

SERMON.

The following sermon was preached in ordinary course to a congregation in the city. It was thought, that it might be useful to the readers of the Journal, and, at our request, Dr. Williamson has consented to its publication.

CARE FOR OUR YOUNG MEN.

2 Samuel, 18 ch., 29 v. "And the King said, is the young man Absalom safe?"

Everything in the life of Absalom recorded in holy writ shows him, however attractive in person, to have been cruel and unprincipled in disposition, and guilty of the worst of crimes. First, after nursing his revenge for two years, he caused his elder, Amnon, to be assassinated. Next, when Joab delayed to come to him, and intercede for him with his father David, he made his servants go and set fire to the crop in Joab's barley field. And at last, after his kind father had been reconciled to him, and had taken him again to his bosom, he treacherously conspired against him, and prevailed by his intrigues and promises with a large body of the Jewish people to proclaim him their king. Nor was he disposed to stop short here. He lent a willing ear, and gave his assent to the proposal that, while quarter should be given to all others in the battle, his seizure of the throne should be secured by the slaying of his own father. This atrocious act of wickedness would, there is little doubt, have been consummated, had it not been for Absalom's own defeat and death.

How great, however, was the love of David even for his evil and rebellious son! He earnestly desired to have the life of Absalom spared, and to have him brought back to him in safety. He still yearned after him, his eldest surviving son, and the most handsome and winning in manners of his children; we cannot but believe, that he longed to have him restored to him, in order that he might be brought by kindness and loving intertreaty to a better mind. It could not indeed be otherwise, from what we know of the character of David himself, who, in all his treatment of Absalom, had shown himself actuated by far higher principles than a mere blind affection. David, had therefore enjoined the captains of his forces, in the battle which was about to take place, to deal gently for his sake with his son. He himself having been prevailed on by the urgent representations of those around him, not to expose his own life, on which so much depended, by engaging in person in the fight, remained seated between the two gates of the city of Mahanuim, anxiously awaiting tidings from the field of conflict. He was still seated there, when at length the watchman from the walls descried first one, and then another messenger running towards the city. Scarcely had they reached the royal presence, when each announced a signal victory gained by the army of David, but the only question which the king asked, with a solici-

tude which overbore every feeling of joy or triumph, was, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And when he was told of his death he gave way to uncontrollable grief, and withdrew himself to his chamber weeping bitterly, and exclaiming as he went, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son."

Well might he grieve for a son who had thus died with the mark of Cain on his brow, and the guilt of intended parricide on his soul. Had he been bereaved of one who had left behind him an honourable name, and a bright example to be followed, David would sorely have felt his loss, but he would have had consolation in his affliction. He could have none such, however, in the case of Absalom, and the thought, that he had been called away in the midst of his career of unnatural enmity and crime, only added poignancy to the woe of his disconsolate father. We see here, what we so often learn when we read of the domestic life, and the cares and sorrows of monarchs that they are after all, even the most exalted, of like passions and affections as their subjects, and in David's anxious enquiry, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" and his grief for his unhappy death, we behold the expression of what ever loving parent in similar circumstances would feel.

We can understand the terrible distress into which David was thus plunged, and when we see the anxious interest of attached parents in the welfare of their children, we sympathize with their deep and tender concern. Let us, however, have something more than a merely sentimental intelligence, and sympathy in this matter, for these are empty things. Let us consider the part which we all ought to take in intelligently promoting the well-being and well-doing of our young people. Let us make use of every means in our power to assist parents in their efforts for their good, and do our endeavour to guard them and their loved ones from consequences which would bring sore trouble upon both. Family affection, however strong and devoted, is bounded by its own circle, but christian affection goes forth to all. It thinks and acts for all as members of the same great family of their heavenly Father, and cares not only for its own, but for the things also of others. No institution can be more perfectly fitted than the Christian family for the proper training of the young, but there are always on the other hand hurtful and counteracting agencies around, to which youth is more or less exposed, and not to speak of households where the bent given to the young mind may be towards evil instead of good, the best efforts of the best parents cannot be expected to be so successful as when others do their duty by seconding them, by being fellow labourers with them, and lending their aid to give greater efficacy to their endeavours. I shall not now speak of the inestimable assistance given to parents in this way by our Sabbath Schools. Our present object is, in connection with the words of our text, to offer some considerations as to our duty to aid in bringing to the faith and obedience