

PAUL OF SAMOSATA: A TALE OF THE ANCIENT SYRIAN CHURCH.

(By a Correspondent of The Church.) CHAPTER VI. A CHRISTIAN SABBATH IN PALMYRA.

"When we read the records of the early Church, we find truly that the holiness of the primitive saints was very different from ours. There was a healthy vigour and hardness, a zeal and a roughness, chaste, severe, and uncompromising, that contrasts strangely with the feeble and effeminate piety of modern times."

The morning of the "Lord's Day," as the little flock of Christ in early times delighted most frequently to term it by way of reverent distinction, rose brightly on Palmyra. But it ministered no rest nor consolation to the Pagan inhabitants of that now uneasy city. For them it came fraught with no spiritual associations, and on their distracted minds it breathed no hallowed repose. The streets, it is true, were silent and almost untenanted; but it was not the delicious stillness of religious awe. Zenobia, in whose presence alone joy and enterprise seemed to thrive, had taken her departure nearly a week before with all the available forces she could collect, to arrest the advance of Aurelian. Two-thirds of Palmyra's denizens had poured forth on the perilous expedition; all the warlike energy of the city encircled the standard of their darling Queen; and none remained within its walls but those whom extreme youth or old age disqualified from arduous service, and those prudent counsellors to whom their sovereign had confided the care of government during her unavoidable absence. No intelligence had been received of the movements of the host.

At the interior of the consecrated edifice in which the followers of the crucified Jesus had come together on this holy day, to worship the God of their fathers, and to celebrate the praises of the Lamb—No cloud of sorrow nor uneasy care intruded within the tranquil precincts of the sanctuary. Their religion, undisturbed by the agitation without, asserted its mild and soothing sway, elevating the heart above the consciousness of strife; subduing in the breast of each worshipper every throbbing of worldly anxiety, and diffusing around that blessed composure and peace which the world cannot give, and which is the peculiar property of the Gospel of Christ to bestow.

The building in question was commodious, though neither very spacious nor costly; for the Christians in Palmyra were not a numerous or wealthy community. It was amply provided, however, with all the arrangements and decorations essential to the beauty of holiness, for the Christian had not yet learned to lavish on his own personal convenience the portion of this world's goods he was bound to contribute towards the erection of an habitation not altogether unworthy of the Divine Majesty to whom he raised the voice of thanksgiving, or preferred the humble prayer. The porch, with its arched face and public acknowledgment of the transgression which excluded him from Church communion, was at this time vacant, a circumstance which might be explained by the fact, that only a short period had elapsed since the Paschal Festival, when it was customary to release from their humiliation all those terms of self-abasement had not previously expired. Happy times, we may exclaim, when the authority of God's ambassadors was deferred for the sake of Him who imposes it; when the turbulence of modern schism did not, on every occasion, oppose its own fractional importance to the decisions of the universal Church, and the collective intelligence of Catholic orthodoxy!

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"Behold him,—the Godhead veiled in mortality,—in the memorable Garden of Gethsemane! Imagine how exquisite must be the torture, how terrible the agony, when He, who had undergone so much already, and whose triumph was now at hand, finds the cup he has given himself to drink so bitter,—is affected with such a horror of sin and its tremendous consequences,—that he prays the draught may be removed in the very hour when the kingdom of Satan is trembling to its foundation. Tears such as man never shed, exalted by anguish such as man never felt, course down his furrowed cheeks. But mark his pious resignation even in this distress! Follow him to the tribunal of Pontius Pilate, identified for bearing and noble majesty! After receiving the unjust sentence of the weak and timid judge, behold him submitting his body, already wasted by privation and fatigue, to the merciless scourge. See Him,—the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the eternal Tenant of an everlasting throne,—arrayed in the vestments of a fictitious sovereignty; and mark the insulting derision, the contemptuous laugh of the wretched beings of clay who mock their Creator,—not less their Creator because in the disguise of humanity. Accompany him to the scene of his crucifixion; see him nailed to the accursed tree; and give ear to the deep curses and deriding scoffs of priests and populace! But hearken to the affectionate prayer breathed in a spirit of unutterable love by the victim of their persecuting hate:—'Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

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MONTREAL DIRECT. THE NEW LOW PRESSURE STEAMBOATS CHARLOTTE, BYTOWN, and CALEDONIA.

THE CHARLOTTE. Leaves Kingston every Monday, at 2 o'clock, P.M.

THE BYTOWN. Leaves Kingston every Wednesday, at 2 o'clock, P.M.

THE CALEDONIA. Leaves Kingston every Friday, at 2 o'clock, P.M.

FORWARDING, &c. 1844. THE SUBSCRIBERS, beg leave to inform their friends and the public generally, that they will be fully prepared, on the opening of the Navigation, to forward Merchandise and Montreal every alternate day.