

instantly followed by reiterated and long-continued plaudits; but these were only a prelude to the appointed rewards, which, though of little value in themselves, were accounted the highest honour to which a mortal could aspire. These consisted of different wreaths of wild olive, pine, parsley, or laurel, according to the different places where the games were celebrated. After the judges had passed sentence, a public herald proclaimed the name of the victor: one of the judges put the crown upon his head, and a branch of palm into his right hand, which he carried as a token of victorious courage and perseverance. As he might be victor more than once in the same games, and sometimes on the same day, he might also receive several crowns and palms.

When the victor had received his reward, a herald preceded by a trumpet, conducted him through the stadium, and proclaimed aloud his name and country; while the delighted multitudes, at the sight of him, redoubled their acclamations and applause.

The crown, in the Olympic games, was of wild olive; in the Pythian, of laurel; in the Isthmian or Corinthian, of pine tree; and in the Nemæan, of smaliage or parsley. Now, most of these were evergreens; yet they would soon grow dry, and crumble into dust. Elsner produces many passages, in which the contenders in these exercises are rallied by the Grecian wits, on account of the extraordinary pains they took for such trifling rewards; and Plato has a celebrated passage, which greatly resembles that of the apostle, but by no means equals it in force and beauty: "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." The Christian is called to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold of eternal life; and to this he is more powerfully stimulated by considering

that the ancient athletæ took all their care and pains only for the sake of obtaining a garland of flowers, or a wreath of laurel, which quickly fades and perishes, possesses little intrinsic value, and only serves to nourish their pride and vanity, without imparting any solid advantage to themselves or others; but that which is placed in the view of the spiritual combatants, to animate their exertions, and reward their labours, is no less than a crown of glory which never decays; a crown of infinite worth and duration; "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." 1 Peter i. 4; v. 4. More than conquerors through Him that loved them, and washed from their sins in his own blood, they, too, carry palms in their right hands, the appropriate emblems of victory, hardly contested, and fairly won. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Rev. vii. 9.

But the victory sometimes remained doubtful, in consequence of which a number of competitors appeared before the judges, and claimed the prize: and sometimes a combatant, by dishonourable management, endeavoured to gain the victory. The candidates, who were rejected on such occasions by the judge of the games, as not having fairly merited the prize, were called by the Greeks *adokimoi*, or disapproved, and which we render "cast away" in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter ix. verse 27; "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be (*adokimoi*) cast away," rejected by the Judge of all the earth, and disappointed of my expected crown.—*Paxton*.