

OUR PILGRIMAGE.

ABSTRACT OF A SERMON BY REV. W. ARTHUR, M.A.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—Heb. xi. 13.

IT seems a very common thing to take the word "pilgrim" in its religious sense as very nearly identical with the word "hermit"; but the two not only differ, but in some respects very strongly contrast. The hermit is a personage who never appears in the Bible; or if he does appear, it is in some very distant glimpses indeed. He is not found, either in the old or in the new dispensation, as having any part in the appointments of the people of God; but the hermit is one of the favourite institutions of heathenism, and was, in olden times, prevalent over all the great ancient countries. The idea was early adopted in Egypt, and from Egypt it diffused itself over all the West, even to our own country. The hermit is one who has a quarrel with human society, and takes it to be his business to get as far away from mankind as circumstances will permit him. He may effect the separation by locality, by getting into a desert; he may effect it by confining himself within the walls of a convent, by getting up a tree, or living on the top of a pillar, as has sometimes been done. He may confine that separation to costly and particular habits and vows; but still his great idea is to separate himself from human society, and so cut out that part of human nature that does not lie built up within the four walls of his own person.

Now, this is by no means the character of the pilgrim. The pilgrim is quite another personage. He has no quarrel with human society. He does not purpose to separate himself from mankind. On the contrary, pilgrims have been remarkable in every age and nation for being social, for seeking in their pilgrimage as many companions as they can possibly gather together, and for cheering their pilgrimage with as many comforts as they can carry through the journey, and with as many songs, and as much intercourse, and as much vivacity and pleasure of every kind as they can possibly command. But the pilgrim is one who has a point at which he is aiming, and a purpose for which he aims at it; and no matter what land he has to traverse, however pleasant it may be, it must not tempt him to stay, or however foul it may be, it must not discourage him so that he turn back. He has to go on; if it be a desert, to cross it in spite of its difficulties; if it be a garden, to cross it in spite of its flowers, and still to go on. The definition of the character of a

pilgrim cannot be more complete than what is given in the verses immediately following our text, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." That is a pilgrim—one who has an object in his eye, and is pressing on towards that object. Let us consider this pilgrimage: its starting point, its course, its end.

THE STARTING POINT with men now of this pilgrimage is, as in the case of Abraham, *that they go out*. Abraham was dwelling in what was then the fairest and noblest of all lands, where the two grand rivers rush down from the north towards the south, tending eastward as they go, and fill the earth with fertility; whilst the great sun above, taking advantage of these waters, nourishes all the loveliest fruits and flowers and trees that earth and heaven together can produce in this world of ours. There, where man's dwelling had arisen, and

cities and villages, and the proud towers of Babylon, and many a monument the foundations of which we are finding out in our own day had sprung up, there was the place where Abraham dwelt. And the word came that he must go out. Go whither? Not eastward towards the rising sun, to new and lovelier countries if they could be found out; but he must turn westward towards the setting sun, must turn his back upon the beautiful fields of Mesopotamia, must face that frightful Syrian desert. Wild and forbidding it is, but he has to do it. He goes out and faces the desert; and if you start upon a pilgrimage to God, it will be by going out. Every man has his own pleasant place, his own banks of the Euphrates, his own Ur of the Chaldees, his own sweet fields of possession or of imagination. They may be very limited, but still, while a man is a sinner without God, there are sweet charms continually around him inviting him to continue in his sin. Come out, come out!—out of the world,



THE REV. W. ARTHUR, M.A.

(From a Photograph published by Appleton and Co., Bradford)

out of your own sins, out of all that you value that leads you away from Christ, out of the paths that go downward and not upward; out of the ways that are broad, not narrow; out of the habits that the crowd are practising, and not God's people; come out, out to-night! Don't say, "I think I am; I hope I shall; I am thinking of it." Do it! Leave your sins and sinful ways, and turn your face to the Cross, to the Saviour; and if it be a desert, and if you have to encounter all kinds of trial, well, the pilgrim must take desert or meadow as he goes. He is going to seek a country, and must not be deterred by little things or invited to delay by any, whether little or great.

AS TO THE COURSE of the pilgrimage, we see by the text that the individuals alluded to persevered. They declared that they sought a country, and Paul says, "If they had desired to return to the country from whence they had come