

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, 1, 12.

VOL. I.]

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Poetry.

HYMN FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

Prepare, the holy Prophet said,
Rise, Son of God, the hour is nigh!
In dust a groaning world is laid,
Hell rears his shameless front on high!
In mortal clay
Thy limbs array,
Uprise, thou mighty one to save,
Go forth, thou Conqueror o'er the grave!

The Son of God went forth, and lo!
Before his steps health's genial heat
Thrill'd the wide world of spirit through,
And flesh in vigorous pulses beat.
Hell's hateful door
Was clos'd once more,
Heaven's wells of bliss o'erflowing ran:
Such gifts the Saviour gave to man.

Prepare, the holy Prophet cried,
Thy Saviour comes, O man, prepare!
Be every duteous gift supplied,
Precious and perfect, rich and rare,
Thy guest to greet,
And at his feet
In penitent prostration fling
Thy will, thy passions, every thing.

And man prepar'd the gibe, the jeer,
The scorn, the mockery, hate, and spite,
Words, looks, to wring the bitter tear,
The perilous day, the unpillow'd night,
The heart's keen ache,
When friends forsake,
The scourge, the thorn, the cross, the grave;
Such gifts man to his Saviour gave.

RECTORY OF VALEHEAD.

For the Church.

ETERNITY.

Interminable sea of endless years,
Of woes unspeakable, and boundless bliss,—
Though on thy face the trace of time appears,
'Tis sinking fast into thy dread abyss.

Time conquers man, but thou canst conquer time:
O'er its fair shores thy mighty flood shall sweep;
Nor storied Babel wilt thou leave, to climb,
Or Ark to shelter, from th' o'erwhelming deep.
Peterboro'. E.

THE DEATH OF DEATH.*

"Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." The irrevocable sentence was passed upon man, originally created after the Divine image, which doomed him to all the miseries mingled in that bitter cup, of which he is compelled at some period or other to drink; and lastly death itself was to terminate his earthly career. The death to which he was sentenced, when he had eaten of the tree of knowledge, of which he had been charged not to eat, extended further than the dissolution of the body. It comprehended the spiritual death of the soul, in which all the guilty race of Adam are involved, no less than the Ephesians, of whom the Apostle speaks as having been dead in trespasses and sins, and it included also everlasting death in the regions of misery. It is to the death of the body, however, that these few remarks are intended to refer; a subject in which we are all deeply and personally interested, and which must necessarily affect every heart which is not hardened by sin, or surfeited with the cares and follies of the world. That hour is rapidly approaching when the writer and the reader shall be numbered with the dead. It is vain, it would be presumptuous, to attempt to investigate the precise period of its arrival; that is among the deep things of God, which are wisely concealed.—"Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."

How mighty are the triumphs of death! Well may it be described as man's "last enemy." How many, through fear of death, are all their life-time subject to bondage! How many tears hath it caused to flow! How many once joyous hearts hath it made sorrowful! How many a wanderer has it driven from the delights of a peaceful and happy home, to contest with the trials and turmoils of a cold and unfriendly world! The widow and the orphan can tell of the conquests of death; for at this moment thousands are deploring the departure of those to whom they were bound by the closest ties, bewailing the guide of their youth, the companion of their manhood, or the prop of their declining years. Around many a bed of sickness, are, at this moment, kneeling those who are bearing their testimony to the advances of the implacable enemy. The glazed eye, the parched lip, the faltering tongue, the ebbing pulse, proclaim, in language not to be mistaken, that the struggle is at hand, in which death will come off the victor. Even since the reader took up this paper, a fellow-mortal hath yielded to death. Man, in the pride of his unsanctified heart, is unwilling to think of death. Man, immersed in the pleasures, or occupied with the business of an all-absorbing world, seeks to drive all thoughts of the enemy from his mind. Man, stricken with a consciousness of guilt, even while he trembles, puts off all consideration of the subject to a more convenient season. Yet all attempts to arrest the progress of this mighty foe have proved ineffectual. No bribe has induced him to stay his darts: he has broken down every barrier; he has foiled every plan; he has eluded every weapon by which the attempt has been made to arrest his progress.

* A meditation for Good-Friday, from the Church of England Magazine.

Reader! thou art a child of sin, and therefore a child of death. Thy beating heart must soon be still; thy beaming eye must soon be closed; thy warm blood must soon be cold. Hale and hearty as thou now art, disease is lurking in thy veins. The grave shall be thy chamber, the shroud thy apparel. The worm shall feed daintily upon thy now fair form. Thy name shall be speedily forgotten, when thou dwellest with the men that are long dead.

But for ever adored and blessed be that eternal Jehovah who hath not left his believing people without hope. The Gospel proclaims, in the most cheering language, that death has been deprived of its sting, and the grave shorn of its triumphs. The great event which the church calls us at this season to commemorate, is not only the death of the Lord Jesus, but the victory achieved by the Prince of life over man's last enemy; and the eye of faith is directed to the contemplation of that last record in the world's obituary—the Death of Death:

For pains and groans, and griefs and fears,
And death itself shall die.

Jesus went down to the dark chambers of the grave; "his crucified and pierced" body was laid in the rich man's tomb; but there in the regions of death's dreary dominion, he struggled with the adversary, the strong man armed; and he arose a conqueror from the grave, and he ascended on the wings of victory, and the eternal gates were lifted up, and the everlasting doors of heaven were opened, and he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, invested with the keys of hell and of death.

As yet, indeed, we see not all things put under this exalted Jesus. Satan is still permitted to exercise sway; Death still hurries his victims from the busy, bustling scene of this world: but Jesus shall ultimately subdue all things to himself; and the last knell that shall be rung shall be the knell of death, sounded by the trump of the archangel, which shall call to judgment.

This is the triumph the church calls us at this season more especially to anticipate. This is the event to which the eye of faith is to look forward—the complete and eternal overthrow of him who hath the power of death.

Happy indeed are they who, amidst the bereavements of a perishing world—amidst the monuments of death which present themselves on every side—can exclaim, in the emphatic language of the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Happy are they who unreservedly look for pardon through that Saviour who hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.

Blessed, and forever blessed, are they who have fallen asleep in Jesus, are sheltered in his bosom from every blast, and dwell with him under his gracious keeping until the end shall come, whose warfare is accomplished, whose iniquity is pardoned, and who have reached the peaceful haven of unceasing rest. Unspeakably glorious shall they be. Reader! through the blood of Jesus, may their abiding portion be thine, who, raised by the power of death's destroyer, shall share in the inheritance which he purchased, and the triumphs which he achieved, in that paradise which shall never be blighted by the curse, for there is never-ending blessing; in that garden of unfading flowers, where there shall be no sepulchre, for there shall be no death; but where the tree of life shall flourish with unfading verdure, and the pure river of the water of life for ever flow, and where, through a bright and blessed eternity, shall be celebrated, in never-ending songs of praise, the mercy and the grace of the triumphant Emmanuel, who with his own right hand and holy arm, achieved the DEATH OF DEATH.

VILLAGE PREACHING.

(Concluded from our last.)

Surely it is a morbid taste, and one that requires correction, which would kick at images that satisfied a Barrow; and yet we could point out numbers in his sermons, which would be now rejected by the preacher, even the village preacher, as mean and pedestrian; and whilst such things are, it is not on the tithing-day alone that we have cause to lament that the farmer should be so coarse, and the clergy so fine. The familiar illustration, therefore, by which a subject is rendered clear to persons slow to apprehend, and interesting to persons hard to be excited, is a figure not lightly to be renounced in deference to the false refinement of the magnates of a congregation—though, doubtless, capable of abuse. We say false refinement; for there are parables both in the Prophets and in the Gospels, against which the same parties might find the same objection. Mr. Hare, therefore, adopts the use of such images with all boldness. The man who does not grow in grace is 'a dwarf in soul': a spectacle as hideous and misshapen to the spiritual eye, as a dwarf in body to the eye of flesh. Men think highly of those who rise rapidly in the world; whereas nothing rises quicker than 'dust, straw, and feathers.' Religion must be learned by practice, not by hearing or reading only; 'it is not by hearing or reading about shoes, that a man becomes a shoemaker.' You must not be content with spelling and reading a parable, but 'do as the bees do' with a flower, settle upon it and suck out the honey. 'Laws are like looking-glasses, they may show us our ugliness, but cannot give us new shapes.' Religious services are the means, not the end,—'the road to London is not London.' 'The tooth of a child is easier to draw than that of a man, because it has no fangs; so is it with his evil passions.' Easy illustrations of

this kind are scattered in profusion throughout these sermons; certainly impart to them an air of great freshness and vivacity; must have had the effect of baiting the pulpit, and gathering a congregation; and no doubt at this moment live in the memory of many of the inhabitants of Alton Barnes, and will be long quoted as the apothegms of their beloved and departed pastor. If in a few instances they may be felt to border on the ludicrous, as where a child is compared to an unfledged angel fallen to earth, and to be restored to heaven, it should be borne in mind that when Mr. Hare wrote these sermons, and still more at the moment when he sanctioned the publication of them, he was occupied with far other thoughts than how to approve himself to those 'who are nothing, if not critical.' Still this is the danger to be guarded against in the use of familiar illustration; and we notice it the rather, lest the imitators of his style of preaching, of which we foresee many, should be led to tread in Mr. Hare's steps, not in the hundred cases where he has trod straight, but in the two or three where he may have trod awry.

There is another suggestion as to village preaching which the publication before us presents. It is a feature in these sermons, and one greatly to be commended, that they make much use of the *less trite* passages of scripture, whilst those which are in the mouths and memories of all, they take for granted are so, and rather touch than draw out at full length—*guarda e passa*. For instance, to show that the seeds of the heaviest crimes may be lurking in a man's heart, when he least suspects it, the case of Hazael is quoted. 'Is thy servant a dog,' says he to Elisha, 'that he should do this great and terrible thing?' Hazael thought at the time that it was impossible for him to commit such a crime as murder; yet the very day after his return to the King of Syria, 'he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died.' Here we have a passage, not recondite certainly, but still not trite, to exemplify the doctrine. Again, in a sermon on Isaiah lxi. 3—"Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord"—occasion would naturally present itself, it might be imagined, for a reference to the parable of the barren fig tree; and so it does; but Mr. Hare quotes no more of it than the three words of warning with which he closes his sermon, 'cut it down,' satisfied that he thereby touched a spring, and that the memory of his hearers would supply the rest. For he probably considered that the members of a congregation of the Church of England hear certain passages in scripture, the most important passages, no doubt—always once, possibly several times every year of their lives—that those amongst them who have been at weekly or Sunday schools, have learned many such passages by rote—that it may, therefore, be safely presumed that such passages are tolerably familiar to them, and may for the most part be called to their minds by a hint, and that more is superfluous: again, that the Bible is the whole compass of a poor man's literature; and that on this account he is often much better versed in it than greater scholars who are spending themselves upon every work that comes out—that he is therefore frequently not an incompetent judge of the degree in which his minister is master of the scriptures; and that he will be much more likely to listen to him with reverence, when he perceives his range over them to be wide and commanding, than when he suspects his knowledge to be just commensurate with the chapters that occur in the Sunday services.

It is true that the practice for which we are pleading is not that adopted by our reformers in the homilies. The homilies make long and large extracts from the portions of scripture that present the most popular and best known; but when the homilies were composed, it must be recollected, no portion whatever was well known and popular. Latimer's sermons presume upon an utter ignorance of scripture even amongst the highest class of all. When he preached before the Duchess of Suffolk and her household, a family as likely to be intimate with scripture as any of the time, he relates circumstantially, and as though the passages would be strange to his hearers, the interview of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, and the death of Ananias and Sapphira. Even the early deliberate writings of the chief Reformers are not without blemishes which betray that scripture was as yet a novelty even with the best informed. 'The Institution of a Christian Man' talks of Jesus being brought before one Pontius Pilate; of his being bound fast to a pillar; and of Lot and his three daughters; all of them passages revised and corrected in the re-publication of the same work with additions, a few years later, and when the Bible had been more studied, under the title of 'The Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man.' When, however, the Reformation had established itself, it became quite characteristic of the English divines, of Jewell, for instance, eminently, of Hooker, of Sanderson, to have an opposite passage of Scripture for every thing; scripture being found in their hands a mine which might ever be worked, and never worked out; and so far from dwelling upon threadbare quotations, such as might occur to any man just as well as themselves, and thus giving token that it was by virtue of a commission that they occupied the teacher's chair, and not by right of superior knowledge, they were perpetually interesting, and very often surprising, their hearers or readers by the dexterous application of texts not commonly produced, but being produced, to the purpose and decisive; stamping the impression they were wishing to communicate more effectually by the smartness with which they struck it in; and creating at once a reverential curiosity about a book which was found to be so full of resources, and a wholesome respect for the character and office of men who could develop them so successfully. But these were divines who had drank deep in the writings of the Fathers, in several of whom this faculty is remarkable; and whilst we may smile at