

P O E T R Y.

From the Protestant Episcopalian.

TO BISHOP WHITE,

On his 88th Birth-Day—April 4th, 1836.

“Rightly is it said
That man descends into the VALE of years;
Yet I have thought that we might also speak,
And not presumptuously I trust, of age
As of a final EMINENCE, though bare
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point
On which 'tis not impossible to sit
In awful sovereignty—a place of power—
A throne which may be likened unto his
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks
Down from a mountain top”—Wadsworth.

The poet's fancy must have surely seen,
Some blest old age as thine, loved man, has been,
For thou art standing on a height of years,
The antique mound of hopes foregone and fears.
An undiminished ray from heaven beams o'er
Thy path that's past, and what yet lies before;
While on the eyes around thee there is shed
The promised glory of the hoary head
Some gentle hearted Walton should indite
Thy modest valor in the hallowed fight.
Rest, aged warrior! Thy hand yet grasps the sword
Raised never 'gainst a foe of thine, but of thy Lord.
From thy mount of time, the backward view may trace
A nation's birth, her strife, and early race;
Thy prayer was offered for her stormiest hour,
And still 'tis guardian of her tranquil power;
On thine own brow unclouded light has shone
Of faith, that brightens as thy path leads on.

BERKELEY.

Abridged from the British Critic.

RELATIVE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER AND PREACHING.

We have often wished that there was somewhat less of preaching, and much more of prayer, in this age of religious excitement; more communion of the soul with God, and less of craving after ministrations of man. Our Church has taught us most effectually how to pray. The very essence of the Gospel is embodied in her services. Her Liturgy has been placed, even by the judgment of many who have abjured her communion, above all uninspired devotional compositions. We now confine ourselves, however, to the enlightened testimony of a prelate of our own. “The Liturgy,” says Bishop Jebb, “is not the work of one man, or of one society, or of one age.—Its materials were gradually formed, and safely deposited among the records of various Churches, eastern and western, more or less ancient. And when the time was ripe for its formation, its compilers were led, I verily believe, by wisdom not their own, to proceed on the principle of rejecting whatever was peculiar to any sect or party, to any age or nation; and of retaining that sacred depositum, which had the common sanction of all. It is compiled from almost every form of prayer extant at the time of the Reformation.” So that “in addition to the touchstone of sacred Scripture, we have the *semper et ubique* of the Catholic Church to satisfy us, that this, our national commentary, is formed according to the analogy of faith.” And if this be so, what can be said of those who, with this glorious formulary in their hands, complain that the Gospel is not preached in our Churches? What can be said of those to whom this formulary is a weariness, a sort of tedious overture to the sermon; and who sit drowsily or impatiently in their pews till their fellow mortal rises in the pulpit; perhaps to exercise their restless understanding,—perhaps to give scope to their powers of criticism, or perhaps, alas! to bring down upon them a still deeper spirit of slumber than before! And with what feelings of sorrow (mixed up sometimes with certain emotions more hot and more vorulry than sorrow) must every mature Christian reflect upon the fact, that the fulness or the emptiness of churches may generally be resorted to, as a faithful gauge of measure only of the powers of the preacher? And how must the spirit of such a man be stirred within him, at the thought that if preaching were for a season to be discontinued, most congregations would, probably, exemplify to the letter the *meeting of two or three together!* And what is the melancholy inference from these phenomena, but that there are

multitudes in the land who are far more ready to listen to a man than to speak to God; and this, too, with a form of words before them, in which they are certain that God may be spoken to acceptably?

What, then, it will be asked, do we disparage and set at nought the ordinance of preaching? Would we take down the pulpits, and leave only the desk and the communion table? No—not so. Instruction in holiness and righteousness must never cease. Preaching is one mode and form of instruction; and, therefore, preaching must never cease until the end of all Christian ordinances shall be finally accomplished. Missionaries, of course, must *preach*; preach in the true and original acceptation of the word.—And stationary Ministers must also preach. For though a merely preaching Church can never stand, so likewise, it is true that an unpreaching Church, even though it should rest upon the right foundation, would leave its superstructure in peril of ruinous decay. We are not ignorant or unmindful of the might and efficacy which belongs to powerful preaching of the word. There are difficulties in the Bible which require explanation. There are *apparent* contradictions which stand in need of solution. And the sluggish heart of man requires the voice, and the countenance, and the gesture of his fellow-man to awaken his sensibilities, and to keep his attention on the stretch. It is a part of our nature to be moved by the energies and the emotions of those who are engaged in the same warfare and the same peril with ourselves. “A iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend. *Right words are always forcible*: but never so forcible as when they issue from the lips of one who is the appointed guardian of our interest, whether temporal or eternal. A powerful appeal to the heart and understanding, when it goes forth from a position so commanding and sacred as the pulpit, frequently pervades a whole congregation with the rapidity and the force of electric fire. With the truth of all this every thoughtful man, must be perfectly familiar. But it will likewise be undisputed by any thoughtful man, that the *still small voice* which comes from JEHOVAH himself, is mightier than the sound of the earthquake and the tempest. And this *still small voice* is never heard except by those who lead a life which is sanctified and pacified by prayer. The utterance of a Boanerges is as nothing, when compared with the unutterable groanings wherewith the Spirit helpeth the infirmities of the penitent, or the breathings which go up to heaven from the depths of a broken and a contrite heart. And our conclusion is, that there must be something vicious in the condition of the Church, when the people are habitually impressed with a belief that they cannot have worshipped God acceptably unless they have listened to a sermon; and that a discourse from the pulpit is as absolutely essential to the completeness of their religious services, as the sacrifice of confession and supplication, of thanksgiving and of praise. And still more vicious is the state of things when the sermon is regarded as the pure flour, and prayers as little better than the chaff and bran. And towards this state of things, we greatly fear there is a powerful tendency at the present day; especially in parishes where the congregation is large, and where they who compose it have intelligence enough to be agreeably affected by an exercise of their minds, or an excitement of their feelings. In such situations the Church is too apt to degenerate into a sort of theatre; and the preacher to be regarded almost in the light of a performer; and the people will be too apt to disperse, not so much with a disposition to search their own hearts, as with a propensity to sift the merits of their orator. Their discourse on retiring from the house of God, will probably be,—that Mr. — was wonderfully great to-day! or perhaps, that Mr. — was not quite equal to himself; that he was too tame or too impassioned, or too argumentative, or too declamatory, &c. &c. &c. And all this while, it may be, that the solemn and soothing accents of the Liturgy have passed away from their thoughts, and have left but little more impression than a tale twice told.

Now every one must allow that *these things ought not to be so*. That the blessings of God will rest upon the labors of a faithful preacher is indeed unquestionable. But fervent prayer, and devout reception of the sacrament, bring the soul into immediate communion with the father of spirits himself. It cannot therefore be doubted that if a man would but prosecute the work

of prayer with all his faculties, he might pass weeks and months together without hearing a single sermon, and yet he might so advance in holiness that his profiting should be manifest to all men: whereas, he might devour sermons without number, and yet his spirit might resemble the leanest of the voracious kind. And any one, who will recollect this, must see in an instant how subordinate a rank the hearing of sermons ought to occupy, when compared with the duty of adoration and thanksgiving.—*Churchman*.

A YOUNG MINISTER.

A young gentleman was requested by his father to light an aged friend to his home, one dark night in winter, in a country village. On the road, the old gentleman said to him, “My young friend, will you try to remember the following words? ‘Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own Son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.’” Mal. iii. 16—18. The boy went home and learned the passage; it was infixed upon his mind so that he never forgot it. It now was adopted as a favourite text.—He became an active and pious minister, the rector of a large parish, and had the care of two thousand souls, who looked up to him as a father and a friend. His influence reached far and wide and his example produced the most beneficial effects not only among his own people, but in the extensive city near which he resided. This anecdote should encourage others to improve every opportunity that may present itself, of implanting divine truth in the youthful mind.

PROTESTANT CHURCH IN THE HIGH ALPS, VALLEY OF CHAMPSAUR.

It will not be heard with indifference by any who have read of, and admired the lovely character of FÉLIX NEFF, that the flock among whom he laboured with Apostolic zeal, is scattered as sheep having no shepherd, and Protestantism almost extinguished in the High Alps. Such is stated to be the case, in the London Christian Remembrancer for February, which contains an appeal for aid in behalf of this interesting band of Protestants, who are surrounded by spiritual darkness, or popish idolatry. Since the death of Neff, which occurred in 1829, “his charge, which extended over a district of above sixty miles, has been divided by the French government, into three parts, under the superintendence of three separate pastors.” For the most populous of these, an appeal has been made by their pastor, showing their destitute and suffering condition, who says that he “alone is left to declare salvation to the remains of many once flourishing Churches.” The appeal, we judge, from what has already been done, will not be unheeded.—*South. Churchman*.

Mrs. Hill.—This excellent lady is now in the United States. The restoration of her health, exhausted by long devotion to her arduous charge, and the business of the Mission School at Athens, bring her home. We rejoice that she is here. We rejoice with her at the advancement, which, at every step, will greet her eyes and gratify her heart, in the good work she loves so well. We pray that health and strength may be in every breeze that meets her on her native shores; and that warm hearts and open hands may send her when she must depart, rejoicing on her way, to clear with beams from heaven, the clouded eye of Greece.—*Missionary*.

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