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SELECT
CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,
WITH
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.



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MRS SUSAN HUNTINGTON.

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM COLLINS. GLASGOW.

428 MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

MRS. SUSAN HUNTINGTON,

OF BOSTON, MASS.

BY

BENJAMIN B. WISNER,

PASTOR OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

AND

AN ORIGINAL POEM,

BY

JAMES MONTGOMERY,

AUTHOR OF "THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD," "SONGS OF ZION,"
"THE CHRISTIAN PSALMIST," "THE CHRISTIAN POET," &c.



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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE is a world of invisible beings among us, whose influences are perpetually acting upon our minds, directing our pursuits, and shaping our characters. Who are these?—They are not celestial intelligences, employed for the glory of God in the service of man. They are not fallen angels, in this revolted province of the Almighty's empire, permitted to tempt and harass its inhabitants, during their period of trial and probation. Nor are they the spirits of just men made perfect, who, as many amiable and excellent persons (without any authority from revelation) suppose, may be commissioned to watch over surviving relatives, comfort them in trouble, and help them on their way to join themselves in paradise.—No ; they are none of these ;—yet are they of the number of those, who, in every age and country, have lived and died, not for themselves alone, but for their contemporaries and posterity :—they are *those*, in a word, *all* those, who are recorded in history for their good or evil deeds ; who have benefited or plagued mankind, by their virtues or their vices ;—benefited them by discoveries in science, inventions in art, and works in

literature; or, by their labours, their sufferings, and triumphs, in the cause of truth, the truth of any kind, but especially the truth of the Gospel;—plagued them, by exercising the most heroic qualities for the oppression and misery of their fellow-creatures, or by employing the noblest talents for the perversion of the minds, and corruption of the morals, of all whom their sayings or their writings could reach. The beings, then, of whom we speak, either by their examples held up in perpetual remembrance, or by productions of genius, which have survived the destruction of empires, and the changes of dynasties on the face of the earth, continue to this day, more or less, to form the manners, and control the destinies of all people, by whom the first may be known, and the latter studied.

It is far above a vulgar fate to be registered in a genealogical table a few centuries after death, though but to fill the space of so many letters as spell the name thus rescued from oblivion. It is a step higher towards the temple of fame to be sung in poetry, though only to swell out the harmony of a verse:—

— “*fortemque Gyan, fortemque Cloanthum.*”

But to have left on record one saying, repeated through all ages as a maxim of wisdom; to have been the founder of one class of men, distinguished as a body among their contemporaries; to have performed one act of invincible fortitude, like Mutius Scævola, when he laid his right hand upon the burning coals because it had mistaken its victim, and slain but a courtier, when it aimed at a king; or, like Decius Mus, to have rushed, a self-devoted sacrifice, into

the heart of the enemy's array, to secure victory to his countrymen;—this is to be exalted to the rank of one of those invisibles to whom we have alluded, —one, who has had his share, however small and indiscernible, in making some others different from what they would have been without such bias, and so far aided in bringing human society itself to its existing state. In like manner, they who have left material monuments, though now in ruins, exercise dominion over the living, by furnishing inexhaustible models of imitation, or inimitable objects of rivalry. The nameless artists, who hewed from blank marble the *Venus de Medici* and the *Apollo Belvedere*; the mechanical hands that wrought the sculptures of the *Parthenon*; the forgotten architects of Gothic Cathedrals; and the builders of the *Pyramids*, equally forgotten;—these, though unregistered here, have yet a being in that invisible world, whose inhabitants we are revealing, as influential agents, though no longer either corporeal or spiritual existences among us.

Now these invisible beings, who thus “rule our spirits from their urns,” or being dead, yet speak with immortal voices,—though they be of all ages and countries, from creation till yesterday, and from Japan to California,—are all contemporaries in that sphere which they occupy. Adam,—for Adam is the first and the lord of the ascendant among them,—Adam is contemporary with all his posterity, down to those who were last promoted to this peerage. Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander and Cæsar, Jenghis Khan and Buonaparte, are simultaneously training up heroes and spoilers of mankind.

Moses and Solon, the Decemviri and Justinian, with our own great Alfred, inferior only to the first, are at this hour teaching statesmen to govern realms, which violence has subdued or liberty recovered. Solomon and Socrates, Bacon and Newton and Locke, are daily instructing the same scholars, in wisdom, science, and morals. Demosthenes and Cicero are yet the masters in eloquence, from whose tongues enraptured students catch "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," to quicken their own minds, and touch with fire their own lips. Homer and Virgil, Tasso and Milton, never cease, by their songs, from inspiring youthful bards, in all ages, who, seeing the dreams of glory of their predecessors realized, thence augur the fulfilment of their own. That the living population of this very kingdom are, in a great measure, *what they are by what they have learnt*, from a multitude of forerunners, cannot be doubted by any one who has himself had intellectual communion with the great, the learned, and the good of past times, and ascertained the effects of such fellowship on his own life.

As children, in respect to their intellectual condition, are born blanks, to be inscribed with the characters which parents, companions, tutors, and the state of society around them, gradually impress upon their minds, subject to the modifications, which are produced by their own awakened powers, and the silent, perhaps unknown, operations of God's Holy Spirit upon their hearts, or the malignant influences of Satan and his emissaries who may have access to the same;—as children do thus, in a great degree, grow up to be what examples and circumstances make them,

so is every generation collectively more or less fashioned according to the precedents, not only of their immediate ancestors, but of their pre-existent fellow-creatures of all countries, whose history and literature may be read and studied in their own. Utterly savage nations, having no history or literature,—no commerce with an invisible world,—are but what their fathers have been before them, and leave nothing to their posterity beyond what they themselves inherited. They live and die unimproved by the experience of others, and unimproving others by their own; so that their condition is only stationary, because they are incapable of sinking lower, being already but worms in the dust of existence, crawling forth by accident, and hastily retreating into darkness. Such seem to be some of the Caffre hordes of South Africa, and the aborigines of New Holland. The unchangeable manners of barbarians are remarkably exemplified by the fact, that the Greenlanders and the Esquimaux, residing two thousand miles apart, have the same language with little variation, the same shaped clothing, boats, fishing tackle, and construction of huts, as well as corresponding superstitions, in lieu of religion. Such absolute coincidence between two originally distinct tribes were impossible, (though the nature of their several climates and their similar occupations would induce the expectation of general resemblance;) but here that coincidence has continued to exist, while, from the impassable gulphs and deserts, nine months of the year more frozen than the Alps, between Greenland and Labrador, no intercourse can have taken place for a period beyond the power of calculation. Yet

even these savages, before Christianity raised them to the rank of men, and prepared them to be associates with angels, and worshippers of God in his eternal temple,—were superior in ingenuity, intelligence, and enterprise, to the brutish New Hollander and the idiotic Bushman. It is difficult to imagine how either of these clans could ever have emerged from their iceberg-state, while they had no history, no literature, no commerce with an invisible world. The Gospel brought all these to them, and thus transformed them from darkness to light, socially and intellectually, as well as turned them spiritually from the power of Satan to serve the living God.

Semi-barbarians have history and tradition, truth and fable, poetry and science, of some kind, monstrously and inextricably blended. Hence the little morality to be traced in their religion is so atrociously assimilated with impurity, as to aggravate every evil, while it is almost impotent for any good. Such are the Hindoos and Chinese. These are greater, and wiser, and in some respects better for what has been done for them by the dead, though, from a paralyzing attachment to what they have received, they neglect to add to it; while, not continuing the process begun before their birth, they remain wilfully impracticable subjects for superior improvement. After all, their commerce with that world of invisible beings, whose influences we are illustrating, is so very imperfect, that they see them but as the half-opened eye saw “men like trees walking.” Their records of events and ideas of truths are correspondingly out of due proportion;—in Hindostan all is shadowy, gigantic, multitudinous; in China all is puerile, little, and fantastical.

Nations a little higher in civilization are those, which have more authentic history, more elevated poetry, and more advanced science. Such were the Saracens, of the middle ages, and such (though miserably degraded) are some of their modern descendants. These, having been emancipated from the mental thralldom of idolatry, and having received the first great truth of Revelation, that there is but one God,—“no God but God,” in their own phrase—though that glorious confession was impiously associated with the most flagrant lie of their false teacher—“and Mahomet is his prophet,”—these, we say, were exalted far above all the philosophers and devotees of the eastern world, a great portion of which they were enabled to subjugate, by the superiority in arts not less than in arms, which they derived from their ancestors, whose deeds were celebrated in genuine annals, and whose works in every department of literature, from the most abstruse to the most fanciful, are yet the glory of Arabia and Persia.

Once more,—in Europe there are many kindred, and people, and tongues, who border on barbarism, or excel in civilization, just in proportion as they have received and improved the lessons of wisdom, which their fathers bequeathed them,—and not their fathers only, but the illustrious of all nations, ancient and modern, whose virtues, whose actions, and whose talents, have left indestructible monuments in their own works, or in the works of others, for the benefit of all the human race who may ever have access to the knowledge of them. It would not be difficult to arrange and class the states of Christendom ac-

cording to the social character of their various populations, when those would invariably be found highest in intelligence, who have the largest and most familiar commerce with the world of the departed, but unforgotten, of all ages and countries. Those, too, would be found to stand highest, not only in intelligence, but in comparative virtue, who are most under the influence of the best examples; and whose laws, institutions, and literature are most conformed to these. Thus Spain and Portugal are exceedingly low, because almost unacquainted with the glories of Greece and Rome, while they are strangers to the light of life, in the holy Scriptures. Hence (except poetry) they have hardly any literature beyond that of the tales of chivalry, and little religion but that of the legends of saints.—In Germany, there is a resurrection of mind, by a revival of research among the treasures of neglected learning for nobler purposes than mere verbal criticism. The various tribes of that heterogeneous empire are rising, therefore, to moral and intellectual grandeur, by their renewed communion with the invisible world, and the conflict and collision of generous spirits awakened by that circumstance, and which, perhaps, no other circumstance could have awakened. Italy, rich in history, poetry, romance, the fine arts, the liberal sciences,—rich in inherited, acquired, and accumulated knowledge of every kind, except the true knowledge of divine truth,—Italy rivals, if not transcends, all contemporaries in productions of genius, appealing to the senses, the understanding, the imagination, or the affections; yet morally she is on a level with the most debased, by servility and su-

perstition, because she substitutes for the oracles of God the traditions of men,—mercenary, profligate, atheistical men.—Of France, with some modifications to her disparagement, and a few to her advantage, the same may be said as of Italy.

Our own country, formerly deemed as waste and excommunicate as we think the wildernesses of Siberia,—now, neither so highly exalted by the examples of Greece and Rome as Italy, nor so conceitedly enslaved by them as France, has nevertheless been sufficiently swayed, to have greatly profited in all that adorns and dignifies man in political and civil society; while she has enjoyed one blessing superior to both, and which has placed her above all competition in true glory and true happiness:—Wickliffe, *before* the Reformation, loosed the Word of God, which had been bound almost a thousand years; the way was thus prepared in this island *for* the Reformation; and that Reformation, by the freedom which it brought with it,—freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action; a threefold cord spontaneously twined and not soon broken;—that Reformation, by the freedom which it brought with it, caused the Gospel, its precepts and sanctions, in process of time, so to mould the laws, policy, manners, and benevolent institutions of our countrymen, as to make the latter nationally, if not individually, more upright, honourable, and conscientious in principle, than can be said of any other people in existence. The history of the last half century is proof of this; during which, whatever have been the sins of government or subjects, in particular instances, our character has been refining,

and, at the same time, rising in the estimation of foreigners—till our enemies themselves, in extremities, had more confidence in us than in each other; so that, without boasting, it may be said, both in the literal and figurative sense of the terms, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is (Great Britain) on the sides of the north.” Psalm xlviii. 2. What hath made her so? Her children have had free and happy communication, beyond all others, with the world of invisible beings among them, consisting not only of heroes, legislators, princes, philosophers, poets, painters, sculptors, historians, orators, and pagan worthies, who have flourished in all lands since the flood,—but especially of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and righteous men, who first declared the truths of revelation to a world lying in wickedness, or have sealed with their blood, and exemplified by their lives, that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

An imaginary, but, happily, impossible case, may illustrate the value and extent of that influence for which we contend, over the well-being and well-doing of consecutive generations. Were all knowledge, remembrance, and record of past ages, obliterated; all books of science, religion, eloquence, and poesy, destroyed; all relics of ancient sculpture and masonry crumbled to dust; and were nothing left to the living race of men but the actual information which they had individually acquired from these sources, with the power of communicating the same, *in their own words only*, to their offspring and contemporaries;—it cannot be questioned, that society would abruptly