

THE SUCCESSION OF MARTYRS

A SERMON.

It is sometimes desirable, on such annual occasions as the present, to call the attention of the assembled brethren to facts and principles identified with our denominational peculiarities. They are regarded by us as important, and they ought to be held in constant remembrance.

For this reason the passage now read, has been selected for our consideration. It relates to the opening of the fifth seal. The Apostle saw in vision under the altar "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held?" They are represented as wondering at the delay of divine vengeance. It seems to them that a crime so heinous as the slaughter of pious men on account of their piety should meet with prompt and condign punishment. They knew not how to reconcile the forbearance of God with his justice, and they exclaim, under the influence of deep emotion, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" In reply, they are bidden to be patient: many more will be put to death for the faith. There will be a Succession of martyrs for ages to come. "The time appointed is long." Individual cases of retribution will occur, but the full and final punishment of persecutors is to be reserved till "the time of the end," and that is far distant. When the number of their suffering "fellow-servants and brethren" shall be "fulfilled," God will "plead his own cause," and raise his church to a state of endless peace and glory.