

SERMON.

A time to weep—a time to mourn.—[Eccles. III : 4.]

THESE words have place among the aphorisms put forth by the preacher-king of Israel, under the general proposition, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." The whole discourse owes its utterance to the ripe experience of old age, directed and controlled by the Spirit of inspiration. Its declarations are not to be taken as mere truisms—the word of God deals not in such—but as containing a seed of Divine truth, needful to be sown in the hearts of men, unto spiritual and heavenly wisdom. This appears, indeed, from their connection in the sacred preacher's discourse; for they lead very directly with him, to the consideration of the glorious works, the gifts, the sovereignty, the eternity, the mysterious Providence, and the righteous judgments of God. They must be regarded, therefore, as expressive of general laws of this life, according to the Divine ordinance, and, at the same time, indicative of human necessity, duty and wisdom.

These three things are clearly involved in the propositions of our text. For tears and mourning are, in their season, and for their causes, of the *necessity* of our common nature. The ties of kindred, of friendship, of brotherhood in the faith, nay, of common humanity—that wide brotherhood in which we all meet—make tears and mourning our *duty*, as well as our necessity. And that they are the part of *wisdom*, too, we may fitly own, in the words of the inspired author of the Book of