to us to reconsider the conditions of our safety and success upon the ocean.

The departing year, then, has shown us grim-visaged and bloody war convulsing Europe. It has shown us the barbarous institution of slavery breaking down the barrier which marked its bounds in America. It has shown us these things to modify any too sanguine expectations which we might cherish with respect to the progress of civilization in this nineteenth century. Our too familiar boasting on this head required some such check. In patience we must possess our souls, while we wait and work for the coming of the divine kingdom.

The departing year has shown us drought and pestilence. By the discipline of these it has been calling on us to look to God, and find our proper and permanent life in a vital union with him. It has shown us unusual disasters by sea; and, by the severe and repeated shocks it has thus administered, it has called on the busy men "that go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters," to review the conditions of their safety and success there.

Historically considered, I think the departing year more notable and important than any other year since 1848. The great struggles of that year, when France was revolutionised, and Germany and Italy and Ireland internally convulsed, have been partially interpreted by the years which have followed. The great struggle of 1854 must

be interpreted by the future also. I have my hopes and fears, but I pretend to no present interpretation. Eighteen hundred and fifty-four is now departing — almost departed — but as it leaves us it takes its place in the great providential order, a link in the grand chain of providential history. It will find its adjustment there independently of any effort of yours or mine. He that bindeth in one orderly and harmonious system Orion and the Pleiades, Sun and Moon, our Earth and the countless worlds which roll above and around us, — He will hold the passing years in subjection to his infinite plan, and bind every one of them there in harmony with the ruling idea of his sublime Order.

We have looked at the departing year ; and marked a few of the more prominent events which the outward world has presented to our notice. But there is another world — a world within us — a world of thought and feeling — a world wherein all that is without is reflected — a world where character is silently formed, and the life of the soul elaborated ; and the survey which the departing year suggests would be essentially defective if we failed to cast our eyes there. Does the year at its close find us nearer to God, or farther away from him, than we were at its commencement. Does it find us advancing or retrograding in the divine life — watching or neglecting the immortal interests of the soul ? The considerations here suggested we must defer until our second service. What time more fitting to think of them than when the shades of the last evening of the year have gathered around us ? Meantime, and always, may God dispose every one of us diligently to watch, patiently to wait, humbly to learn, and devoutly to adore.

CHRISTMAS STANZAS.

WELCOME the Lord's Anointed,
 Sing praises to his name,
 His birth, with loud hosannas,
 The angel choirs proclaim ;
 While troops of bright celestials
 Prolong the anthem still :
 "Glory to God, the highest,
 To man peace and good will."

Lowly the "wise men" found him,
 Within the manger laid ;
 And humbly kneeling round him,
 Their offerings they made —
 The feeble child whose dawning
 Brought light, and hope, and peace,
 And ushered in the morning
 Whose day shall never cease.

Long years have passed, since proudly rolled
 On Bethlehem's hills, that anthem high,
 Proclaiming to the startled world
 The kingdom of the Lord was nigh ;
 But yearly as the day returns
 His chosen followers raise to Heaven
 The hymn of love, that purely burns
 In grateful hearts, for sins forgiven.

Come, let us swell the song of love,
 From humble hearts to Heaven's high Throne ;
 And lift our souls to things above,
 While our Creator's power we own :—
 Hosanna to Jehovah, loud praise that ne'er shall cease ;
 To man good will undying, and everlasting peace.

JUSTIN BEFORE THE PREFECT.

A SCENE IN THE SECOND CENTURY.

Marcus Aurelius is Emperor of Rome. He is a philosopher of the Stoic sort, and is considered on the whole a good ruler, though the Christians suffered much in his reign. Justin had been a Platonic philosopher, but is now a Christian. Crescens, a philosopher too, but of the Cynic order, has a strong personal pique against Justin, and he caused him to be brought before the Præfect Rusticus, who passes sentence of death upon him.

Rusticus. First of all sacrifice to the gods, and do homage to the emperors.

Justinus. He who obeys Christ is guilty of no crime, (meaning that he ought to be discharged without further process.)

R. Of what sect do you profess yourself? (Justinus was in the habit of wearing the philosopher's cloak even after his conversion.)

J. I tried all, and finally embraced that of Christ: though that is not pleasing to those who profess what is erroneous.

R. Do you profess that doctrine, unfortunate man?

J. Yes, for it seems to me that it is true.

R. What is the doctrine?

J. That we should worship the God of the Christians, whom we believe to have been from the beginning, One; the Creator and Artificer of all things seen and unseen: and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who was predicted of by the prophets, as the future Saviour of mankind, their preacher, and instructor in excellent doctrine:

but I, being a man, can say but little of His infinite divinity: that being only to be known by prophetic power. For the prophets told long before of Him whom I said to be the Son of God, and of His presence on earth among men.

R. Where do you assemble?*

J. Wherever any one chooses. Do you suppose that we all meet in one place? — Far from it. As the God of the Christians is uncircumscribed, and invisibly fills the heavens and the earth, His faithful worshippers render Him praise and homage everywhere.

R. Tell me where you assemble, and in what place your disciples are collected?

J. I live just above a certain Martinus, . . . and up to this time I know of no place of meeting but that. If any one chooses to come to me I impart to him the doctrine of truth.

R. Are you not, after all, a Christian, then?

J. Certainly; I am a Christian.

Rusticus then addressed himself to the companions of Justinus, who appear to have been arrested at the same time, and who all in turn avowed themselves to be Christians. After this, he again addressed Justinus thus: "Listen to me, wise man; — you who think you know the doctrine of truth; — if you are scourged from head to foot do you suppose you shall then ascend into the heavens?"

J. I hope to have the promise if I endure these things, for I know that all who so live will participate in the divine gift, until the consummation of all things.

R. Do you imagine when you ascend into the heavens that some recompense will be awarded you?

* The law against *Heteriæ* was in force at this time, which prohibited all unauthorised associations or assemblies.

J. I do not *imagine*; — I believe, nay, am certain of it.

R. It remains that we return to the business before us. Come all of you then, and offer incense to the gods with one accord.

J. No right minded man falls from piety to impiety. . .

R. If you do not obey I shall punish you without mercy.

J. We give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ that we, through suffering, shall be saved: — for this will be to us salvation, and freedom, before the dread tribunal of our Lord and Saviour." And thus also spoke the other martyrs, saying, "Do what you will with us; we are Christians, and will not offer incense to idols." Hereupon Rusticus, the præfect, pronounced the sentence. "Those who will not offer incense to the gods, nor obey the decree of the emperor, having been scourged, shall be led away and punished capitally, according to the tenor of the law."

TIGHT TIMES.

UNDER this heading the *Albany Register* presents an article at once lively and timely, which we here reprint. The prosopopœia is bold but pardonable, and the last paragraph conveys a hint which it would be well for us all to remember.

TIGHT TIMES.—This chap is around again. He has been in town for a week. He may be seen on 'Change every day. He is over on the Pier, along Quay street, up Broadway, stalks up State street, looks in at the banks, and lounges in the hotels. He bores our merchants, and sets himself cozily in lawyers' offices. He is everywhere.

A great disturber of the public quiet, a pestilent fellow

is the same Tight Times. Everybody talks about him, everybody looks out for him, everybody hates him, and a great many hard words and no little profane epithets are bestowed upon him. Everybody would avoid him if they could, everybody would hiss him from 'Change, hoot him off the Pier, chase him from Quay street, hustle him out of Broadway, kick him out of the banks, throw him out of the stores, out of the hotels, but they can't.— Tight Times is a bore. A burr, he will stick. Hints are thrown away on him, abuse lavished in vain, kicks, cuffs, profanity are all thrown away on him. He is impervious to them all.

An impudent fellow is Tight Times. Ask for a discount, and he looks over your shoulder, winks to the cashier, and your note is thrown out. Present a bill to your debtor, Tight Times shrugs his shoulders, rolls up his eyes, and you must call again. A wife asks for a fashionable brocade, a daughter for a new bonnet; he puts in his caveat, and the brocade and bonnet are postponed.

A great depreciator of stocks is Tight Times. He steps in among the brokers, and down goes Central to par, to ninety-five, ninety, eighty-five. He plays the deuce with Michigan Central, with Michigan Southern, with Hudson River, with New York and Erie. He goes along the Railroads in process of construction, and the Irishmen throw down their shovels and walk away. He puts his mark upon railroad bonds, and they find no purchasers, are hissed out of market, become obsolete, absolutely dead.

A great exploder of bubbles is Tight Times. He looks into the affairs of gold companies, and they fly to pieces; into kiting banks, and they stop payment; into rickety insurance companies and they vanish away. He walks around corner lots, draws a line across lithographic cities, and they disappear. He leaves his footprint among mines, and the rich metal becomes dross. He breathes upon the cunningest schemes of speculation, and they burst like a o rpedo.

A hard master for the poor, a cruel enemy to the laboring masses is *tight times*. He takes the mechanic from his bench, the laborer from his work, the hod-carrier from his ladder. He runs up the prices of provisions, and he runs down the wages of labor. He runs up the prices of

fuel, and he runs down the ability to purchase it at any price. He makes little children hungry, and cry for food; cold, and cry for fire and clothing. He makes poor women sad, makes mothers weep, discourages the hearts of fathers, carries cares and anxiety into families, and sits, a crouching desolation, in the corner and on the hearthstones of the poor. A hard master to the poor is *tight times*.

A curious fellow is Tight Times, full of idiosyncracies and crotchets. A cosmopolite, a wanderer, too. Where he comes from nobody knows, and where he goes nobody knows. He flashes along the telegraph wires, he takes a free passage in the cars, he seats himself in the stages, or goes along the turnpike on foot. He is a gentleman on Wall street to-day, and a back-settler on the borders of civilization to-morrow. We hear of him in London, in Paris, in St. Petersburg, at Vienna, Berlin, and Constantinople, at Calcutta, in China, all over the commercial world, in every great city, in every rural district, everywhere.

There is one way to avoid being bored by this troublesome fellow Tight Times. It is the only way for a country, a city, a town, as well as individual men, to keep shut of his presence.—Let the country that would banish him beware of extravagance, of speculation, of over-trading, of embarking in visionary schemes of aggrandisement. Let it keep out of wars, avoid internal commotions, and go right along, taking care of its own interests, and husbanding its resources. Let the city that would exclude him be economical in its expenditure, indulging in no schemes of speculation, making no useless improvements, building no railroads that it cannot pay for, withholding its credit from mushroom corporations, keeping down its taxes, and going right along, taking care of its own interests and husbanding its own resources,—Let the individual man who would exclude him from the domestic circle be industrious, frugal, keeping out of the whirlpool of politics, indulging no taste for office, holding up his dish when pudding falls from the clouds, laying by something when the sun shines to make up for the dark days, for

“Some days must be dark and dreary;”

working on always with a heart full of confidence in the good providence of God, and cheerful in the hope of “the good time coming.”