

What scenes his prayerful vision saw,
 Or how the Sire upon the Son
 Poured forth that holy energy,
 That spirit of almighty Love
 Which quenchless shone on Calvary,
 And quenchless shineth yet above,
 Which strung the quivering limbs to bear,
 And nerved the soul to do and dare !

A kingdom won by deeds of shame,
 A crown ten thousand horrors dim,
 Defiled with blood, and tears, and flame—
 These were the gifts men offered him !
 Oh ! nobler far the throne he chose !
 Oh ! brighter far the thorny crown !
 Unsullied by his brethren's woes,
 Stained with no blood except his own !
 A realm of love that yet shall bind
 The warring millions of mankind !

Broughton, Sept. 29, 1839.

M. S.

SUPERSTITION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

AN excursion through the western wilds of Cornwall has recently attracted my notice to the miserable superstitions still prevailing amongst the peasantry of our generally enlightened country. Before we despatch missionaries to the benighted Heathen of distant lands, let us seek at home to remove the dark cloud obscuring the light of reason in the minds of so many of our fellow-countrymen. The traditions of past ages are scarcely worn away before other and more debasing fables are associated with the retired scenes of Nature's glory : and these wild stories are supported by religious tenets as wild, industriously propagated by an uneducated set of men amongst their credulous brethren. As a specimen of the evil results of Methodism, connected with a belief in the supernatural, I may relate the substance of a conversation between my fellow-travellers and our guide,—a man we had picked up by the way to direct us to some of the grandest scenery on Cornwall's rocky shore. He began by assuring us that a "*whit*" (alias *white*) "*witch*" lived in an old cottage in the neighbouring village, endowed with the power of killing or curing, according to her own wayward fancy. Wide had been the mischief performed by her terror-striking "*evil eye*." Deformity and imbecility were alike produced through her active means, and one woman she had actually "*put to death*." This last piece of intelligence shocked us not a little, until, by gathering further information, we accounted for the atrocity by discovering that the person died from the effects of a natural, but rather uncommon, disease. My companions remonstrated with the man on the folly of supposing a kind Providence would grant to any frail human creature the power of committing so much evil on those around her : he answered, with

a shrewd, knowing look, "Providence employs lower agents to do his will; the Devil also sends abroad spirits to do *his* will; they take different forms and shew themselves in different ways, but they have the power of working *all kinds* of evil. *God is almighty, but the Devil is mighty.*" (This distinction we considered very curious.) "At the end of the world, there will be a struggle between the Devil and the Son of Man; whoever has most souls will have most power." This farrago of nonsense we attempted to combat, but he instantly resumed,—“What does the Bible say? Was there not a Witch of Endor?—and does not the New Testament speak of Christ's fighting against the power of Satan?” He then repeated some lines similar to the following:

“Jesus, the *angry* Lamb,
A lion is in fight.”

I observed they were not in the Scriptures. “Where are they, then?” said our wise controvertist. “In Wesley's Hymns,” I replied. “Well, but it is all the same; they're true.” Here the subject dropped for a time. It was resumed by our guide's bending over a frightful precipice and exclaiming abruptly, “Ought I not to have faith in the wonders wrought by God? What do you think of my having fallen over such a cliff as this, and escaping unhurt?” We expressed our surprise at such an apparent impossibility. “It is quite true, though; I was at work on the slate rocks, when I lost my balance and fell. I soon recovered my senses, got up without any injury but a bruise, and walked straight home as well as ever. Ah! I took pleasure in religion then.” “And do you not now?” “No, it is of no use.” “How of no use?” “Because the grace of God is gone from me. Some years since, I went out to a wreck;* the night was awful, and the boat sank beneath us; at that time I lost *grace*, and it has never since returned to me.” “Have you not endeavoured to recover the favour of God, which you suppose thus suddenly withdrawn from you?” “Yes, I have often *had a mind* to strive against the enemy, and have tried, but stumbling-blocks always come in the way. Besides, *every backsliding of the spirit sinks us deeper into hell.*” “My good man, do you never read your Bible?” “Yes, sometimes on Sundays; but the cares of this world will never let me love the good cause with all my heart again. Before I lost the grace of God I was happy as I could live—as happy as in heaven; but now my mind is full of doubt and heaviness. The Lord has planted a thorn in my flesh.”—At this moment the chief questioner of the party was called away, when I took occasion to observe, “Do you not think the religion that gentleman professes is more Christian than your own? Does it not appear to give him more happiness and peace of mind?” “Oh,” returned the rough enthusiast, “he knows nothing at all about it.” “How did you find out that?” “By his words. A tree is known by its fruits, and a man by his words.” The truth was, our friend (as true a Christian as ever lived) had not the cant phrases by which these fanatics convey their thoughts and *experiences* to

* i. e. to collect the fragments of a wreck. People on the Cornish coast consider any part of a shattered vessel which comes within their reach as a godsend. Those who first give notice of the spoil have half for their share at its division.

each other. Some further conversation passed in endeavouring to awaken this unfortunate man to a sense of his gloomy and fatal errors, but our labour was too limited to be effectual. Time and constant reasoning alone could eradicate prejudices so thoroughly wrought into the imagination. We concluded by inquiring of our guide the path we should take to our home for the night; he immediately led the way, significantly exclaiming, "The narrow is the *right* path, but many take the *broad*, which leadeth to destruction!"

On returning to the village, we were told that this man, although so wild in his ideas, was of very sober and industrious habits. The opinions he professed were common amongst the inhabitants of the place. They were chiefly Methodists, the parish priest being unpopular from certain extravagances which had obliged him to sequester his living, and to live on it as the curate of his own parish. Superstitions of the worst kind were current in the neighbourhood. As a specimen, I may mention the story of a suicide, whose ghost had been seen to wander around his former dwelling until it *was laid*, at dead of night, by three clergymen, who cracked their whips over the unfortunate hobgoblin, and sent it to the depths of a gloomy cavern, whose yawning mouth was pointed out to me as the present resting-place of the unquiet spirit. And this is in our boasted age of intellectual improvement, of religious advancement, of universal education! Will priestcraft for ever throw a veil over Gospel truth, and uphold perverted doctrines which dispose the weak and unthinking to superstitious belief? The three clergymen who could, even in joke, so impose upon their brethren, and the Methodist preacher who frightened his flock into gloomy blasphemies, were equally guilty of retarding the progress of Divine Truth. Will no one dispense an effectual antidote to the far-spreading poison of Error?—no one go forth into the highways and hedges, and, by the aid of reason and unbiassed judgment, *compel* an honest conviction to "the first principles of the oracles of God"? Surely, "the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few." It is true there are many, even now, offering themselves as champions to fight the good fight against the setter forth of strange doctrines; but men of enlightened minds and active benevolence are also required to descend to the feeble and ignorant of our land: they should visit such districts as I have above described, and preach the Gospel to the poor and wretched. The moral necessities of the lower classes are beginning to be cared for in large towns,—why should we neglect the equally pressing wants of our rural population? For instance, in the county of Cornwall a pure scriptural belief in the Divine Unity has no longer any open advocates. The little flock which for many years assembled under the kind superintendence of their voluntary minister, is dispersed, and in the course of the last summer the only chapel belonging to Unitarian Christians was sold. But it does not follow that the light of Truth is wholly extinguished; "the Almighty will not leave himself without witness," nor must we relinquish our endeavours to rekindle a dying flame in "the temple of the living God." Let us send forth ministers able and willing to erect a beacon for the benighted wanderers in the dark paths of superstition; and I would venture to say, that if they took neither scrip nor purse, many would receive them gladly;

many who, from careful reading and the exercise of their own judgment, have come to a knowledge of the truth, would with joy welcome those who could satisfy them on any doubtful point in their religious progress. But supposing the door of hospitality closed against them, surely our rich brethren from their stores might cast in much, and the widow would not refuse her mite in furtherance of so good a cause. One penny per week subscribed by every member of the Unitarian body would support the travelling expenses of our *rural ministry*. Any overplus thrown into a general fund might accumulate for the erection of chapels or for any extraordinary aid required in the prosecution of their labours. Should this plan be deemed impracticable, there is yet another to be considered, namely, the institution of *lay-preaching*; and this appears more feasible on account of the scriptural knowledge and superior intelligence generally observed in the members of our community. Wherever Unitarianism is sincerely professed, you will find liberality of sentiment and an aptitude for the reception of truth. Most of the laity would have little difficulty in propagating their sentiments amongst their neighbours, by preaching and reasoning, if a few hints were given them of the chief requisites for the sacred office of religious teacher. Acting under the direction of the numerous associations now formed, I feel very confident of the success attending the exertions of these voluntary ministers,—urged on, as they would be, by the good wishes of their brethren, their own right principles, and a zealous ardour for the undertaking. The rapid spread of Methodism may be mainly attributed to the peculiar constitution of their body, by which every member is called upon to take an active interest in the welfare of the whole. Lay-preachers are common amongst them, besides which there are class-leaders, those who can make prayers; they all confess or “tell their experiences” to one another. Then there are school-teachers, tract-distributors, money-gatherers, money-payers, in addition to their foreign and domestic missionaries, who are ever on the alert to keep up that state of excitement calculated to attract and please the multitude. Far be it from any one of us to approve wholly of a system following so closely the mind-enslaving policy of Catholicism; but some of its institutions, especially that of lay-preaching, may be commended and applied to advantage by a community rarely able to support an *independent* ministry—that is, a ministry not obliged to engage in any other profession to sustain themselves and their families.

In conclusion, I must offer my humble tribute of praise to those ministers who have thus toiled for the eternal welfare of others, and the temporal interest of themselves; suffering often from the evils of poverty on the one hand, and the obloquy of public opinion on the other. It remains with the Unitarian body adequately to reward their unremitting labours, and to provide assistants able and willing to forward the great and glorious work of dispersing the clouds of superstition and error, that the whole world may rejoice in the light of Truth.

A FRIEND TO CHRISTIAN REFORM.

N. B. The conversation related is almost verbally true, being noted down at the time by the narrator.

REVIEW.

ART. I.—*The Student's Manual; designed, by Specific Directions, to aid in Forming and Strengthening the Intellectual and Moral Character and Habits of the Student.* By John Todd, Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Philadelphia, Author of "The Sunday-school Teacher," "Lectures to Children," &c. Second Thousand of this Edition; reprinted from the Seventh American Edition. 12mo. Pp. 228. Lancaster, printed and sold by L. and R. Willan; sold by Simpkin, Marshall and Co., London. 1839.

IF any thing could raise a prejudice in our minds against a book from the title-page, it would be the announcement of the "Second Thousand." This species of puffing, which began, we believe, and appropriately enough, with "Mammon," is discreditable and ought to be discountenanced. What security has the reader against fraud as to the "thousands"? And what connexion is there between the extent of the sale of a book and its true merit?

We make these remarks in the present case, because "The Student's Manual" needs no artifice to get it into circulation; it is, with some exceptions to be presently pointed out, a really valuable work. We should rejoice to contribute to its gaining access to students, and especially students for the Christian ministry. The author is well-read, and a shrewd observer of men and manners. He knows thoroughly a student's difficulties and dangers, and provides for them with great ability. His moral counsels are generally unexceptionable, pertinent and rational; and a strong sense of vital and practical religion pervades the whole work.

In the following passage, the author exposes one of the common mistakes of young men of talents and ambition:

"I perceive I have used a dangerous word, though of great antiquity. The word is *genius*. Many train themselves into habits of eccentricity and oddity, and suppose these inseparable from genius. There are some men who think nothing so characteristic of genius, as to do common things in an uncommon way—like Hudibras, to *tell the clock by algebra*, or like the lady in Dr. Young's satires, 'to drink tea by stratagem.' Dean Swift, in his celebrated travels, found whole nations of these geniuses, and tells us that he observed a tailor, with a customer before him, whose measure for a coat he was taking with a quadrant! Never set up any pretensions for a genius, nor lay claim to the character. But few such are born into the world; and of those few, though envied greatly, and imitated as greatly, but very few, indeed, leave the world wiser or better than they found it. The object of hard study is not to draw out geniuses, but to take minds such as are formed in a common mould, and fit them for active and decisive usefulness. Nothing is so much coveted by a young man as the reputation of being a genius; and many seem to feel that the want of patience for laborious application and deep research, is such a mark of genius as cannot be mistaken; while a real genius like Sir Isaac Newton, with great modesty says, that the great and only difference between his mind and the mind of others consisted solely in his having more patience. You may have a good mind, a sound judgment, or a vivid imagination, or a wide reach of thought and of views; but believe me, you probably are not a genius, and can never become distinguished without severe application. Hence all that you ever have must be the result of labour—hard, untiring labour."—Pp. 18, 19.