

ails. All that was required of him was to state broadly whether he were willing or not to revoke and recant what he had written?

To this Luther answered:—"Be it so! since it is the desire of his Imperial Majesty, I will repeat my reply, and in few words. I dare not trust to the Pope, nor to the councils, inasmuch as it is notorious, that both have oftentimes erred and been at variance with each other. So long, therefore, as I am not convicted, by the evidence of Scripture, and upon clear grounds, that I have maintained erroneous doctrines, and falsely interpreted those passages in the Bible, which I have invoked, so long I neither can nor will recal one word of what I have advanced. For no upright man will trample upon his own conscience. Here I take my stand; nor can I deal otherwise. Be God my help. Amen."

For the Emperor's sake—he being a native of Flanders, and therefore little conversant with the German tongue—as well as for the information of the foreigners there present, Luther was requested to repeat his answer in Latin. This done, and a discussion among the leading persons at the sitting having ensued upon it, Von Eck again came forward, and endeavoured to prevail upon him to recede from the decisive declaration he had made; representing to him with special force, that it could lead to no good, to renew a controversy respecting matters which had been discussed and decided centuries back; and asking him what would be the fate of Christianity, if every individual were permitted to advance his own views of religion before the public, and require them to be impugned out of Holy Writ? His Imperial Majesty, therefore, afforded him once more the opportunity of saying yea or nay, or in other words, asked him whether he would or would not recant his errors?

At any other time, Luther would have been anxious to meet the charge, which the official's comment had insinuated; but he probably felt that such a controversy would have been ill-timed and out of season, and was evidently overcome by the oppressive heat of the assembly, and the exertions attendant upon an address which it had taken him two hours to deliver. He confined himself, therefore, to requesting, that he might not be pressed further on the subject, as he adhered immutably to the reply he had given.

(To be Continued.)

## THE BELLS OF OLD ENGLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

Rev. Sir,

I have taken in hand a very noisy subject, but I will endeavor to treat it as delicately as possible.

I have seen it asserted in print somewhere—perhaps in Blackwood—but no matter where—that "the English are essentially a bell-ringing people." The phrase suggests an idea that is somewhat grotesque, but I doubt not that the drift of the writer was, in a humorous mood, to predicate of my countrymen a sober truth, viz: that they are pre-eminent in the art mentioned by him, and that while other nations cause bells to clatter and clank with a din that is stunning and offensive to sensitive ears, the English are unrivalled among all in eliciting from them the voice of melody.

At Madrid—I have never been there—but seen it I have, as exhibited in Barker's Panorama, they discard bell ropes, and the bell is operated upon by a man who swings backwards and forwards attached to the apparatus in which the bell is fixed; and if the ear be no more gratified with the sound, than the eye is with the oscillatory motions of the man, their sight and sound are each ludicrous enough.

But what have I to do with Madrid and its bells? My business lies with "The Bells of Old England." How often have I heard them ringing to the wind the notes of sadness or solemnity—or rejoicing from tower and spire, in city and in village! A Village in Old England! How many a pleasing image does the name recall to those who like me have been familiar with the scenes of English rural life? For I have heard

"The curfew toll the knell of parting day,"

And seen—

"The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,"

And marked—

"The plowman homeward plod his weary way,"

And felt—

"The world is left to darkness and to me!"

Not unremembered, too, are the other incidents that wait upon the "fading glimmering landscape;"—"the beetle's droning flight"—"the drowsy tinklings of the distant folds"—"the moaning owl's complaint."

But I am wandering again from my subject, which is, as I said before, "The Bells of Old England." Ah, my dear country! how often have I seen thy hardy honest peasantry, as "I went with them to the house of God with the multitude that keep holy day"—how often have I seen them, sires, sons, wives and daughters wending across the fields on a bright Sunday morning along the numerous paths that centre in the village church embosomed among trees with its spire, towering above them—Heavenwards. Methinks I see them still, young and old, arrayed in their best, pursuing their sinuous course through the waving corn, now clambering over a stile into an adjoining field, now lost from view in some winding hollow, or dimly seen through the intervening stalks. And the bells—what are they doing all the while? Why, they are ringing that chime of three consecutive notes which seems to the ear of childhood to say,

Come to Church! Come to Church! Come to Church!

Or if the spire is tenanted by eight bells †, then six of them are chiming a language which children interpret to mean,

Come to Church, come away! Come to Church, come away!

Ye Puritans! why would ye not suffer more than one solitary bell to summon the worshippers to the house of God? If bells in general be not part and parcel of the "mystery of iniquity,"—if the sound of one,—dull, monotonous, and funereal—be lawful, why should the sound of three or of six—solemn, melodious and tranquillizing,—be a desecration of the Lord's day? Or had ye discovered that the harps of heaven have but one string, that ye would allow the bells on earth to have but one note? Truly had your iron reign continued, England would have lost her best music—a music hallowed by all circumstances—which according equally with social exultation, and with solitary penitence, though it falls upon many an unheeding ear, never fails to find some hearts which it exhilarates, and some which it softens.\*

As for myself, I envy not that man the constitution of his feelings, and of his auditory organ, who cannot testify to the reality of the above representation; who has never felt his heart gladdened while he heard the jocund peal of national rejoicing; or never known what it was to be calmed and softened, when the occasion, the season, the scenery and the distance harmonized with the voice of "England's best music;" or never experienced the revival and the force of early associations, while he has been listening to some sweet strain of music—

\* A strain of the olden time

Falling sad o'er the ear,

Like the dream of some village chime,

Which in youth he loved to hear."

† Perhaps some who read this may have remarked, and may remember the propensity that there is in children who have an ear for music to act the part of interpreters to a peal of bells; and with the help of a little imagination they may be made to utter any thing that is suitable to the occasion. A faint idea of the first-mentioned chime may be formed by sounding the notes B A G in moderately slow and regular succession in the natural key on a flute or other instrument, and of the second by sounding middle D, B, G, —A, F sharp and low D.

‡ In the south of England, the Churches in many villages have eight bells. A village is remembered in Suffolk that was distinguished by the name of Stonham-Ten-Bells, for a circumstance which the appellation explains.

§ Vide Southey, Book of the Church, chap. xiii. where Protector Somerset is described as making war upon the Church Bells from a far worse motive, avarice. They were sold and exported to be cast into cannon.