

THE RIVER AND THE SEA.

BY THE REV. J. BRODIE, MONTMAIL, SCOTLAND.

“Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”—ISAIAH XLVIII. 18.

In these words the Redeemer mourns over the perversity of His people, and contrasts the wretched and hopeless condition into which their rebellion had brought them, with the glorious position to which, through His grace, they had been called. The peace promised to his believer—that is, the joy and satisfaction which spring up within him when he receives and rests on the saviour—is compared to a river, His righteousness—that is, his title in the eye of the law to pardon and to acceptance—is likened to the waves of the sea. His peace is the present revenue which his inheritance affords, and no amount of earthly joy can equal its value; his righteousness is the tenure by which this inheritance is held, and no title is so secure as the covenanted promise of God.—These are the elements which confer preciousness on the portion which the Lord bestows on his people; and the similitude employed in our text affords an appropriate illustration, both of their nature, and of the connection that subsists between them.

1. THE PEACE OF THE BELIEVER IS LIKE A RIVER.—Of all the objects that in any landscape can meet the eye, the river is one of the most interesting and beautiful. In whatever aspect it may appear,—whether tossing and foaming among the rocks of the mountain gorge, or smoothly gliding along in the level plain; whether winding through the open field and glittering in the sun, or flowing through the shade of the forest and covered with gloom—the river attracts and delights the observant eye. This is the case even in the well-watered lands of our colder climes. In the sunny regions of the south, where the drought of summer is more severely felt, the beauty of the river is still more readily confessed. The beauty is more especially remarkable when it comes into contrast with the desert plain. It not unfrequently happens that the traveller, after passing through many a weary mile of

burning waste, comes all at once in sight of the valley in which a noble stream is rolling along. A scene of beauty bursts on his view. He sees a smiling plain, stretched out before him, in which meadow and grove alternate with the cultivated field; and herb, and tree, and living thing seem to flourish as in another Eden.—The track over which he has passed is desolate, as if swept with the besom of destruction; the country before him seems bright and fair, as if the blight of sin had never passed over it.—Such is the peace of the believer, and such are the joys of those that keep the commandments of the Lord. And striking as is the contrast between the well-watered banks of the stream and the barren desert beyond them, equally striking is the contrast between the condition of him who walks in “wisdom’s ways,” and the deadness and hopelessness of those who “know not God.”

The sources of the river are many and various—If we trace the river from its mouth, where it pours its treasures into the deep, up to its feeble beginning in the mountain, we find it drawing its supply from a multitude of tributaries, of varied size and course. On one hand, we see a torrent rushing impetuously down the hill; on another, a sluggish brook creeping through the marsh; here a powerful stream bringing down a swelling flood; and there, a little rill, supplying its tiny store. All of them, however, whether great or small, increase the river’s tide. Such is the experience of the believer. At one time a gushing joy fills his bosom, and he feels as if, like the apostle he were caught up to the third heaven; at another, a scanty drop of consolation sustains him in his hour of need; now, he is cheered by the truths that are taught in the mount of ordinances; and again, he is comforted by the lessons imparted in the valley of affliction. Many and manifold are the channels through which the heavenly gift is