

WORKS
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JAMES HAMILTON

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OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D. F.L.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

I.

THE ARK OF BULRUSHES.

“She took for him an ark of bulrushes, . . . and put the child therein.”—Ex. II. 3.

IN this climate of ours there are some plants which need no culture. The thistle takes care of itself. It requires no husbandman to break up the ground and scatter the seed and drive away the fowls of heaven; but wherever there is a breeze it finds a carrier, and wherever it finds a sod it makes a home. Here are downs which have not felt the plough since the days of Alfred or Caractacus, and thistles grow on them still—the descendants of those prickly sires which were crimsoned by the blood of battling Danes or Britons in the far far distant times of old.

But if you sow any kind of corn you must take a great deal of trouble. You must cleave open and crumble the mould; you must cover it in; you must uproot the weeds that would choke it, and you must drive away the beasts that seek to devour it. And the crop of this season, if left to itself, will insure no successor. A few straggling ears may survive for an autumn or two, but presently there is no more trace of the golden grain on your neglected meadow than there would be on the sands of the shore.

At the first God gave to mankind many great truths and lessons: the knowledge of Himself as the Father of spirits, holy, beneficent, forgiving; the great rules of piety and virtue; and above all, the promise, so gracious and animating, of a coming Deliverer from sin and from sorrow—a promise which, as a blessed element of hope and elasticity, should keep man's face still upward, and his heart still strong for his toils and trials. All these God gave, and at the first He flung them broadcast. They were public property, and at the first were intrusted to the general memory. But this was enough to show that for saving truths the mind of man has ceased to be the proper soil; for knowledge heaven-descended earth is no longer a congenial clime. "Thistles grow instead of wheat." Ambition, revenge, cruelty, falsehood, rapine, float through all the atmosphere, and these can spring up anywhere: not so integrity, truth, chastity, respect for the rights of others, brotherly-kindness: and midway betwixt the Creation and the Advent the world had sunk into such a depth of idolatry and immorality as to make it perfectly plain that on the self-propagating principle those precious seeds which had been carried away from Eden would soon disappear altogether. For the bread of life there was too little appetite to intrust its preservation any longer to the careless and promiscuous multitude,—the sin-loving, God-forsaking, demon-adoring nations of mankind.

Accordingly, at this period the Most High, in His wisdom, took means for the conservation of the priceless blessing. Instead of dealing any longer with the mil-