

The Church.

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER, I, 12.

VOL. I.]

COBOURG, U. C., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1837.

[NO. XXV.]

Original Poetry.

For the Church.

Addressed by a youthful relation, aged 14, to one of our Missionaries, leaving for Canada.

Go, *****; go to other scenes—
To very distant climes,
No more perhaps to mix with us,
And join amongst our smiles.

That pleasure may not here be given—
We may not taste that sweet,
But in the world beyond the grave,
Lord grant that we may meet!

You'r leaving friends—you'r leaving home
You'r going far away;—
May you, the "Labourer of the Lord,"
Reap while 'tis called to-day!

Go, go in spirit and in truth
And preach "good news" to man,—
To fallen man!—if he'll repent
God will forgive—O, yes, He can.

Proclaim to him th' "accepted time"
The day of saving *now*;
No more to gods to sacrifice—
To graven idols bow.

Oh! guard the talents in thy care—
Watch what thou'rt given in trust—
Keep them from Satan—bid them hear
Before they turn to dust.

Pray for the friends thou'st left behind,
Do not forget us here;—
If we put confidence in God,
He'll banish all our fear!

CHARIS.

VENERABLE BEDE.

BORN, 672—DIED, 735.

Among the few illustrious characters of our early history, whose deeds and writings have escaped the ravages of time, this eminent man deserves the honourable mention he has obtained. He was born near Durham, in a village now called Farrow, near the mouth of the Tyne. Having lost both his parents at the age of seven years, he was placed in the Monastery of St. Peter, at Weremouth, in the school attached to which he received his early education, and appears from his youth to have been devoted to the service of God. He afterwards removed to the neighbouring Monastery of Jarrow, in Northumberland, where he spent the remainder of his days in study, devotion, and teaching. In an age when learning was rare, he made considerable progress in all the branches then cultivated, and attained the reputation of being the most learned man of his time. This justly celebrated Monk does not appear to have been infected with the general contagion; for though his character for learning and piety opened before him the widest door of ecclesiastical preferment, since he was invited to Rome by the Pope himself, he chose to remain in obscurity, and both lived and died an unbeneficed presbyter. He is one of our earliest historians, and composed an Ecclesiastical history of our country, which he brought down to the year 731; and so great was his industry, that he left behind treatises on a great variety of subjects in philosophy and religion, to the extent of eight folio volumes. Though his credulity sometimes was great in matters of detail, his theological writings contain a number of very admirable thoughts. He made all his studies subservient to devotion, and examined the scriptures most assiduously, not only by the use of his natural faculties to find out their meaning, but with earnest prayer to the Father of lights for Divine influence and illumination. With much that is fanciful, and some things that are obscure or erroneous, it is surprising and delightful to observe in his theological writings the distinctness and precision of his faith on the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel; and the genuine godliness which appears in them, must have been highly useful amidst that dearth of knowledge which prevailed in his age. He saw and pointed out some of the errors of the church of Rome, and strongly urged upon his ecclesiastical superiors the duty of correcting abuses. Living in an age of superstition, he did not wholly escape its influence; nor, amidst the darkness which surrounded him, did he see every thing in the light of truth. He was also too often allegorical in his expositions of scripture; yet with all his defects he was a wonderful man, and, according to Milner, "knew more of true religion, both doctrinal and practical, than many ecclesiastics of the present day."

It was a principle with him to be constantly employed; "he never knew what it was to do nothing." Happy would it be if all our readers, but especially the young and vigorous, were equally thrifty of their time. And why should they not? every hour must be accounted for. Men do not throw away their money, which they might perhaps regain by renewed labor. Why, then, should they squander away their time, which can never be recovered when once it is gone?

In the midst of his last affliction, his mind was serene and cheerful; his affections were heavenly; and, amidst all his infirmities, he took great delight in giving daily instruction to his disciples. A great part of the night was passed in prayer and thanksgiving; and the first employment of the morning was to ruminate on the Scriptures, and to address God in prayer. Perceiving his end to draw near, he said, "If my Maker please, I will go to him from the flesh, who, when I was not, formed me out of nothing. My soul desires to see Christ my King in his beauty."

One of the last things which he did, was the translating the Gospel of St. John into English. When death seized on him, one of his devout scholars, whom he used for his secretary, or amanuensis, remarked, "My beloved master, there remains yet one sentence unwritten." "Write it then quickly," replied Bede, and, summoning all his spirits together (like the last blaze of a candle going out) he indited it, sang "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and expired with a sedateness, composure, and devotion, that amazed all who saw and heard him.

"Thus," says Fuller, "God's children are immortal whilst their Father hath any thing for them to do on earth; and death, that beast, cannot overcome and kill them, till first they have finished their testimony: which done, like silk-worms, they willingly die, when their web is ended, and are comfortably entombed in their own endeavours." In the words of inspiration, "Immediately when it is ripe, he putteth in the sickle."

The works of this excellent man, which are all in Latin, have been several times published in Paris, Basle, and Cologne; and some have been printed separately. Several of his manuscripts, still unpublished, are to be found in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge.

Having been admired, consulted, and esteemed by his contemporaries, the epithet VENERABLE was unanimously accorded to him after his death.

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

No. 8.

EASTERN SUPPERS.

LUKE xiv. 16—24. "A certain man made a great supper, &c."

It was fixed that at the end of August, the Ameen-ad-Dowlah was to give an entertainment to the ambassador and suite: and on the day appointed, as is usual in Persia, a messenger came to us at about five o'clock in the evening, to bid us to the feast. I might make use of scriptural language to commence my narration:—"A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." The difficulty which infidels have made to the passage of which this is the commencement, arises from the apparent harshness of asking people to an entertainment, and giving them no option by punishing them in fact for their refusal: whereas all the guests to whom when the supper was ready the servant was sent, had already accepted the invitation, and were therefore already pledged to appear at the feast, at the hour when they might be summoned. They were not taken unprepared, and could not, in consistency or decency, plead any prior engagement.

On alighting at the house, we were conducted into a low room, where we found our host waiting for us, with about a dozen more of his friends. The ambassador was placed in the corner of honour, near the window, and the Ameen-ad-Dowlah went to him on his left hand. The other guests were arranged around the room according to their respective ranks. When a Persian enters a mejlis or assembly, after having left his shoes without, he makes the usual salutation of *selam aleikum* (peace be unto you,) which is addressed to the whole assembly, as it were saluting the house (Matt. x. 12) and then, measuring with his eye the degree of rank to which he holds himself entitled, he straightway wedges himself into the line of guests, without offering any apology for the general disturbance which he produces. It may be conceived that, among a vain people, the disputes which arise on matters of precedence are numerous; and it was easy to observe by the countenances of those present, when any one had taken a higher seat than that to which he was entitled. Mollahs, the Persian scribes, are remarkable for their arrogance in this respect: and they will bring to mind the caution that our Saviour gave to the Jews against their scribes, whom, among other things, he characterises as loving "the uppermost places at feasts."

The master of the entertainment has, however, the privilege of placing any one in the ranks of the mejlis as he may choose: and we saw an instance of this on this occasion: for when the assembly was nearly full, the Governor of Kashan, a man of humble mein although of considerable rank, came in, and seated himself in the lowest place, when the Ameen-ad-Dowlah, after having testified his particular attentions to him by numerous expressions of welcome, pointed with his hand to an upper seat in the assembly, to which he desired him to move, and which he accordingly did.

A striking analogy will doubtless be perceived here between the manners of the Jews, as described by our Saviour in the gospel, and those of the Persians: and we may hence see the peculiar propriety of the directions which he thus gives to his disciples: "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest place: lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place: that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have room in the presence of those that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalleth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

MORIER.

VALUE OF DOVE'S DUNG.

2 KINGS vi. 25. "The fourth part of a cab of dove's dung was sold for five pieces of silver."

In the environs of Shiraz, Mr. Morier states that there are many pigeon-houses erected at a distance from the dwelling

houses, for the sole purpose of collecting pigeon's dung for manure. The extraordinary flight of pigeons which he had seen alight on these buildings affords he thinks, a good illustration of the passage in Isaiah lx. 8 "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" their great numbers, and the compactness of their mass, literally looking like a cloud, at a distance, and obscuring the sun in their passage. He then proceeds to remark; "The dung of pigeons is the dearest manure that the Persians use: and as they apply it almost entirely for the rearing of melons, it is probable on that account that the melons of Isphahan are so much finer than those of other cities. The revenue of a pigeon house is about 100 tomanas* per annum: and the great value of this dung, which rears a fruit which is almost indispensable to the existence of the natives during the great heat of summer, will probably throw some light upon that passage of Scripture, when in the famine of Samaria "the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung was sold for five pieces of silver."†

MORIER.

* The toman contains 10,000 silver Arab drachmas called mehtkals, about the value of the English sixpence, and hence a toman is £250 sterling, and the annual revenue of which Mr. Morier speaks is £25,000.

† The pieces of silver here mentioned, are generally supposed to be the shekel, a coin very nearly the value of half a crown: and a cab is a measure of about three pints. Hence a pint of this manure sold for the enormous sum of 16s. 8d. sterling. How clearly does this shew the extremity of the famine!

HIRING OF LABOURERS IN THE EAST.

MATT. xx. 1—7. "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, &c."

The most conspicuous building in Hamadan is the Mesjia Jumah, a large mosque now falling into decay, and before it a maidan or square, which serves as a market place. Here we observed every morning before the sun rose, that a numerous body of peasants were collected with spades in their hands, waiting, as they informed us, to be hired for the day, to work in the surrounding fields. This custom, which I have never seen in any other part of Asia, forcibly struck me as a most happy illustration of our Saviour's parable of the labourers in the vineyard; particularly when passing by the same place late in the day we still found "others standing idle," and remembered his words, "why stand ye here all the day idle?" as most applicable to their situation: for on putting the same question to them they answered us, "Because no man hath hired us."

MORIER.

INFANT BAPTISM.

Baptist writers themselves acknowledge that Infant Baptism was practised as early as the conclusion of the second, or the beginning of the third century; that it continually gained ground till about the end of the fourth century, when it became almost universal, and continued so till the time of the Reformation, a period of upwards of 1100 years. This concession, on their part, will save much trouble in giving evidence of the early and subsequent universal custom of all the churches throughout Christendom. I shall, however, endeavour to shew that there is no foundation in history for any limitations whatever; but that, as it was the practice in the apostles' days to baptize infants, so it was continued down from that period, undisputed and uninterrupted, till the Reformation. And having done this, the proof will be complete, and the inference inevitable, that these pious men, who have quarrelled with the Church of England on the ground of its pædo-baptism, have done so without any just cause. I would only just advert to what I have already stated, that no instances of adult baptism can be fairly adduced in opposition to this statement, unless it can be shewn that they are such as would not have taken place, under similar circumstances, in the Church of England, or among other denominations of Pædo-baptists. Let it not be forgotten, that we are not contending against adult baptism in converts to Christianity from among the heathen, or under other circumstances where infant baptism was impracticable, but are establishing the fact, that there never was a time, in any Christian church, from the days of the apostles down to the Reformation, when infants were not baptized; and that without the slightest opposition, or intimation that the practice was unscriptural or an innovation. And let me call your attention to the conclusive bearing of this fact upon the subject under discussion. Our opponents assume that, for two hundred years (on what authority we shall soon see) no instance of infant baptism occurred; and they conjecture (the fact being undeniable that, at that period, the practice was general) that it must be about that time that the innovation took place. Now let us weigh the probability on which this conjecture is founded. Let us suppose that the whole of Christendom were now, as they suppose it was then, in the uniform habit of baptizing none but adults; and that an individual should come forward, and assert that this universal consent of Christians of all denominations to confine baptism to adults, is founded in error; that it is unsupported by ancient and apostolical usage, and directly in opposition to scriptural precedent; and should immediately begin to insist on the right of infants to christian baptism; would such an extraordinary avowal of opinion gain immediate credit, and silence all objections? or would it not rather be treated with contempt, as the reverie of a madman? If, however, contrary to all probability, it should excite any interest, and proselytes to the novel opinion should be made, would not a host of antagonists be immediately stirred up? and would not every advocate for apostolical usage, and scriptural church-membership instantly gird on the harness, and go forth to the warfare against so