

# The BEREAN.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

No. 44.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1845.

[Vol. I.]

NATURE, Whence sprang thy glorious frame?  
My Maker called me and I came.

FLOWERS, Wherefore do ye bloom?  
To strew thy pathway to the tomb.

WINDS, When and whither do ye blow?  
Thou must be born again to know.

OCEAN, What rules thy swell and fall?  
The might of Him that ruleth all.

SUN, What makes thy beams so bright?  
The voice that said "Let there be light."

STARS, Wherefore do ye rise?  
To light thy Spirit to the skies.

PLANETS, What guides you in your course?  
Unseen, unfehl, unfailling force.

TIME, Whither dost thou flee?  
I travel to Eternity.

ETERNITY, What art thou, say?  
I was, I am, will be, evermore TO-DAY.

LIFE, What is thy breath?  
A vapour vanishing in death.

DEATH, Where ends thy strife?  
In everlasting Life.

GRAVE, Where is thy victory?  
Ask Him who rose again from me.  
S. McC.

## THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

Anniversary Sermon for the Church Pastoral Aid Society, May 6, 1844, by the Ven. W. A. SHIRLEY, M. A. Archdeacon of Derby.

LUKE v. 7.

"They beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help."

THE extraordinary draught of fishes which the disciples of our Lord made, after they had, in obedience to his word, let down their nets, may be regarded as, in some sense, an ecclesiastical miracle; so closely connected is it, in our Lord's teaching, with the call of his apostles to an entire devotion to his service: for they left all, and followed him; and also with his encouraging promise of a blessing on their labours—"Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." We, my Christian brethren, have entered upon their labours, and are, in truth, the Lord's soldiers and servants; it is our blessed and noble object to catch men; an object in comparison of which every other which might minister to pleasure, or stimulate ambition, or excite cupidity, sinks into insignificance. I would also observe, that it is not only the ministers of the gospel whose charge it is that they should thus seek to catch men: every baptized Christian becomes, by the very force of that sacrament, a covenanted soldier and servant of Christ; and we unto him if he neglect to serve, and fight, in his Lord's cause! Christ's church militant here on earth is not an army composed solely of officers, but there are all grades, down to the very lowest and most feeble; and there is for all of them abundant and appropriate occupation. Whenever the ministers of religion have come to be regarded as a mediatorial class—as the performers of religious services on the behalf of their people, instead of their leaders and examples in the service of God,—it has always been the symptom of a debased state of religious feeling; and this debasement has been still further promoted by the consequent exaltation of the priestly office, so as to supersede not the privilege merely, but even the duty of private judgment and personal responsibility in religious matters. All are interested in what concerns all. Every member is interested in that which concerns the glory of the Head, and the furtherance of his blessed will—even that every joint may be added to his mystical body, until we all (the universal church) come to the perfect man—the fulness of the stature of Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, whatever be our office or station in Christ's holy church, take heed that we faithfully fulfil the same, and inquire diligently of our Lord and Master what he would have each one of us severally to do. May God grant that the consideration of the passage of Scripture which I have chosen for the subject of our contemplation this evening may be so brought home to our hearts by his Holy Spirit, that we may each of us learn our special duty in the remarkable period in which our lot has been cast, and may have grace to act with a vigour in proportion to the importance of the work in general and to the peculiar demands of the present crisis.

The first point suggested by the text is, I. THE PERIOD OF UNPROFITABLE EXERTION—"We have toiled all night, and taken nothing."

Such periods every Christian knows in his own experience. The time of waiting without apparent success is longer or shorter; and the night during which they thus watch and toil, without any deliverance, or any ray of light, is more or less dark and gloomy. But all know what it is: thus to wait and watch until spiritual strength almost fails, and the eye is weary with looking so long for our God. Under such circumstances we are

like the woman of Canaan, to whose earnest cry the Lord returned at first no answer; and when he did speak, it was not in words of comfort or encouragement, but such as were calculated, one would think, to break a bruised reed, and to quench the smoking flax. Nothing but the assurance that such is not his purpose, could sustain the soul when subject to so severe a trial.

Moreover, the experience of the individual Christian for himself is that also of the minister of Christ for the flock which the Lord hath given him to feed. My reverend brethren know full well what it is to toil all night and take nothing, until they are constrained to say, "Then have I laboured in vain, and spent my strength in vain and for nought." They know what it is not only to have little ground for hope that the Lord is prospering the work of their hands upon them, but also to have hopes which have supported them in the midst of manifold discouragements dashed to the ground by apostasy or schism. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience, until he receive the early and the latter rain;" but when the blossoms which looked so rich in promise do not set, and fall withered to the ground, his heart withers with them, and sinks down within him like lead.

How many of the Lord's servants have thus been tempted to cast away their nets, and to conclude that it was not his will to make them the instruments of his redeeming mercy towards others, whatever designs of love he might have towards themselves!

Nor has this been the case only with individual ministers here and there; but there have been times in which such apparent desertion by Christ has been almost universal, so that a horrible great darkness has come over the entire face of the visible church. The faithful minister has been constrained with the prophet to cry, "I only am left;" and the children of God have mourned in secret that the "faithful were diminished among the children of men."

It is now universally acknowledged that the church of Christ in this our land had been in this sad condition for many years up to the beginning of the present century. The religion professed was decayed, and full of scandal, and the ministers of religion were following the fashion of the world, instead of doing their Lord's battle against it. Our churches were standing indeed, and the ecclesiastical system not only existed, but was vigorous and influential: there was the form of godliness, but the power was gone; for the Spirit of God had departed. Even then there were those who wept in secret over the evils which they saw around them, and which they were not strong enough to correct, or overcome. "They set their face then" (like Daniel) "unto the Lord their God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Yet for a long time the Lord appeared as one that hearkened not. "There was no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." It was, in truth, a very dark night; and they who watched for souls, few in number, and unconnected with each other, were wearied, and almost ready to relinquish their exertions. Many did practically retire within themselves, enjoying personal communion with their God, while they pleaded for their church and nation, and waited for an opportunity more favourable to action.

In God's own time the opportunity for action was provided. To the period of unprofitable exertion there succeeded what I would next notice—

II. THE COMMAND OF CHRIST TO MAKE ANOTHER EFFORT—"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

The will of God that his servants should be called out of their retirements was declared by the raising up of men here and there with peculiar qualifications for the work of invading the kingdom of Satan, and for disturbing the fatal repose in which he was holding the minds of men. He who giveth to every man severally as he will, "some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," but all for the edification of the body of Christ, made it manifest that he designed to build up the church, which is his body, on an enlarged basis, in nobler proportions, and to a greater elevation, by the workmen, such as needed not to be ashamed, whom he was pleased to provide, and employ, at that juncture.

The mind of the Lord was further declared in the very remarkable openings which presented themselves in different and distant places. As the apostle when he had seen in a vision a man of Macedonia praying him, and saying, "Come over

and help us," "endeavoured to go thither, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel there;" so when it was reported that there was in many parts of England a desire for the message of mercy through Christ, that in Wales there was an absolute famine of the bread of life, that in our colonial possessions there were whole districts deprived of the means of grace which they were most anxious to obtain, that in Africa and the East there was a great door opened, though the adversaries were numerous and mighty; there came then over the minds of God's believing and praying people an assured conviction that He who had kept them long waiting was about speedily to avenge their cause, because it was in truth his own cause, and to get himself honour and renown by overturning the kingdom of Satan, and by extending the kingdom of his dear Son. His voice was most distinctly heard saying to the church, "Launch forth into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

Let us then notice, III. THE ANSWER OF THE CHURCH TO HER LORD'S COMMAND—"Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

His obedience was prompt, though his faith was not perhaps free from doubts, as his astonishment at the result clearly proved; for had he fully and firmly believed in his Lord's power, he would have expected what followed, and his expression would have been one of gratitude indeed, but not of surprise. Thus the Lord's people entered upon the work so manifestly provided for them under a sense of dutiful submission to what they gathered to be his declared will, but with very many doubts and misgivings, and with very limited expectations of the result. There was a general movement among men's spirits, and they went to work as those who rebuilt Jerusalem, "fearfully and in haste;" some in one way and some in another; some laying their foundations deep because they saw far into the future, and were confident the work would stand, and others running up their building with much zeal but little foresight, so that it had soon to be done again, and in the meantime put their neighbour's house in peril; but the stir was general; "they arose and built." There was also created an unwonted spirit of combination for public works. Men no longer confined their attention each to his own dwelling, but they encouraged one another to do something in common for the general benefit. It was a period of association. Societies which had for some time existed received, as it were, new life, and other societies were speedily formed. All denominations of professed Christians combined to print, to translate, and to circulate the sacred volume to which they all appealed, and nearly all of them engaged with more or less of zeal in the formation of schools, especially of Sunday-schools, and in the great work of sending forth missionaries to preach the Gospel of Christ among the heathen, to reclaim the victims of the Mahomedan delusion, and to raise up Christian churches which had fallen into the very dust, having departed from the truth as it is in Jesus, and yielded to superstitious and even idolatrous practices. There was much doing, and more designed, but all who hear me know on how small a scale these works were undertaken; how few were "the arrows of the Lord's deliverance" which the church ventured to shoot, and how very limited were the anticipations of success; but yet they obeyed.

(To be concluded in our next.)

## SAYINGS OF BENGELIUS.

[John Albert Bengel, Provost of the Seminary at Herbrechtingen in Württemberg, was born in the year 1687, and died in 1752. He was a man of extensive learning and eminent piety; excellent in practical and doctrinal exposition of Scripture, but often fanciful in interpreting unfulfilled prophecy. It may well serve as a warning to modern interpreters, when they know that this profound scholar fixed upon the year 1836 for the destruction of the apocalyptic beast. In the following gleanings from memoirs published in German, and translated by the Rev. R. Walker, of Parleigh, Bengel's mind appears unbending from the severer pursuits of his profession, but the more attractively exhibiting its familiarity with heavenly things.—EDITOR.]

The vacant Seats in Heaven.—A lady of rank being once in company with Bengel, addressed him as follows: "I hear, Mr. Provost, that you are a prophet; therefore perhaps you can tell us whether, in the world above, there are any reserved seats for people of quality?" He replied, "I certainly, madam, am no prophet, though I acknowledge that God has granted me some acquaintance with his revealed word; and this informs me that reserved seats indeed there are; and, that, alas, most of them are sadly in want of occupants." So I read in Matt. xix. 24, and I Cor. 13. 26.

The poor Sinner.—When he was at Tubingen in 1748, a peasant of the neighbourhood came up to him just as he was leaving the town, and said, how happy he was for once in his life to get a sight of him. "Well, my good friend, you have only seen one poor sinner that depends entirely upon the mercy of God."

Provision for the current day.—"I act," he said, "like the mistress of a family, who, when a visitor comes in unexpectedly, sets before him the provisions she happens to have at hand. For I always, when any friends call upon me, converse with them just about what my mind is engaged in at the time. As I live by the actual use of my breath, without having to consider what quantity of air I have inhaled in time past, so for my present spiritual life I am not obliged to recur to what I dwelt upon yesterday or the day before, but have only to receive as from God, and to make use of, what he gives me every hour for myself, or for ministering to others. When any person has received a profitable word of mine, so that the little seed in the good ground begins to make its appearance, I have often to admire that power from on high, which has rendered beneficial what did not take its origin from me, but of which I, in much weakness and unprofitableness, was only the medium."

Jesus the Standard of our Self-knowledge.—In trying and proving my own conduct, I endeavour to realize some situation in which our blessed Saviour stood; I think of the variety of characters he had to deal with, and how in every case he judged righteous judgement. Then I inquire of conscience how I should have acted had I been one of those characters, and how the Saviour would have replied or acted by me in return. The answer I thus get from myself, in agreement with the tenor of his written word, is of more value to me than any opinion that can be formed of me by others.

Benefit of Retirement.—Retirement secures me from what would be too much of this world's din. Thus I get leisure for building up myself in a recollected consciousness of God: without which, we are liable to pass away our term of life we know not how. Very important is it to discern the golden opportunities which God gives us for this purpose, as well as the precious moments of day or night, when he is specially nigh to us. Meditation is sweet to me at all times, but particularly in the night season. Matt. xiv. 13.

Concealment from the World.—Often have I much wished that I could pass along my appointed way through this world, and be so little noticed as to be no object for the attacks of slander and misrepresentation. This is why I have now heartily declined all learned correspondence with the doctors of the age, and confine myself principally to correspondence with my former pupils. I feel in this respect like that ancient Father, who desired a disciple of his to bury him directly after his decease, and to raise no monument, not even the mould, over his grave.

Bengel to his Biographers.—If friends of mine should ever choose to write any memoir of my life, I can only say, with respect to what they may notice of me as a Christian, that I sincerely hope they will spare themselves the trouble of all eulogy; and let God be glorified. I wish no one to think of me beyond what he seeth me to be; and that what he does see in me may be referred entirely to the divine mercy; for I am but a vessel of that mercy. All I am and have, both in principle and practice, is to be summed up in this one expression—the Lord's property. My belonging totally to Christ, as my Saviour, is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other glory than this, and want no other.

With respect to my writings, as taken notice of in any such delineation of my character, perhaps it will be difficult entirely to acquit me of over-curiosity. But whatever may be said of me as having laboured conscientiously to communicate what I had learnt, the staple nourishment of my spiritual life has been sought, as my friends well know, in gospel truths of the plainest kind. These have I embraced with sincere simplicity of heart and singleness of mind, apart from all subtle refinement and curious investigation. Faith, hope, love, meekness, and humility, have been my cardinal points.

Family Devotion.—Bengel not only read daily in his closet a portion of Scripture for his private edification, but was also a regular maintainer of family worship. For occasions of this sort he made use of Arndt's "True Christianity," "Franke's Sermons," Muller's "Hours of Refreshing," and similar works; in reading which, he sometimes added a few remarks of his own. Thus, one day when reading in his family the 149th meditation in Muller's "Hours of Refreshing," he said—"This is worth repeating again and again. But how will it be when God brings us to the full fruition of the things here expressed! How little will it then matter what has been said, either for or against me, in the journals of literature! How delightful will it be in the blessed world above to meet with pious souls that have reached it, one from this place, and another from that! What a blessing to arrive in the regions of eternal rest, were it only on account of having escaped out of the confusion of this troublesome world! And what a love of God will glow in the heart of every person thus escaped! Yes, he will feel more of it in a single moment, than can be experienced in the whole term of this earthly pilgrimage."

Why we should specially pray for Kings, and for all who are in authority.—"God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 1-5.) Oral teaching can seldom be used effectually for the instruction of "the mighty upon the earth;" this deficiency, therefore, must be

supplied by the intercessions of believers for them.

The true Medium in religious Feeling.—How invaluable is it to possess that entire confidence in God, that implicit trust in him, which is balanced by holy fear before him! To be neither too bold, and over-confident, nor at the same time too diffident and deficient in holy boldness! He who keeps constant watch over himself will soon learn how it is with him in this respect.

Implicit deference to Divine Direction.—Bengel having observed, respecting the ways of Providence, how much often depends upon a single minute circumstance: "look, for instance, (he said) how frequently all the events relating to a young clergyman's marriage and future condition in life, and perhaps the destinies of many hundreds of souls, may be traced up to the apparent accident of a vacancy in some pastoral charge." Here a friend replied, "This is what renders it so serious a matter to decide for oneself; that one is perplexed to know whether one ought to proceed according to one's best judgment immediately, or take more time to wait." "This (said Bengel) is the very thing which makes it so desirable to pray without ceasing."

Reverence at the Name of God the Father.—It is still a custom with many to bow at the name of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit. This custom was adopted in ancient times by the orthodox, to distinguish themselves from those heretics who denied the second or third hypostasis in the Godhead. I use likewise the same outward expression of reverence—why not?—at the name of God the Father. This, I hope, no one will take amiss in me.

Calmness and Equanimity.—A person expressed to Bengel his sympathy for him at being so virulently written against. He replied—"You will not regret this when I tell you, that such very trials teach me only the better how to gather up and strengthen the testimony of my conscience. I have learnt a good method of cheerfully enduring reproach—I think of the reproaches and revilings which the Son of God has been receiving from the Jews for 1700 years, and of his wonderful long-suffering with them all this while. Thus I learn not to fret at a few relics of the same which may be thrown at me."

Real Guilt.—Let us keep ourselves from real guilt, and we need not be disturbed about any idle reports raised against us. Such reports, whether believed or not believed, are easily forgotten, for the world has always some fresh business in hand. It is right to prevent or correct them, if we can do it becomingly; otherwise it is not worth while to think about them.

One consequence of the Fall.—As a labouring person was carrying home upon his shoulders a heavy truss of grass for his cattle, Bengel observed, "See how man is obliged to be servant to the brutes." Surely there is a meaning in this. God intends it for our humility; for it may remind us how the Fall has abased us."

## THE SOCIETY OF GEHENNA.

Let us now suppose, for a moment, a vast assemblage of beings of the description to which I have adverted, collected in a dark and dreary region. Let us suppose many thousands of millions of such characters as Nero, who set fire to Rome, that he might amuse himself with the wailings and lamentations which this calamity inspired, and insulted Heaven by offering thanksgivings to the gods, after murdering his wife and his mother.—Tiberius who delighted in torturing his subjects, and massacring them in the most tormenting and cruel manner.—Caligula, celebrated in the annals of folly, cruelty, and impiety, who murdered many of his subjects with his own hand, and caused thousands who were guilty of no crimes to be cruelly butchered.—Antiochus Epiphanes, who butchered forty thousand of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in cold blood, and rushed forward like an infernal demon, with the intention of destroying every inhabitant of Judea.—Hamulcar, who threw all the prisoners that came into his hands, to be devoured by wild beasts.—Asdrubal, who put out the eyes of all the Roman captives he had taken during two years, cut off their noses, fingers, legs, and arms, tore their skin to pieces with iron rakes and harrows, and threw them headlong from the top of his battlements.—Jenghiz Khan, who caused seventy chiefs to be thrown into as many caldrons of boiling water, and took pleasure in beholding his army beheading a hundred thousand prisoners at once.—Tamerlane, who displayed his sportive cruelty in pounding three or four thousand people in large mortars, or building them among bricks and mortar into a wall.—Mustapha, who treacherously murdered the Venetian officers, after having entered into a treaty with them, and who beheld with delight the noble-minded Bragadino, whom he had cruelly tortured, flayed alive.—Buonaparte, whose mad ambition sacrificed so many millions of human beings, and Lord Byron,\* in whose breast

\* The author trusts that none of his readers will for a moment suppose, that in bringing forward the above-mentioned characters as examples of malignity, he presumes to decide on their eternal destiny. His object merely is to show, that such malignant principles and passions as they displayed in the general tenor of their conduct, if resolutely persisted in, necessarily lead to misery. With regard to Buonaparte and Lord Byron, he is disposed to indulge a hope, that their malevolent dispositions were in some measure counteracted, before they passed into the eternal world. The grounds of his hope, on this point, are stated in the Appendix.

Part of the Appendix, referring to Lord Byron, in our next number. The quotations were taken from "Recollections of the life of Lord Byron, by R. C. Dallas, Esq."—EDITOR BEREAN.