

The Church.

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.

VOL. I.]

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Original Poetry.

For the Church.

"The people which sat in darkness, saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up."—MATTHEW, iv. 16.

Deep fixed in gloom, behold the human race
Strangers and exiles from redeeming grace:
Dark superstition spreads her mystic veil,
And thousands sit within destruction's pale;
No glimpse to them of future joy appears,
No light to cheer them through this vale of tears;
No heavenly home beyond the chilly grave,
No hope to comfort, and no grace to save.
To heathen gods, they costly temples rear,
And daily mockeries are offered there;
While nought but death and darkness lies within
These painted sepulchres of guilt and sin.

Forth through the gloom of this unbounded night,
The "Star of Bethlehem" beams upon the sight!
A glorious herald from the realms above,
It ushers in the reign of peace and love!
The "morning stars" their sweetest strains employ,
The "sons of God" exult, and leap with joy.
A Saviour born the cherubims proclaim,
And heavenly seraphs echo back the name;—
A Saviour promised since the world began,
To bear the sins of lost, degraded man.

Low in a manger lies his infant head;
Angels are minst'ring around his bed;—
Earth's great philosophers together bring
Their costly tribute to the new-born King;
They bow the knee, they breathe the fervent prayer,
They pay their vows, and humbly worship there.

Soon on the work, for which his father sent,
His thoughts, his soul, his energies are bent;
He wanders ceaselessly from place to place,
Proclaiming life to Israel's fallen race.
At his command the blind receive their sight,
The poor are comforted with Gospel light;
At His command the dead are raised to life,
The winds are hushed, the billows cease their strife;—
The sick, the lame, his mercies each display,
And devils fearing, tremble and obey.
He thirsts, he hungers, in another's stead,
He "hath not where to lay his kingly head."
He groans in agony, he yields his breath,
To ransom sinners from eternal death.
His final prayer, his enemies in view—
"Father! forgive, they know not what they do!"

He dies, and lo! the sun is veiled in gloom,
God's holy prophets issue from the tomb;
The temple's veil is rudely rent in twain,
And nature trembles for a Saviour slain;—
He sleeps in death for those he loved so well,
He lives, to triumph over death and hell.

Now on the winds the gladd'ning impulse springs,
Love in its aspect, "healing on its wings."
Tidings of joy now speak to every land,
And earth proclaims the working of his hand.
Like "dew on Hermon" seasonably shed,
Or precious ointment poured on Aaron's head,
It spreads, invigorates, refreshes all
Within the circle where its blessings fall.
Behold its conquest over earthly lust,
See gods and idols crumble into dust;
Each pagan mystery, each heathen rite,—
All are dispelled by its pervading light.

Now mark the sound that swells upon the ear,—
Thousands proclaim and echo, "God is here."
Up to the skies unnumbered voices raise
A mingled harmony of solemn praise.
Nations and kingdoms, prostrate at his throne,
Confess JEHOVAH to be God alone.
Wide o'er the world extends his vast domain,—
A holy, boundless and eternal reign!

N. R. H.

Toronto, 20th February, 1838.

MR. SIMEON'S TEA-PARTIES AT CAMBRIDGE.*

The report may have reached you, that our dear father in Christ was in the habit of receiving at his rooms, on Friday evenings, those members of the university who might be desirous of profiting by his valuable instructions. Such practical or critical difficulties as had been met with during the preceding week, in the course of private study, or in social intercourse with Christian brethren, were brought by us gownsmen to the Friday evening tea-party, to be propounded to Mr. Simeon. And although I fear that, in some instances; those who were present abused the privilege afforded us; and asked 'foolish and vain questions,' for the purpose of displaying their own wit and cleverness of parts, and, perhaps, with the mean hope of being able to say, 'I have puzzled Mr. Simeon'—I say, though it is to be regretted that some, towards the latter part of his life, took dishonourable advantage of his impaired faculties, and went only with a view to entangle him in his speech—yet much do I err in judgment, if many will not have occasion to praise God with eternal praises for benefits received at those important and instructive meetings.

I must bring you, then, into Mr. Simeon's audience-chamber, where my mind's eye sees him seated on a high stool at the right-hand side of the fire-place. Before him are the benches, arranged for the occasion, occupied by his visitors. Even the window-recesses are furnished with seats, which, however, are usually filled the last, notwithstanding the repeated assurances

* Communicated from the Christian Journal by a correspondent who was present on the interesting occasion here described.

of our venerated friend, somewhat humorously expressed, that he has taken special pains to make the windows air-tight, and has even put the artist's skill to the test with a lighted candle. 'I shall be very glad,' he would say, 'to catch from you every cold that you catch from the draughts of my windows.'

At the entry of each gownsmen he would advance towards the opening door, with all that suavity and politeness which you know he possessed in a remarkable degree, and would cordially tender his hand, smiling and bowing with the accomplished manners of a courtier: and I assure you we deemed it no small honour to have had a hearty shake of the hand, and a kind expression of the looks, from that good old man.

If any stranger was introduced to him at these meetings, he would forthwith produce his little pocket memorandum-book, and enter, with due ceremony, the name of his new acquaintance, taking care to inquire his college, and such other matters as he deemed worthy of being registered. Sometimes, too, he would comment, in his own way, upon the name he was writing, or make some passing quaint remark, which would put us all into a good humour.

As soon as the ceremony of introduction was concluded, Mr. Simeon would take possession of his accustomed elevated seat, and, gathering up his feet till they rested upon one of the higher bars under the stool, would commence the business of the evening. I see him even now, with his hands folded upon his knees, his head turned a little to one side, his visage solemn and composed, and his whole deportment such as to command attention and respect. After a pause, he would encourage us to propose our doubts, addressing us in slow, and soft, and measured accents:—'Now,—if you have any question to ask,—I shall be happy to hear it,—and to give what assistance I can.' Presently one, and then another, would venture with his interrogatories, each being emboldened by the preceding inquirer, till our backwardness and reserve were entirely removed. In the meantime, two waiters would be handing the tea to the company; a part of the entertainment which the most of us could have well dispensed with, as it somewhat interrupted the evening's proceeding; but it was most kindly provided by our dear friend, who was always very considerate of our comfort and ease.

It is my purpose, if you will so far indulge me, to give your readers the substance of some conversations which took place in Mr. Simeon's rooms, on May 3, 1833. This was the most interesting and solemn Friday-evening meeting that I ever attended. I never saw the holy man of God more full of the spirit of his Master. His words were distilled as honey from his lips: at least they were very sweet to my taste; and their savour, I trust, I have still retained. On that memorable evening, such a deep sense of his own unworthiness rested upon his soul, that he was low in self-abasement before God. All his language seemed to be, 'Lord, I am vile;' and his very looks spake the same.

While the impression was fresh and vivid upon my mind, I wrote down his observations, on leaving the room, as correctly as my memory would allow. In order to be concise, I shall give them as proceeding directly from his mouth; together with the questions with which they originated. By this plan, you will be able to see in what way these meetings were conducted.

One asked, 'Pray, sir, how do you understand Romans xi. 32?' The passage was turned to, and, after a moment's consideration, the reply was given, to the following effect:—

'All men have sinned: and there is but one way of salvation for all. Both Jews and Gentiles must look for mercy only in the free grace of God by Jesus Christ. Deep humiliation is what most becomes guilty rebels. Having no hope but in the mercy of God, we should approach him as Benhadad approached king Ahab, with sackcloth on our loins and ropes upon our heads; and our language should be that of his servants, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings."

Again: when he suspected that any of his hearers were desirous to draw him upon controverted ground, he would soon put an end to their design by a short and pithy reply. Of this, the following is an instance, which occurred on the same evening:—

'What does the apostle mean, sir, when he says, in 1 Tim. iv. 10, that God "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe?"'

Mr. Simeon replied: 'Of all, potentially; of them that believe, effectually. Does that make it clear to you? Then, to render the subject practical, he added, 'Faith is a simple apprehension of Christ. It is not merely believing that he is the Saviour of the world; but it is believing in him as peculiarly suited to our own individual cases. It is not the saying, "Oh, now I see I am to be saved in this way, or in that way:" this, so far as it goes, is very well: but the gospel simply declares, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

'What, sir, do you consider the principal mark of regeneration?'

'The very first and indispensable sign is self-loathing and abhorrence. Nothing short of this can be admitted as an evidence of a real change. Some persons inquire, "Do you hate what you once loved, and love what you once hated?" But even this mark cannot be so surely relied upon as the other. I have constantly pressed this subject upon my congregation, and it has been the characteristic of my ministry. I want to see more of this humble, contrite, broken spirit amongst us. It is the very spirit that belongs to self-condemned sinners. Permit me to lay this matter near your hearts. Take home with you this passage, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways; and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your

own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations;" and to-night on your beds, or in the morning, meditate thus within yourselves: 'Loathe!—why if I loathe and abhor any thing, I cannot look upon it without disgust. The very sight of it gives me great pain and uneasiness. I turn away from it as from something abominable and hateful. Have I ever thus loathed and abhorred myself, at the remembrance of my iniquities and abominations?' This sitting in the dust is most pleasing to God. When we carry our thoughts to heaven, and consider what is going on in that blessed region, we behold angels and archangels, throwing their crowns at the feet of Him that sitteth upon the throne, in whose presence the cherubim veil their faces with their wings. I have been into the company of religious professors, and have heard many words about religion; but give me to be with a broken-hearted Christian, and I prefer his society to all the rest. In these days there is too much of talking about religion, and too little of religion itself. On this subject, I remember having read a passage in the life of a pious man, who observed on his death-bed, 'I have met with many who can talk about religion—with few whose experience keeps pace with their talking. Permit me again to lay this important subject before your consideration. And that you may be able the better to pursue it, and properly to enter into it, allow me to state to you what have sometimes been my feelings while seated in this chair by myself, shut in with God from the world around me. I have thought thus within myself in my retirement: I now look around me, and behold this apartment. I see that all is comfort and peace about me. I find myself with my God, instead of being shut up in an apartment in hell, although a hell-deserving sinner. Had I suffered my deserts, I should have been in those dark abodes of despair and anguish. There I should have thought of eternity,—eternity!—without hope of escape or release. From all this I am delivered by the grace of God; though I might have been cut off in my sins, fifty-four years ago.—While engaged in these thoughts they sometimes overpowered me. Were I now addressing to you my dying words, I should say nothing else but what I have just said. Try to live in this spirit of self-abhorrence, and let it habitually mark your life and conduct.'

'Sir, will you be so kind as to explain Matthew xi. 25?'
'The revelation which God has given to man is precisely such as he required; it is not intended to be a subject of speculation; nor does it admit any scope for the exercise of an un-governed imagination. Faith apprehends what reason cannot comprehend. The distinguishing mark of the religion of Christ is its simplicity, and its suitableness to the condition of all men, whether rich or poor, wise or unlearned. At the same time, its humbling truths are offensive to the wise in their own conceits. These may be able to talk about it, and write about it, and lay down an exact system of religion; but still their conceptions of it are confused and indistinct. It is just like giving a person a fine and laboured description of some beautiful scenery, or of some magnificent building,—King's College, for instance,—and filling his imagination with crude ideas. Such a person, though ever so learned and clever, cannot comprehend the object so clearly as the poor ignorant man who has it placed immediately before his eyes. Were an angel from heaven to describe the properties of honey to an individual who had never seen or tasted any thing like it, this individual would not conceive of it so justly as the little child who has tasted it: although the child might be quite unable to communicate to others what it tasted like. Bring a wise man and an ignorant man into this room, and tell them both that the house is on fire; I trow the ignorant man would know how to make his escape quite as well as the wise man. It is just the same in matters of religion. We must all forsake our own wisdom and conceit, and stoop to enter in at the strait gate; we must become as little babes, if we would be saved. Many are the ways in which men endeavour to avoid this humility of heart, by substituting in its place some outward act of voluntary humility. The poor Hindoo thinks that the idol whom he serves is appeased by his walking over fifty miles, and counting the number of his paces. The papist imagines that God is well pleased with his works of supererogation and his penances. Others, with the same notion of gaining the favour of the Deity, have undertaken long and dangerous pilgrimages. But there is nothing in all this to gain for guilty sinners acceptance and reconciliation with God. The plain and simple way is unfolded in the gospel. Our salvation is procured with the blood of Christ; and by coming to God through him, with lowliness of mind and deep self-abasement, we receive the benefit of his death and resurrection.'

'What is the way to maintain a close walk with God?'
'By constantly meditating on the goodness of God, and on our great deliverance from that punishment which our sins have deserved; we are brought to feel our vileness and utter unworthiness; and while we continue in this spirit of self-degradation, every thing else will go on easily. We shall find ourselves advancing in our course; we shall feel the presence of God; we shall experience his love; we shall live in the enjoyment of his favour; and in the hope of his glory. Meditation is the grand means of our growth in grace; without it, prayer itself is an empty service. You often feel that your prayers scarcely reach the ceiling; but oh, get into this humble spirit by considering how good the Lord is, and how evil you all are; and then prayer will mount on wings of faith to heaven. The sigh, the groan of a broken heart, will soon go through the ceiling up to heaven, into the very bosom of God. Without this habitual experience of our sinfulness and natural depravity, even an active religion is a vain thing. I insist upon this point so earnestly,