

The Church.

"HER FOUNDATIONS ARE UPON THE HOLY HILLS."

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER 1, 12.

VOLUME II.]

COBOURG, UPPER CANADA, SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 1839.

[NUMBER XXXIX.]

Poetry.

SCRIPTURE.

Who shall pierce the mystic wonder
Of Creation's primal birth,
When the Lord, in voice of thunder,
Call'd from nothing,—Heaven and Earth?
Break the written Volume's seal,
God will then Himself reveal.

Who shall tell how that beginning
From its brightness soon declined,
When a single act of sinning
Whelm'd our universal kind?
By God's own avouching pen
It is chronicled for men.

Stops He here? And shall His glory
Float abroad on terror's breath?
Is our brief and piteous story
Circumscribed by birth and death?
Does our God His might proclaim,
But in Earthquake, Storm, and Flame?

Earth shall quake at His descending,
Lightnings herald His career,
Whirlwinds, Nature fiercely rending,
Speak His hour of Judgment near;
But His presence we shall find
In the still small voice behind.

Thus the sacred roll unfolding,
In its front our curse we see,—
Tremble, sinner, while beholding:
What hath Heaven in store for thee?
God alone can aid provide;
Strengthen, cleanse, redeem, and guide.

Onward from those healing pages
Cull the balm for wounds within;
Learn how Mercy wrath assuages,
Mark how Love atones for sin!
Blazon'd by the self-same hand,
There both Guilt and Pardon stand.

Rev. Edward Smedley.

THE ENGLISH LAYMAN.

No. XX.

SACRILEGE.

If there were an act of parliament, which authorized the stronger to rob or kill the weaker, I do not think any man will say, that it is less murder or theft before God, than if there were no such act; and, I confess, I cannot apprehend how spoiling or defrauding the church can be less sacrilege, by what authority soever men are qualified to commit it.—*Lord Clarendon.*

We need not go many ages back to see the vengeance of God upon some families raised upon the ruins of churches, and enriched with the spoils of sacrilege.—*Dr. South.*

In the present age of intellectual presumption, when the triumphs over matter, and the clearer insight into the secrets of Nature which God permits to his creatures, are ascribed to the growing perfection of the human mind, with but little reference to the universal Creator, and with almost a total forgetfulness of that leading article of the Christian faith, the doctrine of original sin;—at such a period, it is no wonder that man, in the pride of his vaunted knowledge, should deride the monitor who would recall his attention to the humiliating truth, that in pushing the freedom of thought beyond the bounds which Revelation has assigned to it, he is but enlarging the dominion of error, and losing sight of a principle, which, revolting as it may be to his vanity as a philosopher, is necessary to his spiritual salvation. It is indeed to be hoped that, so long as the world endures, the human mind may travel onward to new discoveries, which shall still more strikingly manifest the goodness and greatness of God,—and that the more the immaterial part of man becomes refined, the more he may be convinced of the truth which science too often obscures, and which is clung to more firmly by the peasant than the sage, that our existence is eternal, and that on the use we make of it here below, depends our second and unchangeable condition hereafter.

We live in an age when new discoveries are daily starting to light, that but a very few centuries ago would have been attributed to the force of magic. Of course the results of these vast acquisitions to the kingdom of science, and of this extension of man's dominion over the elements and the material world, are, upon the whole, beneficial to the human race. But like every other improvement under the sun,—like the invention of printing,—like even the first and continued promulgation of our blessed religion itself,—they are not unaccompanied by their alloy of evil—evil not inherent in or inseparable from them, but ingrafted on them by man, himself an erring and peccable being, who can handle nothing but what he infects more or less with his own moral corruption, and whose most perfect work attests his fallen nature. The spirit of the nineteenth century seems to be that of Intellectual Pride,—a pride that scorns to ascribe the sources of its glorying to the Ruler of the Universe,—that overlooks simple truths, almost co-etaneous with the infancy of the world,—that teaches man to believe nothing but what he can see,—that laughs to scorn the true and precious wisdom of experience,—and that cannot bear to rear its own fabric but on the ruin of ancient habits of thought, principles recognized through the lapse of centuries, and truths written in the volume of Faith, and illustrated in the book of Nature.

This daring spirit, amongst the various objects of its hostility, has proclaimed defiance to the lessons which History furnishes for our instruction, and has unsettled the world's belief in many a wholesome maxim of social or political bearing, now stigmatized as a remnant of superstitious days, a monkish legend, or a nursery tale. Religion, as its greatest and most uncompromising enemy, it has assaulted, but not by open siege. It has contemplated the overthrow of this formidable antagonist by the insidious mine, the masked battery, and the workings of treachery,—for it would not do to unveil too suddenly its real and startling

design of abolishing Christianity altogether. It has, therefore, endeavoured to rob religion of all that external support, and human apparatus which, as an institution partly human as well as divine, it requires for its maintenance. The possessions of the Church are represented as invested with no greater inviolability than the property of a private individual,—as trappings that only encumber and enfeeble the goodly form of the Christian Faith; and it is proposed as a task worthy of a philosophic and enlightened age to strip the Priesthood of its revenues, and devote them to secular purposes.

History, however,—much of a dead letter, or an old almanack as it may have become to the innovator and free-thinker of the present day,—has not yet lost all its application, and still frequently serves as a beacon to guide the Statesman, to point out the shoals and wreck-strewn rocks to the rash but well-meaning theorist, and to lighten the course of the Christian Conservative while weathering the perilous storm. History tells us that to rob the Church, is to rob God,—and that to rob God, is to plunge families, generation after generation, and nations, century after century, into a series of the most appalling calamities,—the instruments for the infliction of which are the spoils of sacrilege, the crime and the punishment in one.

The Reformation in England,—though it is an era in which whenever our country ceases to glory she will have descended from her greatness,—brought along with it in the train of its immense good, a host of evils from which we are suffering even at this present moment. The zeal that cried aloud for the restoration of the Church to its pristine purity was swelled by the voices of many, who, in the great political convulsions that must ensue, foresaw the probable transfer of ecclesiastical property to lay hands, and favoured the progress of the New Learning, not with a single eye towards God, but with a selfish regard to their sordid and unholy desires. The wickedness and crooked designs of men were, by the workings of Providence, over-ruled to wholesome ends; and actions that had the prince of darkness for their instigator contributed to the diffusion of the Gospel of Light. It was an epoch, however, which opened a wide field for the ravages of sacrilege; and, as the consequences of that crime to its perpetrators are so legibly written in the page of English History, it will not be inopportune at a season so momentous as the present to the religious interests of Upper Canada for generations after we of this day shall be but undistinguishable dust, to point attention to the writing on the wall,—to prevent, if it be possible, the holy vessels of the temple from being desecrated by an application to profane uses,—and to denounce the alienation from its legitimate appropriation of what George the Third and his Parliament dedicated to the altar of Protestantism.

In spite of the mild firmness with which Cranmer,—and the bold, homely expostulation with which Latimer opposed the *Step-Lords* who seized on the property of the Church, at the dissolution of the Monasteries,—the plunderers were too powerful to be resisted by so feeble a weapon as the crossier. Yet God who permitted this iniquity, and by allowing the principal men of the kingdom to gorge themselves with spoils, the retention of which ensured their opposition to the restoration of Popery, did not leave himself without a witness even in the earliest days of the Reformation; for it was not long before the sin of sacrilege worked its own well-merited punishment, and its fearful consequences became visible to the most careless observer. "Archbishop Whitgift," I quote from Blunt's excellent Sketch of the Reformation, "in his appeal to Queen Elizabeth against the sacrilegious designs of the Earl of Leicester and others, challenges this as a truth 'already become visible in many families, that church land, added to an ancient and just inheritance, hath proved like a moth fretting a garment, and secretly consumed both.' Lord Burleigh, whose bias was rather that of the Puritan than of the Roman Catholic cautioned Thomas, his first-born, not to build on an inappropriation, as fearing the foundation might hereafter fail. 'I charge you,' was one of the three injunctions laid upon his son by Lord Stafford when under sentence of death, 'touching church property never to meddle with it; for the curse of God will follow all them that meddle with such a thing that tends to the destruction of the most apostolical church upon earth.' And even Selden (no violent advocate of ecclesiastical dues) censures the alienation of tithes. 'And let them remember,' he writes, 'who says, It is a destruction for a man to devour what is consecrated.' In general this ill-gotten and ill-applied wealth served only to verify the adage that 'the Devil's corn goes all to bran.' The receivers of the plunder rarely prospered, and it is observed by Sir Henry Spelman, about the year 1616, that on comparing the mansion-houses of twenty-four families of gentlemen in Norfolk, with as many monasteries, all standing together at the dissolution, and all lying within a ring of twelve miles the semi-diameter, he found the former still possessed by the lineal descendants of their original occupants in every instance; whilst the latter, with two exceptions only, had flung out their owners again and again, some six times over, none less than three, through sale, through default of issue, and very often through great and grievous disasters." Lord Clarendon, when writing in 1641, alludes, as to an indisputable fact, "to the misfortunes which have often befallen the posterity of those who have been eminently enriched by those sacred spoils."

The ancient title-deeds and charters, under which cathedrals and religious establishments held their endowments, almost invariably contained a clause, denouncing eternal vengeance on any one who should dare to divert the bequest from the pious uses to which it was consecrated by the donor. One of the most fearful denunciations of this description runs as follows: "If any one shall wish to augment and enlarge this bequest may God enlarge his portion in the book of life: if any one shall dare to infringe upon or lessen it let him know that, at the tremendous day of judgment, he will have to answer for it before God and his angels."

Highly defensible, considering the temper of the age, as I consider these solemn imprecations to be, I will not stop to defend them, but will pass on to show, by two very striking instances, that Lord Stafford spoke from no promptings of superstition, but from a profound observation of the workings of God's Providence, when he said to his son, 'I charge you touching Church property never to meddle with it.'

The Lands of Sherborne, in the county of Dorset, were bestowed upon the see of Canterbury in a charter, containing a clause similar to the one I have cited. This property, after many changes of ownership, fell into the hands of the Protector Somerset, notorious for his unbounded stomach in devouring the property of the Church; and it was while hunting in the woods of this domain that he was summoned to London, and committed to the Tower on the charge which led to his execution. The forfeited estate was then restored to the Church, and remained in its possession till the reign of Elizabeth, when, through indirect and discreditable means, it was extorted from the Bishop of Salisbury, himself suspected of connivance at the alienation, by the celebrated Sir Walter Raleigh. It then became the favourite resort of this illustrious man, when desirous of snatching a short respite from the anxieties of his chequered career; and so much was he attached to the spot, that he built a noble mansion upon it, and greatly embellished the domain. Subsequently, when, on one occasion, he saw a political storm approaching that threatened the destruction of his fortunes, he settled the estate upon his eldest son. The foresight of Raleigh was not belied by events, but, through a flaw in the conveyance, basely and arbitrarily taken advantage of, Sherborne fell into the hands of the Crown after his trial. The infamous Earl of Somerset, the favourite of James I., then got possession of it; but by the generous exertions of the short-lived Prince Henry it was purchased for him of the minion by his father, to enable him to restore it to Raleigh, the worthy object of his youthful admiration. The death of this promising youth prevented the completion of his truly royal purpose, and the fatal possession reverted to the favourite, who, being implicated in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, did not long enjoy his second investiture. It was a popular, and cannot be called a weakly superstitious remark, that all concerned in the various changes that attended the possession of the Sherborne Estate were smitten with some heavy misfortune,—the faithless Bishop, who died overwhelmed with debt and distress—the lamented Prince Henry—the Raleighs, father and son,—and the guilty Somerset, had all been reached by the prophetic denunciations of the charter. Sherborne ultimately passed to the noble family of Digby—with them it now remains,—and long may it so remain, for the Digbys are a noble race attached to the altar and the throne!

The other instance is that of Cowdray Park, once the venerable seat of the Lords Montacute in Sussex: the history of which may be gathered from the following interesting note of Mr. Croker's, in his edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson:—"There is a popular superstition that this inheritance is accursed, for having been part of the plunder of the church at the Dissolution; and some lamentable accidents have given countenance to the vulgar prejudice. Cowdray was destroyed by fire in 1793, and when the Editor visited its ruins twenty years ago he was reminded (in addition to older stories) that the curse of fire and water had recently fallen on Cowdray; its noble owner, Viscount Montague, the last male of his ancient race, having been drowned in the Rhine at Schaffhausen, within a few days of the destruction of Cowdray: and the good folks of the neighbourhood did not scruple to prophesy that it would turn out a fatal inheritance. At that period the present possessor, Mr. Poyntz, who had married Lord Montague's sister and heiress, had two sons who seemed destined to inherit Cowdray; but on the 7th July 1815, these young gentlemen boating off Bognor with their father on a very fine day, the boat was unaccountably upset, and the two youths perished; and thus were once more fulfilled the forebodings of superstition."

Nor has England, as a nation, suffered less severely, than some of her principal families, from the shameful sacrilege committed on the revenues of the Church at the period of the Reformation. The property originally bequeathed by our pious ancestors for the maintenance of a resident clergy became the spoil of courtiers, more destructive and desolating than an army of locusts; and, as the population increased, and the temples of the national religion, too far scattered, or too limited in dimensions could not hold the growing multitudes,—false doctrine, heresy, schism, and infidelity overspread the land, till these great evils were in some degree absorbed in the lesser one of Dissent, that occupied the vacant ground. Had the property of the Church remained untouched and undiminished, and been appropriated to objects in accordance with the purer faith that superseded the human doctrines of the Papacy, the present generation in England would not have been called upon to repair the ravages of a former age;—and England, with a sufficient, and perhaps even abundant, spiritual provision for her own wants, might, out of her superfluity, have been more largely contributing towards the relief of colonial destitution, and the evangelization of the heathen world.

And if such evils have fallen upon England, and her sister kingdom of Scotland, from the sin of sacrilege only partially committed, what have we not to dread in this colony from the total waste of God's heritage,—from the secular appropriation of the Clergy Reserves? Should the Utilitarian succeed in robbing God's altar of its consecrated fire, is he not applying a torch to the time-honoured fabric of the British Constitution? Will the wide canal, bearing on its bosom a thousand sails,—will the spacious road of the firmness of marble, and impenetrable to weather,—will the noble pier, giving shelter and anchorage to the bark of commerce,—will any public work, however conducive its erection to public prosperity, if its expence be defrayed out of the treasures solemnly set apart for the preaching of God's

word through time to come,—prove a blessing to our descendants? The answer is written in the breast of every one possessing a spark of religion—it is recorded in the annals of history,—and it is found in the Scriptures of inspiration:—

WILL A MAN ROB GOD? YET YE HAVE ROBBED ME. BUT YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE ROBBED THEE? IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS.

YE ARE CURSED WITH A CURSE; FOR YE HAVE ROBBED ME, EVEN THIS WHOLE NATION.

ALAN FAIRFORD.

Toronto, 7th March, 1839.

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

No. XIX.

MOUNT SINAI.

Exodus xix. 20.—"And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mount."

I stand upon the very peak of Sinai, where Moses stood when he talked with the Almighty. Can it be, or is it a mere dream? Can this naked rock have been the witness of that great interview between man and his Maker? where, amid-thunder and lightning, and a fearful quaking of the mountain, the Almighty gave to his chosen people the precious tables of his law, those rules of infinite wisdom and goodness which, to this day, best teach man his duty towards his God, his neighbour and himself? The scenes of many of the incidents recorded in the Bible are extremely uncertain. Historians and geographers place the Garden of Eden, the paradise of our first parents, in different parts of Asia; and they do not agree upon the site of the lower Babel, the Mountain of Ararat, and many of the most interesting places in the Holy Land; but of Sinai, there is no doubt. This is the holy mountain; and, among all the stupendous works of nature, not a place can be selected more fitted for the exhibition of Almighty power. I have stood upon the summit of the giant Etna, and looked over the clouds floating beneath it, upon the bold scenery of Sicily, and the distant mountains of Calabria; upon the top of Vesuvius, and looked down upon the waves of lava, and the ruined and half recovered cities at its foot; but they are nothing compared with the terrific solitudes and bleak majesty of Sinai. An observing traveller has well called it 'a perfect sea of desolation.' Not a tree, or shrub, or blade of grass is to be seen upon the bare and rugged sides of innumerable mountains, heaving their naked summits to the skies, while the crumbling masses of granite all around, and the distant view of the Syrian desert, with its boundless waste of sands, form the wildest and most dreary, the most terrific and desolate picture that imagination can conceive. The level surface of the very top, or pinnacle, is about sixty feet square. At one end is a single rock about twenty feet high, on which, as said the monk, the Spirit of God descended, while, in the crevice beneath, his favoured servant received the tables of the law. There on the same spot where they were given, I opened the sacred book in which those laws are recorded, and read them with a deeper feeling of devotion, as if I were standing nearer and receiving them more directly from the Deity himself.—*Incidents of Travel, by an American.*

EASTERN HOMAGE.

PSALM lxxii. 9.—"His enemies shall lick the dust."

This Psalm, considered by eminent critics as written by David for Solomon, is generally, if not universally acknowledged, by writers on the Bible, to have a reference to the Messiah's kingdom, since many things in it could only be strictly true of Christ: its duration as long as the sun and moon, the subjection of all kings to its authority, the happiness of all its subjects, and the universal honours of the King, admit of no other application; so that, if written in honour of the illustrious king of Israel, "a greater than Solomon is here."

The language expressed in the passage above given, is descriptive of the ultimate subjection of Christ's foes to his supreme authority, whether we consider them as voluntary servants bowing before him, and subdued by his mercy: or involuntary, and so forced to bend beneath his power. The allusion of this passage is to the obsequious reverence with which an eastern monarch is approached.

Mr. Hugh Boyd, in his account of his embassy to the king of Candy, in Ceylon, describes the manner in which his companions approached him. "They almost literally licked the dust; prostrating themselves with their faces almost close to the stone floor, and throwing out their arms and legs."

The lower class of people in Japan also observe a profound silence when their princes pass, and fall prostrate on the ground, in order to show their respect. So with the Turks, as soon as an ambassador sees the Sultan, whether at the window or elsewhere, he immediately falls down on his knees, and kisses the ground.—*Weekly Visitor.*

THE EAGLE.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 11, 12.—"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him."

We have a very animated and beautiful allusion to the eagle, and her method of exciting her eaglets to attempt their first flight, in that sublime and highly mystic composition called "Moses' song;" in which Jehovah's care of his people, and methods of instructing them how to aim at and attain high and heavenly objects, are compared to her proceedings upon that occasion. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so Jehovah alone did lead him." The Hebrew lawgiver is speaking of their leaving their Egypt. Sir Humphrey Davy had an opportunity of witnessing the proceedings of an eagle after they