

[Written for this Paper.]

TRUTH IN ITS ULTIMATE.

So long as human nature remains as it is, probably every question in which it is interested will have at least two aspects or sides, and testimony will be freely offered to substantiate the one conception without any reference to the point of view held by an opponent. Every one is familiar with the illustration of the suspended shield, with one side silver and the other side gold; the two who arrive from opposite directions saw their own side; when their contention led to battle it chanced that each became turned round and saw the opposite side; then the warfare naturally ceased—and this would probably be the case to most things if the position of contestants could be reversed. Men are very strenuous in their assertion of personal opinion and conclusion, staunch as to the correctness of their views and ideas, and to be positive is looked upon as a virtue, when it may truly be an overshadowing vice; for to few is this decision given, and that mainly in scientific deduction—from experiment, and capable of universal demonstration.

It is recorded of an inmate of a London prison, that he intended constructing in his isolation and confinement a history of some importance. But a street contention arose beneath the bars of his window on some occurrence which had just taken place; the controversy of eye-witnesses waxed so warm and assertions were so contradictory, that the inchoate historian relinquished his project on the idea that if two eye-witnesses disagreed on an event just fresh, he could hardly determine of things of years or ages ago, in which he took no part.

Two disputants upon a certain point were good-natured in the beginning; finally one lost his temper and said, "Thank heaven I knew nothing about it." "Oh," said his cool opponent, "you give thanks for your ignorance, do you?" "Yes, I do," was the petulant reply. "Well, you have a great deal to be thankful for" was the rejoinder. Not a few onlookers have reached similar conclusions, less on the merits thereof, than because a rattled man is very apt to lose his temper, and with that his judgment and his case.

Demonstrated truth is pretty universally accepted. There are few disputes in natural philosophy, in chemistry, in arithmetic, in science, save in that which may be new and unfamiliar, of late discovery, and antagonistic to long-held theory. But in politics, on social questions, and as to religion, there are differences so radical that men may never hope for uniformity of creed or action, save some authoritative voice is heard, or some key is given which will be respected or used to the end of assured conviction. Whether this unity is desirable or would be beneficial to humanity is somewhat questionable. Man is not intended for an automaton; he is above a machine, and to reduce him to serfdom or to mechanical obedience would place him in the condition of the "beasts of burden" who move at the word of command and are restrained in their own volition. Man is gifted with faculties of use; however

dormant they can be awakened, cultivated, enlarged; observation educates, judgment improves, reason enlarges; general capacity increases from influences within and without. Yet after all there is every phase and degree of development, and that condition where "each is of one heart and mind" is still the product of something which has been mainly inoperative from the time of Enoch unto now. Seers and Prophets have had glimpses of a time when "every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ to the glory of the Father." There will be unity as to that at least, but how much diversity of sentiment may exist even then on a myriad other things, time alone can tell, for revelation has barely hinted at, and not fully asserted a conclusion, though "all shall know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest." If this result is inspirational and convincing, may we look for modification and correction in regard to other topics, and will similar effects follow? The source of an unity of this character is undoubted; but will it come spontaneously (as it were) or without seeking? When in the coming time "the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon all flesh," and the antagonism of the brute creation perishes, will the agency—the individuality, of universal man be so softened as to bring to pass a reign of brotherhood and peace?

There are probably more men of science who seek out God for light than there are politicians. Prayer in Congress is the essence of formality; Deity is not recognized in the law-making department; His name, His authority, is without political weight. However the fathers may have sought to Him, the practice now is nearly obsolete. However susceptible those who laid the foundation, the builders of the superstructure are not seeking for much more than self or expediency, the triumph of partisanship or the idolatry of Mammon. Yet likely enough there are two sides to this also. There may be a good deal of honesty, sincerity and patriotism, and intelligent analysis might possibly conclude that there is less absolute difference between parties than they themselves think, or failing this, that true science is lacking to determine the right or wrong of either for the great majority, who only nominally conclude for themselves.

Personal disinterestedness is as rare among politicians as elsewhere. The philosopher in his study may determine the value of abstract truth, but the noisy masses are only intent upon asking how they are affected personally by free trade or protection, by free coinage of two precious metals or limiting the ultimate redemption to but one. These ask about tariff and tax, about wool and lead, about sugar and iron, and tea and coffee; or bread and potato, as they are affected through production or use.

As in the long ago, truth is not upon the surface; it is not in extremes; it is not confined to either party, or possessed by one individual. There is a measure of it distributed, and it is this which creates, binds, preserves and sustains parties and organizations of every grade and kind. This determines their being, their length of days, their power in the world. No party can ex-

ist long on a past record; unless it has power to absorb new truth it will surely die; for truth is life, and while its assertion and maintenance may have given origin and continuance for a time, when that becomes common property it becomes collateral to new ideas, and the new increases vitality and force until assimilated; then man or organization languishes again, longs, craves for fresh pabulum, mental or spiritual—so progress is eternal. This is the philosophy of movement, of advance. There is nothing in the economy of Deity that presupposes death or that phase at least which suggests annihilation. But stereotyped nations, communities, individuals, disintegrate, dissolve and die; and, as every true principle is many-faceted, no one or any number of men can exhaust it. It is perennial, and from even the same point of view two phases of mentality will discern different facets and angles of beauty and intrinsic wealth.

There is no one principle of Divine science, or the Gospel, which has yet been circumscribed of individual man or of the church at large. Take the primaries—faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands—they have not been, are not yet, fully understood. No human plummet hath sounded the profundity of either one; and if the alphabet is only dimly comprehended, what of the combinations that can be evolved, and what of the ideas that we call advanced! If these are not understood, need we wonder at the assumptions and mistakes of men in the affairs of life, whether in business, politics, science, social life, education or any of the multitudinous paths in which intelligence may move? There is a germ in each which is divine, enlarging, progressive; yet is it relative to all other truth and is only discovered by the ignorance, disobedience, waywardness and tradition of uninspired and consequently confused and baffled man!

The keys hang today in the vestibule of the new creation, so that men dissatisfied with human lore can find in the archives of inspiration a solution for all the problems and "vexed questions" of these times, whether industrial, social, religious, political or educational, if they have nerve and fortitude to open and obey!

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE NOTES.

HARAN, Roanoke, Co., Va.,
August 28, 1895.

Under the blessings of an All-wise Providence, the Saints and Elders in the Virginia conference have had once again the privilege of assembling in conference capacity. On Aug. 17th and 18th, the Saints, augmented in numbers by twenty Elders from Zion, met at the Mountain View school-house, Haran, Roanoke Co., Va. The weather on Saturday was rainy, yet there was a good attendance. There had been some threats of mob violence and a notice was posted on the school-house door, warning all Mormons and their adherents, particularly the Elders, to leave the country, and forbidding any person to remove the notice under penalty of death. As we thought the outward appearance of the building sufficiently well decorated