
REPUBLICATIONS.

THE year 1841 has been distinguished, with us, above any of its predecessors, by the republication of valuable works, both ancient and modern. Not only are the latest and poorest bubbles blown in the old world re-blown in the new, but the heavy tomes, over which Wisdom has grown pale, and the iron hand of Diligence become weary in the composition, are also presented to us. Not many years ago, if we remember rightly, a bookseller asked the aid of the legislature of his State to enable him to issue Mather's *Magnalia*, not daring to trust two octavos alone.

Among the valuable works, we would name *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4 vols. 8vo., *The Letters of Horace Walpole*,

4 vols. 8vo., Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons, 2 vols. 8vo., Lingard's History of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 1 vol. 8vo. The Speeches of Lord Brougham, 2 vols. 8vo., and the complete Works of Lord Bacon, in 3 vols. royal 8vo. In these volumes, we have all the works of Lord Bacon, arranged after the manner of Basil Montague's edition, accompanied with his life of that philosopher, and furnished with an index more convenient than that in the English edition. Here we have the substance of seventeen English octavo volumes, for about a fifth part of the cost of the original edition, and in a very readable form. We love to see elegant books, but not the less those of a plainer sort, which can find their way to a farmer's fireside. We learn that another edition of Bacon is in course of publication amongst us in numbers, designed for still wider circulation. At some future period, we hope to return to Mr. Montague's edition of Bacon, and consider the merit and influence of the Baconian method in philosophy.

Some other books we would notice more particularly.

I.

The History of Christianity, from the birth of Christ to the abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire. By the Rev. H. H. MILMAN, &c., with an introduction by James Murdock, D. D. New York: 1841. 1 vol. 8vo.

Here, the three elegant volumes of the original are compressed into one, in the American reprint. The paper and type are such as we usually receive from the press of the Messrs. Harper. The work is written with a good deal of fairness, but bears few marks of that erudition, at once various, exact, and profound, which we expect from an historian of the church, and fewer still, it may be, of that grasp of mind, that philosophic power, which comprehends and delineates the course and spirit of an age; a grasp and a power which we may require of a writer, who measures himself against the greatest historical and philosophical problem of the world,—the rise, extension, development, and destination of Christianity. Whoso attempts a history of Christianity, enters upon a vast field, where the ground is uncertain, and its limits not defined, perhaps scarce definable. He must tell us, 1. what Christianity is in itself, and what is its foundation; 2. when it was first made manifest in the world, under what circumstances, and with what limitations; 3. when, and in whom it reached its highest point; and, 4. what has been the course of its development, and what its influence, negative and positive, on the human race, how it has acted on men, and

how their prejudices, sensuality, superstition, and sin have reacted upon their notions of Christianity. These four problems, as we take it, present themselves to the philosophic writer, who aims to delineate the Christian idea and its historical development. He must tell us whether Christianity be the Absolute religion, or not the Absolute religion; if the latter, what are its limitations, considered in itself; if the former, what is the history of its successive unfoldings, and of its application in the concrete. Under what forms has it been contemplated, and what limitations have men set to this perfect religion. If the author takes the view, that Christianity is Absolute religion, then the whole matter resolves itself into this query: What relation did the concrete form of any time and place bear to this Absolute religion? or when the absolute religion was proclaimed, what antagonists did it find, and how were they met?

Various preliminary questions must be answered, no doubt. For example: How do we get at the idea of absolute religion in general; how that of Christianity in particular? To look at the latter question, and see what it involves, Christianity is one historical manifestation of religion amongst many other manifestations, which are more or less imperfect. We become acquainted with it by means of *historical* witnesses, sacred and profane. Then the question comes, are the witnesses *competent to testify* in the premises? Here comes the critical question. If they are, and we find from their testimony that Christianity is absolute religion, then the question comes, What were the forms of religion it invented, how did they act upon one another, and what was the result?

The historian of Christianity must tell us what Christianity is. This is the great point. If he fail here, he does not accomplish his work. He may collect materials, but the history is not written. Now, we think this is what Mr. Milman has not done; of course, then, his work fails of its end. It is *not* a history of Christianity; he has left out that, by an unlucky accident.

Mr. Milman's book is marked by fairness, in general; he writes generally in a pleasant style, though he is sometimes careless; he has a good deal of historical knowledge, though far too little for the undertaking, as we think. But he does not grapple with the subject like a strong man. He talks *about* it, not *of* it. He is wanting in the philosophy of the matter.

When he comes to the details of historical inquiry, he states some facts not previously known to the readers of ordinary ecclesiastical history. If his book be regarded as a whole, it is an interesting work. Beyond this, we can allow it little merit, either as an original performance, or considered as a compilation from ancient or contemporary scholars. His learning is not

wide, nor his philosophy deep. He belongs rather to the class of historical *dilettanti*,—if it be not invidious to say so,—and not in the ranks of genuine historians. The work might be entitled, "Historical Pencilings about Christianity, by an Amateur." However, we welcome the book, and will gratefully accept it for what it *is*, not for what *it is not*. We rejoice in its republication, spite of the shabby appearance the American edition makes; and trust it may recall attention to this too much neglected field of ecclesiastical history.

II.

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.
By EDWARD GIBBON, Esq., with notes by the Rev. H. H. Milman, &c. New York: 1841. 4 vols. 8vo.

This work is from the same press with the former, and the paper and print are of the same character. This new edition contains, in addition to the original work of Gibbon, 1. A preface by Mr. Milman, which is valuable for its hints and suggestions; 2. Notes from the same hand, with others selected from M. Guizot, and M. Wenck, a German translator of a part of the work. The notes of M. Wenck, which extend over only a very small part of the history, are apparently the work of a scholar, familiar with the sources of ancient story, and also with recent historical essays. The notes of M. Guizot are more numerous, and sometimes important. They are marked in general by a certain scholarly aspect, but are not seldom deficient in liberality of sentiment. We should say Guizot has the better head, and Milman the better heart, for surely he is no bigot. But of Mr. Milman's own contributions we must speak more at length.

He undertook the task of a new edition of Gibbon. This problem, therefore, was before him, to render his original as complete, in relation to all historical literature *now* extant, as it was at Gibbon's time, in relation to the literature written before his day. The editor is to make Gibbon's history a manual as fit for the *present* day, as it was when first published for *that* day. This is a serious work. I. The editor must expose his author's errors, and correct his misstatements. This he has often attempted, but rarely accomplished, and for this plain reason, such a work would require at least the equal of Gibbon, the learning of the scholar, the thought of the philosopher. From Mr. Milman we must expect neither. Still, we are grateful for what he has done. Now and then he corrects an error, or points out an unfair remark, exposes a sarcasm, or *refutes a sneer*. He always does it, if we remember well, in good

temper, and does not think it part of a Christian's duty to get into a passion with an infidel.

II. We should demand of an editor a reference to all the important literature which assails or defends the text, and a digest of it in the proper places; a reference to all the valuable criticisms made in Gibbon's time, or subsequently. Gibbon himself, in a very simple way, refers to all the most valuable literature relating to the vast range of subjects that comes before him. He gives an encyclopedia of critical information respecting Roman affairs. But few works of importance escaped his eye, whether they favored his opinions or opposed them. Now, Mr. Milman rarely refers to any of the numerous works published in opposition to Gibbon. An account of those attacking his celebrated xvth and xvth chapters—so numerous, so respectable are some, and so insolent are others,—would be interesting and instructive in our day, when they are for the most part forgotten with their authors.

III. The editor must connect all discoveries and conclusions of subsequent historians, with the text, or incorporate them with the notes, and thus make the work complete for our times. This M. Guizot attempts, in some points, and not without success. Mr. Milman now and then makes the attempt, but rarely succeeds. His notes in general, when compared with Gibbon's, are weak and frivolous. We have collected some instances to substantiate the assertion, but have not space for them at present. But to recur to the first head, supplying the omissions, and correcting the errors of his author, and cite a case in point,—Gibbon's great sin, it seems to us, in regard to his treatment of Christianity, is this; that while he omits no occasion to sneer at the pretensions of the church, the wickedness, hypocrisy, and superstition of its members, he continues to pass dry-shod over the instances of Pagans becoming Christians, and living a divine life of faith and works. These omissions it was incumbent on the editor to supply, especially when the editor is a Christian, and his author an infidel, and still more especially when the editor is himself the historian of Christianity.

To sum up the matter in a few words between the historian and his editor, Gibbon appears to us as a tall giant, with a deportment haughty and arrogant, a face secular even to profanity, marked with coarse sensuality, but stamped with strong and masculine sense, and lit up with keen and flashing eyes, walking loftily about in the ruins of a temple, with a huge flambeau in his hand, smoking like a light-house. Where he treads, some walls totter, and some columns fall. He applies his torch, now to the face of a marble statue, makes its features appear in his plain light, but leaves a smooch on the face, now he holds his torch

at the entrance of some hidden crypt, supposed to be full of holiest relics, and discloses the apparatus of debauchery and deceit; he throws down venerated images, and treads them to dust; delights to blacken what seems fair to the pious, and bring to light what mortals hide with shame. Though he represent the outline of each object as it is, yet by dexterously shifting his light, he makes their shadows take what forms he will. On the other hand, Mr. Milman is a well-dressed page, who walks gracefully, and at a respectable distance behind the giant; carries in a silver case a little taper of wax; with a delicate *mouchoir*, attempts to remove the smooch, but sometimes makes it worse; picks up the fragments of sacred stone, but cannot make them live again; holds up his tiny light to discover the well wrought finger of Jupiter thundering in the marble, but has not light enough to give the awful *face* of the God, still less to change the shadows of the giant's torch.

We are obliged to postpone notices of several works, that have been sent us by their authors, to the next number of this publication.